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GUIDED BY GOD: THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND POLITICAL  
LEGITIMACY IN THE PHILIPPINES

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## ABSTRACT

### GUIDED BY GOD: THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND POLITICAL LEGITIMACY IN THE PHILIPPINES

Steven B. Shirley  
Old Dominion University, 2003  
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The developing world is witnessing a growing (some may say disturbing) trend towards "de-secularization" of national governments. This trend has been understudied and misunderstood over the past decade. Government experts and scholars alike too often view this trend through the lens of "threat" analysis and in so doing miss key cultural, historical, and political factors at work. This study attempts to redress this problem. By looking at political legitimacy and the role religious organizations such as the Catholic Church may play, a new understanding of how religious institutions can shape and mold governments and policies emerges.

This study focuses specifically on the Republic of the Philippines and the Catholic Church. The rationale is that Philippines is one of the most interesting and intriguing nation-states in which to study the dynamics between the Church and State. In no other Southeast Asian nation-state can one find a relationship with both the historical and cultural *gravitas* that exists between the Philippine Catholic Church and secular government. It is a relationship that spans almost five hundred years. Indeed, understanding how the Church uses its power to legitimize and make illegitimate politicians and regimes is a study in power, politics, and religion, all couched in the context of a Southeast Asian nation with its own unique cultural attributes.

Through the use of historical analysis and contemporary case studies this study details for the reader the evolution of Church power and influence and its effects on the

legitimacy of Philippine governments. Built on the foundation of *Weberian* legitimacy and the *Eastonian* idea of support, the study includes a look at the personalities behind the Church's power, the methods that led to two People Power revolutions, and the consequences of the de-secularization on the Philippines.



This work is dedicated to the people of the Philippines and of Asia, whose culture and arts I have studied for so many years.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Qiu Jin who helped me immeasurably in finishing this study. As my advisor, professor, and friend, Dr. Jin kept me focused and her assistance is guidance more than mere words can express. I would also like to thank Dr. Jie Chen and Dr. Simon Serfaty for their efforts in helping improve this study. I also want to thank Dr. Earl Honeycutt for introducing me to the Philippines in 1998. It is because of him that I found a topic of interest. Since that time I have developed a special relationship with the people and culture of the region. His detailed editing of this text was also very important to its completion.

On a more personal note, I would like to dedicate this to my mother, Glenda Shirley. She was always a phone call away to hear my frustrations and complaints and offer words of support. Words fall short to express my appreciation for the most resilient woman I know.

I would also like to thank a few others who in their own way helped me reach this point. My father Ben Shirley, who in his own way helped me complete this study. Ms. Sumi Hong, for her dedication in making sure I finished my work and for providing a great working environment. Wherever you are today Ms. Hong, thank you so much for everything. I would also like to thank Wiriya Phokhwang for her help and support in a time when I thought I might have to leave the program. Her friendship means a lot to me, and it is to the future Dr. Phokhwang that I owe my introduction into the wonderful culture of Thailand.

Finally, I want to thank Ms. Madiha Jafri, who will one day be Dr. Jafri, for making Norfolk a better place to live, and for making me a better soul. Ms. Jafri is a one

of a kind treasure, and if there were more like her in the world then it certainly would be a better place to live.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

On January 20, 2001, television sets across Manila beamed images of hundreds of thousands of protestors converging in and around Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) in metropolitan Manila. Those protestors gathered in the shadow of the EDSA shrine—a statue of the Virgin Mary located at the intersection of EDSA that had come to represent the power of democracy and the victory over the totalitarianism of Ferdinand E. Marcos in the first People Power Revolution of 1986. Yet this was not 1986 and Marcos had long since passed into history. On this day the Church had a new target: the allegedly corrupt President Joseph “Erap” Estrada.

At 3:30 p.m. the Archbishop of Manila and de facto head of the Philippine Catholic Church, Jaime Cardinal Sin, announced through a loudspeaker and the Church-owned radio station Veritas that several top government officials who had in previous days supported Estrada had defected. Sin, a familiar face of the opposition both against martial law and Marcos, once again came to the defense of political morality in the Philippines and called for Estrada’s resignation. Sin and the thousands gathered at EDSA knew that Estrada’s own departure was imminent. It was a poignant scene, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church leading the protests and joined in hand with secular personalities. Both were being supported and cheered by the masses assembled at the feet of the Virgin Mary. Sin and the others came to worship, to pray, and to depose a constitutionally elected president.

In the days leading up to the mass protests at EDSA, threats of nonviolent action made politicians apprehensive. Word came to their offices that the average citizen and organized political groups were rallying their forces against the president. Included in

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This thesis follows the style and format of *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* by Kate Turabian.

these groups were the *Kongreso ng Mamamayang Pilino* (Kompil), the *Bagong Alyansang Makabayan*, the Estrada Resign Movement, and most importantly, the Philippine Catholic Church. The Church's history in toppling regimes and the fact that its membership was spread throughout each of the other anti-Estrada organizations made it particularly relevant and an authentic threat to Estrada.<sup>1</sup>

The Catholic Church flexed its political muscle when its leadership called on the faithful to come to the EDSA shrine in a show of solidarity, and hundreds of thousands poured into the streets in response. Once there, they were treated to speeches and pronouncements made by the Church hierarchy, including Cardinal Sin, that were intended to encourage and prepare the crowds for a long vigil. That vigil would not end until Estrada was convicted by the Philippine Senate and ejected from office; or he voluntarily agreed to step down and hand power to the Church's hand-picked successor, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

If Estrada was unwilling or the Philippine Senate did not have the courage to convict Estrada on the impeachment charges brought against him, then the Church was prepared for action. These preparations included calls for mass protests at EDSA, coupled with efforts to build coalitions between business leaders, Church officials, and politicians sympathetic to their cause. Plans were made to ensure that both Estrada and his regime would be rendered illegitimate and that the protestors assembled would be protected from possible military reprisals ordered by Estrada, who prior to January 20, 2001, still held the Philippine military's loyalty.

Estrada had powerful political allies and there was little hope that the Senate would convict him. The fear of a rigged trial in the Senate prompted the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) to call for "a miracle" and "prayer" in

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<sup>1</sup> Norman Boradador and Pablo Carlito, "Anti-Erap Groups Plan for People Power II," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (January 16, 2001; accessed 1 September 2001).

hopes of influencing the Senator-judges to abandon their political allegiances and vote Estrada out. In the past the CBCP, organized in 1945 to give voice to catholic concerns, had played a role in furthering national unity, coordinating and organizing Filipino Catholics in education, promoting social welfare, and initiating political action.

Orlando Quevedo, Archbishop of Nueva Segovia and member of the CBCP, summed up the concerns about Estrada's likely impeachment: "God's grace works quietly in the depths of conscience. Still, the door of conscience must be open to God's grace."<sup>2</sup> The Church left no doubt that in their minds that Estrada had lost the moral basis to govern and the legitimacy he once enjoyed. Estrada may have cowed the Senate, but the Church held the street. The Church's leaders promised to fight his corrupt presidency with more than prayers if he was allowed to stay. They were prepared to use extended and massive "extralegal . . . civil disobedience."<sup>3</sup>

In the end the Senate did not convict, failing by one vote to move forward with the impeachment charges. The Church made good on its warning.<sup>4</sup> The crowds at the EDSA shrine swelled and became so massive they spilled into surrounding areas, filling up nearby Ortigas Avenue, the parking lots of the SM Megamall, and places as far away as Camp Aguinaldo. Those individuals who answered the Church's call represented a cross-section of Philippine society and industry, from labor to the federal bureaucracy, militant groups, religious organizations, and even university students who walked out of their classes to make their voices heard. Those voices were not just heard in Manila.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>On the twenty-third day of the impeachment trial, the Senate voted on whether or not to open second envelope, which purportedly held concrete evidence of Estrada's crimes. By a margin of only one vote, the senators supporting Estrada successfully blocked the opening of the documents. The 11-10 margin was decried in the press, and in the Senate, Estrada's victory was short lived. In just more than 48 hours he was forced from office.



Throughout the Philippines, from Zamboanga in the south to Cebu in the Visayas, tens of thousands of demonstrators engaged in anti-Estrada rallies.

Many military and police personnel were overwhelmed and unprepared for the number of protestors. At first they tried to control the crowds and maintain the barricades, but in a matter of days they too were overcome by the spirit of the movement. Media on the scene captured images of the military and police sent to contain the rallies extending their hands in solidarity with the protestors.

Efforts by the Church to build a visible coalition paid off. Powerful and charismatic politicians united themselves with the Church. Former president Corazon Aquino, a longtime supporter and beneficiary of the first People Power revolution whose story and connection to the Church is told in chapters 4 and 5, stood with her longtime friend and advisor Cardinal Sin. Fidel Ramos, a Protestant, former president, one-time antagonist of the Catholic Church, and target of EDSA rallies in the past, was also in attendance. All of them were there to show the world the power and solidarity of the Philippine people who refused to tolerate corruption in their midst.

The Church's coalition also spanned political and religious lines, winning the support of business and industry both in Manila and throughout the Philippines. These businesses allowed their workers to take the days off and answer the Catholic Church's call for a People Power II. Many businesses also supplied food and water to the thousands who were at EDSA.

Viewing the masses assembled against him, Estrada and his few remaining allies realized that salvaging his presidency was politically hopeless. The crowd at EDSA signified outrage and shame directed toward his administration. The protestors represented a society that was fed up with corruption and tired of turning a blind eye to the president's peccadilloes. Estrada was out of time and out of options.

On Saturday, January 20, 2001, Estrada left Malacañang, the home of the president, by boat. That same day, the Supreme Court of the Philippines declared the

presidency vacant. Through the force of People Power II, the Philippine Catholic Church proved to the world that it remained a political force to be reckoned with.

The first days of the new century witnessed the end of the brief Estrada presidency and the emergence of the Philippine Catholic Church's potent political power. People Power II, recounted in further detail in chapter 6, was a potent and concrete example of how the Catholic Church remained a force of political change. As it had done on many occasions in the past, the Church challenged the legitimacy of a constitutionally elected government and was successful in enforcing its political will.

The Philippine Catholic Church remains today one of the few institutions with the organization, the leadership, and the moral substance to launch a crusade against a corrupt president. It is the only institution in the Philippines with the power to declare a president legitimate or illegitimate and do so through peaceful means. The Church certainly did not act alone, but it succeeded where the Senate failed and politicians were powerless. Even when public opinion was running against the Catholic Church's pressure, it proved invaluable and influential in forcing the removal of President Estrada and the coronation of his successor, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

People Power II and the Church's work in bringing down Estrada are the latest in a series of events that illustrate the role the Church historically played in the Philippines as a force of governmental legitimacy. It is a role overlooked in traditional international relations literature, comparative political studies, and writings on legitimacy. This study is one step in helping highlight the Church's role, not merely as a social or political force, but as one of the key mediating factors in legitimating governments in the Philippines.

Studying governmental legitimacy is important because legitimacy shapes the effectiveness of governance, the scope, pace, and method of political change, and the international conduct of the state. By maximizing political obligation, legitimacy greatly

enhances the viability of rulership.<sup>5</sup> The Church, playing the key role in this legitimacy, is therefore an important unit of study with consequences that stem well beyond simple unit level analysis.

If substantial studies existed recounting the happenings of People Power II and the influence of the Church within this movement, then the need for this study would be less urgent. The same would be true if current legitimacy theory dealt adequately with religious organizations like the Church. If less developed countries were utilized as case studies when Church-State issues were researched, then this study of the Philippine Catholic Church and its role as the force of legitimacy would be less intriguing.

Unfortunately, these studies do not exist. No current research examines the specific role of the Catholic Church as a legitimizing force in the Philippines, and no literature addresses the corollary between legitimacy and the Catholic Church in the context of People Power II. All of this makes this particular study timely, relevant, and important to international relations literature.

This study also has two great advantages over previous studies. For one, it serves as an excellent source of information on the role of the Church in the Philippines. No single study has ever highlighted the dynamic relationship that exists between the Church and State in the Philippines, nor looked at it with a historian's eye and a political scientist's analysis. It is at the same time applicable to the larger trends such as *de-secularization* taking place in world politics today. Indeed, throughout Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and other areas, governments are coming to grips with new political realities, among them the fresh injection of religion into the political dialogue and affairs of secular governments.

Politicians and citizens around the world are waking everyday to the reality that religious-based governments such as the Taliban are not the political anathema that one

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<sup>5</sup>Muthiah Alagappa, ed., *Political Legitimacy in Southeast Asia: The Quest for Moral Authority* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 3-4.

might think, and in fact such diverse locations as the Philippines, Indonesia, Turkey, Pakistan, India, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Sudan, Egypt, and a host of others, secular governments are clashing head to head with the religious hard liners in their own countries.

In some countries they are able to deal with them and work together relatively peacefully, but in each of these examples there have been times when violence ruled the day, and it was a violence often precipitated by the religious leadership. By examining the Philippines, and the Catholic Church's role in political legitimacy, a model is given through which the role of other religious institutions can be dissected, laid open, studied, and understood within the context of political legitimacy. It is the author's hope that the study can be a guide for others who wish to take up the understanding of religious groups in other less studied areas of the world, and in the process add to the greater understanding of the world in which we all share.

To begin a study of this nature, one must have a basis from which to understand how the Church can "fit" into a society like the Philippines. Simply stating that the Church is influential is not sufficient. An intellectual framework or theory is needed so that the correlation and causation between the variables can be determined. Until now, studies of legitimacy and legitimacy theory have not offered sufficient explanations of the substantive role for an organization like the Catholic Church. Moreover, few contemporary studies address the role of religion in the legitimacy of lesser-developed nation-states, and classical studies of state legitimacy do not adequately address the theoretical contemporary role religious organizations like the Church play in twenty-first-century politics.

The absence of this material creates a sizable gap in the intellectual framework of comparative politics, Philippine studies, international relations, and especially legitimacy studies. This is an unacceptable situation, because understanding legitimacy as a dependent variable requires understanding the independent variables that impact it.

Evidence uncovered in this study will testify to the role of the Catholic Church as a legitimizing force in the Philippines. Whether it is the main independent variable or merely a mediating factor will be discussed in detail later in the chapter.

This study begins by posing and attempting to answer several important questions and challenges to current legitimacy theory: (1) What is legitimacy and how, if at all, does it deal with the role of a social institution such as the Catholic Church? (2) What do the major theoretical texts in legitimacy theory have to say about how legitimacy is established, and what, if any, intellectual space do they set aside for a body such as the Catholic Church to operate within? (3) Is legitimacy theory incomplete and consequently, can it allow for a religious institution like the Catholic Church to be an important variable in legitimacy? (4) Is a rethinking of the legitimacy paradigm needed? (5) Can the function of the Catholic Church in legitimacy transcend a singular theory? (6) Historically, how did the Catholic Church become the force of legitimacy in the Philippines? (5) What do the events of People Power II tell us about the Church's responsibility in legitimating today's Philippine government and its continued role in the future?

We must first address the ways scholars from a variety of fields, including political science, international relations, cultural anthropology, and sociology, have all contributed to the development of legitimacy theory. Those scholars' differing intellectual backgrounds have not resulted in radically different ideas about legitimacy. In fact, from the works of classical philosophers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau to modern theorists like Seymour Martin Lipset, the elements of legitimacy remain relatively constant. Variety is found in the ways these elements are operationalized and the language used to define them, not in the essence of their meaning.

As a theory, legitimacy is unlike the Realist, Marxist, or Dependency schools of thought in which the boundaries, variables, and causal pathways are clearly marked. The independent variables in legitimacy can be many things, depending on the author's

worldview. A few things are constant, such as all definitions including nods to power and authority, but the ways these variables are constituted is subject to debate. For example, Rodney Barker offers this concise definition of legitimacy: “The belief in the rightfulness of a state in its authority to issue commands so that the command be obeyed not simply out of fear or self interest, but because they are believed to have moral authority, because subjects believe that they ought to obey.”<sup>6</sup>

Barker’s definition of legitimacy is well delineated, but it does not explain how the state issuing the commands received the mandate to do so, nor does it identify the actions the state takes to remain legitimate. Where does this “moral authority” come from? How does any individual, regime, or government in Barker’s definition gain and keep its power and authority? The answer to these questions is contentious and subject to debate among scholars, and no common agreement exists across all schools of thought.

A more common source, such as *Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, says simply that legitimacy is “the quality or state of being legitimate . . . in accordance with law or with established legal forms or requirements . . . conforming to recognized principles or accepted rules and standards . . .”<sup>7</sup> Again, like Barker, this definition clearly identifies what a legitimate authority might look like, but not how the authority gains its legitimate status. Moreover, what individual or group sets the “accepted rules and standards”?

A graphic visualization of the legitimacy process may help simplify the variety of definitions. Fortunately, in the majority of studies the conceptualization of legitimacy is simplified into an easily discernable binary model: Legitimacy (dependent variable or  $Y_1$ ) and Forces Imparting Legitimacy (independent variable or  $X_1$ ). This idea is graphically illustrated in figure 1.

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<sup>6</sup>Rodney S. Barker, *Political Legitimacy and the State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 11.

<sup>7</sup>*Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* (1969), s.v. “legitimacy.”

What complicates the issue is determining what  $X_1$  may be, and it is on this point that the disagreement among scholars arises. While these same scholars work to identify the ways and means by which governments become legitimate, none of them give adequate attention to social organizations such as the Catholic Church. Therein lies the incongruence and incompleteness of legitimacy studies.

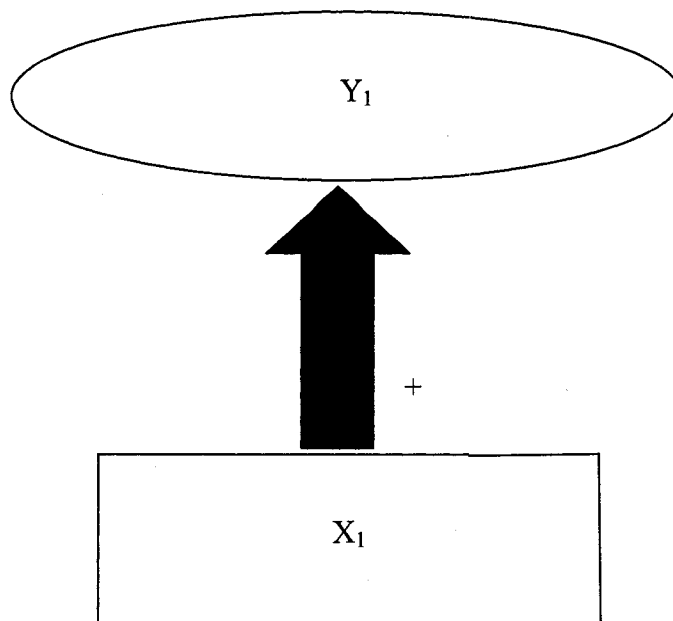


Fig. 1. Graphical Representation of Legitimacy: *Legitimacy* (Dependent Variable or  $Y_1$ ) and *Forces Imparting Legitimacy* (Independent Variable or  $X_1$ ).

Using a standard quantitative model to illustrate the causal pathway for legitimacy is not part of this study. Analyzing the Church-State relationship in legitimacy is not a mathematical undertaking. Quite the contrary, it is a qualitative relationship that requires qualitative types of research. The closest this study comes to using quantitative methods is drawing on public opinion data to show the level and strength of support for certain institutions and individuals in Philippine political and social culture. However, in this instance and later in the chapter, use of the quantitative-type graphical model to visualize the relationship between variables is ideal for helping illustrate legitimacy in nation-

states. It is particularly helpful in explaining how the Catholic Church influences the process.

In addition to lacking definitional succinctness, the concept of the Church's role in legitimacy has been understudied and lacks a substantial amount of case studies to guide current research. This is particularly evident in relation to emerging nation-states such as the Philippines, a fact made clear in Muthia Alagappa's 1995 pivotal work, *Political Legitimacy in Southeast Asia: The Quest for Moral Authority*. Alagappa's study highlights two reasons why this may be the case. The first is a lack of interest from Third World specialists in the state-society relationship, which includes the role of a religious institution such as the Catholic Church. Instead, these specialists, most often from one of three dominant theoretical fields (Marxist, Political Development, and Dependency Theory), are concerned with other areas in their intellectual inquiry.<sup>8</sup>

Marxists view the state as an instrument of class rule, a guarantor of production relations, or an arena for class struggle. They advocate the overthrow of the sociopolitical order and its replacement with more egalitarian socialist systems. Social relationships, particularly those that include cultural variables in developing nations, are of little importance to Marxist theorists in their paradigmatic view. Because of this, Marxism is less concerned with the social dynamics behind why non-Marxist governments remain legitimate. Ideally, a Marxist government is legitimate because it exists at the behest of the proletariat--who serve as both the citizenry and the government--and on the orthodox Marxist ideology that seeks to neither exploit nor depress the masses. In simplified terms, legitimacy in Marxism has two independent variables at play,  $X_1$  and  $X_2$  (see figure 2).

To Marxists, there is simply no general need to study the social dynamics unique to the culture of a nation-state, because the principles of Marxism will emerge supreme in the end no matter which culture one is from. Moreover, any role a social-spiritual

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<sup>8</sup>Alagappa, *Political Legitimacy in Southeast Asia*, 4-5.



organization such as the Catholic Church may play is irrelevant. As a representative of the “opiate of the masses,” the Church and all it represents will pass with the rise of the state.

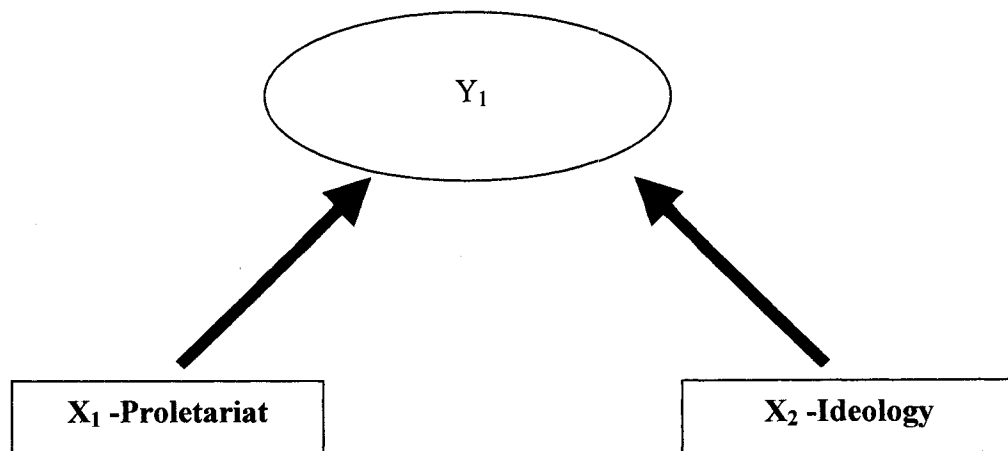


Fig. 2. Graphical Representation of Marxist Legitimacy

Political Development theorists tend to be concerned with the goals of economic growth and distribution, as well as the preconditions and transitions of democracy, political order, and stability. If a religious organization can be used to further the cause of economic growth and distribution it is an added bonus, but the organization itself is still of little consequence. They also posit a linear model in which traditional societies develop into modern ones with no deviation. Economic growth is the primary means of achieving modernization and democracy, but until the model is mature, proponents advocate a strong autonomous center with domination based on power.

Modeling Political Development for legitimacy is simple, because Political Development theorists really only have one independent variable: economic growth (see figure 3). Within that variable itself there are many fine points, such as equity of distribution, sustainability, and other factors. However, those factors are less pertinent to a legitimacy model. It seems that if economic growth can be sustained, then a government has a high probability of maintaining its legitimacy.

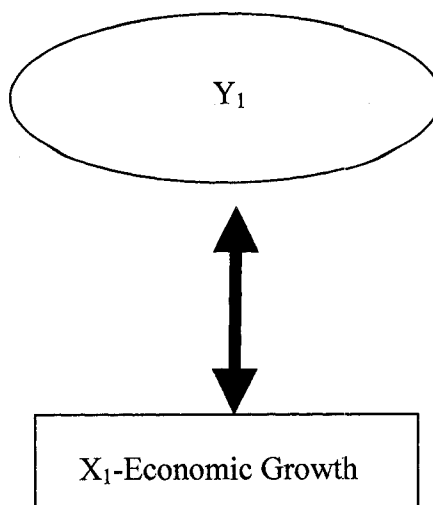


Fig. 3. Political Development's Legitimacy

Evidence of this approach is seen in studies of East Asian nations, such as Japan's strong state-controlled industrial sector, South Korea's planned economy, and the neo-Marxist-capitalist blend emerging out of the People's Republic of China. Each case represents a strong autonomous government moving towards a Western style of government. Japan has matured and reached the end of the linear spectrum. South Korea has progressed more recently with its new democratic constitution in 1988 and the election of Kim Dae-Jung in 1998. China has just begun this transition following the reforms of Deng Xiaoping in the early 1980s.

Interaction between the dominant power base and social institutions is not highlighted or emphasized. It seems a church or group can help move the traditional society along its path to modernity, but just how that would happen and what effects it would have on modernization remains unclear. Based on the case studies used to prove political development hypotheses, it appears that what is important is not religious institutions, but secular state controls of economies and unified cultures. The Church may be able to find a role in this theory, but it would be minimal at best.

The Dependency schools try to combine Marxism and nationalism, emphasizing the dependent character of lesser-developed countries' economies and the need to break

bonds with the capitalist order. According to Alagappa, the Dependency school believes the solution to the social ills created by capitalism requires the overthrow and replacement of capitalism by socialism and breaking the bonds of internationalism.<sup>9</sup>

Illustrating the Dependency view of legitimacy requires at least three independent variables: unified nationalism, socialist economy, and internal focus (see figure 4). If a government can help foster or achieve all three--or at least appear to endorse all three--then it is likely to be legitimate in the eyes of a Dependency theorist. Consequently, Dependency-based studies of nation-states such as the Philippines would overlook inherent cultural variables and social institutions like the Catholic Church and their role in legitimacy, discounting their importance in favor of finding a nationalist trend within the political milieu. That environment favors the rejection of internationalism and any extraterritorial forces meddling in the internal affairs of the state.

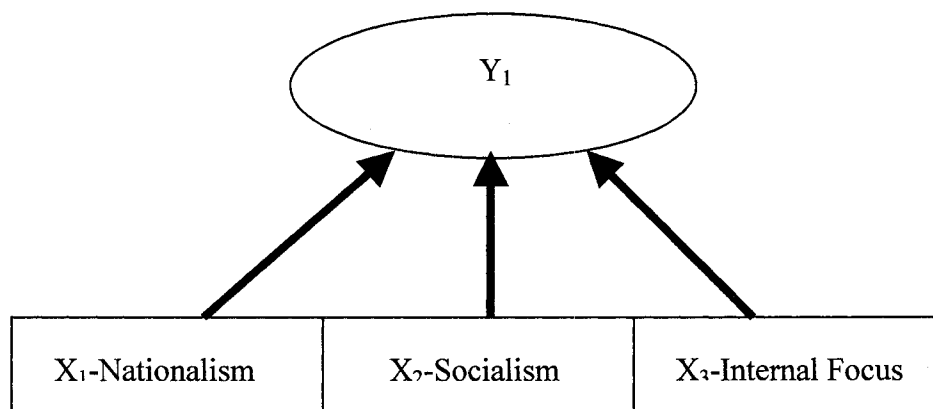


Fig. 4. The Dependency School's View of Legitimacy

Arguing for the inclusion rather than against the omission of the Catholic Church in these disciplines begins by addressing the universality of the statements found in Marxism, Political Development, and Dependency Theory. The same could be done for any of the major theories that overlook the role of religious institutions in legitimacy.

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 5.

Logically, a universal statement may be invalidated if one example can be produced contradicting the contention's universality. Furthermore, just because it is difficult to establish a cause and effect relationship does not mean that these relationships do not exist. Issues should not be abandoned and considered useless because of difficulty. Legitimacy studies that include a Church-State relationship should not be sacrificed on the altar of parsimony.

The second reason Alagappa suggests for the Church's omission from legitimacy studies is the belief among social scientists that legitimacy itself is a weak social science concept.<sup>10</sup> The weakness stems from legitimacy's perceived limited explanatory power as a concept and the difficulty of operationalizing the term. Alagappa highlights the Marxist, Political Development, and Dependency schools, all of which look for other ways of explaining the state's legitimacy while shying away from religious variables, for which it may be difficult to find evidence of cause and effect relationships.<sup>11</sup> However, further examination of legitimacy shows that it is no less valuable as a concept than others, and indeed may offer certain inherent strengths to help understand nation-states.

Even legitimacy's harshest critics admit that "while legitimacy [theories] cannot predict precisely when a regime change will occur, [they are] nevertheless useful in drawing attention to trends in the degree of support enjoyed by particular governments and regimes."<sup>12</sup> Legitimacy may be complex and difficult to grasp, but such is the case with most of social science. Even calling the study of societies a "science" can lead to trouble, given that science is an exact discipline. Including a variable such as the Catholic Church in these studies can only give the researcher another tool and another way of understanding the social dynamics behind certain populations and governments.

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

Social science's inexact nature also supports the supposition that to fully understand legitimacy requires space for social or religious institutions like the Catholic Church. The definitional fluidity and intellectual openness makes these types of legitimacy studies exciting and engaging. Indeed, this is why studies like this examination of the Philippine Catholic Church's role can take on wider significance. These studies are relevant not only as legitimacy studies, but also as illustrations of the growing political power of religious groups, charismatic leadership, and the reemergence of old institutions in the new realities of power politics.

Before we examine the new realities of power politics, we need to look at how the idea of governmental legitimacy developed. One of the first times the modern question of legitimacy was critically addressed was in the Hobbesian doctrine of liberalism, or more precisely, with the reconciliation of the problem of state power and individual rights.<sup>13</sup> Although Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) did not coin the word "legitimacy," nor was he the first to delve into how humanity can create a sovereign governmental regime with the power to command and be obeyed, his theoretical concern for how a government or "leviathan" could be created by popular consent was vital to Western political thought and the notion of a ruling regime needing the consent of the governed.

In Western political theory the individual, tribe, or clan gives up a certain level of personal freedom to a larger governmental order in exchange for security. This exchange of personal freedom for group sovereignty is seen as a small price to pay for a measure of personal security that would not otherwise be possible in the state of nature. Just as Jean-Jacques Rousseau's stag hunt analogy illustrated, members of a group working together are more likely to achieve a substantive goal than individuals working alone.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1965), passim.

<sup>14</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A Discourse on Inequality*, trans. Maurice Cranston (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), passim.

Hobbes's leviathan represents the government of a nation-state that is invested with a level of authority and thus power from the members of the leviathan's group. As such, it acts according to the leviathan's mandates but also has the freedom to dictate behaviors circumscribed by the group and authorized to it through voluntary acquisition by its members.

The Eastern tradition of legitimacy is quite different. Acting on a more supernatural basis, Asian societies tend to view man's natural state in different terms. Man is not inherently bad, his life is not necessarily brutish or short, and he does not have inherent freedoms fully enjoyed in the state of nature. Man instead operates in a hierarchical world, whether he submits to this order or not. The doctrines of Confucius, Mencius, Lao Zi, Zhuang Zi, and others point to this phenomenon. The ruler is invested with power and legitimacy, not from the people, but from "heaven" or some other intangible origin that he may answer to directly. He is given a mandate. If he is a just ruler, then he retains the mandate. If he is an unjust ruler, then he is in danger of losing this mandate.

In Southeast Asia, rulers went a step further in identifying themselves and even their governmental structures with the supernatural world. In the ancient Khmer Empire, entire cities were built to represent Hindu cosmology.<sup>15</sup> By constructing these structures, the ruler himself gained legitimacy from inhabiting its corridors and being God's representative on earth. People obeyed the leader and his government as any human would obey a god.

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<sup>15</sup> Angkor Thom and Angkor Wat, both in Cambodia, are prime examples. Both the city and the temple complex were built to represent the Hindu view of the universe. By building such monumental architecture, the Khmer kings hoped to foster a belief that they and the gods they sought to honor were one and the same. They were seen as god-kings, and their legitimacy was realized in this fact and in the very buildings they constructed.

By the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the traditional elements of legitimacy found in East and Southeast Asian societies began to fall into disuse, replaced by the more Western idea of the social contract. For example, by 1911, the last emperor of China abdicated and the “mandate of heaven” was replaced by a modern republic. Yet not all elements of the supernatural have been eliminated in every sector. Chinese thought may still revolve around the idea of a “mandate,” even in its communist-based society. South Korea is still very much a Confucian society, Japan retains ascetic elements that continue the code of *bushido*, and in societies such as the Philippines, charismatic leaders and organizations still hold considerable influence over the populations. Moreover, although the vote may decide the ruler today instead of a “god” or any other source, the religious organizations operating within these societies have a direct impact on the voting behavior of a sizable segment of the population.

In contrast to these Asian ideas, Hobbes’s strength rested in how he clearly raised the idea of the necessity of a government to have consent, active or passive, if it was to work at all. Hobbes, however, did not address the question of governmental effectiveness, or whether the particular government was effective in delivering on promises it made to the people. Moreover, he did not effectively address the role of social institutions like the Catholic Church in helping to form or maintain the Leviathan. In the modern world, with its ever-expanding layers of government, institutions play an increasing role as power brokers between the people and their governments.

While Hobbes had the idea in theory, Charles Maurice Talleyrand (1754-1838) was one of the first people to use and define legitimacy in practice. His use and definition of the word centered on the description of the political situation of European nation-states in relation to one another in the post-Napoleonic world, providing a clear demarcation as to what types of governments were considered legally legitimate and what types were not acceptable. Talleyrand himself was an ordained priest, becoming bishop of Autun in 1789 before rising to secular political power in nineteenth-century France.

For much of his career, Talleyrand exemplified the marriage between the Church and the State. With such a religious pedigree, could Talleyrand ignore the Church in legitimizing governments? Yes, he could and he did.

Talleyrand's ideas of legitimacy, at least those he espoused while he was France's foreign minister, left little place for the role of the Catholic Church in government.

While he himself enjoyed the power of his position due in large part to the opportunities afforded by his involvement in a very political Catholic Church, he did not extend these powers when he was in a position to do so.<sup>16</sup> Instead, Talleyrand believed legitimate states included those with elected and parliamentary governments, such as Great Britain and the hereditary governments of Spain, Austria, and Russia. Those states that were not legitimate in Talleyrand's eyes included the Napoleonic regime, which gained its political power through violence, aggression, and subversion, rather than from legal, popular consent or through descent, lineage, or tradition.<sup>17</sup>

Consideration for the role of the Church was miniscule. It was still powerful, particularly among the monarchy of Spain, but the religious ceremony and the trappings of a kingly coronation were all that really remained in most European states. Real power now rested in the hands of the strongest military, the greatest navy, the ability to keep the treasury full, and a standard of living for the population that prevented the sorts of revolutions that Europe witnessed in France and in its American colonies. Indeed, this

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<sup>16</sup> Philip G. Dwyer, *Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand, 1754-1838: A Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), passim; J. F. Bernard, *Talleyrand: A Biography* (New York: Putnam, 1973); Louis S. Greenbaum, *Talleyrand, Statesman-Priest: The Agent-General of the Clergy and the Church of France at the End of the Old Regime* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1970), passim.

<sup>17</sup> Joseph Bensman, "Max Weber's Concept of Legitimacy: An Evaluation," in *Conflict and Control: Challenge to Legitimacy of Modern Governments*, ed. Arthur J. Vidich and Ronald M. Glassman (London: Sage Publications, 1979), 18.



time period may be the beginning of the myopic view held by Western intellectuals that the Church no longer mattered.

Writing a century earlier and most certainly influencing Talleyrand was French deistic philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who combined the ideas of the social contract with the need for other elements to legitimize the regime it formed.<sup>18</sup> His thoughts, while deep and substantive, are responsible for the simplified modeling of legitimacy.

At the core of Rousseau's belief was that legitimacy is nation-bound and parochially circumscribed.<sup>19</sup> This did not initially preclude involvement of religious institutions, but it did limit the kinds of organizations that may play a role in Rousseau's society. Moreover, the validity of this belief poses a particularly interesting set of questions for those who study legitimacy as a part of the anarchical nation-state system or have hope of building an effective international government, for how can anything international be parochial?

Rousseau's ideas did contain flaws as they relate to the Catholic Church. Just as Hobbes had done before him and Talleyrand would do later, Rousseau neglected and did not provide a role for extra-territorial institutions such as the Church, institutions that exist both within the nation-state's borders and without as part of a larger global organization. His idea of parochialism notwithstanding, Rousseau did offer intriguing views on what constitutes legitimacy. Rousseau's two distinct bases for legitimacy consisted of "procedural rightness" and the "general will."<sup>20</sup> Both serve as independent variables in the formation of legitimacy (see figure 5).

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<sup>18</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. G. D. H. Cole (New York: Dutton, 1950), passim; John H. Mason, ed., *The Indispensable Rousseau* (New York: Horizon Press, 1979), passim.

<sup>19</sup>F. M. Barnard, *Self-Direction and Political Legitimacy: Rousseau and Herder* (Oxford: Calredon Press, 1988), 20.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 67; J. G. Merquior, *Rousseau and Weber: Two Studies in the Theory of Legitimacy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), passim.

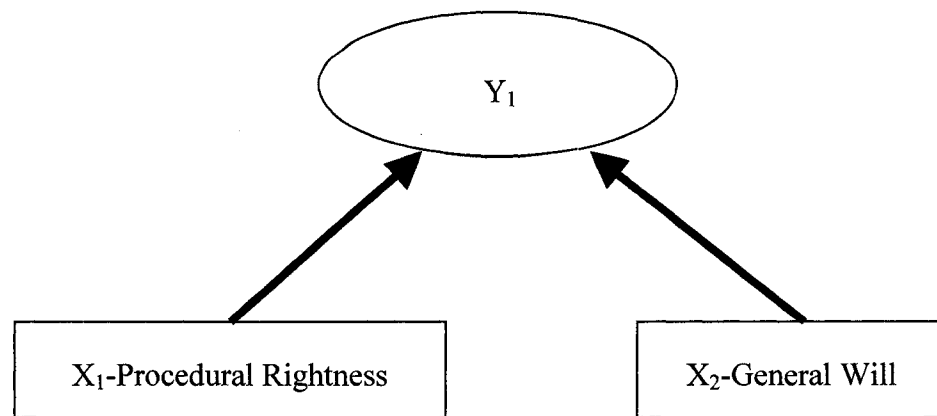


Fig. 5. Rousseau's Legitimacy Variables

Procedural rightness refers not to the substantive content of a particular decision, but to the manner in which it was arrived at as part of a process in which the public participates. The public's participation in any decision imbues it with validity. This statement clearly opens the door for Church involvement. The general will is something prior to and independent of processes of political mediation. The general will may be thought of as society's boundaries, the limits it sets for itself and how far it is willing to go to accomplish a task or policy. In order to have a general will, there needs to be a general consensus across society and class. This consensus can come only from the culture of the people. Culture is shaped by mutually shared experiences, powerful elites, and social institutions, again opening up an area where the Church may be involved.

Rousseau's writings make it clear that both the general will and the procedural rightness include a religious element, but here Rousseau's idea of religion should not be confused with the supernatural aspect that is most commonly thought of when religion is mentioned. Although Rousseau rejected involvement of an organized religion claiming to represent a system of beliefs stemming from supernatural origins, such as the Catholic Church, he did believe that his brand of legitimacy and its procedural mechanism

required a foundation of intrinsic rightness that can come only from what he termed a “civil religion.”<sup>21</sup>

Rousseau’s civil religion was a collection of secular ideas, norms, values, and ceremonies that grew out of the general will. It was also a fusion of both utility and justice. Theoretically, civil religion was to act as the glue to ensure that societal norms remained constant and were not subject to persistent debate.<sup>22</sup> Some people argue that Rousseau’s civil religion is the only way to create the degree of “creedal consensus” necessary for a general acceptance of moral standards and for “the injection of civic virtue into social life.”<sup>23</sup>

Rousseau’s concepts of civil religion were not unique. Others, such as Alexis de Tocqueville, believed in much the same thing and saw evidence of it taking shape in early America. Tilo Shabert points out that de Tocqueville believed in two sources of legitimacy: majority rule and *moeurs* and *les croyance communes*.<sup>24</sup> Loosely translated, these are the general habits and civil virtues stemming from the common political culture, a different way of expressing Rousseau’s general will and civil religion. Both are the generally accepted principles and attitudes.

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<sup>21</sup>Barnard, *Self-Direction*, 83-96.

<sup>22</sup>The United States can be said to have a civil religion. One aspect is found in the rituals surrounding the fostering of patriotism from a very early age. Both the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem are aspects of this religion of the American state. Very few of the 270 million Americans disagree or somehow object to these ceremonies being repeated and practiced in public and private life, and the act forms a common bond between a citizenry that might otherwise not share much in common.

<sup>23</sup>Barnard, *Self-Direction*, 83-96; Patrick Riley, *Will and Political Legitimacy: A Critical Exposition of Social Contract Theory in Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), *passim*.

<sup>24</sup>Tilo Shabert, “Power, Legitimacy and Truth: Reflections on the Impossibility to Legitimise Legitimations of Political Order,” in *Legitimacy/Légitimité: Proceedings of the Conference Held in Florence 3-4 June 1982*, ed. Athanasios Moulakis (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1986), 101.

One can immediately notice the correlation between de Tocqueville's "accepted attitudes" and "virtues" and Rousseau's "creedal consensus." Rousseau and de Tocqueville realized that in legitimacy, what is right in society or politically right, in other words, cannot be divorced from what people acting together consider right and proper under particular circumstances of time and place.

Did this civil religion develop? The answer depends on how succinctly one interprets the evidence. Most, if not all nation-states, particularly those that claim a separation of Church and State, create the trappings of a civil religion to foster unity and a melting pot mentality that fuses their society. Yet an unexpected result of this civil religion is that supernatural religions are protected and in some cases promoted under secular rule of law, thus gaining greater influence over members of the society who are the authors of the law. The United States is an obvious example of this phenomenon.

American society is a potent mix of almost every major culture and religion on earth, yet it operates under the common ideas of a civil religion that are embodied in its "holy" text, the U.S. Constitution. Coupled with the Constitution are other "canonical" works, including the Bill of Rights, Declaration of Independence, and Federalist Papers.

Lesser works have also been added over the years in the form of Supreme Court rulings and landmark legislation that have helped shape attitudes and the very nature of society. A few examples from American history include *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which effectively ended the separate but equal statutes in many states and chipped away at the legality of segregation. Another would be *Roe v. Wade* (1972), which legally protected certain forms of abortion by using the right of privacy found in the U.S. Constitution.

The 1964 Civil Rights Act is another example of an attempt at implementing sweeping legislation to right previous injustices against the African American population through Affirmative Action, as well as racial quotas and fundamentally altered race relations in the United States. It proved a turning point for African Americans, offering

them access to the mainstream of American society that had previously been denied to them. Alongside these civil religious treatises is a tacit promotion of the biblical Ten Commandments and other Judeo-Christian doctrines. Evidence of this is found in numerous places, from the mottos on U.S. currency to the writings etched in national monuments.

The writings of Hobbes and Rousseau are well thought out treatises on government and legitimacy, and they are prime places to start if one wishes to understand the current meanings and context of legitimacy. However, both fail to give a complete picture. Likewise, case studies based purely on their writings cannot be fully delineated without a further maturing and evolution of legitimacy theory. Shoring up some of the weaknesses and giving legitimacy one of its best definitional treatments was the influential sociologist, political theorist, and historian Max Weber and the writings of twentieth century political scientist David Easton who investigates the connection between support and political systems.

Theoretically modern legitimacy studies are guided more or less by two important foundations. The first is the Weberian model of legitimacy and the second is the Eastonian model of political support. Both theories supply a credible framework in which the Philippine Catholic Church can be analyzed. Yet both theories are also lacking in their explanatory power, and must be supplemented by historical analysis to prove and validate the relationship between theory and practice.

Max Weber was a product of both his own religious upbringing and the humanist movements of the late nineteenth century. As a sociologist and political economist, he is best known for his writings on the "Protestant Ethic." But Weber's contributions to the social science field go well beyond his initial writings. Weber believed that a historical phenomenon was determined by the viewpoint of the investigator rather than by any objective significance. This led him to develop the concept of "ideal types" as a tool for isolating sociological phenomena. These ideal types are particularly useful in legitimacy

studies, where isolating independent variables to determine the dependent variable of legitimacy is difficult to do. Another strength of Weber's work was his promotion of the idea of a plurality of historical factors, meaning one should not focus exclusively on one phenomenon to determine all results.

Weber delineated legitimacy as concisely as anyone before or after him did. To begin with, his concept of legitimacy contained the idea of "authority." To have true authority and for it to be valid and thus legitimate, it must be more than simply a standard of social conduct determined by custom or self-interest.<sup>25</sup> Authority must be oriented around certain recognizable and practicable axioms. There are many types of axioms that can reinforce authority. The legitimacy of authority can be guaranteed on a purely affectual basis, derived from rational belief, originate in religious attitudes, or even be guaranteed by self-interests.<sup>26</sup> However, two things must be present for legitimacy to function. There must be a belief (*vorstellung*) shared by those within the order that the order itself is valid (*geltung*).<sup>27</sup>

Weber wrote in his landmark text, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, that this system of legitimate order is called a "convention." Its validity is externally guaranteed by the probability that deviation from the convention from within a given social group will result in a general and significant negative reaction from others under the same convention.<sup>28</sup> He termed such an order "law" when lack of conformity with it is met with physical or psychological sanctions aimed at compelling conformity

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<sup>25</sup>Max Weber, *Basic Concepts in Sociology*, trans. H. P. Secher (New York: Greenwood Press, 1962), 71.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>27</sup>Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, trans. S. N. Esienstandt (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 11.

<sup>28</sup>Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: Free Press, 1947), 127.

and punishing disobedience. Law is also a basis for one of Weber's ideal types of legitimacy.

In general, Weber's simplest idea of what legitimacy is and ought to be is contained in the following idea: Legitimacy is best understood as "the basis of every system of authority, and corresponding of every kind of willingness to obey, is a belief, a belief by virtue of which persons exercising authority are lent prestige."<sup>29</sup> Though simple, ideas such as "belief" and "prestige" are general enough to be open to wide interpretation. Thus, the ideal types of legitimacy need to be defined, as well the sort of conditions needed for an order to be considered legitimate.

According to Weber, legitimacy may be ascribed to an order by those acting subject to it in several different ways. The first is by tradition or, in other words, a belief in the legitimacy of what has always existed. The second is by affectual attitudes, especially emotions, legitimating the validity of what is newly revealed or a model to imitate. The third is by a rational belief in its absolute value (*Wertrational*), thus lending it the validity of an absolute and final commitment. The final way is because it has been established in a manner which is recognized to be legal. This legitimacy of the legality is derived from a voluntary agreement of the interested parties or imposed on the basis of what is held to be a legitimate authority over the relevant person and a corresponding claim to their obedience.<sup>30</sup>

These ideas express, in general terms, the basis for legitimate order. Although Weber's structure does not specifically account for a role of religious organizations, it nonetheless provides a valuable intellectual framework on which to build a legitimacy study that exposes the important role of a religious institution like the Catholic Church in helping foster an order. It does so both at the level of the basis of legitimate order, and

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<sup>29</sup>Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), 263.

<sup>30</sup>Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 130-131.

also as Weber expanded and focused his idea on the “ideal” types of legitimacy he believed existed in the real world. These ideal types, discussed next, provide a useful framework in understanding the role of the Catholic Church in Philippine politics generally and the specific events and consequences of People Power II.

In *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, Weber utilized ideal types of legitimacy in his quest to answer the basic question of how one can become a leader, issue commands, and have their actions carried out. In effect, he was trying to find out how an individual or regime can be legitimate. Weber attempted to show both the nature and constitution of legitimacy. His theory, by using a triad of categories, attempted to address the kinds of substantive issues Hobbes, Rousseau and others neglected to cover in their writings. Weber’s talent and his value to legitimacy studies lies in his simplification of legitimacy into three main types, which also serve as ideal independent variables: rational (*legal*)-X1, traditional-X2, and charismatic-X3 (see figure 6).

While Weber used the term “rational,” this particular type of legitimacy can best be described as legal. It rests on belief in the legality of patterns of normative rules and the rights of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands. In the case of legal authority, obedience is owed to the legally established impersonal order. It extends up to the person or regime exercising the authority of office only by virtue of the formal legality of their commands and only within the scope of the office’s authority.

The effectiveness of legal authority rests, according to Weber, on accepting the validity of a few mutually interdependent ideas. The first is that any given legal norm may be established by agreement or by imposition on grounds of expediency or rational values or both, with a claim to obedience made by at least some of the corporate group’s members.<sup>31</sup> In the case of states, this usually includes all people living in that territory

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 329.



who stand in certain social relationships or carry out forms of social action that have been declared relevant in the order governing the group.

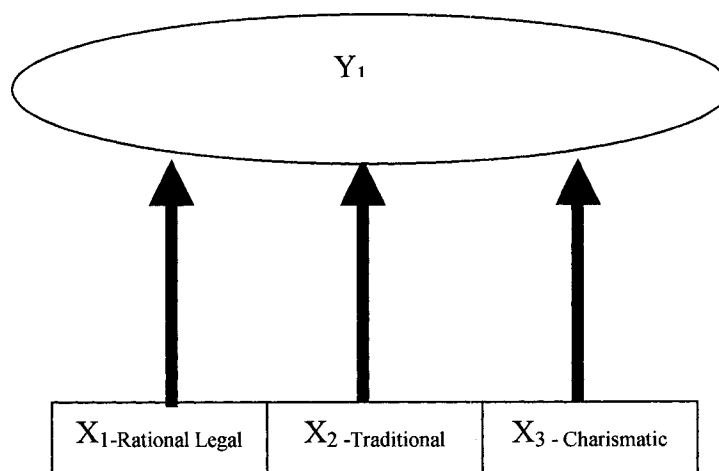


Fig. 6. Weberian Model of Legitimacy

The second idea is that every body of law essentially consists of a consistent system of abstract rules. These rules are typically established intentionally.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, administration of law is held to consist of the application of these rules to particular cases, and the administrative process in the rational pursuit of the interests specified in the order governing the corporate group. This is done within the limits laid down by legal precepts and following principles that are capable of generalized formulation and are approved in the order governing the group, or at least not disapproved by it.<sup>33</sup>

The third idea is that the person in authority occupies a legally established office. In the actions associated with his status, including the commands he issues to others, he is subject to an impersonal order to which his actions are oriented.<sup>34</sup> This is true for all

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 330.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

people in positions of power, not only for the ones exercising legal authority as the elected president of the state.

The person who obeys this authority does so only in his capacity as a member of the group, and the authority he obeys is the law. He may also be part of an association, a territorial commune, or a church, or he may be a citizen of a state. His submission is to the law, not to the person who occupies the office. Hence, it follows that there is an obligation to obey only within the sphere of the rationally delimited authority that, in terms of the order, has been conferred upon the officeholder. Obedience does not extend beyond the scope of the law.

Margherita Ciacci embraces Weber's paradigm, arguing in her writings that legitimacy can be the outgrowth of a legality of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands.<sup>35</sup> The loyalty Ciacci described is the citizenry's loyalty to the rule of law and the organizations the law establishes. It is not loyalty to personalities. The loyalty to both the law and the impersonal order that exists is extended to the person exercising the authority of the office under them. For example, citizens' loyalty to the office of president is extended to the individual who occupies that office, whether or not one has a favorable opinion of or initially supported the person in the electoral process.

This rational-legal form of legitimacy Weber recognized might be a de facto agreement, but it is most often an assumptive consensus among the populace to elect a body of officials from their ranks and to abide by the rule of law. Indeed, as the discussion thus far has illustrated, there is near universal agreement that legitimacy itself is a social practice, an outcome of the interaction between the ruler and the ruled. Hence,

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<sup>35</sup>Margherita Ciacci, "Legitimacy and the Problems of Governance," in *Legitimacy/Legitimite: Proceedings of the Conference Held in Florence 3-4 June 1982*, ed. Athanasios Moulakis (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1986), 22.

it must be framed in the sociopolitical and economic context of a specific society at a specific time, taking into account actors within the society that play significant roles.

Supporting this statement are the earliest writings addressing legitimacy, including those of Hobbes, who laid bare the harsh realities of the leviathan and the need for people to give up certain individual rights and freedoms to enjoy the safety and stability of a state monolith. They freely and voluntarily give their legitimacy in return for receiving a desired social and political situation that is acceptable to the majority, or at the very least the majority of the politically relevant within that particular body. This is true whether it is at the village level or nation-state level.

Earlier, more grandiose works such as Dante Alighieri's *De Monarchia* (1310) argued that humankind's development of intellect and culture could create a social contract resulting in a strong world government that would ensure peace and world stability. Indeed, his was the first call for legitimation of a world government, at least a government of the known world.<sup>36</sup> Others followed him, including Emeric Crucé in 1623, Hugo Grotius in 1625, and Abbe de Saint-Pierre in 1712. Each illustrated in their own way how the legally based social contract between the populace and the prince could be made workable, legitimizing a regime meant to bring about the collective good of the known world.<sup>37</sup>

The ideas and concepts behind this legally based legitimacy have remained appealing for contemporary scholars as well. Peter T. Manicas expresses a similar line of thought, albeit more developed, in his book *The Death of the State*. To Manicas, the idea

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<sup>36</sup>Dante Alighieri, *Monarchia*, trans. Prue Shaw (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1995), passim.

<sup>37</sup>Emeric Crucé, *The New Cineas*, trans. C. Frederick Farrell Jr. and Edith R. Farrell (New York: Garland Publishing, 1972), passim; James Bohman and Matthias Lutz-Bachmann, eds., *Perpetual Peace: Essays on Kant's Cosmopolitan Ideal* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), passim; J.R. Jacob and M.C. Jacob, eds., *Peace Projects of the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1972), passim.

of a legitimate government rests on the supposition that in order to be legitimate, the government must be invested with the right to command and to act in the name of the governed. The laws conceived in this arrangement are considered “morally obligatory,” and citizens have a duty to obey, whether they personally approve or not.<sup>38</sup>

In the real world, of course, the system is not as “obligatory” as one might expect, and just how the citizens can get out of this arrangement is unclear. However, following the logic, personal approval, or disapproval of individual citizens is not enough to effect change. Instead, an *organized* effort and *mass* movement are required. How large the movement would need to be may be a function of the population or be based on the percentage of those active in politics. In the United States, for example, it certainly does not take tens of millions to affect policies or the makeup of the national government. Such effects can be brought about by a relatively few powerful interest groups and elites.<sup>39</sup>

If the world were neatly packaged under the rule of law and officials were elected without the necessity of personal influence and charismatic appeal, then Weber’s first category would be sufficient to explain all forms of legitimate authority. However, the world is not that way. Weber realized as much and provided two other categories of legitimate authority, traditional and charismatic, to help explain these variations.

According to Weber, traditional legitimacy rests on the established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising

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<sup>38</sup>Peter T. Manicas, *The Death of the State* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1974), 38.

<sup>39</sup>Another element that is tacit, although not explicitly mentioned, is the idea of fair play. If someone has received benefits under the standing body of laws and political organization then he has an obligation to bear the burdens of that organization as well, including an obligation to accept its political decisions, whether or not he has solicited these benefits or has in any more active way consented to the burdens of the order.

authority under them.<sup>40</sup> In traditional authority, obedience is not owed to enacted rules or laws but to the person or the chief who occupies the traditionally sanctioned position of authority and who is bound by tradition. In this category the obligation of obedience is not based on the impersonal order, but is a matter of personal loyalty within the area of accustomed obligations.<sup>41</sup>

The commands of the traditionally legitimate government or individual are formulated in one of two ways. The first is in terms of traditions, which themselves directly determine the content of the command and the objects and extent of authority.<sup>42</sup> In so far as this is true, to overstep the traditional limitations would endanger the traditional status by undermining acceptance of the legitimacy. The second is a matter of the head of state's free personal decision, for there are no formal principles as there are under legal authority.

Examples of the traditional type of legitimacy in a "pure" form are found in the feudal kingdoms of China, Egypt, and Africa, and later in the monarchies of Europe. The danger of this sort of authority is that it can be exercised arbitrarily. The office is held by virtue of traditional status, by recruiting favorites, or by patrimony. Promotion is by the ruler's arbitrary grace. A meritocracy does not usually exist and the best and brightest are not recruited to fill positions.

Obedience from the population is based on personal loyalty, and the traditional exercise of authority is only limited by resistance aroused in the subjects or by a failure to act according to traditions. Natural societal evolution is retarded, and the development of capitalism is obstructed.<sup>43</sup> Functions within the government are defined in terms of

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<sup>40</sup>Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 328.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 341.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

competition among the interests of those seeking favors, income, and other advantages. Because fees and gifts are given to win the ruler's favor, bribery and corruption are rampant.<sup>44</sup>

Weber's final category of legitimacy is *charismatic* authority. It is based on devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism, or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him.<sup>45</sup> In the case of charismatic authority, the charismatically qualified leader is obeyed by virtue of personal trust in him and his revelation, his heroism, or his exemplary qualities so far as they fall within the scope of the individuals' belief in his charisma.

Ciacci's writings on charisma again echo and support Weber's on this point. According to Ciacci, charismatic legitimacy is built upon the devotion to a specific and exceptional character, to a person, and on the normative patterns revealed by that person.<sup>46</sup> The leadership or leader seeks to maintain a sense of self-confidence and legitimacy by continually trying to gain the support of other individuals and groups wherever they may be found, inside or outside the territorial limits or the supposed consensus-oriented jurisdiction of the nation-state.

Ciacci believes that the charismatic ideal of legitimacy is almost always embodied in a single individual, but that individual is not necessarily the head of state. He or she may also be a religious leader, spiritual advisor, or trusted spokesman of the people, a role that will prove particularly relevant during the discussion of the Philippine Catholic Church and its leadership.

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 328.

<sup>46</sup>Ciacci, "Legitimacy and the Problems of Governance," 22.

With the rational, traditional, and charismatic categories of legitimacy, one has a large piece of the legitimacy theory puzzle. However, there are still some pieces missing. Weber realized that his classifications were an ideal, not reality, and that his models were dynamic, meaning one form of legitimacy could change and morph into another and then even revert. No one form was capable of acting alone in the real world, and all needed to be propped up by elements of the others.<sup>47</sup> Weber's model may also be cyclical, with some classifications being more unstable than others and turning into hybrids.

Since it can be argued that the three categories Weber expounded do not include all possible types of legitimacy and that the obligatory nature of the social contract does not exist in the real world, then something else must exist to fill the gap. There must be another piece of the puzzle. The missing piece is not a radical departure from Weber or any other legitimacy theory, nor is it likely that Weber would disagree with including it alongside his three classifications. This is because in all three of his legitimacy categories, power lies at the bottom of the relationship. While society's dynamics have changed, power is still the most important component. The power has simply shifted in form and shape.

Twentieth-century economies produced populations geared towards materialism and the acquisition of an ever-increasing standard of living, the kind unknown to Weber, Hobbes, Rousseau, and de Tocqueville. Power now came from the ability to meet these needs. After World War II, populations looked to governments for more than just the bare necessities of survival. Instead, they wanted material goods and services and assurances that they and their children would have increasing opportunity for success, safety, and prosperity.

The United States led the charge and the industrial nation-states of Western Europe and Japan have followed in close order. Legitimacy of their governments

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<sup>47</sup>Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 329.

expanded beyond charisma and traditional ties, and even beyond the rule of law. In this new world, governments provided utility for their populations in return for their support. This is a *utilitarian* form of legitimacy. This same form of legitimacy also dominates the twenty-first century.

Under utilitarian legitimacy, the apparatus of the state functions as a machine churning out goods and services wanted, needed, and desired by the population. The population in turn provides for the machine, keeping it in working order, and the fuel for its operation comes in the form of popular consent and legitimacy (see figure 7). This utilitarianism can manifest itself in a variety of ways, from the most grandiose to the simplest. A utilitarian-based social contract could be something as complex as national defense of the population or as mundane as adequate sewers in a city.

Seymour Martin Lipset is one of the key supporters of utilitarian legitimacy. In some of his works, Lipset laid out the causal relationship between state capacity and legitimacy.<sup>48</sup> His studies centered on empirical analyses of the state's ability to produce economic results. Lipset believed that in the short term, a government can substitute economic growth for political legitimacy, and in the long run this same growth could generate legitimacy itself.<sup>49</sup> Lipset made state effectiveness his independent variable and legitimacy his dependent variable, thus producing a simple binary model of legitimacy.

Lipset's model has a positive correlation; as effectiveness goes up, so does the level of legitimacy a government enjoys, as it decreases so too does the government's legitimacy. Joseph Schumpeter supports this contention, arguing that the fate of modern regimes hinges on their ability to trade off the delivery of state services for political

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<sup>48</sup>Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); idem, *Consensus and Conflict: Essays in Political Sociology* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1985), passim.

<sup>49</sup>Edward W. Lehman, *The Viable Polity* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1992), 4.



support. Moreover, faith in the incumbent's ability to deliver results does not necessarily mean a loss of faith in a system. As with other models, legitimacy can be withdrawn when governing elites are unable to deliver on specific claims.<sup>50</sup> Easing the tensions created by the government's failure to deliver on its part of the utilitarian equation may be done by lowering citizen demands.

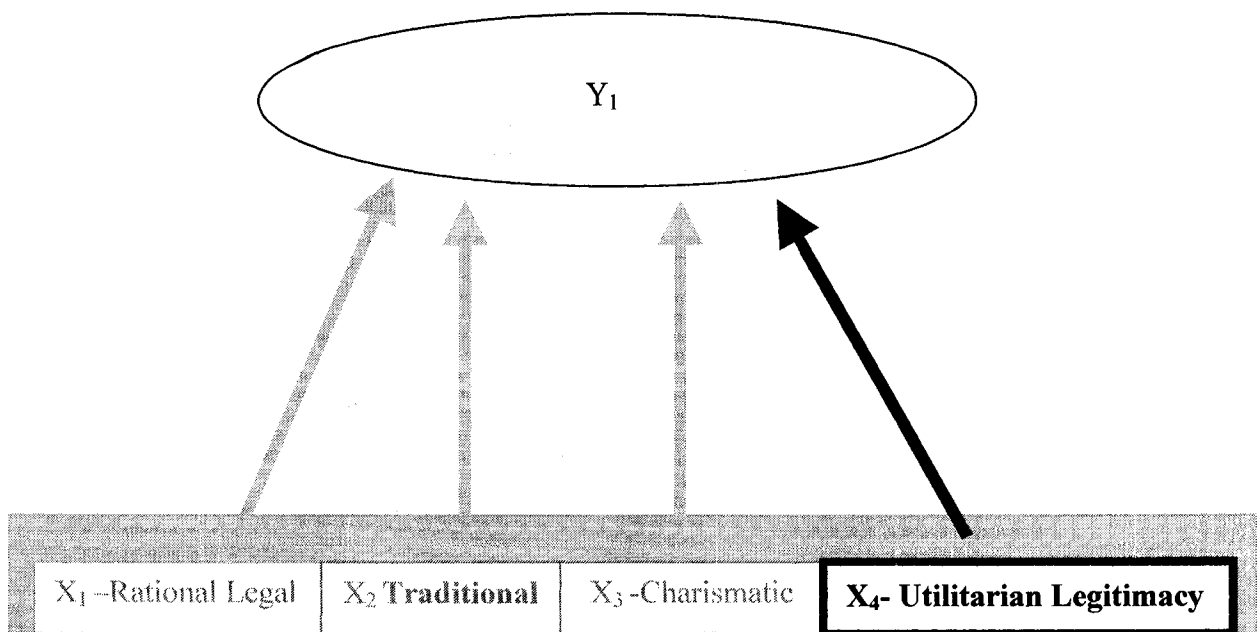


Fig. 7. Weber + Utilitarianism

Ciacci hints at a utilitarian desire expressed between the ruler and the ruled in her writings. Her idea of utilitarian legitimacy is based on personal loyalty within the area of obligations. These obligations are built, fostered, and sustained by an established belief in the certainty of immemorial tradition and of the status of those exercising authority.<sup>51</sup> This tradition can be anything, from expectations that the government provide for the common defense, support the general welfare, and ensure equal protection

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Ciacci, "Legitimacy and the Problems of Governance," 22.

under the law, or an expectation that the government simply maintain roads and bridges. The government in turn expects that the populace will respect its authority. The government possesses legitimacy when a population values the government and the work it undertakes. As such, individuals are willing to assume the disciplines and burdens that membership in this society entails. Legitimacy declines when this willingness flags or fails.

Procedural principles such as majority rule, unanimity, and theories of consent prescribe adherence to this kind of rule. These principles also prescribe adherence to a decision rule. Along these lines is the work of Robert Nozick.<sup>52</sup> In Nozick's worldview, the only just state is the minimal state, and a person must never experience consequences that would violate his rights within the society. The state should provide, not prevent, a standard of living. Utilitarianism can be found in the state's willingness to do "nothing" to prevent a citizen from being satisfied.

Delivering on the utilitarian aspect requires power, which is imparted to the government, regime, or individual by the people. Once in power, government's use and control of the power it is entrusted with will affect its legitimacy. There are two aspects to the proper use of power. The first, according to Alagappa, is that governments operating within the law or other tacitly accepted rules and procedures must be seen as properly using the power they are given. Governments that abuse or otherwise misuse their power risk alienating their own populations and losing their mandate.<sup>53</sup> Future elections can mean the end of the government, but revolution can also result from abuse of governmental power in many parts of the world. Failure to fulfill the utilitarian

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<sup>52</sup>James S. Fishkin, *Tyranny and Legitimacy: A Critique of Political Theories* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1979), 5; Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), passim.

<sup>53</sup>Alagappa, *Political Legitimacy in Southeast Asia*, 20.

agreement between the ruler and the ruled is a failure of duty and a form of abuse of power.

The second aspect of power, even more related to utility, is performance. Performance is defined as the power used to promote the collective interest of the community.<sup>54</sup> Classical definitions of legitimacy tend to exclude performance as a consideration. This is unfortunate, because effective governmental performance can be used to generate political, social, and moral authority.

Measuring performance is becoming more sophisticated in most of the developed world. The Internet, tracking polls, and twenty-four-hour news and information networks allow politicians to test the public perception and acceptability of policies before they are ever implemented into law. Floating “trial balloons” is the norm. Thus, when laws are finally passed the people get what they want, further buttressing the government in power.

It is when these institutions or individuals seem not as appropriate that a problem with the government’s mandate of legitimacy may occur. Removal of the mandate can occur if the government becomes unable or unwilling to meet the utilitarian responsibility that has come to be expected of it. It may then be replaced by a regime that promises to provide the utilitarian aspect the former government once did.

Currently, ideas of utilitarian legitimacy are in vogue. They are perhaps the easiest to validate through statistical methods. In social sciences the use of statistics is often seen as necessary if one’s study is to gain attention from peer-reviewed journals and publishing houses. However, it is difficult to mathematically model what lies in people’s hearts. One then must turn to expressions of opinion, found in polls, which tell the researcher the level of satisfaction with a particular regime or official and measure the mandate’s strength.

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 22-23.

Using public opinion polls alone to track how a society may feel about the government also has its pitfalls. Polls may be too one-dimensional and may lead to an analysis based on personal biases and opinions, because data can be manipulated in a variety of ways. The best solution is to analyze the words of the actors involved, both in written sources and interviews.

Utilitarian legitimacy is the missing piece of the legitimacy paradigm. Alongside rational, traditional, and charismatic authority, it provides a better picture of how states and rulers can become legitimate and maintain that legitimacy. However, like the other concepts, it cannot stand alone. Utilitarianism is a valuable new way of looking at legitimacy, but it is no more powerful or convincing in its explanatory power than the more classical ideas expressed by Weber and others. Therefore, it finds its place alongside the other three pillars of legitimacy as a useful but not wholly independent form of legitimacy theory.

Within each category the reader may have noticed the implied existence of intellectual space for the development of norms and a moral order. In all three of Weber's categories and in the utilitarian model, there is implied if not directly stated the existence of a moral order. Indeed, it can be argued that the moral aspects, more appropriately described as *normative*, are an underlying requirement for both the traditional and the rational-legal categories.

If a set of laws or a ruler is not backed by force of arms, then its legitimacy must rest upon some element of trust and expectation that both sides will fulfill their duties. This trust and expectation results from the shared norms of the parties involved, both the ruler and the ruled. Once established, legitimacy can reinforce and strengthen existing norms and become a norm itself. Norms and values are essentially belief systems or ideologies that specify how things ought to be.<sup>55</sup> These shared norms and values

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<sup>55</sup>Barker, *Political Legitimacy and the State*, 15.

determine the political system and structure of domination within a nation-state and serve as a normative regulation on society. In figure 8, one can now see the four types of legitimacy highlighted in the literature, as well as the role of norms and political violence that are ever-present in all aspects of legitimacy.

Another way to look at norms is by focusing on their references to the grounds on which those wielding power claim obedience.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, this normative ground may differ from state to state, and here again is where the role of social institutions like the Catholic Church comes into play. Left to its own devices, the moral aptitude of the people may never quite stimulate the moral aptitude of the government, and vice versa.<sup>57</sup> Both the rulers and the ruled need molding, reinforcement, and validation from each other. The government gets these things from the citizenry through the power of legitimacy, and the citizenry gets them by being ruled by a government that is respectful and responsive to societal norms and values.

The likelihood of either side getting this type of feedback and political satisfaction from the other without a third party active in the political culture is small. The government would lack real legitimacy and the people would most likely suffer at the hands of a less-responsive government. In fact, saying less-responsive is putting it mildly, because in most cases a government that does not have this moral authority from the people or organizations representing the people's interests tends to not only become dictatorial, but authoritarian and totalitarian. Citizens do not just suffer politically, but they are often victims of state-sponsored persecution and violence.

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<sup>56</sup>Paschalis Kitromilides, "Enlightenment and Legitimacy," in *Legitimacy/Legitimite: Proceedings of the Conference Held in Florence 3-4 June 1982*, ed. Athanosios Moulakis (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1986), 61.

<sup>57</sup>Frederick Rosen, "Legitimacy: A Utilitarian View," in *Legitimacy/Legitimite: Proceedings of the Conference Held in Florence 3-4 June 1982*, ed. Athanosios Moulakis (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1986), 73.

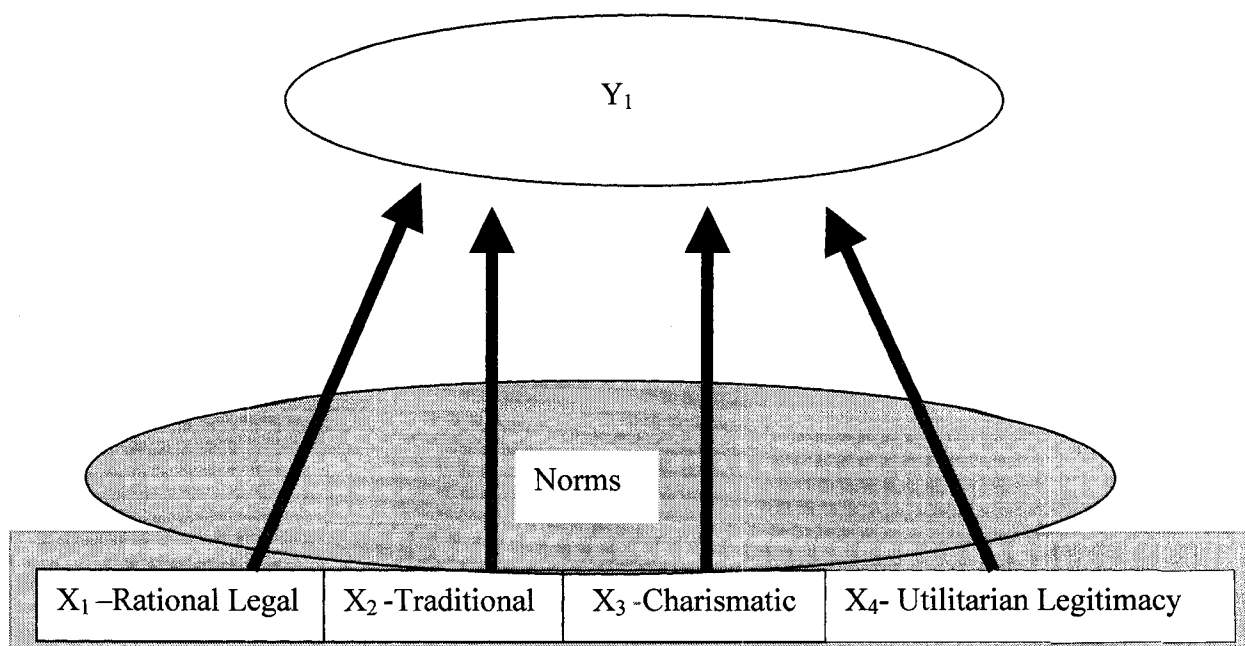


Fig. 8. The Inclusion of “Norms”

Alagappa contends that the norms and values of a society contribute to the establishment of regimes in which rules for the acquisition of power are properly established.<sup>58</sup> In other words, they are a part of every category of authority previously discussed and credited to Weber and the utilitarian model of legitimacy, as long as they foster societal norms and reinforce existing morality. Governments acquiring power through these channels are likely to be seen as legitimate.

History seems to support this contention. Just recently in the United States there was a crisis of sorts surrounding the election of the president. In 2000, Al Gore’s challenge to the results in Florida spawned a mini Constitutional crisis, as the lawyers from his and George W. Bush’s campaign sparred in front of the partisan Florida Supreme Court and the United States Supreme Court over the constitutionality of “butterfly ballots,” recounts, and the electoral college system.

<sup>58</sup>Alagappa, *Political Legitimacy in Southeast Asia*, 20.

On many occasions, members of Gore's campaign and the media hinted and blatantly questioned the legitimacy that either candidate would enjoy after the electoral mess. Gore made an effort to mention his popular vote victory and hinted at the illegitimacy of a Bush victory, no matter how lawful it may have been. Several members of the U.S. Senate were quoted as wanting to amend the Constitution in order to do away with the electoral college, which gave Bush the win.<sup>59</sup>

Interestingly, the poll numbers never swung dramatically either way. It seemed that the American public took a wait-and-see attitude. When the United States Supreme Court finally resolved the election and Gore conceded defeat, public opinion polls showed that the majority of the electorate believed that Bush was the legitimate winner. In essence, Bush had obeyed the rules. He had followed the norms and stuck to the electoral values that the country was founded upon, and no amount of partisan wrangling over the outcome and the intricacies of the vote changed the feeling of legitimacy. In the end, both candidates conformed to the expected rules of the game and were rewarded with the public's trust and support. This moral-normative dimension of legitimacy that was at work during the 2000 election may cause problems for scholars who dislike studying normative values in a society and believe they are unscientific. But in any political inquiry into legitimacy, one must consider both empirical connotations and basic normative elements.

So far, the journey through the legitimacy literature leads to several conclusions. The first is that although the variety of scholars creates variety in definition, the basic concept of legitimacy remains a simple concept and an even simpler model, with dependent and independent variables. Where agreement breaks down is on what exactly should be an independent variable and the strength of the relationship between X and Y.

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<sup>59</sup>After the 2000 election and the difficulties some Florida voters had in determining who they had voted for, the editorial pages of major newspapers and most prominently Sen. Hillary Clinton called for a change, in Clinton's case the elimination of the Electoral College system.

Some of this confusion is natural, because mathematically modeling what is in the hearts and minds of individuals and organizations is extremely difficult, leading to subjective studies using the qualitative approach to understand the relationship.

Some ideas, however, are more helpful at elucidating the causal relationships than others. There are strengths and weaknesses in all approaches, with some containing a good balance between theory and reality. For example, where Rousseau and others may be too specific in their attempts to pinpoint the independent variables in the legitimacy equation, Weber provides the right balance of generality and parsimony. When Weber comes up lacking, the inclusion of a utilitarian category can help strengthen his model. Yet even Weber's idea with the inclusion of the utilitarian model remains insufficient. Including norms across the independent variables is also not enough.

Until now, there has been no single study that can accurately and fully account for the role of a religious institution like the Catholic Church in the legitimacy of regimes. The author believes the key missing from the model, and from all the studies discussed thus far, is an emphasis on what can be termed a *mediating* variable. This variable, couched between X and Y, acts as a lens to focus, shift, and even redirect the legitimate authority vested by populations and coming from the independent variables. Use of a mediating variable also fills the incompleteness of the conceptualization of legitimacy, addresses the inadequacy of the models, and fulfills the potential of the theory. The mediating variable becomes the Z component of the legitimacy equation.

The mediating variable will generally act as a lens to focus the many forces and factors found in each of the independent variables and help clear up the causal relationship between the factors of legitimacy and how they directly affect the legitimacy of a ruling regime. This does not mean, of course, that the X variables cease to interact with one another, for as Weber demonstrated in his earlier models, no one pure form of legitimacy exists. They all influence one another in a variety of ways and levels of strength. What is different with the inclusion of a mediating variable is that it can serve



to filter, direct, and focus the political and social power emanating from the X variables. In turn, it adds its own influences back upon the independent variables and upon the dependent variable (legitimacy) as well.

In the real world, a mediating variable can be many things. It may be the military establishment, a particular powerful personality, the media, the entertainment industry, or a religious institution. Where there is a democracy, Z variables focus the people's energies, their will, their anger, their desires, and their authority towards the government. In the Philippines, a host of organizations, institutions, and even individuals serve as mediating variables. It can get complicated (see figure 9). Social, political, and even military organizations jockey for position to influence the vote and the nature and character of the ruling regime. They may even field candidates, campaign, and attempt coups, all in an effort to establish a ruling government favorable to their needs.

Including all of the possible mediating variables affecting legitimacy in the Philippines would lead to a web of arrows and boxes, creating a confusing labyrinth that may be difficult to decipher and not particularly useful for understanding the most important factor behind the legitimacy of Philippine regimes. The military, business interests, universities, popular politicians, economics, and public policy think tanks all serve as mediating variables in determining the level of the ruling regime's legitimacy. Yet what is evident in figure 9 is the existence of one mediating variable that transcends every independent variable. What is evident in figure 9 is the one organization that can influence all variables.

In the Philippines, there is only one organization that has traditionally been and remains the most influential mediating variable for all four of the legitimacy categories. It is the only institution that serves as a lens to focus the forces of legitimacy. This organization is the Catholic Church. It is not an overstatement to say that all roads to legitimacy lead through the Catholic Church. How and why this is the case will be illustrated in subsequent chapters.

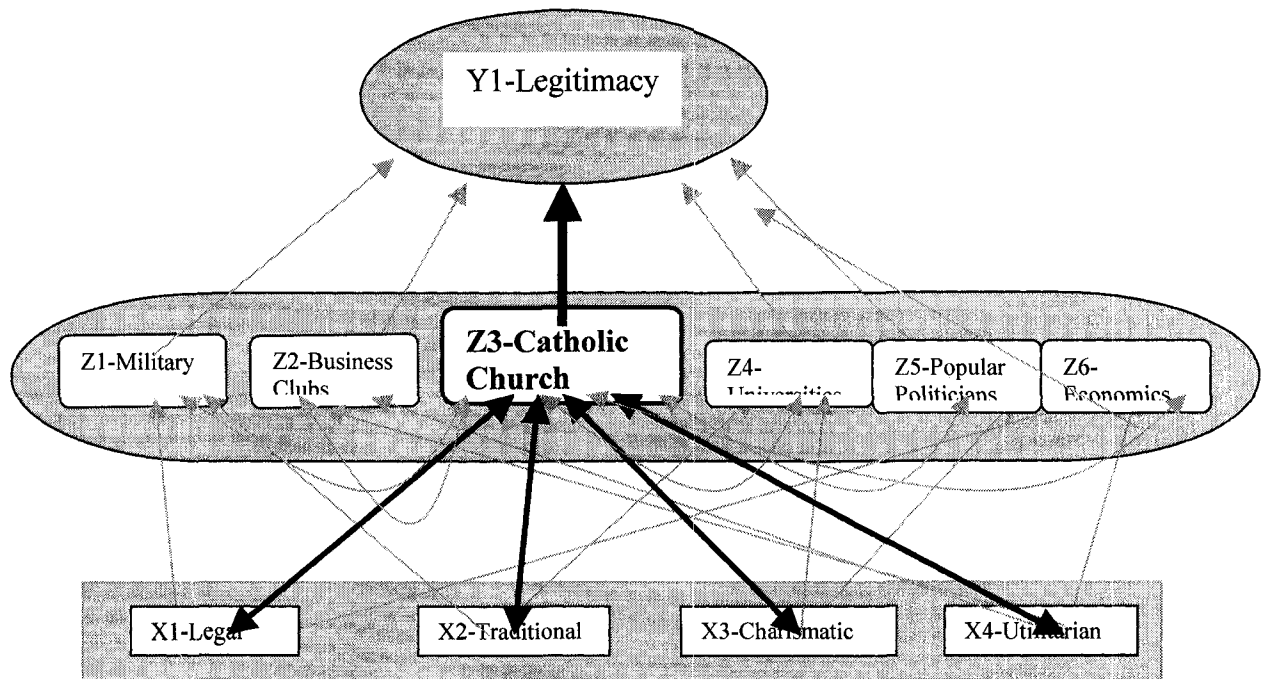


Fig. 9. The Intricate Web of Variables

With the inclusion of utilitarianism and the mediating variable concept, the Weberian model has been adapted into a valuable tool for understanding the role of the Church in the legitimacy of the Philippine government, and indeed although altered just a bit, it is the cornerstone in understanding legitimacy in the Philippines. Indeed, Weber's ideas are one of the most useful tools to the historian. In the mid-twentieth century another attempt to explain the interaction of social and political forces was developed by David Easton, and Easton's theory also allows for a mediating variable like the Church to influence the legitimacy of governments.

Easton's theory, while more in the genre of political science, is still useful in understanding the historical dynamics of the Philippine Catholic Church in political legitimacy. To understand the Eastonian theory, one must first think of politics outside of a cultural milieu. Unlike Weber, the cultural dynamics that bring personality and life to politics is left to the side. Easton makes no room for political culture and instead focuses on a sterile political environment that he calls a system. Easton defines his political

system as “a set of interactions abstracted from the totality of social behavior, through which values are authoritatively allocated for society.”<sup>60</sup>

Whereas Weber defines the state by its monopoly of physical force used legitimately, Easton's is concerned more about the political system that includes the nation-state and the international community.<sup>61</sup> In other words the political system represents a multitude of interests. Moreover, Easton's theory revolves around the determination of relationships within a system. These relationships are self-regulating, and are never truly in equilibrium. Instead, forces are in constant competition, either directly or indirectly with one side gaining and losing the advantage over another.

A key to the Eastonian system is the idea of support. The government is made legitimate through support within the system. According to Easton there are two types of support: diffuse and specific.<sup>62</sup> The actors in Easton's theory are much the same as those found in Weber's ideal types of legitimacy. In this particular study of political legitimacy, the Philippine Catholic Church, the secular government, and individual politicians account for the actors in these relationships. The actors involved deal with a give and take reality. There are demands and there are supports, both of which are converted into decisions by the regime in power. The kind of decisions that are made really depends on the types and level of the input.

Diffuse support is support developed over a long period of time. It is formed at an early age and is not easily lost. Indeed, diffuse support is more like the traditional idea of legitimacy than any other. On the other hand, specific support is measured at any given

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<sup>60</sup> David Easton, *A Framework for Political Analysis*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 57.

<sup>61</sup> David Easton, *The Political System: An Inquiry into the State of Political Science* (New York: Knopf, 1953), 23.

<sup>62</sup> David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (New York: John Wiley, 1965); David Easton, “A Re-Assessment of the Concept of Political Support,” *British Journal of Political Science*, no. 5 (1975: 435-57).

time by public opinion data, and illustrates a persons or groups personal satisfaction with a regime or individual politician's policies and actions. Along with being easily measurable it is also unstable. Policies and politicians can find themselves on a roller coaster ride of popularity among their constituents. As the study goes forward the role of the Church in formulating diffuse and specific support will become clear. In the last chapter, the level and measurability of such support will also be outlined in relation to Easton's theory.

Easton is mentioned here at the end of the Weberian discussion because Easton's theory is not without problems for a legitimacy study. He succeeds more in laying out a study of political systems rather than succeeding in producing a real general theory of legitimacy. Because his theory is removed from the real world, maybe a function of his political science training as compared to Weber's cultural sociology, Easton does not make room for the dynamics of economics, gender, race, nor in-depth cultural analysis. In his theory there are also no real interest groups or mediating variables, making little room for institutions that have the size, scope, and power of the Catholic Church. Regardless of these limitations the theory has value.

In its weakness lies strength. In the Eastonian system, all politics is simply politics. There is no difference between national, local, or international. The truisms one may find at any level may also work at others. It stands to reason, therefore, that if the Church is found to be active in Weber's ideal independent variables, as well as utilitarianism, and active in the cultivation of diffuse and specific support then according to Easton its affects will be felt at both the domestic and international levels. Throughout this study, this particular assertion will be backed by history and concrete facts.

In chapter 2, the historic role of the Church will be examined, illustrating the establishment of the Church's hold on the hearts, minds, and politics of the island. Chapter 2 will also explain the permeation of the Church into the very fabric of Philippine society, from the first mass in 1521 to the most recent People Power

revolution. The ways the Church continues to change and adjust to new political realities are also covered in chapter 2, and the story blends seamlessly into chapters 3 and 4, in which the Church's relationship with Ferdinand Marcos, martial law, and the first People Power Revolution are discussed.

In chapter 5, the Church's cooperative effort to rebuild the Philippine polity alongside their chosen president, Cory Aquino, is discussed. Finally, in chapters 6 and 7, the Church's antagonism and political struggle against Joseph Estrada and his administration will be detailed, including the events leading to the culmination of People Power II and Estrada's downfall. No more fitting case study can be found to illustrate the powerful influence of the Church on the legitimacy of Philippine governments.

Throughout this study, the reader should pay close attention to the Catholic Church's resilience in its many political battles and its ability to influence elections, governments, politicians, and peasants. These are all a testament to the power of the Church to affect legitimacy. No greater testament to the Church's power can be found, other than the fact that it entered the twenty-first century more powerful than it had ever been since Spanish colonial times. The Church has proven its importance as a variable in legitimacy because among all organizations, it has been able to survive, sustain, and maintain its position as the premier force in Philippine politics.

## CHAPTER II

### CONSTRUCTING FAITH & CREATING GOVERNMENT

The first chapter laid out an intellectual framework to explain the causes, creation, and foundation of a legitimate government, in particular the government of the Philippines. In the remaining chapters the point will be made again and again that in order for a government in the Philippines to be legitimate it must work with, through, or, to a lesser extent, around the Catholic Church. What is illustrated in figure 9 becomes clear as the story of the Philippine Catholic Church and its role in legitimating Philippine governments is discussed at length. It is important to understand that although the other mediating variables in figure 9, such as the military, play a role, no other institution or organization in Philippine society has had such an important role for as long a time in influencing policy and practice as the Philippine Catholic Church.

Legitimacy, as explained by Rousseau, Weber, and by the author of this study, is an idea that revolves around community. This community involves many attributes, including common identities, norms, and laws all of which create a unique political culture. The political culture in this community sets the rules and procedures for investing a government or institution with the power to govern or the power to represent the political will of the membership—the legitimacy or illegitimacy of a government. It is this community that also gives both a voice and power to organizations like the Catholic Church.

In the Philippines, to understand how the Catholic Church behaves in the political culture unique to the community and most importantly its role in determining the legitimacy or illegitimacy of a government first requires an understanding of how it helped form and shape the very underlying foundation of Philippine political and social identity. This requires an examination of the Church's history in the Philippines.

Through this window into the past one can better understand the present and, with a little luck, forecast the future.

A common national identity, the kind necessary to legitimacy studies, did not exist in the Philippines prior to the arrival of organized religion. Indeed, the idea of what it meant to be “Filipino” did not exist prior to the Spanish arrival in 1521 and the introduction of Catholicism. Based on the anthropological and cultural studies focused on the pre-Spanish Philippines, it is believed that there was no singular “nation” in the Philippines, and no concept of being “Filipino.” This situation existed in part due to the geographical layout of the archipelago, and it also resulted from the lack of commonality in laws, norms, and values among the various tribal groups that were themselves the result of centuries of human migrational waves into the islands.

Situated in the South China Sea, the Philippines are an archipelago of more than 7,000 islands covering roughly 300,000 square kilometers. The three main island groups are Luzon, the Visayas, and Mindanao. Luzon comprises the northern portion of the archipelago, the Visayas the middle region, and Mindanao the south. The sheer number of islands meant the creation of a strong central authority was difficult and the islands were left politically fragmented. The disparate origins of each successive wave and the inability of any one group to absorb and dominate others meant that no singular power developed around which a strong national identity could coalesce.

The first and oldest remains of human culture date back to a pre-Mongoloid *homo sapien*, who scientists believe lived around 250,000 years ago in the Palawan region. The next to arrive were the Negritos (Aetos).<sup>1</sup> Successive waves of Malaysian, Indonesian-

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<sup>1</sup>These Neolithic hunter-gatherers are believed to be part of a wave of humans migrating from East Africa around 30,000 B.C. These groups share a common ethnicity with Austrolnesians in the Andaman Islands and Aborigines of Australia and are some of the most primitive peoples on earth, only recently emerging out of a Neolithic existence. Today, the Negritos number only in the thousands but can still be found only in the most remote jungles of the Philippines. At one time they were the dominant human presence on the islands.

Malay, and Chinese settlers pushed the Negritos out of their dominant position.<sup>2</sup> The descendents of waves of aboriginal, Malay, Indo-Malay, and Indo-Chinese settlers lived in scattered coastal and riverside villages or further inland in the mountains.<sup>3</sup> There were small-scale contacts with Chinese, Indian, and Arab traders particularly in the Visayas and Mindanao.

Possessing animist beliefs and practicing primitive forms of ancestor worship, the islands' early inhabitants had very basic conceptions of religion. As Hinduism trickled into the islands from the Southeast Asian mainland and the maritime empire of Sri Vijaya early in the first millennium A.D., it mixed and mingled with other native beliefs. Unfortunately, little if any of this early Indic influence remained by the time the more organized religions of Islam and Christianity arrived, and the ideational elements of these early Indic faiths were not strong enough to imbue the Filipino with a common religion, language, or culture.

Pre-Spanish populations, possessing the most rudimentary political organization, identified with the tribal group. They lived in settlements called *barangays*. The Tagalog word *barangay* comes from the Malay word *balangay*, the small boat used for inter-island transport, fishing, and war. As the unit of government, a *barangay* consisted of 30 to 100 families. At its head was the chieftain, known as the *datu*, and more often than not each *barangay* was independent from other groups. Usually, several *barangays* settled near each other to help in case of war or emergency. The *datu* passed his authority to his eldest son or, if he had no sons, to the eldest daughter. Later, any member of the *barangay* could be chieftain based on his talent and ability.

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<sup>2</sup>William Henry Scott, *Prehispanic Source Materials for the Study of the Philippines History*, rev. ed. (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1984).

<sup>3</sup>James B. Goodno, *The Philippines: Land of Broken Promises* (New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1991), 19.



The *barangay datu* had the usual responsibilities of leading and protecting the members of his *barangay*. In turn, members of the tribe were expected to pay tribute to the *datu*, help him till the land, and help him fight in case of war. Traditionally, a council of elders advised a *datu*. Laws were agreed upon by the council and announced to the entire *barangay*. Early *barangay* society was loosely based on four classes: the ruling class (*datu*), the freemen and people of skill (*maharlika*), the commoners (*timawa*), and the dependents and slaves (*alipin*). The *alipin* were of two kinds, the *aliping namamahay*, who were household servants, and the *aliping saguigulid*, who were slave workers.

Small-scale domestic trade existed among the *barangays* and between the dozens, sometimes hundreds, of small tribes that shared an island or group of islands. Traces exist of sporadic foreign trade with Ming China, Tokugawa Japan, Siam, Borneo, the Sri Vijaya and Majapahit of Java and Sumatra, the Khmer of Cambodia, and the populations of Champa and Malaysia. The barter system was most likely used in business transactions since there was no currency. Trade was neither heavy nor complex, and most often consisted of small contacts between *barangay* traders and middlemen who occasionally ventured to the islands from the more advanced mercantile societies of Indonesia and coastal Vietnam.

Although ethnically similar, the familial or kinship group found in a *barangay* was the largest community an individual would usually recognize. It was not uncommon for tribes on the same island to be political foes and no closer in ties than tribes from one end of the archipelago and the other. The fractured nature of the geography and the fractured beliefs adopted by the scattered groups led to deep and lasting divisions within the Philippines. Even today there are several different ethnic groups and dozens of cultural minorities in the Philippines, many that speak their own dialects or languages. Among the most well-known ethnic groups are the Tagalog, the Ilocano, the Pangasinanian, the Pampangueño, the Bicolano, the Cebuano, the Ilongo, and the Waray-Waray. Chinese and other groups also live in the Philippines. The Chinese currently

comprise 1.5 percent of the population and are active in business, controlling a large segment of the business capital in the Philippines.

Religion played a miniscule role in identity and community formation, and most likely little if any role in legitimating whatever proto-governmental structure would have existed in the pre-Spanish era. Only the arrival of a unifying religion--Islam--with its monotheistic doctrine and strong tendency to organize society around a moralistic body of laws, began to change this. Tradition says that in 1380 an Arab teacher by the name of Mukdum arrived in Sulu from the Malay peninsula to preach Islam to the locals. He built the first mosque in Sulu. Around 1390, Raja Baginda, a minor ruler of Menangkabaw, Sumatra, followed him. In 1450 Abu Bakr, a Muslim scholar, came to Sulu and married Paramisuli, the daughter of Raja Baginda, and after Baginda's death, he established a sultanate form of government with himself as sultan. Islam then spread rapidly to all parts of Sulu.

Serif Kabungsuwan is credited with spreading Islam in Mindanao. He led a force that conquered the natives in what is now Cotabato and converted them to Islam. He also married into an influential family and founded the first sultanate of Mindanao. At the same time, Muslim Malay traders from Borneo were spreading Islam to natives as far north as Luzon. When the Spaniards arrived in the Philippines during the first half of the sixteenth century, many parts of Luzon, including several large kingdoms of Manila and Tondo, had already been nominally Islamized. By the year 1515, Islam had gained a permanent foothold in Mindanao, a foothold that almost 500 years of Christian influence and open warfare were unable to eradicate.

The arrival of Islam is important and illustrative to this study for several reasons. First, it shows how an organized and vigorous religion bent on proselytizing can have a profound affect on a pre-modern tribal society that was essentially a *tabula rasa*. Second, it illustrates how a religion can go beyond taking care of the spiritual needs of a people and help organize an identity beyond the tribal community. Islam gave the small,

fragmented tribal communities throughout the Philippines their first conception of “organized” civilization, coupled with a communal identity that went further than the local *barangay*.

In Mindanao, the Muslim rulers espoused a common law, a common belief in a single god, and gave the populations where Islamic influence was strong a sense of identity greater than that of the tribe. After the introduction of Islam one was still a member of a kinship group, but as followers of Allah and Quranic law, one shared a common bond with neighboring tribes and answered to a common chieftain or sultan in matters of social justice, warfare, trade, and moral issues.

Islam made great strides in organizing the populations where it was introduced. Even today in the southern Philippines the *Moros*, or descendants, of these first Muslim converts retain a strong sense of pride and identity with the past, their religion, and their fellow Muslims. This causes the majority of the Christian population a great deal of consternation in efforts at national unity and cohesion.

Islam deserves credit for what it was able to accomplish in the century after its introduction. Indeed, had the Spanish not arrived it is very likely that the Philippines would have become an Islamic nation much like neighboring Malaysia and Indonesia. But the true development of Philippine identity was shouldered by the Catholic Church, which arrived in the Philippines as a result of the Spanish push to find spices and converts early in the sixteenth century. The Church, represented by the Spanish friars and the conquistadors, was about to land on the shores of the Cebu and change the history of the Philippines forever.

The Spanish arrived in 1521, led by Portuguese navigator Ferdinand Magellan. The Spanish did not set out to discover these islands, but were instead looking for new trading routes to Asia via circumnavigation of the globe. However, upon discovering these islands the opportunity for conquest and conversion of its souls was too rich to pass

up. Magellan planted a cross and the Spanish flag, and the first Catholic Mass was celebrated on Limasawa on March 31, 1521.<sup>5</sup>

After landing in the Visayas, Magellan wasted little time in becoming involved in local politics. He impressed himself upon the local *datus* (kings) on the island of Cebu and formed alliances with several of the local chiefdoms. These alliances were followed, in due course, by the conversion of local *datus* and their followers to Catholicism. Emboldened by his successes, Magellan tried to impress the Catholic faith and Spanish rule upon the other surrounding *datus*. Some accepted but others, like *datu* Lapu-Lapu of Mactan, resisted. Magellan set out on a punitive expedition against Lapu-Lapu. Unfortunately for Magellan, he was outnumbered and outfought, and he and fifteen of his men died after horrendous hand-to-hand combat. Only one ship of the original five made it back to Spain, and only 35 of the original 265 men were left alive.<sup>6</sup>

Magellan's defeat did not mean the end of Spanish designs, and it was only the beginning. Soon more Spanish ships would return, better equipped and better armed. Both friars and soldiers filled the Spanish ships with the dual purpose of subduing the islands for Spain and converting as many inhabitants as possible to Christianity. By 1565, Miguel Lopez de Legaspi officially claimed the archipelago for Spain and the *conquista* of the Philippines then began in earnest. By 1571, Manila was established and

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<sup>5</sup>Gegoria F. Zaide, *Catholicism in the Philippines* (Manila: University of Santo Thomas Press, 1937), 14.

<sup>6</sup>Today on Mactan Island one can visit the site of Magellan's defeat. Nearby there are two statues, one of Magellan and the other of Lapu-Lapu. It seems strange to one unfamiliar with the Filipino nature to honor both the slayer and the slain. On one end of the promenade stands the native chieftain, who viscously resisted the foreign invaders armed with a sword and shield, and on the other is a statue honoring a man who made it possible for the islands to be subdued by conquest. One answer to this confusing duality lies in religion, for while it is true Magellan brought colonization to the islands, he also brought Christianity. It was subsequently embraced by more than 80 percent of the population.

the islands were under Spanish authority. Only the Muslim south remained a thorn in the Spanish side.

While Spain used military and economic power to dominate the country physically, to establish cultural and political hegemony it turned to the Catholic Church.<sup>7</sup> At the outset, the Spaniards placed a heavy emphasis on *Christianization* as the most effective means of incorporating the Filipinos into Spanish culture and colonial government. This emphasis on Catholicism is a unique and striking feature of Spanish imperialism, as was the inseparable union of the Church and the State—two institutions inextricably interdependent.<sup>8</sup>

In the early stages of Spanish colonial rule, legitimacy did not extend from the Church to the government, nor did the Church receive a popular mandate from the people or act as an agent on their behalf. Quite the contrary, in the initial stages of Spanish colonization the Church and the government were the same. Legitimacy was inherent because the government did not require Church's the backing. The government *was* the Church. When graphically illustrated (see figure 10) the reader will notice how the Church not only acts as a mediating variable but also cuts across the government itself.

The very claim of the Philippines by the Spanish was based on pontifical Law 29, Title XXVII of Partida III, which gave them a legal right over any newly discovered land they inhabited first. However, little was said about the legality of this claim if there were indigenous people already inhabiting the land. This led to a dispute between Castilian monarchists and Spanish friars in the Philippines. Initially, some in the Catholic Church resisted Spanish conquest and subjugation of the islands even if it meant new Christian

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<sup>7</sup>Goodno, *The Philippines: Land of Broken Promises*, 20.

<sup>8</sup>John Leddy Phelan, *The Hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish Aims and Filipino Response 1565-1700* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1959), 6.

lands under Papal authority and the Spanish crown.<sup>9</sup> Their argument was that Spain could not rightfully claim and take over territory where people were already settled.

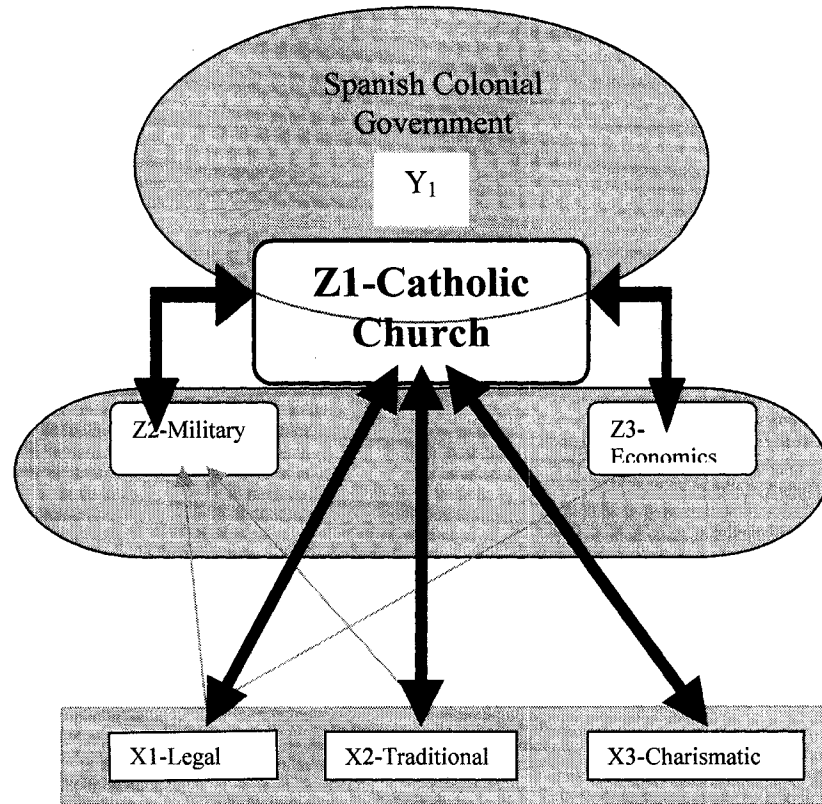


Fig. 10. Legitimacy Model of Philippines during the Spanish Colonial Era

Traditionally, Spain could acquire sovereignty over new territories in four ways: heredity, voluntary choice of the inhabitants, marriage to an heiress of the realm, or pontifical or imperial grant.<sup>10</sup> It was obvious that Spain could not meet the requirements of the first and third items. The second and fourth justifications were more readily open to manipulation, because the Catholic Church was used to help ensure that the native

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>10</sup>J. Gayo Aragon, O.P., "The Controversy over Justification of Spanish Rule in the Philippines," in *Studies in Philippine Church History*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), 3.

Filipinos made a “voluntary” choice. The Pope, as the de facto “ruler” of all the world’s domains, could then grant them the right to the Philippines.

Out of this controversy came more power for the Church, for as the religious debated with the secular authorities they were at the same time positioning themselves as the power of legitimacy for colonial rule. They did so through an elaborate but curiously Catholic logic. A case in point is declaration of Monsignor Domingo de Salazar, the first bishop of the Philippines, who argued that the secular authority had no power except that granted by Christ. Therefore, Spain could not claim any legal right to the Philippines *except* that part which was a consequence of steady Christian conversion.<sup>11</sup> From the very beginning, the Church positioned itself to be needed by the crown. Indeed, it argued that no soldiers or administrators were required unless converts were made, because the Church first had to produce a population of Christians before Spanish soldiers, Spanish law, and Spanish government were necessary or legally justified.

The king of Spain, Philip II, supported the Church’s position that preaching the gospel had to be assured first. Once conversions were made they, had to be protected, organized, and governed. Philip II, a staunch Catholic, made a habit of intently listening and studying the writings and arguments of the Catholic bishops in his realm. He rarely acted without their consent and never did so without their advice. Even after decades of Spanish control, he called upon the authorities of the islands, including all the clergy, to ask for voluntary submission of the indigenous population to the Spanish crown. The results, thanks to the hard work of the Spanish friars, were positive. Most indigenous Filipinos brought under Spanish authority assented peacefully and “voluntarily” to the friars’ requests.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 18-22.

Producing a population of “converts” is itself an interesting story about Church power and influence. It was not enough for the friars to get a verbal commitment of conversion from the Filipinos. Instead, conversion required acts of faith and participation in the sacraments. One of the most important of these sacraments was baptism. The proper administration of baptism was the *sin quo non* of taking part in the new Christian communities. Baptism was carried out only after the convert had at least a rudimentary understanding of Catholic doctrine.

Instruction in Catholic doctrine to prepare the Filipino for the sacraments and for baptism also meant that the rudiments of a common identity were being constructed among otherwise disparate groups. The progress towards this identity construction was real, because few were forced to accept the baptism rite if they were not cognizant of what they were doing.

It was through baptism that the indigenous Filipinos became subjects of another independent and sovereign state, one that was spiritual in character and came under the authority of the Pope in Rome.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, the friars allowed the Filipinos to keep their kinship ties and loyalty to their rulers, who were also allowed to keep their positions of authority and their lands once they too converted. It was explained that the Pope delegated his authority to the friars and to the converted *datus*, who pledged to promulgate the laws necessary for the protection and the rights of new Christians. In theory, running parallel with Papal authority was the authority of the secular Spanish, whose duty it was to administer temporal protection, laws, and government in areas where Papal and spiritual matters had no jurisdiction. In reality, the Catholic Church’s jurisdiction was omnipresent, leaving the Spanish colonial authorities to work with and around the Church as best it could.

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 11.



The first few decades of Catholic presence in the Philippines were a tremendous success. What the priests were able to accomplish in the first few years with limited numbers is quite astounding. By the 1590s the number of friars was only 267, yet they were able to baptize around 200,000 Filipinos.<sup>14</sup> Many of those baptized in the Philippines were youths and young children. This was no coincidence, because the friars realized that the future of Catholic and Spanish authority lay with the children.<sup>15</sup> Representing a foreign faith and foreign ways meant that acceptance amongst the elders and the older *datus* was not readily forthcoming. However, through well-laid plans of evangelization the friars sought to overcome initial reservations. When a new mission was established, three buildings usually went up in quick succession: a church (parish), a convent, and a school. If the *datus* could not be converted, they could still be convinced to allow a few of their children to receive an education at the friars' schools.

The use of such a small number of friars to administer such vast areas was not meant to be a permanent situation. Instead, the friars were to establish their missions and make initial conversions, then set about the work of training indigenous Filipinos to take over the positions of clergy at the parishes. But the Spanish friars hesitated in this duty for reasons explained later in the chapter.

The Church's refusal to ordain enough Filipino priests to fill positions meant that the Church and Spain had to rely on other methods of converting and pacifying the large numbers of Filipinos. Since the number of friars was sparse, much of the initial work of preparing the way for conversion fell to the *encomenderos*. The *encomenderos* formed a system of tributary labor. Developed as a means of securing an adequate and cheap labor

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<sup>14</sup>John Leddy Phelan, "Prebaptismal Instruction and the Administration of Baptism in the Philippines During the Sixteenth Century," in *Studies in Philippine Church History*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), 36.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 35.

supply, the *encomienda* was first used in the conquered areas of Moorish Spain. Transplanted to the New World, it gave the conquistador control over the native populations by requiring them to pay tribute from lands, which were granted to deserving subjects of the Spanish crown. The indigenous populations often rendered personal services as well. In return, the grantee was obligated to protect his wards, to instruct them in the Christian faith, and to defend their right to use the land for their own subsistence.

The Spanish *encomienda* system filled the need to have both a Spanish presence and a Catholic presence in the colonies. As part of their agreement with the crown, those *encomenderos* in the Philippines had to personally undertake the spiritual education and baptism of the indigenous Filipinos in their wards. Moreover, out of their profits they were required to build a parish, supply it with the necessary ornaments and items for the mass, and build a house for and compensate the friar who came to reside in his ward.<sup>17</sup> For the friars and Church officials who were active in the Philippines, the political climate could not have been more accommodating.

The union of Church and State in the Spanish colonial empire was official colonial policy. The *Recopilacion de las leyes de Indias* (Recompilation of the laws of the Indies) put the spiritual and cultural welfare of the nation first, not just economic and political gain.<sup>18</sup> The same *Recopilacion* used to guide Spanish actions in Central and South America became the guide for the management of Spanish acquisitions in the Philippines. Adhering to the doctrines set forth in its religious cannon and the legal rights bequeathed to it under the *Recopilacion*, the Catholic Church never limited its role in the Philippines to spiritual matters.

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<sup>17</sup>Phelan, "Prebaptismal Instruction and Administration," 29-31.

<sup>18</sup>Zaide, *Catholicism in the Philippines*, 55.

The local parish priest was given duties beyond those of caring for the spiritual life of his parishioners. The priest was a salaried government official.<sup>19</sup> He was also entrusted with purely civil duties, such as organization of the tribute list, direction of the local elementary school, supervision of the election of local officials, management of town council meetings and the approval of local ordinances. Moreover, he oversaw the administration of public works projects, including the maintenance of roads and bridges.

Leading the administration of the *Recopilacion* in the Philippines was Manila's first bishop, Fray Domingo de Salazar of the Order of Preachers. He arrived in 1581 and in 1598, Manila became an archbishopric. This was coupled with the establishment of suffragan in Cebu, Caceres, and Nueva Segovia. Under this system power emanated from the top down, and from the altar of the Church it remade the Philippines into a Catholic colonial territory. In return for the Church's cooperation, the Spanish crown committed itself to the protection and compensation of priests. The symbiotic relationship between the Church and the Spanish government was further underscored by the fact that in the early years of the colony, the religious were continually consulted about governmental administrative matters.

The *Hispanization* of the Philippines required the Church to do as much. Spain extending its government to include the Philippines naturally meant that its theocratic system also had to be adapted to the conditions of the islands. *Spanishness* was equated with Catholicism. To be a good Spanish colony meant that the inhabitants should also be Catholic. The friars undertook the dual task of governing and evangelizing the colony, and in the process they helped construct the Filipino identity. Religious conversion was the path to it all.

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<sup>19</sup>Horoacio De La Costa, S.J., "The Development of the Native Clergy in the Philippines," in *Studies of Philippine Church History*, ed. Gerald. H. Anderson (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), 70.

In order to convert the Filipinos, the friars had to first appeal to the indigenous populations. That meant a greater understanding of their beliefs and practices. The first step was to learn the languages and customs, and here the friars were up to the task. One of the first things the friars did was learn and employ the local languages, a necessary burden given their formidable task of “conversion.” The first printed book in the Philippines, the *Doctrina Christiana* published in 1593, was a translation of prayers and Christian doctrines. Other books published after *Doctrina* were translations or adaptations of Biblical stories or explanations of Christian doctrines.

In 1627 the first dictionary, *Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala* by Fray Pedro de San Buenaventura, was published. It was an important tool that helped the Spanish missionaries learn Tagalog. The earliest translations and publications were therefore directly related to religion. Knowing the indigenous dialects gave the friars power--the power to influence, convert, exploit, and subjugate. The naïve element of the Filipino populace believed the Church was the be all and end all of civilization. The friars, by translating Catholic doctrine and Spanish law, fundamentally altered the makeup of the Philippines.

Aurora E. Batnag of the Philippine National Commission of Culture and Arts highlights this transformation of society through the friars’ translation efforts. “Translation in the Philippines started as part of a religious undertaking . . . missionaries used translation as a tool to spread Christianity among the natives, thus fulfilling a utilitarian role: to conquer mind and body.”<sup>20</sup>

The results of learning the dialects and the push for mass baptism allowed a small number of priests to baptize the majority of the Filipinos. Baptisms also allowed the friars to conduct a de facto census, thus gathering the population data necessary to carry

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<sup>20</sup> Aurora E. Batnag, *Translation in the Philippines*, [http://www.ncca.gov.ph/phil.\_culture/other\_cultural\_info/language/language\_translation.htm] *National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 2001* (accessed 29 September 2001).

out another policy of the Church and crown--the policy of *Reduccion*. *Reduccion* (literally translated as reduction), implemented by the Church with the help of the Spanish military, aimed to gather together scattered tribal groups and resettle them under the watchful eye of a parish priest. It not only meant that the friars held tighter control over the new converts, but it also made the administration of laws and tax collection much easier. The Catholic Church and its authority extended to all of those said to be living *debajo de las campanas*, or within the sound of the parish's bells.

In a matter of decades, large chunks of territory took on the characteristics of Castilian organization, leaving behind a Philippine society that had until that time been little more than Neolithic. *Reduccion* created new townships organized around the parish and Catholic authorities. This meant that it was now easier to instruct and train the indigenous population in Spanish law and Catholic doctrine.

The very infrastructure, government, and civic organization of the Philippines was created during this time and owed itself to the work of Catholic religious orders in the *Reduccion*. The founding of towns, cities, and principalities, which served to organize the centers of government, learning, and welfare, were the direct result of the work of the Catholic Church and the religious orders. These orders also established numerous cities and townships. The Augustinians had the most, with more than 385 cities and towns established by their order. The Recollects were a distant second with 235, and the Franciscans established 233. The Jesuits, who were evicted from the Philippines in 1768 but returned in 1859, were responsible for more than 93, and the Dominicans had 90. Each order was also instrumental in developing agriculture, bridges, water works, and roads.<sup>21</sup> Even today, the Philippines remain divided into provinces that owe their origins to this Church-based organization.

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<sup>21</sup>Zaide, *Catholicism in the Philippines*, 70.

With *Reduccion* and baptism came new names, new rules, and new identities for the Filipino population. Tribal identities were discouraged, and identification with those living within the sound of the parish bells was furthered. As each successive generation joined the church through participation in the rituals, the Filipino identity became closely linked with being Catholic. The names of those baptized were logged, and as these communities grew they fell under the jurisdiction of the parishes whose responsibility it was to organize them politically and socially. Little by little, native Filipinos lost their pre-Spanish identities as they began to adopt the dress and the surnames of the Spanish. Gone were names such as Lapu Lapu, replaced instead with De La Cruz, Mendoza, de Ocampo, and others.

Within the sound of the parish bells daily life came to revolve almost entirely around the Church. The Church taught its communities how to read and introduced them to classical music, rudimentary healthcare, and basic forms of government. Many of the new Filipino artisans would ply their talents to create the ornate interiors of the baroque parishes that still dot the Philippine landscape. Catholic doctrine also influenced rituals and festivals as various tribal traditions were melded within the new communities and injected with a dose of Christianity. Dances, songs, and live plays were now performed with Christian themes. Characters were no longer spirits of the forest, but instead included Jesus and the Virgin Mary.

Religious holidays, such as Easter and Christmas, became joyous events for the villages. Today every Catholic town in the Philippines celebrates an annual *barangay* fiesta in honor of their patron Catholic saint. There are large processions and parades throughout the town with the saints, the *mayordomo*, or sponsor of the fiesta, and school children marching through the settlement to music. In addition, families visit neighbors and relatives to share special home-cooked foods. Where else in the world can one celebrate Christmas for literally one full month?

Thus, the Catholic Church did more than just encourage baptism, adoption of a “Catholic” sounding name, or the wearing of Spanish clothes. The friars woke up the villagers each day, summoned them to Mass, and subjected them to religious indoctrination and catechismal instruction.<sup>22</sup> The Church played a central role in the lives of the Filipino because it touched every aspect of their existence, from the spiritual to the ordinary, from birth to marriage, and from adulthood to death.

The Filipinos themselves responded enthusiastically to the new religion.<sup>23</sup> Luckily for the friars, they were able to convert and reorganize the Filipinos due in part to the absence of centralized, organized, and complex political structures. In areas where Spain and other Catholic countries like the Portuguese encountered powerful and organized civilizations--such as the Hindu kingdoms of India, the Buddhist kingdom of Siam, or the Islamic kingdoms of Java--they had little success.

The mass of conversions and the *Reduccion* around the parishes that followed the Spanish conquest gave the Filipinos, from Luzon to Mindanao, a common set of social, moral, and spiritual beliefs that had never before existed. It was the first step in a process that would see the Church become the central focus of identity, stronger than any other symbol or political ideology during the Spanish period. Integration of religion into the social fabric of the Philippines was complete and thorough, as the Catholic Church reproduced the various institutions it had successfully established in Spanish America, including hospitals, colleges, orphanages, and houses of refuge.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Leslie E. Bauzon, "Influence of the Spanish Culture," in *Encyclopedia of Southeast Asia: Philippines*, ed. Shizuo Suzuki and Shinzo Hayase (Kyoto: Dohosha, 1991), 195-196.

<sup>23</sup>Phelan, *Hispanization of the Philippines*, ix.

<sup>24</sup>Gerald H. Anderson, ed., *Studies in Philippine Church History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), 47.

Beyond institutions, the Catholic Church injected itself into the lawmaking process in the Philippines. The governor-general shared his powers with high-ranking officials of the clergy. Friars virtually ran the countryside, and with this absolute power came corruption. Both the friars and the secular authority used each other for gain. The colonial government used the friars to maintain control, and the friars became the authority for all matters of state. Government officials consulted the clergy before policy was made or implemented, and it was not uncommon for the friars to write laws for the Spanish colonial authority. In fact, the first Philippine civil code was penned by Father Juan de Plasencia in 1589.<sup>25</sup>

Education of the masses was also part of the Catholic Church's agenda. The Church believed that to truly capture and hold the hearts and minds of the indigenous Filipino required more than mere submission under the threat of arms. Primary and secondary education was established to teach Spanish ways and Church doctrine, but the education was not complete. The goal was to educate while giving only enough knowledge to make the population governable. Too much knowledge meant a population that was hard to control. For those who were deemed worthy to study, usually the *mestizos* (those with a mix of Spanish and Filipino blood), a university education was possible either in Spain or at several friar-run institutions, the oldest being the University of Santo Thomas, which was established in 1611 in Manila.

Educational indoctrination was also part of constructing a common political and social identity. Educated Filipinos from across the vast archipelago could meet members of other tribes who only a century earlier may not have understood each other's languages, customs, or religious beliefs or recognized different political authorities. Now in the townships, local parishes, and Catholic universities they shared a common language, style of dress, set of laws, government, and religion.

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<sup>25</sup>Zaide, *Catholicism in the Philippines*, 120.



The policy of *Reduccion* gathered together the disparate tribal groups and laid the foundation of towns and cities. Translation and publication of religious texts were coupled with conversions, all furthering the creation of a common identity. Friar-controlled government and education gave rise to a number of Filipino elite, and the Church's efforts culminated in the creation of a common political culture around which the nation of the Philippines emerged. But the friars were more than spiritual teachers and government officials. In some cases they were called upon to defend the colony itself.

The Spanish fleet protected the colony externally. Periodic clashes with the Dutch, the English, and the Islamic tribes of Mindanao called upon the resources of the Spanish military garrisons stationed there, but the Church also played a role in colonial defense. Indeed, the clergy were instrumental in helping defend the territorial and political integrity of the Philippines from foreign invasion.<sup>26</sup> Priests organized and rallied the population against internal revolts, occasionally taking up arms against rebellious Chinese traders who lived in the islands, against the Muslims in the south, and externally against attacks by the Dutch and the British.<sup>27</sup>

The most prominent example of the Church's role in colonial defense came during the brief British occupation. As part of the Seven Years War, the British sailed into Manila Bay and occupied the city. Their occupation lasted from October 6, 1762, to June 11, 1764. It proved to be the only serious imposition of a foreign power on Spanish rule until 1898, when Spain would lose the Philippines to the United States. What is

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<sup>26</sup>Anderson, *Studies in Philippine Church History*, 124.

<sup>27</sup>Some of these incidences are well documented and include a raid in 1582 by a Japanese expeditionary force. The year 1603 saw the first large-scale Chinese revolt in Manila, in 1622 Chinese pirate Limahong occupied Corregidor Island, during 1636 a Dutch invader sacked and burned the churches of Cagsaw, Albay, and in 1647 the Dutch sieged Manila. During the period from 1762 to 1764, the British occupied Manila.

important about the British occupation, however, is not what it meant for Spanish history but its illustration of another role the Church shouldered—defense of the Philippines.

The religious orders did not simply verbally oppose British conquests, they actively opposed the British occupation. The occupation government, whether justified through war or not, was illegitimate in the eyes of the friars. This meshed with the concept of the unity of the Church and state that was carried into the Philippines. When one was attacked, the other was to defend.<sup>28</sup> Recognizing that the Church and the government were one and the same, it is little surprise that the Spanish friars were as devoted to Spain as they were to their missionary work.

The British were unprepared to deal with the Church as a military threat. Working with opposition forces, such as those headed by Don Simon Anda y Salazar, the Church proved an effective resistance. The British made a fatal error in judgment when they freely granted the right to religious assembly. What they did not realize was that these assemblies left undisturbed were covert meeting places for resistance fighters within the perimeter of occupation.<sup>29</sup> The parishes were turned into planning rooms. It is not hard to imagine that after Mass the talk turned quickly to plans of resistance. Indeed, Anda and the friars would not only appeal to anti-British sentiment but also justified their defense of the Philippines as a fight against anti-Catholic doctrines.<sup>30</sup>

Almost all of the religious orders were hostile to the British. When Archbishop Manuel Antonio de Rojo y Vieyra, the Spanish governor-general, called for the religious orders to leave their cloisters and help defend the city, many friars filled the ranks of the defenders. In most areas the friars were the best trained, most familiar, most fluent, and

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<sup>28</sup>Conrad Myrick, "Some Aspects of the British Occupation," in *Studies in Philippine Church History*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), 113.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 115.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 117.

in the best position to organize a native resistance against the English. They knew the language, the customs, and the native Filipinos better than anyone. Among the orders called to arms, the Augustinians appeared to be the most active and effective instigators of resistance. They even riled fears among good Catholics that the British were heretics who brought only war and no peace.<sup>31</sup>

Some of the British did see problems with the Church. One officer, Captain Blackhouse, is credited with noting that the whole Philippines could be quickly subdued if the clergy were arrested and confined to Manila.<sup>32</sup> The friars, who plotted to starve the British forces out of Manila, victimized Blackhouse and others. Since the Church controlled the valuable supply lines leading to Manila, it was difficult for food and other materials to get to the British without the friars' help. The Church also worked with Anda in helping melt parish bells in order to use the metal for casting guns. This forced the British to seize all parish bells within their area of control, further angering both the friars and the Catholic Filipinos.

Throughout the ordeal, the Spanish clergy gave their support to Anda and others against the British, rallied the Filipinos, took up arms, and facilitated to a great extent the failure of British occupation in the Philippines. The military dimension of the Church, coupled with its role in the education and infrastructure building in the Philippines, was part of the wide swath the Church cut politically in the country. Everything about the Spanish colonial regime's legitimacy reinforced a pyramidal social structure created by the Church and that remained intact until the end of the nineteenth century. At the top of the pyramid were the Spanish officials, the *peninsulares*, and the friars. Its base consisted of the Filipino majority, and the middle was filled with a small bourgeois class

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 123.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 124.

of *mestizos* and *criollos* (Spanish born and raised in the Philippines).<sup>33</sup> Each level was interwoven socially and politically into the great fabric of society, and the thread that bound them all was the ever-present Catholic Church.

Since 1565 the Philippines, under the guidance of the Spanish friars, had witnessed steady development. Church policies helped create a new Filipino identity, religion, and political culture. But underneath the surface tensions begin to mount. The tension was the result of several policies made by the friars. These included the friars' refusal to give the Filipinos what they wanted: full access to the power that being full members of the clergy allowed. Education was incomplete for most and religious training was in general never fully developed, obstructing the path for most Filipinos to rise to positions of power and influence within the Church. The Catholic Church had helped create the Filipino nation, but because the friars were unwilling to step aside and let the natural progression and maturation of the society to take place, they were directly responsible for the burgeoning sense of nationalism.

The Spanish friars enjoyed their roles as power brokers for the Spanish crown, and they resisted traditional efforts to ordain native priests. In so doing, they failed to acknowledge a universal maxim of the Church: The church can only be securely founded when it is assured of a clergy sufficiently numerous to administer and develop its various works, and the church has no assurance as long as its personnel in any given territory are dependent for their recruitment on foreign lands.<sup>34</sup>

Traditionally, the Catholic Church established a mission and then set about training the indigenous population to become members of the clergy. The Church and its priests had followed this doctrine elsewhere in Asia, including China with the works of Matteo Ricci and Japan with Francis Xavier. However, this was not the case in the

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<sup>33</sup>Maria Corona S. Romero and Julita R. Romana, *Rizal and Philippine Nationalism* (Manila: St. Anthony Book Service, 1969), 7.

<sup>34</sup>De La Costa, "The Development of the Native Clergy in the Philippines," 67.

Philippines. The doctrinal basis for this exclusion began with the first royal decrees made by Philip II, who wanted the parishes to remain in Spanish hands because he felt they were loyal subjects to the crown. It was also based on two councils, the Council of Mexico in 1555 and the Third Council of Mexico in 1585, which prohibited the admission of *indios* to the religious orders. As Gerald H. Anderson writes, the retardation of the native clergy was the result of the “ecclesiastical legislation of the New Spain, where the failure of a premature attempt to develop a native clergy resulted in a reaction unfavorable to the very idea of a native clergy.”<sup>35</sup>

The friars’ obstinacy was easily sustained through the structure of *patronato*, a policy that gave the king the right to appoint clergy and administration in return for his pledge to protect and compensate the Church. The entire structure of *patronato*, through which the parishes in the colony were administered, contributed to the barring of indigenous Filipinos from entering the priesthood and achieving any meaningful role. Under the doctrine of *patronato*, the Spanish sovereign in his capacity as royal patron of the Church in the colonies defrayed the expenses of the colonial churches. In exchange he acquired the exclusive right to presentation to all-important ecclesiastical posts. He then held wide power in the disposition of personnel and the division of ecclesiastical territory.

Finally, the Spanish cited the cultural level of the Philippine missions as a reason they could not turn over control. In their minds, no suitable candidates existed.<sup>36</sup> The Philippines, they argued, were just emerging out of a rudimentary human existence and had yet to organize into stable political communities. Whereas Japan, China, and India had all possessed great civilizations in the past, it was premature to expect that the

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 103.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 77.

Filipinos would be priests. The Church wanted to “civilize” them first and ordain them later.

Most friars believed that the indigenous people lacked the temperament necessary for the job--a nice way to say they feared Filipinos did not possess the intellectual acumen to be priests and giving them such responsibilities would be a disaster. The Filipinos, the friars believed, were good only for labor and for assisting the “real” priests. It was shocking for anyone to suggest that having a native priest was something to be desired and most surely, such a priest would promote the downfall of his parish, his village, and all those in his wake. At the core was a fear that giving the Filipinos the kind of power that the priesthood allowed would mean the collapse of Spanish authority.

The friars had opposed all efforts made by the Spanish crown to appoint men to the posts, even though according to the *patronato* doctrine the crown had every right to do so. The friars fiercely protected their territory from secular influence. They were successful in their defense based on a simple formula. The crown either left them alone or they threatened to quit the parishes and missions, leaving no Catholic presence, no Spanish presence, and thus no governmental presence in the vast majority of the Philippines.<sup>37</sup>

Spain’s colonial government initially backed the friars. The monarchists thought that keeping the religious in their parish posts was good for the colonial government.<sup>38</sup> The farther from Manila these posts were, the more important the residence of a Spanish friar was to the secular government. The friars were not only zealous missionaries, but also honored and loyal subjects of the crown. Their presence in these remote regions defrayed the expense and effort needed to maintain a large armed force to police the colony.

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 80-81.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 72.

The friars “showed the flag” of Spain and were the eyes and ears of the secular authorities. Indeed, through the use of the sacraments they were able to ensure stability and control over those in their townships. For example, as part of the evangelization process the natives were expected to regularly participate in the sacramental life of the Church. Baptism, as mentioned earlier, initiated one into the Church and the State. Communion sealed the bond and the confessional was a necessary part of the new spiritual life of the Christian. As a result of the enforced confessional, friars were able to hear the deepest thoughts, feelings, and motivations of the Filipino, including those who harbored ill will against the Spanish authorities.<sup>39</sup>

One may never know the actual number and frequency of instances when a friar was privy to a plot being hatched against the Spanish and then turned over the intelligence to the appropriate authorities. However, it was frequent enough to garner the attention of preeminent Filipino nationalists like Jose Rizal, who used such incidents as fodder in his anti-Spanish writings. Indeed, the Catholic religious in the *doctrinas* were given credit by governor Pedro Sarrio for having “contributed most to the pacification of the malcontents.”<sup>40</sup>

The Spanish friars exploited their power in the *patronato* system. They, as part of the government, were usually the only visible source of Spanish authority within the colony. However, even against this backdrop of resistance, a native clergy was slowly emerging in spite of their best efforts to suppress it. In 1702, some in the Church, but not the Spanish friars, even went so far as to propose that Manila become a regional seminary for East and Southeast Asian *indios*. It would be a place to train them in the ways and laws of the Church for service in their homelands. Although the idea did not come to

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<sup>39</sup>Rafael L. Vincente, *Contracting Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 92-94.

<sup>40</sup>De La Costa, “The Development of the Native Clergy in the Philippines,” 73.

fruition, it did spark the building of a few seminaries in and around Manila, including San Carlos in 1772, which was established by Archbishop Sancho de Santa Just y Rufina.<sup>41</sup>

By the mid-eighteenth century there were at least four educational establishments in Manila built to train native candidates for the priesthood. These priests were slowly forming a secular priesthood. It was secular in the sense that they were not bound to any particular religious order and were separate from the Spanish religious orders. It was rare that the friars would allow an indigenous Filipino to enter their order. This produced a split within the Church. On one side were the friars and on the other were members of the developing Filipino secular clergy.

Racial prejudice embittered the rivalry between the friars and the seculars almost from the beginning. The problem only worsened as the number of Filipino clergy grew, because this gave the Archbishop the power to impose punishments on friars, a power that was unenforceable as long as their threat to abandon their parishes was valid. With the numbers of Filipino clergy growing, friars who did not bend to the will of the Archbishop or yield to the *patronato* could be replaced. At least that was the theory.

That theory was put to the test in 1773 when Archbishop Sancho expelled the Augustinians from the parishes in Pampanga and replaced them with indigenous priests. When the Jesuits were removed from their parishes, Filipino clergy also replaced them. So great was his need to replace the arrogant and rebellious friars that Sancho hurriedly ordained Filipino priests, often before their training was complete. The results were disastrous, and many of these new Filipino clergy were incompetent. Their parishes fell into disrepair and stories of cruelty and thievery perpetrated by indigenous clergy flooded into the Archbishop's office.<sup>42</sup> Sancho's disastrous experiment resulted in the general acceptance by both civil and religious authorities that the Filipino was incapable of

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 85-86.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 95-96.



accepting the responsibilities of the priesthood.<sup>43</sup> To the secular authorities incompetent Filipino priests were no better, nor were they an improvement over rebellious Spanish friars. At least the friars were Spanish and loyal subjects, while the Filipino clergy were often suspected and thought of as enemies of Spain.<sup>44</sup>

It was a no-win situation for the indigenous clergy. If they were incompetent, then they served only to justify and prove the negative view of the incapability of Filipinos to assume responsibility for parishes in their own land and justified their continued subservient role to the Spanish friars. However, if they proved intelligent and competent, then they were sure to be labeled as rebels with divided loyalties. Indeed, it seems that the best and brightest among the Filipino clergy did attract malcontents among the *barangays*, yet in hindsight this was not unusual. If a Filipino had the right combination of acumen, intelligence, and luck, he could rise to a position of power within the Church. It is only natural that restless elements of Filipino society sought assistance from one of their own in a position of power.

The Filipinos desired to be part of the clergy as much as the friars desired to keep them out. They realized that the Church offered a path to power and brought respect, lands, wealth, and influence to those within its structure. Yet the Filipinos were excluded from these opportunities. Catholic influence in the Philippine colonial government and among the populace did not translate into opportunities for the Filipinos who aspired to be priests or members of the powerful Church hierarchy.

The Filipino clergy were excluded by the system itself on almost every front. The division of ecclesiastical territory in the Philippines among the missionary religious order decreed by Philip II left no room for a secular clergy. The arbitrary limitation of the scope of Filipino clergy necessarily lowered the standards of its formation. In other

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 98.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 100.

words, the Spanish friars had no need to fully educate and train the Filipinos because they were to serve only as subordinates to the friars.

The one attempt by Archbishop Santos to cripple the religious orders resulted in disaster, as poorly trained and half educated native clergy were unable to assume the responsibilities of the parishes after the Spanish were removed. It proved to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. This purely political maneuver resulted in a deepening antagonism between the Spanish friars and the Filipino seculars, which rapidly degenerated in a national and racial enmity.<sup>45</sup> This was followed by a growing uneasiness on both sides, as the Filipino clergy realized revolution was necessary to achieve their goals and the Spanish friars and secular authorities suspected Filipino clergy of harboring revolutionary tendencies and believed that their loyalties did not lie with Spain.

The Church establishment's rejection of native Filipinos laid the foundation for revolution against Spanish rule in the nineteenth century. This revolution can be considered the first legitimacy crisis, when the Church, long a pillar of governmental stability, used its resources and was used by others as a tool to fight against the decaying Spanish regime. The Filipino clergy were first to rise up against the friars, and thus the government. They were the most visible protagonists against Spanish authority, and their efforts were based on the early and repeated attempts to exclude them from assuming responsibility for the parishes.

Few understood as well as the Filipino clergy the power that came with control of the parishes and missions. Having this power meant being a part of the government and the power structure and enjoying the full benefits the position entailed. It was not simply a desire to serve God or a desire to put a Filipino face in the parishes, but it was real power concerns that motivated these Filipinos. Nonetheless, the Spanish had laid a foundation that excluded Filipino participation.

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 104.

An interesting dichotomy developed during this pre-Revolutionary period in and around the Catholic Church. The Church, which was the institution of governmental stability and of continuity, became the early focus and breeding ground for Philippine nationalism.<sup>46</sup> The Spanish friars, long the objects of scorn among the nationalists, became targets, while at the same time Filipino priests took leadership roles and stirred up the fires of nationalism. The Church was simultaneously equated with stability and revolution.

The catalysts that set the revolution in motion were a series of political affronts to Filipino national pride, starting first in 1826 when all Filipino priests were removed from Philippine parishes and replaced by monastic friars from Spain. This religious expulsion was followed a few years later in 1837 by the political expulsion of Philippine representation to the Spanish Cortes. As these insults to the Philippine people mounted, the common bonds of nationalism were fostered both in underground networks and through the communications of the Filipino priests. The local parishes served as intellectual rallying points, as well as central meeting points for members of discontented groups. Soon, these groups would foment into a revolutionary movement, one that would challenge the legitimacy of the Spanish position and bring about a new era in the Philippines.

As early as 1870, Archbishop Gregoria Meliton Martinez warned that bitterness and resentment of the Filipino priests could boil over into revolution should their treatment not improve.<sup>47</sup> It was feared that the friends and families of the priests would be the foot soldiers of any revolution that might erupt. An interesting feature of this time period is the fact that much of the motivation for revolution was anti-Spanish friar and

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<sup>46</sup>Goodno, *The Philippines: Land of Broken Promises*, 27.

<sup>47</sup>Cesar Adib Majul, "Anticlericalism during the Reform Movement and the Philippine Revolution," in *Studies in Philippine Church History*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), 153.

the period's literature was anti-Christian, cementing in many minds the permanent break from the Catholic Church by the Filipino elite. However, this is a misconception because although it was anti-friar, it was never anti-Christian.

The people never sought to break from religion, but merely desired a break from what they saw as a corrupt political institution operating under the guise of faith. The *ilustrados* (a group of highly educated native-born Filipinos) also joined the movement. Educated, wealthy, and restless, the *ilustrados* joined the secular priests and began to agitate peacefully for civil rights and the secularization of the parishes, unheard of actions until that time.<sup>48</sup>

The revolution itself was not anti-Catholic but anti-Spanish friar. Even the most ardent of revolutionaries who wanted to see the Spanish friars disappear did not want the parishes closed or the Catholic faith to be replaced with something else. Instead, they wanted the corrupt Spanish friars to be replaced with Filipinos, thus giving a boost to Catholic faith and the revolution at the same time. Anticlericalism during the Philippine revolution and legislative attempts to neutralize or minimize the traditional power of the Church represented the last phases of a process that began earlier.<sup>49</sup>

The Spanish monarchists and the friars allied against the *ilustrados* and the Filipino clergy. The turning point was the Cavite Mutiny of 1872. On January 20, 1872, 200 Filipino soldiers mutinied due to harsh treatment and oppression by the Spanish. It was quelled in two days, but three Filipino priests were suspected of instigating the mutiny. As a result, Jose Burgos, Mariano Gomez, and Jacinto Zamora were publicly executed. Other priests and *ilustrados* were exiled and arrested.<sup>50</sup> Their deaths contributed as much as anything to the emergence of Filipino nationalism. After their

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 155.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 152.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 156.

execution, an acronym developed from the names of the martyrs, and GOMBURZA became the code word used to identify the underground members of the revolutionary *Kataastaasan Kagalang-galang na Katipunan nang manga Anak ng Bayan* (The Highest and Most Honorable Society of the Sons of the Country), or *Katipunan* for short.

It was widely believed that the three priests were executed simply for being Filipino secular priests, but they became martyrs to the revolutionary cause. Two camps were now solidified in the same Church. The Spanish friars emerged as defenders of the Spanish sovereignty of the colony, and the Filipino priests emerged as the organizers and instigators of revolution against Spanish control. The positions were irreconcilable. Any demand made by one, if met, would result in a loss of power for the side that acquiesced.<sup>51</sup> The chief demand from the revolutionists was that the Spanish hand over some 700 parishes to Filipino clergy. To do this would have meant an immense loss of revenue, territory, and political power for the Spanish government. The friars were the single largest and wealthiest group in the Philippines.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, they were the most politically powerful.

*Ilustrados* flocked to the cause under the banner of the martyred priests. Prominent men, including Jose Rizal, helped fan the fires of revolution by helping publish newspapers such as *La Solidaridad* (1889), which attacked the position of the friars in the Philippines. Rizal also wrote *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, both scathing satirical attacks on the hypocrisy and corrupt nature of Spanish friars.

The *ilustrados* and other revolutionists were careful not to attack Catholicism in the process of attacking the friars. The sympathy for the Filipino secular priests was used to arouse nationalist sentiment against the Spanish friar, for it was the Filipino secular priests who were the first to fight Spanish abuses. Yet they remained ardent in their faith,

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 158.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 159.

reminding their followers that it was the Spanish who had corrupted Catholicism and the Catholic faith was not to blame. Furthermore, they reminded the revolutionaries that Catholicism was the great glue holding the islands together. The Filipino priests were comrades in arms against the Spanish. They became instigators, organizers, and martyrs.

Jesuit writer John Schumacher traced this story and the role of the Filipino clergy as genitors and carriers of the nationalist consciousness in *Revolutionary Clergy: The Filipino Clergy and the Nationalist Movement, 1850-1903*. Schumacher noted that it was the Filipino priest who gave birth to nationalism, who nurtured it, and who continued to support it even when they were forced to yield its leadership to others who would later betray and abandon the Church in pursuit of their own power and alternate versions of the revolutionary cause.<sup>53</sup>

Some in the revolution, including Amelio Aguinaldo, made fatal errors in trying to separate the Church from the State. Apolinario Mabini did likewise. Mabini feared that any priest, if left in the same position as a government worker, would be a threat to stability and start abusing power.<sup>54</sup> He believed in the separation of Church from the State, but others disagreed. One was Felipe Calderon, a prominent revolutionary who strongly propounded the unity of Church and State in the Revolutionary Congress of 1898. Calderon was anti-friar but wanted to keep the Catholic religion as part of the state. The Filipino clergy were also represented at the Congress and demanded that any new Philippine society have the Catholic Church at its base and its foundation. The Church gave the Filipino a moral compass, norms, and “sense of identity.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>John N. Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy: The Filipino Clergy and the Nationalist Movement, 1850-1903* (Quezon City, Metro Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1981), 3.

<sup>54</sup>Majul, “Anticlericalism,” 171.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 168-169.

When it came time to vote on an amendment to the provisional constitution that would have separated the Church from the State, there was a huge fight between those who favored keeping the Church as part of the government and those who wanted a clean break. The first vote on the amendment ended in a tie. However, the chairman broke the tie and the amendment passed by a margin of one vote.<sup>56</sup> The Filipino clergy were outraged and felt the revolution's leadership had betrayed them. The priests who supported the revolution to get rid of the Spanish friars never supported the goal of dissolving the established power and influence of the Catholic Church. Many revolutionary delegates agreed. No one present at the vote needed to be reminded that there would have been no revolution had the Filipino priests not organized a stand against the Spanish friars and the Spanish crown.

The errors of Aguinaldo and Mabini aside, most people were mindful of the friars' role in the revolutionary cause, including Rizal, who dedicated his second novel, *El Filibusterismo*, to the martyred Filipino priests Mariano Gomez, Jose Burgos, and Jacinto Zamora. Rizal's actions, and those taken by Calderon and others, are poignant reminders that nationalism in the Philippines did not mean secularization of the government but instead a "nationalizing" of the Catholic Church. By doing this it was believed the obstacles to education, progress, and freedom would be overcome while at the same time keeping the Philippines a Catholic nation. Unfortunately for the Church and the revolutionaries, those ideas were not fully realized.

In 1898 the Spanish-American War began, with grave consequences for the Philippines. Having defeated the Spanish in short order, the Americans became the new colonial masters of the Philippines, voiding the established Philippine Republic and igniting a new war against the Americans. The Catholic Church had few weapons to combat this new American colonialism, and would see its role diminish in importance as

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 169.

nationalism gave way to a partnership with the Americans. To be Filipino would still mean to be part of the Church, but now America would inject its own influences into the Philippine psyche, including ideas such as liberty, democracy, the Protestant work ethic, and the separation of Church and State. For the first time in the history of the Philippine nation-state, the Catholic Church was not needed to legitimate the government.

The United States acquired the Philippines as the spoils from the war with Spain, and with them came the Catholic Church-based infrastructure. It was unlike any territory the United States had ever attained. Within American political circles there were those for and against this acquisition. Some saw the economic and military value of the islands, including their undeniable value as a naval base for America's emerging pacific fleet. Others objected to the United States playing the role of an imperialist power. It was, in their view, unjustifiable in light of American political culture, which was founded on the principles of free choice and rule of law. To force the American government and institutions on a people who did not wish them was in itself un-American, yet President William McKinley and his advisors, mostly in the military, were able to look past any negatives associated with violating American principles and the tradition of anti-imperialism and see the economic, political, and even religious benefits associated with the acquisition of the Philippines.

Estimates of public opinion toward the acquisition of the Philippines after the war were varied. Businessmen viewed the Philippines as the gateway to Asiatic markets and a way for the United States to finally become competitive with what they believed would be the emerging markets in China.<sup>57</sup> In American religious circles, there was almost uniform support for the acceptance of American responsibility for the islands and undertaking a "conquest for Christ." The fact that more than 80 percent of Filipinos were Christian did not seem to damper the American spirit for Protestant proselytizing. Many

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<sup>57</sup>Garel A. Grunder and William E. Livezey, *The Philippines and the United States* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951), 28-29.



Americans who were aware of American involvement in the Philippines viewed the acquisition of the islands as divinely inspired.<sup>58</sup>

Divinely inspired or not, the American regime in the Philippines took power and remained in power throughout the colonial era because of its military might. The Church, long the center of politics in the Philippines, was marginalized. In figure 11 the drastic change in legitimacy is illustrated. The Church was detached from the government by the American desire to separate Church and State and was marginalized by other factors, such as the United States colonial economic sector and the United States military. Legitimacy did flow around the Church, but it was in large part inconsequential to the ruling regime.

Ignoring the Catholic Church was something the Americans did from the beginning. One of the rallying points for acquiring the Philippines initially as a protectorate was that a conquest of arms must be followed by a conquest for Christ.<sup>59</sup> American Protestants simply ignored that more than 80 percent of the Philippine population was Catholic. The few anti-imperialists, such as Samuel Clemens, Andrew Carnegie, and Charles Francis Adams, who viewed what the United States was undertaking as being in direct opposition to the spirit of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States, were ignored. These gentlemen argued that the Filipino was no more eager for American rule than they were for Spanish misrule. The United States had unmistakably broken with its democratic traditions of equal rights and self-government.<sup>60</sup> These men's voices, like those of the Catholic Church in the Philippines, were muted by the majority's clamor to take over the islands.

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<sup>58</sup>Kenton J. Clymer, *Protestant Missionaries in the Philippines, 1898-1916: An Inquiry into the American Colonial Mentality* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 154.

<sup>59</sup>Anderson, *Studies in Philippine Church History*, 286.

<sup>60</sup>Grunder and Livezey, *The Philippines and the United States*, 49.

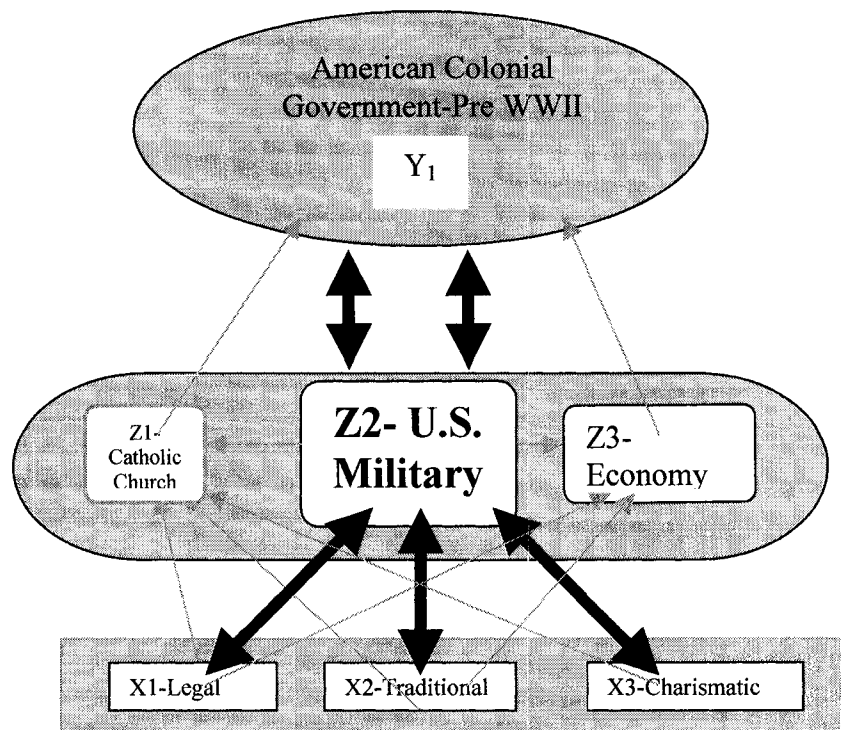


Fig. 11. Legitimacy Model of the Philippines During the American Colonial Era

The final decision was McKinley's, and given all the bluster about economics and empire, his description of his own decision lacked any mention of empire building, a desired naval base, or an American counterweight to European expansion in Asia. What he says instead is that the United States had three undesirable alternatives. The islands could not be given back to the Spanish, they could not be turned over to a rival European power, and they could not be left to themselves, because the Filipinos were in his opinion unfit for self government. McKinley thus concluded that there was nothing left to do but to take them and "educate the Filipinos and uplift and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the best we could for them as our fellow men for whom Christ also died."<sup>61</sup>

American colonial authorities never saw themselves for what they were, the first major extension of the American imperialist arm. On the contrary, the official line of the

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 37.

United States was that it had come to the Philippines as a liberator, not as a colonizer, taking up the unenviable but necessary “white man’s burden.”<sup>62</sup> Opinions about the Filipinos themselves were not flattering. Books written at the time described the Filipinos as “spoiled children,” “indignant,” and grateful for the surfeit of American supplies.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, the Filipinos were expected to be thankful that a “just” and “noble” imperial master was pacifying them, not a third-rate European power with antiquated politics and a friar-controlled bureaucracy.<sup>64</sup>

American intentions were not all bad. They planned to eventually give the Philippines independence, but in limited steps. There was still support for the policy of filling the Filipinos’ stomachs while keeping their heads empty. Yet there was more than pure philanthropy to the American conquest. Many Filipinos did not see the Americans as liberators, but as simply another occupying force, and they met the American army with a revolutionary army of their own.

Spain’s defeat by the Americans was in a real sense a defeat of the Catholic Church as well, and it made the Church’s cooperative position with the government uncertain. The Spanish friars were not ignorant of the American political culture, but it is likely that the friars themselves did not have a clear idea of how they would be treated by the new American regime. Some probably felt their positions would be sustained against the Filipinos and the indigenous clergy, and others probably felt a mutual working relationship could be worked out between the parishes and the Americans. In either case, the Spanish friars planned on staying in the Philippines without being harassed by either Americans or Filipinos.

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<sup>62</sup>Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden,” *McClure’s Magazine* 12 February 1899.

<sup>63</sup>Nicholas Roosevelt, *The Philippines: A Treasure and a Problem* (New York: J. H. Sears and Company, Inc., 1926), 4

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*

In previous centuries the power of the friars was so great that the Spanish government rested upon the Church. The Americans had seldom dealt with a Church whose authority was indistinguishable from that of the secular government, and one was always invoked to sustain the power of the other.<sup>65</sup> Garel A. Grunder and William E. Livezey summarized the friars' power during the Spanish era quite well, stating that the friars were "supreme" in the life of Filipinos.<sup>66</sup> The priest exerted a determining influence in practically every branch of municipal government. He was president of the boards of health, statistics, and prisons. He presided over taxation and the municipal budget and was a member of the board of partition crown lands. At times, the friars were even in charge of the insular police. They closely supervised whatever public instruction was offered and naturally opposed any liberalizing tendencies or actions that might undermine their own privileged status or the power of Spain. In a very vital sense, these religious leaders were to the Filipinos the real representatives of Spanish power.

The American administration approached the situation unsure of how to handle a Church that was also a government. The situation was complicated by the actions of some within the Church itself. As it had during the final years of Spanish rule, the Church tried to serve as a rallying point for opposition forces against the Americans. Some elements within the Philippine Church refused to relinquish their dream of independence and did not shy away from violent conflict with the American forces. The most well-known of these clashes occurred on the island of Samar, where the bells of the local parish were used as a signal to launch a brutal assault on Company C of the United States Ninth Infantry. At the sound of the parish bells, Filipinos dressed as mourning women pulled out their bolos (large machete knives) and slaughtered fifty-four soldiers. Retribution from the Americans was swift, and included burning the church and seizing

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<sup>65</sup>Charles Burke Elliot, *The Philippines to the End of the Commission Government: A Study in Tropical Democracy* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 42.

<sup>66</sup>Grunder and Livezey, *The Philippines and the United States*, 123.

the parish bells. The bells are still in American hands, kept as trophies at F. E. Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, Wyoming. To this day, Wyoming veterans' groups resist giving them back.<sup>67</sup>

The soldiers who had rallied around the Filipino clergy to overthrow the Spanish looked again to their parishes for guidance in matters of war. They were fighting a juggernaut in the American military, but it did not stop them from trying. Discovering this, the Americans began to target the Church and the Filipino priests became a major focus of “pacification.” To do this would require winning over the clergy, and if they could not be won over they were to be “eliminated.”<sup>68</sup>

The exact number of priests targeted, won over, or eliminated is not known. What can be surmised is that the pressure placed on the Catholic Church by the American occupying forces was successful. Gradually, the Church withdrew and was pushed out of any revolutionary role. The revolution gradually transformed into something unrecognizable from the war with the Spanish. As the leadership, Aguinaldo, Mabini, and others distanced themselves more and more from the Church and the revolution lost popular support and died out. Scholars readily acknowledge that the revolution became short-lived when the Church was removed from its center and there was nothing to replace it as the organizational and spiritual force.<sup>69</sup> In many respects, the revolution failed because it abandoned its religious roots.

The centuries-old conflict between the Christian majority and the Muslim minority in the south was also very much alive during this time. Unlike the Spanish, the

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<sup>67</sup>Edwin Kiester Jr. and Sally Valent Kiester, “Yankee Go Home and Take Me With You! Effect on Philippines of U.S. Colonization,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Smithsonian* (May 1, 1999; accessed 22 August 2001).

<sup>68</sup>Reynaldo C. Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1998), 114.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, 97.

Americans had little difficulty in subduing the *moros*. They were, through superior arms, more than a match for the fighters of the *moros*, who were equipped with antiquated firearms and a *keris*. The Muslims ultimately accepted American rule with the signing of the Carpenter Agreement in 1915 between Sultan Jamalul Kiram and Frank Carpenter. They did this hoping that they would be granted a modicum of autonomy and not be forced to submit to the authority of the Christian Filipinos, whose power was centered in Manila.

The Americans, however, should not be viewed as benevolent imperialists who had no other choice but to take the Philippines under their exclusive wing and colonial protection. Elements in the Philippine revolution who had fought against the Spanish before the American victory had declared through their Malolos Constitution of 1899 an independent Philippine state, and the Americans simply ignored this. The Americans did not plan to share their victory or the spoils of the Philippines with the Filipinos. After the dispatch of the Spanish, the United States made it known that the “insurgents” who had previously been Filipino freedom fighters must recognize the authority of the United States.<sup>70</sup>

The American administration took the islands, but it also inherited the problems. Problems of education, infrastructure, land reform, and government all taxed the intellectual and material resources of the United States. An elite and educated body of Filipinos existed, but they were few in comparison with the overall population and were not of great use in fostering the American administration.

Among the most important problems facing the new American administration was how to deal with the Church. The Americans had never seen or dealt with a Church-State apparatus that was so intimately intertwined. The indigenous Filipino clergy also had to be dealt with, along with the issue of the Spanish friars. The questions and problems

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<sup>70</sup>Grunder and Livezey, *The Philippines and the United States*, 21-22.

facing the Americans were daunting. They had to pacify a population, deal with the friars, keep the native clergy content, and honor their own American political traditions of separation of Church and State.

To deal with this issue, President McKinley tapped Jacob Gould Schurman, then president of Cornell University, to head a commission to look into these difficulties. By the end of 1899, the commission submitted a report stating that American stewardship was needed for an indefinite period until the Filipinos themselves were educated and responsible enough for self-government.<sup>71</sup> It did, however, deal concretely with the Catholic Church issues. From the beginning of American rule in the Philippines, it was officially announced that the cardinal principle of policy would be consonant with a fundamental rule of American life: Keep the separation between Church and State “real, entire, and absolute.”<sup>72</sup> As a corollary, there was to be absolute religious freedom. This separation of Church and State was an expression of the American political culture and ideals, not of religious convictions.

A second commission was established under the authority of William Howard Taft. President McKinley gave the Taft Commission legislative and executive authority to put in place the civilian government the Schurman Commission had recommended. In 499 statutes issued between September 1900 and August 1902, the Taft Commission attempted sweep away more than three centuries of Spanish and Catholic rule and replace them with American-style law. In place of a constitution, the United States passed the Organic Act of 1902, which among other things extended the protections of the Bill of Rights to the Filipinos and imposed, for the first time in Philippine history, an official government mandate for the separation of Church and State.

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 59.

<sup>72</sup>Bonifacio S. Salamanca, *The Filipino Reaction to American Rule* (New York: Shoe String Press, 1968), 96.

Declaring the separation on paper did not make it reality. The Catholic Church, the friars, and the power they wielded were still issues that needed to be addressed, and Taft took it upon himself to give them his personal attention. Most of the members of his civilian government were clamoring for the expulsion of the friars from their land and from the Philippines because they had observed that the Spanish friars were the targets of much Filipino animosity. The friars were the reason for the revolution to begin with, and keeping them in their parishes could only hurt America's effort in the Philippines. Yet at the same time, Article VII of the Treaty of Paris meant the Americans had to protect the friars and their lands.

The Church issue was made more complex by the fact that the Church owned vast estates throughout the Philippines and was also engaged extensively in banking and general businesses.<sup>73</sup> Complicating matters was the Vatican's handpicked representative, Archbishop Placido Chapelle of New Orleans, who was sent to the Philippines to oversee the transition from Spanish to American control. Archbishop Chapelle arrived on January 2, 1900. Paradoxically, he was the wrong man for the right job.

Once in the Philippines, Chapelle gave the illusion of representing both the Papacy of Rome and the United States, but as a champion of the friars he failed to understand his role as an American representative. His aims for the Church clouded his judgment and ended up superseding any patriotic tendencies.<sup>74</sup> Chapelle pressured the American administration to return the friars to their estates, in plain disregard for the inhibitions against the United States government or its agents being involved with ecclesiastical preferment.<sup>75</sup> He also tried to get recognition for the Church's exclusive

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<sup>73</sup>Elliot, *The Philippines to the End of the Commission Government*, 43.

<sup>74</sup>James E. LeRoy, *The Americans in the Philippines: A History of the Conquest and First Years of Occupation with an Introductory Account of the Spanish Rule* (New York: AMS Press, 1970), 296.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, 298.



right to control property and charitable or educational works, which under Spanish rule had been mixed civil and ecclesiastical authority.<sup>76</sup>

Chapelle's crusade to get exclusive rights to all Church-owned property and even that once held in joint custody by the Spanish secular authorities and the Church frightened many Filipinos, who feared an American-friar alliance. Fortunately for them, his requests were denied, and the fact that the insular government was legally contesting the right of the Church or friars to the property helped satisfy many Filipinos.<sup>77</sup>

The damage Chapelle did to the American efforts to resolve the friar issue was serious. He blatantly supported the friars' interests, and to many Filipinos he seemed to represent the American view. Coinciding with Chapelle's seemingly royal treatment by the American authorities was the imprisonment of Adriano Garces, a Filipino priest who was a chief opponent of the Spanish friars. This action seen alongside the pomp and circumstance afforded friars by the Americans, including the military protection of some friars, led many to believe the Americans were getting too cozy with the friars.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, it was not uncommon for Catholic dignitaries to be provided army wagons for pastoral tours and occasionally be granted a guard of constabulary at their disposal. Even steamboats were available for the use of the Church's dignitaries.<sup>79</sup> The Church even managed to pressure the Americans to appoint Catholics to the highest offices overseeing education in the Philippines.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 303.

<sup>77</sup>Grunder and Livezey, *The Philippines and the United States*, 126.

<sup>78</sup>Elliot, *The Philippines to the End of the Commission Government*, 38-40.

<sup>79</sup>Henry Parker Willis, *Our Problem: A Study of American Colonial Policy* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1905), 205.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 234-235.

There may have been more than one way to deal with the friar issue, but Chapelle's methods were not one of them. Contrary to what Chapelle was purporting to be the American stance, the American authorities set two objectives. The first was the reduction of the economic power of the Catholic Church and the second was the expulsion of the religious orders (friars) from the islands.<sup>81</sup> Together the main religious orders--the Dominicans, Augustinians, and Recollects--held almost half a million acres of the best lands and considerable business and political influence. Given that they were the targets of Filipino animosity, they could not be allowed to stay in the same powerful positions. Taft's commission concluded that the best way to deal with the issues was to purchase the friar lands and resell them to the Filipinos and others who wished to purchase them.

Directions from Washington were clear and echoed Taft's findings. Secretary of War Elihu Root told Taft that separation of Church and State was one of the fundamental and imperative provisions of American government and could not be compromised. Moreover, there was a need to adjust the relations of these agencies in the Philippines from one of close union to one of complete independence.<sup>82</sup>

McKinley's assassination on September 14, 1901, and his subsequent replacement by Theodore Roosevelt did not change America's Philippine policy. At Roosevelt's request, Taft proceeded to Rome in June 1902 to meet Pope Leo XIII to try to solve the friar problem. The deal Taft eventually struck was to purchase 410,000 acres for roughly \$7.2 million in gold. Taft believed that unless serious efforts were made to get the Holy See to withdraw all friars, there would be no peace with the elite on whom the American

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<sup>81</sup>Willis, *Our Problem*, 192.

<sup>82</sup>Grunder and Livezey, *The Philippines and the United States*, 128.

policy of conciliation depended.<sup>83</sup> Taft's work continued, and so did progress on the Cooper Bill, which authorized the purchase of friar lands.<sup>84</sup>

Coupled with the Americans' movement to buy the friar lands and rid the Philippines of them for good were the schismatic movements within the Church itself. Gregorio Aglipay, an ordained priest of the Catholic Church, broke away from the Roman Church to establish his Independent Philippine Church (*Inglesia Filipina Independiente*). Also called the Aglipayan church, it grew out of the Filipino clergy's deep resentment against the Spanish government and the Catholic Church for failing to faithfully carry out the secularization of the church.<sup>85</sup>

The Aglipayan church was based on the Roman model and was essentially orthodox Catholicism with a nationalist bent, allowing full participation for the indigenous clergy who would join their ranks. Aglipay believed that those who joined his movement would also inherit the church buildings and property of the Catholic Church once the Americans had evicted the Spanish.<sup>86</sup> It was this promise and the fact that those who joined his movement also brought ownership of their parishes that fueled the explosive growth of the Aglipayan church.

As the Aglipayan movement built momentum, it began to gobble up the lands and parishes of the Catholic Church. It did so when a parish priest quit the Roman Church and joined the schismatics or when the congregation voted to do so. However, the purchase of the best friar estates posed difficulties, as did a legal challenge to the

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<sup>83</sup>John N. Schumacher, S. J., "Foreign Missionaries and the Political-Cultural Orientations of the Roman Catholic Church, 1910-1970," *Philippine Studies* 38 (1990): 152.

<sup>84</sup>Grunder and Livezey, *The Philippines and the United States*, 78-80.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>86</sup>Elliot, *The Philippines to the End of the Commission Government*, 58-59.

movement, which was heard before the Philippine Supreme Court on November 24, 1906. In the case of *Barlin v. Ramires*, the court held that the Catholic Church was the sole legal owner of all disputed churches and other parish properties.<sup>87</sup> Deprived of its main source of inspiration--the takeover of property--the Aglipayan movement lost momentum and became politically irrelevant within a decade.

The *Inglesia ni Cristo* (INC) is quite a different story. Founded in 1914 by the charismatic Felix Manalo, the *Iglesia ni Cristo* (Tagalog for "Church of Christ") claimed to be the one true Church of Christ. Manalo heralded himself as God's last prophet. Since its founding, it has grown to boast more than 200 congregations in some sixty-seven countries outside the Philippines, including a large and expanding community in the United States. From its humble beginnings, membership grew and current estimates range from three million to ten million members worldwide.

At its onset, the INC poured large amounts of resources and energies into condemning the Catholic Church. Like the Aglipayan movement, it offered dissatisfied Filipino Catholics an alternative to the friars' legacy. However, unlike the Aglipayan church, it did not rely on the seizure of Catholic property to make converts. Thus, when the Church won its legal battle the INC did not falter. It survived and grew and remains politically powerful today, a fact made clear in later chapters.

During this time the Catholic Church itself, made up of a few remaining foreign friars and loyal indigenous clergy, was being pressured on all sides. Schismatic movements such as Aglipay's and the INC, initially drew both property and parishioners away from the Church, and the influx of hostile Protestant missionaries seemed to only exacerbate the problem. The hostility between the Catholic Church and the American Protestant missionaries was real. Many missionaries came to the island with the apparent

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<sup>87</sup>Salamanca, *The Filipino Reaction to American Rule*, 104-105.

notion that their first and most imperative duty was to fight the Catholics.<sup>88</sup> But the Church was not going away without a fight, and it was prepared to do what was necessary to survive.

Though it is true that the Aglipayan schism, the INC, and the entrance of the American Protestant denominations shook the Church and caused a great deal of consternation, it survived weakened but basically intact. Under the Americans, the Church may not have been the force of legitimacy it once was, but it retained the nominal adherence of the immense majority of Filipinos in the twentieth century and thus remained a major potential force in Philippine society and politics.<sup>89</sup> The Church and its clergy were wise in the ways of political manipulation and realized that the American regime could be one of two things: the tool to break its hold on the people forever or the instrument allowing it to stay politically relevant and involved in the population's everyday lives. Initially, it seemed a difficult task but later the Catholic cause would be helped along by the Americans themselves.

At the outset, American representatives were distinctly hostile to the Church and were inclined to treat it as if it were identical to the discredited Spanish hierarchy. Further experience in the Philippines brought the Americans to see the immense power the Church wielded. While the land negotiations were ongoing, there grew an American desire to make use of the Church's power as a means of political control, rather than opposing it to keep it continuously against American rule.<sup>90</sup> The idea of using the Church to further American aims had existed since Taft's arrival. Taft and many of his associates fully appreciated the fact that the Catholic Church had done much

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<sup>88</sup>Willis, *Our Problem*, 222.

<sup>89</sup>Schumacher, "Foreign Missionaries," 151.

<sup>90</sup>Willis, *Our Problem*, 203.

to civilize and stabilize the Philippines. Moreover, Taft believed that the Church's great power and influence could still be used in advancing America's agenda.<sup>91</sup>

Using the Church to further American aims was a delicate task, helped along by the Church's willingness to find shelter in America's shadow. The Americans had only to be careful not to appear to favor the friars. Moreover, the Americans had to ensure the absolute separation of Church and State and carefully avoid anything resembling concessions to the Church.<sup>92</sup> It was a public policy keeping with the political traditions of the United States and also ensured the Filipino who had fought against the friars that the Americans were different and would not forsake their traditions or reinstall the friars to their positions of power.

At the same time, the vast majority of the population still needed and held affection toward their Catholic faith. This affection was used to foster pro-Americanism, making the United States' colonial occupation more tolerable to the Philippines. To accomplish both tasks meant a staunch and very public legal enunciation of the separation of Church and State, paralleling a much less public effort to buy friar lands, sell them to the natives, install American priests where the Spanish had once been, and support the native clergy who were pleasant towards American aims.

The United States was adroit at playing both sides of the card. The Filipinos, who were unable to throw off the yoke of American imperialism, benefited by ridding themselves of the corrupt friars, taking possession of their own lands, and maintaining the faith that had unified them politically, socially, and culturally for more than 300 years. The Church also took steps to continue their internal reforms, structuring the Church to better fit the Philippine model. The *Quae Mari Sinico* issued in Rome on September 17, 1902, increased the number of bishoprics, increased training for the indigenous priests,

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<sup>91</sup>Elliot, *The Philippines to the End of the Commission Government*, 45.

<sup>92</sup>Willis, *Our Problem*, 225.

and elevated their role in Church affairs. Other reforms included replacing the Spanish friar prelates with American bishops in 1903.<sup>93</sup>

The Manila Council of December 8-29, 1904, took up these and other matters and marked a real turning point in the Church's history in the Philippines. Since then, the Church's political progress has been slow but steady.<sup>94</sup> In the end, the Church had successfully rebuffed the Aglipayan schism, and after eighteen years of evangelical work the Protestants had converted only 124,575 Filipinos, or 1.3 percent of the population.<sup>95</sup> The failure by the Protestants or any of the schismatics to make significant progress in the long run is yet another testament to how deep the Church's roots ran in the Philippines.

Divorced from a direct role in political affairs, the Catholic Church attempted to remain relevant by having Filipino clergy attend to the needs of their parishes and parishioners as best they could. Sacraments still needed performing, schools still needed to be run, health care needed to be doled out, and the Church could still dominate in all the places where American forces had yet to penetrate. The Church continued to run its schools and universities, including two universities that remained the premier institutions for Philippine elite. Those were the University of Santo Thomas, the royal and pontifical university of the Philippines, and the Jesuit-established Ateneo de Manila University.

The Catholic Church had to share intellectual, political, and cultural space with the mass appeal of all things American. Americanism itself became sort of a religion, and Uncle Sam's American way was a moral ideal to be emulated. Identification with things American sometimes became as powerful as any religious affiliation. Church leaders struggled to find ways to remain relevant. Understanding that the stiffest

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<sup>93</sup>Salamanca, *The Filipino Reaction to American Rule*, 111-112.

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, 109.

competition for the hearts and minds of the populace was not with any anti-clerical ideology but with Americanism, they decided to adopt some aspects of the American way, such as the use of the rule of law to affect change and remain congruous to the everyday life of the nation's populace.

The Church also pushed parishioners to have a larger voice both in Church affairs and in social affairs. By doing this, it was hoped that Catholics would garner greater political leverage through greater political activity. The logic was that the more the Church expanded parishioners' involvement, the greater the Church's influence would be in secular political institutions.<sup>96</sup> It would take nearly three decades of constant effort, but eventually it yielded success.

Three decades after the Americans had established control, the Catholic Church managed to regain some political relevancy. The 1930s saw a rejuvenation of Church importance to politics, as Catholic scholars and the secular leadership were brought together in an exchange of ideas. This was the result of the strong foundation and the kind of deeply rooted influence the Church enjoyed in the Philippines, along with the fact that the Catholics still held administrative power in the premier universities. The students they produced were still Catholic, and the majority of the scholars, politicians, and government workers were all still Catholic. It was reasonable, therefore, to assume that when the United States began to get serious about transitional control of its colony to indigenous hands it would turn to the best and brightest of the nation, who just happened to be graduates of Catholic institutions who were influenced considerably by the Church.

In the legal arena, the push for independence was spearheaded by the efforts of Sergio Osmena and Manuel Roxas, who led a mission to the United States between 1931 and 1933. The United States passed the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Law, which provided granting the Philippines independence after a ten-year period. Due to some objectionable

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<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 134.



provisions, the Philippine Legislature rejected it, and in 1934 Manuel Quezon, himself a graduate of the University of Santo Thomas, led another mission to the United States to secure passage of the Tydings-McDuffie Law, which provided, among other things, establishment of the Philippine Commonwealth before granting independence.

The culmination of these efforts was the 1934 Commonwealth Constitution, the product of the finest Catholic minds assembled from the nation's parishes and universities.<sup>97</sup> From 1898 to 1934, the Catholic Church had been attacked, suppressed, and marginalized by the Americans. The Commonwealth Constitution was proof that the Church was back. It was again a force of legitimacy in the Philippines. The Commonwealth Constitution is still called the first truly "Christian doctrine" of national law.<sup>98</sup> This document was to serve as the law of an independent Philippines.

Remarkably, the Catholic Church survived the ideological onslaught of American government, military, and Protestant denominations to reemerge in 1934 as the co-author the new constitution. It was positioned once again as a force of legitimacy in Philippine politics. Unfortunately, the Commonwealth government outlined in the constitution would never be truly tested. Japanese aggression was growing in East Asia and would spill over into Southeast Asia and the Philippines. Faced with a new enemy, the time for enlightened law in the Philippines had not come. Now was a time for war and national survival.

The price of being America's ally in Asia was high for the Philippines. More than 200,000 lives were lost fighting the Japanese, and the material destruction of Manila and other important cities was almost complete. The fighting was costly, but as they had so many times in the past the Filipino people prevailed, their tenacity as fighters and their survival as a people unquestioned. Their reward was independence. The United States

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<sup>97</sup>Zaide, *Catholicism in the Philippines*, 202.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, 210.

kept its agreement to grant independence. On July 4, 1946, the Philippines declared independence and the third Philippine Republic was inaugurated.

To help the newly independent nation, the Americans offered the Philippines a “mini-Marshall Plan,” of \$600 million per year.<sup>99</sup> The amount was considerably less than the European nations were offered. And by the time the money was distributed, the amount was smaller than that offered to rebuild Japan. The miniscule help the United States offered to its former colony and its staunchest ally in Asia bordered on insulting, but the Americans added more salt to the Philippines’ wounds.

In 1946, before a single dollar was earmarked for the Philippines, the United States extracted a number of preferential provisions from the nation through two major agreements. The first was the Rehabilitation Act (mini-Marshall Plan), and the second was the Trade Act (Bell Act). Both were implemented in 1946. Provisions in both bills required the Philippines to revise their constitution and civil, criminal, and trade laws so that American citizens and business interests were granted parity with their Philippine counterparts in economic matters.<sup>100</sup> The latter was reaffirmed in the Laurel-Langley Act of 1956. The problems were made all the more intense by a weakened sense of identity and national morale, weakened by the pre-war American occupation, the Japanese onslaught, and the diluted Catholic Church and its institutions. If the Philippines were to rebuild and if its poorest elements were to be lifted up, the nation would need a revitalized Church.

During the Spanish era, the Catholic Church had provided governance and guidance, and during the revolution it had provided leadership. However, the American colonial period had effectively weakened the Church-State cooperation that was endemic

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<sup>99</sup>E. San Juan Jr., *Allegories of Resistance: The Philippines at the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century* (Manila: University of Philippines Press, 1994), 93.

<sup>100</sup>David Joel Steinber, *The Philippines: A Singular and a Plural Place*, 2d ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), 20.

in Philippine society. The brief Commonwealth period illustrated the Church's resilience and its ability to reclaim its spot as a partner with the Philippine government. It survived the Japanese onslaught and helped the Philippines become the first colony in Asia to gain independence. In so doing, it attracted the respect, admiration, and attention of leaders and revolutionary movements across the region.<sup>101</sup>

The next few decades would witness a reinvigoration of the Catholic Church worldwide. Vatican II, Liberation Theology, and the rise to power of Ferdinand Marcos would all serve, in different ways, to push the Church's activities to the forefront of Philippine politics. The culmination would be the Church's role in the People Power revolution, which played a significant role in bringing down an authoritarian regime and bringing the Church back to the forefront of Philippine politics.

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 46

### CHAPTER III

#### FROM LIBERATION TO DESPOTISM

The Japanese occupation did more than destroy lives and property. It created a new threat and a new challenge to political stability in the post-war Philippine political landscape, particularly in central Luzon. This instability, greeted head on by the government and the Church, was the maturation of the peasant unrest that fomented nearly a decade earlier at the height of American colonial involvement.

Since the Spanish colonial era, much of the arable land in the Philippines had been owned by the Catholic Church or by a small number of elites. These landowners worked out what was in their minds a mutually beneficial relationship with peasants, who served as tenants on the land. The peasants and the landowners had a paternalistic relationship. The peasants cleared and cultivated the land and the landowner shared in the harvests and provided loans to the families when they needed extra funds. The landlords also sought cooperation with the Church to ensure the spiritual needs of the tenants were satisfied. The American colonial period resulted in a further disintegration of this relationship.

In addition to the Church-State ties being weakened, the American presence brought a fundamental shift in the landlord-tenant relationship. Before the Americans' arrival, these large *haciendas* had little support outside of their local communities. The tenants and landowners needed each other, and this promoted a bond between landlords and peasants. The landlords extended protection and patronage to the peasants in return for their labor. But with the Americans pushing capitalism and demanding cash crops from every acre of land, the large landowners now had an outside market for their goods, as well as an outside source of income. For the landlords, doing it the American way was

more profitable and any harm was passed on to the peasants. Indeed, the need to appease the peasants was less and less important.<sup>1</sup>

It was when the landowners stopped taking care of their peasant tenants that trouble began to brew. The landlords' failure to take care of the peasants was seen by many as an affront to the tradition of *utang na loob*. This concept is loosely translated as a feeling of gratitude, obligation, or reciprocity for those who exchange services, or as one favor deserving another. In the past, landlords gave loans and looked after their workers. Now they increasingly ignored them and demanded a larger share of the harvests while giving less and less in return. Faced with these increasingly harsh living and working conditions, the peasant tenants began to protest. Unfortunately, they had no legal recourse or outlet for their anger and frustration. Small, unorganized groups of peasants attacked landlords, burned crops, and sometimes refused to harvest the crops.<sup>2</sup> Such acts had limited success. Landowners brought in strikebreakers or other peasants and used violence to compel their tenants to work.

Increasingly, peasants realized their shared predicament and common grievances. They learned that they had little power individually or in small groups. To have power, they needed to organize and band together.<sup>3</sup> Several organizations sprang up during the 1930s. Among the most prominent of the peasant groups during that period was the KPMP (*Kalipunang Pambansa ng mga Magsasaka sa Pilipinas*), the National Society of Peasants in the Philippines, and the AMT (*Aguman ding Maldin Talapagob*), the General Workers' Union, which was also affiliated with the Socialist Party. There was also the emergence in 1930 of the PKP (*Partido Komunista ng Philipina*), the Communist Party

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<sup>1</sup>Benedict J. Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977), 22-23.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>3</sup>Leonard Davis, *Revolutionary Struggle in the Philippines* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 37.

of the Philippines. By working together, fears of eviction, arrest, or reprisals were decreased.

Government fears of Communism germinated during this time period and accelerated in the aftermath of World War II in what has since been termed a “red scare.” Fears of Communism that would later dominate the decade following World War II would have their genesis during this time, but the reality was something quite different. Initially, the PKP lacked strong ties with the peasantry. Moreover, even after the consolidation of the Socialist Party and the PKP in 1938, the number of Communists in the peasant movement was relatively small. The Communists and the peasants shared common enemies, which made them allies. Their enemies included the landlords, the Philippine Constabulary, which was practically an army for landowners, and local politicians. The courts did not offer any recourse, as the judges were often members of the elite or appointed by them.<sup>4</sup>

The Japanese invasion of the Philippines in 1941 gave the peasants a new enemy to combat. Unfortunately for the peasants, the problems with the landlords and the Philippine government were merely compounded during the years of Japanese occupation. How the movement would have progressed in the absence of the Japanese threat is unknown. What is known is that after the Japanese invasion, the peasants’ resentment grew even more towards the government and landowners who colluded with the Japanese during the war.

The events of World War II eroded whatever good faith may have previously existed between the peasants and the landlords.<sup>5</sup> The Church, however, was never one of the peasants’ targets. Though the Church remained largely conservative, it was also anti-Japanese. Filipinos on the whole thought their God and morality were superior to those

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<sup>4</sup>Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*, 55.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 66.

of the Japanese and their emperor.<sup>6</sup> Any government, colonial or otherwise, that did not embrace the Christian faith was not legitimate, no matter how many Filipinos died or suffered under its control. However, the Church lacked the will and the resources to launch an effective counter-insurgency, and the clergy avoided taking up arms against the Japanese. Resistance, in Luzon at least, fell to peasant organizations.

As peasants watched the Japanese rape, pillage, and murder their way through Luzon, many turned to guerilla warfare as a way to resist. Resistance against the Japanese grew from previous peasant movements, with most of the anti-Japanese members coming from the KPMP and other peasant organizations. The new united front against the Japanese was called the *Hukbo ng Bayan laban sa Hapon* (People's Anti-Japanese Army), also known as the *Hukbalahaps* or simply the Huks.<sup>7</sup>

During the war, the Huks' main goals were to harass the Japanese and police the countryside in order to establish some semblance of law and order where none existed. This was a necessary function because the Philippine Constabulary and the landlords had switched loyalties and worked in concert with the Japanese. Banditry and crime went unchecked unless groups such as the Huks made an effort to police areas under their watch. Yet the Huks were not a police force. They were also not initially much of a fighting force. They were poorly armed, poorly trained, and poorly organized, but they learned through experience and often obtained their weapons from the soldiers they killed. They gradually developed into an effective guerilla force. Luis Turac, a member of the Socialist and PKP parties, became the Huks' overall commander.<sup>9</sup> Turac

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<sup>6</sup>Marel N. Francisco and Fe Maria C. Arrilola, *The History of the Burgis* (Quezon City: GCF Books, 1987), 120.

<sup>7</sup>Richard J. Kessler, *Rebellion and Repression in the Philippines* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 16.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

embodied the continuity between the peasant movement of the 1930s and the Huks of the 1940s.

Throughout the war, the Huks put up a fierce resistance in areas they controlled. Attacking the Japanese in small groups, they then disappeared into the jungles. It was dangerous work, as the Japanese were fierce in their retaliation against suspected Huk villages. However, the Huks never gave up and even helped the Americans who returned in 1945 to push the Japanese from the Philippines. Fighting side-by-side with the Americans, the Huks thought that if they were valuable allies, they would be able to return to their normal lives after the war with a government that honored and respected their contribution to the Philippine nation. This was not the case.

After the war, the Huks were not honored. Quite the contrary, during the closing months of the war the Americans and the Philippine authorities turned against the Huks. The Americans feared Communist subversion and wanted the Huks disarmed.<sup>9</sup> Those who refused were arrested, persecuted, and attacked. The Americans, the Philippine government, and later even the Catholic Church issued propaganda that exaggerated the threat of Communism in the Philippines. As the evidence showed, the PKP had little impact on the Huks' political direction and ideology. Pushing for equanimity in harvests, enforcement of the constitutional bill of rights, and fairness in elections hardly qualified as Marxist, but that was the thrust of Huk ideology in 1946.<sup>10</sup>

Still, the Huks were looking for a way to peacefully end their armed conflicts with the government. The events of 1946 changed that. The Congressional elections held in 1946 proved to be the watershed in Huk-Philippine government relations. Six candidates fielded by the Huks won seats in the new government, and for a time it seemed that the Huks would put down their weapons in favor of a political settlement with the

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 34.

<sup>10</sup>Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*, 171.



government. However, the government would not accept the election results. With little evidence, they accused the Huks of election violence and fraud. The new president, Manuel Roxas, prohibited the six Huk-sponsored candidates from taking their seats in the Congress.<sup>11</sup> The Huks were outraged and returned to guerilla warfare, this time against a familiar enemy, the Philippine government.

The peak of Huk activity was between 1949 and 1951. Estimates of Huk strength during this time period range from eleven to fifteen thousand members.<sup>12</sup> Yet the Huks' efforts, both civilian and military, suffered from a chronic lack of funding. There was never enough food, clothing, ammunition, or other supplies. Moreover, by 1951 the Catholic Church had entered as a third party into the fight against Huk insurgents in Luzon. As their efforts helped that fight, the Huks rapidly declined.

The constant pressure on the Huks from the government, the Americans, and the Church took its toll. By 1951, the guerillas suffered from "battle fatigue" and were simply tired of fighting and wanted to return to their fields.<sup>13</sup> The Philippine military, with the help of the Americans, applied more and more pressure to Huk units by killing, capturing, and liquidating them in increasing numbers. United States assistance to the Philippines during the years from 1951 through 1956 totaled \$500 million.<sup>14</sup> American aid provided roughly half of the funds used to fight the Huks.

The Americans wanted the Huks suppressed to further their own interests, which were more geo-political than altruistic towards the Philippines. The United States wanted to make sure the Philippines did not fall to the ideological threat of Communism that

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 150.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 210.

<sup>13</sup>Davis, *Revolutionary Struggle in the Philippines*, 41-42.

<sup>14</sup> Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*, 244.

surfaced in Southeast Asia after the war. The colonial era was over, not just in the Philippines, but also in other parts of Southeast Asia, where indigenous movements sought to break the chains of colonial rule. The new anti-colonial movements were often spearheaded by ideologues who absorbed the teachings and tactics of Marx, Lenin, and Mao.

Communism had claimed China. It was now threatening American interests in South Korea, and minor Communist tremors were being felt in Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, and Indonesia. The United States did not want to lose the Philippines as China had been lost. For its part, the post-war government in Manila did not want to be toppled by Communist insurgents and sought help from all sectors, including the Catholic Church, to counter the threat.

Government reforms, although modest, created a feeling of progress among those Huks who were tired of fighting. It seemed that the government, particularly of President Ramon Magsaysay, wanted to reach out to the Huks and bring them back into the fold of normal Philippine society. He used a characteristic stick and carrot approach couched in frank language. He was quoted as saying to the Huks, "As guardians of our nation's safety, it is our duty to hunt you down and kill you if you do not surrender. But, as fellow Filipinos, we would rather help you return to a happy Filipino way of life."<sup>15</sup> However, the government's work would have been less effective without the Catholic Church's cooperation. Magsaysay and his government turned to the Church for help against the Huks and other groups that tried to destabilize the government.

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<sup>15</sup>Alvin H. Scaff, *The Philippine Answer to Communism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1955), vi.

Accepting the call to service against the Huks after 1946, the Catholic Church became a more aggressive pressure group that consolidated its conservative elements.<sup>16</sup> The Church, though largely left alone by the Huks, now became active in the drive to force Huk acquiescence to the government's will. The partnership is not surprising, considering members of the new Philippine leadership were products of Catholic universities and strict religious education and saw the Church as the one organization that could protect their "flock," and thus their constituents, from the evils of Communism.<sup>17</sup>

In the fight against the Huks and Communism, the Church became politically active.<sup>18</sup> Few organizations turned out to be as staunchly anti-Communist as the Catholic Church. It was willingly drawn into the hysteria of the "red scare" and did everything it could to promote the cause in the parishes and to ensure that "solid Catholics trembled with holy indignation at the mere mention of Communism."<sup>19</sup> In the fight against the Huks and against Communism in many forms, the Church became politically active.<sup>20</sup>

The Catholic Church made an effective and valuable ally for several important reasons. First, it was a grassroots level organization operating at the same societal level as the insurgents. Second, it was anti-Communist to the core. Marx's godless ideology had no place and no support in the conservative Catholic Church of the mid-twentieth century. Furthermore, while it was true that the Americans trained and equipped the Philippine military and provided funds to the government, both actions helping counter

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<sup>16</sup>Mary Rosario Battung, Liberato C. Bautista, Sophia Lizares-Bodegon, and Alic G. Guillermo, *Religion and Society: Towards A Theology of Struggle* (Manila: Crossroads Publications, 1998), 101.

<sup>17</sup>Wilfredo Fabros, *The Church and Its Social Involvement in the Philippines 1930-1972* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 1988), 23.

<sup>18</sup>Francisco and Arrilola, *The History of the Burgis*, 178.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 146.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 78.

insurgency, American influence could not penetrate the Communists' grassroots level organization. Here is where the Church proved invaluable.

The Church was at its core a grassroots organization, and the best place to observe the actions and operations of the Communist enemy. Their parishes dotted the landscape and their parishioners came from the same segments of society from which the Communists attempted to recruit their members. The Church had both the motivation and the ability to inform on the Communists.

One of the first and most effective actions taken by the Church was the establishment of organizations that worked against the Huks' base of support, including quite a few organizations that actively competed for members from the poorest segments of society. These were the same constituent groups the Huks targeted in their recruiting efforts. Among these organizations was the Church-established Catholic Welfare Organization (CWO), created in 1945. The CWO was meant to assist in all phases of relief work after the war. Later, it took on the role of an anti-Huk political front.

In 1947, the Institute of Social Order and the Young Christian Works Association were created by the Church along the same lines as the CWO, recruiting members from various segments of society, including the poorer elements that the Huks also targeted. A few years later in June 1950, Fathers Walter Hogan and Juan Tan started the Federation of Free Workers (FFW), a democratic and specifically *anti-Communist* labor union. Jermias Monetymayor and Fernando Esguerra established the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) three years later along the same lines. Both the FFW and the FFF were staunchly anti-Huk, and the efforts of both the FFW and the FFF helped stem the tide of peasants who were joining the Huks.<sup>21</sup>

With fewer peasants taking up arms against the government, their energies were now used to serve the Church-inspired aims, including rebuilding the Philippine nation-

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<sup>21</sup>Fabros, *The Church and Its Social Involvement in the Philippines*, 44.

state and legitimating the ruling regime. It should be noted that the important aspect of these and other Church-sponsored organizations is that they provided an alternative outlet for energies that might have otherwise been employed by the Huks. At the same time, these Church-inspired grassroots organizations served as effective intelligence-gathering arms for the Philippine government, which was militarily engaged against the Huks.

After two decades of helping the government counter the Huks and other leftist causes and helping stabilize the situation in the post-war Philippines, the Church possessed little in the way of political clout to show for it. Indeed, the Church's leadership role against the Huks did not win them new political powers in Manila. Instead, the Church leadership sat as politically weak as it was before the onset of World War II.

The Philippine government, meanwhile, continued to strengthen its ties with Washington. At the same time, the traditional Church-State cooperation that characterized most of Philippine history progressively deteriorated. A situation existed where the government was more than willing to use the Church and its resources to promote its own agenda, but it was unwilling to share power or influence either publicly or privately with the Church or its bishops.

The attitude displayed by the government's leadership reflected the real nature of legitimacy in the Philippines. In the past, the government had enjoyed legitimacy because of and through the Church. Now the Church's role had declined to such an extent that the government did not seek, nor did it need, the Church's direct support to remain in power. The Philippine government was now legitimate because of the political relationship it enjoyed with the United States. Legally, it had an American-style constitution, its laws and policies mimicking those of America.

Militarily, its forces were propped up by United States aid. The threat of Communism had been neutralized and the United State provided the arms, infrastructure, and money with which to build a new republic. The charisma of leaders such as Manuel

Roxas, Elpidio Quirion, Ramon Magsaysay, Carlos Garcia, and Diosdado Macapagal was also sufficient enough to carry elections and give each a mandate to govern. Under their leadership and with American dollars, the Filipino standard of living was raised, meeting the utilitarian standard of legitimacy. The Church was in no position to compete with American influence. If anything, the Church and its traditional institutions stood in the way of “progress.”

The United States, with its military power and economic support, usurped more than the Weberian types of legitimating functions once enjoyed by the Church. For more than 300 years the Catholic Church was the institution that provided the common ideational values and norms for the diverse Filipino population, even to the point of constructing identity. For the overwhelming majority, to be Filipino was to be Catholic. The situation was reversed as illustrated in figure 12. The American presence influenced norms and values, both indirect determinants of legitimacy. By the mid-1960s, America began to assume a pseudo-religious role as well, and not simply by supplying hundreds of American Protestant missionaries. American ideals, ideology, and pop culture flooded into the post-war Philippines. Everything from blue jeans to American flags on *jeepneys* crowded Manila’s streets.<sup>22</sup> But Americanism had its limits.

Crowded streets, kids in blue jeans, and American dollars flooding Manila were not representative of the Philippine experience in its totality. The rising towers of Makati, financed by foreign investment, were in stark contrast to the shantytowns found in Manila and in the rest of the country. Elites may have enjoyed the post-war economic boom and the views from their American sedans, but most Filipinos were poor. They did not enjoy the luxury of wearing American clothing and eating in fast food restaurants or

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<sup>22</sup>The colorful and often gaudy *jeepney* is a staple of Philippine roads. Originally constructed from surplus and leftover American JEEPS, the *jeepney* is the primary mass transport vehicle across the archipelago. Although no longer constructed from surplus American JEEPS, the *jeepney* still rolls off the assembly line maintaining the trademark characteristics of its forbearer.

benefit from the money coming from the mini-economy produced by American military bases.

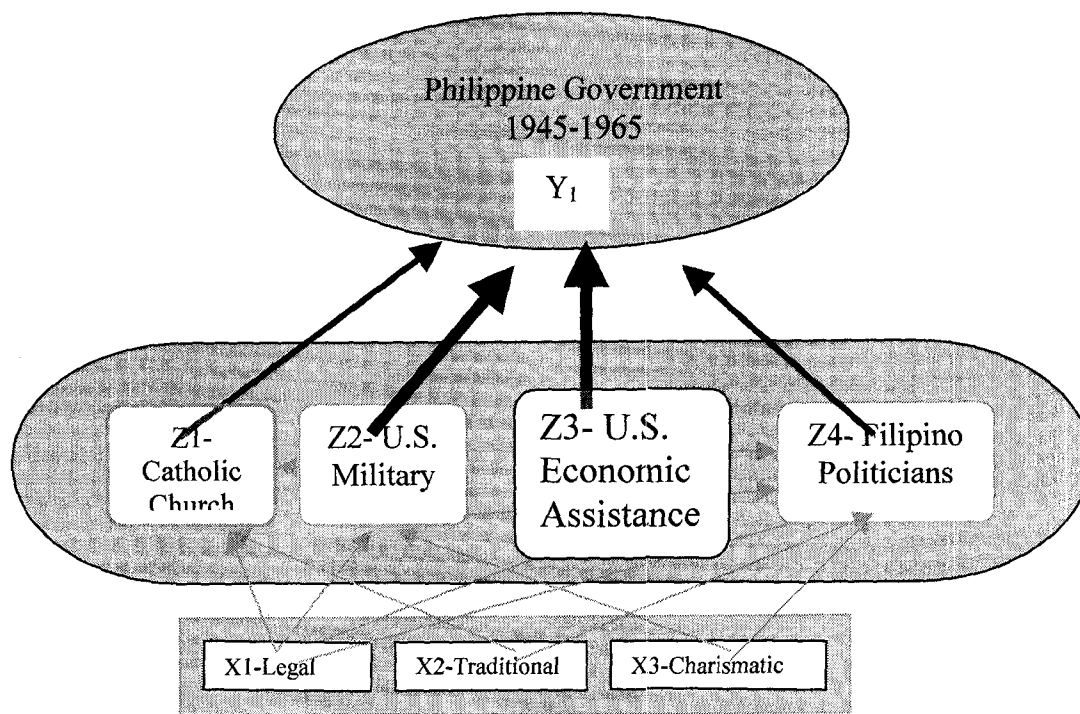


Fig. 12. Legitimacy Model of the Philippines During Independence, 1945-1965

Most Filipinos barely lived at the subsistence level, and Americanism offered them little hope. No matter how much political support the United States offered Philippine administrations, it could not address the desperate needs of the average Filipino who was trapped in poverty. America could not solve the problem of the Philippine poor. However, one institution was in a perfect position to do just that—the Catholic Church.

It was among the poorest elements of Philippine society, by far the majority, that the Church found a new road to political relevance and a return to its place as the most prominent and important mediating variable in determining governmental legitimacy. The impetus for this new direction was the Second Vatican Council, more commonly known as Vatican II, a landmark series of ecumenical meetings sponsored by the Catholic

Church from 1963 to 1965 that would challenge Catholic leadership and laity across the world to refocus their efforts on capturing the hearts and minds of their flocks. Political relevance for the Church might not have been one of the main objectives of Vatican II, but it was certainly one of the most important results for the Philippine Catholic Church.

The Second Vatican Council was called almost 100 years after the Church convened a similar council of its hierarchy in the nineteenth century. It was termed Vatican II by the press, and the documents and changes to the Church that would emerge out of two years of meetings would fundamentally alter the Church in a variety of ways, including its role as a force for social action. Vatican II was the idea of Pope John XXIII, who announced to the world in January 1959 his ambitious plans to convene the council. It is said that the inspiration came to him during a time of prayer, a fitting beginning to the single most important event for the Catholic Church in the twentieth century. The first Vatican Council was held from 1869 to 1870, and many observers believed that this would be the final council the Church would convene because Pope Pius IX had promulgated the dogma of infallibility.<sup>23</sup>

Vatican II was convened on October 11, 1962, in Rome. It was for the Catholic Church an “opening of the windows” and a time for *aggiornamento*, or bringing the Church up to date.<sup>24</sup> It has since been called the “greatest religious conference of all time,” a spectacle of 2,600 bishops, abbots, and heads of religious orders.<sup>25</sup> The Pope welcomed input from all levels of the Church, encouraging the members to offer suggestions as to what sorts of ideas the council should tackle. It was a time to look

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<sup>23</sup>Robert McAfee Brown, *Observer in Rome: A Protestant Report on The Vatican Council* (London: T. H. Brickell & Son Ltd., 1964), 1.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>25</sup>Paul Blanshard, *Paul Blanshard on Vatican II* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), 3.



internally, and also to rejuvenate efforts to reach out to non-Catholics.<sup>26</sup> The Council was successful in many areas, even after the death of Pope John, because the spirit of the Council was continued by his successor, Pope Paul VI.

Pope Paul VI carried Vatican II to fruition, and the thoughts and ideas coming out of the meetings would impact the Philippine Catholic Church on numerous fronts. Vatican II was ecumenical, and its essential thrust was to address the Catholic Church's declining relevancy worldwide. It also sought to update Church procedures, rites, and other aspects of Catholic doctrine that had remained relatively unchanged since the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. In many ways, Pope Paul was even more ambitious than John XXII. He not only made the legacy of John his own but also tackled the Roman Curia, the main source of the Pope's power and authority within the Church.<sup>27</sup>

At the most basic level, Vatican II attempted to drag Catholic thought, liturgy, and the sacraments out of the middle ages and into the twentieth century, making them more accessible and appealing to the masses and more relevant to the needs of the world's poor. Vatican II was an attempt to stem the tide of not only Protestant challenges, which were far more effective at winning converts with their use of charismatic movements, but also stop the increasing migration of tens of thousands away from the Church and into the arms of the numerous Communist movements and their godless doctrine.

The two-year Vatican II conference brought many fundamental changes to the Church, including a renewed interest in helping the poor overcome poverty. It also

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<sup>26</sup>Indeed, Pope John XXIII believed so strongly in this reunion of Christendom that he created the Secretariat for Christian Unity whose sole job was to, in an ecumenical fashion, reach out to Protestant denominations

<sup>27</sup>The working power of the Church is the Roman Curia, made up of twelve Congregations, three Tribunals, and six offices and legitimized by Canons 242-264. Its membership at the time of Vatican II was predominately Italian. The Curia is described this way in *Christus Dominus* 9: "In exercising supreme, full, and immediate power in the universal Church, the Roman pontiff makes use of the departments of the Roman Curia which, therefore, perform their duties in his name and with his authority for the good of the churches and in the service of the sacred pastors."

empowered traditional elements of society whose voices had been silenced by both poverty and authoritarianism.<sup>28</sup> After Vatican II, the Church espoused particular economic policies that were nationalist and pro-worker.<sup>29</sup> In many ways, it placed an authoritative stamp on embryonic Church-sponsored anti-poverty movements already active throughout the world, including a nascent movement in the Philippines.

The social involvement that grew out of Vatican II also emerged as the concept of liberation theology. Liberation theology is described by Vitaliano R. Gorospe as originating in Latin America as “a theological pastoral movement” that spread to other countries in the third world and in certain circles, in the first world. Liberation theology refers to a special concern for the poor and the victims of oppression, which in turn begets a commitment to justice. Moreover, it designates a theological reflection centered on the biblical themes of liberation and freedom.<sup>30</sup>

Ironically, liberation theology had much in common with the Marxist ideology the Catholic Church opposed. It shared a sense of empowerment for the poor and a desire to combat the problem of class exploitation, and its target was usually the ruling elite, who were seen as rich and out of touch. Also like Marxism, liberation theology had its birth in European humanist thought. Where it differed was its reexamination of the mandate found in the Christian New Testament, a collection of books believed to be the doctrine given by Jesus to his apostles and his earthly church.

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<sup>28</sup>For more detailed readings on Vatican II, see Michael A. Davies, *Pope John's Council* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1977); George A. Lindbeck, *The Future of Roman Catholic Theology: Vatican II-Catalyst for Change* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970); Robert Kaiser, *Inside the Council: The Story of Vatican II* (London: Burns & Oates, 1963); Anthony D. Lee, ed., *Vatican II: The Theological Dimension* (Washington: Thomist Press, 1963).

<sup>29</sup>Gretchen Casper, *Fragile Democracies: The Legacies of Authoritarian Rule* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995).

<sup>30</sup>Vitaliano R. Gorospe, S.J., “The Vatican Instruction and Liberation Theology in the Philippines,” *Philippine Studies*, vol. 33 (second quarter 1985): 153.

Born in European thought, liberation theology was nurtured in Latin America, where remnants of the Spanish colonial empire had left the Catholic Church permeating all segments of society, much as it did in the Philippines.<sup>31</sup> In the twentieth century, however, the Catholic Church in Latin America found itself often aligned with leftist groups against authoritarian regimes and an emphasis was placed on the political dimension of their faith. Through liberation theology, the Catholic Church was now seen as an institution of social criticism, not simply a place to preach the gospel.

Liberation theology, including those ideas expressed by Gustavo Gutierrez, author of *A Theology of Liberation*, contended that all theology was dynamic and was an ongoing exercise involving contemporary insights into knowledge, humanity, and history. The key is the ongoing nature of theology. The Church realized through liberation theology that the teachings of Jesus were not interpreted in a dogmatic way. Indeed, they could not be if they were to be responsive to the modern needs of the poor. The Church recognized that the poor, though they may be promised to inherit the earth in the latter days, needed their situation addressed now. Jesus had shown special attention to the poor during his time on earth, and the Church as his temporal representative must do the same in theory and in practice.

Gutierrez argued in his writings that religion and theology were to not just to be learned but also practiced. This was not a novel idea in the Philippines, where the Catholic Church's theology had steadily mixed with secular activities for centuries. Indeed, throughout the Spanish colonial period the Philippine Catholic Church had taken

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<sup>31</sup>The literature on the theology of liberation is vast. For more information, see Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973); David Lehmann, *Democracy and Development in Latin America: Economics, Politics, and Religion in the Post-War Period* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990); Rosemary R. Ruerther, *Liberation Theology: Human Hope Confronts Christian History and American Power* (New York: Paulist Press, 1972); Philip McManus and Gerald Schlabach, eds., *Relentless Persistence: Nonviolent Action in Latin America* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1991).

theology out of the pulpit and organized an entire nation-state around it. It certainly was not the idea shared by later liberation theologians, but it is difficult to argue that it did not try to make Christ's doctrine manifest in the physical world. The post-Vatican II situation gave the Philippine Catholic Church another opportunity to "do" theology, both in the Philippines and across the world by organizing and lifting the poor and politically empowering them in the process.

Liberation theology quickly made the leap from its early incubation in Latin America to Southeast Asia and the Philippines. Given the shared Spanish and Catholic tradition between Latin America and the Philippines, it is not surprising that this theology appealed to the Philippine Catholic Church which, weakened politically after the war, needed an avenue to regain its relevance. The poor, whether in Latin America or the Philippines, were the beneficiaries of liberation theology. The enemies and targets of this new theology were typically capitalists, as well as their cronies in the government who were seen as exploitive and greedy. Liberation theology seemed tailor-made to the Philippines, for there the poor were plentiful and so were capitalist targets.

The Church, traditionally a loyal ally to the government, worked hand-in-hand with many of these officials to help suppress Communist rebels like the Huks. However, they had not reaped any rewards for themselves or their parishioners. Moreover, since 1934 the Catholic Church had remained active through the establishment of their social organizations and outreaches, as well as against the Huks. These and other efforts were essential in helping keep the Philippine nation-state together, a nation-state that throughout its history had a natural tendency to fragment.

The Church never abandoned the traditional role it had in identity formation and continued to remain and foster national unity in the remotest reaches of the Philippine archipelago. But in the political realm, secular politicians took advantage of the Church, and they had their influence on legitimacy curtailed. The Philippine government cared more about American military and financial help than the Church's support. Much like

their revolutionary predecessors, Philippine politicians took the Church's support for granted.

Keeping the Church politically marginalized was not easy, and history illustrated that it was impossible to dampen its influence or maintain the political distance indefinitely. The Church itself was not about to sit idly by while its political fortunes grew progressively weaker. Vatican II was the proverbial nod from the hierarchy in Rome that the Philippine Church needed to move forward politically, and the theology of liberation served as a blueprint for the Church to reclaim some influence.

The new avenue of political power was quite different from the friar-based politics of the Spanish, and it did not cater exclusively to the elites as it had done in the post-war years. As the rich got richer and the poor got poorer in the Philippines, the Church took advantage of this inequality. It did not promise an equality of outcome because it was not in the business of economics, but it did appeal to the poor socially and politically in ways that other organizations could not. The Church, as the center of the community, rallied communal resources around the common goals of economic development or something as simple as alleviating the hunger of the villagers. Doing these simple things allowed the Church to accomplish two complementary goals that were in line with the new Vatican doctrine. The first was helping the poor lift their standard of living and in the process accomplishing the second, which was the reemergence of the Church into a politically relevant and powerful social organization.

Liberation theology unfolded relatively quickly in the Philippines. The Church, for the most part at the parish level, began to change its tone. Mass was performed as it had been for centuries, but the message coming from the priests now reflected the new attitude of liberation theology. The message emphasized that God was not passive, but was dynamically involved on behalf of the poor and destitute. Likewise, the Church was there to help organize them, to give the poor a voice, and to ensure that the government would not and could not violate the social contract with the people that they were

entrusted to protect. Indeed, the Philippine Catholic Church sought to preach, instruct, and act in accordance with the very foundation of liberation theology: "To know God is to do justice."<sup>32</sup>

The Philippine poor were receptive. Politicians were forced to follow the Church's lead in addressing the issues important to the poor. This would have been impossible had the Church not motivated them to get out to vote and ensure their voices were heard. Even in contemporary Philippine politics, astute politicians realized that addressing the issues related to the poor was one of the surest ways to win an election. For example, in 1997 and 2000, public opinion polls conducted by the Social Weather Station (SWS) found that 82 percent of the population felt that helping the poor was "very" important to any candidacy.<sup>33</sup> In 2000, the SWS found that helping the poor rose in importance to 91 percent. The issue topped the list of characteristics the people wanted in their politicians.<sup>34</sup> As a related corollary, the surveys further found that 74 percent believed a candidate should possess religion and the values associated with being a man or woman of God.

Public opinions polls consistently illustrate that issues related to the Philippine poor are at the top of the list of concerns that politicians must address should they desire a mandate at the polls. These numbers can be credited in large part to the work of the Church, which during the 60s, 70s, and 80s brought the poor to political relevance. The Church made the poor a large block of votes through their investment of time, money, and manpower into organization and social programs. The work paid dividends in later

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<sup>32</sup>Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 9.

<sup>33</sup>Pedro Laylo, ed. *Filipino Voting Attitudes and Opinion: Selected Findings from SWS 1984-2001 National Surveys* (Quezon City, Philippines: SWS, 2001), 32.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 34.

years when it was the poor who were called upon to rally for the election of the Church's own slate of congressional delegates and presidential candidates.

Many factors may go into explaining the continued rise in the importance of issues related to the poor, but there is no doubt that since Vatican II the Catholic Church's constant emphasis on the poor and empowering them at the polls is reflected in national surveys. As an astute political body, the Church and its representatives in the parishes, missions, and educational institutions capitalized on those issues and garnered political power at the polls. The Church realized that few national politicians canvassed the vast slums of the Philippines. Thus, the Church played a role as the mediating variable between the poorer masses and the candidates. The Church could either support or deny a candidate votes.

As Vatican II and the theology of liberation made the Philippine Catholic Church politically relevant again, there was a need among some more conservative elements of the Church to balance this emerging power. Even from the Vatican, officials felt a need to strike a balance between affirmative policy measures and restraining clergy from being overly proactive in the political realm.

Simply put, the Vatican feared that there was too much activity on the part of its priests. While it endorsed a struggle against tyrannical governments, the Vatican warned its clergy against direct involvement in politics and any efforts to inject Marxism into the Church's work on behalf of the poor.<sup>35</sup> The Vatican apprehension stopped short of condemning the efforts of the Philippine Catholic Church, stating that civil disobedience campaigns like those that were to be employed against politicians and led by Catholic bishops in the Philippines were in keeping with the Church's doctrine and worldview.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>“Vatican Endorses Struggle by the Oppressed Against Tyranny: Clergy Warned Not to Enter Politics; Marxist Ideas Rejected for Work with Poor,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Dallas Morning News* (April 6, 1986; accessed 23 October 2001).

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*

Respecting the Vatican's wishes and the tone it wanted set in Church-State relations, the Philippine Church nonetheless remained staunchly independent in regards to liberation theology, believing their mandate came from God, the spirit of Vatican II, and the Philippine people themselves. The Philippine Church believed that the conservative court of the Pope, particularly the larger court of Pope John Paul II (1978-present), needed respect but not to the detriment of the Philippine parishioners' welfare. The actions the Church set in motion in the Philippines in the wake of Vatican II came years before Pope John Paul II took office in 1978.

Before and during the 50s and the early 1960s, the Catholic Church had retained much of its colonial-era economic, political, and social power and remained a bulwark of conservatism.<sup>37</sup> This did not stop a small but growing progressive movement within the Church from making waves. Many of these so-called progressives had "leftist" tendencies and were strengthened by the actions of Vatican II. Part of this strengthening was a push by the Philippine Catholic Church to establish five commissions at the local and national level to implement the various policies of the Council.

Among these bodies was the Episcopal Commission on Social Action, with its own national secretariat, the National Secretariat for Social Action (NASSA), created in 1966.<sup>38</sup> The establishment of such apostolic social organizations drew attention from government leaders, especially with the Church's expressed desire to combat any infringement on human rights and abuses by the government. This was an area where the incoming government of Ferdinand E. Marcos, who ruled from 1965 to 1986, became notoriously prolific.

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<sup>37</sup>Gregg R. Jones, *Red Revolution: Inside the Philippine Guerrilla Movement* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), 201.

<sup>38</sup>Robert L. Youngblood, *Marcos Against the Church: Economic Development and Political Repression in the Philippines* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 76.



By 1969, 2,000 church-sponsored social action projects had been started, and nearly 90 percent of all dioceses had a hand in some social action programs.<sup>39</sup> Along with social organizations, the Philippine Catholic bishops became more vocal against government abuses. The use of the pastoral letter became commonplace as an effective way to issue statements on a wide range of issues, from the theological to the political. Pastoral letters usually shied away from direct confrontation and instead emphasized the Church's mission in the temporal order, which meant that among other things the Church should safeguard human dignity against government abuse. Pastoral letters also called attention to the close relationship between social development and evangelization, bringing in Socialist and left-leaning rhetoric to address the issues of the poor. Coupled with that was the Church's conscious decision to make extraordinary efforts to go to the barrios in order to sharpen their focus on social transformation.<sup>40</sup>

The establishment of NASSA and the issuance of pastoral letters were preliminary steps, but the Catholic Church did not always act as a monolith in their social or political activities. Indeed, there were many different elements that worked beneath the umbrella of the Philippine Catholic Church, and some were active in other more clandestine ways. Moreover, not all of these activities opposed the government. Social organization of the barrios was one thing, but strengthening the Church's political clout while maintaining its commitment to the faith did not always mean publicly confronting the ruling regime.

A prime example of this clandestine and "conservative" operation to garner more political power was the penetration of the Philippines by an elite and secretive Catholic sect known simply as Opus Dei. Opus Dei had only a few objectives, and at the top of the list was the desire to permeate and influence all segments of elite society. Opus Dei's

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 77.

<sup>40</sup>James H. Kroeger, M.M., "Evangelization in the Philippine Church: 1965-85," *Philippine Studies*, no. 35 (1987): 8.

unique brand of politics and social action harkened back to a more medieval time when the Catholic Church and the State were one. The situation in the Philippines was one where the Church's connections to the State had steadily eroded since the American occupation. This was an unacceptable situation to some. Opus Dei's activities were part of the solution to the problem. Their activities were another way to get the Church back to the level of power and influence it once enjoyed, and it did so not through the power of the poorer masses but through recruitment of the elite.

Opus Dei itself was and remains a cult within a religion. It revolves around the personality of its late founder, Josemaria Escriva, who saw his creation as one institution that should be heavily invested in politics. In the beginning, Opus Dei's membership was restricted to only those members of high society levels who were actively engaged in non-clerical work. Opus Dei members were integrated into the Catholic Church as whole. However, the leadership soon realized that to control the membership completely and to guard its own secrets from less-supportive elements within the Catholic Church required a priesthood exclusive to Opus Dei. Escriva successfully petitioned for and founded a priestly order exclusive to Opus Dei in 1943, dubbing it the "Society of Priests of the Holy Cross." Opus Dei was given swift pontifical approval in 1947, and later became a Personal Prelature in 1982.<sup>41</sup> Both these things are a testament to the organization's power and influence within the Church hierarchy.

Opus Dei tried to maintain a level of secrecy unmatched in the Catholic Church. What is known from the internal documents is that Opus Dei's *raison d'etat* is that members are to "hallow and Christianize the institutions of peoples, of science, culture,

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<sup>41</sup>A Personal Prelature is defined as a jurisdictional and hierarchical structure by which the Catholic Church sets for itself special pastoral initiatives for the good of all the "people of God." It is entrusted to a prelate, has its own priests, and can incorporate into itself those lay persons who wish to contribute to the Prelature's pastoral goals. The idea was conceived during Vatican II.

civilizations, politics, the arts, and social relations.”<sup>42</sup> To follow through with this mandate, members were required to work at all societal levels, from the poorest elements to the elite, including working to shape and form opinion among elites in academia, finance, and politics. Since its inception, Opus Dei had been active in formulating policy, both in Rome and internationally, in various nation-states where it had penetrated the foreign policy and domestic policy levels of government bureaucracies. Indeed, Opus Dei had been called a religious “Fifth Column,” and it had never shied away from confrontation with elements in secular society, other religions such as Islam, or even the Catholic Church itself.<sup>43</sup>

As part of the Catholic Church’s push to regain power in the Philippines, Opus Dei was allowed to penetrate the Philippines in 1964, and since then it has steadily grown in influence. After its arrival, Opus Dei gave considerable attention to the Philippines as one of the “front line” countries.<sup>44</sup> Within the Philippines, it enjoyed the full backing of the Philippine Catholic Church and influential Catholic leadership. Membership was kept small and elite, but despite its own efforts, membership rose to nearly 3,000 people in the Philippines. Although this may seem like a small number, it is comparable in size to the number of members found in much larger countries, such as the United States.

A quick look at the profile of Opus Dei membership gives one an insight into why the organization is so successful in its recruitment efforts and has such influence in government and society. In the Philippines, the membership is traditionally located in large urban areas like Manila and Cebu City, with smaller segments in Laguna, Iloilo, Bacolod, and Davao. More than 70 percent of Opus Dei members are married, and a

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<sup>42</sup>Gordon Uguhart, *Conservative Catholic Influence in Europe, Opus Dei: The Pope’s Right Arm in Europe* (Washington, DC: Catholics for Free Choice, 1997), 1.

<sup>43</sup>Robert Hutchinson, *Their Kingdom Come: Inside the Secret World of Opus Dei* (London: Corgi Books, 1997), 14.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 500-502.

conscious effort has always been made to recruit members from a cross-section of elite society. Opus Dei members are politicians, bankers, corporate managers, businessmen, lawyers, and other professionals, some of whom are well known in public and others who remain power brokers behind the scene.<sup>45</sup>

Devising a term that describes what Opus Dei tried and continues to do in the Philippines is not easy, for Opus Dei is unique in the Catholic Church. It has both fundamentalist tendencies and secretiveness. Its work is best termed *integralism*, a word that harkens back to a time when Church and State were inseparable, a quixotic notion and worldview of a modern-middle age.<sup>46</sup> The idea of *integralism*, which would seem impossible to accomplish for most religious groups, drove Opus Dei to begin work in the Philippines and no doubt continues its work there today. Regardless of the pace of progress, the organization is undeterred, and for good reason. When compared to other religious groups, Opus Dei is “better organized, more unobtrusively hospitable, and more clearly thought through than are those of any other organization, religious or secular . . . The Work, quite clearly, works.”<sup>47</sup>

Nowhere is this more evident than in the Philippines, where the Opus Dei agenda has been pushed at all levels of society since its introduction.<sup>48</sup> One of Opus Dei’s first

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<sup>45</sup>“Weekender: Q&A with Opus Dei’s Msgr. Joseph Duran,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Business World* (November 27, 1998; accessed 3 December 2001).

<sup>46</sup>Penny Lernoux, *People of God: The Struggle for World Catholicism* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), 42.

<sup>47</sup>Robert Royce, “Opus Dei: Leadership and Vision in Today’s Catholic Church,” *First Things*, no. 83 (May 1998), 56.

<sup>48</sup>When describing its own efforts in the Philippines and elsewhere, Opus Dei favors the analogy of salt. Salt gives flavor but does not attract attention to its presence. Yet the analogy is filled with pitfalls, because if too much salt is present it will destroy the flavor. Moreover, in abundance it can poison both land and water.

tangible successes in the Philippines was the construction and operation of the Center for Research and Communication, founded in 1967 by two Opus Dei members, Dr. Bernardo Villegas and Dr. Jesus Estanislao.<sup>49</sup> The institution's mission was simple, to produce the next generation of Catholic-trained leaders and elite to penetrate the government and run the Philippines.

Graduates of the Opus Dei institution were to be the best of the best, and once in power they served the Church's interests in any capacity they could. Opus Dei was also a permanent presence in other Catholic universities. Although the organization did not take over the administration of the schools, it was there to help make sure that what was taught, be it economics or politics, was in line with the Catholic doctrine and that graduates would maintain their ties to the Catholic Church after obtaining positions of power.<sup>50</sup>

Financing Opus Dei's efforts, including those at the Center for Research and Communication, which later became the University of the Asia and Pacific, required the group to tap an extensive web of international support. Its activities in the Philippines received major funding and support from other Opus Dei-affiliated organizations based in the United States and Europe, including the Hanns-Seidel Foundation of Germany, which itself is accredited by and receives funding from the European Union. Together with another Opus Dei affiliate, Limmat, the Hanns-Seidel Foundation helped fund Opus Dei's extensive operation in the Philippines during the 1960s, 70s, and 80s.<sup>51</sup>

Opus Dei's early activities were largely clandestine and effective, but they were still only a small part of the Catholic Church's activities in the Philippines. The Church's

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<sup>49</sup>W. J. West, *Opus Dei: Exploding a Myth* (Crows Nest, Australia: Little Hills Press, 1987), 138.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>51</sup>Urguhart, *Conservative Catholic Influence in Europe*, 12.

main thrust remained with the masses, and this activity was overt for all to see and evaluate. Its public nature also meant that its political enemies monitored its actions. By 1969, the Church's social participation gradually moved from small community and parish-based initiatives of development to cultivation of community-based organizations.<sup>52</sup> Within a decade, the Church's own mandate broadened from merely one of social welfare to include a demand for social justice, and from simply developing the poor to liberating them from the harsh conditions of tenancy to government's human rights abuses.

The Church continued to push socially and politically, but political gains within the Philippines were initially slow and not up to par with the social progress the Church enjoyed in its effort to aid the poor. However, any sort of political gain was a good thing considering the Church had been marginalized for decades. These gains, while marginal, would prove extremely valuable because they came at a time when great political change was about to grip the Philippines. During the 1960s, the Church was gaining momentum as a political and social force for change in the Philippines at a time when its more vocal and advocacy elements ran afoul of the new government--a government and leadership that would prove more authoritarian than any since the Spanish occupation and more anti-Church than since the American's arrival. This new government was the government of Ferdinand E. Marcos.

Marcos came to power in the presidential election of 1965 by defeating incumbent President Diosdado Macapagal on a ticket that was one part nationalism, one part charismatic appeal, and one part typical Philippine politics—the bribing of individual voters and the barrio leadership. Marcos appealed to the masses for several reasons, including his insistence on his glorious record as a soldier. He was never shy about touting his record as a war hero, which itself was fraudulent. As a candidate, he ran on a

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<sup>52</sup>Kroeger, "Evangelization in the Philippine Church," 8-9.

platform that promised governmental reform that would lift the Philippines out of the poverty of the Third World. During his tenure as president, he accomplished neither.

He did, however, bring a new level of political oppression, violence, and social chaos to the Philippines. His one and a half terms as a constitutional and legal president were fraught with largesse at the expense of his own people. He had a Napoleonic complex of his own and a marriage of convenience with Imelda Romualdez that suited his political ambitions. Together they looted the Philippine treasury, ignored the suffering of the people, and grew paranoid in their unquenchable thirst for complete authority over the Philippines. Those that got in his way, be they members of the military, his friends, or political foes, did not endure. Organized resistance had a way of falling under the category of subversion and mass arrests, torture, and even murder were used as tools to squash dissent.

Some of his later political targets were the left-leaning progressives within the Catholic Church. In the end, getting at the Church and politically neutralizing it proved the ultimate challenge for Marcos. Targeting the Church politically was one thing, attacking it with the tools of his policy state was another. In a country where the Catholic Church impacts more than 80 percent of voters, Marcos had to be careful about the type of action he took to silence any opposition to his regime that existed in the Church hierarchy.

In hindsight it is ironic that Marcos, who believed himself called by God to lead the Philippines, later turned the power of the State against God's church and in the end was brought down by this same Church during the People Power revolution of 1986. But People Power was still thirteen years away, and the Philippines first had to suffer through years of brutal authoritarian rule. The events of martial law and the People Power revolution are discussed later in the chapter, but to understand how he went from being a self-proclaimed ardent Catholic to the Church's top political enemy requires some background analysis.

Marcos's political history was as checkered as any politician's. His life, from a very early age, was filled with murder and intrigue and a sense of destiny and divine intervention.<sup>53</sup> Marcos knew how to manipulate his image and use those around him to gain votes. Those used for that purpose included his wife Imelda, who he chose for her beauty and talents and who he later nurtured into the ultimate socialite who could work a room with the best politicians. They were a true power couple. Marcos also used all means--money, influence, *utang na loob*, United States financial aid and support, and the Philippine military--to obtain and maintain power.

In the presidential election of 1965, Marcos wooed voters with money and the media with favors and overwhelmed his opposition in the public relations war.<sup>54</sup> He played the dual role of new blood and wise statesman. He played on pent-up frustrations and portrayed himself as a father figure wanting to take care of his nation. He was a nationalist *par excellence*, vowing to make the Philippines great, alleviate poverty, and keep their soldiers out of America's Vietnam conflict.<sup>55</sup> Marcos was assuming the roles of the wise leader, the statesman, and the father. One observer of the Philippine political culture correctly noted this fact. Beth Day Romulo wrote that, "What Filipinos have always looked for . . . is a *datu*: a father figure, a single leader who will take care of his

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<sup>53</sup>As a youth in law school, Marcos was charged with murdering one of his father's political opponents. He was later jailed for one year while awaiting trial. He finished his law degree during this time and defended himself in court. Although the evidence showed that he pulled the trigger to avenge his father's loss of honor, the Philippine Supreme Court later acquitted him on all charges.

<sup>54</sup>William C. Rempel, *Delusions of a Dictator: The Mind of Marcos as Revealed in His Secret Diaries* (Boston: Little Brown, 1993), 16-17.

<sup>55</sup>Sterling Seagrave, *The Marcos Dynasty* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 183.



people. No one has understood this national yearning, and taken better advantage of it, than Ferdinand Marcos.”<sup>56</sup>

The truth about Marcos is far more complex. He fancied himself a soldier, a military leader, a savior, and even a consolidator of an empire, much like Napoleon.<sup>57</sup> But many things about Marcos were not what they seemed. For example, he was not the war hero he claimed to be. Much of his storied past existed only in his imagination. Moreover, buried in the government archives in Washington D.C. were documents that contested Marcos’s claims to heroism as well an arrest order issued by the United States military charging Marcos with wartime racketeering.<sup>58</sup>

Padding one’s war record for the benefit of public office may not be ethical, but it is certainly easier to understand than Marcos’s quest to silence the Church against his regime, especially considering what he wrote in his personal diaries about his own relationship with God. Marcos himself claimed to be a staunchly religious figure and a “good” Catholic. It is ironic that he considered himself a devout Catholic but went above and beyond most Catholics in his claim that God spoke to him personally. It appears that Marcos did not need the benefit of a priest and was granted a special audience with the Creator himself.

Marcos believed that he was God’s personal political and social tool in the Philippines. Indeed, Marcos believed that his own hands did God’s work. His dreams were visions from God, his voice spoke God’s words, and even during the most tumultuous times of his presidency he believed his solution, martial law, was all part of

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<sup>56</sup>Beth Day Romulo, *Inside the Palace: The Rise and Fall of Ferdinand & Imelda Marcos* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1987), 19.

<sup>57</sup>Rempel, *Delusions of a Dictator*, 163.

<sup>58</sup>James Hamilton-Paterson, *America’s Boy: A Century of Colonialism in the Philippines* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 88-93.

God's plan.<sup>59</sup> Being God's personal servant meant that he was above the petty level of the Catholic Church. Indeed, he may have equated himself as an equal to the Vicar of Christ in Rome. One can only speculate about the level of his delusion. However, one thing is certain. Marcos claimed that God was calling him to save the Philippines, to purge the subversive elements of the Church, and to declare martial law.<sup>60</sup>

Believing as he did in his own special relationship with God, Marcos did not start as an enemy of the Church. He, like other presidents and politicians before him, embraced the unifying aspects of the Catholic faith and understood, supported, and sought to utilize the conservative elements within it. In a way, the Marcos regime understood the value of having the Church as an ally in efforts to win popular support for and even legitimacy of his regime, much like the United States attempted to do during the early years of their colonization of the Philippines. Just as it had been for the United States, Marcos believed the Church was best used as a mediating variable to temper the political feeling coming from all sectors of society. The Church was best for Marcos when it was a tool to be exploited to further his political aims. Only when it began to interfere with his ambitions did the Church become an enemy.

After taking the oath of office and becoming the sixth president of the republic on December 30, 1965, Marcos let loose a political steamroller, dolling out pork barrel projects, reneging on campaign promises and consolidating his power.<sup>61</sup> Marcos began to court the United States more openly as well, for military aid more than anything. The military was his favorite project, and he set out to make it bigger, better equipped, and

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<sup>59</sup>Rempel, *Delusions of a Dictator*, 69.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>61</sup>One blatant political promise Marcos violated was his assurance during the campaign that he would not commit combat troops to Vietnam. After his election, he committed 2,000 Philippine soldiers to Vietnam.

run under tighter control.<sup>62</sup> Marcos's increasing authoritarian tendencies were demonstrated by his step-by-step approach to increasing his own presidential powers during his first term. To be safe, potential political opponents such as the Catholic Church needed to make sure they stayed out of his way. At first this was not difficult to do. At the time of Marcos's first election, the Catholic Church was only beginning its activity at the barrio level of society, socially organizing the peasants in a variety of social and political elements.

The Marcos mystique was strong during his first two years and was tested at the polls during the 1967 midterm election. This election showed just how powerful his political machine was at the time. With one exception, his *Nacionalista* party won every senate race. A young senator from Tarlac, Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, claimed the only opposition victory.<sup>63</sup> Ninoy Aquino was to become the bane of Marcos's political career almost from the beginning. In fact, it was during Marcos's triumph in the election of 1965 over Diosdado Macapagal when Aquino's name first surfaced as a political force capable of challenging Marcos. Aquino, working on behalf of Macapagal in his home province of Tarlac, made sure that Marcos did not win that province.<sup>64</sup> Marcos, who never forgot a political slight, made note of this fact.

After the elections of 1967, Marcos's political honeymoon was over. Crime rates soared in Manila and the problems of hunger and poverty plagued the nation.<sup>65</sup> Rumors of corruption were spreading. During this time, Marcos showed early signs of what would later be his legendary corruption during his first administration. Once in the

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<sup>62</sup>Rempel, *Delusions of a Dictator*, 20.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 22.

presidency, Marcos used his cronies and some members of his cabinet to muscle in on private businesses. Mrs. Marcos was doing the same thing.<sup>66</sup> Critics were also worried about his seemingly singular focus on building up the military.

Marcos faced vocal opposition in the congress and on the street. He was accused among other things of being a *tuta* (lap dog) of the Americans.<sup>67</sup> The attacks were more frequent and more personal as the 1969 presidential election loomed. However, Marcos was prepared for a fight. He had the money, his solid voter base in his home province of Ilocos Norte, and many friends eager to help.<sup>68</sup> He also had grandiose plans that included a movie about his life. It was to be called *Maharlika*, and though it was not finished in time to make a difference in the election, it was evidence of Marcos's increasing self-importance and willingness to waste funds on himself rather than helping his own people.

For the 1969 election, Marcos had a war chest of money unmatched by his opponents and an army at his disposal. He was willing and able to use the powers he had available against individuals or groups that caused him trouble, including the Catholic Church. Marcos was adamant about staying in power, and was willing to pay off barrio political bosses and individual voters and threaten political opposition. But in 1969, dissent was a non-factor, including opposition from those elements of the Church who were despondent towards Marcos's increasing authoritarianism. More than anything, this was the result of the opposition's choice for president, Sergio Osmena Jr. He lacked both charm and charisma, and his base of support did not extend beyond his home province of Cebu.

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<sup>66</sup>Romulo, *Inside the Palace*, 170.

<sup>67</sup>Rempel, *Delusions of a Dictator*, 22.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 23.

Marcos won by a margin of almost two million votes and soon after, accusations were hurled about election fraud.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, it seemed that Marcos was not content to simply win the election in 1969, he wanted a landslide. So much money was spent on the election that it had a negative impact on the Philippine economy. The final tally was more than \$50 million used to buy votes. If Marcos ran short on money, he simply ordered the central bank to print more pesos to pay off his political cronies and to buy votes on a massive scale. One victim of this spending orgy was the Philippine peso, which was devalued by 50 percent as a result of the inflation caused by the amount of currency printed and given out by the Marcos campaign.<sup>70</sup>

At Marcos's second inauguration, he promised democracy instead of totalitarianism.<sup>71</sup> Marcos delivered the reverse. His second term got off to a rough start due in large part to the ailing economy, something that Marcos himself was blamed for in the press. Things grew worse as students and leftists took to the streets to demand that Marcos either do something or step aside. His response was to unleash the riot police and tear gas the protestors.

There was a real fear among the dissenters that Marcos would try to stay longer than the constitutionally allowed two terms. This was a valid fear, because not long after his victory Marcos began making plans to hold a constitutional convention in hopes of changing the constitution and the government to a parliamentary style of government. This constitutional convention called in 1971 gave Marcos virtually unlimited power.<sup>72</sup> His reasons for wanting this change became clear a few months later. For now, he had to contend with an increasing level of civilian violence directed towards his government.

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<sup>69</sup>Seagrave, *The Marcos Dynasty*, 218.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, 219.

<sup>71</sup>Rempel, *Delusions of a Dictator*, 27.

<sup>72</sup>Hamilton-Paterson, *America's Boy*, 57.

It was also during the street protests of 1970 that the first hints of Marcos's anti-Church policy were revealed. His personal diary, found in 1986 a few months after his hasty flight from the presidential palace in the wake of the People Power revolution, gave insight into how he grew wary of the Church as a political obstacle to his political plans. At the height of the protests, as police were beating the students, the new session of congress was set to begin. As was customary, a priest was present to give the opening prayer.

Marcos bristled at this particular prayer. It was no ordinary invocation. Instead, it was a scathing attack on elements of the Marcos government offered by Father Pacifico Ortiz, the Jesuit head of Ateneo de Manila University. Ortiz used his prayer to pick at the conscience of all those present for their abuses of power, students, and the conditions in the Philippines. Later that night, still fuming about the prayer, Marcos wrote his thoughts in his diary. He called the prayer "poor taste" and went on to blame extremists, the press, and even the priest's prayer for helping instigate the riots in the streets.<sup>73</sup> This delusional blame that Marcos placed on Father Ortiz was representative of a pattern of blame for unrest in the Philippines. He would blame everyone, including Catholic priests, during the months ahead.

Marcos did not explain just how the opening prayers of one priest evoked riots in the streets, and he simply ignored the role his own policies and riot squads played in the violence. Ignoring responsibility, Marcos chose to overlook what history has since revealed. The reality of the violence of 1970 is something quite different than the official Marcos version. Using evidence from his diary, it is now clear that much of the unrest and violence in the streets, including the Battle of Mendiola, where several civilians were killed in a bombing, resulted from Marcos's own political plans and intrigue. Further

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<sup>73</sup>Rempel, *Delusions of a Dictator*., 32.

evidence suggests that he personally approved the planting of government agents among the student protestors in order to instigate violence and unrest.<sup>74</sup>

Marcos did these things out of fear of what might happen should he lose power. He did not want his political career to come to an end. Moreover, he believed that he was the only man who could guide the Philippines on a course to prosperity. The students, the extremists, and the Catholic Church filled with men like Father Ortiz made Marcos extremely uncomfortable. Opinionated priests were the kind of individuals who stood in the way of his political plans.

Ortiz was indeed representative of a movement coming out of the Church. Still conservative, Vatican II's theology of liberation and the push for increased social action rippled into the mainstream Church. Men like Ortiz and later Jaime Cardinal Sin felt its affects. Slowly, the mainstream Church embraced more and more activist elements as the Marcos administration grew more authoritarian, eventually culminating in a clash of wills in the People Power revolution. But even in 1970, Marcos sensed the danger to his authoritarian designs. He feared that a growing number of "Father Ortizes" in the Church might cause problems for his long-term plans to stay in power.<sup>75</sup>

Marcos had ample blame to pass around and plenty in reserve for the Church, which he blamed for increasing unrest. His vitriol knew no bounds. He even accused the Catholic Church of hiring thugs to force the poor to rise up in protest.<sup>76</sup> To counter this perceived trend, he launched a secret investigation into the conduct of priests and leaked reports to the media that some in the Church were in league with the communists. Using the "red scare" to attack the Church was a common Marcos tactic, even though evidence of such a Communist threat did not exist.

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 44.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 62.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 67.

The Communist scare, the instigation of protests, and the careful eye Marcos kept on the Church were part of his larger plan. He was positioning himself for a major power grab, an opportunity to suspend the writ of habeas corpus and arrest and detain his political opponents. With opposition silenced, he could act with a free hand. But in 1970, the time was not ripe for action.

Marcos's political instincts were sharp and he saw that the Church posed a future threat to his position. As a result, he sought other means of legitimizing himself in the eyes of the Catholic faithful by circumventing the indigenous Catholic hierarchy. One idea was to invite Pope Paul VI to the Philippines. Marcos believed that a Papal visit would serve to dull any criticisms hurled at him by the Filipino clergy. What better way to show how "religious" and "Catholic" he was than to hop from photo opportunity to photo opportunity with the Vicar of Christ? It was in simple terms a stroke of political genius, at least in theory. His idea to use the Pope to further his political capital did not work as planned.

Marcos hoped to foster a warm relationship with the Pope, but reality was quite different. The Pope rebuffed the invitation to stay at the presidential palace, refused to ride in the presidential limousine with the first family, and showed little desire to attend the functions Marcos planned.<sup>78</sup> This did not sit well with Marcos, who at every turn put his own positive spin on the situation. Even when Benjamin Mendoza attempted to assassinate the Pope on the tarmac of Manila airport, Marcos took credit for saving the Pope's life. The entire fiasco with the Pope is in some way indicative of Marcos's relationship to the official Church, for although in retrospect it seems he did little to save the Pope, Marcos credited his own "karate chop" with saving the Holy Father.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Hamilton-Paterson, *America's Boy*, 69-70.

<sup>79</sup>Rempel, *Delusions of a Dictator*, 72.



The chill that existed between the Catholic Church and the Marcos administration took a public turn in November 1970 when Pope Paul VI rebuffed Marcos's and his wife's efforts to join him on an official visit to the Philippines' poorest areas.<sup>80</sup> This action by the Pope was indicative of his treatment of the administration for the extent of his visit. The Vatican and the Philippine Catholic Church worked to keep the Marcos administration out of the official visits as much as possible, highlighting a demarcation of power and influence. The line ran between Marcos's control of the government and military and the Church coveting the poor masses.

To his chagrin, Marcos noticed the trend of the Church's conscious efforts to increase their political capital among the poor segments of society and the growing overall political power that would result should they succeed. Since the beginning of the decade, Marcos had grown increasingly uneasy with the new power of the Church and its role in promoting anti-Marcos sentiments throughout the country. His investigation into the "religious personalities actively engaged in various efforts to promote restlessness and disorder . . ." turned up little useful political ammunition.<sup>81</sup>

Marcos's efforts to suppress the Communists and quell student unrest had also been less successful, and nationalist unrest over the lagging economy was growing. Coupled with his economic woes was an obstructionist Congress that threw up political roadblocks to his domestic and foreign policy agenda. It was both unclear and uncertain whether, even with a corrupt political machine behind him, he could win the 1973 presidential election. When the Catholic Church and its increased ability to mobilize the poor into a sizable voting block was factored in, Marcos understood that he did not stand much of a chance in a free and fair election.

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<sup>80</sup>Henry Kamm, "In Manila Shanty, Pope Kneels to Pray," *New York Times*, 30 November 1970, sec. 1, p. 5.

<sup>81</sup>Philip Shabecoff, "Filipino Church Under Broad Fire," *New York Times*, 15 March 1970, sec. 2, p. 11.

Marcos may have overestimated the Church's strength between 1970 and 1972, but he did not overestimate its potential. Church activities during this time were far less odious than he believed. By and large, the Church stayed out of foreign policy and on the national scene it injected itself into only a few legal issues. One issue the Church did get involved in was in 1970, when the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) made a push for a Non-Partisan Constitutional Convention to be convened in 1971. The Church's hope was that such a conference, with its participation and oversight, would produce a document that would heal the opposition's wounds, calm the student protests and be favorable towards the Church's activities on the national level.

Alongside the push for a new constitution was the continued promotion of moral, spiritual, economic, social, cultural, and political elements in society. By 1972, the Church was increasingly a champion of the disenfranchised. As such, it filled a huge vacuum as an advocate for traditionally oppressed groups. It was a *de facto* role for the Church because no other group could or would take on the responsibility.

The Church pressed forward, largely under Marcos's political radar. However, as the 1973 presidential election loomed over the horizon, Marcos grew uneasy. He believed that if the clamor of the opposition in congress, in the Church, or on the streets was an accurate indicator of the political climate, then it was unlikely that he could stay in power. On a legal basis, Marcos's fears were moot. He had already been elected to a second term and the existing constitution forbade him to run for a third.

It is in this light that his push for a constitutional convention and the creation of a parliamentary government is understood. Marcos wanted the convention to convene and finish its work as soon as possible. He also wanted a parliamentary government, and as luck would have it, the student protestors in the street wanted the same thing. In Marcos's mind, he was merely giving them what they wished.<sup>82</sup> However, while they

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<sup>82</sup>Rempel, *Delusions of a Dictator*, 36.

wanted a parliamentary form of government, the protestors did not want Marcos as their first prime minister. Marcos knew that creation of a parliamentary government would ensure that he remained in power indefinitely. As president, he was limited to two terms. As prime minister, he could serve at the behest of the parliament. All he needed to do was win the seat of Ilocos Norte, and not a plurality of the votes in a nationwide election. The *Nacionalista* party's stronghold on any future parliament was its insurance policy. With a parliamentary system, his hold on power was guaranteed, but Marcos did not have the luxury of time in his quest for the constitutional change.

If he was going to act, he needed to act before 1973. Unfortunately for Marcos, it seemed unlikely that the convention could produce a document in time, and it was further unlikely that the delegates could or would ignore the protestors' insistence that Marcos and his family be banned from holding office after his presidential term expired in 1973. Marcos was not about to let the protestors or the Church interfere with his goals. He devised an alternative plan, and he called it his "*total solution*."<sup>83</sup> This *total solution* was martial law.

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 53.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CHURCH UNDER MARTIAL LAW

Marcos once mused in his diary that what was needed to enact his *total solution* was a little more violence and vandalism. He believed that following that violence and vandalism, he would be justified in doing anything to ensure order. Time was of the essence, for he needed to invoke martial law as quickly as possible to seize his political opponents, silence his critics, and make sure that a new government was in place before any elections were held. He even hoped he could instigate an attack on his presidential palace, believing that would be enough to give him just cause to implement his *total solution*.<sup>1</sup>

Marcos feared Communists, extremists, students, journalists, and the Church. He labeled them all as subversives and considered them all potential targets of the *total solution*.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the Church stood out among the others as having a special role as a political enemy. Marcos believed that there existed a “Jesuit-fascist-CIA” united front specifically for the purpose of deposing him and his government.<sup>3</sup> No evidence of such a plot ever really existed. It was just something Marcos believed, and it was evidence of his paranoia about the Catholic Church.

The *total solution* needed to be implemented quickly. Yet in mid-1972, the violence was nowhere near the levels necessary to implement martial law. Marcos needed to devise a plan to change this situation. He called in his defense minister, Juan Ponce Enrile, to Malacañang to discuss the final event that would necessitate martial law. The two eventually settled on a staged ambush of Enrile’s motorcade. An attack on such a high-level official by “extremists” would necessitate a call for martial law.

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<sup>1</sup>Rempel, *Delusions of a Dictator*, 56.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 61.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 54.

Enrile agreed to go along with the ambush, which was set for Friday, September 22, 1972. Ironically, years later Enrile became one of the key players in Marcos's downfall. However, his willingness to serve Marcos's devious and violent designs clearly illustrate that he was not without blood on his hands. It was Enrile's complicity in Marcos's plans that allowed opposition leaders such as Ninoy Aquino to be arrested and take their first steps towards martyrdom. It was this "ambush" that allowed Marcos to take to the airwaves and declare martial law and name the Catholic Church as one of its targets. How ironic that fourteen years later, Enrile would beg the same Church for its help to save his own life. But this was 1972 and not 1986, and the fake assassination attempt set in motion a series of events that threw the Philippines into its darkest hour since World War II.<sup>4</sup>

After martial law was declared, one of the first orders of business was to seize the media.<sup>5</sup> Marcos signed an executive order during martial law that allowed the Philippine Ministry of Defense to take control of the mass media, including both the print and broadcast media that the state promptly seized. Violating the basic freedoms of the press and free speech was another "necessary" step to retain control of the government and keep the media out of the hands of less desirable elements. The fear of "Communists" was always invoked when Marcos did something that was both unjust and unpopular.

Under martial law, Marcos ordered the closing of all but one of Manila's sixteen daily newspapers and seized all but one of the seven national television stations. Each new violation of the constitution was justified under the guise that the "Communists" had infiltrated the press. By the end of martial law in the early 1980s, the Catholic Church operated Radio Veritas, one of the few radio stations that survived Marcos's media seizures.

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<sup>4</sup>Seagrave, *The Marcos Dynasty*, 244.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 246.

One might ask why Veritas was not also shut down. It may have been because Veritas was, for the most part, apolitical. Its programming centered on the gospel of Jesus Christ and usually avoided political rhetoric. There was also another reason. While seizing newspapers and television stations was one thing, attacking the Catholic Church's public affairs voice was quite another. Silencing Veritas would have been a very public attack on the Church, and one unparalleled under Marcos's regime at that time.

The *total solution* also meant that Marcos set about to make quick work of his political opponents. He had the loyalty of the military, the Philippine Constabulary, and the *Nacionalista* party. What he did not have was the legal basis to remain in power or to continue martial law indefinitely. But he had a plan to fix that situation. By the time his plans were implemented, the martial law regime he had established was a far cry from the forms of legitimate governments the Philippines had possessed in the past.

Marcos's first step after martial law was to call for a constitutional convention to be held in 1973. It was a continuation of the process that began in 1970, although it was now hijacked by the Marcos martial law machine. His approach to the convention was to run it like a campaign, and that included bribery. Each delegate was given "messages" from the president in the form of crisp new pesos of various denominations.<sup>6</sup> Those he could not bribe were often jailed. Marcos's money and the power intoxicated many, and in the end the constitutional convention went just the way Marcos wanted. He got his new parliamentary government. He also managed to have his term extended to six years and his election to the presidency ensured despite opposition protests, including those from the Church.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Rempel, *Delusions of a Dictator*., 142-143.

<sup>7</sup>In article VII, section II of the 1973 Constitution, it reads in part, "The President shall be elected from among the members of the National Assembly by a majority vote of all its Members for a term of six years from the date he takes his oath of office, which shall not be later than three days after the proclamation of the National Assembly, nor in any case earlier than the expiration of the term of his predecessor."

By 1973, after implementation of the *total solution*, the Catholic Church was fast becoming the focus of anti-Marcos energy. Francisco Claver, bishop of Bontoc, clearly saw the connection between Marcos's *total solution* and the Catholic Church when he noted, "The suspicion is in fact strong that one of the reasons for Martial Law was precisely to put a stop to a process, helped along by [Church] efforts."<sup>8</sup>

The process Marcos wanted to stop was still in its embryonic stage. When the Church criticized him, he accused its members of being Communists. And although Marcos had a tendency to label everything as "Communist," there was some validity to his fears. Some Communist cells in the Philippines, particularly in Negros, relied on the Catholic Church to provide food, shelter, and protection.<sup>9</sup> At times, the Church even offered financial and logistical support for the cadres.<sup>10</sup> Yet even the most liberal views of the Church's involvement in leftist organizations showed that at the time of the declaration of martial law, only a handful of priests and laymen actually joined the Communist Party.<sup>11</sup> As time went on more priests, nuns, and laymen belonged to the Communist insurgency, but never at the levels Marcos believed.

Church involvement in the anti-Marcos struggle took a variety of forms, and the conversion of priests and nuns from non-violent activists to armed revolutionaries occurred in two contrasting fashions. For some, accepting a Maoist "people's war" was the result of frustration over the conservative Catholic leadership's inability to fully implement the goals of Vatican II.<sup>12</sup> This included national Church leaders such as

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<sup>8</sup>Francisco Claver, "Prophecy or Accommodation: The Dilemma of a Discerning Church," *American* 142 (April 1980): 354.

<sup>9</sup>Jones, *Red Revolution*, 92.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>11</sup>Joseph Lelyveld, "Church in Philippines Becoming a Focus of Opposition to Marcos," *New York Times*, 27 February 1975, sec. I, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup>Jones, *Red Revolution*, 202.

Archbishop Rufino Santos, who as bishop of Manila and the de facto leader of the entire Philippine Church had undertaken many good works during his career. But he was better known for his ability as comptroller of the vast Church holdings than he was as a voice of change. Indeed, Santos was a far cry from the kind of reform-oriented, liberal-minded bishop needed to lead the Church against Marcos.<sup>13</sup>

Others in the Church never accepted a Maoist revolution or a “people’s war,” but they joined the movement to realize a mixture of two important ideological undercurrents in Philippine society, one old and one new. The old--nationalism and the new liberation theology--proved to be a potent mix.<sup>14</sup> Out of that mix came the establishment of the Christians for National Liberation (CNL) on February 17, 1972, on the 100th anniversary of the martyrdom of Fathers Mariano Gomez, Jose Burgos, and Jacinto Zamora. The CNL was the formal integration of segments of the Church and the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

The integration of some Church officials into organized leftist organizations seemed to prove Marcos’s earlier concerns that the Catholic Church would be the home of a revolution against his administration. But the CNL collaboration was not the only opposition. For example, Father Antonio Y. Fortich, bishop of Bacolod, started social action programs among his parishioners to help curb the abuse of martial law. He also went above and beyond his Church duties to help organize labor. Moreover, he pushed his young Jesuit charges into taking stronger anti-government stances. He believed that Filipinos did not have the luxury of waiting for “messiahs,” but instead must push for social change on their own.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Eduardo Lachica, *Huk: Philippine Agrarian Society in Revolt* (Manila, Philippines: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1971), 254.

<sup>14</sup>Jones, *Red Revolution*, 202.

<sup>15</sup>Lelyveld, “Church in Philippines Becoming a Focus of Opposition to Marcos,” 3.



Marcos was aware of Fortich's activities and those of others and issued stern warnings through his staff to cease and desist. Juan Ponce Enrile, whose own contrived assassination attempt brought the Philippines to martial law, issued warnings to the Catholic clergy not to "rock the boat."<sup>16</sup> Warnings were backed up by action. Marcos did not hesitate to issue arrest warrants against the Church.

By mid-1973, twenty-six priests and nuns had been formally arrested or detained by the government. The number of laymen arrested while working for Church causes is more difficult to determine.<sup>17</sup> But in one incident that seems typical of the martial law period, more than fifty youths were arrested while working with the Catholic Social Action Center and thirty-five were arrested while working for Jesuit priests. The activities for which they were arrested fell under the definition of subversion, although the Church and government could never agree on exactly what constituted subversion.

Regardless of the number arrested, the majority of Church's members were still low key in their opposition to Marcos. Only a small number of renegade priests joined leftist organizations, and the rest went about their daily lives with only the occasional pastoral letter protesting Marcos's regime. This did not mean, of course, that anti-Marcos sentiment was not strong within the mainstream Church, but the Church lacked a leader around whom to organize effective resistance. At the local parish level, many brave priests and nuns instilled courage in their followers to stand up against Marcos, even while they were being arrested and jailed. However, a national leader with the right mix of charisma, bravery, and audacity needed to combat martial law had not been found.

Throughout the formative years of martial law, Cardinal Santos remained the leader, but he was not the kind of man to give in to revolutionary tendencies. His death in 1974 changed the situation. After the cardinal's death, the door was open for a new

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>"Marcos Meets Moslem Rebels," *New York Times*, 6 December 1973, sec. I, p. 7.

priest to rise to that position of power. The Church chose wisely. Replacing Santos, whose surname meant saint, was Jaime Sin, whose own last name is the source of numerous religious puns. Jaime Cardinal Sin was no stranger to protest. The cherubic son of Chinese *mestizos*, he was active in the Church for many years before rising to the leadership position. However, as the newly appointed bishop of Manila, he took over de facto leadership of the Philippine Catholic Church. All eyes were on him.

It did not take long before Marcos tested the new Archbishop. The first test came when the administration issued an official government statement “thanking” the Church for its “cooperation” during a military raid on a Jesuit novitiate on August 26, 1974. Cardinal Sin, upon reading this outrageous statement, called privately for the government to issue a retraction.<sup>18</sup> It did not.

Cardinal Sin went into action. It was the first test of his new position and of his new power. His response took the form of a strongly worded pastoral letter that was read in parishes throughout the country, a tactic later used proficiently and profusely by Cardinal Sin and others during the embryonic stages of the People Power movement of 1986. Coupled with the letter was a call to the faithful to attend a prayer vigil at the Manila Cathedral. Marcos, acting through his own Church connections, urged Sin to call off the vigil. He did not.

The vigil started small but quickly grew to include more than 5,000 worshipers by September 1. The cardinal was moved by the response and so were the people. Those in attendance were a part of something special. They were hearing for the first time open criticism of the government from the highest-ranking member of the Catholic Church. Almost overnight, the hopes and dreams of a people yearning to be freed from the oppression of martial law rested on the shoulders of one man, Jaime Cardinal Sin.

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<sup>18</sup>Joseph Lelyveld, “Marcos Mending Religious Fences,” *New York Times*, 18 October 1974, sec. I, p. 5.

During the vigil, Marcos invited Cardinal Sin to the palace not once, but twice. He had the cardinal lead Mass, read homilies, and discuss issues with him. These attempts to woo Sin over to his side were fruitless. In the end, Marcos ordered his administration to issue a statement of retraction asserting that the Church hierarchy did not in fact cooperate in the raid.<sup>19</sup> In his first showdown with Marcos, Sin prevailed.

Under Cardinal Sin's leadership, the Church was emboldened. It was emboldened to a degree that a vigil against injustice was not enough. It went further in calling for an end to Marcos's *total solution*. The first official call to lift martial law came during the same month as the vigil. In a statement issued on September 3, 1974, the Catholic Bishops of the Philippines, led by Cardinal Sin, formally asked President Marcos to lift martial law and restore the civil liberties he had done away with two years earlier. The statement read in part, "On the occasion of the approaching holy year 1975, with its theme of renewal and reconciliation, we respectfully suggest that bold steps be taken to gradually lift martial law and thus pave the way for healing the wounds of the nation."<sup>20</sup>

Marcos scoffed at the call to end his martial law. But one thing was certain under Cardinal Sin--the Church was reinvigorated. Part of this reinvigoration included the call to end martial law, but it also included the revamping of previously underfunded and neglected social action groups, such as the National Secretariat for Social Action (NASSA). As noted earlier, the bishops created NASSA in 1966 to promote the active participation of the Philippine Catholic Church in the transformation of society. It remained committed to peace, justice, and the liberation of the Philippine people from all structures of oppression. Under Cardinal Sin's leadership, it became important again.

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<sup>19</sup>"Catholics Hold Vigil in Manila to Protest Raid on a Novitiate," *New York Times*, 2 September 1974, sec. 1, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup>"Filipino Bishops Ask End of Curbs," *New York Times*, 4 September 1974, sec. I, p. 8.

During martial law NASSA worked in, sponsored, and promoted programs that emphasized human development through “conscientization.” Among these works were establishment of Basic Christian Community-Community Organizations, or simply Basic Christian Communities (BCC).<sup>21</sup> The BCCs were inspired in part by Vatican II’s injunction to greater lay participation in liturgical and sacramental functions. In remote areas where there were only one or two priests for thousands of parishioners, the BCCs enabled the Church to maintain its influence.<sup>22</sup>

The Church’s work in general and the BCCs work in particular fundamentally changed the social and political empowerment level at the bottom strata of Philippine society. In a way, the BCCs harkened back to the Spanish era, when the Catholic parish was the center of the community, guiding and directing the community in matters of social and political concerns. Although the friars were long gone, the organization of the BCC was centered on the Church, which was now headed by indigenous clergy and guided and encouraged participation in decisions that affected parishioners directly within both the Church and their communities. The BCC was a way to engage the masses in collective action to solve collective problems.

Revitalization of the Church did not mean an end to persecution. BCCs and Cardinal Sin’s leadership did much to bring the mainstream Church into social action, but also made it an easier target in some respects. Indeed, Sin’s actions heightened the profile of many who had earlier remained off of Marcos’s lists. The level of persecution would vary from month to month, with some years being worse than others.

In an effort to put a stranglehold on Church involvement in peasant organizational activities and the inevitable linkages provided by the combined efforts of the Church and leftist groups, Marcos issued a decree in 1975 that required Church organizations to

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<sup>21</sup>Youngblood, *Marcos Against the Church*, 84.

<sup>22</sup>Jones, *Red Revolution*, 208.

obtain government approval before assisting in labor causes and banned foreign missionaries from trade-union activities. The decree served to reinforce the ban on strikes and lockouts imposed at the outset of martial law. The Catholic Church reacted by charging that Marcos was preventing them from performing their “Christian and human duty to help the poor and suffering.”<sup>23</sup> It also violated the Bill of Rights, but since the Bill of Rights had ceased to be relevant upon the imposition of martial law, it was a moot argument.

Failure to heed these decrees brought harsh government reprisals and threats. It was not uncommon for the government to “leak” threats against the Church. In February 1975, one such government leak was of an unsigned arrest warrant that contained the names of 155 priests, nuns, and Catholic laymen. Included in this extensive list were four bishops who were, according to the warrant, to be charged with “rebellion and inciting to sedition.”<sup>24</sup> The government leaked this and other warrants as a warning to the Church that its actions were being monitored. The leak struck fear in those whose names were on the list and prevented open confrontation with the Church.

The year 1976 saw continued arrests of clergy, deportations of missionaries, and raids on Church property. Not only did the Marcos government arrest priests, but the military raided the offices of Jesuit publications and seized Catholic-owned radio stations in Mindanao.<sup>25</sup> Year after year, these sorts of activities continued. In 1978, attacks against the Church were punctuated by the arrest of the Jesuit priest Father Romeo Intengan and the murder of his staff worker, T. Tantiado.<sup>26</sup> Father Intengan was targeted

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<sup>23</sup>“Manila Decree Draws Church Protest,” *New York Times*, 15 November 1975, sec. I, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup>Henry Kamm, “Church’s Ties with Manila Strained,” *New York Times*, 2 February 1977, sec. I, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup>Youngblood, *Marcos Against the Church*, 122.

for being the founder of the anti-authoritarian political party the *Nagkakaisang Partido Demokratiko Sosyalista ng Pilipinas* (United Democratic Socialist Party of the Philippines). The *Nacionalista* party-controlled government feared the actions of Intengan's party so much that they used terror and intimidation to try to silence its activities.

Even the most powerful members of the Church leadership were not immune to Marcos's harassment. Cardinal Sin had his activities watched closely by the Marcos administration. Sometimes he was unduly detained and kept from leaving the Philippines when he attempted to make official visits to the Vatican. This was an outrage to be sure, but it was a common occurrence in a country ruled by the singular power of a corrupt man. Yet the Cardinal was quite lucky. Inconveniencing his travel plans was a minor thing compared to the list of options Marcos might have considered, which included arrest or assassination. Cardinal Sin realized that he could be targeted at any time.

Clergy and laymen suffered almost equally under Marcos's tyrannical political policies. During martial law, more than 20,000 Philippine citizens were arrested for so-called political crimes. Among these were twenty-eight prominent and politically active Catholic priests and nuns.<sup>27</sup> Some were even tortured after their detainment. Their crimes are unknown, probably because their crimes were little more than trumped-up charges created to give the government an excuse to arrest them. These men and women were little more than politically effective organizers, and for that reason they were targeted.

The way Marcos prosecuted his struggle with the Church was careful and cunning, and his tactics often remained unknown to the public. Still, there were no less than twenty-two major military raids on Church institutions during the remaining years of martial law, and there is little doubt that far more were conducted on a lesser scale.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Kroeger, "Evangelization in the Philippine Church," 10.

<sup>28</sup>Youngblood, *Marcos Against the Church*, 114.

Through the use of terror tactics, Marcos tried to restrict the clergy to merely preaching the gospel, and in so doing end any threat to his political fortunes. He failed to do both.

However, Marcos's tactics were successful in slowing growth in Church activism. He did not, however, stop it. His political combat with the Church was indirect, and he avoided direct confrontation. Even Marcos realized that it was unwise to launch a direct frontal assault on the Church because it would certainly invite a backlash against his own administration. No matter how politically powerful the Church was or was not, it still had at least the nominal allegiance and respect of the vast majority of the population. Marcos controlled the State and the power inherent in it, and by using this power he won the majority of the battles. But in the end, the Church would win the war.

The marginalization and persecution of the Church during the height of martial law had other consequences. As Marcos's campaign had early success, he pulled away more and more from the Catholic Church as an institution of legitimacy for his own government. He had to fill in the huge vacuum created by the Church's removal. How did Marcos then deal with creating at least a myth of his own legitimacy? Marcos's approach to the legitimacy of his martial law regime was a Faustian approach to Weber's model of the legal, charismatic, and traditional aspects of legitimacy mentioned in chapter one (see figure 13). On the charismatic side of things, he fostered his own cult of personality, as demonstrated in the film about his life and the vast work of Philippine history he commissioned in order to link himself with other great Filipino heroes, from Lapu Lapu to Jose Rizal.

Marcos used the military and his cronies to ensure complete power, and to cover up for his lack of legal authority he held a series of referendums. These votes showed the world that his government enjoyed a mandate from the people. The referendums were a prime example of how low he had fallen. During the days leading up to the third referendum held on February 27, 1975, Marcos campaigned even though he was the only

candidate. The people were powerless, and again only the Church could organize a voice of opposition.

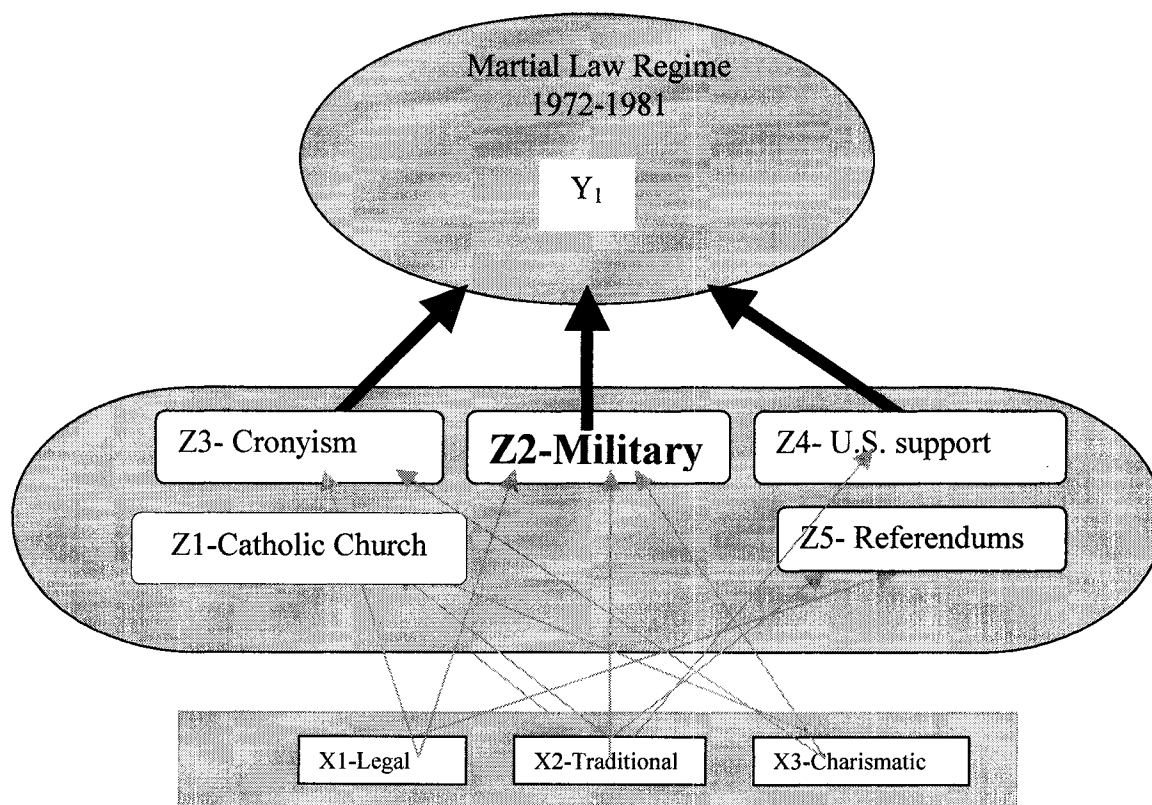


Fig. 13. The Legitimacy Model Under Martial Law- Mediating variables that normally would not show up in such a model (cronyism) play prominent roles in stabilizing the regime. The military, this time the Philippine military, is also key in preventing dissent and stabilizing the government, as is the United States continued financial support. The Catholic Church still remains one of the variables, but its suppression by Marcos causes it to lose some prestige from the previous period. What is absent is “utilitarian” legitimacy. Marcos neither cared nor had to appeal to this form of legitimacy.

At first their numbers were small, numbering around 5,000 protesters, but it was a start and a daring one considering the amount of power the Marcos police state could bring to bear on the Church if it desired. But in 1975, it was not necessary for Marcos to act any harsher towards the Church than he already did. Through a combination of voter

<sup>29</sup>“5,000 in Manila Join Protest March Against Regime,” *New York Times*, 22 February 1975, sec. 1, p. 8.



payoffs, harassment, and outright murder, Marcos made sure that he won every referendum on martial law. He was to be, in effect, the president for as long as he was alive, and should he die, Imelda Marcos was there to take over.

In reality, Marcos's legal mandate and his legitimacy had long since gone out of the people's hands. While he may have at one time enjoyed the benefits and moral certitude of legitimacy that came in the legal sense, it was now hollow. The constitution that gave him his power was written by him, and it was approved by men he had either bribed or threatened into acquiescence.

What Marcos had in abundance was traditional power. His administration was along the lines of Weberian traditionalism. He used bribery, nepotism, and favoritism to install his people in positions of power and had his opposition arrested. To gain power in the Marcos government meant pleasing Ferdinand or Imelda, and it had more to do with one's own personal loyalty to Marcos than with any intellectual ability one possessed. It was a common saying under martial law that everything was "relative," meaning you had to be related to the Marcos clan if you wanted to succeed in the Philippines.

A prime example of this was Herminio Disini, who was related to Mrs. Marcos by marriage. Because of his family position, he went from being a menial worker in a tobacco company to having ownership of a conglomerate with assets exceeding \$500 million.<sup>30</sup> Virtually all of the television stations and newspapers passed into the hands of Marcos relatives, and a mere 20 percent of the population controlled 53 percent of the nation's wealth. Marcos padded his own pockets and those of his relatives, and yet he tried to put forth a face of "constitutional authoritarianism" for his government.

Utilitarian legitimacy was harder for Marcos to foster. As chapter one discussed, the utilitarian model of legitimacy is based on the population granting the right to rule to a regime or government that in return takes care of the population's needs and desires.

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<sup>30</sup>Fox Butterfield, "5-Year Old Philippine Martial Law Builds Personal Power of Marcos," *New York Times*, 9 January 1978, sec. 1, p. 8.

Marcos and his administration were woefully inadequate to perform the task of taking care of the Philippine people. This was not because of lack of resources. Money poured into the State from the International Monetary Fund and other sources, but it never made it to the people. Instead, Marcos cared more about catering to his own excess than taking care of his people.

Marcos's brand of authoritarian stability actually brought some foreign investment, but much of the new cash flowed straight into the bank accounts of Marcos and his allies, and Marcos left the Philippines \$26 billion in debt a decade later.<sup>31</sup> His excesses were legendary and bordered on the preposterous. For instance, his government granted massive loans--out of the money given by the International Monetary Fund or the United States--to his cronies to build expensive five-star hotels in Manila while the poor went without adequate housing. On a smaller scale but just as outrageous was when much-needed money was diverted from the Typhoon Relief Fund to pay for Marcos's daughter's wedding dresses.<sup>32</sup>

Imelda Marcos was notorious for buying everything from precious stones to Manhattan real estate and charging it all to the Philippine government. Cardinal Sin was not above using biting social humor when discussing Mrs. Marcos's disproportionate spending. He was once quoted as saying that Imelda was "into mining" as the source of her wealth, but he did not mean the kind of mining that brings forth precious metals from the ground. Instead, her mining was along the lines of "this is mine, and this is mine, and this is mine."<sup>33</sup> Indeed, by the time Marcos was chased from office by the People Power

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<sup>31</sup>Youngblood, *Militarization and the Churches*, 29.

<sup>32</sup>Romulo, *Inside the Palace*, 186.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 205.

revolution it is estimated that his net worth was around \$30 billion, more than enough to retire the national debt of the Philippines.<sup>34</sup>

Marcos's military kept him in power. Before 1972, the armed forces numbered 55,000, and a mere five years later it had increased to 160,000.<sup>35</sup> The military was staffed with Marcos cronies, and it represented a real threat of violence to the opposition and more corruption in civil society, because many generals sat on the boards of directors of top Philippine corporations.

The use of the military to intimidate opponents was only one tactic Marcos used to stay in power. He heaped debt upon the citizenry, violated basic human rights, and persecuted opposition political and social establishments like the Church, all in an effort to remain on top. To Marcos, violence was necessary in martial law to bring about a "New Society" and a "New Republic." The crackdowns against dissidents inside and outside of the Church were justified for the elimination of subversion and the protection of national security.<sup>36</sup>

Marcos's targeting the Church as part of the conspiracy to subvert his "New Society" coincided with the Church's own attempt at remaining politically vigorous under the leadership of Cardinal Sin and the activities of the CBCP and the BCCs. The Church still did not confront martial law directly, but its work continued at the grassroots level. Political patience gave way to empowerment of the poor, gathering of allies in the middle class, and work in all sectors for possible unification as a single political voice under Church leadership.

The Marcos regime did not sit idly by while NASSA, the BCCs, and Cardinal Sin organized Church resources into politically relevant units capable of challenging him at

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 251.

<sup>35</sup>Butterfield, "Martial Law Builds Personal Power," 8.

<sup>36</sup>Youngblood, *Marcos Against the Church*, 65.

the grassroots level. Besides arrests and violations of human rights, Marcos took political action when he commissioned several top-level government committees within the Ministries of Labor and Defense to investigate the Church's activities. As Robert Youngblood writes, "The Marcos regime's uneasiness [with Catholic Activists] . . . was underscored by two confidential government reports, one by the Ministry of Labor in 1975 and the other by the Ministry of National Defense in 1978."<sup>37</sup>

Both reports outlined the danger of the Catholic Church's activities after Vatican II and its adoption of liberation theology in the Philippines, including the paranoid belief that the Church was being manipulated by Communist elements and even the Central Intelligence Agency. The reports recommended undercutting and thus weakening Church "activists." The BCC movement was labeled "dangerous" because of its potential as "an infrastructure of political power" on a national scale. Therefore, the report stated in general terms that the Church must be dealt with and countered.

These two reports blurred the line between what was considered radical and what was considered mainstream and thus acceptable within the Catholic Church. Both reports recognized that the Church's influence in politics could not be completely curtailed. It could only be slowed. Later in 1983, the *Crisis Papers* were also critical of the Catholic Church and recommended to the Marcos government more proactive steps to stem the tide of Church influence. These steps included divide-and-conquer tactics, such as legislation guaranteeing the vital interests of the Church, curtailing criticism of the Church in the state-run media, and downplaying ideological differences between the Church and State while using the state-controlled media to highlight even the smallest ideological schisms within the Church.

As the stranglehold of the Marcos government tightened, the strength of the Catholic Church's opposition continued to expand. The commissions that Marcos had

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 93.

ordered to study the problem issued recommendations that were implemented neither fully nor successfully. Cardinal Sin, now president of the CBCP, continued to strengthen the Church's position through his own efforts. He was not only charismatic, but also politically astute, unflappable, and the right man for the job. Sin may have been the perfect adversary to Marcos.

Sin avoided direct confrontation with Marcos, preferring instead to use what became his *modus operandi* for political declarations, the pastoral letter. He issued a slew of them throughout the remaining years of martial law. One of the first was entitled "Reconciliation Today." This particular letter, read throughout the parishes of the Philippines, proposed the National Reconciliation Council, which would bring elements of the Church together with business leaders and government officials to help bring the Philippines out of the martial law period and reconcile the government with the people. The Marcos administration ignored this overture.

This did not deter Cardinal Sin and the Church from continuing to challenge, at least from the pulpit, the martial law regime. Indeed, calls to end martial law had come sporadically since Sin became bishop of Manila in 1974. In 1979, the cardinal issued a firm and uncompromising pastoral letter calling for the end of martial law, stating unapologetically that martial law was destructive to the Philippines and had not brought progress but instead "killings" and "fear" to the people.<sup>38</sup> He called for its immediate abandonment, stressing that the continuation of a failed policy was senseless. He further called for the release of Marcos's chief political opponent, Ninoy Aquino, who had languished in prison since 1972.

Such pastoral letters alarmed some about the fears of blurring Church-State authority, but Sin still publicly stated he believed in the separation of Church and State. He qualified his statement by reiterating that this did not mean that the Church should sit

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<sup>38</sup>Henry Kamm, "Philippine Cardinal Calls for End to Martial-Law Rule by Marcos," *New York Times*, 15 September 1979, sec. I, p. 4.

in isolation from temporal matters. For better or worse, the Catholic Church was married to the system. Catholics take marriage seriously and in a marriage of any kind, whether literal or political, it is until death do they part.

In 1981, Cardinal Sin continued to blast the Marcos government for violating religious freedoms in the Philippines. In an address to the Catholic bishops in Baguio, Sin stated that the government was conducting “a deliberate, finely orchestrated campaign to throttle the freedom of the church to speak on matters of Catholic morality.”<sup>39</sup> That statement came in the wake of fraudulent presidential elections held in June, yet another Marcos farce. Tempers were beginning to reach a boiling point and patience was running out. In the year ahead, Church anger spilled onto the streets as a group of 5,000 priests, nuns, and laymen rallied in the streets of Cebu City in December 1982 to protest Marcos’s policies, as well as to burn him in effigy.<sup>40</sup> Similar gatherings were also held that same year in Manila and Bacolod.

Though not fatally damaged by the Catholic Church’s attacks, Marcos realized that the Church had the potential to accrue political weight over time. To counter it, he reached back into his bag of tricks to pull out a tactic that he had used earlier. In his mind, it seemed like the best way to counter an attack by the Philippine Church was to embrace a higher authority, and since God had yet to appear by Marcos’s side, the Pope was certainly a good second choice. As he had before with the visit of Pope Paul VI, Marcos wanted to use a visit by Pope John Paul II to his political advantage. Pope John

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<sup>39</sup>“Manila Cleric Says Marcos Stifles Religious Freedom,” *New York Times*, 28 June 1981, sec. I, p. 4.

<sup>40</sup>“An Effigy of Marcos Is Burned at a Rally in the Philippines,” *New York Times*, 13 December 1982, sec. I, p. 14.

Paul II was an extremely popular pontiff and had he embraced Marcos, it would have been the best political *anting-anting* he could achieve.<sup>41</sup>

Both the Church and Marcos wanted a visit from the Pope. They had pushed for it for several years. The Pope's final acceptance of an invitation and his subsequent visit did not have the effect Marcos had hoped. John Paul II did not embrace Marcos or grant him any special anointment, but it did bring an end to martial law. In a gesture of good will, Marcos ordered the end of martial law on January 17, 1981, a month before Pope John Paul II's visit. It seemed just enough time to tidy the political landscape up while not risking any destabilization of his government. However, it did not curry any political favor with the Pontiff.

The end of martial law did not mean the end of the problems between the Church and the Marcos government. Marcos's "reelection" in 1981 only meant that the Philippines had another six years of terror and in 1982, no less than a dozen clashes occurred between the Church and State, including raids on buildings and arrests of those politically involved religious and lay workers.<sup>42</sup> It seemed that Marcos was intent on keeping the Church out of politics, knowing full well the gravity of his situation should the Church be able to effectively mobilize the voting power of the BCCs and other social organizations.

The Church, emboldened by its perceived victory of having martial law lifted, rebuffed Marcos's efforts to keep it marginalized and away from temporal governmental matters. In 1983, the new CBCP president, Archbishop Antonio Mabutas, stated that the

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<sup>41</sup>Part of the folklore of the Philippine people is the belief in the protective qualities of certain magical talisman called *anting anting*. These *anting anting* can be anything from tattoos on the body to small metal discs worn around the neck. *Antinganting* are believed to be powerful enough to prevent death in battle or a loss in politics, or even promote something as mundane as making sure you have good luck on the job.

<sup>42</sup>Kroegeer, "Evangelization in the Philippine Church," 12.

Church could not restrict its mission only to the religious field and disassociate itself from temporal problems. It was a challenge for the Church in the wake of martial law to help build “not just a new society, but a new and just society . . .”<sup>43</sup>

In 1984 the Church grew more vocal in its criticism of Marcos. It issued a mid-year pastoral letter titled “Let There Be Life,” which confronted three specific national problems: the secret marshals, the economic crisis, and constitutional Amendment VI. The secret marshals had been the bane of both the Church and political opposition in the Philippines, responsible for the effectiveness of the crackdown across the archipelago. The economic crisis was hurting the Philippines at all levels, from the business interests in Makati to the poorest segments of Philippine society at the most basic level. Marcos, obsessed with remaining in power and enriching himself, did little to stimulate the economy.

The church’s opposition to Amendment VI was the most virulent. Amendment VI to the 1973 constitution, the result of unprecedented bribery and heavy-handed tactics as discussed earlier, empowered President Marcos to exercise lawmaking powers alongside the *Batasan Pambansa*, the national legislative body. Considering the *Batasan* was nothing more than a rubber stamp on Marcos’s policies, the inclusion of Amendment VI gave Marcos unlimited power to rule unopposed.

The Church never expected the protests to yield quick results, but the fight that had been waged since the 1960s at the grassroots level and at the national level since 1974 was slowly cracking the Marcos regime. Already he had lifted martial law, and his *total solution* had created nothing more than total problems. The Church capitalized on it, not for its own enrichment, but for the sake of its flock. The Church fully expected Marcos to refuse and fight its efforts at every turn, and that is what he did.

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 18-19.



Since it was expected that Marcos would not voluntarily give up his presidency, the Church was prepared to take other action. It pushed hard and encouraged participation by its members in what it called a “parliament of the streets.”<sup>44</sup> In this mass protest activity the people, long victimized by the Marcos administration, finally let their voices be heard. But just as Marcos in 1972 lacked a proper level of violence to justify his call for a *total solution*, the Church was missing a catalyst to bring out large numbers of people to apply adequate pressure on the administration. Martial law itself was not enough to motivate the masses, but the Church did not need artificial violence like the kind Marcos used as a catalyst for his *total solution*. It needed a tangible symbol on which to focus its rhetoric. This is what was missing in 1983.

Cardinal Sin, the CBCP, and the rest of the Catholic Church needed only the right opportunity or person around which to rally their forces and bring to bear the political power they had amassed since 1972. Few could have predicted what would make this a reality. Fewer still expected that the murder of one of Marcos’s key political rivals and one of the Philippines’ most popular opposition leaders would provide the impetus needed for the Church to help bring the downfall of Marcos’s government. It was not expected, but that is precisely what happened.

The role Ninoy Aquino played as Marcos’s chief political opponent and rival was discussed briefly before. From the very beginning of martial law he was an adamant opponent of Marcos, but sitting in a government jail left him powerless to act. Ninoy was eventually released from jail and essentially exiled to the United States. Alongside Ninoy was his devoted wife Corazon “Cory” Aquino. Little did she know at the time that her own destiny would be intertwined with the Church’s work, Cardinal Sin’s leadership, a people’s revolution, and Marcos’s fate.

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 13.

Cory Aquino was born Maria Corazon Conjuangco in 1933 to a family of upper class and staunchly Catholic Filipinos. Her family was both rich and politically powerful enough to have their daughter educated in finest Catholic institutions in the United States. Her education began at the all-Catholic Raven Hill Academy in Philadelphia, and later the Sister School of Assumption Convent and Notre Dame convent school. Her primary education was accentuated by her life at the College of Mount Saint Vincent, a Catholic-run institution of higher learning situated in the Bronx and administered by the Sisters of Charity.<sup>45</sup> Throughout her college years, she was also active in several Catholic lay organizations. She was by birth and by training immersed in the Catholic faith, a fact that proved important during the struggles against Marcos when the Catholic Church anointed her to take up the fight.

After her Catholic education, she would eventually marry Ninoy Aquino in 1954. In what can only be seen as a bizarre twist of fate, Ninoy had at one time dated Imelda Ramuldez, the future Mrs. Ferdinand Marcos. After marriage, Cory assumed the duties of a mother and housewife, and Ninoy became a politically powerful figure from the province of Tarlac.

Ninoy was imprisoned for most of the 1970s until Marcos, who feared his political power even in jail, had him exiled to the United States in 1979. Ninoy's exile also allowed him to receive needed medical treatment for a chronic heart condition. In the United States, he at least had access to the best medical care, although he did not wish to leave the Philippines. Life in the United States was good for both Ninoy and Cory, but living in America meant that Ninoy was out of the mainstream of Philippine opposition. He was restless and wanted to return to the Philippines to serve as the conscience of the anti-Marcos forces. In 1983, he and Cory decided to return. Ninoy chose to go alone

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<sup>45</sup>Lucy Komisar, *Corazon Aquino: The Story of Revolution* (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1987), 14.

first and left the United States on August 13, 1983, on a return trip to his homeland. Eleven days later, Cory arrived in Manila to bury her husband.<sup>46</sup>

The events of that day are now part of Philippine history. When Ninoy's plane landed in Manila, he had no protection, not from the Church and not from the opposition. He was set up, a sitting duck for Marcos's forces. As 30,000 supporters waited on him to emerge from the airport, Ninoy was escorted off the plane onto the tarmac where he was gunned down. Ninoy was assassinated in one of the most brutal ways imaginable, being shot in the back of the head by Philippine soldiers.<sup>47</sup> Ninoy's assassination profoundly affected the Philippines on all levels. Not only did it lead to political upheaval later, but it also it caused a flight in economic capital as the wealthy moved their money out of the country to safer locations because they were unsure about the future. The peso was devalued 38 percent and the poverty level skyrocketed to 70 percent.<sup>48</sup>

It is said that Imelda Marcos warned Ninoy and others around him that if he attempted to return to the Philippines he would be killed.<sup>49</sup> The crime was never solved to the satisfaction of Ninoy's supporters. Moreover, President Marcos did little to investigate the murder. He did go through the motions of establishing a commission led by his hand-picked Chief Justice Enrique Fernando as chairman, and he even offered Cardinal Sin a spot on the committee, something Sin promptly refused.<sup>50</sup>

Until this point, the Marcos-caused problems that existed in the Philippines, such as the peso devaluation and rising level of poverty, took time to notice. That was not so with Ninoy's murder. The outpouring of mourners was instantaneous. During Ninoy's

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 50.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 51.

<sup>49</sup>Romulo, *Inside the Palace*, 174.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 195.

funeral, the tens of thousands who showed up to pay their respects overwhelmed his widow, Cory. The funeral procession itself numbered two million people.<sup>51</sup> It remains one of the largest funeral processions ever.

The hundreds of thousands of mourners who turned out to pay their respects to Ninoy and to call for Marcos's resignation crippled Makati, metro Manila's main business district. The rallies continued even after Ninoy was buried. It was the catalyst the Church needed, and it gave birth to a new political movement. Businessmen, the poor, and the clergy united in a single cause to oppose Marcos. At the movement's center would be Ninoy's ill-prepared widow, Cory Aquino, who was buoyed by faith and guided by the Church.

The Church had, until Ninoy's assassination, been engaged in what Cardinal Sin called a policy of "critical collaboration."<sup>52</sup> The collaboration kept the government and the Church from having a direct confrontation. This allowed the Church to slowly build its forces for an opposition push against Marcos and speak out through pastoral letters. The Aquino assassination accelerated the opposition's momentum. Pressure mounted on Marcos as the "parliament of the streets" grew in size. In August 1984, Sin again called for national unity and reconciliation between the opposition and the government, knowing full well that Marcos's government would not respond favorably to his second call for reconciliation.

Marcos's reaction was expected. The Church's leadership was not surprised by the unresponsive nature of Marcos towards their overtures. Since the implementation of his *total solution* and his targeting the Church as an opposition movement, he had never

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<sup>51</sup>Robert H. Reid and Eileen Guerrero, *Corazon Aquino and the Brushfire Revolution* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 21.

<sup>52</sup>Romulo, *Inside the Palace*, 58.

taken a truly conciliatory stand towards the Church.<sup>53</sup> Sin and the Church realized that the future lay not with Marcos's appeasement, but with a leader they had yet to choose and in an opposition they could organize. Before Aquino's assassination the identity of the leader was unclear, but the organization of the middle class and peasantry was well on track. In the wake of the tragedy, the Church called for unity between the groups--a united stand against the government on mutual concerns.<sup>54</sup> Its leader had been found, and it was Cory Aquino.

There was little doubt among the opposition that Marcos was behind Ninoy's murder, and this fact only galvanized support for Cory. Marcos's guilt was evident in his government's actions and the state-run media's complete lack of coverage of the event. The few newspapers that dared print anything about the event had their doors shut, and daring journalists who challenged the official Marcos line were invited to "meet" the military.<sup>55</sup> Radio Veritas was the only exception.

Aquino's funeral drew millions of mourners, but no official coverage from the state-controlled Philippine press was given to the event. One of the largest funerals in world history garnered no favorable press coverage in the Philippines. Veritas was the only notable media outlet covering the funeral.<sup>56</sup> It clung tenaciously to the story, defying the martial law regime to shut its doors. Veritas did this because the Church bankrolled it, and its chairman was none other than the pugnacious Cardinal Sin.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 57.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 58.

<sup>55</sup>Bryan Johnson, *The Four Days of Courage: The Untold Story of the People Who Brought Marcos Down* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 173.

<sup>56</sup>Monina A. Mercado, ed. *An Eyewitness History: People Power The Philippine Revolution of 1986* (Manila, Philippines: James B. Reuter, S.J. Foundation, 1986), 10.

<sup>57</sup>Jonhson, *The Four Days of Courage*, 174.

The funeral was a backdrop to both mourning and anti-Marcos politics. Cardinal Sin officiated at the funeral and the world witnessed the Church shift its focus, aspirations, and hopes onto the shoulders of the grieving widow, Cory. She was at first a reluctant recipient of the Church's mandate. Questions about how a humble housewife could be the secular head to depose the seemingly all-powerful Marcos were valid. Cory herself had to be talked into taking the political lead by Cardinal Sin. But Sin's words, often described as having an "emphatic impact" on world leaders, were convincing.<sup>58</sup>

The Church had to do less to convince the public to embrace Cory. Nonetheless, it sought to endear her to the public by appealing to the Filipino affinity for the Christian *pasyon*. The *pasyon* was used to draw a parallel between what had happened to Ninoy Aquino and the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. The *pasyon* of Christ was and remains a popular religious story that is both recounted and reenacted in the Philippines. The *pasyon* is the story found in the New Testament of Christ's suffering in the Garden of Gethsemani, his desire to have the Father lift his suffering and his fate, his betrayal by the apostles, his arrest and his execution by the corrupt Roman authorities. It is also the story of victory over death and the resurrection, and it offered an understandable metaphor for the Philippine experience.

In the Philippine Catholic Church's political take on the story, Ninoy Aquino was the fallen savior who wished his fate could be altered by God but realized it could not. He had to see it through. His Galgoatha was the Manila airport and his cross was the tarmac where he, like Jesus, was betrayed by his own people and executed by their corrupt government. Cory was portrayed as the suffering Mary. Mary the mother and Mary Magdalene, who wept at the death of the fallen savior. In a country where every year hundreds literally have themselves crucified to reenact the suffering of Jesus, such

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<sup>58</sup>Roger Matthews, "Speaking Voice of the Church," *Financial Times*, 28 March 1989.

powerful imagery invoked sympathy and support for Cory, precisely as the Church hoped it would.

The *pasyon* allowed the Philippine population to have a connection with their past and their present. Christ's suffering was transformed and personified in the modern era by leaders of nationalist movements, including Jose Rizal and Benigno Aquino. Cory was viewed in the same light as the suffering Mary, mourning the lost savior and speaking of Ninoy's death as her country's resurrection. It was an amazing combination of images, the religious *pasyon* and the call for secular democracy in the fusion of Catholic imagery with secular politics.<sup>59</sup>

As Cory's political capital began to rise, the pressure put on Marcos for reform increased throughout 1985. The Church played an integral role in applying that pressure. It was largely due to this massive political pressure exerted by the Church that Marcos called snap presidential elections in 1986. He was not constitutionally required to do so, and it was a full year before his "constitutional" term expired. Marcos felt, as he had before the calling of martial law that he could catch his political opponents off guard and unorganized by calling for snap elections in 1986 instead of 1987. He could then set his own political machine in motion, as he had during the previous referendums on martial law and elections, to prove to the world that he still held a mandate from the Filipino people.<sup>60</sup> But this was not 1969, nor was it 1973, and the Catholic Church had the power—a candidate and a platform to challenge Marcos as he had not been challenged since assuming office.

The election itself was a referendum on Marcos's years in power, but with Marcos it would be impossible to have an honest vote. His political machine went into overdrive, blasting the Church, bribing officials, and doing whatever it took to win the election.

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<sup>59</sup>Steinber, *The Philippines: A Singular and a Plural Place*, 180.

<sup>60</sup>Romulo, *Inside the Palace*, 214.

However, this time Marcos could not escape the watchful vigilance of the Catholic Church, an institution that in 1986 had reached its full political capacity and power, and was finally able to confront the Marcos government head-on.

The legitimacy of the Marcos regime had been fragile since his declaration of martial law. Hairline fractures developed throughout the 1970s within the various institutions and conventions that had fostered his regime. Marcos stood on very shaky legal ground, his charismatic legitimacy was equally fragile, and his appeal to utilitarianism was effectively nonexistent. The Church was headed toward a full reclamation of its place as the primary mediating variable in Philippine legitimacy. It would be the one to help determine just who would lead the Philippines in 1986, and it would not be Ferdinand Marcos.

The methods used to organize the populace have been covered at some length so far. These included Radio Veritas, whose primary purpose was to spread the gospel but which was taking a more political turn in its broadcasts. The Church also had social organizations previously mentioned, the BCCs, pastoral letters, and something new--the National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL). Although formally organized in 1983, NAMFREL had its roots with the establishment of the Operations Registration Committee (1957) and in the Citizens National Electoral Assembly (CNEA) formed in the 1960s. The Catholic Church helped develop, create, and organize NAMFREL. Its membership before the 1986 election read like a who's who of the Catholic powerful, including Cardinal Sin. Even today, NAMFREL has several powerful Catholic clergy serving on its national board of directors.<sup>61</sup> At the time of the 1986 election, NAMFREL had the backing and full faith and support of the Church, businesses, labor, and civic groups.

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<sup>61</sup>For a current list of NAMFREL's members and board of directors visit <http://www.atenista.net/namfrelqc/about.htm>.



NAMFREL's reach was extensive because it was based on the Church's nationwide organization.<sup>62</sup> With NAMFREL, the Church had the only organization that could compete with Marcos and his party. During the months leading up to the 1986 election, NAMFREL fielded an estimated 500,000 volunteers strategically placed in nearly 90,000 polling places. Working through the organizational power of NAMFREL, the grassroots reach of the BCCs, the oversight function of the priests, and the charisma brought by Cory and Cardinal Sin, the Catholic Church proved to be unstoppable. Marcos's days were numbered.

Marcos must have been shocked. He and Imelda had underestimated the forces aligned against them. It seemed that his decade of persecution against politically active elements within the Church was fruitless, for he woke up in 1986 to a real juggernaut like he had never faced before. He was furious at the actions of the Church and Cardinal Sin, but he was unable to arrest or assassinate the popular leader, lest he bring about his own downfall. Instead, he blasted Sin's efforts by publicly accusing him of "destabilizing the nation."<sup>63</sup> Marcos even went so far as to accuse Sin of being a Christian version of the arguably insane Islamic revolutionary Ayatollah Khomeini.<sup>64</sup> Sin took these and other personal assaults in stride. He knew his power base was strong and his political influence was on the rise. There would be a new leader in the Philippines who would be granted a mandate of legitimacy by the people, and this legitimacy was to pass through the Catholic Church as it had for the majority of Philippine history. It was enough to make anyone confident.

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<sup>62</sup>Komisar, *Corazon Aquino*, 94.

<sup>63</sup>Robert L. Youngblood, "The Corazon Aquino Miracle and the Philippine Churches," *Asian Survey* 28, no. 12 (December 1987): 1,243.

<sup>64</sup>Battung et al., *Religion and Society*, 80.

Cardinal Sin remained vigilant even as he helped Cory navigate potentially political pitfalls. Part of his activity on behalf of the Church and the voters was his call to the laity to help keep a watchful eye on Marcos's political machine in order to stave off election fraud. Part of his plan included a request to send in accounts of electoral cheating, which he would then turn over to former United States Vice President Walter Mondale. His call was answered in large numbers.<sup>65</sup> Sin, along with other priests and ministers, also directed his flocks through sermons and pastoral letters to take part in the voting. Voting became part of one's Christian duty in 1986. The people answered this call in record numbers. Once at the polls, they voted for the Church's hand-picked candidate, Cory Aquino.

As stated earlier, Cardinal Sin and the Church convinced her to run, but the process of completing the opposition ticket and selecting Cory's running mate was not as easy. Cory may not have been the most politically astute person, but she knew what she did not want in her campaign. She did not want Salvador Laurel as her vice president, even though he was clearly the best choice given the fact that he had an organized political machine behind his campaign--something she lacked and desperately needed to win.

Cory's reasoning for keeping Laurel off the ticket was that she felt Laurel did not meet the moral standards to run on a leadership platform.<sup>66</sup> Throughout the early primary, both jostled for political position and each side criticized the other. Laurel had not decided to give up his own presidential aspirations in deference to the Church's choice in Cory. But division meant a possible Marcos victory and the choice in candidates could not have been more clear. The primary came down to an immoral candidate versus an inexperienced one. The fragmentation that it produced in the opposition might have

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<sup>65</sup>Casper, *Fragile Democracies*, 74.

<sup>66</sup>Komisar, *Corazon Aquino*, 69.

never healed and it may have doomed their chances against Marcos had the Church not intervened.

Not having the party machine that Laurel possessed or his political instincts, Cory knew she would need the Catholic Church. It was the only force in the Philippines that by giving its blessing and support legitimized her candidacy to millions. She needed the Church's help, and during the indecision about Laurel she needed its advice. Her first step was to formally announce to the Church her decision to seek the presidency. On December 6, 1985, Cory went to see Cardinal Sin in his sprawling white villa in Manila and said, "Your Eminence, I have prayed over this. And I have made up my mind. I will run."<sup>67</sup>

Sin's response to Cory's simple statement was direct and pointed, for he knew Cory did not possess the political machinery or acumen needed to win against Marcos, who was certain to pull out all stops in his corruption machine. "With whom are you going to run?" Cardinal Sin asked. Cory answered that she could not run with Laurel. After hearing her explain her concerns, Sin took on the role of the trusted advisor. His tone shifted to one that was more appropriate for the representative of the truly legitimate force behind any decision for her to run, any hope she had of future political success, and any legitimacy her presidency could hope to possess. He said to her, "Cory, you cannot do it alone . . . It is foolish to run if you are going to lose."

In these a few words, the cardinal cautioned Cory not to dismiss the political machinery that backed Laurel. Cory knew what Sin was implying without saying it directly. She knew that Sin wanted her to consider Laurel, and she also knew that he would talk to Laurel himself, evaluate his fitness, and help him accept a secondary role in the future government. Feeling the pressure of the Catholic Church on her shoulders

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 75.

Cory humbly replied, “Your Eminence, before I came here, I made up my mind. Whatever you tell me to do. I will do.”<sup>68</sup>

On December 11, 1985, Cory again visited Cardinal Sin, and he blessed her and prophesized that she would indeed be the next president of the Philippines. He called her the Philippine “Joan of Arc.”<sup>69</sup> Although neither Aquino nor Sin could have known it, in that single act of submission the future of the Philippine government’s character was set. It would be the government of Cory Aquino that would be awarded the mantle of legitimacy from the Catholic Church. It would also be her government that would oversee the full restoration of the Catholic Church’s power and political influence to the levels it had enjoyed almost a century before.

The Church’s mission, especially Cardinal Sin’s, was to convince Laurel to accept the secondary spot on the presidential ticket. Sin paid a personal visit to Laurel to discuss the matter. Cardinal Sin spoke to Laurel in his typical diplomatic fashion as powerbroker, intermediary, and adviser, “You are wise in the way of politicians . . . (but) the sympathy of the people will go to her. Join with her, and you will win.”<sup>70</sup> It is said that a tear rolled down Laurel’s cheek as he fought with his pride. “Now go and decide,” Sin told him. He did, choosing to be Cory’s vice president.

Even unbiased observers within the Marcos circle now state unequivocally that it was Jaime Cardinal Sin who brought Laurel and Aquino together and convinced Laurel to shelve his presidential ambitions in favor of Cory.<sup>71</sup> It was this action by Jaime Sin that prevented the split in opposition votes that most likely would have doomed any chance to dethrone Marcos in the election. Sin, through his act of political intervention,

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 76.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>Romulo, *Inside the Palace*, 214.

had saved Aquino's candidacy and more than a decade of preparation by the Church was also salvaged. Cory had only two months to prepare for the election, but now she had a united ticket and she had the Church on her side.

Initially, Cory's campaign was strong on generalities and short on specifics, but this did not matter. There was no need for her to be strong on both. She was leading a moral crusade, and this kind of campaign was much more than a campaign of policy wonks and issue-specific details. Her political message was both simple and appealing, "Sobra na—Tama na—Palitan na!" ("Too much—Enough Already—Change him!").<sup>72</sup>

This moral crusade pitted Cory and her backers in a constant fight to combat what they felt would be inevitable cheating by Marcos. Cardinal Sin issued a pastoral letter warning of a "sinister plot" to frustrate the people's will, including bribes to teachers, district campaign managers, and others to buy their votes. Sin took the unprecedented step of offering absolution before the sin, telling people that they could take the money but that "money offered to you in no way obliges you to vote for a particular candidate."<sup>73</sup>

Alongside the usual vote-buying schemes and violence, Marcos made a conscious decision to counter the Church's influence at the polls. The Church had NAMFREL, but Marcos had his own weapon at the precincts and they were the ones who would officially tally the votes. Marcos's government Commission on Elections (COMELEC) issued an order prohibiting priests and nuns from engaging in partisan election activities, with threats of fines and long imprisonment. It was a blatant and atrocious double standard meant to target the Catholic Church, for no order was forthcoming when anti-Catholic

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 217.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 88.

charismatic religious group *Iglesia Ni Kristo* and its three million members publicly backed Marcos.<sup>74</sup>

There was no limit to the lengths to which Marcos would go to discredit the Church. During the actual voting, Marcos ordered his state-run television networks to broadcast images of nuns carrying ballot boxes, with the announcers absurdly telling the audience that what they were seeing was evidence that the Church was trying to cheat.<sup>75</sup> It was not convincing. Nonetheless, his efforts at cheating bore fruit. At the height of the vote count it appeared as if Marcos would successfully steal the election. His cronies successfully rigged the results at some of the ballot boxes and at official vote-counting establishments.

One thing remained to be done. NAMFREL planned a quick count of all the votes and the results would be broadcasted over Veritas. If this happened, Marcos knew his fraudulent election could be in jeopardy. To counter this possibility, Marcos sent Imelda to Brother Raymundo L. Dizon, then president of De La Salle University, to demand that he stop the NAMFREL count. The Marcos administration knew NAMFREL results would not match those of the Marcos controlled COMELEC.<sup>76</sup> Dizon refused.

COMELEC was expected to cheat, and early returns only verified the inevitable. The cheating brought down the mood at NAMFREL headquarters. Before their eyes, Marcos was successfully stealing the election from the Church, from the people, and from Cory. Workers at NAMFREL, burdened with the reality that despite their ardent efforts they might come up short, were melancholy as the results came in. But the Church did not give up and did not shirk its responsibility and role as the force of

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<sup>74</sup>Johnson, *The Four Days of Courage*, 51.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>76</sup>Romulo, *Inside the Palace*, 218-219.

legitimacy in the Philippines. It had thrown down the gauntlet in the election and it was the time for it to put everything it had in resources, people, and leadership on the line. If political change was to happen--and no change could be more absolute than deposing Marcos--then it had to take a stand now.

Keeping the spirits up at NAMFREL was an important task, and taking part in this effort was again Cardinal Sin. Word spread quickly through the NAMFREL headquarters that Sin would be coming to visit, to lift their spirits, and to reinvigorate their efforts. "The Cardinal is coming. He will defend us against Marcos," was the rumor spreading through the workers.<sup>77</sup> Through the force of personality, Cardinal Sin kept the fight alive at NAMFREL. And come he did.

Cardinal Sin entered NAMFREL headquarters that night like a film star surrounded by a phalanx of security men, being jostled by throngs of women trying to touch him and kiss his ring and eager autograph-seekers thrusting papers and pens in his path.<sup>78</sup> Sin pushed his way through the crowds, offering his ring with one hand and signing autographs with the other. Sin's presence in NAMFREL that night was more than just a visit to rally the troops. It was a real manifestation of the Church's willingness to fight Marcos.

Sin's visit and his work on behalf of NAMFREL and others made people believe. He gave them hope when most felt that they did not have a chance against Marcos's corrupt political machine. In the showdown of Church versus State, Cardinal Sin led the charge. His visit to NAMFREL completed the circle because NAMFREL itself was founded at the urging of the cardinal, who gave its first president, Jose Concepcion, his full blessing. Sin also provided him with an elite corps of priests and nuns to act as recruiters and organizers, and this was merely the first step. NAMFREL's work was

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<sup>77</sup>Johnson, *The Four Days of Courage*, 46.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

thought of as a Christian apostolate, using bishops to verify possible members and weed out the saboteurs and infiltrators.<sup>79</sup> So on the night of Sin's visit, it was just another in a long line of proactive measures he took on behalf of the Church. And that night, Cardinal Sin and the Church asked the faithful not to give up hope, telling all the foreign press in attendance to stick around because something big was going to happen soon.<sup>80</sup>

It did not take long for something big to happen. One of the most important events from the election period of February 1986 happened on the evening of February 9, when thirty government COMELEC computer operators charged with counting the votes quit their jobs and walked out. They did so out of conscience, accusing the Marcos government of electoral fraud and cheating. They were given protection by the Church and moved to a Church safe house to prevent Marcos from exacting revenge.

The Church was doing all it could to bring Marcos down. It hand-picked the opposition candidates, fielded a half-million people to oversee the elections, set up an anti-Marcos radio station and weekly journal, castigated the government from the pulpit, ardently prayed for its downfall, and now sheltered its enemies.

Even the skeptical nonpartisan foreign press started to believe in the Church's power to challenge the Marcos machine. Bryan Johnson, who was among the journalists in the foreign press corps covering the events, wrote:

To a Protestant skeptic such as myself, such profound faith was nearly incomprehensible. Until then, I had thought of the Philippine Catholic church as a wealthy and dogmatic bureaucracy; its opposition to Marcos had seemed mostly symbolic. All that talk of Good vs. Evil and "God On Our Side" was the standard rhetoric of battle, the same absurd claim made by everyone from Hitler to the Ayatollah Khomeini. But Jaime Sin had put a large dent in my cynicism. Who knows? Maybe God did care about the millions of poor, devout Filipinos pleading for His intercession.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 47.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 49.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 50-51.



As a skilled observer of events, Johnson noticed how Marcos had for years criticized the Catholic bishops for their unwarranted intrusions into politics, and had even accused them of harboring Communist sympathizers in their ranks. But he had always been careful to couch the attacks in oblique language, avoiding any direct assault on the Church itself. In a country that is 90 percent Catholic, where half of the female population seems to be named Maria, Lourdes, or Evangeline and no home is complete without a wall shrine to the Christ-child Santo Nino, it is political suicide to declare open war on the Roman Church.<sup>83</sup>

Political suicide perhaps, yet some politicians did not believe it was a risk, and certainly Marcos had no choice. He did not realize that the Catholic Church did more than just encourage participation in secular politics and that it made voting a symbolic act of the Christian faith. Along those lines, the Church also carried out voter mobilization campaigns. Voting in the 1986 election was for the parishioner as much a Catholic duty as taking Mass, confession, and the Hail Mary.

Even before the election was completed, the Church hierarchy in the Philippines and even the Papacy in Rome let it be known that they did not intend to extend the trappings of moral and political legitimacy to Marcos. The Church also took an active role in opening up the long-controlled Manila press by starting publication of a new tabloid, *Sign*, and the Catholic magazine *Veritas*. Radio Veritas, the Catholic station that survived the Marcos crackdown on freedom of speech, continued to prove itself as a useful and influential tool in spreading the Catholic Church's call to action during the election.

After the COMELEC defections, it was clear that Marcos was going to steal the election as expected. What was also equally expected was the Church-backed NAMFREL's announcement that its quick tallying of the vote results gave the election to

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

Mrs. Corazon Aquino.<sup>84</sup> The Church was invested at every level of Cory's election that night. The NAMFREL vote counters, the vast majority of them Catholics, declared her the winner of the vote, and the Catholic radio station Veritas was the first place Cory went to claim victory.<sup>85</sup>

When COMELEC declared Marcos the winner, there was little surprise. This election was by all accounts one of the most corrupt elections in Philippine history. Just as the COMELEC defectors had warned and just as the NAMFREL workers feared, Marcos had stolen the election. What was different this time was that the Church and its flock were prepared to do something about it. In 1969 and 1972 they did nothing, but in 1986 things were different. The Church moved quickly to declare the new Marcos presidency null and void.<sup>86</sup>

On Sunday February 9, 1986, Sin made an address after the Mass at Santo Domingo and Baclaran churches. He was dressed in yellow and green, the symbolic colors of Cory and Laurel, and in his speech he praised the voters' courage, NAMFREL, and Aquino. Moreover, he warned that God would not forgive Marcos if he was responsible for fraud. God may not have been on Marcos's mind, as he did indeed try to steal the election. Cory waited for the Church to act.

In the days following the fraudulent claims by the ruling regime, the Catholic bishops deliberated on the appropriate response. On February 13, the CBCP discussed and reflected on their positions well into the early morning hours. Members argued amongst each other about whether to take a strong position.<sup>88</sup> Imelda Marcos tried to intervene and break up the meeting. She hoped her actions would prevent the bishops

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<sup>84</sup>Komisar, *Corazon Aquino*, 101.

<sup>85</sup>Reid and Guerrero, *Corazon Aquino and the Brushfire Revolution*, 24-25.

<sup>86</sup>Komisar, *Corazon Aquino.*, 119.

<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*, 100.

from issuing a statement. Her action was yet another example of how much those in power feared the Church's voice. She even went so far as to try to bribe Cardinal Sin with extravagant gifts.

In her pleas for the cardinal to influence the CBCP not to act against her husband, Imelda Marcos threw a temper tantrum in what was called "one of the most delicious scenes in Church-State relations."<sup>89</sup> It was to no avail. Cardinal Sin had no intentions of stopping the CBCP, and he himself wanted the statement to be one that would define the Church's position against Marcos. When complete, the CBCP's statement was both blunt and scathing in its language against the Marcos presidency. It left little doubt in the minds of the public and the international community about the official Church position.

The CBCP statement declared in unambiguous terms and with moral certainty that Cory Aquino had won the presidency. It was one of the most explicit political statements the Church had ever issued, not simply during the Marcos era but also during post-Vatican II Church history. The bishops called the election "unparalleled in the fraudulence of their conduct."<sup>90</sup> Moreover, they condemned the disenfranchisement of voters and declared that the government had no moral basis on which to govern.

The statement was read around the country in all parishes and churches, and it did not take long for Marcos to respond. His cronies blasted the bishops' statement, calling it "inflammatory" and "rash" and insisting that it posed "an imminent threat to the peace and tranquility of [the Philippines]."<sup>91</sup>

Coupled with the CBCP's statement was the first of what would become a series of massive anti-Marcos rallies organized by the Church. In the past rallies were held, but rarely did they number more than a few thousand participants. This new rally was

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<sup>89</sup>Johnson, *The Four Days of Courage*, 56.

<sup>90</sup> Reid and Guerrero, *Corazon Aquino and the Brushfire Revolution*, 26.

<sup>91</sup>Johnson, *The Four Days of Courage*, 57-62.

trumpeted as a “Triumph of the People” prayer rally and held on February 16, 1986, in Manila’s sprawling Luneta Park. Two million people attended, led in prayer and protest by three bishops and thirty-five priests. The Church worked on all fronts.

As an amusing aside to the growing size and power of the rallies, Cardinal Sin’s political power caught the attention of other would-be plotters for Marcos’s presidency. In more than one instance Cardinal Sin was included, without his knowledge, in the planning of political intrigues such as the coup plot being hatched by Marcos Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile. Enrile planned to overthrow Marcos and establish a new “National Reconciliation Council” that was to include Cory, General Fidel Ramos, and Cardinal Sin.<sup>92</sup>

Marcos learned of Enrile’s plan and set in motion another chain of events that led to Cardinal Sin and the Church being involved with Enrile and Ramos, but not in the way the two military men expected. Remember that Enrile was a major player in the events that brought about martial law and persecution of the Church, as well as being a mouthpiece for various threats and warnings hurled at the Church throughout martial law. The events set in motion after Marcos’s own intelligence reports showed that Enrile was planning a coup would lead to an ironic twist of fate in which Enrile would beg the Church to save his life.

After learning of the plot, Marcos ordered the arrest of Enrile and Ramos. Tipped off to the coming trouble, both men sought safety in their respective camps and among their loyal followers. But none could offer them complete security. They had to call upon the Church to protect them in their hour of need. Their defections from the Marcos administration, combined with events already set in motion by the Church, culminated in the massive protests in the streets that have since come to be known as the People Power Revolution.

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<sup>92</sup>Komisar, *Corazon Aquino*, 110.

Enrile joined forces with General Fidel Ramos at Camp Aquinaldo with a handful of soldiers who supported their cause. They knew that an attack could come at any time, and that their actions, while bold, were doomed without the support of the Church and the people. To be successful against Marcos meant more than guns and ammunition, it took faith in the Church's ability to rally the people around their cause. Marcos was far from politically impotent. He still controlled the presidency, and he still had the loyalty of the armed forces and the firepower to crush the infant revolt by two of his top military officials. He did not, however, control the Church.

Enrile's wife was the first to appeal to the Catholic Church for help on the day her husband defected. She called Cardinal Sin directly and appealed to him to help her husband. Cardinal Sin responded favorably and contacted the leadership of many of the religious orders of nuns and priests in Manila and told them to "go to the chapel and stretch out your arms and pray and fast . . . We are in battle, and you are the powerhouses . . ."<sup>93</sup> Prayer was needed first, and action followed next.

Enrile also telephoned Sin. He said to the cardinal, "I will be dead within one hour . . . I don't want to die . . . if possible do something."<sup>94</sup> Even Fidel Ramos, a Protestant, told the cardinal that he embraced an image of the Virgin Mary and pleaded with Sin to "help us by calling the people to support us."<sup>95</sup> The cardinal replied that he would indeed help them both, comforting Ramos and Enrile by saying, "In fifteen minutes, your place will be filled with people."<sup>96</sup>

On February 22, Cardinal Sin took to the airwaves on Radio Veritas. As he spoke to the people, the Church's candidate, Cory, slept in the Carmelite Monastery protected

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 111.

<sup>94</sup>Mercado, *An Eyewitness History*, 105.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid.

by a battalion of nuns who vowed to die if necessary to protect her. Cory was resting and waiting patiently for her opportunity to assume the presidency. Hearing the cardinal on the air, Marcos sought to silence Radio Veritas, but fortunately for the Church the military commander he told to destroy the facility ignored his order.<sup>97</sup> As such, the opposition was able to hear Sin and other officials broadcast messages of inspiration and urgency in these critical hours.

The Church did not take the requests from Ramos and Enrile lightly. Cardinal Sin knew that calling upon the six million Catholics in metro Manila would be dangerous. He knew what Marcos was capable of and once People Power began, Marcos had options. General Fabian Ver, an ardent loyalist of the Marcos regime, came up with one plan that called for the government to instigate a bombing and arson campaign and then crack down on this supposed criminal activity by calling for martial law. The plan was called Operation Everlasting, and it included the arrest of many officials, including Cory Aquino and Cardinal Sin.<sup>98</sup> It was outrageous to say the least, but it was an action the Marcos government considered.

If Marcos decided to open fire, thousands would be killed and the blood would be on his hands.<sup>99</sup> So when Sin went to broadcast again, he knew the full weight and magnitude of his request. He announced on Veritas that day that he was “deeply concerned about the situation of General Ramos and Minister Enrile,” and he made a call for the “people to support [Enrile and Ramos]” and to “go to Camp Aguinaldo and show your solidarity with them in this crucial period.”<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 116.

<sup>98</sup>Romulo, *Inside the Palace*, 223.

<sup>99</sup>Johnson, *The Four Days of Courage*, 78-79.

<sup>100</sup>Komisar, *Corazon Aquino*, 115.

Pushed by the Church and the exhortations of Cardinal Sin, hundreds of thousands took to the streets. They answered the call to defend those in the Marcos administration who had defected from his camp. When Marcos's troops closed on the camp, they did not meet armed resistance but instead human barricades as nuns knelt in front of the tanks and recited the rosary.<sup>101</sup> It was an unprecedented scene in world history, and from February 22-25, 1986, the events that would become known as People Power unfolded.

With People Power in full swing, the Church now protected the same officials who during martial law were responsible for the arrest, torture, and execution of many of the faithful. Nonetheless, Radio Veritas broadcasted repeated calls for the people to take to the streets to protect those who had defied Marcos, and come they did. Veritas increasingly became a thorn in Marcos's side, and eventually he was able to have some of his loyal forces bomb the transmitter and knock the station off the air. However, the destruction of their tower was too little too late for Marcos's position. By then, hundreds of thousands had come to the streets in and around EDSA Avenue, forming a human barricade against the tanks and armed forces loyal to Marcos.

The Church-sponsored nature of the People Power revolution is unmistakable. Even one of the most popular and well-known books dealing with the events of People Power, entitled *An Eyewitness to History People Power The Philippine Revolution of 1986*, is dedicated not to Enrile, Ramos, or even to Cory but to the Virgin Mary. The events of February 1986 are called a "Marian revolution" by no less than Francisco S. Tatad, Marcos's former press secretary, a member of Opus Dei, and a current member of the Philippine Senate. Senator Tatad and other influential and politically powerful Filipinos wrote that the revolution's strength and sustenance was drawn from the masses

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 118.

held and conducted by men like Cardinal Sin and prayers offered to the Virgin Mary.<sup>102</sup> It was a case of rosary beads against M-16s.

At first, rosary beads and prayers were not enough to convince Marcos to budge. He was not going to leave without a fight, no matter how many people took to the streets. In a late night press conference following the Enrile and Ramos defections, Marcos blasted his former defense minister as being “out to grab power and rule the country through a junta.” His rage also extended to Cardinal Sin, whom he called “an inciter to rebellion” and “a mouther of subversion statements!”<sup>103</sup> He tried to move forward with his own inauguration, but his broadcast was interrupted after supporters of the People Power revolution took control of the major broadcasting relay stations.

The United States watched the events with interest, and even President Reagan’s administration recognized the Church’s importance in the political developments within the Philippines. The Reagan administration requested that Cardinal Sin go to Malacanang to negotiate a peaceful end to the standoff in a face-to-face meeting with Marcos. Sin responded: “It should be the president of the United States who insists that he should leave the country.”<sup>104</sup>

The United States also hastily arranged a phone call to Cardinal Sin from Jose Azcona, the president of Honduras, where it was hoped Marcos could go into exile. President Azcona told the cardinal, “We have decided not to accept him, but if you ask, we will do it.”<sup>105</sup> Both instances are further evidence of the Church’s powerful political

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<sup>102</sup>Mercado, *An Eyewitness History*, 8.

<sup>103</sup>Romulo, *Inside the Palace*, 231.

<sup>104</sup>Komisar, *Corazon Aquino*, 120.

<sup>105</sup>*Ibid.*



position. Here was the world's most powerful nation turning to a priest to resolve a crisis, bring peace to a nation, and ensure American interests in the region.

Having lost all ability to communicate with the country and seeing his military routed by hundreds of thousands of citizens, Marcos finally realized his situation was hopeless. Indeed, while he may have held nominal political power and influence in the military, he could not rule a country where the citizenry was in active revolt. He had lost the mandate of legitimacy long ago, and martial law and his penchant for corruption allowed it to remain only as a façade. The Church brought reality home to Marcos. His time was up. At 9:00 P.M. on February 25, 1986, American helicopters airlifted Marcos and his family to Clark Air Base. He was then flown to Guam, and after Cory rejected his appeals to return to the Philippines, he was exiled to Hawaii.

The family's departure from the Philippines only embittered Marcos against those who deposed him. He and Imelda were particularly ungracious in their comments towards the Catholic Church. Marcos himself continued to call Cardinal Sin "an Ayatollah Khomeini," while Imelda referred to him simply as "a son of a bitch."<sup>106</sup> They were furious at the People Power movement organized by the Church and outraged at what they felt was illegal assistance given by the Church to Cory's campaign. They charged that the Catholic Church contributed more than \$30 million to Aquino's campaign, a charge that Church officials scoffed at and denied. The Church had room to scoff, because Marcos himself had stolen billions from the Philippine people to remain in power.

The anger was understandable. The Church forced Ferdinand Marcos, president and dictator of the Philippines for more than twenty years, to flee the country of his birth. He died in exile. He had lost international support for his government, but domestic support had long since dried up. Thanks to the brave souls in the streets, the military

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<sup>106</sup>Romulo, *Inside the Palace*, 262.

defectors, and the Catholic Church's leadership, Cory Aquino became the new president of the Philippines.

Cory was in power because of the Church, and as she faced the task of ruling the country she needed its support, assistance, and legitimacy then more than ever. The Church's actions during the election of 1986 were unprecedented in modern political history, yet when viewed through the lens of this study one can see how the Church was merely reclaiming its lost legacy. Its power as the force of legitimacy had come full circle. With the election complete, Cory legitimized, and the Philippines reclaimed, the Church's next task was to pick up the pieces of a tattered nation left by years of Marcos corruption and rebuild Philippine pride in the government and in the nation-state as a whole.

## CHAPTER V

### THE PARTNERSHIP OF POWER

The Philippine Catholic Church's work in the post-Vatican II era made the events leading up to People Power possible. Organized peasant and dissident movements aided the process, but the Philippines' fragmented political nature made any large-scale resistance by these groups unlikely. The Church was the only institution with the resources and organizational capability to oppose Ferdinand Marcos. With its vast network of priests, nuns, and laymen working in the Basic Christian Communities, the parishes, and at the national level, an anti-Marcos coalition became a reality. In the end, Marcos had not given the Philippines a *total solution* but instead a total problem, and it was the Church that provided the ultimate answer.

Ninoy Aquino's assassination was the watershed in the Church's resistance movement. It culminated more than a decade of work that had grown increasingly bolder with each year. Ninoy's martyrdom enabled the Church to make a final social and political push that included pastoral letters, protests by clergy, mass rallies, and the mandate of legitimacy being passed to Cory Aquino. When Cory was finally recognized domestically and internationally as the Philippines' new president, her recitation of the oath was the symbolic culmination of martyrs' sacrifices both in the Church and in the streets. People who had given all for love of their country made those sacrifices.

Cory Aquino took the oath with her hand placed firmly on a Bible held by Dona Aurora, the mother of her slain husband Ninoy. Together, she and her supporters sang the Lord's Prayer. At that moment in history, the Philippine Catholic Church had come

full circle. It had risen like a phoenix from the ashes of martial law to once again claim the preeminent position of power (see figure 14). The Church was now both a mediating variable and a partner in power. No other group or organization possessed the same influence and credibility as the Church. It was again the kingmaker and the force of legitimacy in the Philippines. From the time Cory took office until the day she left no other organization wielded as much influence or control over the government's legitimacy as the Church did.

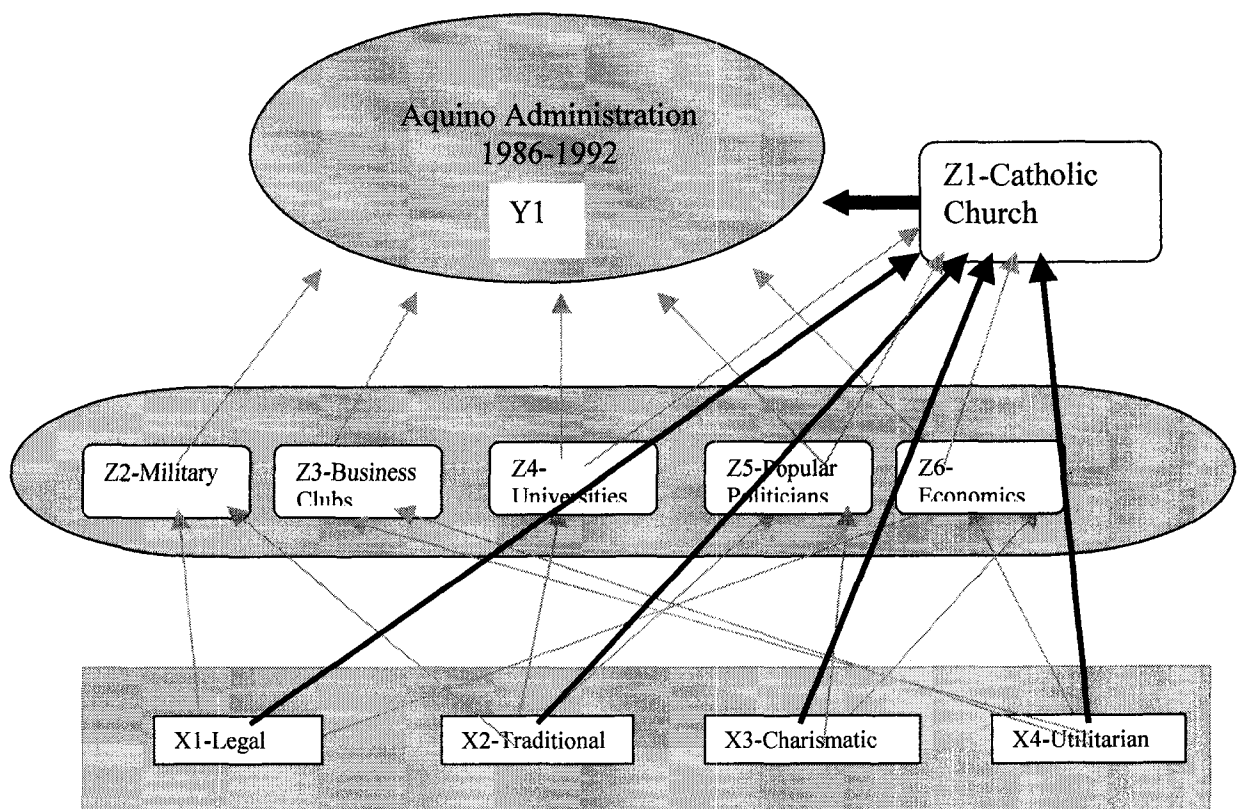


Fig. 14. The Church and Aquino's Administration - Aquino's ascension to the presidency was coupled with the rise of the Church as both a partner and a mediating variable in her legitimacy. Unlike Marcos, Aquino also addressed utilitarian concerns of her constituency. At no time since the 1898 revolution had the Church enjoyed such preeminent influence in Philippine politics, and that is why it is illustrated as rising above and as coequal with the government.

The oath of office was just the beginning. During the next few months and years, the fledgling Aquino administration was challenged and tested. These challenges included writing a new constitution, restoring morality to the presidential office, and lifting the Philippine people out of poverty. The years of Marcos's administration had done little to alleviate the poverty of the masses, and millions still struggled to survive. Marcos had cared only about guns and neglected the butter of his nation. Rebuilding all that was torn down during martial law was a daunting task requiring sacrifice from every sector, including the politicians who had grown fat on the plunder of the Philippines.

Aquino's stiffest test came from politicians who wanted to maintain the status quo, not from the people who were eager to see a new life and hope for their children. Tests also came in the form of military coups. There were seven in total, and it is likely that many more were planned but never brought to fruition. The coup attempts against Aquino were led by disgruntled members of the military who saw Aquino as soft on Communism, weak on the military, and unworthy to hold the position of president. Undoubtedly, a level of Philippine machismo played into the various plots that were hatched. Cory was, after all, a soft-spoken Catholic woman, hardly fit in the eyes of some in the military to run a country being torn apart by Communist insurgency, Islamic separatism, and banditry.

These disgruntled military elements wanted to seize power. However, even during the military coup attempts the Church emerged as the Aquino administration's protector. Indeed, through it all Cory had but one strong and faithful ally on which she always leaned--the Catholic Church. During her administration, the Church's full political and social power was used to stave off the coup plotters, keep her in power, and mold and shape the character of Philippine politics.

The Aquino administration represented many things for the Church and the Philippines. The Church and its apostle, Cory Aquino, led their flock, which was symbolized by the Philippine masses, into the light of a new era. Marcos's vanquishing

was a fitting end to the “miracle” that was People Power. The Church’s role in affecting the lives of so many millions within the country, providing solace and a solid foundation against Marcos, and crowning a new president were just the first steps in its reemergence as the force of legitimacy.

Cory understood, as did the world, that she was president not simply because of the people’s votes and the actions of Enrile and Ramos. She was president for two main reasons. The first reason was the sacrifice of her husband Ninoy, who had paid the ultimate price for his country. The second reason was because she had the Catholic Church’s full faith and support. The Church gave her a platform from which to speak, infrastructure to build upon, and a voter base on which she could rely. But winning the election was merely the first major hurdle to be cleared. Having accomplished that, she needed to turn her attention to rebuilding her government. Just as the Church had helped her construct one of the most amazing political victories in history, it was also prepared to build her government.

The situation that existed during the Aquino administration was one not seen since the days of the friar-run Spanish government. After more than a decade of study, however, scholars of the Aquino administration are confident in writing that the official political support and activities of the Catholic Church during her administration were significant factors in shaping the Aquino government’s character.<sup>1</sup> “It is impossible to separate the two . . .” commented one Western diplomat. “The one unquestionable winner . . . has been the Church. It is now stronger than ever with the enhanced moral authority of having rid the country of Marcos, with a very direct and effective line into the presidency.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Battung et al., *Religion and Society*, 31.

<sup>2</sup>Matthews, “Speaking Voice of the Church.”

This partnership manifested itself in a variety of ways. Among them was the Church's role in hand-picking a number of Aquino's government officials, both at the cabinet and sub-cabinet level. The Church also served as an oversight body on other appointments in the bureaucracy. Indeed, it was common knowledge during the Aquino administration that those who wished to serve in the civil service and who sought powerful and influential positions knew that the "church [was] a sure channel for acquiring posts . . ."<sup>3</sup>

The process of putting together a cabinet for the Aquino administration was extremely important. It had to be done correctly and with the right people. Mistakes made in selecting personnel could hamper the entire administration. Aquino's government was a fresh start, and with the Church's help she intended to make a clean break with the Marcos past. Besides Cardinal Sin, other Aquino advisors included her brother Peping, close friend Jimmy Ongpin, Joker Arroyo, and the President of Ateneo de Manila, Father Joaquin Bernas.<sup>4</sup>

Aquino's economic advisor was Bernardo Villegas, a Catholic with ties to Opus Dei. There were other Opus Dei representatives in her government as well, and they filled many of the top positions. Among the most notable included Jesus Estanislao, the minister of finance, who was responsible for reigning in the out of control inflation, stabilizing the Philippine peso, and laying the ground work for the growth that would characterize the latter half of her administration and that of her successor, Fidel Ramos.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Casper, *Fragile Democracies*, 124-25.

<sup>4</sup>Mercado, *An Eyewitness History*, 127.

<sup>5</sup>Jesus Estanislao received few accolades during his term as Philippine finance secretary. The Harvard-trained economist became President Corazon Aquino's third finance chief. Estanislao's most lasting legacy is the restructuring of the Philippines' foreign debt. Estanislao negotiated with commercial creditors and multilateral lenders such as the World Bank and the IMF, and the result was a complex arrangement that retired some national debt while lowering interest rates and spreading out payments.

Jose Concepcion, the Catholic layman Sin hand-picked to head NAMFREL, was made minister of trade and industry. Concepcion was also president of the Council of the Laity and had a vision to meld his own ministerial functions with business leaders. Concepcion stated, "I see the church, the military and the private sector working together to eradicate the country's problems."<sup>6</sup> Joint efforts by the Church, the laity, and business interests were seen as one avenue to address the difficulties facing the Aquino administration.

This Church's heavy involvement in the Aquino administration overshadowed the military's role. During the proceeding decades the Philippine military had played a major role in legitimizing the government, shoving aside the Church as the major player. Now the roles were reversed. The Church reclaimed the top spot with the People Power revolution and soon after, strains between the Church and the military became apparent.

On many occasions, Aquino did not consult the military about her political appointments. Whether this maneuvering helped foster the coups is a matter of debate, but ignoring the military resulted in tension between their camp and the Church. If the military was angry that its advice was not sought, the Church basked in the attention. Cory consulted the Church about almost every decision. In fact, her cabinet's religiosity was so well known by the media that it was dubbed the "Council of Trent."<sup>7</sup>

This "Council of Trent" helped her form policy and administer the complex job of rebuilding the Philippines. On the domestic front, the Church was particularly influential in matters such as family planning and education. To help shape her education policy, Aquino chose one of the Church's hand-picked candidates, Lourdes Quisumbing, to be her minister of education. At the time of her appointment, Quisumbing was the president

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<sup>6</sup>*National Catholic Reporter*, June 14, 1986 no 20, page 1.

<sup>7</sup>Eduardo Lachica, "Corazon Aquino's Strategy Calls For a Campaign That Never Ends," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Wall Street Journal* (February 2, 1986; accessed 1 September 2001).



of Maryknoll College, a Catholic girls' school. Quisumbing had no experience in government and no experience running a nationwide education network. She did not have a background in politics at all, so why did Cory Aquino choose her? What were her qualifications? Most importantly, she had the support of the Church and Cardinal Sin and according to their sources, she led an exemplary family life, was an able administrator at Maryknoll, and was a good Catholic.<sup>8</sup>

With her cabinet taking shape, Cory moved in concert with the Church to abolish the Marcos constitution of 1973. This constitution was the basis of Marcos's exceptional power and allowed him and his government to become more corrupt than any in the modern era of the Philippines. With the Church's help, Cory sought to dismantle the legal trappings of the Marcos administration piece by piece in a fast and efficient manner. A mere month after taking office, she abolished the *Batasán* (national assembly) and with it the constitution.

The Philippines were now without a governing document. To fill this void, Aquino turned to Father Bernas, who drew up what was called the "Freedom Constitution." This provisional document penned by an influential member of the Church provided Aquino with enough executive power to govern the Philippines until a new constitution was written and ratified.

To help write a new Philippine Constitution, Aquino turned again to her Catholic advisors. This led to a Constitutional Convention in 1987 that included an unprecedented number of clergy filling its ranks and committees. Not since the days of the Commonwealth Constitution had the makeup of the drafters almost guaranteed a document that would be favorable to the Church's aims and goals.

Among the well-known clergy and laity that served on the Constitutional Commission were Bishop Teodoro Bacani, the former Jesuit president of Ateneo de

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<sup>8</sup>Komisar, *Corazon Aquino*, 128.

Manila and a theological and secular law specialist, Father Joaquin Bernas, who has already been mentioned as president of Ateneo and author of the provisional constitution, and Sister Christine Tan, one of the most popular and charismatic nuns in all of the Philippines.

The commission was charged with more than creating a new document outlining a legislative and executive structure. Real human needs had to be addressed, the kind of needs the Church had committed itself to championing during the Marcos years. As such, committees dealing with civil liberties, abortion, divorce, identity, social justice, and human rights were formed. Almost every committee had at least two members from religious organizations. In all, two-thirds of the constitutional committees had representatives from the Catholic Church. With that level of representation and input into the formulation of the Philippine legal code, it was inevitable that the constitution would reflect Church opinion.

The Constitutional Convention proved more than ever the length and depth of the Church's role in legitimating the new government. It was a fundamental example of the kind of power the Church enjoyed as a result of Aquino's victory. No organization in the Philippines has played such a powerful and influential political role before or since.

Completing the constitution was merely the first step. The Church wanted to ensure that the document was ratified after its completion. Aquino relied upon the Church's power and political pressure to make sure that happened. The Church did not disappoint her. Cardinal Sin himself was quoted as saying that ratification of the 1987 Constitution was the moral duty of every elected official. It was equally important that the people support it, adding pressure on their elected officials to not drag their feet during the ratification process.

Ratification was achieved quickly and the new constitution was considered a significant victory for the Aquino administration and for the Church.<sup>9</sup> The fact that scholars recognize the Church's victory parallel with that of Aquino's secular government is another telling reminder of the close partnership between Church and State that reemerged during the Aquino era. Moreover, it is evidence of the impressive mediating role the Church played in influencing all sectors of governmental legitimacy, including the establishment of laws and legal norms.

The Philippine Constitution shares many similarities with the United States Constitution. For example, the 1987 Constitution established a presidential system with a bicameral legislature, restoring the political structure the United States had implemented in the Philippines at the time of independence. But in other ways it is quite different. The constitution's intricate details do not need to be outlined in this study, but a few important aspects of the document are worth noting because they illustrate how the Church was able to inject its own agenda into the law.

The form of government the committee agreed upon was a restorative move of sorts. As mentioned earlier, Marcos abolished the legislature in favor of a parliamentary system in 1973. He insisted on these changes to ensure his reelection. Marcos also had Amendment VI, which gave him the power to rule by legislative fiat, also abolished in 1987. Besides setting mild restrictions on foreign investment and requiring two-thirds of the Philippine Senate to approve treaties, the constitution also granted women equal treatment before the law. In response to martial law it prohibited secret detention, violence, and torture.<sup>10</sup>

While it never mentioned the Church specifically, the document's tone was clearly inspired by Church doctrine. As a "Catholic" document, it banned abortion from

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<sup>9</sup>Youngblood, "The Corazon Aquino Miracle and the Philippine Churches," 1,240.

<sup>10</sup>Komisar, *Corazon Aquino*, 137-38.

the time of conception. Moreover, it outlined in Article XIII the government's responsibility to enact measures that "protect and enhance" the right of all people to human dignity and the reduction of social, economic, and political inequalities. These goals are precisely the same ones the Church sought in its quest for social justice under liberation theology. It is ironic that something Marcos fought so hard to prevent would eventually become part of a new constitution.

There were also explicit references to freedoms of speech, assembly, and the press, all rights Marcos violated during the martial law period. Along with these basic rights were the establishment of an official language, Filipino, and a weakening of capital punishment, which the Catholic Church had hoped to abolish. While it did not make capital punishment completely illegal, the constitution made it very difficult to pass a death sentence for criminals, a clear victory for the death penalty opponents within the Church. Also in the area of criminal law, the writ of *habeas corpus* was strengthened and could no longer be suspended indefinitely.

Even before the ink was dry on the constitution, the Church was pressuring the Aquino administration on several fronts. Among them was the issue of land reform. Many in the Church felt that her administration was in danger of falling behind on its promise of land reform, a much-needed policy to appease the more violent elements of the peasantry. But more than anything, land reform was seen as a first step in alleviating poverty in the Philippines, a condition that saturated the vast majority of its citizens. Cardinal Sin joined the chorus of those within the Church attempting to reach Aquino on this issue.

In a strongly worded pastoral letter read at Manila's cathedral, Cardinal Sin reiterated his pressure on the government: "We ask our government . . . to turn its

attention to the issues of land reform and the concerns most closely related with it.”<sup>11</sup>

Aquino had raised “genuine hope” among the poorest segments of society on the issue of land reform. Archbishop Sin applied a bit of public pressure on Aquino when he said the government's "credibility" depended upon "its sincerity and readiness to act in this area.”<sup>12</sup>

Cardinal Sin and the Church were not expecting miracles, but they were expecting action. Blood was being shed over the matter, and its inclusion in the new Philippine legal code was essential. Sin stated, "We realize that what has been beyond the capacities of past government for so many decades--and perhaps centuries--cannot be adequately resolved in a few months . . . But realistic implementation of programs must begin, with all deliberate speed."

The Church's efforts were rewarded with the inclusion of Article XIII in the constitution. Article XIII deals with the issue of social justice and human rights. More specifically, sections four through ten address the issue of agrarian and natural resources reform and land reform. The problems tackled in the national governing document were meant to address and emphasize the importance to future governments of taking care of the elements of both rural and urban poor. These elements were of particular importance to the Church as its traditional constituency, and they were also the same societal elements that the Communist insurgents targeted for recruitment.

A healthy nation required uplifting all citizens. Tackling the large *hacienda* owners was the first task the Church felt was necessary, and the state itself was one of the largest landowners in the Philippines. Prying the land away from elite families was certainly politically risky, but redistributing the state's lands was less so. Indeed, Aquino

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<sup>11</sup>Keith B. Richburg, “Filipinos Criticize Aquino Over Shooting: Church Stresses Absence of Land Reform,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Washington Post* (January 26, 1987; accessed 13 September 2001).

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

enjoyed the wealth produced by her family's *hacienda*, and she showed little sign of moving to redistribute her own land or pressuring the other large landowners to do the same.

The state, with its immense holdings, was a different story. Targeting large tracts of government land was not as politically risky as targeting elites and not nearly as hypocritical. It was to be the first step in giving something to the poor, landless farmers. Section six reads, "The State may resettle landless farmers and farm workers in its own agricultural estates which shall be distributed to them in the manner provided by law."

In urban areas such as Manila where thousands lived literally on mountains of garbage, the need was urgent. The Church pressed the Aquino regime and the constitutional committee to address this need. It was successful, and section nine of the 1987 Constitution put into law the general principle that it is the state's duty to help alleviate the problem of urban poverty and provide the basic needs of life. It reads:

The State shall, by law, and for the common good, undertake, in cooperation with the private sector, a continuing program of urban land reform and housing which will make available at affordable cost, decent housing and basic services to underprivileged and homeless citizens in urban centers and resettlement areas. It shall also promote adequate employment opportunities to such citizens. In the implementation of such program the State shall respect the rights of small property owners.

The constitution also addressed the abuses of public trust, the sort of abuses the Church decried that were rampant during the Marcos era. Article XI, section one declared that employees "must, at all times, be accountable to the people, serve them with utmost responsibility, integrity, loyalty, and efficiency; act with patriotism and justice, and lead modest lives." It also took steps to curb the military's power, barring any member of the military from engaging directly or indirectly in partisan political activities. It prohibited the imprisonment of individuals based on their political beliefs and aspirations.

Some of the most outrageous past abuses by the government and the military were violations of basic human rights. Curbing government and military influence also meant curbing the possibility of repeated abuses. The constitution went further in specifically addressing human rights issues, and there are several striking and clearly Church-influenced aspects, including the establishment of a human rights commission in Article XIII.

Family issues were also addressed, and this was clearly the fruit of the Church's labor on the various committees. The unique focus the Philippine Constitution has on the Filipino family is remarkable in that it explicitly addresses issues of marriage and children along the lines of the Catholic Church. In Article II, section twelve it reads that the state "shall equally protect the life of the mother and the unborn from conception," effectively ending abortion. The anti-abortion clause was the work of the Catholic representatives on the committees, but the Church was also successful in two other major constitutional provisions.

The first was Article XV, entitled simply "The Family." In a few amazing sentences the Philippine Constitution, and thus the government itself, takes a direct interest in the welfare of not just individuals but the traditional, Church-sanctioned heterosexual family unit. Sections one and two read:

The State recognizes the Filipino family as the foundation of the nation. Accordingly, it shall strengthen its solidarity and actively promote its total development. Marriage, as an inviolable social institution, is the foundation of the family and shall be protected by the state.

In those few sentences, the Philippine Constitution strengthens and supports the family unit with the full backing of the government itself, and makes divorce, for all intents and purposes, illegal.

Finally, the Church's influence is found in yet another major part of the constitution. Remembering the role of the BCCs, NASSA, NAMFREL, the CBCP, and

even earlier efforts by Catholic-sponsored social organizations to fight social injustice and how Marcos tried to crush them all, the new constitution addressed the issue of “People’s Organizations.” Indeed, it was the Church’s work through these “People’s Organizations” that facilitated the first People Power revolution. Therefore, the basic idea of such organizations’ value and usefulness was realized in 1986. One year later as the constitution was being penned, the importance of these groups was not lost on the drafters.

In Article XIII, sections fifteen and sixteen it states:

The State shall respect the role of independent people's organizations to enable the people to pursue and protect, within the democratic framework, their legitimate and collective interests and aspirations through peaceful and lawful means. People's organizations are *bona fide* associations of citizens with demonstrated capacity to promote the public interest and with identifiable leadership, membership, and structure . . . The right of the people and their organizations to effective and reasonable participation at all levels of social, political, and economic decision-making shall not be abridged. The State shall, by law, facilitate the establishment of adequate consultation mechanisms.

The 1987 Constitution is a remarkable document in so many ways and a testament to the revitalization of the democratic ideals and the spirit of freedom. Even today, reading the words is a refreshing experience to those who appreciate a government built upon egalitarian principles that uplift and protect less fortunate elements of society. One can feel within each paragraph the hard work of the committee members who poured every ounce of commitment they had into creating a set of laws and principles based on the ideas they felt God had endowed naturally to humankind. The document was so loved by the people and the Church that it found easy ratification, and future efforts to alter these words met with stiff opposition.

With the new constitution being handled and overseen by trusted officials, including clergy, Aquino turned her attention to local government matters. Marcos had



stocked the various mayoralities with his cronies and the city councils with an equally bad lot. Aquino believed that dealing with this problem required drastic measures, so she began the wholesale firing of more than seventy provincial governors, 1,600 mayors, and more than 10,000 council members.

The firing of so many elected officials was an unexpected and a politically daring move by Aquino. The officials' dismissal was justified as necessary to purge the polluting elements of the Marcos administration. Firing them was the easy part. The difficult task was replacing them, because Aquino had no intention of allowing elections to replace these individuals. She was smarter than that, knowing that elections might only bring back the sort of riff-raff she had just purged. She chose instead to appoint officials to fill the offices.

Appointment instead of elections may have violated the type of democratic principles that Aquino and her new government stood for, but it was a necessary step. There was a danger that if elections were held, the result would be widespread corruption and voter fraud at the local level, resulting in the reinstallation of the very Marcos cronies she had just fired. Rather than allow any of the Marcos corruption to taint her administration, she chose instead to follow her own conscience and sought the Church's advice before making any appointments.

To illustrate how involved the Catholic Church was in this appointment process, one need only note that before making an appointment, the administration held consultations with local bishops and priests.<sup>i</sup> The consultations with the Church at this level illustrate the political power the Church enjoyed throughout the Aquino administration. Church involvement in choices of a few cabinet-level offices is amazing in itself, but to have a hand in choosing hundreds of local officials is another level of influence altogether. It demonstrates the political permeation that was thorough by this time.

Aquino rightly believed that besides being worthy of her trust, these local-level Catholic officials were in the best place to judge office holders' suitability.<sup>13</sup> These priests, like the friars before them, were in the trenches doing the dirty work while others, such as Cardinal Sin, were more nationally recognized. Sin could never have given an informed opinion on each of the vast number of council seats to be filled. However, these local-level priests did so with authority and the kind of expertise that came from living their entire lives in the communities. They knew the families better than anyone, being present at community marriages, baptisms, and funerals. The type of information that comes from knowing a community and its members from cradle to grave could only be gleaned from local-level priests.

Aquino's cabinet, local appointments, and constitution were all issues tackled during her first year in office. Through it all, the Church and its leadership were there to offer assistance when needed. Each of these and other actions helped the Aquino government become thoroughly ensconced in power and provided a little breathing room for one man who needed it--Cardinal Sin. Feeling that he had made his contribution to Philippine politics, Sin thought it wise to step back and evaluate his position. In March of 1987, the Archbishop made a decision and surprised everyone with a statement regarding his political future.

He announced that he was withdrawing from the political arena. To some this was no doubt a welcome sign of a return to normalcy in politics, especially to those who feared the Church as a political rival. To others, it was a shock and a sad day knowing that the Philippines were losing one of the most effective and charismatic political figures in history. Cardinal Sin did not simply announce his retirement from politics, he went a step further and recommended that other clergy do likewise. "From here on in I shall

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<sup>13</sup>Keith Dalton, "Cardinal Sin Steps Down from Political Stage," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Sydney Morning Herald* (March 6, 1987; accessed 10 September 2001).

stay in the background," he said, "I shall not talk too much. I shall be avoiding the limelight."

Sin denied that his decision was due to pressure from the Vatican or the Pope. No matter what side of the issue one was on, one did not have time to savor Sin's retirement very long. In a matter of weeks, he was back injecting himself into political matters. Sin's retirement was brief, maybe one of the shortest political retirements in history. It was not long before he was pulled back into the strife-torn world of Philippine national politics. There was really no other choice. Aquino needed his support and that of the Church if her administration was to survive the turbulent times ahead.

Part of the reason Aquino needed the Church was to counterbalance the military's influence and power. The military was constantly shifting, trying to gain as much power for itself as possible. This often meant that during the Aquino government the military and the Church clashed. Indeed, they were not on the best of terms to begin with, having been at odds throughout martial law. The bad relations between the Church and the military had started more than a decade before when the Marcos administration chose the path of martial law and the Church dedicated itself to the "liberation" of the poor. The army, at the behest of Marcos, was used to fight the left-wing Communist insurgency that thrived in impoverished areas.<sup>13</sup>

On more than a few occasions, the battle against the Communists led to the persecution of Church members. Many in the military seemed to find it difficult to distinguish their left-wing enemies from the priests and nuns. Thus, they were equally harassed. This left bad blood between the Church and the military, differences healed only temporarily by the Church-military alliance to bring down Marcos and install Aquino as president. Even this alliance was partial, and many elements remained loyal to

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<sup>13</sup>Gustav Niebuhr, "Friction Between Philippine Armed Forces, Catholic Church Sparks Growing Violence," *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 29 November 1987, sec. A, p. 1.

Marcos or stayed on the sidelines awaiting the final outcome of the 1986 special elections and the People Power movement.

The Church did not fear the military and sought to counterbalance it at all levels through its own power and influence. The military had to respect the Church, both during the Marcos era and the Aquino administration, because the Church remained the only institution in the Philippines with both a nationwide communications network and the legitimacy to use that network for political purposes. This network proved invaluable in pressuring Marcos to leave and in protecting those elements of the military that needed shielding during the Enrile-Ramos defection.

Until his final days in Malacanang palace, Marcos fought a bitter war of words with the Philippine bishops, particularly Cardinal Sin. Just before fleeing into exile, Marcos uttered words that evidenced the Church's important actions. He made no mention of the military, but he accused "priests and nuns" of working hand-in-glove with Communists to bring him down.<sup>14</sup> To the military's chagrin, the Church's authority continued to increase in Philippine society.

In spite of or because of its own actions, the Church became the only independent institution outside of government control. Citizens no longer turned to independent mayors and congressmen to try to get grievances redressed. The average person had but one place to go for a reliable solution, and that was the priest. All of this meant that the military remained suspicious of the Church even after Aquino's victory, and the feeling was mutual.

The suspicions about the Church were well grounded. Aquino's administration rested on shaky ground more than a few times during her tenure. She was caught between the generals and the bishops, but it was the military that threatened her government's stability, and it was the Church that helped bring her through each coup

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

attempt. The Church held more of the cards, having brought People Power to the forefront and using its high-profile position to effectively support Aquino through the various nefarious plots.

The military-sponsored coups proved the most serious challenges to Aquino's government. Some of the coups the Church faced down were not severe, such as the Manila Hotel incident, in which the conspirators were punished with thirty push-ups and allowed to go back to duty. But others were serious grabs at power.<sup>15</sup> For example, in 1989 elements of the right-wing *Rebolusyonaryong Alyansang Makabansa* (RAM) seized portions of Makati and threatened destruction of the presidential palace. The military never wholly supported Aquino and their efforts failed, but not without a cost in political capital and human life.

Aquino did not have the military's complete loyalty, but she did have General Ramos and the Catholic Church on her side. At the height of the coup plotting, Cory turned to the Church and Cardinal Sin to join her in a meeting with top military officials at the Malacanang palace. It so happened that one of the plotters was none other than Juan Ponce Enrile, one of the aforementioned plotters of the Marcos era. It was not enough that Enrile had been given the defense portfolio during the Aquino administration. He had his eyes on the president's seat and ruling the country. Instead of helping Aquino build the country, he was determined to overthrow her government. Although he was never labeled a traitor, Enrile's actions can be seen in a treasonous light. It is peculiar to Philippine politics that he was allowed to go free and even later was elected a senator, as was former coup plotter and RAM leader Gregorio Honasan.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Carlito Pablo and Fe Zamora, "No Link with Estrada Loyalists: Young Officers Head Held for Questioning," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Manila Times* (October 25, 2001; accessed 23 August 2002).

During the tense days against Marcos, it was Cardinal Sin and the Church who rallied around Enrile, protecting the defense minister from Marcos's guns with the Church faithful. Yet after the People Power victory, Enrile began plotting to overthrow the very government his earlier actions had helped establish, and he made an enemy out of the very Church that had saved his life.

The particular plot in question was a serious power-grabbing attempt dubbed "God Save the Queen." Enrile's plotting included a plan to depose Aquino and place himself as head of a military junta. The particulars of the coup are not important, but what is important is that it failed to succeed, in large part because of the actions and pressure brought by the Catholic Church. Aquino needed the Church's support and the cardinal's advice, and she asked Sin to postpone his trip to Rome and to see what he could do to help the situation.<sup>17</sup>

With some forces still loyal to Aquino and headed by the stern and dependable Fidel Ramos, Cory had some breathing room. The Church gave her more. Cardinal Sin placed a call to Enrile just as Aquino had wanted, and he attempted to persuade him not to go through with his attempts to seize power.<sup>18</sup> Sin focused on Enrile's own responsibility as a cabinet member who was not supposed to be talking of coups but coordinating and supporting Aquino's administration. He emphasized the magnitude and futility of the coup, and Cardinal Sin laid the responsibility for any bloodshed on Enrile.

Still fearing plotters, Cory asked again that Sin stay and not go to Rome, and he agreed.<sup>19</sup> She herself stated publicly that any coup attempts by "misguided elements" would be met with People Power.<sup>20</sup> In the end, the coups were aborted and Enrile was

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<sup>17</sup>Komisar, *Corazon Aquino*, 158.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 224.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 227.

forced to resign. He is lucky he was not jailed or worse. Attempts to topple Aquino failed repeatedly, largely because of her continued appeal as the embodiment of the *pasyon* and the Catholic Church's support. Both of these things acted as buffers to her popularity and her political control and helped secure the administration by characterizing any attempts to topple her via a coup or legislation as a rebellion against God.<sup>21</sup>

The Philippine Catholic Church staked its very prestige and reputation on Aquino's success. It was a political marriage. She was the Church's darling until the very end. She was the bride, the Church's personal selection as president, legitimized by the Catholic vote and by the Catholic Church. Cardinal Sin and the rest were not about to abandon her fortunes to those military elements that sought to illegally seize power. Not content at merely supporting the president herself, the Church shored up her administration by campaigning for, supporting, and endorsing Aquino's own slate of candidates for the congress during midterm legislative elections. In response, Aquino was thankful and always devout, even at times praying her rosary on national television.

As if dealing with disgruntled elements of her own military were not enough, Aquino inherited several active rebellions and separatist movements from Marcos. Among these were various Islamic separatist groups located in the southern archipelago on the islands of Mindanao, Sulu, and Jolo. There was also a Communist insurgency that still held on to the antiquated idea of overthrowing the democratic government and establishing a Marxist regime. The National Democratic Front (NDF), the Communist Party of the Philippines' (CPP) political front organization, led the charge during the Marcos era along with its armed element, the New People's Army (NPA). Both the Communists and the Muslim separatists threatened the life and property of thousands of Filipinos and the stability of Aquino's government.

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<sup>21</sup>Casper, *Fragile Democracies*, 152.

Marcos's method of dealing with the Muslims and Communists was to crack down on them. He launched military attacks against them throughout his administration. Attacks instead of reconciliation created deep wounds of mistrust between the government and the rebels. The level of mistrust on both sides seemed almost insurmountable. Moreover, during this period Marcos often lumped the Church's socialist activity in with the Communists, justifying his attacks on both the NPA and on the Catholic Church. Yet the Church was never an ally to the NPA, nor was it an enemy. As mentioned earlier, there were some leftist elements of the Church that were not far in their ideological views of social reform from many of the leftists in groups like the NPA, and there were a few priests who officially joined the Communists. Where they differed was in the use of violence and removing God from the center of their ideology. It may seem ironic that a priest would join and fight for an ideology that at its core was anti-God. It is just another example of the strange alliances that distaste for Marcos created in the Philippines.

In dealing with the Communist insurgency after the 1986 election, the Church was again aligned with Aquino. Or it may be better stated that Aquino was more in line with the Church's position. The Philippine Catholic Church's hierarchy continually rebuffed efforts by some Communist leaders to be included in a power-sharing role after Marcos's downfall.<sup>22</sup> This was a change in posture after Aquino's assumption of power, as the Church had been in careful collaboration with leftist groups throughout martial law. With Marcos deposed, the Church could afford to take a stronger stance against leftist elements both in the New People's Army (NPA) and in the Church itself.

More decisively, the bishops decided to assert their own authority over the Church's National Secretariat for Social Action, a body that proved successful in

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<sup>22</sup>"Philippine Rebels Jar Conservatives, Church," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Chicago Sun-Times* (December 12, 1986; accessed 23 August 2001).



countering some of the negative aspects of martial law but had for a decade been widely suspected of being under the control of NPA sympathizers who were siphoning off funds to support various guerrilla organizations.<sup>23</sup> With Aquino installed and made legitimate, the Church was not about to share its power with leftist insurgents. The military had to be dealt with on relatively equal footing, but Communist rebels could be overshadowed.

The Communists made it easier given their ridiculous demands for power sharing. The National Democratic Front's own proposals for "nationalistic foreign policy" included the immediate closing of United States military bases on the islands and removal of Catholic-based education from the islands' school systems. Both of these requests were inconsistent with the Church's goals.<sup>24</sup> The Church could tolerate the United States bases in 1986 and preferred to wait for negotiations to resolve the base issue once the lease expired. Indeed, the Americans were a potential military force to be tapped if Aquino needed extra firepower to ward off coup attempts. This is precisely what happened in 1989. Little mention need be made of the demand for Marxist-based education, because that was something completely intolerable to the Church.

Denying the Communists' demands on the American base issue and on the education system did not mean that Cory opposed a peaceful resolution to the conflict. And with the Church on her side, it seemed that such a resolution was feasible. One step briefly discussed earlier in the chapter was her creation of a Commission on Human Rights. The Commission was headed by Pepe Diokno and included Church representation at all levels. Sister Marianni Dimaranan was the former head of Task Force Detainees, which during martial law was the largest national Church-backed human rights organization. She was the Church's chief representative on the Commission

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<sup>23</sup>"Philippine Rebels Said to Get Funds From Bishops," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Washington Post* (February 5, 1988; accessed 3 November 2001).

<sup>24</sup>"Philippine Rebels Jar Conservatives, Church," *Chicago Sun-Times*.

on Human Rights. She had spent much of her life documenting abuses committed by the military and paramilitary groups during the Marcos administration and was the perfect choice to sit on the Commission.<sup>25</sup>

The 1987 Constitution included Article X, which allowed for establishment of an autonomous Muslim region in Mindanao. The region's organization was to be based on religion, cultural heritage, and the economic and social structures of the people living in those areas. It was hoped that by giving concessions to the separatists, peace could be achieved. Cory's administration went a step further by taking police power out of the constabulary's hands and placing the responsibility of peace and order with local Muslim police.<sup>26</sup> As chapter 3 mentioned, the Philippine constabulary was notorious for its abuse of peasants and minorities. It was corrupt and often used private armies controlled by wealthy landowners and corrupt politicians. Just as the Huks had banded together to police their own areas, Cory's deal allowed the Muslims to provide a police force to take care of their own.

Aquino's attempts at making peace with the rebels had both high and low points during her six-year term, but even in her presidency's waning years she did not give up on the peace efforts or fail to include the Church as part of the solution. As late as 1990, Aquino was quoted as saying she intended to "invite the leaders of the private and Church sectors to join the government in convening a national peace conference so that we can work out, resolve and act to attack the deep sources of our divisions, our conflicts, our injustices and inequities in society which are obstacles to peace."<sup>27</sup> Until the end she was searching for peace for her fellow Filipinos, no matter their creed or religion.

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<sup>25</sup>Komisar, *Corazon Aquino*, 141.

<sup>26</sup>Philippine Constitution, art. 10, sec. 21.

<sup>27</sup>Robert H. Reid, "Aquino Calls for Decade of Peace in Philippines," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Associated Press* (January 1, 1990; accessed 12 November 2001).

While Aquino's efforts ended with her leaving office in 1992, the Church's activities as a peace broker spilled over into the administration of Fidel Ramos. Ramos, a Protestant and former general under Marcos, had helped bring Aquino to power during the People Power revolution. Under Aquino, he served as defense minister and won a narrow plurality to become president of the Philippines. One of the first questions posed to Ramos was how, as the first Protestant leader of a predominantly Roman Catholic country, he could forge a working and lasting relationship with the Catholic Church.<sup>28</sup>

Ramos had to appease the Church because he was not its ideal man for the job. He was not Catholic and did not initially cater to Cardinal Sin or other bishops, so his relationship with the Catholic Church was precarious. At times he clashed with the Church head on, and at other times they worked in unison. His strength lay in his ability to get things done without worry of coup attempts. Secure in his position as president, he could deal directly with both the economic and political troubles that had plagued Aquino. Chief among these troubles were the insurgency movements and dissident groups, both areas where the Church proved useful to Ramos's efforts.

The problem of insurgency was not going away. On February 15, 1992, the NPA ambushed government soldiers on the island of Mindanao, killing forty-one people and highlighting the real danger that still existed from the groups. Early in his administration, Ramos declared "national reconciliation" the highest national priority. He legalized the Communist Party and created the National Unification Commission (NUC) to lay the groundwork for talks with Communist insurgents.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Sandra Burton, "Stepping Into Cory's Shoes: Fidel Ramos Succeeds President Corazon Aquino of the Philippines," *Time*, 15 June 1992, 41.

<sup>29</sup>John McBeth, "Attritional Politics: Ramos Looks for Ways to End Communist Rebellion," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Far Eastern Economic Review*, (March 18, 1993; accessed 3 December 2001).

In September 1992, Bishop Fernando Capalla of the CBCP and Feliciano Carino, secretary general of the National Council of Churches of the Philippines (NCCP), joined the nine-member NUC, which was entrusted with formulating a national reconciliation program to resolve problems with dissident groups. Government efforts under Aquino and Ramos had come up short alone, and Ramos realized that true peace needed to incorporate the religious, including the Catholic Church. It was time to give the Church and its leadership a real try to end the conflicts that directly affected domestic stability and international relations with nation-states such as Malaysia and Indonesia. These nation-states had a direct interest in seeing the separatist movements in the Philippines quelled, lest they encourage their own dissidents.

The CBCP and the NCCP also formed the Joint Committee for Peace. Philippine churches, along with other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), initiated peace consultations at the local level.<sup>30</sup> In June 1994, Ramos signed into law a general conditional amnesty covering all rebel groups, as well as Philippine military and police personnel accused of crimes committed while fighting the insurgents. In October 1995, the government signed an agreement bringing the military insurgency to an end. Although outstanding differences remained and many of the underlying social problems were not addressed, the actions Ramos and the Church took removed the threat to government stability posed by the Communists and Muslim insurgencies.

The Ramos government also worked with Catholic and Protestant church organizations on projects and programs to protect the environment, improve the socioeconomic wellbeing of the poor, and address a growing Vietnamese refugee problem.<sup>31</sup> It did so because the government itself remained staffed with a large

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<sup>30</sup>Robert L. Youngblood, "President Ramos, the Church, and Population Policy in the Philippines," *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 3.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*

contingency of men and women who were educated in the most prestigious Catholic universities in the Philippines. These universities continue today to act as feeders for personnel in the Philippine government. Through the education process, the Catholic Church ensured its survival and guaranteed that those sympathetic to its agenda remained in power.<sup>32</sup>

Cooperation to alleviate the problem of insurgencies and social welfare projects did not mean that Ramos's relationship with the Church was always smooth. Quite the contrary, he would raise the Church's ire on numerous occasions, including his move towards "family planning" and changing the 1987 Constitution, a move that would come to be known as "Cha Cha," short for Charter Change. His first clash with the Church was over the issue of family planning. Ramos addressed the Philippine Congress about the country's population growth rate and endorsed a family planning program that met with stiff Church opposition.

Remembering that the Church itself had made sure abortion was outlawed in the 1987 Constitution, Ramos took his appeal directly to the people. Passing out condoms, something Cardinal Sin once called only fit "for animals," angered conservatives within the Church. Whether Ramos liked it or not, he was president of a Catholic nation, and he was president in large part because the Church had supported his candidacy. He remained president in large part because the Church thought him adequate for the task. Indeed, he owed his life to the actions of Cardinal Sin and others who put their own lives on the line to protect Ramos at Camp Crame when he defected from the Marcos camp during the People Power revolution. But the past was the past, and during his tenure as

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<sup>32</sup>Esteban A. De Ocampo, *The First Filipino Diplomat* (Manila, Philippines: National Historical Institute, 1978), 94.

president his actions earned him the moniker “Infidel” Ramos from his Catholic opponents.<sup>33</sup>

Being labeled an infidel by the Church was in stark contrast to how Ramos was initially embraced. Early in his administration, Ramos was invited to speak at Catholic gatherings, including crowds of hundreds of thousands in Luneta Park where he and Cardinal Sin appeared onstage at a rally against poverty. But the honeymoon period between Ramos and the Church did not last.

Besides the abortion issue that resulted in him being labeled an infidel, the pivotal event in the Ramos-Church relationship was his consistent desire to change the provision of the 1987 Constitution that would allow him to run for a second six-year term. This became known as “charter change,” or “cha cha” for short. As evidence has shown earlier, the 1987 document was no ordinary constitution. It was a Catholic document, penned and ratified through the hard work of the Church and the martyrs of Marcos’s state violence. It was written to fit their needs and peppered with protective mechanisms, such as the six-year term limit, to keep the Church and the Philippine population from experiencing a repeat of the Marcos era. The drafters were not about to let Ramos or any government official run roughshod over their hard-fought victory. Tampering with the words of the constitution was akin to editing the Bible itself for many in the Church.

Cardinal Sin again led the political fight that ensued between Ramos and the Church. It was man of the cloth versus man with the gun and Catholic versus Protestant, and the prize was either the salvation of the 1987 Constitution or another six years of Ramos. The Church did not hold back on its rhetoric against Ramos. It accused him of attempting to stay in power at any cost, even being willing to throw the Philippines back in the dark ages. To add to the rhetoric’s impact, the Church made many of its statements

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<sup>33</sup>Greg Jones, “Optimism Growing in Philippines Elections Indicate Democracy Finally Taking Root, Analysts Believe,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Dallas Morning News* (June 10, 1995; accessed 13 October 2001).

on carefully timed days. For example, on the fourteenth anniversary of Ninoy Aquino's assassination, Cardinal Sin issued a pastoral letter reminding the Philippine nation of the trouble that would befall them should Ramos insist on staying in power. Sin's alluding to Marcos's murderous actions and comparing them to Ramos's desires to stay in power was a bit overdone, but it was effective.

The two opposing camps could not have presented a starker contrast. One camp had the president and the other had the Church of People Power and Cardinal Sin, the man who had led the Mass at Ninoy's funeral, guided his widow to the presidency, and called upon the flock to protect Ramos from the bullets of Marcos's assassin. Now this same Cardinal Sin told the faithful that Ramos wished to throw progress away in a blind pursuit of power. Sin blasted Ramos for not leading the Philippines with "enlightened political responsibility, social stability and prosperity . . ." but instead leading the country "back into the dark ages of pre-martial law political dynasties, warlordism, corruption, sham democracy and debilitating poverty."<sup>34</sup> It was an impressive use of the Church's power to persuade.

In other statements, the Church accused Ramos of endangering the future of the Philippines with his charter change ideas. As if endangering the future and impoverishing the nation were not enough, Sin even went so far as to warn that the Philippines might become "another Cambodia," with civil war, murders, and executions if Ramos got his way.<sup>35</sup> Comparing what Ramos wanted to do with the evil inflicted upon the Cambodian people by Pol Pot was certainly excessive hyperbole, but in a country

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<sup>34</sup>"Filipino Cardinal Fights Re-Election of President," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Seattle Times* (August 24, 1997; accessed 23 October 2001).

<sup>35</sup>Jonathan Mirsky, "Manila Faces Civil War Under Ramos," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Times of London* (September 12, 1997; accessed 27 October 2001).

where Cardinal Sin led a politically powerful political body, Ramos had to take it seriously.

Ramos did not give up or back down easily. He and his allies struck back with their own attempts to scare the public with predictions of religious fundamentalism. One pro-Ramos observer wrote, "It is a shuddering thought. This country could be the Catholic equivalent of Iran. We will have a mullahtocracy, except that we address them as monsignors."<sup>36</sup> Such charges met with little public support. The Philippine population did not believe or even fear a mullahtocracy of Catholic monsignors, and there was no danger of religious fundamentalism washing over the Philippines unless one considers 80 percent of the population adhering to one faith and enjoying the Catholic Church's leadership to be a brand of fundamentalism.

Ramos and his supporters should have known that their appeals to the fear of fundamentalism would come up short. They were in a position of power with the help of the Church, and the Church was a part of the fabric of Philippine society and would be there long after Ramos had turned to dust and his administration had faded from memory. Had it not been for the Catholic Church, Fidel Ramos would probably not have had the chance to become president at all.

This fact did not deter Ramos from trying to push through his charter change ideas. His continued efforts to do so meant a head-on confrontation with the Church. The Church and its allies, including former President Cory Aquino, threatened another People Power-like demonstration should Ramos start a fight. Sensing that a showdown was imminent, Sin called on the Catholic faithful to prepare for a rally against Ramos and against charter change. In a prepared statement read just days before the proposed September 21 rally, Sin said, "If you are against military rule and authoritarianism, if you

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<sup>36</sup>Uday Khandeparker, "Pulpits Again Political Platform in Manila Battle," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Business Daily* (September 16, 1997; accessed 14 September 2001).



are for freedom, go to Luneta on September 21. If you are afraid, do not go to Luneta. Luneta is only for the brave."<sup>37</sup>

Ramos's allies countered the Church's call for a rally and other efforts to influence the legitimacy of his administration. One group, calling itself the Philippine Constitution Association (PCA), went so far as to formally request an intercession by Pope John Paul II to stop Cardinal Sin's "aggressive interference" in political matters, arguing that he was sowing dissension in the country. In the letter, the PCA said Sin "has been fomenting hatred and conflict" with his anti-charter change pastoral letters, leading many Catholics to break away from the Church and join other religious groups."<sup>38</sup>

The letter further stated, "Many Catholics have stopped attending masses because they don't want to hear political sermons . . . Some have even changed religion." The PCA did not say how many Catholics had broken away from the Church to join opposition movements, but the number must have been miniscule because public opinion data since Ramos's era show no sign of Catholic affiliation weakening among the population.

Sin shrugged off the complaint, justifying his actions as being in line with the spirit of Vatican II. The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) backed Cardinal Sin. Pro-Ramos lawyers, with the full faith and support of Ramos himself, filed petitions against Cardinal Sin and his activities. In effect, it was an attempt to put a national-level restraining order on the Archbishop of Manila. The Philippine Supreme

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<sup>37</sup>"Church Warns Against Ramos 'dictatorship' Filipinos Urged to Turn Out for Protest Rally," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Toronto Star* (September 17, 1997; accessed 12 August 2001).

<sup>38</sup>"Philippine Groups Complaints to Pope about Church Interference," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Deutsche Presse-Agentur* (September 11, 1997; accessed 12 October 2001).

Court, however, sensibly ruled that lawyers Vincente Millora and Ricardo Valmonte “failed to establish sufficient justification” and denied their request.<sup>39</sup>

Seeing that the “stick” approach was not working, Ramos then tried the “carrot.” Setting aside his rhetoric and his cronies’ attempts to silence the Church, he decided to broach the matter with Sin face-to-face. Despite calls from within his administration to keep the Church out of political decisions, Ramos dined with Cardinal Sin at the Malacanang palace and met with seven officials of the Church’s governing body, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, led by Monsignor Pedro Quitorio. Both occasions appeared to acknowledge the strong link between the Church and the business of government in the Philippines.<sup>40</sup>

Yet these meetings did not stop Ramos from continuing his efforts to counter the mainstream Catholic Church by courting opposition and breakaway movements, such as the charismatic Catholic offshoot group El Shaddai. With more than ten million members, El Shaddai made a powerful ally for Ramos. Speaking at the thirteenth anniversary of El Shaddai’s founding, Ramos tried to circumvent the Catholic Church’s negative reaction to his charter change ideas. Mike Verlade, the leader of El Shaddai, warmed to Ramos, foreshadowing his own slow move away from the mainstream Church and out from under the shadow of Cardinal Sin.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Carlos B. M. Santos, Norman P. Aquino, and Miguel C. Gil, “SC Affirms Church Right to Hold Anti-Charter Change Rally on Sunday,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Business World* (September 17, 1997; accessed 2 February 2002).

<sup>40</sup>Raissa Robles, “President Invites Cardinal Sin and Aquino to Dinner After Month of Mudslinging Ramos Defuses Tension with Church,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *South China Morning Post* (October 3, 1997; accessed 12 October 2001).

<sup>41</sup>Leotes Marie T. Lugo, “Ramos Scorns Sin, Runs to El Shaddai,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Business World* (August 25, 1997; accessed 12 October 2001).

The Ramos-El Shaddai partnership did not deter the Church from its opposition to charter change. Ramos had to admit and recognize the Church's power and even met several times privately with Cardinal Sin to try to politically negotiate himself out of a potential political mess. The mere fact that the president of the Philippines was taking time out of his schedule to meet with religious leadership to discuss his political strategy is more evidence of the Church's role as an important variable in governmental legitimacy.

As a constitutionally elected president, it was Ramos' prerogative to push any agenda he wished within the scope of the law. His attempts to change the charter were not illegal. They were, however, unpopular with the Catholic Church. It is for this reason Ramos and his proposals were doomed to fail. Sometimes even as meetings took place between Ramos and Sin, more than 3,000 priests and nuns rallied in front of the building.<sup>42</sup>

On other occasions, President Ramos showed up unexpectedly at Cardinal Sin's residence to reassure the Church that he had no plans to become a dictator and that the constitutional changes were safe, and to ask the Church to call off rallies against his administration.<sup>43</sup> When reporters caught Ramos emerging one night from Sin's villa, they questioned him about the visit. Ramos simply responded, "I asked him to please reconsider the planned rally on Sept. 21 because that would be counterproductive toward our wish to heal the wounds of the nation." He added that the mass demonstration would just exacerbate differences. It is more likely that he was worried about being deposed or wished to safeguard his legacy and not have it lumped together with Marcos's.

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<sup>42</sup>"Sin Ignores Ramos's Plea to Call Off Protest," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Asian Political New* (September 8, 1997; accessed 12 October 2001).

<sup>43</sup>Miguel C. Gil, Cecille M Santillan, and Carlo B. M. Santos, "Ramos Fails to Stave Off Rally vs Charter Change," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Business World* (September 11, 1997; accessed 3 December 2001).

The Church would not be silenced on this issue. It made noise over the charter change proposal, both figuratively and literally. Churches nationwide rang their bells, and Catholics blew their car horns in a noise barrage encouraged by the Church.<sup>44</sup> This noise barrage was the beginning of the countdown to a September 21 demonstration. Cardinal Sin, never one to miss the symbolism of an event, organized the rally to coincide with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the imposition of martial law in the Philippines. The symbolism was there, and it was time for the substance.

Ramos and the Philippine Congress knew they had no chance and, fearing a showdown with the Roman Catholic Church, eventually abandoned the idea of charter change. The call came after Ramos and his allies heard the announcement by Sin and former president Aquino that they were going to mobilize more than one million people at the September 21 rally. The rally went ahead as scheduled.

September 21, 1997, would prove once again how powerful the Catholic Church remained. Before the event, questions swirled as to whether or not the Church would produce the numbers they had promised in Manila and the rest of the Philippines. Could they convince enough people to turn out in a show of peaceful protest against Ramos's charter change? These questions were answered with a definitive "yes." An estimated 600,000 protesters poured into the streets in Manila, and more than 100,000 demonstrators gathered in Bacolod. Tens of thousands turned out elsewhere in the Philippines to send Ramos and his allies a strong message. That message was that the powerful and influential Church was there and it was watching, and no one was going to be allowed to tamper with its blessed constitution.

The rally of 1997 was the exclamation point on the Ramos-Church rift. After that, Ramos and the Church did not face off again on any large-scale issues. Ramos

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<sup>44</sup>“Cardinal Sin Calls for Church Bell Protest Against Philippine Leader,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Toronto Star* (September 5, 1997; accessed 12 October 2001).

served out his term as president, which ended in 1998, and made no further attempts to remain in power. However, Ramos never left public life completely. He still resurfaces from time to time alongside Church officials at various national rallies, lending his support to their continued political fights. Ironically, he is usually seen at these rallies standing on stage, arm-in-arm, shoulder-to-shoulder with Cardinal Sin. In the Philippines, old foes can be new friends again. The Church remains there with open arms to welcome those who may have “lost their way.”

Ramos may have “lost” his way politically, but he was forgiven. This was so because in the past he had been instrumental in helping bring Aquino to power and won early favor with the Catholic Church. His missteps and mistakes in the eyes of the Church were his insistence on family planning and charter change. He was not, however, an immoral man, at least in the eyes of the Church hierarchy. Once out of office, he was redeemed to become a Church ally. The same cannot be said for Ramos’s vice president and the man who would become the third president in the post-Marcos era, Joseph “Erap” Estrada.

Joseph Estrada and the Catholic Church started off as uneasy allies because of Ramos’s charter change actions. The Church objected to the charter change on constitutional grounds and out of fears of renewed dictatorship. Estrada objected because he had designs on the presidency, and a second Ramos term meant an end to those aspirations. But their mutual dislike of Ramos’s initiative was not enough to endear Estrada to the Church. Estrada himself had the kind of personal life that put him in the same tabloidesque league with Bill Clinton and Ted Kennedy. Needless to say, he was not a favorite of the Catholic Church’s moral majority.

Before entering politics, Estrada was a movie actor. He was the star of more than 100 films, and in real life he was fond of playing Robin Hood-type roles and fancied himself a champion of the poor. He often compared himself to Ronald Reagan, although that comparison is neither fair nor warranted and does a great disservice to Reagan.

Estrada the politician was not much different from Estrada the movie star. Outside of the cinema and the legislature he was an admitted drinker, gambler, and philanderer. He was never shy about his activities.

His movie career and his role as Ramos's vice president had won him popular support from the nation's poor, but his lifestyle did not endear him to the Church. Once its temporary solidarity had eroded with Ramos's constitutional term, the Church ended its moral cease-fire with Estrada. Subsequently, his declaration of desire to run for the presidency prompted Cardinal Sin to call for "morality" in the opposition. This call for morality in an election where Estrada was sure to be the frontrunner was clear evidence of the Catholic Church's early opposition against an Estrada presidency. It was in a way a preemptive strike, one that was needed if the Church was to dampen Estrada's substantial support among the poor.

During the 1998 election, the Church's support was important to all of the candidates. The election came down to who could garner a plurality of the vote, and the Church's support was considered crucial. At that time, the Church's key figure was still Archbishop Cardinal Sin. His vow to leave politics back in 1987 was never realized. He never really left and reemerged repeatedly during the Aquino and Ramos administrations or whenever "infidel" Ramos needed a good nudging in the "right" direction.

By 1998, public opinion polls showed that nine out of ten adult Filipinos knew who Cardinal Sin was, and among those surveyed, 69 percent trusted him.<sup>45</sup> This level of trust was unmatched by any official in or out of the Philippine government. Cardinal's Sin's trust rating was built by the activities he had engaged in during the previous decade, from People Power to preventing charter change. Any candidate in the 1998 election had to take him seriously and take his public and private support of their campaign into

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<sup>45</sup>1998 Social Weather Survey, done nationwide on 1,200 respondents of voting age, for a 3 percent error margin. SWS media releases may be verified on the webpage at <http://www.sws.org.ph>.

consideration. Even candidates like Estrada, who had little chance of winning the Church's favor, were careful in their public criticisms of Sin or the Church.

Estrada did not, however, pay the Church the deference that other candidates showed. For example, during the 1998 campaign it was commonplace for candidates to meet with Church officials. In fact, eight of the eleven presidential candidates showed up at forums organized by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines.

Conspicuously absent from these forums was Joseph Estrada. He chose to avoid such Church-sponsored forums, relying instead on the solid lead he had in the polls.

The situation vexed the Church. Although its official position and that of Cardinal Sin was "neutral," it was clear to all observers that the Church did not want Estrada to win the election. Coming to this conclusion was not difficult. Statements from Church officials made it clear that Estrada was not the favored choice. Indeed, he was a political pariah in their opinion. Keeping him out of office was difficult because of the support he enjoyed with the masses. It was not that the Church did not control a strong Catholic vote. The problem the Church faced was the sheer number of candidates, which split the Church vote. If the Church wanted to keep Estrada out, it needed to unify the opposition.

Issues of insurgency, abortion, and foreign policy became less important to the Church as the election of May 11, 1998, got closer. The Church realized that a split in the vote would allow Estrada to win. In an unprecedented display of political partisanship and with the Church's blessing, Sin made a desperate attempt to ward off the vote split. Throwing away any pretense of impartiality, Cardinal Sin, acting on behalf of the Philippine Catholic Church, urged the less popular candidates to withdraw from the presidential race in order to keep an "unqualified" candidate from winning.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Oliver Teves, "The Outspoken Archbishop of Manila," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Associated Press* (April 23, 1998; accessed 12 October 2001).

Sin did this so that the Catholic vote would not be split and divided among candidates who may have been fine individuals but did not stand a chance at winning the election. It was hoped that by having some of the less popular candidates withdraw, a strong and unified anti-Estrada vote could be mobilized. This sort of influence, or some may say “meddling,” in politics by the Church is astonishing to observers who have no idea about the historical role the Church played in Philippine politics and legitimacy. Though unparalleled in a place like the United States, the Church’s attempt to directly affect the outcome of a presidential election in the Philippines and install the sort of regime it wanted was and remains the norm.

Asking candidates to withdraw from presidential contention was not a foolproof plan, for there was no guarantee that the candidates would do as the Church asked. If the plan failed, the Church had other measures. The pastoral letter was again used to issue political opinions from the Church. Sin issued a series of letters to the Catholic dioceses to be read in parishes throughout the Philippines. The sentiments expressed were simple, to the point, and clearly anti-Estrada. The Church wanted parishioners to ignore the various public opinion polls that showed Estrada in the lead.

The letters not only encouraged the voters to ignore the polls but also hinted that the election of the next president was a moral referendum on the Philippines itself. Voters had more to consider than just personal interest, because their vote was to illustrate the kind of people they were by the kind of leaders they elected. One letter stated, “Our future depends most of all on our choices, and especially on our choice of leaders . . . Listen to the voice of conscience and do not be intimidated by survey results. Our choice for president will show what kind of people we want to become.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Oliver Teves, “Cardinal Sin Tells Voters Not to be Intimidated by Surveys,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Associated Press* (March 25, 1998; accessed 1 November 2001).



In a pastoral letter issued on May 3, 1998, just eight days before the election, the Church stated in a matter-of-fact manner that the most probable winner, Estrada, would be disastrous for the Philippines. Any pretense of impartiality was purged. Such bold political statements, particularly aimed at bringing down a presidential candidate who was merely exercising his political right to seek office, drew considerable fire from the opposition. Sin's reply to the criticism was in his usual affable fashion: "I am guiding my people because if I do not guide, what kind of shepherd am I?"<sup>48</sup>

Sin was indeed a shepherd for the Church, and he wanted the flock to choose a candidate that the Philippines could be proud of and a person worthy of imitation. This meant a good Catholic and someone who would seek out the Church for counsel. In the Church's view, the Philippines must be united around a common positive moral vision for the Philippines. These ideas were summarized in the Church's pastoral letters, which were direct attacks against candidates with links to the Marcos administration, and particularly a womanizer like Estrada.

Other religious organizations entered the fray against the Church and in favor of Estrada. He may not have had the backing of Cardinal Sin or the Catholic Church, but he did have the backing of the *Iglesia ni Cristo*, which declared its support for Estrada during the campaign. The *Iglesia* was not as large, but its members were committed and wealthy and its endorsement helped to further solidify Estrada's wide margin in the polls.

Estrada was not above exploiting religion. A Catholic himself, Estrada used elements of the Church and its trappings to further his image as a "friend" of the Church. For example, when it came time to receive Mass and blessings from priests, Estrada usually surrounded himself with the poor, who he claimed to be the champion of during

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<sup>48</sup>Marcus Gee, "Vote Pits Church Against State: A Philippine Archbishop Takes a Tough Stand in Campaign for President," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Globe and Mail* (April 27, 1998; accessed 1 November 2001).

his campaign.<sup>49</sup> These and other blatantly political actions that exploited religion appalled many, but it never stopped Estrada from joking about it during the campaign. Buoyed by his lead in the polls, Estrada could afford to make statements that left the Church's collective jaws on the floor, particularly in matters of sexual indiscretions. In a country where speaking of sexual matters is taboo between adults even in private, Estrada's comments about then United States President Bill Clinton were outrageous. He said, "Both President Clinton and I have sex scandals. But Clinton has the scandals, and I have the sex."<sup>50</sup> Such statements galled the Church.

Estrada also had allies in the public and private sector. Although it is unclear if Estrada was behind any moves to shut the Church out of its role as overseer of elections, there was a decision by the government-controlled Commission on Elections (COMELEC) to ban priests and nuns from helping monitor the May 11 election. The timing seemed odd at best. COMELEC further ordered that in order for NAMFREL to be accredited, Archbishop Sin and eight of his religious associations must be dismissed. This was further evidence of the government's desire to remove the Church from being a factor in an Estrada candidacy.

Estrada's allies were not against legal action to lessen the Church's influence in the 1998 election. As Ramos's allies had done before, groups tried litigation to tie the Church's hands. One such group, the pro-Estrada Muslim Reform Party, filed a petition calling for an investigation of Sin for possible violations of the Omnibus Election Code. Party Chairman Alim Farouk Kali criticized Sin for his remarks that Vice President

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<sup>49</sup>Ramoncito De la Cruz, "Ex-Actor in Lead for Filipino President, Markets Stay Calm, but Church Concerned about Man Known as Champion of Poor, A Hard Drinker," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Rocky Mountain News* (March 9, 1998; accessed 3 November 2001).

<sup>50</sup>David Thurber, "Estrada Claims He'll Prove Critics Wrong," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Associated Press* (May 12, 1998; accessed 13 November 2001).

Joseph Estrada was certain to win but unfit to govern the country because of his questionable character, saying the statements indicated his favoritism toward another candidate. The Church and Cardinal Sin accepted the criticism in stride.

Unfounded and irresponsible litigation was one thing, but the Church had to be careful of its long time nemesis, the military. Whether it liked Estrada or not, it did not want the military involved in the electoral process. The Church wanted to make it clear that any undue government influence in general or military involvement in particular would be met with a powerful Church response. The Church did not want Estrada to win, but it did not countenance cheating to affect the election's outcome. Given the military's record, the Church's caution was warranted.

Flexing its political muscle, the Church warned the military to stay out of the election. The Church declared May 10 as "the Lord's Day," and also stated that Christians must oppose any form of cheating. But if cheating did take place or the military intervened in the free and fair elections, it would be opposed with "People Power."<sup>51</sup> Sin stated, "In case of electoral fraud, people power, the people empowered by the Lord, will not fail to prove anew God's special Providence and its democratic institutions."

In the end the Church both won and lost, for the elections of May 11, 1998, were not fraught with cheating, but Joseph Estrada won. Estrada did not garner a majority of the vote, but he did win the election based on a plurality of the vote. It was not the stunning victory reported in the worldwide press, for he received 34.6 percent of the total vote. The rest was split amongst a plethora of less popular presidential candidates. The Church was successful in keeping the majority from voting for Estrada, but it could not keep one-third of the voters from choosing a man of questionable character.

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<sup>51</sup>"Philippine Cardinal Warns Army to Stay Out of Elections," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Agence France-Press* (May 4, 1998; accessed 13 November 2001).

The 1998 elections proved to be peaceful, and this was also a testament to the Church's enduring influence. While the Church may have not had a direct role in electing Estrada, it was one of the primary reasons the polls were safer than in the past.<sup>52</sup> Due to the rise of the Church, civilians no longer dominated politics as they once had, and factional poll violence declined. Church participation is of particular importance for democratic consolidation because it institutionalizes nonviolent participation. The subculture of violence and corruption was in some ways tamed by the Church's activities.

The Church opposed condemning the national security state and economic policies that emphasized efficiency and export at the expense of the poor. It accelerated political education and aid to nongovernmental and human rights organizations, mobilized followers to monitor elections, staged rallies, and confronted regimes through its Church-owned media. Its opposition to Estrada aside, the Church made sure that it kept up its role of the insurer of free and fair elections, even if it meant the election of a man it did not want in office.

Estrada's plurality victory was hardly a stunning rebuke of the Catholic Church, but it was evidence of the Church's weakening electoral influence. There was little chance that Estrada could have received that high of a percentage without a sizable number of Catholics who had ignored the Church's advisory and voted for Estrada. The first round of the political fight between the Church and Estrada went to Estrada. However, this fight was going the full twelve rounds, and as was illustrated earlier, the Church would not wilt and go away. It would regroup to fight another day.

Estrada's inauguration met with the usual pomp and celebration, but not the exuberance the Church had offered to his predecessors. The Church had no intention of cutting Estrada any political slack, as evidenced by the lack of a honeymoon period.

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<sup>52</sup>John L. Linantud, "Whither Guns, Goons, and Gold? The Decline of Factional Election Violence in the Philippines," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, no. 20 (December 1988): 298.

Political tradition usually allows a new administration a honeymoon period. This period is a time when the new president enjoys the well wishes of even his defeated foes.

Estrada did not enjoy a honeymoon period. Cardinal Sin did not show up for Estrada's inauguration and no sooner had he won the election than the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) began forming a committee to review constitutional amendments Estrada intended to propose. Estrada, like Ramos, planned to offer up a few minor constitutional changes during his administration.

The Church did not take its defeat at the polls lightly. It may have failed get the desired results in the presidential election, but legitimacy in the Philippines comes from more than the ballot box. To be legitimate in part means to be effective, delivering on the utilitarianism discussed earlier. Estrada's ability to maintain his popularity, to push through his agenda, and to maintain his office had yet to be seen.

It was well known that Estrada had designs on the 1987 Constitution, the Catholic Church's baby. If his designs were real, then Estrada needed to prepare for a political fight with the Church and a serious test for his administration. To the Church, the 1987 Constitution meant "the destiny of the people . . ." Any changes, even any talk of changes, had to include a dialogue with the Church.<sup>53</sup>

Cardinal Sin also shot a preemptive volley across the Estrada administration's bow. The political volley was not meant to sink the new government, but merely to warn Estrada against embracing corrupt elements of the past. The Church and Sin feared a return of "former plunderers," referring to close associates of the late Ferdinand Marcos. One such "plunderer" was the business tycoon Eduardo Cojuangco Jr., one of the most powerful figures during the Marcos regime and a man who was cozy with Estrada.<sup>54</sup> "I

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<sup>53</sup>"Church to Join Cha-cha Effort," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Business World* (June 4, 1998; accessed 13 November 2001).

<sup>54</sup>"Cardinal Sin Blasts Return of 'Plunderers,'" [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Associated Press* (July 7, 1998; accessed 13 November 2001).

am worried about the ease that accompanies our dealing with the former plunderers of our nation. Money is not the end of everything. Friendship and *utang na loob* cannot be the sole criteria for our decisions and actions," Sin stated.

Estrada gave little attention to the Church's warnings, although at times he sought the Church's help for domestic initiatives. One such initiative was his much-vaunted war on poverty. The Church and Estrada joined forces, at least rhetorically, in their efforts to alleviate the persistent problem of poverty. However, taking credit for the initiatives was another story. Not wanting to give the president credit for the initiative, Cardinal Sin made sure in public statements that it was the Church that thanked Estrada for joining *it* in the war on poverty, instead of the government thanking social organizations like the Church for helping governmental efforts.<sup>55</sup>

Ramos's family planning initiatives also continued during the Estrada administration, drawing direct fire from the Church. Taking its cues from the Vatican, the Philippine Catholic Church continued to be the most active opponent of population control in the Philippines. Politicians, wishing to balance the real need for population control within the poverty stricken country with their own political needs, walked a fine line between family planning and support of Estrada and the Catholic Church's very conservative policy towards birth control.

Adding to the fire was the Church's insistence that abortion of all types remain illegal in the Philippines, something Estrada was open to changing. Abortion was seen by some of the more liberal elements in Estrada's government as one form of population control. Moreover, in a country where a baby is more likely than not to be born in abject poverty and a burgeoning sex industry fuels the rapid spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, the Catholic stance showed its inflexibility. But this position did not change.

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<sup>55</sup>"Estrada, Sin Join Forces In Fight vs. Poverty," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Business Daily* (September 22, 1998; accessed 3 December 2001).

Other aspects of the Church's activities and influence during the Estrada years were less conspicuous. For example, The Church injected itself into the Estrada administration's domestic policy, including the "conscience committee" that Estrada appointed to review death penalty cases. The death penalty had always been a contentious issue for the Church, and it tried during the writing of the 1987 Constitution to have it outlawed. However, it was unsuccessful and Estrada had every intention of reinstating the use of the death penalty in certain instances. His inclusion of the Church in the matter demonstrated his own need to appease it as much as possible.

Estrada was also sensitive to the Church's role in the use of People Power, although at the time he could not have imagined that People Power would be used to end his presidency. He did know that its use helped secure the new era in Philippine politics, an era he enjoyed and that led to his presidency. Trying to capture the spirit of EDSA, and some may say hijack it, Estrada created a commission to ensure the annual commemoration of the EDSA revolution. He even gave Cardinal Sin an honorary membership on the commission.<sup>56</sup>

The smiles and handshakes went both ways between the Estrada camp and the Church. Working with Estrada was a necessity if the Church wanted to accomplish objectives such as staffing the bureaucracy. Filling political positions was important to the Church, and it was wise to focus on those organizations that were beneficial to the Church's goals in the next election. The Church already controlled NAMFREL, but COMELEC was another story. To help rectify this situation, the Catholic Church strongly pushed for the appointment of one of its allies, Teresita Dy-Liacco Flores, to the highest post in the organization. Cardinal Sin, teamed with influential Archbishop

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<sup>56</sup>"Erap: Keep People Power Alive," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Manila Standard* (February 9, 2000; accessed 3 December 2001).

Ricardo Cardinal Vidal of Cebu and other religious leaders, successfully pushed for the appointment.<sup>57</sup>

The issue of United States military bases was another area in which the Church remained involved. In 1986, the Church was in favor of keeping the bases open, but 1998 was a different year. Back in 1991, Cory Aquino and the Church had rallied to extend the lease of bases but failed to win support in the government, and as a result, the bases were closed. Seven years later, the Church had removed all pretense of support for United States military activities in the Philippines. On the issue of the United States military, it seemed the Church took on the characteristics of a political party. It had the ability to shift and change its position. It was unlike other moral or religious issues, such as abortion, on which the Church and its leadership never wavered.

Whereas in the late 1980s it had supported keeping the United States military in the Philippines, the late 1990s saw the Church adopt a more nationalistic agenda, urging the Philippine Senate to reject an accord that would allow United States troops to train in the Philippines. Although the substance of its claim is questionable, the Church believed that a new pact with the United States would threaten the Philippines' security.<sup>58</sup> In a Church homily, Cardinal Sin said the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) was too vague and opened the door to American placement of nuclear weapons on Philippine soil. Senate leaders recognized that Sin's opposition "cannot be ignored."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Cecille M. Santillan and Cathy Rose A. Garcia, "Church Leaders Name Preference for Top Comelec Post, Palace Choice Known Soon," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Business World* (October 9, 1998; accessed 3 December 2001).

<sup>58</sup>Jim Gomez, "Influential Church Leader Urges Philippine Senators to Reject U.S. Pact," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Associated Press* (May 17, 1999; accessed 3 December 2001).

<sup>59</sup>"Philippine-US Defense Pact to Push Through Despite Objections: Officials," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Agence France-Presse* (May 18, 1999; accessed 3 December 2001).



The Church remained relevant because it remained important. In areas other than politics, for example, the Church was often called upon to counsel and support the government. Estrada, who during the campaign promised to bring a settled peace to the trouble regions of the Philippines, backed away from his initial proposals. He unilaterally suspended talks with Muslim separatists and Communist rebels on the southern island of Mindanao. Senate Defense Committee Chairman Rodolfo Biazon feared a resumed war and appealed to the Church and Cardinal Sin to pressure Estrada to resolve differences through negotiation.<sup>60</sup>

Since the late 1980s, the Catholic Church in the Philippines had been actively involved with peace efforts in the archipelago. Some of these efforts were discussed previously, as was the Church's role as primary mediator between the insurgencies and the State. The Church was also proactive in peace talks between the government and the leftist New People's Army. Estrada sought a role for the Church in helping his government deal with both new and old threats to domestic peace.

Estrada's administration called upon the Church to conduct talks with various factions of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Abu Sayaff, a more recent insurgent threat that acted as a terrorist-kidnapping gang in the Mindanao-Sulu area and purportedly had ties to Osama bin Laden. Church officials had in the past successfully negotiated cease-fires between the government and these militants. The Church even actively pursued a joint dialogue between priests and Muslim clerics in an effort to unite the Filipino people from Luzon to Mindanao under a common cultural banner, all evidence of the Church's continued role in shaping and forming the Philippine identity.

Its work with the government did not stop the Church from criticizing Estrada's approach to peace. Whether it was a real attack on his failure to lead on the issue or just

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<sup>60</sup>Raissa Robles, "Civil War Fears Amid Estrada Peace Tour," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *South China Morning Post* (February 26, 1999; accessed 3 December 2001).

another chance to weaken the legitimacy of the Estrada presidency is a matter of debate. But the attacks were anything but mild. Cardinal Sin accused Estrada's government of failing to provide leadership amid the crises of the Muslim insurgency, kidnappings and bombings:

There is a growing perception that there exists a vacuum of leadership. Even government personnel, especially those with decision-making powers, cannot get their act together . . . This situation will not leave us unless the government gives us clear directions and a common course of action . . . the people are clamoring for a clearer, more analytical and more unified leadership.<sup>61</sup>

President Estrada was willing to meet with the Catholic bishops about the way his administration was handling the insurgency issues, even desiring an open dialogue on the Church's proposals to end the armed conflict. Meetings such as these with Church officials helped Estrada maintain a balance in his own policy in the region. It also gave him the opportunity to explain to the bishops in a formal setting his administration's policy.

Domestic policy was not the only area in which the Church was utilized during the early Estrada administration. In the late 1980s and 1990s Church officials, including Cardinal Sin, served as *de facto* ambassadors to China, probing the Chinese government in matters of religious freedom and reestablishing relations with the Republic of the Philippines. Sin, himself of Chinese decent, visited China on several occasions serving as an unofficial but extremely influential representative of the Philippine nation.

The Church also pressured the government successfully on other foreign policy issues. The most noticeable example was the situation in East Timor. East Timor had recently voted for independence when Estrada took office. He had to balance his need for good relations with Indonesia, from which East Timor was trying to break away,

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<sup>61</sup>“Senior Philippines Church Leader Assails ‘Vacuum of Leadership’ During Crisis,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Agence France-Presse* (May 20, 2000; accessed 3 December 2001).

while being sensitive to the fact the East Timor was a predominately Catholic nation with tremendous sympathy from his country's population and the Church.

The Church admitted that the Philippines were too far from East Timor to be directly affected by the turmoil there, but it drew parallels based on the commonality of their religion. The Catholic Church and its leadership, including Cardinal Sin, consistently urged the Philippine government to exert pressure to stop the bloodshed in East Timor, where anti-independence militias were murdering Catholics.<sup>62</sup> Up to twenty Filipino nuns and priests were in East Timor during the height of the violence. "This should stop . . . I am appealing to the [Philippine] Secretary of Foreign Affairs and to the ambassador of Indonesia to the Philippines to exert moral pressure to stop further bloodshed," Cardinal Sin stated.<sup>63</sup>

The pressure the Church exerted worked. Estrada agreed to commit 1,000 troops to the peacekeeping effort and said the final number of Philippine peacekeepers would depend on a decision by the United Nations. He was also willing to offer \$200,000 in government funds to help the situation.<sup>64</sup> The Philippine Catholic bishops also attempted to pressure the United States to put American troops into East Timor and halt what they described as Indonesian "genocide" in the mainly Catholic territory. Indonesia was also targeted. More than 2,000 priests, nuns, Catholic schoolchildren, and activists and a small group of East Timorese added to the political pressure with demonstrations. These protests were staged in front of the Indonesian embassy.

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<sup>62</sup>"Bishops Call for Action in E. Timor," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Gulf News* (September 16, 1999; accessed 3 December 2001).

<sup>63</sup>"Philippine Church Leader Urges Pressure to Stop East Timor Bloodshed," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Agence France-Presse* (September 9, 1999; accessed 3 December 2001).

<sup>64</sup>"Philippines Gives Dlr 200,000 for East Timor, Offers Troops," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Associated Press* (September 15, 1999; accessed 3 December 2001).

"The Philippines should help promote democracy in East Timor," said Cardinal Sin, who led the nuns and priests at one of these demonstrations. "We have been vigilant about our democracy. We also want democracy to reign in East Timor." Estrada welcomed the decision made by Catholic bishops and business leaders in Manila to send humanitarian assistance to East Timor. Church groups also launched a campaign of their own to raise funds for humanitarian aid to East Timor. The National Secretariat for Social Action, Justice and Peace and Caritas Philippines began a "Save East Timor" campaign. NASSA hoped to solicit more from corporations, prominent personalities, politicians, and major Catholic universities.

The cooperation between the Church and State regarding East Timor may represent the best of times for the Catholic Church and the Estrada administration. Having come to power in spite of Church opposition, Estrada did not feel any particular allegiance or affinity towards the Church or its leadership, but he had to be wary. Estrada understood that because of his lifestyle as much as his politics, he was a political target for the Church. He needed to be careful in his dealings both domestically and internationally to stave off the ever-present Church and its willingness to release pastoral letters condemning Estrada for his missteps.

Estrada had at one time been aligned with the Church against Ramos in the debate over charter change. As a witness to history, one would think that he would avoid such a fight for his own administration. Yet he did not. Perhaps it was his own feeling of invulnerability based on his electoral success. Whatever the case, he chose to make charter change an issue in his administration, and just as it had during the Ramos years, the Church was there to meet the president in political battle. The new clash over changing the 1987 Constitution would spark a series of events that would make Estrada a frequent target of Church criticism and scrutiny. In a matter of months he would be embroiled in repeated scandals, all culminating in the call for People Power II and the sudden and dramatic collapse of the Estrada administration.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE POLLS, THE PULPIT, AND THE STREET

Joseph “Erap” Estrada was elevated to the office of president through a large plurality of the vote in 1998. His popularity among the masses superseded any politician’s at that time, and this popularity would prove to be a formidable hurdle for the Church to overcome in its own efforts to influence policy and Estrada’s presidency. He posed new challenges for the Church, because while it did not want him in office, Estrada proved that without the Church he could still be elected and legitimized.

Estrada was the epitome of the populous politician who attempted to use other methods to maintain his legitimacy. He challenged the Church’s role as the mediating “z” variable. Attempting to maintain the Church’s position as the “z” variable meant inevitable confrontations between the Church and Estrada. Indeed, during the Estrada administration it seemed the penchant for the Church to criticize his government and for Estrada to blast the Church was matched only by the seemingly endless number of calls from both sides for “reconciliation.” The pattern seemed to be: assault→ reconcile→ assault again→ reconcile once more, all the while preparing for the inevitable final political battle. This future battle could take many forms. It could happen at the next election if Estrada survived, or it could happen in the streets should the Church come across an issue that necessitated a People Power-type revolution to depose the president.

This chapter is therefore important in illustrating how the Church adapted its strategy to fit the problem, and in the process emerged more politically powerful and invigorated. Challenging Estrada’s legitimacy would require an adjustment in strategy, and it was an adjustment that the Church was able to make. Through the use of specific instances from the Estrada administration, the reader will come to understand just how the Church was able to manipulate events in its favor and eventually succeed in bringing Estrada down.

The previous chapter mentioned briefly how the Church and Estrada began his administration with a hint of cooperation. However, this cooperation had its limits, and as Estrada pushed forward with his domestic political reforms in the second year of his administration, he had the backing of the business community but not the Church. Estrada's main domestic project for the year 1999 was his Constitutional Correction for Development (Concord), a fancy name for what had in the past commonly been called "Charter Change." As Estrada floated trial balloons for his own version of "Charter Change," the Catholic Church hardened its stance against him. In time, the Church called for a rally to denounce Estrada and what Cardinal Sin called the "cronies" of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos who were influencing the Estrada administration.<sup>1</sup> It was also a very public way for the Church to express its displeasure with Estrada's attempts to change the constitution.

Estrada insisted that his changes were different from Ramos's because he would limit his changes to economic provisions, such as the ban on foreign entities owning land. Any political changes he wanted to make would take affect after he was out of office. The Church did not support this argument. Cardinal Sin called Estrada's plan a "dangerous exercise," fearing that opening the constitution to change would allow the involvement of what Sin termed "crazy people."<sup>2</sup> By opposing Estrada's ideas for the constitution, the Church and Cardinal Sin believed that they were doing their "duty" as Philippine citizens by remaining "vigilant" so that the gains of EDSA would not be lost.

The Church feared opening up the constitution to any change that might lead to an extension of term limits. This would allow a political enemy like Estrada to serve up to

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<sup>1</sup>Cecil Morella, "Aquino, Church Leaders Gang Up on Philippine Leader," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Agence France-Presse* (July 30, 1999; accessed 8 August 2002).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

twelve years in office, an unpalatable situation for the Church.<sup>3</sup> It believed such a move would endanger the fragile Philippine democracy, and it felt that general legislation could address any economic problems and a constitutional assembly was unnecessary.

Estrada expected Church opposition and took his case for Concord to the press. He argued that provisions in the 1987 Constitution hurt the nation's economy because they limited foreign investment. But words were not enough to convince the press or the people. Estrada needed the support of popular figures. If the mainstream Church was not going support him, then Estrada had to find someone else. He did, and he soon trotted out Brother Mike Velarde, the leader of the Philippines' largest charismatic movement, *El Shaddai*, and Estrada's spiritual adviser.

By having Brother Mike at his side Estrada hoped to illustrate that he had "religious" support for his proposed changes. Velarde, who went against the Church and Cardinal Sin by backing Estrada's presidential campaign, organized a birthday celebration to coincide with a rally of support for Estrada. It was no accident that this celebration corresponded with the Catholic Church's own planned rally against Concord.<sup>4</sup> The rally organized by Velarde and Estrada was expected to draw a larger audience, because while the Church offered patriotism and rhetoric, Velarde and Estrada offered a festival atmosphere and a chance for families to come and enjoy a free meal.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>"Sin Taps Church Network vs Constitutional Change (Pastoral Letter's Targets: Cronyism, Threat to Press Freedom," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *BusinessWorld* (August 1, 1999; accessed 22 November 2002).

<sup>4</sup>Velarde's actions drew heat from the mainstream Church, even to the point of generating talk of an official censure from the Church. The censure, had it proceeded, would have been based on the "official" position that Velarde was transgressing Church doctrine while preaching the gospel to his followers. The unspecified and unclear nature of the charge mattered little, for Velarde's real crime was his unqualified support for Estrada.

<sup>5</sup>Raissa Robles, "Free Food at Rally Expected to Draw Millions," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *South China Morning Post* (August 18, 1999, accessed 8 August 2002).

To counter Verlade's and Estrada's moves, the Church mobilized its power base. Indeed, it had all it needed to counter Estrada's moves, for it could work within democracy and appeal to nationalism and Catholicism to counter his actions. Cardinal Sin urged through a pastoral letter for the faithful to join the Church's rally against Concord. The letter was read during Mass in Catholic churches nationwide. In his letter, Sin stressed past Church successes and exhorted parishioners to join if they "still believe in freedom and you want our children to remain free, join me . . . for our rally for freedom. Let us not wait until it is too late. Vigilance is the price of freedom."<sup>6</sup> In the letter, he also linked Estrada with Marcos and called for "morality," "transparency," and "truth" in Estrada's government. Sin also said that the rally was a show of "patriotism," and patriotism was an expression of the love of God and the Church.

Estrada did not let the issuance of the pastoral letter pass without a reaction. He branded Cardinal Sin's statements as "lies" and "baseless accusations."<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Estrada believed that his actions would benefit the people and as such, he had God's support. "Despite all the insults [the Church] will make, similar to those of Cardinal Sin's, they cannot change my mind because I believe the voice of the people is the voice of God," Estrada said.<sup>8</sup> However, Estrada was careful not to push the Church too far. Just a day after he issued his statement, he expressed hope that he and Cardinal Sin could sit down to a nice lunch and patch up their differences.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>"Sin Taps Church Network vs Constitutional Change."

<sup>7</sup>Donna S. Cueto and Blanche S. Rivera, "Palace Tells Critics: Erap no Marcos," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (September 22, 2000; accessed 8 August 2002).

<sup>8</sup>"Sin Taps Church Network vs Constitutional Change."

<sup>9</sup>"Erap Turns Conciliatory," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Manila Standard* (August 17, 1999; accessed 17 November 2002).



Estrada's sober and conciliatory tone contrasted sharply with the angry rhetoric he often directed towards the Church. But he was not alone in his criticism. Top government officials also urged the Church leadership to refrain from preaching a "gospel of hate" against the Estrada administration.

Batangas Representative Ralph Recto, a member of the administration's *Laban ng Masang Pilipino*, called on Sin and other Church leaders to stop using the pulpit to raise "alarmist statements" regarding Estrada and Concord.<sup>10</sup> When August 20, 1999, arrived, the Church's anti-Concord rally drew an estimated crowd of more than 150,000 people. The Church's efforts from the pulpit paid huge dividends. People took to the streets in several major cities to oppose Estrada's efforts. In Manila alone, the number was estimated to be 75,000. These rallies were the first large-scale public opposition organized by the Church against Estrada's administration. The Church framed itself in the role of valiant warrior opposing the oppressor. Those who came heard a litany of anti-Estrada propaganda, much of it comparing his administration to Marcos's. "We fought a dictatorship then," said Josefina Fernando, a Franciscan nun who spoke to the protestors. "We are here to prevent this government from ending up like that one."<sup>11</sup>

The Church's success at turning out tens of thousands was a point of pride, but surprisingly it could not match the success of the Verlade-Estrada rally held the same weekend. That rally drew more than 600,000 people in metro-Manila. It was certainly impressive, but neither Estrada nor Verlade could have believed the masses were there simply to celebrate a birthday or support Estrada's Concord. Indeed, they were there for the festive atmosphere and the free food, and the politics of the event were secondary. In the end, the numbers at the Church rally might have not matched Estrada's, but those in

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Jim Gomez, "Filipinos Protest Proposed Change to Constitution," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *The Seattle Times* (August 20, 1999, accessed 8 August 2002).

attendance at the Church's rally were there with purpose, were politically astute, and were active and did not show up simply for free food.

The Church claimed a moral victory that overshadowed Estrada's numbers. "The rally last Friday achieved its purpose. We said what we wanted to say. We manifested openly, peacefully and emphatically our concerns, more specifically regarding the proposal to change the Constitution. Now the ball is in the President's court," said Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines President Archbishop Oscar Cruz.<sup>12</sup> With both rallies considered successes, each side waited for the other to react.

Estrada's reaction was quick and reconciliatory. He agreed to meet with Cardinal Sin to discuss Concord. However, those plans were put on hold almost immediately. No real excuse was given as to why Estrada changed his mind. Perhaps he believed the numbers at his own rally provided him with the necessary political clout to demean the Church's role in the Concord issue. After his rally, Estrada belittled Cardinal Sin and the Church's political role, saying the Church and the cardinal should concentrate on preaching spiritual and moral values and stay out of his politics. "Maybe he [Cardinal Sin] should leave the matter of running the government to the duly-elected leaders--past and present. We are the ones accountable to the people."<sup>13</sup>

Estrada may have overlooked the Church's role in his own legitimacy, but advisors close to him did not. It seems that behind the scenes pressure was exerted after his comments, and Estrada made a counter-announcement a few days later. He recanted his earlier statements and vowed to "consult" the Church before making any changes to the country's constitution. It was an astonishing about face. Estrada abruptly visited Sin's

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<sup>12</sup>"Church Waits for Signals from State," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Manila Standard* (August 21, 1999; accessed 1 September 2002).

<sup>13</sup>"Erap: With Cory, FVR, Yes: With Sin, No," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Manila Standard* (August 23, 1999; accessed 1 September 2002).

residence for a late afternoon meeting. Although Estrada believed there were no specifics to discuss, he said he felt the meeting was necessary to mend fences.<sup>14</sup>

Estrada also preempted speculation about whether or not the Church would play a role in legitimizing possible changes to the constitution. After the meeting, he outlined for the press his plans to appoint a preparatory commission whose sole purpose would be to look over all proposed changes and come up with a specific plan to address the constitutional amendments. Furthermore, he agreed to let the Church help select members of the committee. Lastly, Estrada promised that once the committee had completed its work he would submit it to "his eminence."<sup>15</sup>

In a matter of days, Estrada went from telling the Church to "stay out" of politics to including it in every level of his decision-making process regarding the Concord. Either he or one of his advisors realized that fighting the Church over changes to the 1987 Constitution was a losing battle. It was better to make the Church a participant in the process itself and ensure its full support for any changes that might be made.

The Church accepted the president's offer, but it never really felt comfortable with Concord. Moreover, it continued to encourage street protests against "Charter Change." In September 1999, thousands marched in Manila's streets to mark the anniversary of Marcos's declaration of martial law. The rallies were not a mere remembrance of the past but were also tied to Estrada's efforts with Concord. Rallies were held simultaneously in thirty-two cities and provinces. Each gathering was a potent mix of Church theology and political activism, with people waving anti-Estrada banners and carrying images of the Virgin Mary.

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<sup>14</sup>"Erap Meets Cory, Jaime at Palace of Archbishop," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *BusinessWorld* (August 31, 1999; accessed 23 November 2002).

<sup>15</sup>Barbara Mae Dacanay, "Estrada Bows to Cardinal's Will," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Gulf News* (August 31, 1999; accessed 12 June 2002).

Estrada's pledge to include the Church was never fulfilled to the Church's satisfaction. There was really no way for Estrada to placate the Church, for it never called off its vocal opposition against the administration's plan for Concord. One Church organizer, Father Robert Reyes, said that the Church-sponsored outpourings would "... not stop until the President listens to the voice of the people and stops pushing for [Concord]."

Reyes said that the Church was committed to bringing more people to the streets if necessary.<sup>16</sup> Cardinal Sin added, "The moves to amend the charter now is a threat to our democracy. The reasons for changing the charter are not clear. The character of the people who will be tasked with amending the charter gives me a nightmare."<sup>17</sup>

Estrada was unwilling or unable to concede his policies to the Church's influence. He did not want the Church to dictate the policy or the makeup of any "Charter Change." It was better to strategically retreat from Concord at this point and regroup to fight another day. In essence, the Church's pressure worked and in January 2000, Estrada announced that he would back off his plan to change the constitution.

The Church welcomed the move, sending out the figurative olive branches of peace. Cardinal Sin released a favorable public message via the Philippine press stating that the Church was not Estrada's enemy over Concord but was merely engaged in an honest disagreement about policy. Sin offered a change in the tone of political rhetoric, saying, "I believe in the goodwill and good heart of the President. Our criticisms of his

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<sup>16</sup>"Thousands March Against Cha-Cha," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *BusinessWorld* (September 22, 1999; accessed 21 November 2002).

<sup>17</sup>"Thousands Join Philippine Protest Rally," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Japan Economic Newswire* (September 21, 1999; accessed 17 November 2002).

administration do not make us his enemies or oppositionists. We really want to make him succeed."<sup>18</sup>

It is unlikely that Estrada was moved by the Church's kind words, because he and the Church knew it was matter of time before they clashed again. Dropping Concord from his domestic agenda earned Estrada some breathing room, at least publicly. He made other favorable moves in his governmental appointments. The Church was particularly pleased by the appointment of Alfredo Lim as interior secretary. Lim's appointment was seen as a "peace offering" to Cardinal Sin and ex-President Aquino. In 1998, Lim had been Sin's choice and the Church worked to get him elected. However, like the other candidates, Estrada soundly defeated him.<sup>19</sup> His inclusion in the Estrada administration was a roundabout victory for the Church.

Estrada may have told the Church and the public that he was dropping the idea of Concord, but he was never through with his Concord propaganda. Estrada continued to celebrate "Charter Change" as a personal and national priority. Although he had agreed not to push for it in 2000, Concord was his pet project and ten days after publicly shelving it, he claimed the press had misunderstood his true intentions. Far from disposing of the plans for Concord, Estrada said that he would "never backtrack" because he fervently believed that change was necessary.<sup>20</sup>

Estrada's behavior was not schizophrenic. Perhaps he believed that if he paused, regrouped, and rethought his strategy he could take up the issue again in the future. At

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<sup>18</sup>"Sin Happy with Concord Deferment," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Manila Standard* (January 11, 2000; accessed 12 June 2002).

<sup>19</sup>Jonathan Sprague and Antonio Lopez, "Act II for Estrada," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Asia Week* (January 21, 2000; accessed 8 August 2002).

<sup>20</sup>"Philippine President Says Moves to Amend Constitution Continue," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *The Manila Times* (January 13, 2000; accessed 12 November 2001).

the time, Estrada still had four years left in his term, plenty of time to push through constitutional change. Perhaps it was the result of a leader's inability to accept a political defeat at the hands of the Church, or maybe it was simply that he could not stomach the patronizing statements in the press coming from Cardinal Sin and other Church officials.

Estrada continued to enjoy support from a large segment of the population. He believed, and rightly so, that close to half of the population supported some form of constitutional change. In the first four months of 2000, the numbers only grew stronger. *Pulse Asia*, in its March 2000 survey, found that 45 percent of the population agreed that the country's constitution needed to be amended. That was up from 39 percent during September 1999. The ranks of those who disapproved of the move, on the other hand, dwindled from 57 percent to 44 percent during the same period.<sup>21</sup> So why was it that Estrada needed to bow to the Church's wishes and its criticism of his administration? Did he not have a mandate from the people? Indeed he did, both from the 1998 election and from the polls on Concord. Yet as this study has consistently illustrated numerous times, without the Church's support it is difficult to maintain the people's support.

Estrada did not deal well with criticisms and patronizing statements from the Church. When attacked, he often struck back. He even promoted a boycott against the widely read *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, which had been particularly critical of him and his policies and seemed to favored the Church in much of its coverage. Estrada publicly accused the *Inquirer* of maligning him and filed a libel suit against the publication. The suit was dropped after the owners wrote a front-page apology.

Seizing this controversy, the Church attacked Estrada on many levels. The issue provided yet another way for the Church to chip away at his credibility and his legitimacy. The Church pointed out that it was not the fault of the *Inquirer* that Estrada

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<sup>21</sup>Luz Baguioro, "Filipinos Warm Up to Idea of Charter Change," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *The Strait Times*, (April 19, 2000; accessed 11 September 2002).

suffered from what Cardinal Sin called a "crisis of credibility." Sin also bashed Estrada's suit as an attempt to censor the press and prevent free political commentary. Sin noted, "When we see clear attempts to silence the opposition and to harass free expression how can the citizens not worry about a return to authoritarianism?"<sup>22</sup>

In addition, Cardinal Sin urged Estrada to behave more like a president, and "to look at criticism with openness, humility and even with gratitude."<sup>23</sup> He publicly questioned Estrada's fitness to govern. "When government officials make statements in public with no reflection, decorum and finesse, how can the citizens' respect be won? When government deals are done under dark clouds of suspicions, how can trust in public office be sustained? When the cronies of the dictatorship are perceived to be close allies of government, how can we believe that justice will indeed be served?" Sin asked.<sup>24</sup>

Estrada bit back in a published interview. In it, he pointed his own finger of shame at the Catholic Church. He brashly lumped Cardinal Sin in with openly subversive and violent groups, such as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the New People's Army.<sup>25</sup> Such charges went above the usual rhetoric exchanged between the Church and State. In the same interview, he oddly expressed an admiration for the unity of Vietnam and said he was disturbed by the Philippines' disunity. He went further, making vague references to a plot to destabilize his own government. There is little doubt that he meant to include the Church among those groups that wished to overthrow him.

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<sup>22</sup>"Church Accuses Philippine Leader of Muzzling Press, Opposition," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Agence France-Presse* (July 22, 1999; accessed 17 November 2002).

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>"'I Am In control': The President Defends His Reworked Agenda," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Asia Week* (February 2, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

Expressing an admiration for a brutal Communist dictatorship was certainly no way to win the Catholic Church's support, particularly when there was an ongoing political fight over the future of the Church-crafted constitution. Estrada had a few high-profile allies to keep the pressure on, including Senator Juan Ponce Enrile, who in the past had benefited from the Church's power during the 1986 revolution. Forgetting what the Church had done for his political career, Enrile publicly charged that it was now a destabilizing force at work against the Estrada administration.<sup>26</sup> To have raised the ire of so many Estrada allies meant that the Church was effective in its criticism.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) vehemently denied Enrile's claims. "Our business is to point out the corruption and moral ills in the government," said Monsignor Hernando Coronel, CBCP spokesman. Coronel also stated that it was not the Church's business to topple governments and the criticisms surrounding Concord and other issues were merely part of the "prophetic" role that the CBCP and Cardinal Sin had a right to exercise.<sup>27</sup> When asked to characterize his own role in relation to the government, Cardinal Sin said, "When necessary, I am an accelerator and people accuse me of being a radical. When the situation calls for it, I am the brakes."<sup>28</sup>

In a few words, Cardinal Sin had summarized the Church's role and his position as its leader. Neither could keep silent, for their roles were ones of oversight. They did not seek to create policy, but they were determined to help shape it and oppose it if it conflicted with Church goals. They were *the* mediating force, giving voice to a population who might otherwise be bulldozed by the political machine of the Estrada

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<sup>26</sup>"Bishops Deny Plot vs. Erap," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (March 9, 2000; accessed 5 August 2002).

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.



government. When the single voice of a voter was not enough and when something or someone needed to mobilize thousands to be heard, Cardinal Sin felt that the Church had a right and a duty to do it. The people may not have always agreed with the Church's stance, but there had never been mass opposition to its policies and positions.

Despite the political bickering, by early 2000 the Church and the president were sure of their respective roles in the political drama of Philippine politics. Never far from the surface were the Church's desire to depose Estrada and Estrada's desire to circumvent the Church's influence and push his agenda through Congress. Yet all was not political warfare between Estrada and the Church. Often in the public arena the proverbial "hatchet" could be buried long enough for a political truce to take affect.

An example of this reconciliation came in February 2000, during the fourteenth anniversary of the first People Power Revolution that had toppled Marcos in 1986. Estrada portrayed himself as its champion. In actuality, he had been a minor victim of the People Power Revolution. After the first EDSA revolution when Corey Aquinio took office, one of her first principle acts at the Church's behest was to fire hundreds of local officials believed to be connected to Marcos. Estrada was then serving as mayor of San Juan in Metro Manila and was summarily dismissed.

Putting a spin on his past victimization at the hands of the Church, Estrada said he accepted his removal because he believed that at the time it was the only way for true reform to be implemented by the Aquino administration.<sup>29</sup> He went further in his *mea culpa* by claiming that his dismissal in the wake of EDSA I, as People Power has come to be called, prompted him to seek higher positions. He became a senator, vice president, and eventually president. It was a blessing in disguise and after winning the presidency, Estrada continually identified himself as a champion of the events at EDSA.

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<sup>29</sup>“Erap: Keep People Power Alive.”

The anniversary proved to be a political Christmas of sorts when bad feelings were put aside in celebration of a wondrous birth, in this case the birth of a new Philippine democracy. The tone carried over into March 2000. Perhaps both sides were weary and in need of a respite, for since 1998 the Philippines had experienced almost two years of political fighting between the Church and Estrada.

Publicly at least, both sides continued the time of reconciliation and good feelings for the next few weeks. For his part, Estrada urged Filipinos to forgive him for past transgressions and broken campaign promises. The Church urged the people to pay less attention to the president's failings and focus instead on unifying and working together towards solving society's problems.<sup>30</sup> However, like a bad marriage, it was inevitable that the respite would end and the bickering between the two sides would resume.

A mere month after the "reconciliation," Cardinal Sin opened up a new political assault on Estrada. He blasted the administration and accused the highest levels of government of having what he termed a "vacuum of leadership."<sup>31</sup> What prompted his outrage was a spate of bombings in Manila and the Estrada administration's failure to arrest those responsible. Estrada had also failed to address the issue of poverty to the Cardinal's satisfaction. Finally, the Church had offered in good faith to mediate the talks between Muslim separatists and the government, but had been snubbed by Estrada.<sup>32</sup>

Estrada did more than rebuff the Church's offer to negotiate with the separatists. He also ignored pleas for a temporary cease-fire from a Church-led coalition that included groups such as the Coalition for Peace, the Makati Business Club, the National

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<sup>30</sup>"Estrada Wants to Rectify Past Mistakes," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Gulf News* (April 22, 2000; accessed 4 June 2002).

<sup>31</sup>Norman Bordadora, Carlito Pablo, and Juliet L. Javellana, "Sin Slams 'Vacuum of Leadership' in Gov't," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (May 25, 2000; accessed 8 July 2002).

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*

Peace Conference, Abanse Pinay, the Akbayan Citizens' Party, and the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines.<sup>33</sup> Estrada's administration also blasted the Papal envoy, Archbishop Antonio Franco, for suggesting in a speech that Estrada did not want peace in the Philippines.<sup>34</sup> The cardinal defended the envoy as a "man of peace." He turned the tables on the critics, charging that anyone who was "offended by a man of peace cannot be men of peace themselves."<sup>35</sup>

Attacking a "man of peace" was construed as further evidence that the Estrada government lacked something substantial in leadership. However, the Estrada administration immediately attempted to rebuff any claims of a "vacuum of leadership" at the top. Executive Secretary Ronaldo Zamora blasted the Church's insinuation and implied that the Church had no clue about the president's real nature. Press Secretary and Presidential Spokesman Ricardo Puno Jr. said much the same thing. In denying any vacuum of power, he said, "It is clear the President is not just in control. He and his Cabinet are also working hard to address the problems of the country, including those concerning our economy . . . with all due respect to our Cardinal, [I don't know] what he based his statement on the supposed leadership vacuum in the government."<sup>36</sup>

During the Papal envoy scandal and the argument over leadership, there were the first hints of something bigger brewing in the way of scandals. The rumors of this new

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<sup>33</sup>Carolyn O. Arguillas, "Erap Rebuffs Sin, Cory on Ceasefire," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (June 1, 2000; accessed 8 August 2002).

<sup>34</sup>Armand Nocum and Norman Bordadora, "Erap Men Mad at Papal Envoy," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (June 14, 2001; accessed 8 August 2002).

<sup>35</sup>Norman Bordadora, "Sin Defends Papal Nuncio, Lambastes President's Men," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (June 15, 2000; accessed 7 September 2002).

<sup>36</sup>Gilbert Felongco, "Manila Denies Sin's Charges," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Gulf News* (May, 26, 2000; accessed 7 September 2002).

scandal revealed an affiliation between Estrada and large gambling cartels in the Philippines. The Church had always found the Estrada administration's lackadaisical attitude towards gambling offensive, and as early as January 2000 it seemed the Church had some insight into possible connections between gambling illegalities and the Estrada administration. One thing was certain, if a scandal could be created, Cardinal Sin and the Church would go out of their way to link it with the Estrada administration. Indeed, gambling was choice material for the Church. It was often linked with "poverty" and a "lack of direction" within Estrada's government.<sup>37</sup>

The scandal that would develop out of these rumors is pivotal to this study, for it is the final fight between Estrada and the Church. It is the final showdown between two powerful political forces, and one that sees the Church and Estrada come face to face in a political showdown for his legitimacy as president. The scandal itself and how the Church used it to take legitimacy away from Estrada is fascinating on many levels. Not only is it the story of a president's downfall, but it illustrates the Church's power to make news, create controversy, and energize enough of the people's authority to topple a government.

Being two years removed from the scandal, this study has many luxuries of hindsight. However, one question that cannot be answered fully is whether or not the Church had advance knowledge of the impending scandal. But whether it knew or not, the Church behaved in a particularly unsavory manner towards the Estrada administration in the weeks leading up to the story breaking. There were no olive branches passed between the two camps, and the Church did not offer any reconciliatory rhetoric. In fact, it publicly turned up the pressure on Estrada. But these attacks were merely a prelude to the bigger scandal, one that would see the Church launch its final assault on the

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<sup>37</sup>"Philippine Church Leader Slams Arrival of Floating Casino," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Agence France-Presse* (January 3, 2000; accessed 12 November 2002).

presidency and bring to fulfillment its long-expressed desire to remove Estrada from office.

The irony and symmetry of what was about to unfold could not fail to be appreciated. The Church had a hand in driving Estrada from his mayoral office in 1986, yet it had been unsuccessful in keeping him from winning the presidency. Since 1998, it had never failed to publicize every major and minor fault of Estrada and his administration. Those were nitpicking political attacks and did not damage the president's overall popularity among the masses. What the Church needed was something big, something that the majority could not overlook.

The Church needed an issue to serve as the foundation for a new "People Power" revolt to rip legitimacy away from Estrada. In late summer 2000, when Estrada remained as popular as any elected president during the same time, the Church found that issue. It was the political ammunition it needed to topple Estrada. This new scandal would prove to be the missing link required to energize the Church and the public and take away Estrada's mantle of legitimacy.

The story began when one of Estrada's closest friends sought the Church's assistance and guidance in a matter of great importance. This "friend" had information that the president was involved in high-level illegalities, and he felt that the Church would be interested in knowing the specifics. Estrada's "Judas" in this political passion play was a man by the name of Luis "Chavit" Singson. Singson had been both Estrada's friend and political confidant for much of their political lives. Singon, the governor of Ilocos Sur, bolted from his friendship with Estrada after the President seized tax revenue from the treasury of Ilocos Sur. At the time he sought out the Church's help, he was serving as the provincial governor of Illocos Sur. Singson's relationship to Estrada meant he was privy to important personal information. It also meant he had powerful allies, and turning on them meant making powerful enemies.

To protect his life and ensure his credibility, Singson sought out the Catholic Church's assistance, support, and protection before going public with his story of Estrada's massive corruption.<sup>38</sup> Cardinal Sin eagerly listened to the story. Singson's story was not filled with the typical allegations hurled against Estrada. His story was something quite different. As Governor of Illocos Sur, Singson claimed he was forced to collect payoffs and kickbacks for President Estrada, including P130 million from the province's tax proceeds and P414 million from a gambling *jueteng*.<sup>39</sup>

Allegations of illegal gambling fit in well with the picture the Church wanted to paint of Estrada as being incompetent, irresponsible, a liar, a thief, and immoral. Singson's allegations had in effect spilled Estrada's proverbial blood, and the sharks of the Church began to circle. Singson asked for the Church's help and he got it. But it came at a price. The Church would make sure that Singson brought his "crusade" against Estrada to a successful completion.

When the story of Singson's revelations hit the Philippine press, it had an immediate impact on the economy and the value of the Philippine peso. The peso plunged to a low of 47.35 per dollar and stocks hit a two-year low. Singson now feared for his life, and he said as much in his statements to the press: "I had wanted to come out with this for a long time but I could not because the president was my friend . . . It is hard to go against a powerful man--they will file cases against you, they will even try to kill you."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>"Cardinal Sin Supports Singson Efforts on Gambling Allegations Against Estrada," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *AFX News* (October 9, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

<sup>39</sup>"I Was Desperate, I Gave P544m," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Manila Standard* (October 8, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

<sup>40</sup>"Archbishop Urges Estrada to Step Down," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Deseret News* (October 11, 2000; accessed 7 September, 2002).

The way in which Singson made his allegations public by working through the Church appears to build a strong circumstantial case that the Church applied the necessary pressure on the otherwise loyal Singson to turn on Estrada publicly. The behind-the-scenes machinations of Cardinal Sin, other Church officials, and Singson are not fully known, but a deal was certainly struck in which the Church would offer moral support and a modicum of protection for Singson if he was willing to tell his story in full and serve as the chief witness in the moral crusade and Estrada's eventual impeachment.

Singson was certainly not the Church's poster boy for ethics. He had admitted to illegalities of his own, but he was a useful tool in helping turn the public against Estrada. The Church offered support and Singson offered evidence. The partnership, such as it was, seemed to work well. Singson, Cardinal Sin, and the Church were pleased with the results of their initial meetings. Singson himself said, "I left my meeting with Cardinal Sin with a stronger resolve and an inner peace, as he assured me of his prayers and counseled me not to be afraid of telling the truth."<sup>41</sup> In other words, Cardinal Sin had praised Singson for his courage to come forth and give the Church the much-needed evidence to finally eliminate Estrada. In so doing, Singson was offered forgiveness for his own crimes and the protection afforded by the Church to someone who can be of use in its political aims. Singson had given the Church the long-awaited key to bring down Estrada, and it was a chance that the Church could not and would not miss. It was a convergence of luck for both sides. Estrada had long dodged the Church's fire, but this time it would be more difficult.

Some may doubt that the Church had a concerted plan to oust Estrada. But after he was merely implicated in an alleged illegal *jeuteng* by the admitted criminal Singson, the Church went straight to the press and the people to call for Estrada's resignation.

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<sup>41</sup>Ceres P. Doyo and Norman Bordadora, "Singson Dubbed 'Enrile of Erap'" [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (October 10, 2000; accessed 20 November 2002).

Indeed, a mere day after Singson's press conference Cardinal Sin, speaking on behalf the Church, called for Estrada's resignation, saying he had lost "the moral ascendancy to govern." He also called for Estrada to "relinquish his office and turn it over to the constitutional successor."<sup>42</sup>

The Church circumvented the courts and the constitutional process to get a jump on influencing public opinion. Given the tradition of being innocent until proven guilty and the Catholic Church's forgiving nature, it seemed at least a bit hasty to call for the resignation of the nation's highest elected official before a complete hearing of the facts. The media did not fail to notice the early signs of the Church's planned strategy. They said Singson's press conference looked like the early beginning of a "People Power" type uprising. As in 1986, the Church was there and Singson appeared to play a role similar to the one played by Marcos's defense minister, Juan Ponce Enrile.<sup>43</sup>

It is also likely the Church had preliminary contact with Estrada's "successor." She was none other than Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the daughter of former President Diosdado Macapagal, who was defeated in 1985 by Ferdinand Marcos. Arroyo was Estrada's vice president, but she understood the importance of the Church as an ally. And if the time came and the Church called her to power, whether through another "People Power" or other means, she would be ready to serve.

It was not accidental that the same day the Church called for Estrada's resignation Arroyo resigned her cabinet post as secretary of social welfare.<sup>44</sup> She had been advised to do so by Cardinal Sin. Arroyo's action sent a very public message to Estrada that she

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<sup>42</sup>"Philippine Church Leader Calls on President to Step Down," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Agence France-Presse* (October 11, 2000; accessed 7 September 2002).

<sup>43</sup>Doyo and Bordadora, "Singson Dubbed 'Enrile of Erap.'"

<sup>44</sup>Jim Gomez, "Philippine VP Leaves Cabinet Post," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *AP Online* (October 12, 2000; accessed 7 September 2002).



supported the Church's call for his resignation, and that Estrada would not have her support in the months ahead. It is not mere speculation whether or not the Church's actions and those of the vice president were concerted. She admitted as much a few months later.<sup>45</sup> Her admission was not surprising given the close relationship between the Church and Arroyo during the scandal and the continued role the Church had in advising in her administration. It is unlikely that she would have made such bold moves had Cardinal Sin and the Church not assured her full political and moral support in the coming months.

The CBCP on October 13 2001, also called for Estrada's resignation. In the CBCP's statement, it said that Estrada had lost the right to serve as president. CBCP President, Archbishop Orlando Quevedo, upped the ante when he officially endorsed Cardinal Sin's earlier call for the people to unite in the expression of their outrage about the president's alleged illegalities.<sup>46</sup> The Church, acting in its role as *the* mediating variable in the Philippines, had launched an effort to influence public opinion and organize the faithful around the cause of withdrawing legitimacy from Estrada and banishing him from public office.

Other Church members involved in anti-Estrada activities immediately backed the CBCP and the Cardinal's call. "President Estrada has turned the national leadership into a national disaster. He has lost the moral and political basis to run the country and must therefore heed the growing calls for his resignation," said Father Joe Dizon, the spokesman for the September 21 Committee, a Catholic group that gained prominence

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<sup>45</sup>James Hookway, "Arroyo Makes Preparations For Possible Life After Estrada -- - Acceding to Presidency, She Would Confront Conflicts Among Supporters --- 'We Will Go Straight to the International Capital Market,'" [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *The Asian Wall Street Journal* (January 19, 2001; accessed 8 September 2002).

<sup>46</sup>"Catholic Bishops Support Cardinal Sin's Call On Estrada To Resign," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *World News Connection* (October 13, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

for leading nationwide protest actions against corruption, martial law, and the Estrada administration.<sup>47</sup>

The Church moved quickly to solidify its political support. Part of this effort was the unification of disparate factions that acted independently against Estrada. This required the Church to form alliances that normally would not have been considered. For example, it bucked its traditional wariness of the military and joined with the 2,000-strong *Rebolusyonaryong Alyansang Makabayan* (RAM), a group of ex-military rebels who backed Corazon Aquino's rise to power. They also joined with the Guardians, a group composed of 800,000 reserve and active military soldiers, as well as the Young Officers Union and other legitimate groups in the Armed Forces to call for Estrada's resignation.<sup>48</sup>

As special-interest support was growing and uniting with the Church's effort, the public response was expected to follow. But the public did not immediately respond favorably to the Church's call for Estrada's resignation. Perhaps it was scandal fatigue or the belief that this was another in a long line of accusations hurled by the Church at Estrada. Whatever the reason, in the early days of the scandal public opinion polls revealed that the masses were unmoved by the situation. *Pulse Asia* found in its poll taken on October 16 that 53 percent of Manila residents wanted Estrada to hold on and stay in office.<sup>49</sup> It was a solid majority unmoved by Cardinal Sin's call.

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<sup>47</sup>Jennee Grace, U. Rubrico, and Jacquelin P. Conclara, "Cardinal Sin Airs Call for Estrada to Resign," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Business World* (October 12, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

<sup>48</sup>"Sin, RAM, NGOs Join 30 Lawmakers," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Manila Standard* (October 11, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

<sup>49</sup>"Survey favoring Erap Shows Nation's Pulse," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Manila Standard* (October 16, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

But the Church was not alone in this fight, and it was confident that enough of the population would come around to its way of thinking when needed to bring down Estrada. The Church's call for resignation was meant to move events on several fronts, not simply to cause an instant and measurable affect in the polls. Public opinion was certainly important, but the Church's action aimed to pressure political leaders as well. The public was known to respond sluggishly, but the politicians who feared and respected the Church's voice responded more quickly. Just days after Sin's announcement, thirty members of the Philippine House of Representatives signed a resolution "endorsing the verified complaint for impeachment."<sup>50</sup> Along with Arroyo's resignation, it was the first real step towards pulling legitimacy from Estrada.

Estrada was clearly perturbed by the Church's unusual quickness to judge him and his administration. He immediately issued statements calling the Church's stance "unfair" and rejected any call for resignation or "snap elections" meant to unseat him.<sup>51</sup> In a televised statement, Estrada said, "It is my conviction that the call for my impeachment or resignation is unfair as it is hasty."<sup>52</sup> In other television interviews, he added that he could not understand why the cardinal prejudged him when he had not heard his side.<sup>53</sup> In private, Estrada surely knew what was at stake. He had been targeted by the Church before and survived, but this time things were different.

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<sup>50</sup>Jason Gutierrez, "Philippines' Estrada Rejects Quit calls Over Bribe Scandal," *Agence France-Presse* (October 11, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

<sup>51</sup>"Philippines Estrada Rejects Church Call For Resignation," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Dow Jones International News* (October 11, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

<sup>52</sup>"I'm innocent and I'll Survive This Crisis – Erap," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Manila Standard* (October 12, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

<sup>53</sup>Armand N. Nocum and Juliet L. Javellan, "Estrada says Declaring State of Emergency 'Farthest Thing from his Mind'," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *World News Connection* (October 14, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

At the outset, Estrada rejected the Church's calls and vowed he would never resign. He then tried to divert attention away from his scandal by privatizing gambling activities once overseen by the government. The hope was that this move would show that no one in government would ever gain from gambling. It also reaffirmed his commitment to the masses that had so strongly supported him during his movie career and political life. He also tried to contrast the argument for his impeachment with what he called his continued fight for the oppressed and the poor. Like America's Bill Clinton, Estrada and his advisors sought to turn the people's attention away from scandal and back to a domestic agenda. A Social Weather Station poll on November 6, 2001, reported that 44 percent of Filipinos did not want Estrada to resign and only 29 percent did.<sup>54</sup>

Estrada categorically denied Singson's charges and lashed out at the Church and Cardinal Sin. Estrada said he would not "accommodate" Cardinal Sin's wishes because his pact was with "the masses" and not with the Catholic Church.<sup>55</sup> He was willing to fight for his job and for his legitimate mandate. Indeed, the battle ahead was one that would test the strength of the legitimacy model on every level. The question was, how strong would Estrada's mandate be when the authority gained from the law, his charismatic appeal, and his utility to the people was filtered through the Catholic Church, which now expanded its role and authority as the mediating force to determine Estrada's fitness as president? This battle was fought using the constitution, in the legislature, and over the support of the *masa*.<sup>56</sup>

The Church began where its power base was the strongest and most effective, and soon the "parliament of the streets" began to assemble at mass rallies across Manila and

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<sup>54</sup>Rigoberto Tiglao, "Fool's Polls," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (December 8, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

<sup>55</sup>"'I'm sorry it had to come to this,'" [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Manila Standard* (October 14, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

<sup>56</sup>*Masa* is the colloquial term used by Estrada to describe the masses.

the Philippines. The Church realized, as it had since the early days of Marco's martial law, that in order to push its agenda it needed the people's support. The first call to action came on October 17, 2000. In attendance at this small rally were Cardinal Sin, former President Aquino, Vice President Arroyo, and close to 2,000 supporters. It was a small rally, but it was a beginning. At this first rally, Sin openly prayed that Estrada would do the "heroic" thing and resign, while Arroyo spoke to the crowd about her recent resignation from the cabinet. She appealed to the masses in her way by saying that her own resignation from Estrada's cabinet allowed her to join Cardinal Sin, Aquino, and the "cabinet of the people" to oppose Estrada's presidency.<sup>57</sup>

When she was asked by a reporter about the possibility of an another EDSA revolution along the lines of the first People Power, she replied, "We do not know yet where all these will lead to because only God can decide where we should go. What is important is that we are following His orders. We are praying to know what He wants us to do."<sup>58</sup> In matters of politics, Cardinal Sin and his bishops were often the only ones who were given credit for knowing God's orders. Realizing as much, Arroyo verified in this same interview that her actions had the authorization of Cardinal Sin and the Church.

A day later, 6,000 clergy, business leaders, and members of various political groups held a rally in Makati, Manila's financial district, to demand the president's resignation.<sup>59</sup> The rally came hours after forty-one members of the House of Representatives filed an impeachment motion against Estrada. At a rally a few days later,

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<sup>57</sup>"Anti-Estrada Forces Hold Mass Rally in Manila," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Xinhua* (October 17, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

<sup>58</sup>"Philippine VP Arroyo Discusses Role in Unifying Opposition," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *World News Connection* (October 17, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

<sup>59</sup>Arturo Bariuad, "Thousands Protest Against Estrada," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *The Straits Times* (October 18, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

the number was 10,000.<sup>60</sup> Things were moving rapidly in the Church's favor. Even the nation's Muslim minority weighed in, branding Estrada as an "evildoer" unfit to govern.<sup>61</sup> These street protests were all leading up to a larger rally planned and organized by the Church for November 4, 2000.

The rally being planned was significant on many fronts. It was scheduled to take place on Church property, but not just any property. It was to take place at the EDSA shrine. Holding a rally at a shrine that had been declared holy ground and was official Church property brought with it political and spiritual connotations. Any anti-Estrada rally held at EDSA was sure to send a powerful message to Estrada and his allies that the Church meant business and was not going to let this issue die without seeing his resignation.

In order to gather the number of supporters required to make this happen, the Church had to use its tried and true public relations methods. Calls went out from their print and broadcast media as well as in pastoral letters from the pulpit. The letters were issued to all parishes, Catholic schools, religious communities, and institutions and called each member to mobilize in full force for the rally.<sup>62</sup> Father Joe Dizon of the Estrada Resign Movement (Resign), urged the public to heed Cardinal Sin's pastoral letters and the Church's call to rally, saying this was "both a moral obligation and a patriotic duty."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>"Pressure Rising on Philippine Chief," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Deseret News* (October 10, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

<sup>61</sup>Dirk Beveridge, "Filipinos Blast Estrada; Vice President Says Resignation Only Way Out," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Associated Press Newswires* (October 25, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>62</sup>Normal Bordadora and Yolanda Fuertes, "Cardinal Sin Justifies Acceptance of Donation From Manila's Gambling Firm," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *World News Connection* (October 25, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

<sup>63</sup>Christine Avendano and Norman Bordadora, "Velarde Challenged: Church, or Erap?," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (November 3, 2000; accessed 8 September, 2002).

Dizon went further to vent his frustration over Estrada, stating, "Each day that he clings to power, Estrada gives the people more reasons for his resignation or ouster. What is worse is that he and his henchmen are shamelessly pointing at the people's protests as the cause of the economic and political crisis when he is the problem."<sup>64</sup>

Estrada described the proposed rally and the Church's other actions as "assaults" against the republic. Fearing that he would lose support from key segments of the government the Estrada administration pressured the military not to support the Church or any other group that might try to oust him. Defense Chief Orlando Mercado, who was Estrada's campaign manager during the 1998 elections, was dispatched to meet with the head of the armed forces, General Angelo Reyes, and new Philippine Army commander Brigadier-General Diomedio Villanueva to caution both men to remain neutral and not engage in "partisan politics."<sup>65</sup> Estrada's fears were real, because he knew the Church's power, especially if it could gain the momentum of past EDSA rallies.

Some of Estrada's supporters were more vocal and less gracious in their anger at the Church's call for his resignation. Just a few days before the Church's rally, a group of several hundred rallied outside Villa San Miguel, the home of Cardinal Sin, and pelted his residence with dead fish and tomatoes.<sup>66</sup> The group was quickly arrested and charged with defacing the cardinal's property, and Estrada distanced himself from the attack. He also called for no further harassment of Cardinal Sin. However, it is unlikely that such actions would have happened without at least tacit approval from Estrada.

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Raissa Robles and Frank Longid, "Estrada Seeks Military Backing," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *South China Morning Post* (October 23, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>66</sup>"House of Sin Pelted With Tomatoes, Fish," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Manila Standard* (October 28, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

Through it all, Singson continued to meet with Cardinal Sin and Church officials. Each time it seemed he had new revelations for the priests. Speaking at Sin's Villa, Singson opened up new public accusations of philandering against Estrada. He accused the president of spending the people's money on "beautiful ladies."<sup>67</sup> Estrada's philandering was no secret, but the possibility that he had used the poor's hard-earned money to finance his liaisons was something altogether different. To have a mistress was one thing, but to keep her on the backs of the poor was quite another.

The Church used this and the previous accusations of gambling illegalities to call for the activation of Article VII, Section eleven of the 1987 Constitution to remove Estrada from office.<sup>68</sup> It was yet another avenue the Church could use to apply pressure on Estrada. Leading law professionals agreed with the Church's use of the law. The College of Law Student Council and the Legal Advocacy Group of the University of Saint La Salle were leading the charge when they issued a joint statement calling for Estrada's resignation or impeachment for allegedly violating the constitution and betraying the public trust.<sup>69</sup> They had attacked his character and his utility and every day they were rallying popular opinion to their cause, but Estrada remained unmoved.

With the Church's help, Vice-President Arroyo joined and led a newly formed United Opposition, which was an alliance of opposition parties committed to participation in mass actions held by other anti-Estrada forces. Other high-profile politicians, such as *Opus Dei's* own Senator Francisco Tatad, continued to pressure

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<sup>67</sup>"Estrada 'Paid Millions for Services of Women'," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *The Straits Times* (October 28, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

<sup>68</sup>Section 11 reads, "Whenever the President transmits to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives his written declaration that he is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, and until he transmits to them a written declaration to the contrary, such powers and duties shall be discharged by the Vice President as Acting."

<sup>69</sup>Avendano and Bordadora, "Velarde Challenged: Church, or Erap?"



Estrada. Tatad asked Estrada to resign and came up with a power-sharing scheme that would include Arroyo and a coalition cabinet to rule the country in the interim.<sup>70</sup> Estrada refused to consider it.

The rallies, the defections of Arroyo and Tatad, and the dozens of legislators calling for Estrada's impeachment led political analyst Alex Magno to describe Estrada as "damaged goods" and write in the *Christian Science Monitor* that Estrada's attempts to stay in power could lead to the destruction of the Philippine economy.<sup>71</sup> Former President Cory Aquino agreed with this analysis. Speaking at the Catholic Ateneo de Manila University before a thousand delegates from the *Kongreso ng Mamamayang Pilipino* (Kompil), one of the largest anti-Estrada coalition groups in the Philippines, Aquino said, "For every day that he holds on to office, the peso drops in value, more investments retreat, more factories and businesses shut down, more workers lose their jobs, and more families go hungry."<sup>72</sup> Estrada had lost the people's confidence, she claimed, "because [he] seems to have lost any sense of accountability." It appeared that Estrada was willing to take the chance and he was unmoved by criticisms from all sectors. He still believed he had a mandate from the people to stay in office, to fight the charges, and to finish his term.

The Church's rally went on as planned on November 4, 2000. Amazingly, some in the mainstream Philippine press seemed to support and endorse it. In particular, the

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<sup>70</sup>"Philippines: Estrada Rejects Proposal to Share Power with Opposition," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *BBC Monitoring Source: GMA 7 television, Quezon City, in Tagalog 1000 gmt* (October 27, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>71</sup>Abby Tan, "Heat's on Philippine President," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Christian Science Monitor* (October 29, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

<sup>72</sup> Dona Pazzibugan and Alcuin Papa, "Fight Between Good, Evil," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (October 30, 2000; accessed 20 November 2002).

*Philippine Daily Inquirer* printed an exhaustive list of the assembly points.<sup>73</sup> Anyone wishing to attend the rally in Manila or elsewhere in the Philippines could have found out just when, where, why, and how to do it by simply reading this supposedly unbiased newspaper.

The four-hour rally was dubbed *Ipagdasal ang bayan, bantayan ang katotohanan* (Pray for the country, safeguard the truth) and was described in the papers as being marked both by both religious activities and political speeches.<sup>74</sup> Most of the speeches focused on getting rid of Estrada. More than 100 thousand people gathered at EDSA that day and Cardinal Sin used the podium to launch another verbal jibe at Estrada: "We are here to pray for the President. Resignation from the presidency will be good for his soul . . . The presidency is not good for you because you are not capable to run this country."<sup>75</sup> He went further, telling Estrada to "shake the dust from your feet and leave . . . Mr. President, the poor elected you because you said you were for the poor. Can you now tell them that you lived a simple life as a sign of your concern for them?"<sup>76</sup>

Sin claimed that Estrada's resignation was both "constitutional and biblical."<sup>77</sup> At EDSA, the Church covered all bases in its attack on Estrada. Having locked up "God's" opinion, it now proclaimed to have a legal standard as well. After the cardinal finished speaking, Cory Aquino took the stage and voiced her unity with the Church. In her

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<sup>73</sup>Norman Bordadora, "100,000 Expected at EDSA Rally today," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (November 4, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>74</sup>Norman Bordadora, Rocky Nazareno, and Juliet Javellana, "Take Final Bow Now'," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (November 5, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

<sup>75</sup>Frank Longid, "80,000 tell Estrada to Quit," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *South China Morning Post* (November 5, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

<sup>76</sup>Bordadora, Nazareno, and Javellana, "Take Final Bow Now'."

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*

speech, she praised the Church and Cardinal Sin, recognizing the Church's role as the voice of conscience in Philippine politics and change when necessary.

Cardinal Sin was the gatekeeper and the key master, and the Church was the arbiter of legitimacy and authority in Philippine politics. Those were powers vested to them by the people themselves. Aquino said, "In a nation of many voices, [Sin's] has stood out because he has always been able to galvanize the flock to action. Without him, the democracy born out of the EDSA People Power Revolution would not have been possible. And because of him, we are proudly united today."<sup>78</sup> Aquino's words were not lost on the thousands gathered, nor were they lost on the woman who the Church wanted to be Estrada's replacement, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Arroyo looked upon Cardinal Sin and the Church with great deference. If she were to be president it would be the Church, working through the people, that would give her that opportunity. It would be the Church that would ensure she had a legitimate mandate to rule the country. Could there be any doubt that she would also defer to the Church once she was president? That question was partially answered when reporters covering the EDSA rally asked Arroyo about how she would handle a possible resignation deal with Estrada. Arroyo's answer intimated that she did not have the power or authority to handle such things.

It was an astonishing admission, for if the duly elected vice president did not have the power to handle the president's resignation, then just who did? Arroyo's answer revealed the solution. Arroyo's answer to this question was stark. She said that anyone who wanted to negotiate for Estrada's exit should go to Cardinal Sin. "I think [Sin and Aquino] are the best persons who can reflect a consensus . . . [Interested parties] should

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<sup>78</sup>"The Cardinal," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (November 16, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).

approach them."<sup>79</sup> In some ways, her short answer was a brief window into the soul of Philippine politics and into the future of her administration.

Estrada's initial reaction to the November 4 rally was simple: "No amount of rallies can make me resign."<sup>80</sup> He was prepared for a political battle that would work to his favor if the impeachment proceedings made their way to the Philippine Senate, where his allies were sure to help him. Cardinal Sin's response was equally blunt: "If he will not step down, the situation could worsen and he may have to step down with great embarrassment, humiliation and ignominy."<sup>81</sup> It appeared that neither side was going to budge. Both camps continued their preparations for a political clash.

The same day as the Church's rally, Estrada had to deal with more bad news. Manuel Villar, the speaker of the Philippine House of Representatives and one of Estrada's strongest allies, left the Estrada camp and took more congressmen with him. Villar's move effectively destroyed Estrada's majority in the House of Representatives.<sup>82</sup> Senate President Franklin Drilon also resigned from Estrada's ruling *Lapian ng Masang Pilipino* (LAMP) Party and threw his support behind efforts to remove Estrada from office.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>Donna S. Cueto and Christine Avendano, "Estrada: Why Will I Agree to Graceful Exit?" [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (November 11, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

<sup>80</sup>Jim Gomez, "Filipinos Rally Against Estrada," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *AP Online* (November 4, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup>Richard Lloyd Parry, "Estrada Hanging on to Power After Allies Jump Ship," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *The Independent* (November 4, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

<sup>83</sup>Rajiv Handrasekaran, "Impeachment Seems Likely in Philippines," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *The Washington Post* (November 4, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

Opposition was mounting against Estrada day by day, and his choices were becoming limited. If he hoped to counter the Church's efforts successfully, he would need to prove to the Church and to the public that he still enjoyed a popular mandate from the masses. Estrada had more than rhetoric to back up his claims of legitimacy, because not only had he won a free and fair election, but public opinion still favored his staying in office. Moreover, he claimed he had the support of the United States, which he said advised him to "stick it out" through the constitutional process amid the calls for his resignation. His last claim is subject to scrutiny since the official United States position was to stay out of Philippine domestic affairs.<sup>84</sup>

Estrada was also willing and able to do something, and other politicians could not use his charismatic appeal to call for the people's support. He still enjoyed the support of the *Inglisia ni Cristo* and *El Shaddai*, each with millions of their own very loyal flocks ready in support. He also had legions of poor Filipinos who viewed him as a folk hero. He had used his own rally to counter the Church's attempts at "People Power" over the Concord issue.

So while he lashed out at business interests and the Church for what he called a "destabilization campaign" against his administration, Estrada was making his own plans for a counter-rally to show the world the support he enjoyed among the masses.<sup>85</sup>

Estrada's rally took place a mere seven days after the November 4 rally organized by the Church. His call for support from the masses resulted in more than a million people gathering in Manila for a government-organized "prayer rally." How ironic that in his darkest hour, when he was criticizing the Church for its prayer rallies, he allowed his

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<sup>84</sup>Leotes Marie Lugo, and Manolette C. Payumo, "Estrada on the Attack, Blames Business and Other Groups for Crisis," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *BusinessWorld* (November 10, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*

government to officially sponsor one of its own. To ensure massive numbers, Estrada declared that November 11, 2000, was a non-working holiday and reports said that some government agencies “asked” or pressured their employees to attend.<sup>86</sup>

At the rally, Estrada sounded more like a parish priest than a beleaguered president. In front of the multitude that had gathered, he pleaded to God for his administration’s salvation: “Almighty God, we offer you everything, my presidency, my whole being, our identity as people, our hearts and minds because all of these came from you. We also pray for everyone to be enlightened so all our actions will be for the good of all, especially our economy.” Estrada further asked God to “help us move forward our economy for the good of our poor and small countrymen.”<sup>87</sup>

Estrada’s rally caused a bit of concern inside the anti-Estrada coalition. Senator Ramon Magsaysay Jr. admitted that the opposition and the Catholic Church appeared to be losing, at least temporarily, to Estrada in the battle to win the hearts and minds of the poor in supporting calls for his resignation. Magsaysay and others met with Mosignor Socrates Villegas, rector of the ESDSA Shrine and Cardinal Sin’s spokesman, and other Catholic priests to find ways to reach out to the common people.<sup>88</sup> They certainly needed a plan to counter Estrada’s rally, and they needed to do something quickly or they risked losing their early momentum.

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<sup>86</sup>Mynardo Macaraign, “More than a Million Filipinos Gather for Estrada ‘prayer ally,’” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Agence France-Presse* (November 11, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>87</sup>Dario Agnorte, “Estrada Seeks Divine Forgiveness and Guidance,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Kyodo News* (November 11, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>88</sup>Armand N. Nocum and Cristina Arzadon, “El Shaddai, INC to Lead Erap Rally,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (November 8, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).

It did not take long for the Church to counter Estrada's moves. On November 14, 2000, the Church called for a nationwide "people's strike." This strike was, according to the Church, a way for the average Filipino to "express their outrage at the immorality in public office."<sup>89</sup> It was also a chance to take the spotlight and media coverage off of Estrada's success. Indeed, the success of Estrada's rally led many political observers to conclude that the Church would not have enough support or political will to stage a second People Power revolt to remove him from office.

The experts were wrong. The Church had every intention of pushing forward with efforts to de-legitimize Estrada through the power emanating from the masses. And anyone who doubted its political will needed only to refer to the words of Father Reyes, who summed up the Church's plan of action: "Congress will impeach him, the united opposition will press for his resignation, and if these fail, the Filipino people will be forced to oust him."<sup>90</sup> People Power was definitely in the works.

Estrada's rally would be the high point of his counter-offensive. He would never again be able to mount the kind of public support necessary to counter the Church's opposition. After November 11, his allies were left throwing mere political spears at an ironclad Church. Among the petty things his allies attempted was filing sedition complaints against Cardinal Sin, Corazon Aquino, Fidel Ramos, and even Vice President Arroyo. Ironically, lawyers hired by the Marcos family filed the complaints, which were soon dismissed by the Quezon City prosecutor's office.<sup>91</sup> Arroyo scoffed at the charges

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<sup>89</sup>"Sin Supports Nationwide People's Strike Today," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (November 14, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>90</sup> Arturo Bariuad, "Estrada Ousted By People Power II," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *The Straits Times* (November 14, 2000; accessed 8 September 2002).

<sup>91</sup> Andrea Trinidad-Echavez, "Philippines: Aquino, Cardinal Sin Seek Dismissal of Sedition Complaint," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Inquirer News Service* (November 17, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).

and believed they were merely attempts to "undermine" her credibility.<sup>92</sup> They were also meant to distract and harass Church leadership.

Earlier, Estrada had distanced himself from just these sort of personal attacks on Cardinal Sin. He then said that "being the Archbishop of Manila and a prince of the Catholic Church, of which I am a member, he deserves honor and respect from everyone, including those who do not agree with him on some things."<sup>93</sup> But now all bets were off, and this was a fight for his political life. He would try any legal means he could muster to oppose the Church.

Events were rapidly deteriorating in the Philippines as Estrada's impeachment moved forward. By early December, the peso had continued its slide against the dollar and tensions had mounted. Any hope that Estrada had to repair the economy by keeping protests off the streets would be ineffective. The Church had no intentions of calling off its protests. Indeed, other rallies were already in the works, including a *Pananalangin ng Bayan Para sa Katotohanan* (Nation's Prayer for Truth) followed by a "Jericho March."

Cardinal Sin and other Church officials planned to lead thousands of anti-Estrada protestors around the Philippine Senate building on December 7, 2000, the first day of Estrada's impeachment trial.<sup>94</sup> The walls were not going to "come crumbling down," but it was hoped that those inside would feel the pressure to convict Estrada. The circling of the Senate was also meant to draw media attention to the impeachment and apply pressure to those senators who remained loyal to Estrada. During the march, a "torch for

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<sup>92</sup>Christine O. Avendano and Cathy C. Yamsuan, "Gloria Blames Palace for Move to Impeach Her," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (November 16, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>93</sup>"Philippine Leader Denounces Attack on Home of Cardinal," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Agence France-Presse* (November 1, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>94</sup>"Philippines: Protesters to Stage 'Jericho march' at Senate 7th December," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *BBC Monitoring Source: 'Philippine Daily Inquirer' web site* (December 3, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).



truth" was to be passed Olympic-style by opposition leaders, including former presidents Corazon Aquino and Fidel Ramos and Vice President Gloria Arroyo.<sup>95</sup> The "Jericho March" was part of a larger nationwide Church effort that included as many as seventy-seven rallies held at all the dioceses throughout the Philippines.

In each of these efforts, the Church acted more like an opposition political party than a religious institution, broadcasting its calls for the faithful to attend on its own radio stations, through pastoral letters, and even placing full-page advertisements in the nation's newspapers. The ads mixed a dose of prayer with a repeated call for Estrada to step down. In one advertisement Cardinal Sin wrote, "We must pray very hard for the president. It is only in the light of the spirit of love for God and country that he will be able to see the value of resignation."<sup>96</sup> The Church even made alternative plans for those Filipinos who may not have been able to attend the rallies. This included those who had to stay at home, in offices, factories, or schools. The Church urged them to switch off their lights to observe five minutes of darkness as a symbolic act that would mean a demand for Estrada's resignation.<sup>97</sup>

At the start of the impeachment trial the big question was not "if" the Church would inject itself in the process but "how" it would do so. The answers would come quickly. The day the impeachment trial began, Church officials held a special Mass for senators and their staff and while this special mass was labeled "impartial," the faithful

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<sup>95</sup>"Thousands Gather Ahead of Philippine Leader's Corruption Trial," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Agence France-Presse* (December 7, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>96</sup>P. Parameswaran, "Philippine Church's Hatchet Man Sin Keeps Crossing Swords with Presidents," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Agence France-Presse* (December 6, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>97</sup>"5 Minutes of Darkness' Planned," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (December 6, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).

were nonetheless urged to attend an anti-Estrada prayer rally being convened by Cardinal Sin.<sup>98</sup>

After they prayer the prosecutors wasted little time in opening their attack on Estrada. They labeled him a “thief” and accused his administration of being tainted by money, mansions and mistresses. One of the eleven prosecutors, Congressman Joker Arroyo, compared Estrada to the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, saying, “I wonder [which one] is the bigger crook?” Arroyo would later produce a check for \$3 million with a signature that he said was a mirror copy of the presidential signature on Philippine bank notes. He accused Estrada of having hidden assets in numerous bank accounts under a false name.<sup>99</sup>

Upon hearing the allegations coming out of the impeachment trial, Church officials repeated their demand that Estrada quit immediately. Sin believed that only a quick resignation would spare the Philippines from a long, divisive trial.<sup>100</sup> So fervent was the belief in Estrada’s guilt and unfitness as president that protesters who were part of the “Jericho March” and other rallies throughout the nation vowed that they would continue to protest regardless of the verdict.<sup>101</sup> It was only the first day, and things certainly did not bode well for Estrada.

The “Jericho March” itself ran into a bit of trouble, because Estrada still had the loyalty of Manila’s police force. He had them block the estimated 80,000 participants from reaching the Senate building. Police installed barricades roughly one kilometer from the building. “Jericho” marchers, a diverse group organized by the Church, included

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<sup>98</sup>Craig Skehan, “Estrada Foes And Allies Seek God’s Help,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *The Age* (December 7, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup>Dirk Beveridge, “President Estrada’s Trial Starts,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *AP Online* (December 7, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).

members of the *Kongreso ng Mamamayang Pilipino* (Kompil) II, the Makati Business Club, Trade Union Congress of the Philippines, *Kilusang Mayo Uno*, *Bagong Alyansang Makabayan* and the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines. The marchers were only able to push up to the front gate of the Senate. This was not what they had planned, but it was close enough for their voices to be heard.<sup>102</sup>

The loudest voice at the rally was Cardinal Sin's. He urged Estrada to be true to his bravado and personally answer "one by one" all of the charges lodged against him. Sin demanded that Estrada "be brave and face the truth." He said, "I hope that you personally answer the questions of our senators, not through your lawyers. We want the truth from your lips personally, not by proxy . . . Mr. President, do not be afraid to resign."<sup>103</sup>

Cardinal Sin went further, emphasizing the president's need to realize the *truth* of his situation, at least the truth as seen through the eyes of the Church, and compared Estrada unfavorably to another whom the Church had helped depose. He said, "I say to the President, do not be afraid of the truth . . . the truth is, you have lost your moral ascendancy to govern us. Face the truth and be courageous . . . We were there to face Marcos. But Mr. Estrada is worse than Marcos because he does not understand history."<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup>Christine Herrera, "Cops Block Jericho Marchers on Pimentel Order," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (December 8, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>103</sup>Craig Skehan, "Police And Priests On Impeachment Duty," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Sydney Morning Herald* (December 7, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>104</sup>Norman Bordadora, "Sin tells Estrada: We Want the truth From Your Lips," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (December 8, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).

The events of December 7, 2000, like those of previous months, foreshadowed a larger problem for Estrada and his allies. They worried, and rightly so, that each passing day as the people took to the streets the politicians themselves would be placed under tremendous pressure to produce an outcome that the Church would favor. And the Church favored only one outcome—conviction.<sup>105</sup>

The protests in the streets were also indicative of another problem that politicians, the police, and the military had to consider. Even if Estrada survived the trial, his position might be made untenable by mass opposition.<sup>106</sup> Just as it had done to Marcos, Ramos, and Estrada himself over the Concord fiasco, the Church was slowly chipping away at his legitimacy by marshalling its political clout and focusing it on a single point in the future--a People Power revolution with Estrada as the target.

At the height of the trial, Estrada seemed in a hopeless position. Just a few weeks earlier Estrada had the masses behind him, yet the masses were not taking to the streets every day begging him to stay. Indeed, it was the Church that was fielding thousands in the streets demanding he resign. Estrada might have wondered what good was it to have a million supporters if none were willing to stand by his side when he needed them most.

As the impeachment trial adjourned for the Christmas holiday, both sides had time to regroup and strategize. The Church continued to push its agenda every Sunday during Mass. But what started out as peaceful combativeness between the Church and State erupted into violence on December 30, 2000. Just a few days before the trial was to resume, five synchronized bomb attacks killed twenty-two people and injured more than 120 people in Manila. Police accused Muslim rebels in the attacks, yet many in Manila

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<sup>105</sup>Craig Skehan, "Police And Priests On Impeachment Duty."

<sup>106</sup>John Aglionby, "Philippines President Tried for Corruption: Senate Impeachment Hearing Told of Mansions, Mistresses and Kickbacks," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *The Guardian* (December 8, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).

feared the bombs were linked to the trial. There was the possibility that Estrada supporters were trying to instill fear in the hearts of would-be protestors.

Whatever the case was in reality, the escalation of violence during the height of the impeachment trial concerned many, including Cardinal Sin, who confessed in the wake of the bombings to feelings of “hopelessness” over the national situation. He used this opportunity to accuse the Estrada government of not only failing to set a high moral standard for the country, but also failing to protect its citizens from terrorist attacks and heinous crimes.<sup>107</sup>

Cardinal Sin, working within the Church’s framework, used this opportunity to question the veracity of any actions the Estrada administration might take to calm fears. He said in a public statement that, “If the President cannot give us an example of moral leadership, if the police and the military cannot protect innocent citizens from terrorist attacks in the middle of the city, if our Cabinet secretaries cannot appreciate overwhelming evidence that the President is corrupt and they continue to support him, where else can we turn? This government has not only lost its moral ascendancy to govern. It seems like this government cannot even give us private citizens the peace and order that public servants owe the citizenry.”<sup>108</sup>

The bombings did not deter the Church. Indeed, work never stopped and it never took its eye off of the impeachment proceedings. The bombings may have caused fear, but there was a greater concern for the safety of Church protestors. Many felt that real danger lay in the possibility of Church-sponsored demonstrations being counter-attacked by pro-Estrada forces, triggering an “Indonesia scenario” of street fighting, violence, and killings. The media wrote that such an orgy of civil violence could only be prevented by

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<sup>107</sup>Norman Bordadora, “Sin Admits to Feeling 'hopeless' Over Crises,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (January 6, 2002; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>108</sup>Ibid.

the Church. They argued that the Church was the only organization with the power to stabilize the volatile situation and calm fears of a doomsday post-acquittal scenario.<sup>109</sup>

The potential for violence was certainly there. The Church realized this and so did the military. Both also recognized that by working together, they could mitigate the possibility of violence. The *Manila Standard* reported that a group of ex-generals, including National Security Council Adviser Joe Almonte and former ambassador and ex-General Fortunato Abat, met with Cardinal Sin at his home to discuss the prospects after an acquittal or conviction. The *Standard* claimed that this group of ex-generals had support from active members of the armed forces, and that during their visit they assured Sin that in case of a Senate acquittal, elements of the military were ready to ensure that Church protests were not victimized by reactionary pro-Estrada violence.

The report seemed to coincide with ongoing rumors that the same group had promised "military intervention" on the Church's side in case of acquittal.<sup>110</sup> This is an important point, because here the Church was given what amounts to official assurance that the military would not intervene in its activities. It would not crack down on an EDSA II should it happen, and what is more, it would protect the Church's flock if Estrada attempted to crush the new revolution against him. It was a win-win situation for the Church.

The military's backing of the Church further emboldened Cardinal Sin. Early in January 2001, he publicly implied that something larger than the previous street protests was in the works, and he hinted that a People Power-style revolt could take place if there was an acquittal. One of the cardinal's spokesmen, Father Joselito Jopson, said the Church would first study any verdict, and if there were indications that the acquittal was

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<sup>109</sup>"Post-acquittal Scenario: What's Church Role?" [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Manila Standard* (January 4, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>110</sup>"Military Intervention After Senate Trial?" [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Manila Standard* (January 8, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

“premised on deceit and manipulations, there would be no acceptance on [the Church’s] part.”<sup>111</sup>

The “no acceptance” clause found in the Church’s public statements was chilling. Sin and his Church were ready to call upon parishioners to join “non-violent” mass actions “to express . . . indignation” over Estrada’s continued refusal to step down. The cardinal assured the faithful that their actions were legal and moral, and furthermore it was their “Christian duty to stand up for what is right and moral,” which meant joining the Church’s effort to oust Estrada.<sup>112</sup>

Cardinal Sin sent solidarity messages urging other anti-Estrada groups, such as those that made up *Kompil*, to maintain the pressure, saying in his message that now was “not time to be passive and indifferent, not the time to just simply wait.”<sup>113</sup> The need to apply pressure on the impeachment court was also of prime importance for the Church, because like Vice President Arroyo and members of KOMPIL, it feared that if left on its own conscience the Senate could be easily bribed or otherwise swayed by the presidency’s power and influence. Father Reyes stated that the Catholic Church was prepared to “march in thousands and even in millions” should the impeachment court not rule as the Church hoped.<sup>114</sup> The Church felt confident that it could mobilize the public and be protected against counter-rebellions led by Estrada’s backers.

Arroyo took a leading role in urging the anti-Estrada groups to continue the fight and warned that they all had “cause for concern” because those who “seek to preserve the

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<sup>111</sup>“In Case of Acquittal, What Next?” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Manila Standard* (January 13, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>112</sup>Gerald G. Lacuarta, Volt Contreras, and Christine Avendano, “Sin: Keep Up Good Fight,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (January 15, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup>*Ibid.*

spoils of power" were moving to "prevent the truth from coming out."<sup>115</sup> The leadership of KOMPIL agreed, saying it would be no less than "treason" for the Senate to clear Estrada of all the charges amid what they called the overwhelming evidence against him.<sup>116</sup> "We overthrew a ruthless dictator. We will oust a criminal President," KOMPIL declared in a statement.<sup>117</sup>

Estrada's allies scoffed at the Church's action. In a telephone interview with *Business World*, acting Press Secretary Michael F. Toledo spoke of Estrada's belief that the public was well aware that the situation in 1986 was much different than the current case against the president. He said, therefore, that any "People Power" phenomenon could not be replicated and would "not get the support of the Filipino people."<sup>118</sup>

The confidence Estrada's team expressed was founded on a shaky premise. They either could not or wished not to see the power and influence the Church still wielded. And why they ignored the reality of the situation is very puzzling. With the exception of his election in 1998, the Church had prevented Estrada from changing the constitution and forced his hand in East Timor and in other issues. Estrada's camp should have realized that the impeachment process had become the most important political issue for the Church. Only the performance of the sacraments took precedence over getting rid of Joseph Estrada in the year 2001.

The statements about the unlikelihood of an EDSA II were made by the administration on January 15, and a day later the validity of these statements was put to

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<sup>115</sup>Lacuarta, Contreras, and Avendano, "Sin: Keep Up Good Fight."

<sup>116</sup>"Philippines Warns Against Protest if Estrada Acquitted," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Deutsche Presse-Agentur* (January 15, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>117</sup>Lacuarta, Contreras, and Avendano, "Sin: Keep Up Good Fight."

<sup>118</sup>Leotes Marie T. Lugo and Jennee Grace U. Rubrico, "1986 EDSA Revolt Cannot be Replicated, Says Palace," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *BusinessWorld* (January 15, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).



the test. On January 16, 2001, events transpired that the Church, Arroyo, and KOMPIL feared but expected. The impeachment trial was effectively halted when the Senate voted by a margin of one to keep sealed a “second envelope” of vital evidence. With that one vote, the opposition was dealt a major defeat. The Church was now sure that the trial was as sham, because without all of the evidence Estrada would never be convicted. Inside this “second envelope” was the most damaging of all evidence against the president. The envelope contained bank records that purportedly proved Estrada had amassed 3.3 billion pesos (\$63.5 million) in unaccounted wealth in illegal bank accounts using four aliases.

Chief Prosecutor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. threatened to resign if the envelope was not opened. Nonetheless, the senators judging Estrada voted 11-10 not to open the documents, underscoring how the highly politicized trial had divided the impeachment court. Congressman Joker Arroyo called the move “shameless” and said, “This means there are eleven senators who are in the pocket of the president.”<sup>119</sup> It did not take long for the Church to react to the news.

The eleven senators, all allies of Estrada, became instant targets of Church anger. The next few hours would see a flurry of activity by the Church as it blasted the Senate and Estrada and immediately called the “people” into action. Within an hour of the ruling, several protests erupted in Manila. Cardinal Sin urged people to gather at the EDSA shrine. On Radio Veritas, Cardinal Sin stated solemnly, “That which we are afraid of has happened . . . Truth has become a victim of immoral people.”<sup>120</sup> In his lament for justice, there was the call to action and a new “People Power” had begun.

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<sup>119</sup>James Hookway, “A Twist in Manila's Impeachment Trial --- Senate Could Acquit Philippine President,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *The Wall Street Journal* (January 17, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>120</sup>“Estrada Prosecutors Quit after Vote Blocks Evidence,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *The Florida Times-Union* (January 17, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

The Philippine Senate failed to fulfill its constitutional duty impartially, so it was time for the Church to do its duty and rip legitimacy away from Estrada the best way it knew how--through a People Power Revolution, or an EDSA II. By midnight, Cardinal Jaime Sin had spoken before an angry crowd of more than 10,000 people who gathered at the EDSA memorial. He spoke not only of the Philippine Senate's failure, but also warned of bloodshed because of their irresponsible actions.

The protesters gathered included nuns, office workers, and laborers. Many carried anti-Estrada signs with the words "Guilty" and "Justice died last night" printed on them. They chanted such slogans as "Enough is enough. You're exposed, Get out." This was the beginning of EDSA II, and from underneath the statue of the Virgin Mary, Cardinal Sin warned Estrada and the eleven senators who had betrayed the Church about God's wrath: "God is awake and God knows the evil they have done . . . We will not sleep and rest. We must keep watch, keep our candles lighted and overcome this darkness."<sup>121</sup>

The rally at EDSA extended into the next day, with the Church leadership calling for a "political cleansing" of Philippine politics and Malacanang.<sup>122</sup> The Church stepped up pressure on Estrada by marshaling thousands more angry protesters and demanding he pack up and leave office along with his cabinet. "Only the foolish and crazy will say that he is as innocent as a dove and as pure as a baby," Sin told those assembled. "We do not say resign only to the president, we also say to the cabinet--resign." The Church vowed to lead intense, nonstop "forms of public protests including even civil disobedience,"

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<sup>121</sup>"Church Leader Warns Suppression of Evidence Could Lead to Bloodshed," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Agence France-Presse* (January 16, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>122</sup>Karuna Shinsho and Marga Ortigas, "Thousands of Filipinos Call For Estrada's Resignation," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *CNN International: Asia Tonight* (January 17, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

because continuing to leave the fate of Estrada in the hands of the Congress was in their words an "exercise in futility."<sup>123</sup>

Support poured in from all over the country. The potential for violence was there and Cardinal Sin was forced to address the issue. "The Church will not allow violence," he said, but he noted that it could not "discount the possibility or even the validity of extralegal peaceful means, in terms of civil disobedience."<sup>124</sup> And groups participating in these "extralegal" means were voicing their support from as far away as Mindanao. "Cardinal Sin has already warned about this and we are ready to mobilize enough people to show Metro Manilans we are with them in this struggle," said Alvin Luque, head of the Estrada Resign Movement (ERM) for Southern Mindanao.<sup>125</sup>

There were some efforts to dampen EDSA II. Estrada's allies tried in the media to discount the Church's call, even branding Cardinal Sin and the Church as a group of "lawless clerics."<sup>126</sup> Moreover, they wondered out loud if the Church would respect the constitutional process of removing a president from office or if it would simply act unilaterally and attempt to instigate riots to bring down the government and destabilize the nation. Members of the media accused the Church of supporting mob rule and called

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<sup>123</sup>"Time is Up, Philippine Church Leader Tells Estrada Cabinet," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Agence France-Presse* (January 17, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>124</sup>Christine Avendano, Carlito Pablo, and Norman Bordadora, "All set for 'People Power II'," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (January 16, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>125</sup>Rufy L. Villanueva and Hernnin P. de Leon, "Police Prepare for Post-Verdict Demonstrations," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *BusinessWorld* (January 16, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>126</sup>"Sin's Lack of Respect for Rule of Law," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Manila Standard* (January 17, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

the Church's idea of ousting Estrada through "People Power" uncivilized and part of the "law of the jungle."<sup>127</sup>

Countering these charges, the CBCP said it was the Church's duty, morally and religiously, to seek Estrada's resignation. The relationship between the Church and State was not as clearly defined as Estrada's supporters wished. Indeed, the level of interaction between the Church and Estrada's state was determined not by the constitution but by how the government was doing its job and whether the Church was being true to the mission it had expressed for itself.<sup>128</sup>

Senate President Aquilino Pimentel also quit in protest after the vote and left the Philippine Congress, along with the entire prosecution team. Estrada appealed for calm. But there was little for the anti-Estrada crowd to be calm about. Former President Fidel Ramos, himself a target of Church rallies in the past, joined Cardinal Sin at the EDSA memorial and called on the army and police to withdraw their support for Estrada. Echoing the Church's call, Ramos told the crowd that the nation's fate "is now in the people's court."<sup>129</sup> Vice President Arroyo was also with Cardinal Sin and warned Estrada's backers against encouraging a military takeover to cling to power: "You will not succeed because the people will not allow it."<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup>Ibid.

<sup>128</sup>Norman Bordadora, "Bishops Say Evidence Compelling," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (January 17, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>129</sup>James Hookway, "Manila's Power Struggle Shifts From Courtroom to the Streets --- Massive Anti-Estrada Protests and Trial's Halt Roil Already Fragile Markets -- - A Bittersweet Victory for an Embattled Leader," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *The Asian Wall Street Journal* (January 18, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>130</sup>Ibid.

Cardinal Sin also requested that the poor, part of Estrada's core constituency, join the Church in its efforts. He compared Estrada's corruption to an attack on the poor, claiming, "The poor trusted you and you betrayed them . . . The businessmen trusted you and you lied to them. The First Lady married you and you used many women . . . We know in our hearts that the President is guilty."<sup>131</sup>

Throughout the day protesters continued to pour into the streets and parking lots around EDSA, shutting down traffic in the area. Cardinal Sin exhorted them to stay "until evil is conquered by good."<sup>132</sup> The political turmoil caused the Philippine currency to tumble further.<sup>133</sup> Yet the people kept coming. EDSA II was growing and gaining support. Cory Aquino, also present at EDSA, called for more: "Our prayer is that there will be more people who will gather at EDSA in the coming days."<sup>134</sup> Arroyo's prayer was soon answered as the crowd swelled to an estimated 200,000 people in a very short time, bolstered by the arrival of delegations from all over the Philippines.

The Church's plan was working, but it was a long time in coming. Since 1998 it had tried to depose Estrada, yet he had always remained in power. Now at the EDSA shrine it was 1986 all over again. The people were there in the tens of thousands, as were Cardinal Sin and the Catholic hierarchy, all surrounding their political allies and leading those who answered the call to action. Cardinal Sin understood that without the masses

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<sup>131</sup>Richard Lloyd Parry, "Rumours of a Military Coup Sweep Philippines," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *The Independent* (January 18, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>132</sup>Norman Bordadora, Andrea Trinidad-Echavez, and Christine Herrera, "Stay on Edsa Until Evil is Conquered by Good," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (January 18, 2001; 9 September 2002).

<sup>133</sup>Hookway, "Manila's Power Struggle Shifts From Courtroom to the Streets."

<sup>134</sup>Bordadora, Trinidad-Echavez, and Herrera, "Stay on Edsa Until Evil is Conquered by Good."

little could be accomplished in opposing Estrada. He realized the Church was powerful because at that moment it led the people, and the people acted through it.

At no other time or place was the Church fulfilling its duty as *the* mediating force in Philippine politics and in the legitimacy equation more clearly or more completely than that day at EDSA. Cardinal Sin now spoke for the people, and through the Church they expressed their outrage. To the Church and the people, the truth had “been subverted” and the “fire of the people’s indignation and outrage” had been ignited. In one of his defining moments as the Archbishop of Manila, Cardinal Sin turned to address the crowd and told them just how important they were to the Church’s cause: “I have hope because you are here. You are the hope of this nation. So long as you are here, I can keep on hoping. There is only one immoral President and eleven shameless senators. There are millions and millions of people who will safeguard the truth and, if necessary, die for the truth”<sup>135</sup>

In other remarks, Sin had as much praise for the ten Senators who voted for the envelope’s opening as he had anger for those who refused. In fact, he broke off from his homily to lead the crowd in cheers for Senators Raul Roco, Rene Cayetano and Franklin Drilon, who joined Sin on stage along with other members of the Philippine Congress. Rain or shine, Cardinal Sin and Church officials vowed that in the name of the people they would all stay at EDSA until they could “reclaim power” from Estrada.<sup>136</sup>

The indignant but peaceful protests on January 17, 2001, which Defense Secretary Orlando Mercado referred to as “political dynamics,” were proof of the people’s distrust of Estrada and a demonstration of the Church’s power to call upon the “parliament of the streets” to enforce its will. Other actions, such as a mass march to the presidential palace planned by opponents of the embattled president, were called off because protestors said

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<sup>135</sup>Ibid.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid.

they did not recognize the occupants of the palace anymore.<sup>137</sup> There were also fears of violence should the group march on the president's residence, and Cardinal Sin forbade it, calling the potential for violence too risky.<sup>138</sup> There were also some people who simply wanted to remain at EDSA, feeling it was the center of hope and power for the movement. The march would eventually take place, but only after Estrada's plight was certain.

The economy continued to nosedive during EDSA II. The Philippine peso plunged 5.3 percent during a twenty-four hour period to a low of 55.75 pesos against the dollar.<sup>139</sup> EDSA II was now a test of wills. There were to be no negotiations between the Church and Estrada. The Church had only one requirement, and only one mantra—resign.<sup>140</sup> Indeed, Cardinal Sin reminded everyone within the sound of his voice that he had warned of an Estrada presidency. He had “tried” to educate the electorate and the elite about the dangers of Estrada as far back as 1997, and now the proverbial chickens were coming home to roost and the nation was suffering because of it. Sin said, “I said this during the campaign . . . If he is elected, it will be a disaster. And (now), you see.”<sup>141</sup>

There were few options remaining for Estrada under Philippine law, and the Church preferred they not be exercised. They included a provision that allowed the

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<sup>137</sup>“Mass March to Estrada's Palace called Off: Organizers,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Agence France-Presse* (January 18, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>138</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup>“Return of People Power?” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Jakarta Post* (January 18, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>140</sup>“Philippine Senate Adjourns Amid Swelling Protests,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Los Angeles Times* (January 18, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>141</sup>Bordadora, Trinidad-Echavez, and Herrera, “Stay on Edsa Until Evil is Conquered by Good.”

Philippine House of Representatives to form a new group of prosecutors, a move that could further delay the trial but at least see it to that a lawful conclusion was reached. But the Church wanted no more delays. Estrada's tightly knit group of core supporters began to unravel. Soon, Defense Chief General Angelo Reyes appeared at EDSA, and at his side was Estrada's defense secretary, Orlando Mercado. Hours earlier they had urged Philippine soldiers to stay out of the political fray. Moreover, a newspaper advertisement signed by sixty members of the Philippine Military Academy's class of 1962 urged Estrada's departure and said Philippine soldiers "know what to do during the critical days ahead as they have done in the past for the good of their country and their people."<sup>142</sup> Other top military officials quickly joined them at EDSA.

A desperate Estrada appeared on television, pleading with lawmakers to restart his impeachment trial. It was an interesting sight to see the embattled president practically begging to be prosecuted. He was now more than willing to let prosecutors open bank records that had previously been sealed. Estrada was willing to face any trial or court except the court of public opinion or the "parliament of the streets," for it was there that the Church was the prosecutor, and it had already selected the jury, stood as judge, and had signed an order of political execution.<sup>143</sup>

Estrada believed that restarting the impeachment trial would buy him the time he needed to counter the Church's moves to rally the people against him. It was also a way to further his public relations campaign and to discredit anyone who would take his place. Estrada felt that no one other than him could be legitimate because it was he who had won an electoral mandate from the people. "Since I still have the support of a significant segment of our people, I don't think that the present polarization can be healed by a new

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<sup>142</sup>Dirk Beveridge, "General Defects in Philippines as Estrada Struggles to Stay in Office," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Associated Press* (January 19, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>143</sup>*Ibid.*



leader who will take over without an electoral mandate from our people," Estrada said in a statement clearly directed at Arroyo.<sup>144</sup> His appeals for a restart of the trial were ignored, and thousands of people continued to swarm at EDSA and tens of thousands of protestors marched on the palace.

Estrada could fight no longer. Until then, Arroyo had been pensive about EDSA II and had expressed a concern to do the right thing morally and legally about Estrada. She often met with her advisors to discuss the issue and on the morning of January 20, she had breakfast with Cardinal Sin and Cory Aquino to discuss how to handle Estrada's exit. According to Arroyo, Estrada had asked for five days to get his affairs in order. However, Cardinal Sin was emphatic that this was unacceptable. Witnesses at the meeting said the cardinal began to pound on the table and spoke sternly to Arroyo: "Gloria, you owe the presidency to the people. And it is the people who want a new president."<sup>145</sup> There would be no five-day wait. On January 20, 2001, Estrada stepped down as president of the Republic of the Philippines.

Vice President Arroyo immediately took the oath of office on the platform that had been erected in front of the EDSA shrine. Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. administered the oath. She took the oath in front of tens of thousands of Filipinos gathered at EDSA, and she shared the stage with her political allies, members of the military, and the Church leadership.<sup>146</sup> As she swore her solemn oath, she did so under the ever-watchful gaze of the Virgin Mary statue that stood so prominently at EDSA. "I

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<sup>144</sup> Paul Alexander, "Stripped of Support, President Reportedly Negotiating Resignation," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Associated Press Newswires* (January 19, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>145</sup> Amando Doronila, "SC Justices Finally OK Gloria Oath," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (February 24, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>146</sup> Amando Doronila, "Philippines: Article Analyzes Estrada's Downfall Analysis from the Opinion," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *World News Connection Inquiries* (January 21, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

accept the privilege and responsibility to act as president of the republic. I do so with a sense of trepidation and of awe . . . It is now, as the good book says, a time to heal and a time to build," Arroyo told the masses at EDSA.<sup>147</sup> Word from Estrada via his executive secretary, Edgardo Angara, was that he had accepted the decision rendered by the people at EDSA, the court, and the Church.<sup>148</sup>

The entire event of Arroyo's swearing in offered striking imagery, illustrating the Church's power not only to influence but to shape the secular State. One spectator had words of praise for all EDSA II had accomplished: "This was a parliament on the streets and the people have expressed themselves."<sup>149</sup> Indeed, they had expressed themselves, and while the future can never be known with absolute certainty, one thing about the new Arroyo government was certain. The Church would play an influential role in its foundation and any future actions it might take.

Arroyo was under no illusions as to why she was now the president. She was president because of Estrada's resignation, but she was in power because of the Church's actions. The Philippine Constitution might have mandated the terms of succession, but she was not made legitimate by simple rule of law. She had not received a mandate at the ballot box, yet she had the people's support. She attained the legitimacy of the Filipino population through the Church's efforts.

A day after Arroyo took her oath, Cardinal Sin celebrated a special Thanksgiving Mass at EDSA. It was a celebration of the country's "liberation," a victory of the people

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<sup>147</sup> Calvin Sims, "Estrada Forced Out of Office," *New York Times* 21 January 2001, sec. A, p. 21.

<sup>148</sup> Peter Goodspeed, "Estrada Steps Down After Cabinet Resigns: VP Sworn in as President: Filipinos Take to the Streets in Near Replay of 1986 Revolution," *National Post*, 20 January 2001, sec. A, p. 14.

<sup>149</sup> Alex Spillius, "'People Power' Topples Estrada: Deputy Takes the Helm as Disgraced Philippine President is Forced Out," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *The Sunday Telegraph* (January 21, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

and of the Church. Speaking at the Mass, Sin said that the Philippines now needed to remain vigilant and not allow a leader like Estrada or a government like that elected in 1998 to beset the nation again. He spoke of those who in the past warned that the Church's struggle would be long, but he said he believed otherwise, saying that God had always planned to give the Philippines a "special gift."<sup>150</sup> He also noted the role of the people, taking special effort to credit their response to the Church's call as the key to bringing down Estrada. "We walked in darkness but now have become people of the light . . . Your presence and prayers wrote history. Your love for God and country made the big difference . . ."<sup>151</sup>

The Mass was also the perfect opportunity for Cardinal Sin to publicly inject the Church into the fledgling Arroyo administration. "We will help you for the good of the nation. We will also criticize you for the good of the nation," stated Cardinal Sin. Arroyo now had unofficial advisors whether she wanted them or not. Cardinal Sin further assured the assembled masses that the Church would and in fact *must* be involved in future politics: "Among all the aspects of Filipino life, it is politics that needs most the redemption of Christ. Politics in the Philippines must be baptized, evangelized and become a tool not for corruption but for sanctification."<sup>153</sup>

These words, meant to reassure the public, sent chills through the spines of those who advocated a strict separation of Church and State in the Philippines, most notably Estrada's allies. It was ironic that someone so opposed to the Church's role in

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<sup>150</sup>"Answered Prayers," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Manila Standard* (January 20, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

<sup>151</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup>"Church says It Will Ensure Arroyo on the Straight and Narrow," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Agence France-Presse* (January 22, 2001; accessed 9 September 2002).

government had lost his job not at the ballot box, but by a revolt of the people led by that same Catholic institution. Indeed, the Estrada administration posed several paradoxes. While Estrada attempted to keep the Church marginalized, his actions and his policies resulted in the Church becoming more powerful.

At no time during the modern era did the Church assume as much influence and power as it did during the final year of the Estrada administration. Not even during the Aquino years, when it acted as a partner in her administration, did it have as much say in the political future of the Philippines as it did after EDSA II. Because of Estrada's scandals and because he chose to fight it, the Philippine Catholic Church briefly superseded even the president in power, forcing his resignation and installing its own anointed choice into the office. In the wake of EDSA II, it was a time to sit in awe and reflect on all the Church had accomplished and ponder future possibilities.

## CHAPTER VIII

## CONCLUSION

Nearly five centuries have passed since the Philippine Catholic Church's establishment. The previous chapters have detailed Church involvement in the legitimacy process and its evolution from governmental control during the Spanish colonial era to overt power-sharing schemes that materialized during the post-1945 era of independence. Throughout history the Church has played both lead and supporting roles in the political *pasyon* that is Philippine politics, and it has evolved from an arcane body of bishops seeking a theocracy to a modern, politically active, and flexible social organization that adjusts to fit the changing landscape of Philippine politics. The Church's survivability has proven that no matter what kind of regime ruled the Philippines, it invariably sought the loyalty of the Church and the Filipino people—rarely mutually exclusive things. Indeed, whether a particular ruling regime continued often hinged on whether or not it enjoyed the Church's support.

The roots of the Church's influence run deeper than some social scientists and politicians like to admit. The Church maintains considerable influence, even as the average Filipino may wish for it to stay out of politics. For example, 66 percent of the population polled in 1998 felt that religious leaders should not try to influence how people vote in elections, and 63 percent said they should not try to influence government decisions.<sup>1</sup> Yet when the Church intervenes in secular politics as it did in EDSA I and II, the public rarely objects and indeed follows the Church's political lead. For example, as late as January 6, 2001, 53 percent of those polled did not want Joseph Estrada to resign,

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<sup>1</sup>“Attendance at Religious Services- Survey for October 28-November 14, 1998,” *Social Weather Report Survey* (Quezon City, Philippines: Social Weather Station, 1998), 186.

but in a matter of weeks nearly 71 percent felt that the Church-sponsored EDSA II, which forced Estrada's resignation, "expressed the sentiment of the majority."<sup>2</sup>

Polls conducted in the Philippines can be used to show the rise and fall of the Church's trust rating and those of its leadership, yet it is to the Church that the nation turns in times of political chaos.<sup>3</sup> Both EDSA revolutions vividly illustrated to the world the power of the Church to affect change in governmental legitimacy, and at the same time showed the weakness of polls in gauging true public opinion towards the Church.

In the absence of reliable statistical data, the kind that has only become available in the last two decades, the researcher is left with qualitative analysis of Philippine history and politics to determine the Church's true nature in government legitimacy. The totality of this study has attempted to do just that, and this chapter is the final reservoir of ideas and analysis of the Church within the legitimacy paradigm. It begins with a brief review of legitimacy theory and a discussion of the Church's place within the model.

The ideas of Weber and Easton are recounted to refresh the reader on the general concepts discussed, debated, and challenged in this study. Coupled with this review is a look at how the Church has performed within the democratic milieu now predominant in Philippine politics. Democratic politics poses its own unique rules and constraints on legitimacy, for the people must be accounted for in any legitimacy model. One purpose of the concluding chapter is to explain this issue and demonstrate how the people were and remain a part of the Church's actions throughout the twentieth century, especially in the EDSA revolutions of 1986 and 2001.

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<sup>2</sup>Maha Mangahas, "From Juentenggate to People Power 2: The SWS Surveys of Public Opinion," *Social Weather Report Survey* (Quezon City, Philippines: SWS, Inc. 2002), 18, 52.

<sup>3</sup>"The Cardinal," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (November 16, 2000; accessed 9 September 2002).

The review of legitimacy theory and the discussion of the role of the Church within the democratic realities of the Philippines is followed by a discussion of the events in the wake of EDSA II. It is beneficial for this study to include a few examples of how Estrada, and later Arroyo, dealt with the Church's political influence and authority in their own quests for legitimacy. In a similar vein, the last half of the chapter examines at the Church's current role in the Arroyo administration and its possible future in Philippine politics. This includes an examination of specific policies of the Arroyo administration where the Church's influence is obvious, as well as lesser issues where the pressure is not so noticeable.

Finally, no look at legitimacy and the Church can be complete without some discussion of the future, and discussion about the future of the Philippine Church must inexorably revolve around what will be a "post-Sin" Church. Jaime Cardinal Sin's own political involvement has decreased and continues to do so since the events of 2001. The Church may face its own leadership crisis in a few years. Will the Church suffer from a "vacuum of leadership" of its own in his absence, or will it survive and even flourish with a new generation of leaders? A few pages are dedicated to answering these and other questions.

Any study dealing with legitimacy and the role of a social institution like the Church tends to focus on pursuit and acquisition of power within political relationships. This is not surprising considering that reduced to its most basic element and stripped of all its social trappings, legitimacy is simply a government's ability to coerce consent out of a population. The word coerce may seem harsh, but this coercion can take many forms. The Weberian model of legitimacy outlined three possible ways, or the three archetypes or classifications that function as independent variables providing authority to the dependent variable of "legitimacy." There are Rational-Legal, Traditional and Charismatic, and each are considered "ideal" types of legitimacy found in Weber's paradigm.

Rational-Legal legitimacy rests on the belief that there is a legality found in patterns of normative rules and behaviors, and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules is to issue commands. The government's ability to coerce legitimacy from the population stems from its acceptance of the rules and laws found in a governing document or contract. Whether it is a Rousseau-like uncomplicated social contract or a more Lockean document such as the United States Constitution, the people concede that both they and the government are responsible for keeping the tenets of the law. One side yields authority and a degree of personal sovereignty to the other.

Traditional legitimacy is based on the belief in the sacredness of ancient traditions and the status of those exercising authority. People respond to the government and its command because that is what the previous generations did. New thought is discouraged, new ways are not welcome, and new blood is not appreciated within the ruling circle. Kings, queens, sultans, and chiefs predominate this form of legitimacy. The power of the potentate is unquestioned. Populations are coerced by history, culture, respect, and custom.

The final Weberian legitimacy type, Charismatic legitimacy, may be the most intriguing. In this ideal type of legitimacy the government or regime, which is often personified in a single individual, coerces its authority out of the population by appearing to embody exceptional or exemplary characteristics. People *want* to follow this type of individual or regime because they are so enamored with that person's qualities that they are willing to sacrifice a bit of their own personal sovereignty. Moreover, the ruler or regime that is legitimized by charisma is ordained with the authority to set out the rules of how things ought to be.



Outside the Weberian model is the Utilitarian type of legitimacy. Utilitarianism features coercion equally applied by both the ruler and the ruled. The ruler seeks the power and authority to govern the nation-state and the ruled seeks as many concessions from the government as it can get. Nowhere is this concept more readily observed than in the United States, where candidates are often elected to government office based on how much money or goods and services they can bring back to their district or state. A presidential campaign is much the same way. In exchange for a vote, a presidential candidate may promise more money for national defense, roads, reducing crime, or even something as mundane as a guaranteed prescription drug program for senior citizens.

As with every independent variable, whether it is Rational-Legal, Traditional, Charismatic, or Utilitarian, it does not affect governmental legitimacy directly. Indeed, the cornerstone of this entire study is based on the existence of mediating variables that serve as lenses through which authority is focused. Each of these mediating variables filters consent to the government, and consent is based on a belief in norms and values shared by rulers and the ruled. Mediating variables tend to shape the norms and values. Thus, any consensus on a norm or value used to legitimate a government is the result of actions taken by the mediating variable. These mediating variables may include the military, business groups, and religious institutions. This study has argued that in the Philippines, the Catholic Church has become the epitome of the mediating variable, influencing legitimacy of any and every type.

Discerning the Church's role in the Rational-Legal type of legitimacy proved to be the least problematic. As was discussed in previous chapters, the Church has at times been more than simply a mediating force in Philippine governmental legitimacy. It has actually *been* the government. Extensive resources exist documenting the Church's role during the Spanish colonial era, when it helped write the laws, staffed the bureaucracy

with its candidates, and at times even had its Archbishop serve as chief executive of the colony.<sup>4</sup>

The Church also organized cities, built infrastructure, and protected the population against pirates, heretics, and other Europeans who sought dominion over Filipino territory. Later, the death of three priests was the catalyst for the Filipino revolution of the late nineteenth century. During the revolution, Spanish friars were the object of scorn and Filipino priests were part of the revolutionary leadership. Parishes served as weapons stores and rallying points for colonial defense, and later for the revolutionary cause against Spain and the United States.

The Church also brought 1,000 years of Catholic tradition with it to the Philippines. The success it had in baptizing and converting the indigenous population to the Catholic faith meant that in a few years, large segments of the Filipino populace accepted the catechism and the authority of the Church and all it represented during this time. Part of this acceptance was the political leadership role of the pontiff, archbishops, bishops, and the parish priest.

Filipinos were subjects of Spain and the Catholic Church, and as such leaders in both realms were to be respected and obeyed. The priest, regardless of his rank, represented the historical Church, its customs, and inevitably God himself. Therefore, when the bishops favored one set of laws over another, or one ruler over another, the people abided by their decisions. The Filipino gave consent to the Church and the Spanish secular authority based not on the Spanish reputation, but because the Spanish were allied with the Catholic Church. Such a close relationship allowed Spain to control a numerically superior population with few soldiers and even fewer priests.

The Church's traditional authority meant that it possessed considerable political *gravitas* that it could parlay into real political influence even after the passing of Spanish

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<sup>4</sup>Nicholas Tracy, *Manila Ransomed: The British Assault on Manila in the Seven Years War* (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1995), 33-34.

hegemony. The Spanish Church became the Filipino Church, and its mantle of traditional legitimacy passed from one to the other. The monarchy may have left the archipelago to be replaced by Uncle Sam in 1898, but the Church remained active in “crowning” local leadership and in a feudalistic position as head of its *barangays*. Traditional authority invested in the Church by custom and legacy continues to support government officials and actions.

Characterizing the Charismatic element of legitimacy requires a more specific look at personalities within the Church that directly impacted Philippine politics. There have been several leaders in the past and the present who, through the Church’s leadership and their own personal charisma, have sought and achieved an important role in Philippine politics. These individuals include Bishop Fray Domingo de Salazar, the first bishop of Manila who in 1581 led the *Christianization* of the Philippines; Archbishop Manuel Antonio Rojo del Rio y Vieyra, who was Governor General for a time and led the defense of Manila when the British lay siege in 1762; and Fathers Jose Burgos, Mariano Gomez, and Jacinto Zamora, who bravely fought to end Spanish control of the Church and their country and were executed for their actions. Their deaths sparked a revolution.

In the twentieth century there has been one charismatic priest who has stood out among the rest for his involvement in politics and the legitimacy of Philippine governments. Indeed, some may argue that Jaime Cardinal Sin, the archbishop of Manila, has become a mediating variable himself. His charismatic appeal can certainly not be denied, for no ordinary man can command the allegiance of the Philippine Catholic Church, have a million people pour into the streets when he asks, and unseat two constitutionally elected presidents. Indeed, he is much more than the archbishop of Manila, he may be the seminal political and social force in twentieth-century Philippine politics.

The very powerful and influential Jaime Sin came from very humble beginnings. He was born on August 21, 1928, the fourteenth of sixteen children born to Juan Sin and Maxima Lachica. Like many large Filipino families, the Sins expected one of their children to enter Church service. Young Jaime did, and he was ordained a priest at the age of twenty-six and went on to become a domestic prelate at thirty-one. He became a bishop at thirty-eight, an archbishop at forty-four, and a cardinal at forty-eight. His rapid rise to the heights of Church power placed him in the position of great importance in the Philippine Catholic Church. As bishop of Manila, he was the Church's de facto leader. He attained this post at the height of Marcos's marshal law, and chose to thrust himself into the heart of the political turmoil.

The Church had always been active in politics, but prior to Cardinal Sin's takeover of Manila's bishopric it had not fully confronted Marcos. Cardinal Sin rallied his forces to change this situation and served as the uniting influence and the voice of opposition against Marco's regime. He successfully drew upon his own charismatic appeal and political acumen to position the Church's immense popular support and resources to render Marcos illegitimate.

After Marcos's downfall in 1986, Cardinal Sin helped prop up the presidency of Corey Aquino, stabilizing the fragile Philippine democracy in the process. He was also instrumental in the ratification of the 1987 Constitution and subsequent efforts to keep President Fidel Ramos and Joseph Estrada from tampering with the document. His role in the EDSA II uprising against Estrada in 2001 was recounted in the last chapter. The showdown between two charismatic leaders, Estrada and Sin, proved to be a titanic political battle that would last for four months, from October 2000 to January 2001. Unofficially, it can be traced back to the 1998 presidential elections and did not end until the events that transpired in May 2001, which are discussed later in this chapter. In the end, EDSA II might prove to be Sin's last great political battle, but at least he went out on top.

Sin's importance to Philippine politics cannot be understated. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has lauded Cardinal Sin as a "prophet of our times," a "pillar of the Catholic Church," and "one of the greatest Filipinos" of the last two centuries. Yet Arroyo's praise does not end there. During a special Thanksgiving Mass held at the Manila Cathedral, Arroyo spoke at length about the work and legacy of this charismatic Catholic leader. Her speech appears in part below, and it deserves a place in this study for its ability to highlight the importance of Cardinal Sin to the president in particular and the Philippines in general. Before a crowd of political and theological dignitaries, Arroyo affirmed:

His eminence has guided us to discern the right path through various moral and ethical issues. He has strengthened our faith in miracles, in prayer, and in the blessings that the Lord Almighty showers upon our country . . . He has been a true example of courage, facing up to the authoritarianisms and immorality in days when very few dared to dream of free speech or go against the tide of mob popularity. He has shown catholic and non-catholic Filipinos alike . . . we can stand in the way of armored tanks and propaganda machines and still prevail . . .

. . . Who can forget that it was His Eminence [who] called us to gather at EDSA and make a stand for democracy? It was His Eminence . . . soothing assurances that one's presence at EDSA was a moral act and a free person's right that brought a million people to EDSA . . .

. . . Who can forget, too, that it was also His Eminence who invoked the requirement of moral ascendancy in government just a few months ago that culminated in a peaceful change of leadership by constitutional succession? His Eminence's wisdom has guided us . . . more than 25 years . . . proving over and over again that, as in Proverbs, Chapter 24, Verse 5, "A wise man is more powerful than a strong man, and a man of knowledge is more powerful than a man of might." Your Eminence, I speak for a grateful Filipino people, grateful to you for leading us through years of struggle for democracy, through long months of searching for moral ascendancy, and through many moments of individual moral and religious decisions that Filipinos have to make in their daily lives."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Speech of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, given during the Thanksgiving Mass on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee Anniversary of Cardinal Sin as Cardinal of the Catholic Church (May 31, 2001) Manila Cathedral, Manila.

It does not stretch the imagination to think that Cardinal Sin may one day be given sainthood for the “miracles” that he and his Church performed in 1986 and 2001. Still, he will not live forever and there are others within the Church waiting to assume the role of archbishop of Manila and the leadership of the Church. The responsibilities they will inherit are more than spiritual. Any future leader must realize that the Church, as the premier mediating variable, may determine the very legitimacy of the government and the presidency itself. Politicians may understand this better than anyone. Many were in attendance at the Thanksgiving Mass, and others appreciate the significance of the Church’s support, both real and symbolic, to any search for power they may entertain.

Outside of Weber’s paradigm in the area of Utilitarian legitimacy the Church played an equally important role. For many centuries while the Philippines were under Spanish control the Church facilitated the outlay of goods and services, meager though they were, to the population. The Church ensured not simply community defense or the common good, but as was discussed in Chapter 2, the local parish organized every aspect of community life. So engrained was the relationship between the parish priest and the community that when the Filipinos had the chance to throw off Spanish rule during the British occupation of Manila in 1762, they did not.<sup>6</sup> The British found it impossible to win the Filipinos’ hearts and minds. The Americans were able to do it only by re-staffing parishes with friendly priests, doing away with the Catholic monopoly on education, and building on simmering discontent within the Spanish Church. Yet the Church was never fully removed from politics and reemerged in the wake of World War II to reassert itself.

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<sup>6</sup>Tracy, *Manila Ransomed*, 40.

Finding a utility for the organization in the post-war Philippines challenged the Church's resourcefulness in many ways, and it responded accordingly. No longer responsible for providing basic goods and services or even governmental services to the population, the Church focused instead on helping the new independent republic and the peasant population through the organization of trade unions, peasant advocacy groups, and anti-Communist cadres that sought to counter the ongoing Huk rebellion.

After the Vatican II liberalization and revitalization of the Church in the early 1960s, Church elements became more active as advocates for the poor and the politically disenfranchised. This advocacy role provided a utility for large segments of the population that could not hope to resist the repressive laws of the authoritarian Marcos regime, which was in full force by the end of the decade. After Marcos declared martial law in 1972, the Church provided one of the strongest anti-Marcos and anti-martial law voices in the Philippines. This led to the events of the early 1980s and the first People Power Revolution, the culmination of the Church's efforts and the epitome of its political utility for the masses. Since Marcos, the Church has continued its utilitarian function for both the poor and the politically disenfranchised, taking an active role in elections and caring for the needs of the less fortunate.

Though discounted by Weber and others in legitimacy theory, the Philippine Catholic Church has proven its merit and worth in all four types of legitimacy. It has provided the government with a social order seen as validated by God and embedded within a political culture that was itself shaped and often controlled by the Church. Legitimacy in the Philippines has proven to be a phenomenon of social order, and the

type of social order found in a Philippine society has not affected the Church's ability to manipulate it to its advantage.

The Church has thrived and dominated in a colonial government, matched wits with an emerging superpower during a commonwealth period, and survived a Cold War. It has fought off challenges from left-wing humanist movements, Protestant schisms, Communist infiltration, and Muslim insurgency. It has survived martial law and the imprisonment, abuse, torture, and murder of its leaders and laity. It has endured and outlived fascism and authoritarian regimes, and it has flourished in democracy. The Philippine Catholic Church has been the great political and social survivor for almost 500 years and most likely will remain politically active.

In Weber's theory of legitimacy acceptance of the Church's role is found in the three ideal types, along with utilitarianism. In David Easton's theory the Church's role takes a different shape. Unlike Weber, Easton does not give a theory of legitimacy, but his ideas on the political system require one to already exist. In that sense, his ideas fit well with helping expand the Weberian design of legitimacy and the role of the Church in the state. For example, Easton tells us that in a political system, something needs to "intervene in the name of society ... to decide how valued things are to be allocated."<sup>7</sup> This study has illustrated that in the Philippines, no other organization has intervened more in political matters than the Catholic Church. The very nature of its *raison d'être* meant that it decided the value of policies and politicians, and still does this today.

The Church is also inherently intertwined with the idea of diffuse support. Throughout Philippine history support for the Church has been based on traditional, legal,

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<sup>7</sup> David Easton., ed. *Varieties of Political Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall , 1966), 136.



charismatic, and utilitarian authority. Along with this has been the diffuse support engendered in the population by the catholic institutions that make up the Church and the Church itself. No organization or government has the impact on the young mind, the family unit, and the adult population, as does the Church. Its support has been institutionalized. Its specific support is found in the policies it promotes and the solid backing it gets from the citizenry. The Church has realized what Easton wrote, that governments, regimes, and individual politicians find it difficult to remain effective without diffuse and specific support.

The Church has been successful in maintaining specific and diffuse support and this can be proven by public opinion polls that confirm the Church's trust rating and the public's concurrence on key issues. For example, in a country where overpopulation is a problem and the Church frowns upon birth control, abortion is a hot issue. Politicians have from time to time brought up the issue, and the Church has reacted vehemently against it. The citizenry seem to agree with the Church. A full 70 percent believe abortion is always wrong, making no exceptions for the life of the mother or rape and incest. Only 7 percent say that abortion is acceptable.<sup>8</sup>

Public opinion in the Philippines also illustrates that the Church has more trust and confidence from the population than do the courts and the educational system. Moreover, one finds a strong majority of 55 percent believe the Church possesses and utilizes the correct amount of power, illustrating for the researcher that the Church among

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<sup>8</sup> *Religion Module - Social Weather Station Report Survey, October 28 – November 14, 1998*, (Quezon City, Philippines: Social Weather Station, 1998), 181.

all organizations has the institutional diffuse support needed as well as the specific support to push forward their agenda in the Philippine democracy.<sup>9</sup>

The Eastonian idea of diffuse and specific support is real and lasting for the Church in the Philippines in part because it has utilized so well the tools of politics, even as the political currents have changed in Philippine history. The restoration of democratic rule in the Philippines and the election of President Aquino allowed the Church a new position of power. At the same time, it also created new challenges. A democracy restored meant that the Church was now unable to simply impose its will as it did during the Spanish era, or resort to open violence as it did against the British and Americans. Unable to work through peasant groups as it did in the post-World War II decade, the Church has had to adapt to and deal with this democracy. It has worked successfully through the people because its very foundation is with the people.

As it had in the past, the Church utilized all aspects, including its *gravitas*, to ensure that the politicians of their choice--Aquino and now Arroyo--survived and those they objected to did not. The Aquino presidency and subsequent administrations each provide ideal material to observe the Church within a democratic milieu. Dictating policies was much easier in a time when concern for parishioners was secondary to Church policy, but parishioners were now the well from which the Church's power was drawn. Through the use of People Power the Church has left an indelible mark on the Philippine body politic. With the people's help during the past twenty years, the Church brought down one dictator and one morally corrupt president and helped install two governments sympathetic to the Church's cause.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 190.

It has been able to do this not by force of arms or theological coup, but by working through the democratic processes now existent and revitalized in the Philippines. No matter how powerful or convincing the Church may be, without the people there would have been no EDSA I or EDSA II. It was, after all, People Power. At lower levels of politics the Church continued to stump for candidates, openly expressing preferences for or attempting to prematurely end the terms of officials with which they did not agree. In a way, the Church's power has remained interwoven with the fortunes of politicians allied to its cause.

These questions remain: Where does the people's authority expressed through the power of the vote and through the Church's agenda fit into the legitimacy model outlined in chapter 1? Should the people share paradigmatic space with other independent "x" variables and, if so, does this preclude any action by the population in the other sectors of "x"? Do the "x" variables have a chance to interact with one another or are they mutually exclusive? And where does the Church fit in the model with the inclusion of people expressed graphically? Is it still as important? How does the theories of Weber or Easton help explain this situation?

The answers are not complicated, because any study that examines the importance of mediating variables in legitimacy and uses for its case study a democratically elected government cannot take the people out of the equation. The population's role has always been assumed in each of Weber's categories and in utilitarianism, and in Easton's ideas of diffuse and specific support. For example, a leader needs a population with which to have a social contract under the Rational-Legal ideal of legitimacy. Without a population, the ruler's contract would be null and void because he would be the only party to the agreement. A ruler also needs the population of his state to acknowledge his charismatic appeal. Looking in the mirror at one's reflection and admiring one's own charisma is not

going to keep one in office. Therefore, any ruler who survives on charismatic appeal needs a population to recognize and reinforce it.

The people are of lesser importance in the traditional style of legitimacy, but they are nonetheless needed because they accept and reinforce this norm. And should they cease to accept it, it opens the way for an illegitimate ruler and an unstable nation-state. The overthrow of monarchies is certainly something that is part of human history. The utilitarian ideal of legitimacy presupposes the presence of a population that gives authority to a government or individual in return for what that government or individual can do for it. Indeed, without a population there can be no exchange of goods and services for authority.

Support of any type, whether it is diffuse or specific, needs actors involved to give such support. Measuring diffuse or specific support is mainly done through public opinion polling. Without a public there could be no polls, without polls there can be no effective measurement of support. There would be no need for either diffuse or specific support in totalitarian regimes, for they would exist in spite of an Eastonian ideal. But Easton's ideas require a democracy to work, a democracy like the Philippines, and thus the people *a priori* to the political system.

The bulk of this study has dealt with the Church's role as the champion, caretaker, spokesman, and representative for the political will of the Philippine population. Therefore, in the legitimacy model the people cannot and should not be illustrated as a separate variable acting independently. Instead, the people are an equal and integral part of each and every one of the independent variables. In democracies like the Philippines, the population is the foundation on which all independent variables of legitimacy exist.

The inclusion and acknowledgment of an important role for the people does not pose any particular problems for the Church's role. In fact, the last few chapters have shown that these roles are necessary when one attempts to understand the Church's influence in Philippine politics. The Church has acted and continues to act as a political

lens that focuses the people's power and authority through the independent variables onto the Philippine government. Democratization of the Philippines has had consequences for the Church's role in legitimating governments, but it has adjusted.

Realization that nothing of the magnitude of deposing presidents can be accomplished without the people, this study has shown how the Church and its leadership have become masterful in manipulating the population to that end. Cardinal Sin and others continue to fight their battles with politicians in the court of public opinion, and they do not fight fair. Mobilizing the Church's immense resources, they can launch propaganda barrages that very few single politicians can counter. They have their own television, radio, and print media to transmit their ideas, opinions, and attacks. But even this is not needed, for the Church gets ample coverage in the private media as was illustrated in earlier chapters. What the Church does not get in free coverage it buys with paid advertisements.

What the Church cannot accomplish in the media it can attempt to achieve in the parishes. One thing that raises the ire of Church critics on the op-ed pages of Philippine newspapers is the Church's continued use of pastoral letters and homilies extolling the "virtuous" will of the Church, while scandalizing and condemning the politicians it opposes. Since 1986, going to a Catholic Church in the Philippines has often meant more than simply hearing a sermon, receiving Mass, and confessing sins. It has come to include important political messages written by Cardinal Sin or the CBCP and read by the local parish priest. These messages simultaneously reaffirm God's love, condemn political foes, and seek to motivate the people to answer the Church's call to action. Any political enemy of the Church can be assured that if they do not bow to the Church's will, they too will find their names and activities as part of the sermon.

Becoming an enemy of the Church has meant political destruction for many--destruction brought about by the people. The previous chapters are full of examples. Once the Church's resources are mobilized behind a cause and it has motivated the

people, it is almost impossible to stop. Estrada had the best chance to fight and beat the Church. He was not an ordinary politician or a cruel dictator. He was a former movie star who appealed to the masses as both a cult hero and as a politician who championed the poor's cause.

Estrada was able to translate his charisma into political clout. As an actor and a politician, he was able to convince the poorest of society that he cared about their plight. The poor, or the *masa* as they were known, were the source of his political power and his legitimacy. In Estrada's eyes, the Church could be circumvented. He would accept its endorsement if offered but he believed he did not need it to survive politically. It was a calculated risk on Estrada's part. The Church publicly opposed his candidacy, propped up his opponents, and questioned his morality. The Church wanted anyone but Estrada to win.

Not only was Estrada's victory a defeat for the Church, but it also indicated that the people mattered in the new Philippine democracy. If the Church wanted to affect political change in the post-1998 world, it needed to mobilize the people. In the Estrada case, enough people chose to ignore the Church's mediating influence and elect Estrada. As such, he had a right to feel invincible. As he relaxed into his new role as the most powerful politician in the Philippines, the Church never stopped working against him. Had this been pre-1898, it would have simply had him removed and sent him back to the province from which he came, relegated to obscurity either in the Philippines or on the Iberian peninsula. But this was 1998 and the Philippines is a democracy. To get rid of Estrada, the Church needed the people. It needed the masses, and it needed to find something to turn sufficient numbers against Estrada to end the mandate that he had won in a free and fair constitutional election. That is exactly what the Church did.

The events that led to Estrada's downfall have already been chronicled, but of interest is how the Church worked through the people. As with all "z" variables in a democracy, the people's energies are usually focused on the government. Their will,

anger, desires, authority, and voices are magnified by mediating variables to levels unachievable without them. The political decibel level was deafening to Marcos in 1986, loud enough for Ramos to stop his attempts to tamper with the constitution in 1997, and boisterous enough in January 2001 to force the resignation of the once very popular Estrada.

Estrada believed that the masses could protect him. Unlike Marcos, his approval ratings had remained high and he remained a hero to the poorest in the Philippines. In its initial struggle against Estrada, the Church fielded fewer numbers than Estrada so his confidence was warranted, at least on the surface. But as this study has shown, one must look much deeper than the surface. The Church realized its place in modern democratic politics and embraced it.

If one lesson is learned, it is that the Church articulates and protects norms and legitimacy. Moreover, as Fleet and Smith point out, the Church has made a gradual, though no less radical, transformation to become an ally to democracy. The Philippines are an ideal place to witness this transformation. There the Church has become a kind of social loudspeaker, ensuring that the political will and desire of the masses cannot be discounted or overlooked by any politician seeking to remain legitimate and relevant.

Polls in the wake of EDSA II confirm this position. If the Church had not instigated a People Power movement against Estrada, 64 percent of the population believed Estrada's government would not have listened to their complaints.<sup>10</sup> In 1986, after the first EDSA revolution, 66 percent believed that a popular struggle was necessary to have their grievances heard.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the triumph of EDSA II was seen as the

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<sup>10</sup> Maha Mangahas, "From Juentengate to People Power 2: The SWS Surveys of Public Opinion," 76.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

will of God by 59 percent of the population, and 61 percent believed that EDSA II was necessary and just.<sup>12</sup>

Estrada tried but failed to marginalize the Church. During the early stages of his impeachment trial, he was able to organize upwards of a million people to attend a rally in support of his administration. In the end he was able to get nearly 1 million supporters at his rally, and the Church managed only 100,000 at their counter demonstration, yet the Church prevailed. Why? The only answer lies in the Church's ability to magnify the individual's voice and power, energizing tens of thousands from the electorate and channeling their power into a mandate for the Church to call for the removal of a duly elected president who still maintained tremendous mass support. There has really been nothing like it in all of Southeast Asia, and perhaps the world.

Doubters need only look at the events of EDSA II. Nowhere else in contemporary politics is there so vivid an example of the Church working unilaterally through the people to accomplish its political agenda. Public opinion data now shows that the Church's actions were justified since the Filipino people have embraced the results. The numbers at EDSA were in the hundreds of thousands, but that still only represented a small fraction of the electorate. With the Church's support, however, EDSA II forced Estrada to resign. EDSA II was an expression and an illustration of how the Church serves as the mediating variable in legitimacy.

Public opinion data collected by the Social Weather Station (SWS) after the events of EDSA II reaffirmed the Church's actions and its position of power and influence. Polls taken shortly after EDSA II revealed that 56 percent believed that the "strength of People Power" legitimized Arroyo's presidency.<sup>13</sup> The second and third factors in her legitimacy were "the decision of the Supreme Court" and "the support of

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 59-60.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 87.



the Catholic Church.” It should not be forgotten that although the Church is third on the list of factors, it played a leading role in helping organize the People Power and pressuring the Supreme Court. The Church gave weight to both Estrada’s resignation and Arroyo’s swearing in as the new president, and the people accepted it.

Another poll showed that nearly 70 percent of the population believed EDSA II represented the majority’s opinion. This reinforces the idea that the Church was in the unique position to act on the behalf of millions of Filipinos.<sup>14</sup> Yet another public opinion poll showed that a full 64 percent of the people believed that if the Church-led People Power had not taken place, Estrada’s government would not have responded to the people’s grievances. This is more evidence of the Church’s continued role as *the* one organization that can force a corrupt government to heed the people’s wishes. By its actions, the Church ensured that there would be no mass disenfranchisement of the electorate by the actions of Estrada and his eleven allies in the Philippine Senate.<sup>15</sup>

The Church’s overall effectiveness in the public’s eyes was boosted considerably after its EDSA II success. When the SWS measured the “trust ratings” of popular personalities in February 2001, just two weeks after EDSA II, Cardinal Sin enjoyed a net trust rating several points higher than former President Aquino, and more than fifteen points higher than the popular Fidel Ramos. The only non-Church figure with considerably more popularity was the new president.

Arroyo was and remains a popular figure, and like Cardinal Sin and others in the Church, she had a strong sense of her political destiny.<sup>16</sup> She still portrays herself as a

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<sup>14</sup>Mangahas, “From Juetengate to People Power 2: The SWS Surveys of Public Opinion,” 36.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>16</sup>Hookway, “Arroyo Makes Preparations For Possible Life After Estrada.

woman of the masses and her support may reflect that reality.<sup>17</sup> Yet never far away from Arroyo's political life is the influence of the Catholic Church and Cardinal Sin. Even before Estrada's troubles, Cardinal Sin was considered Arroyo's close confidant. It was Cardinal Sin who advised her to quit her cabinet job the same day the Church launched its anti-Estrada campaign. Later, Arroyo relayed part of their conversations, which reflected a powerful cardinal guiding a very malleable Arroyo. She said Sin told her, "We don't have to plan every detail. God will take care of it."<sup>18</sup> Of course, in the opinion of millions and maybe Arroyo herself, God worked through Cardinal Sin and the Church.<sup>19</sup>

Arroyo's story and the way the Church has influenced her administration follows next in the discussion. Up to this point, the story of the Church's influence has been told largely through historical narrative with analysis weaved into it. The events of the Spanish era, the American period, and the administrations of Marcos, Aquino, Ramos, and Estrada have all been discussed in varying degrees of detail to ensure a proper understanding of the Church's role in the legitimacy process. The Church's existence within the democratic political milieu has also been covered in this chapter. What remains is a discussion of how the Church is performing in the Arroyo administration.

President Arroyo's administration, now twenty-one months old, provides an archetype final case study to understand how the Church remains a force of legitimacy. Having installed her into power, the Church has still not removed itself from its advisory and support role in her administration.

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Raissa Robles, "Just the Woman for the Job," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *South China Morning Post* (January 20, 2001; accessed 5 October 2002).

In fact, it may be argued that since Arroyo has taken power the Church has acted in a very public manner, becoming bolder and more powerful than it ever has been. The Church's importance to Arroyo has only become larger since her inauguration. Its role in her presidency is easily measurable by simply looking at the Church's actions since she took her oath of office under the statue of the Virgin Mary at EDSA. Her first year in office illustrates the Church's key role in solidifying her legitimacy, which has been questioned by some in the Philippines, especially Estrada's supporters. The first months of the Arroyo administration are full of political drama and Church involvement. Indeed, the Church continued to remain active throughout her administration in its role as the most influential mediating variable. What follows is a discussion of a few of the key issues in which the Church injected itself into matters of legitimacy and policy in the new administration.

The first test for Arroyo and for the Church in its advisory role to the new president was the question of legitimacy itself. Although the polls clearly showed that the people supported the results of EDSA II, there were those in Estrada's camp who tried to create doubt in the people's minds about the legality of Arroyo's legitimacy. The criticisms were based on the Rational-Legal foundation found in the Weberian model. Arroyo had not been elected to the presidency and in the pro-Estrada group's eyes, therefore, she should be seen only as an "acting" president until something legally binding, such as a snap election, could be created.<sup>20</sup>

The argument had some weight, but it ignored Arroyo's popularity and the majority's acceptance of EDSA II as a form of snap election. Moreover, the Church-sponsored protests had forced President Estrada to accept a Philippine Supreme Court decree that stripped him of his office. The court may have been creating law, but

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<sup>20</sup>"GMA Government Facing Constitutional Crisis," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Manila Standard* (February 2, 2001; accessed 5 October 2002).

nonetheless, his acceptance of it and Arroyo's swearing in by the chief justice made her the new president of the Philippines.<sup>21</sup> It was, therefore, constitutional.

The efforts to discredit her via a legal argument were fruitless. Furthermore, Arroyo had followed the constitutional procedures in selecting a new vice president, Teofisto Guingona, and both chambers of the Philippine Congress had confirmed her selection. The constitutional hurdles that needed clearing were so minor that they did not even register in most people's minds. Whether Estrada's allies liked it or not, the fact was that Estrada had resigned, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court had sworn in Arroyo, and she had the full faith and support of the Catholic Church, which "spoke" for the people at EDSA II and had the public opinion polls backing up its claims.

In spite of everything, it was still not enough for loyal Estrada cliques, and Estrada still had legions of supporters among the poor. A plan was hatched three months after EDSA II to force Arroyo's resignation. Throngs of Estrada supporters began to gather at the EDSA shrine. They were angry about their idol's arrest, and they declared that they would not disperse until Arroyo resigned and Estrada was returned to Malacañang. It was a tense time in Manila, and the Church knew it had to react to this counter-action or risk losing its president and its influence over Philippine politics.

The press dubbed the event the "poor People Power" because it was largely made up of Manila's poor and unemployed, who had voted for and sympathized with Estrada. There was also a very large contingent from the *Inglesia ni Cristo*, a powerful anti-Catholic religious group that still supported the ousted president.<sup>22</sup> The numbers soon

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<sup>21</sup>David W. Hendon and Donald E. Greco, "Notes on Church-state Affairs," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Journal of Church & State* (April 1, 2001; accessed 5 October 2002).

<sup>22</sup>Ramon Tulfo, "Catholic vs. INC at EDSA," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (April 28, 2001; accessed 5 October 2002).

swelled to tens of thousands, but they discovered that numbers were not the key to success. Even before EDSA II, Estrada had amassed more than a million supporters to his cause in Manila to no avail. As those at this “EDSA III,” as it became to be called, were about to learn, a People Power without the Church’s support had no power at all.

The Catholic Church not only did not support the efforts of an EDSA III, but also fought against them. The protestors gathered at the EDSA shrine had done so without the Church’s permission. Once there, they began to deface what was officially Church property. EDSA was more than simply Church property. It was officially “holy ground,” a place where Christian pilgrims were granted plenary indulgences by the Roman Catholic Church. It had been declared holy ground shortly after EDSA II by a decree from Pope John Paul II. A church had existed on the site since 1987.<sup>23</sup>

Defacing holy ground and the parish did not sit well with Cardinal Sin. He took to the airwaves and urged people to defend democracy and the new president. “As Catholics, we must fully support, defend, and stand behind the present government and President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo,” Sin said in a radio and television address. “Keep watch, stay alert. [EDSA III] is immoral to grab power. It is immoral to support those plotting against duly constituted authorities.” The armed forces were also put on the highest alert.<sup>24</sup> Arroyo’s feelings on the issue were summed up by her husband, who said she was ready to deal with any attempt to grab power. He quoted the president as saying to Estrada’s supporters, “Come and take your best shot and I will crush you.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Norman Bordadora and Andrea T. Echavez, “EDSA Shrine: Where man is Fully Alive,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (February 23, 2001; accessed 5 October 2002).

<sup>24</sup>Paul Alexander, “Philippines Cardinal Urges Protest,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Associated Press* (April 29, 2001; accessed 5 October 2002).

<sup>25</sup>“Estrada Followers Cancel March To Philippine Pres Palace,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Dow Jones International* (April 29, 2001; accessed 5 October 2002).

The pro-Estrada mob did nothing to endear themselves to the millions of Arroyo's Catholic supporters. Their actions desecrated the EDSA shrine and left many dismayed. Trash littered the site, and Estrada partisans even plastered pictures of their hero on the hem of the Virgin Mary's dress. They also positioned loudspeakers at the doors of the shrine's church. The loudspeakers blasted "foul language" and "obscene songs" while those inside were trying to hear the liturgy.<sup>26</sup> "So many of us are on the brink of tears," Sin said over the situation. "We are grieving for the EDSA shrine, church of the people, temple of God, monument to peace."<sup>27</sup>

The influential Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines also decried the protestors as "immoral" and accused Estrada's "rich and powerful" allies of "exploiting the poor" for their own interests.<sup>28</sup> The CBCP's Bishop Quevedo called the EDSA III rally an "effectively planned and amply funded sinister destabilization scheme" staged by Estrada's supporters. Both sides were poised for a new confrontation.

Estrada supporters threatened to storm the presidential palace. The police and the military rolled out armored vehicles to secure the palace and several thousand people responded to Cardinal Sin's radio broadcast. President Arroyo visited and shook hands with those who responded to the Church's call and thanked them profusely.<sup>29</sup> She also made a special effort to meet with Cardinal Sin, military, and police officials to discuss

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<sup>26</sup>Blanche S. Rivera, Donna Pazzibugan, and Gerald G. Lacuarta, "Sin Urges Flock: Wear Blue Today," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (April 29, 2001; accessed 5 October 2002).

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>"Strike Thwarts Power Grab by Estrada Supporters, says Arroyo," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Bangkok Post* (May 1, 2001; accessed 3 October 2002).

strategy on how to deal with the potential for deadly riots.<sup>30</sup> Sadly, violence was inevitable.

On May 1, 2001, elements of the pro-Estrada rally attempted to storm the Malacanang. President Arroyo declared a "state of rebellion," sending heavily armed police to arrest key opposition politicians and quell the protests. It was the worst wave of political violence in fifteen years, and Philippine democracy suffered because of it. Within hours, Senator Juan Ponce Enrile, who served as defense minister under dictator Ferdinand Marcos, was arrested on sedition charges. He was one of eleven politicians, military officers, and policemen arrested that same day. Others included Senator Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan, the same man who led two coup attempts in the late 1980s against President Corazon Aquino. When the smoke cleared, one policeman and two rioters were dead. About 113 protestors were wounded and more than 100 rioters were also arrested.

In the end Arroyo made good on her promise "to crush" the protests and end Estrada's hopes for a return to power. The blame for the violence lay not with Arroyo but with Estrada, and the Church placed it on his shoulders.<sup>31</sup> Cardinal Sin condemned allies of the jailed Estrada for instigating the riot as he spoke before thousands of pro-government supporters who had gathered at the defaced EDSA shrine to reclaim it for the Church and clean up the filth left by Estrada's mob. The fact that the pro-Estrada mob chose EDSA as the place of the protest also indicated that they opposed the Church's actions as well. However, the Church did not blame the poor, but instead laid the blame

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Marc Lerner, "President calls 'state of rebellion' in Manila Police Arrest Opposition Politicians," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *The Washington Times* (May 2, 2001; accessed 5 October 2002).

at the feet of Estrada's political allies for abusing and manipulating the poor and capitalizing on their weakness.<sup>32</sup>

Nearly 25,000 people attended the Mass held at the end of the "poor people" power uprising. It was a day of "reclamation" and reaffirmation of the Arroyo presidency. Standing before the trash-strewn shrine, Sin declared, "The people have desecrated Holy ground, disrespected the image of our Lady and offended Catholic sensibilities. Obscene songs and contemptuous remarks were hurled even at the Church . . . [but] we do not sow revenge, hatred, and rancor. We are saddened but not vengeful. We are appalled by the desecration but we do not want to retaliate . . . We do not hold these sins against the poor."<sup>33</sup> Cardinal Sin also used the mass to reiterate his support for President Arroyo. He said, "She blended well justice and love, force and tolerance, law and freedom."<sup>34</sup> Moreover, he vowed that the Church would "never again allow the desecration" of the EDSA shrine.<sup>35</sup>

Estrada's hopes of using People Power to regain his office were dashed, but EDSA III opened the Church's and the new administration's eyes. It illustrated to both the government and the Church that significant numbers of the poor still supported Estrada. The reasons were simple. He was their matinee idol and, at least in his rhetoric,

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<sup>32</sup>"Philippine Catholic Church Leader Condemns Street Riots," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Agence France-Presse* (May 1, 2001; accessed 4 March 2002).

<sup>33</sup>Cathy Rose A. Garcia, "Politicians Who Manipulated Poor Face God's Wrath – Sin," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Business World* (May 2, 2001; accessed 3 March 2002).

<sup>34</sup>Arturo Bariud, "Arroyo Blossoms Under Pressure," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *The Straits Times* (May 5, 2001; accessed 5 March 2002).

<sup>35</sup>"Choose Wisely, Voters Told (GMA Says Polls Not a Test of Her Legitimacy)," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Business World* (May 14, 2001; accessed 5 October 2002).



he attempted to identify with their issues. Regardless of his own alleged embezzlement of funds, he still made them feel important.

Arroyo had not used her first few months in office to cater to the poor as Estrada had. Concrete actions by the Church were slow, and the poorest segments of society continued to feel abandoned and overlooked by the new government. Certain segments even called upon Arroyo and Cardinal Sin to end their social, economic, and political "calvaries," daring them to "stand for the right of the peasantry . . . above the interests of the landed families who continue to amass wealth and property at the expense of the already impoverished peasants."<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, many felt that action was too slow, and this is part of the reason an EDSA III erupted.

When the author was in Manila during the summer of 2001, the talk on the streets was much the same. "Where is Arroyo? Where is Cardinal Sin? Erap was our guy, our president and they took him from us," said one gentleman in a Makati shopping mall. "The Church should not have intervened. Let the trial go. Estrada is the one who should be president," said another in Manila.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, many were still angry about the events of EDSA II well into the summer of 2001, feeling that the Church had snatched away their legitimate president in order to install one of its own. Moreover, they felt that the Church was an institution of elite and middle class that cared little about the plight of Manila's poor.

The editorial boards of Manila's newspapers concurred. They often criticized the Church for not taking the plight of the poor seriously. One criticism was that the Church did not apply enough pressure on its rich and middle class parishioners, who seemed to

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<sup>36</sup>"Farmers Seek Sin, GMA Help to End 'Calvary'," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (April 12, 2001; accessed 5 October 2002).

<sup>37</sup>Filipinos' Opinion. Interview by author, 20 July 2001, Philippines. Transcribed. Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia.

forget the gospel after Sunday sermons and failed to take care of the “least” of society. In fact, these same “rich” parishioners often failed to pay their poor workers a “living” wage. In one scathing editorial, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* called upon the Church to do “something significant to show for more than 400 years of work in this ‘only Christian country’ in Asia.”<sup>38</sup> It was a dramatic indictment of the Church’s performance in helping the nation’s poorest.

Understanding this perspective, Cardinal Sin took the opportunity in the wake of EDSA III to publicly ask for forgiveness from the poor for both himself and the Church. Sin apologized and acknowledged that the Church had neglected the poor and that this had made them easy prey for “selfish” and “powerful” people. “We would like to ask the poor for forgiveness,” Sin said. “We should listen to the poor’s complaints. We should not wait for another crisis before we open our eyes.”<sup>39</sup> The Church needed to reopen a dialog with the poor, and the aftermath of EDSA III was the perfect time.

The crisis of the “poor people power” forced the Church to act as Arroyo’s protector. It would soon have to meet another challenge to her legitimacy from a different and much smaller segment of society. In the summer of 2002, a new threat to her legitimacy came in the guise of a political pressure group known as the Council for Philippine Affairs (COPA). Ironically, COPA was launched at Cardinal Sin’s villa in 1999. It started out as a gathering of political hacks interested in injecting themselves into national politics. They morphed into a group eager to depose what they felt was a weak Arroyo administration.

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<sup>38</sup>Ramon T. Jimenez, “EDSA III’ Should Jolt Gov’t, Labor, Church to Act Now,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (May 2, 2001; accessed 3 April 2002).

<sup>39</sup>“Catholic Church Leader Apologizes to Poor for Neglecting Them,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Associate Press Newswires* (May 13, 2001; accessed 4 May 2002).

The COPA slogan had been "Be informed. Be concerned. Be involved," and as long as the group's criticism was not directed towards Arroyo, the Church did not watch COPA particularly closely.<sup>40</sup> But when Arroyo became a target of COPA, the Church took notice and took action. Although COPA's attacks were minor and hardly registered in the Philippine press initially, they had to be met head on. Allowing them to fester in the body politic was something the Church was not comfortable with.

Most of COPA's charges centered on the fact that Arroyo had abandoned the "spirit" of EDSA II in favor of *status quo* politics. It was a baseless charge, and Arroyo initially dismissed it, saying she was not bothered by COPA, nor did she owe her position to anyone but "God." To some God may have been a code word for Cardinal Sin, and according to at least one incredulous reporter, Sin was "as close to God as anyone can get in this country."<sup>41</sup> While not divine, Cardinal Sin was politically astute and wanted to head off any COPA rallies that might use Church property as a rallying point. The Cardinal banned political demonstrations on the premises of the EDSA shrine and refused to give permission to allow COPA to use it for any actions against Arroyo.

The Church did not want anything to jeopardize the Arroyo administration.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, the cardinal commanded the presidential advisor on media and ecclesiastical affairs, Conrado "Dodi" Limcaoco, to release information to the press about

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<sup>40</sup>Donna S. Cueto and Norman Bordadora, "Who's Afraid of Copa?" [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (July 27, 2002; accessed 5 October 2002).

<sup>41</sup>Conrado De Quiros, "Theology 101," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (July 15, 2002; accessed 5 October 2002).

<sup>42</sup>Amando Doronila, "GMA - EDSA II Beneficiary Not Its Reincarnation," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (July 14, 2002; accessed 5 October 2002).

COPA's activities.<sup>43</sup> The strategy was simple. He wanted to expose the plotters to the conservative press and to Arroyo's supporters, and this preemptive move would force COPA back into the shadows. He also had another reason. Members of COPA had been intentionally feeding erroneous information to the press that fostered the false assumption that Cardinal Sin supported their efforts against Arroyo.

COPA Secretary General Pastor Saycon told one paper about a meeting with Cardinal Sin. He said he went to see the cardinal to present COPA's manifesto. "The manifesto would be all about democracy and freedom from poverty. That's why we wanted the Cardinal's blessing," Saycon said.<sup>44</sup> The manifesto also contained a provision by which COPA members would take over the government and form a ruling *junta* should rumors of a coup or an EDSA IV materialize. COPA's manifesto was absurd on many levels, because the group never had the support of Cardinal Sin or the Church.<sup>45</sup> Moreover COPA never had support from the masses. It was, in the words of one observer, a "small group" with media savvy.<sup>46</sup>

COPA was easily defeated without the Church's support and after a meeting with the Reverend Socrates Villegas, COPA's Saycon offered a public apology to the nation, the Church, and the president.<sup>47</sup> The entire COPA affair was small but indicative of how

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<sup>43</sup>Carlito Pablo and Dona Pazzibugan, "Palace Admits News Leak," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (April 25, 2002; accessed 5 October 2002).

<sup>44</sup>"'Freedom Force' not Anti-Gloria," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (April 23, 2002; accessed 4 October 2002).

<sup>45</sup>Christian V. Esquerra and Dona Z. Pazzibugan, "Copa to Seek Ceasefire," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (April 26, 2002; accessed 5 October 2002).

<sup>46</sup>Armand N. Nocum and Normal Bordadora, "Saycon Says Sorry for Those He Offended," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (July 15, 2002; accessed 4 October 2002).

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*

political opposition sometimes worked. The Church helped keep it small, and that was a good thing for Arroyo. In Philippine politics the most minor of charges or the smallest ripples of discord can lead to severe consequences. Former Presidents Ramos and Estrada can attest to that.

In less public and identifiable ways than COPA, the Church served Arroyo as less of a watchdog and more of a cheering section and unofficial publicity machine. Its message for all the discontented was simple—have patience. Patience was a theme echoed over and over by the Church during the early months of Arroyo's administration. Everyone must have patience with the new president, the Church believed, including the masses and the Philippine Congress.

The Church was not above chiding the Philippine public and members of Congress for having what they deemed "unrealistic" expectations of Arroyo. The Church also criticized the "inane behavior" of senators stifling her domestic agenda.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, it was the Philippine Congress, the Church believed, which kept Arroyo's war on poverty from making progress. In a roundabout way, Congress's inaction could be used to take some of the heat off of Arroyo and the Church.

Poverty and how to deal with it is always a pressing issue in the Philippines, and sometimes the Church is even harsh on the president when it feels she is not acting in the best manner and being proactive enough in responding to the needs of the poor. In fact, Cardinal Sin chastised Arroyo early in 2002 when he believed she cared more about photo opportunities with the poor than actually helping them. Sin told the president that the poor were "not for decoration and for romantic charity photographs," and exhorted

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<sup>48</sup>“Philippines: Catholic Bishops Ask for Arroyo Government to be Given More Time,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (January 18, 2002; accessed 5 October, 2002).

Arroyo to serve them "away from the flashing lights of photographers."<sup>49</sup> Arroyo soon got the message and stated publicly that she would "heed" Cardinal Sin's advice.<sup>50</sup>

Over the past twenty-one months, these are issues that the Church has helped Arroyo address when it is not defending itself against attacks from the press, such as on the issue of the poor, or actively buttressing Arroyo's legitimacy. Less popular issues were not less important to the Church. Indeed, it injected itself into many of Arroyo's policies and the Philippines have also witnessed a convergence of Arroyo's policy platform and the Church's political agenda over other issues. Arroyo accepted virtually the Church's entire policy platform as the template for her own government's policies, including the areas of reproductive health, divorce, the death penalty, and censorship of the media. The press even reported that Arroyo herself vowed with "lamb-like meekness" to follow the Catholic Church's dictates in matters of policy, and would pay particular deference to the advice of Cardinal Sin and the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines in certain policy matters.<sup>51</sup>

One area where the Church belonged was in the spiritual needs of the administration. For example, the president summoned the "prayer power" of Cardinal Sin to help her and her administration put an end to the hostage crises that afflicted the Philippines in June 2001. The Abu Syaff, a terrorist group with ties to Al Qaeda, was kidnapping Filipinos and western tourists with impunity and causing her administration considerable public relations problems. The cardinal arrived at the palace and set about

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<sup>49</sup>"Philippines Leader Says She is in Charge After Turbulent Year," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Agence France-Presse* (January 20, 2002; accessed 5 October 2002).

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup>Norman Bordadora, "Gloria Toes Church Line," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (February 16, 2001; accessed 18 November 2002).

leading a "prayer for the Cabinet."<sup>52</sup> The fact that his visit was detailed in the press hints at its importance. Whether the prayers worked or not is something debated by believers and theologians, but no doubt the Church's public presence added a sense of authority and punctuated the crisis's importance to the Arroyo administration.

In a more mundane role, the Church injected itself into the nomination process of some of Arroyo's cabinet members. A prime example is the selection of the health secretary. Since this position was directly responsible for policies dealing with reproduction and abortion--issues the Church had a keen interest in—it was interested in who would take the seat. Arroyo recognized the Church's interest in her administration's issues. She said she would "gladly listen" to the counsel of the Church and "the good Cardinal."<sup>53</sup> It came as no surprise that the Church approved the appointment of Dr. Manuel Dayrit, who favored its positions.<sup>54</sup>

Media reports also indicated that the Church was heavily involved in the nomination and endorsements of candidates to the Commission on Elections (COMLEC), which is the governmental body in charge of overseeing elections. Overseeing elections was one way for the Church to solidify a powerful position in the government. Having allies on COMLEC could ensure an election that it believed would favor its candidates.

The Church was also involved in more ominous endeavors, such as censorship of the media. The Arroyo administration did little to counter its actions. The Church had always been the unofficial moral conscious of the Filipino people, but under the new

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<sup>52</sup>Juliet L. Javellana and Carlio Pablo, "Gloria: Nani Can't Serve as Negotiator," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (June 20, 2001; accessed 5 October 2002).

<sup>53</sup>Arturo Bariuad, "Ban Shows Church's Influence on Arroyo," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *The Straits Times* (March 23, 2001; accessed 5 October 2002).

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

Arroyo administration it became more active, taking an “official” role as arbiter of what could and could not be seen in Philippine cinema. A prime example of the Church’s new empowered moral authority came after the release of the motion picture *Live Show*.

The film, which won wide acclaim across the entertainment world, including the Cannes Film Festival, was targeted by the Catholic Church and its leadership for its graphic depictions of the seedier side of Manila’s nightclub life, including its depiction of live “sex shows.” The Church did not approve, and it pressured the president to remove the film from theaters. When Arroyo acquiesced, it became the first instance of open censorship in her administration.

In another graphic representation of the Church’s authority and influence on the State, the chairman of the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) was summoned to a meeting with Cardinal Sin. Interestingly, he had to answer to the cardinal and not to the president for his actions. After the meeting Chairman Nicanor Tiongson, who had previously approved the film *Live Show*, stated to the press that he had been “traumatized” by his meeting with Sin, who he said was “reeking with arrogance.”<sup>55</sup> Moreover, Tiongson said the cardinal had acted more like a “political tactician” than a priest.

Regardless of the criticism, Cardinal Sin proved politically effective in pressuring President Arroyo to suppress the film. Did she have a choice? How could she say “no” to the Church or Cardinal Sin in this matter? Arroyo recognized that she owed her position as president in large part to the actions of the Catholic Church and to Cardinal Sin. Without EDSA II there would be no President Arroyo. Consequently, Arroyo forced Tiongson to resign.

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<sup>55</sup>Leah Salterio, Donna S. Cueto, and Norman Bordadora, “Chief Censor Quits; Church Meddling Hit,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (March 22, 2001; accessed 18 November 2002).



The media was wary of the Church's actions in this particular case. By giving in to the Church's pressure, they believed that Arroyo had committed "a culpable violation of the constitutional principle separating Church and State." The *Philippine Daily Inquirer* called the Church a "moral posse of pharisaic ayatollahs," claiming that none of the Church leadership had even seen the film.<sup>56</sup> Asked if this was a violation of the separation of the Church and State, President Arroyo confidently replied that it was not. She said, "Anybody can recommend, and it's up to the President to make a decision."<sup>57</sup> So it seems the Church merely "recommended" that she do what it advised.

The Church also had Arroyo's support regarding the death penalty. Catholic doctrine from the Vatican on down opposes the death penalty in all cases. This often contradicts with Catholic societies at large, including the Philippine public, which tends to favor the death penalty for murder and other heinous crimes. Public opinion polls show that the death penalty is favored by as much as 82 percent of the Philippine population. On this issue, the Church is out of step with the majority.<sup>58</sup>

Arroyo's own actions in dealing with the issue of capital punishment show how she is torn between doing the Church's bidding and her own desire to follow the people's wishes. She has personally expressed displeasure for the death penalty, and she continues to support the Church's push for the repeal of the death penalty law.<sup>59</sup> She has

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<sup>56</sup>Dean Jorge Bocob, "Joker, Say, Oh say It Ain't So," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (March 26, 2001; accessed 4 May 2002).

<sup>57</sup>Donna S. Cueto and Jerome Aning, "GMA: It's Not Sin but His Spokesperson," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (March 31, 2001; accessed 4 October 2002).

<sup>58</sup>Mahar Mangahas, "Omnibus Social Survey-October 30, 1998," [Online database at <http://www.sws.org.ph/>] *Social Weather Report Survey* (October 30, 1998; accessed 22 November 2002).

<sup>59</sup>Raissa Robles, "Arroyo 'Rules Out Executions on Her Watch'," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *South China Morning Post* (April 5, 2001; accessed 5 October 2002).

also commuted all death sentences to life imprisonment.<sup>60</sup> However, a few months later she altered her stance and said that death sentences should be carried out as long as the law existed. It seems that she is playing politics on this issue.

Most recently, she granted a reprieve to three convicted rapists who were coincidentally scheduled to die on Cardinal Sin's birthday.<sup>61</sup> Arroyo would not allow the executions on the birthday of her most important benefactor. As the year 2002 progressed, the issue of the death penalty was still unresolved, but if she followed public opinion then capital punishment would continue unfettered. If she followed the Church, she would continue to push for a law that prohibits the death penalty in all cases. The outcome of the death penalty issue remains uncertain.

The legality of divorce is another issue confronting the president. But unlike the death penalty, Arroyo and Cardinal Sin's closeness on the issue is described as "solid" and in "total agreement."<sup>62</sup> Both have attacked a measure before Congress that would have made divorce legal, calling it "un-Filipino," "immoral," and "unconstitutional." Not one to mince words, Cardinal Sin said such a measure was "absurd" and "insane" and said that no sensible or intelligent legislator would pursue it.<sup>63</sup>

Both Arroyo and Sin have consistently favored keeping the constitutional provisions of 1987 that "guarantee" the sanctity of the family. Divorce violates these

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<sup>60</sup>Leotes Marie T. Lugo, "GMA Commutes All in Death Row List to Life Terms," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Business World* (April 4, 2001; accessed 4 March 2002).

<sup>61</sup>"Legal Effort To Halt 30 Philippine Executions Fails," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Dow Jones International News* (September 23, 2002; accessed 5 October 2002).

<sup>62</sup>Gerald G. Lacuarta and Juliet L. Javellan, "GMA, Sin call Divorce Bill Immoral, Un-Filipino," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (July 7, 2001; accessed 5 October 2002).

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*

provisions, in their opinion. Arroyo has been quoted as saying that the government should not alter any section of the constitution that would harm the “basic source of our national bond and fraternity.”<sup>64</sup> Arroyo also said measures to amend the constitution and legalize divorce only served to distract from economic priorities and cause further divisions within the government and society.<sup>65</sup> For the foreseeable future, it seems that divorce will remain illegal since the Church is unlikely to yield on this issue.

EDSA III, the *Live Show* debate, the death penalty, and divorce are just a few examples of how the Church has been integrally involved in the new administration. Sometimes its activities have drawn criticism both domestically and internationally. Even the Vatican was displeased with the Philippine Catholic Church’s overt political activities. A case in point is found in a “leak” of a Holy See edict soon after Arroyo took office. In the edict, the Pope was critical of Cardinal Sin and the Church’s continued involvement in politics after EDSA II. The Church’s leadership did not like the criticism. Cardinal Sin reportedly had the Philippine Ambassador to the Vatican, Tita De Villa, recalled immediately.

It was an astonishing demonstration of power, for here was a prelate forcing the newly installed president of the Philippines to recall an ambassador. It was yet another bit of evidence of the Church’s lofty position in the Arroyo government. As the *Manila Standard* later pointed out, the important lesson from this episode was not the “leak” itself but that President Arroyo was so eager to accommodate the Church without giving Ambassador De Villa a chance to explain her actions. The appointment of ambassadors

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Camela Cruz, “President Opposes Proposal to Allow Amendments,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Associated Press Newswires* (July 6, 2001; accessed 5 October 2002).

is legally the *sole* prerogative of the president, but she gave in to the cardinal's demands. This caused the *Manila Standard* to ask if Arroyo had own "Richelieu."<sup>66</sup>

Having a "Richelieu" was not all bad, and it had positive affects for Arroyo. Not only did Cardinal Sin lead the Church that helped install her as president and legitimize her administration, but he also helped her gain a congressional voting block in the interim elections of May 2001. The Church made it its duty to campaign for candidates that favored its agenda in the May elections.<sup>67</sup> Together with Arroyo, it campaigned to get the country's estimated thirty-six million eligible voters to choose a slate of candidates that would help Arroyo, and do so in an atmosphere not tainted by guns, goons, or gold as Philippine elections often are.

The Church and Arroyo had high hopes for their slate of candidates, thirteen in all. They were all part of the administration's "People Power Coalition," which was a group of candidates that the Church felt would support the president's policy decisions. As it had in the past, the Church watched the May balloting carefully. It wanted to prevent cheating and hoped to calm any potential violence the election could engender. Not only did COMELEC officiate, but the National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) was also present, as was the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV), which had an impressive 462,000 volunteers covering fifty-eight dioceses nationwide.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>"Sin Had Ambassador to Vatican Recalled," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Manila Standard* (February 4, 2001; accessed 5 October 2002).

<sup>67</sup>"Philippine Church Leader Appeals for Calm Ahead of Elections," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Agence France-Presse* (May 13, 2001, accessed 4 October 2002).

<sup>68</sup>Gerald G. Lacuarta, "Polls 'Generally Peaceful,' Turnout 85%," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (May 15, 2001; accessed 5 October 2002).

When the election was over and the dust had settled, the Church was pleased. Its presence had ensured relatively peaceful elections and eight of its thirteen candidates had won election. Politically, the Church had pulled off another victory for the Arroyo government. She now had validation from the Church, from the EDSA II “parliament of the streets,” and from the ballot box. Challenges from pro-Estrada forces would now face an impossible task in unseating Arroyo.

By the year 2002 Arroyo had, with the Church’s help, fought off challenges to her legitimacy and secured her place as president. She made significant progress on her policy agenda, and certain segments of the international press took notice of her efforts. In their “report card” on her administration, she received high marks. They credited her for having accomplished a great deal in her first year in office, despite the political and economic turmoil that engulfed the Philippines at the time she took over for Estrada. They gave her credit for restoring fiscal control, stabilizing the peso, and presiding over the fastest growing economy in Southeast Asia for the fiscal year.<sup>69</sup>

Domestically, she enjoyed the solid backing of the military, and public opinion polls showed that her popularity remained steady. The Church continued to stand squarely behind the president, and throughout her term it has been her most ardent supporter.<sup>70</sup> Sometimes it offered concrete policy advice and at other times spiritual guidance and comfort, and it sometimes served as her protector. On rare occasions, the Church could even be Arroyo’s toughest critic. The key point is that it was there in some capacity through her first volatile months, keeping her focused on her message and the reasons she was made the president to begin with.

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<sup>69</sup>“Thrilla in Manila – II,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Institutional Investor – International* (June 1, 2002; accessed 5 October 2002).

<sup>70</sup>Luz Baguioro, “Arroyo Feels the Heat from Ramos and Estrada Camps,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *The Straits Times* (January 11, 2002; accessed 5 October 2002).

Cardinal Sin and the Church have remained powerful in Philippine politics, both in an advisory role when necessary and a very vocal and public role when required. But what about the future of the Church in Philippine politics? Will it remain *the* mediating variable in matters of legitimacy? Cardinal Sin's leadership certainly cannot last forever, and with his passing the Church will have to fill a large "power vacuum."

The author believes that Cardinal Sin's absence in no way means the end of Church activism or influence. The model found in figure 17 does not contain the names of any one person, but instead features an institution in the role of the mediating variable "z." Yet history teaches one that the presence of a charismatic and politically astute leader helps assure the Church a *preeminent* position in matters of secular politics and not simply a marginal role as a mediating variable. Cardinal Sin's own exploits have illustrated that the Church is most powerful when it has a strong leader at the helm. As a result, observers have wondered if anyone can and will fill Sin's shoes and lead the Church in the new millennium.

Whoever it may be, he will need to possess a combination of empathy for the oppressed, a dynamic personality, and a keen political instinct. Only a leader with keen political instincts could navigate the immense social weight of the Church through the potentially troubling waters of the Philippine political scene. He will need to practice political moderation as well, so as not to involve the Church in petty political disputes but save its power for battles that truly matter. Given all of this, the question becomes: If not Cardinal Sin, then who will it be? Is there any one man who will rise to take the Church's helm?

Until recently it was unclear if such an individual existed. But one man has risen above the rest in the unofficial competition to be Sin's spiritual successor. He has been

previously mentioned briefly in this study. His name is Socrates “Soc” Villegas.<sup>71</sup>

Although not a stranger to those who have visited the EDSA shrine in the past eleven years, he has remained largely below the political radar screen of most casual observers of Philippine politics. But Villegas is far from a new face to Philippine social and political circles. Everyone from Philippine politicians to priests knows exactly who he is, his history, and his potential.

Since being ordained by Cardinal Sin sixteen years ago, Villegas has been Sin’s personal secretary and spokesman and has been in the forefront of many of the Church’s political battles. In fact, Villegas was just months into the priesthood when he stood by Cardinal Sin’s side during the four days of the first People Power Revolution of 1986. For eleven years, he was the rector of the EDSA shrine, and in January 2001, it was Villegas who turned on the lights at EDSA to welcome the first wave of protesters against President Joseph Estrada.<sup>72</sup>

The faithful who have attended Mass at the shrine during the past decade know Father “Soc” very well, having been “entranced by the homilies of the baby-faced priest.”<sup>73</sup> Villegas has been called a “gifted sermon writer and orator, a charismatic, principled leader who guides his faithful with steadfast, moral courage.”<sup>74</sup> In Manila’s political circles, he is known for being a simple, well-spoken advocate of conservative Catholicism, making the Church’s doctrines palatable to all.

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<sup>71</sup>Andrea Trinidad-Echavez, “Msgr. ‘Soc’ Now a Bishop,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (July 27, 2001; accessed 5 October 2002).

<sup>72</sup>“Barbed-wire Crest for New Bishop,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (September 1, 2001; accessed 5 October 2002).

<sup>73</sup>Kris Aquino, “A Modern Man of the Church,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (September 3, 2001; accessed 5 October 2002).

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*

Villegas has also accumulated some accolades. In the year 2000, he received the Ten Outstanding Young Men (TOYM) award for community development given by the Philippine Jaycees. He is also the author of five books on homilies, prayers, and reflections. Moreover, he was given the Catholic Authors Awards by the Asian Catholic Publishers Inc. in 1994. He also serves as member of the College of Consultors, vicar general of the Archdiocese of Manila, and the district head of the Ecclesiastical District of Quezon City-South. He was also executive coordinator of the Commission for the World Youth Day 1995 in Manila.

But those offices and honors were mere baby steps to his ordination as a bishop of the Church on August 31, 2001. The coronation was held in the historical Manila Cathedral and performed by none other than Cardinal Sin. In fact, Sin chose his own birthday as the perfect day to affirm the Church's newest bishop. If the Cardinal's personal blessing was not enough, President Arroyo, former President Aquino, and Chief Justice Hilario Davide were also there. They shared the audience with members of the Philippine Congress and some of the most politically powerful Filipinos in the world. It was no accident that they were in attendance. Their presence was a very real acknowledgment of the event's significance. Perhaps it was also a tacit "nod" to the future of the Church itself.

Even before the ceremony, Villegas had the president's ear. Arroyo publicly stated during the COPA crisis that she received advice and counsel from Villegas. He had also offered to mediate between the Arroyo administration and COPA during the mini-crisis discussed earlier.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, he was also the one who pressured COPA's leadership to drop their anti-Arroyo rhetoric, convincing Pastor Saycon to publicly apologize.

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<sup>75</sup>Armand N. Nocum, T. J. Burgonio, and Christine Avendano, "Bishop Offers to Mediate in 'Civil' Unrest," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (July 12, 2002; accessed 4 October 2002).



The political elite's attendance illustrated that in years to come, young Bishop Villegas would most likely be leader of the Church, and those who wished to secure and legitimize their political power should become acquainted with the new bishop. On the day of his coronation, Villegas's life and Cardinal Sin's, and perhaps even the Church's role in the Arroyo administration, had come full circle. The Church of today had Cardinal Sin, its future lay in Villegas, and its political power rested with Arroyo.

In a way, the torch of leadership was passed to Bishop Villegas on the day of his coronation. Cardinal Sin has since receded more into the background. The rest of the Church leadership has also vowed to disengage from the political scene. In a statement issued by 119 bishops of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, they vowed to stay out of the country's politics and leave secular matters to ordinary Filipino Catholics and lay organizations.<sup>76</sup>

However, the Church has vowed to do so in the past and has failed each time. It is unlikely that the bishops will withdraw completely from politics. There remain too many important issues to deal with in the Philippines, and the Church has something to contribute to them all. As an essential power broker in the Philippines and the bedrock on which the legitimacy of the Arroyo government rests, do not expect the Church to fade from the public spotlight.

The Church helped situate Arroyo in the unique position where she may have been able to serve eight years as the president and bring real fundamental changes to the Philippines. Yet Arroyo's own waffling on political matters near and dear to the Church produced rifts in their once close relationship. On one side was the powerful Church that was looking for a strong and even subservient political ally as president to help push through their social and political agenda, and on the other a politician being torn between

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<sup>76</sup>Arturo Bariuad, "Manila Bishops Vow to Keep Out of Politics," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *The Straits Times* (July 17, 2001; accessed 5 October 2002).

the need to satisfy the Church as well as political opposition in the Philippine Congress. The result was stagnation, and nothing was being done.

Perhaps sensing the hopelessness of the situation and realizing she was losing support from all sectors Arroyo made a surprising decision. On December 30, 2002 President Arroyo announced to the nation that she would not seek reelection in 2004. This sent shockwaves throughout Philippine political circles and even shocked the author of this study. On the surface there were no real indications that her situation was so hopeless as to warrant pulling out of politics. However, it did not take long before facts emerged that gave a context to her decision.

Rumors soon surfaced that Arroyo lost the support of the Church.<sup>77</sup> These rumors were not hard to believe. Her popularity has been falling in recent surveys and she ranked a distant fourth in preferences for the 2004 presidential election.<sup>78</sup> Some urged the President to “cast aside” the wishes of the Catholic Church in order to tackle issues such as population control that she has been less than assertive in dealing with while under the Church’s thumb.<sup>79</sup> The Church pushed her to be more in line with their wishes. She could do neither. She decided to bow out.

Reaction to her decision was swift, for just a few days after her announcement the Church praised Arroyo during a special Thanksgiving Mass. In front of a crowd of about a thousand the heir-apparent of Cardinal Sin, Bishop Socrates Villegas said that Arroyo had set a “fine example of pursuing peace and unity for the world and the nation.” He

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<sup>77</sup> “Philippines Risk: Economic, Political Worries Increase,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Economist Intelligence Unit* (January 9, 2003; accessed 10 February 2003).

<sup>78</sup> “Analysis-The Philippine Presidency: Jury Still Out on Wisdom of Arroyo’s Withdrawal,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Bangkok Post* (January 7, 2003; accessed 2 February 2003).

<sup>79</sup> Ramon Tulfo, “There’s a Lack of Presidential Timber,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (January 6, 2003; accessed 5 February 2003).

went further to declare that the President “sought the guidance of God and not politicians in declaring her decision not to run in 2004.”<sup>80</sup> Such a quick and glowing response leads this author to suspect that the Church knew and had a hand in her decision all along.

After her announcement candidates began lining up for the presidency and the Church is already preparing their tactics for 2004. Who are the contenders and what do the people think of them? In a recent Social Weather Station poll Senator Raul Roco was chosen by 24 percent of those polled, followed by actor Fernando Poe Jr. at 21 percent, Noli de Castro with 19 percent, and coming fourth was President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo with 13 percent.<sup>81</sup>

Out of this list, Fernando Poe Jr. worries the Church the most. He not only is a popular actor but also a friend and ally to deposed President Estrada. The Church does not wish to see another Estrada debacle. Their reservoir of “People Power” is not so deep as to be able to call another in just a few years should Poe be elected and it become necessary. Hoping to preempt Poe’s candidacy Archbishop Orlando Quevedo, president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, praised Arroyo while at the same time indirectly commenting on Poe when he said, “We must expect other political leaders to follow her example of self-sacrifice when it is for the common good of all. We must expect possible candidates for electoral office to examine themselves in the light of the needs of the country... winnability must not be taken as a criterion for candidacy.”<sup>82</sup> It would seem that the Church is gearing up for an offensive should Poe take on the mantle of Estrada and wish to challenge their authority. There are no current indications from

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<sup>80</sup> “GMA Admired, Applauded at Mass for Unity,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (January 2, 2003: accessed 5 February 2003).

<sup>81</sup> “Roco and De Castro Lead the 2004 Race, According to SWS December 7-15 Survey,” *Special Media Release* [<http://www.sws.org.ph>] (20 December 2002: accessed 3 January 2003).

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

Poe's side that he wishes such a political fight, and he may end up embracing the Catholic Church, as 2004 grows closer.

Outside electoral politics the Church is also relevant to the Philippine government. The recent spate of terrorist attacks in Mindanao and in Manila also highlights the dangers posed by Communist insurgencies and Muslim separatist movements. The Church may be needed now more than ever as both an intelligence gathering arm of the government and for its ability to negotiate peace with enemies of the State. Many questions will certainly be posed and answered in the 2004 elections. Can the Church ensure an election of a candidate favorable to their agenda? Will the new president embrace the Church as a political ally? And what role will the Church play with the State in the next few years?

If one thing is certain about Philippine politics, it is that nothing is certain. The Church will certainly have a major presence, but at times the relationship between the Church and State--even between Cardinal Sin and Arroyo--can be a tumultuous union with the electorate taking the part of the suffering children. At other times the "marriage" between the two is one of the most beautiful political and social relationships found in the family of nation-states.

The closeness of the relationship may trouble the hardened observer, but the sight of Arroyo surrounded by cardinals and bishops of the Philippine Catholic Church is anything but an ominous vision. In many ways, it is the continuation of a tradition spanning over 400 years, when the first political communities were organized around the Catholic parish and the local leadership was hand-picked and advised by the parish priest. Seeing Arroyo embraced by the Church both literally and figuratively may be just the way it ought to be, and it is certainly nothing unusual or any reason to feel a sense of foreboding. Indeed, the fact that the new president shared the stage with the Philippine Church may offer a bit of inner peace, if only for a moment, for it is better to see a head of State surrounded by men of peace instead of the objects of war.

In the end, the future of the Arroyo presidency beyond 2004 and Philippine politics in general can be seen by examining a scene from the recent past. In fact, this scene may be one of the most telling and striking visuals to come out of the Church-State relationship in years. It happened on January 21, 2001, as members of the Philippine government joined with newly appointed President Arroyo on stage at the EDSA shrine along with the Church's leadership. The following account of the event is from the January 28, 2001, edition of the *San Francisco Chronicle*:

Philippine President Gloria Macapaga- Arroyo walked solemnly toward the serene-faced old man in a gold-colored vestment seated near the altar of the Manila Cathedral. *Bowing* before Cardinal Jaime Sin, she *kissed* the hand of one of the world's most politically influential Roman Catholic leaders, who--for the second time in 15 years--helped rally a million people in a popular revolt that brought down a tainted government . . .

Bowing in respect and acknowledgment for what the Church had just done for her and the Philippine nation, Arroyo recognized where her government's legitimacy came from. After she bowed, the cardinal spoke to her and to the nation: "Politics in the Philippines must be baptized, evangelized and become a tool not for corruption but for sanctification . . . we will help you for the good of the nation. We will also criticize you for the good of the nation."<sup>83</sup>

Many may pray, wish, and even plead with the Church not to "meddle in the affairs of government," but their prayers and pleas will most likely fall on deaf ears and their wishes will come to no avail.<sup>84</sup> The Church is now an integral part of Philippine

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<sup>83</sup>Benjamin Pimentel, "Prelate of the People / Cardinal Jaime Sin Seeks Justice in the Philippines," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *The San Francisco Chronicle* (January 28, 2001; accessed 7 October 2002).

<sup>84</sup>Ramon Tulfo, "Lucio Tan's Unsolicited Advice," [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (August 30, 2002; accessed 5 October 2002).

democracy and performs an indispensable role. It remains active when necessary and vigilant when required.<sup>85</sup>

If God does exist, he may very well be working through the Church to stabilize Philippine democracy, marginalize its enemies, and legitimize those who will best serve the nation. Who is to say? It could be so. In the grand scheme of things, whether the Church performs exactly as a “z” variable should function or whether it outperforms any social science model is of less significance than the greater lesson found in more than 480 years of Philippine Church history.

The lesson is clear. The Church matters, and it matters a great deal. Take it out of Philippine democracy and the democracy will be weakened. Take it out of the society and watch governmental corruption envelope it. Take it out of the lives of those who believe and their moral compass goes astray. Take the Church out of its oversight and advisory role and the leadership may falter. Finally, take it out of the legitimacy process and the right to rule will be diminished. Like an old friend, father, mother, teacher, comforter, defender, and ruler, the Church has played every role for the Philippine people. No institution can claim a perfect track record, but given its dominance over the Philippine nation-state, one can hope the Church will continue to guide administrations and individuals for the betterment of all under its care.

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<sup>85</sup>Armand Nocum and Carliot Pablo, “Bishops - Beware of 'Edsa IV' Groups,” [Wire Service Online-Dow Jones Interactive] *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (January 11, 2002; accessed 5 October 2002).

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