

# THE AQUINO ALTERNATIVE

EDITED BY  
M. RAJARETNAM



Trends in Southeast Asia Series  
INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

# **THE AQUINO ALTERNATIVE**



Trends in Southeast Asia Series

INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

Published by  
Institute of Southeast Asian Studies  
Heng Mui Keng Terrace  
Pasir Panjang  
Singapore 0511

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

© 1986 Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.  
First printed 1986.  
Reprinted 1988.

---

### **Cataloguing in Publication Data**

---

The Aquino alternative / edited by M. Rajaretnam  
(Trends in Southeast Asia series)  
Papers presented at the Seminar on Trends in the Philippines III organized by the  
Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 7 June 1986.

1. Philippines — Congresses.
2. Philippines — Politics and government — Congresses.
- I. Rajaretnam, Murugaiah.
- II. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- III. Series.

DS686 .5 T792 1986

ISBN 9971-988-46-1

---

## Preface

"Trends in the Philippines III" was the eleventh in the Institute's Trends in Southeast Asia series of seminars. This series was inaugurated in late 1970 with the aim of keeping abreast with the latest political, economic, and social trends in the individual countries in Southeast Asia.

Since our last "Trends" seminar on the Philippines in 1978, we have had numerous requests for another such seminar on this country. At the same time, the Philippines had been undergoing fundamental changes, especially in its governmental structure and development and political orientations. Moreover, diversity of opinion and perspective characterizing these changes has been such that it is often difficult to distinguish reality from fiction, and mystique from material. Yet, these and other developments are of profound significance not only for the Philippines but also for the region as a whole. With this in mind, the Institute invited and gathered together a panel of articulate and knowledgeable Filipinos — including the Honourable H.E. Mr Luis R. Villafuerte, Minister, Presidential Commission on Government Reorganization; Brigadier-General Jose T. Almonte, Deputy Chief of Staff (Administration), Armed Forces of the Philippines; Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J., President, Ateneo De Manila University; Dr Francisco Nemenzo, Professor, Department of Political Science, University of the Philippines; Mr Jose Maria Sison, Professorial Lecturer, Asian Center, University of the Philippines; and Dr Arturo M. Tolentino,\* former Foreign Minister of the Philippines — to discuss the latest political, security and economic developments in the Philippines and their implications for the future of the country. This discussion took place on Saturday, 7 June 1986, and proved to be both informative and stimulating. It was attended by a capacity audience of some 300 people. The proceedings, together with the associated papers, form the basis of this volume.

During the seminar, and the preparation of the proceedings and papers for publication, the Institute received assistance from several individuals and organizations to whom it would like to record

## viii PREFACE

its appreciation. In particular, the Institute is grateful to the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund for covering part of the seminar costs, and to Mr M. Rajaretnam of Information and Resource Center for help in the finalization of the seminar programme. Last but not least, the Institute would like to thank the speakers and the editor for their valuable contributions and promptness in meeting requests and deadlines. While wishing them all the best, it is clearly understood that responsibility for the statements made, and for the accuracy of the information provided in the proceedings and the accompanying papers, rests exclusively with the individual authors.

\*(At the last minute Dr Arturo M. Tolentino was unable to come and was represented by his son-in-law, Mr Gregorio H. Gabriel, Jr., Vice-President, World Wide Projects Corporation, Philippines.)

21 October 1986

Kernal S. Sandhu  
*Director*

# Contents

Preface	vii
The Philippines under President Aquino's Leadership: The Dilemmas of the Third Alternative <i>M. Rajaretnam</i>	1
A Nation in Ferment: Analysis of the February Revolution <i>Francisco Nemenzo</i>	28
Current Questions concerning the Communist Party of the Philippines <i>Jose Ma. Sison</i>	54
Towards Reshaping Philippine Martial Traditions <i>Brigadier-General Jose T. Almonte</i>	67
Church-State Relations <i>Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.</i>	91
Perspective of the "New" Opposition <i>Arturo M. Tolentino</i>	104
A Time of Turmoil, a Time of Hope <i>Luis R. Villafuerte</i>	114
Questions and Answers	125
Notes on Contributors	157

# **The Philippines under President Aquino's Leadership: The Dilemmas of the Third Alternative**

**M. Rajaretnam**

## **Introduction**

The sudden collapse of the Marcos regime and the ascendancy of Corazon Aquino to the presidency significantly altered the radical polarization of Philippine society. It has introduced a positive political dynamic that could allow the revitalization of democratic institutions and the development of a critical middle ground in the Philippines political process. The dramatic events of February 1986 were due in part to the conjunction of a series of factors perhaps more fortuitous than expected: of snap elections, U.S. mass media impact, popular "people's power", military rebellion, and American pressures for change through a well orchestrated policy of incentives and disincentives. The drama, however, has not ended, and the contest is far from being won for the Filipino people and their friends. The paradox of the new situation is that it has conferred on President Aquino a heavy political burden, and because its "political parenthood is multiple" the new regime will also have many political debts to pay.

In the critical months before the February elections, the Reagan Administration, a bipartisan Congress and the American media were almost unanimous in demonstrating that the Philippines was in serious crisis. The then Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian Affairs, Paul Wolfowitz, had said the Philippines was heading towards "a civil war on a large scale" and that if Marcos did not change course the Philippines could fall into anarchy, thus laying the ground for a military takeover or a communist dictatorship. His characterization of the Philippine situation in 1985 evoked new

scenarios of another Iran, a Nicaragua, or even a second South Vietnam that could destabilize the whole Southeast Asian region.

Has the overthrow of the Marcos regime resolved the Philippine crisis? Is the spectre of civil war still present? What are the nature and scope of the threats to the Philippines? What are the stakes for the Filipino people? And will the Philippines stand up in the face of its problems? The answers to these questions are neither simple nor self-evident.

What is the reality of the post-Marcos era? The legacy of Marcos seems enormous and almost insurmountable. President Aquino has now to keep her pledges, reorganize the political system, purge the military, and reorder national priorities. She has to consolidate into a working coalition the disparate forces that brought her to power, and to neutralize the threats from the communists as well as from the right. She must rebuild confidence, revitalize a sick economy, and distribute social justice. President Aquino must also contend realistically with America's concern for the future of the military bases within the context of the Soviet strategic breakthrough in Southeast Asia and the growing trend of nationalist sentiment in the country. Above all, she must provide the leadership. Consolidating democracy will definitely be a long and arduous process.

### **New Administration of President Aquino**

The hotly contested presidential elections clarified how highly polarized Filipino society had become by February 1986. These tensions were defused by a military rebellion, most probably supported by the United States, which broke the stalemate and introduced another chance for the Filipino people to forge a genuine democratic alternative. The constellation of forces that brought about the change defies characterization at this stage but it will form the basis of the alternative middle ground, the "third force",<sup>1</sup> on which a broad workable consensus can be built.

The third force in post-Marcos Philippines is highly factionalized. Political factionalism is an inherent phenomenon in Filipino elite politics. With the dismantling of the one-man centralized system and given the strong liberal tendencies towards a more decentralized and free-wheeling political system that Filipinos were

used to in pre-martial law days, élite factionalism is likely to intensify.

### *Spectrum of the Middle Ground*

The centrist coalition forming the government itself is particularly factionalized. Comprising the traditional élite, including Marcos hold-overs, so-called nationalists, human rightists, cause-oriented groups and church-sponsored technocrats, this motley assemblage's cohesion is based upon their almost unanimous dislike of the Marcos regime. It was as if the legacy of St Augustine had transcended the Philippines. A kind of "new Manicheanism" had emerged, where moral standards of political behaviour (anti-politician) were to be introduced into Philippine politics. For a majority of the coalition, this house of cards was to be further reinforced by the illusion that the danger of communism would disappear with the departure of Marcos.

In the new administration, on the right, Juan Ponce Enrile and General Fidel Ramos, authors of the armed rebellion which caused the downfall of Marcos, have preserved their key positions of Minister of Defence and Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces respectively. The background of these two men is well known. They were associates and allies of ex-President Marcos until they crossed the Rubicon on 22 February. Enrile was one of the architects of martial law, and together with Ramos, ensured Marcos' long stay in power. There was speculation in the past of the Defence Minister succeeding Marcos should a crisis transition occur, not only because he was a close confidante of the ex-President (at least until 1981 after which Marcos depended increasingly on General Fabian Ver) but also because he was perceived as a powerful person with a strong personality. It is doubtful, for instance, that the military rebellion would have succeeded had Enrile not been in the centre of it. As a result of this association they are controversial figures, and their presence in the Cabinet is considered by some quarters in the new administration itself to be very destabilizing. It has been argued that unless "Enrile can be safely removed and Ramos neutralized" the coalition's instability will remain. Enrile has repeatedly argued that he has a trouble-free relationship with President Aquino. In response to a recent accusation that he harboured presidential ambi-

tions, the Defence Minister said that these speculations resulted from the insecurity of some of the President's close advisors owing to the "weaknesses of the government". It is not unexpected that several of these Cabinet members would be extremely uncomfortable with Enrile because he was instrumental in their imprisonment during Marcos' long years in power. In an interview on American television, Executive Secretary Joker Arroyo said with some humour that the human rights violations in the Philippines could prove to be "worse than Argentina" and that some of those to be tried might very well be sitting beside him in the new government.

Paradoxically, however, the presence of both Enrile and Ramos is a guarantee and insurance for stable transition, and a bridge between the new power and Marcos loyalists, both within and outside the armed forces. As the process of dismantling the Marcos' power system entails the risks of destabilizing the Philippines itself, their retention in a post-Marcos government is a very habile political move, however unpopular it may be for some. It means that the change of leadership guarantees some degree of evolutive stability. Besides being close to the reformist movement in the army, these two men are close to the United States. Their presence will predictably stabilize U.S.-Philippine relations.

The members of President Aquino's Cabinet represent the spectrum of the centrist opposition which supported her candidacy. The restoration of the traditional electoral game has been crucial to the interests of the traditional élite, represented in the government by the organized political parties in the centrist coalition: the United Nationalist Democratic Organization (UNIDO) and the PDP-LABAN. Their alliance during the elections paved the way for Corazon Aquino's victory. UNIDO leader, Salvador Laurel, who cumulated the posts of Vice-President, Prime Minister, and Foreign Minister, is a familiar figure in the political establishment. Laurel did not retain his prime ministership for long. With the abolition of the *Batasang Pambansa* (National Assembly) and the 1973 Constitution, he lost his portfolio and his party lost its seats in Parliament. The UNIDO was also disenchanted with the limited number of Cabinet positions it was given.

The PDP-LABAN ended up with the choice Cabinet positions. The party's loyalty to President Aquino is very strong. The late Senator Benigno Aquino Jr. founded the original LABAN, while her brother Jose Cojuangco dominates the PDP-LABAN coalition. The

key portfolio of Local Government went to Aquilino Pimentel which enabled him to play a crucial role in the appointment and removal of local officials. The UNIDO is unhappy with Pimentel as his controversial appointments have undermined the UNIDO's chances in the local elections scheduled to be held before May 1987. Enrile has also observed that the dismantling of the political leadership at the local level has been very destabilizing and could affect the peace and order problem: "when you shake up the *Batasang Pambansa* and local government you have a house that is shaking." Because of increasing criticisms of his removal of mayors and governors and some questionable replacements, Pimentel was forced to slow down his pace of reforms. The traditional élites' factionalism will increase as they resume their bitter battle over the control and patronage of limited resources.

President Aquino is also relying on the professionals and businessmen who have strong ties with the Catholic Church. The more prominent of them are from the Catholic Bishops-Businessmen Conference, the Makati Business Club, and the MANINDINGAN (an organ for businessmen and professionals). Finance Minister Jaime Ongpin (who also belonged to the Convenor's Group that nominated Mrs Aquino as the presidential candidate), and Trade and Industry Minister, Jose Concepcion Jr. (of the National Movement for Free Elections, or NAMFREL) are among some of them. Schooled in the famous Jesuit university, the Ateneo de Manila University, both have strong Catholic credentials. Obsessed with issues such as corruption, crony capitalism and economic monopolies but less firm on the military bases issue, they represent the same moderate political élite which has always dominated political life in the Philippines even during the reign of Marcos. Their ideas on free enterprise and growth economies will probably dominate the regime's economic policies. Their economic programmes, however, will face critical opposition from the more "progressive" members of the Cabinet to prevent the emergence, as a view from the left puts it, "of an agrarian paradise of oranges, mangoes, and shrimps".

On the "left" side of the coalition are populist elements whose ideological leanings are from the nationalist to the progressive left spectrum. Among the older members of this spectrum are Jovita Salonga, the Chairman of the Presidential Commission on Good Government, and Jose Diokno, Chairman of the Presidential

Committee for Human Rights. Salonga and Diokno have always been ideological mavericks of the old Liberal Party and have been prominent in human rights causes, and are supported by the cause-oriented groups. Strongly nationalist in their political views, both Salonga and Diokno have been described as "agents of catharsis".

In this same power bloc are the group of human rights lawyers, the so-called MABINI (Movement of Attorneys for Brotherhood, Integrity and Nationalism, Inc.) — lawyers who were associates of the late Senator Aquino, such as Joker Arroyo (Executive Secretary), Rene Saguisag (Presidential Spokesman), and Augusto Sanchez (Minister of Labour). Imprisoned in the 1970s, these men are strongly ideological and, like Salonga and Diokno, are opposed to the presence of the military bases in the country.

The more populist elements in the Cabinet are represented by the cause-oriented groups, ranging from the nationalists to the progressive left spectrum. Known for their effectiveness in mass action techniques, these groups played a critical role in not only mobilizing people for the opposition but also in delegitimizing Marcos, marginalizing leftist organizations such as the *Bagong Alyansang Makabayan* or BAYAN (which was blamed for its stand on boycott), and in seizing the initiative from the left in the post-election mass activities. Now engaged in the process of "critical participation" with their involvement in the government, the groups are ideologically committed to the total dismantling of the military bases. Less visible than other personalities in the government, they occupy many of the positions of deputy ministers. The cause-oriented groups are the force to watch. Diokno has stressed their importance: "There's one factor Mrs Aquino listens to, that's the cause-oriented groups. And the cause-oriented groups are in broad terms, nationalist, regardless of ideological differences". Their participation in government, however, has engaged a new social force on the political scene and they will provide the much needed balance to the traditional élites by focusing on issues of social justice and economic equity.

This brief on the administration will be incomplete without a discussion on the influence of the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines. With its nation-wide information network, the Catholic Church played a crucial role in the success of the National Movement for Free Elections' watchdog role during the elections. More importantly, the Church had sensitized the Filipino electorate to the

significance of the presidential elections. And it was the Archbishop of Manila, the now celebrated Jaime Cardinal Sin, who tipped the balance during those crucial days of February when he mobilized an extraordinary force of priests, nuns and Catholics to defend the military rebels. Today, some of the President's closest advisors are from the Catholic Church.

But the most crucial internal dimension is the stabilizing role of the Church. The years under Marcos' rule had introduced a crisis of moral decay of tremendous proportions. Core cultural values had been extensively corrupted. With Marcos gone, the opportunities are now open for moral renewal. This was Corazon Aquino's simple campaign strategy that won her a landslide victory: her struggle against Marcos was simplified into a struggle between the good and the evil. Can the Church now provide that moral dimension to Filipino renewal? Is the Church also in a position to provide that ideological perspective and the institutional framework to bring together all the contending forces towards the process of national reconciliation? The answer to these questions is also crucial to the long-term survival of the Church itself, now challenged by the Marxist ideologues of the theology of liberation. If the Philippines is radicalized, the Church will end up the way it did in Nicaragua. Can the Church provide the dimension necessary to meet this challenge?

### *The Search for an Uneasy Consensus*

The battle lines in the centrist coalition are still unclear at this stage but the spectrum of interests will result in a shaky coalition in the first few months. At one level, the divisions could be drawn along the issue of democracy as there is an obvious lack of consensus among them on what sort of democracy to construct, as was shown in the lack of unanimity over the abolition of the 1973 Constitution and of the *Batasang Pambansa*. A leftist view has simplified the process into a struggle between those who seek to restore élite democracy and the "new forces" which seek to establish popular democracy. Since there is yet no clear statement on what the central philosophy of government is to be, the process to some extent is expected to be anarchistic in view of the strong differences that exist on fundamental issues such as the constitution, foreign debt, IMF dictates, military bases, human rights, land reform and U.S. domination of the economy. President Aquino's political ideas are still in the

process of formulation and have yet to be clarified. The President's stand on "fascist dictatorship" is described as "impeccable" and is shared by the centrist coalition, but on most other issues there is yet to be consensus.

The most serious threat to stability will come from the latent factionalism within the centrist coalition. The Filipino political class has always been marked by sprawling factionalism which even the authoritarianism of Marcos had difficulty in containing. The traditional political families and their heirs, who had been suppressed for a long period under the Marcos regime are now making a comeback. They will try to frame the new President within the well-known and established rules of the political game, and to temper her reformist ardour. The old political oligarchy intends to maximize the opportunity from the return to democratic rule to affirm its presence and stake its claim for power-sharing, while the new forces, propelled by cause-oriented issues, will try to marginalize the traditional élites and turn the political turf to the mass mobilizers. The future of President Aquino's power will depend to a large extent on the resolution of this dilemma.

Beyond the dilemma of the centrist coalition is the crucial task of national reconciliation which will be the main preoccupation of President Aquino: how to solidify the middle ground and provide that viable third alternative. The task of national reconciliation will have to contain all the pressures that exist within a broad national consensus without resorting to authoritarian rule. Already, Marcos' running mate in the elections, Arturo Tolentino, has said that a "revolutionary government" (established on 25 March by the interim "Freedom Constitution" described as "revolutionary in origin, democratic in essence and transitory in character") is worse than a dictatorship. Outside of the centrist coalition, the government is faced with dangerous threats from the rightists as well as from the leftist forces. The *Kilusan ng Bagong Lipunan* (KBL, or New Society Movement) has been factionalized into several groups after the elections but continues to constitute a serious force both at the national and local levels and cannot be discounted altogether. The mass rallies organized by the remnants of the KBL leadership to protest the new government's policies provide a potent mechanism for radicalizing and repolarizing the political situation.

On the left, radical organizations such as the BAYAN and the National Democratic Front (NDF) coalition are watching with

vigilance the government's programmes while pressuring for even more radical measures. Although President Aquino had declared in her inaugural address that the first priority of her administration is to improve the lot of the poor, the unemployed and the under-employed which form the majority of the populace, the left has been critical of the government for not including representatives from the peasant and labour sectors. The NDF has qualified the new administration as the Marcos power without Marcos and has called on the people to continue the struggle by mass action in order to install a genuinely popular power.

To be sure, the Catholic Church which is being undermined at its base by crypto-religious and pro-Marxist infiltration will have to play a decisive role in containing the social crisis. President Aquino's third force represents the only credible alternative likely to break the radicalization process which has divided Filipino society as well as the Church. Therefore, the Catholic hierarchy with its human and material resources will have to use its moral authority as a social guardian to canalize the new popular tide for the consolidation of the third force. The need of the moment, according to former Labour Minister, Blas Ople, and now leader of the *Partido Nasyonalista ng Pilipinas* (Philippine Nationalist Party) is to define the "strategic intellection" of national goals and to build a "strategic consensus".

### **The Armed Forces of the Philippines**

The revolt of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) on 22 February caused the final collapse of the Marcos dictatorship. Until that fateful day, the AFP was perceived as an unpopular instrument of institutionalized repression. It now enjoys remarkable popular support. Since the 1972 imposition of martial law, the AFP had been systematically transformed from an army of professional soldiers into a highly visible and personalized political force that served the interests of one man. The former regime's use of the AFP in the militarization of the countryside has placed the burden of blame for the increased insurgency on the AFP. Now re-baptized the "New" AFP (NAFP), it is in the process of re-transformation and de-politicization. But how did the NAFP develop in the first place?

*The Marcos System*

Ferdinand Marcos was the only President known to or remembered by a whole generation of Filipinos who were in their twenties or thirties by 1985. It is safe to assume that a considerable number of Filipinos had known no other President except Marcos. This phenomenon is more or less paralleled in the AFP. Most of the officers and men of the AFP had received their training in the Philippine Military Academy (PMA), the main officer-training institution founded in 1905, or the Reserved Officer Training Course (ROTC, which is a college course for reservist officers), with Marcos as the Commander-in-Chief. During their training, these men had literally undergone intensive indoctrination to hero-worship a living national hero.

The graduates of the PMA, who almost always rose to occupy the important commands in the various services of the AFP, had Marcos as their speaker and dispenser of diplomas and honours at their graduation ceremonies for about twenty years. It is probable that by 1985 these officers who had joined the AFP just before martial law was declared in 1972 had reached the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel or its equivalent. For the PMA class of 1971 it may be said that they were just starting to reach the age of political awareness (at 16 or 17 years) when Marcos became their President in 1965. It was this class of officers that spearheaded the reformist officers' revolt in February 1986.

It can be pointed out that by 1985 all the commanding generals and flag officers had received their rank from Marcos. About 40 of them had in fact been "overstaying" for a number of years. Up to the last moment of his presidency, a number of them led by General Fabian C. Ver and Lt. Gen. Fidel Ramos had been granted extended stay in the service because Marcos felt he needed their loyalty as his regime continued to rely on military force to guarantee its existence.

Since 1972, the officers and men of the AFP had been mentally conditioned into associating Marcos with flag and country. Martial law was used to harness the military in order to save the Republic from the twin threats of communist subversives and Muslim secessionists. As it turned out, all those political foes or former friends whom the Marcoses did not trust, such as the late Senator Benigno Aquino Jr., Jose Diokno, Jovito Salonga, and

Fernando Lopez, came to be regarded as villains, as loyalty to Marcos became equated with loyalty to the Republic.

As Marcos consolidated his highly personalized power base, his regime's rhetoric placed maximum emphasis on his image as the saviour of the Republic and the reformist crusader of the New Society. Marcos used the military to perpetuate himself in power. The AFP was made to look upon itself with pride as the engine for the purging of old society vices and villains. In this sense, the AFP saw an ideological dimension to martial law — nationalism and national security interests epitomized by the Filipinized reformist aspirations of Marcos. He thereby spawned a system in which the military came to play a political and social role which at the same time enabled its officers to enjoy economic and social privileges.

Marcos also conditioned the thinking of the top brass in the AFP into a "we" versus "they" feeling with regard to the "national interest" *vis-à-vis* external actors. Thus, Marcos let it be known that in such foreign military policy matters as the defence of the Philippine-claimed islands in the Spratleys, the AFP's wariness over Malaysia's alleged tactical support for Muslim secessionist guerrillas, or military aid under the bases agreement, he was the AFP's godfather and benefactor. Martial law practically meant that the interests of the AFP top brass were not only intertwined but were coterminous with the national interest. Since 1972, Marcos had clearly cultivated the AFP to become the guarantor of his perpetuation in power.

### *The Reform Movement*

But there was an inherent paradox in Marcos' one-man rule. To perpetuate his rule he had increasingly to rely on personal loyalty, regional (that is, Ilocano) affinity, or trusted apolitical subservience, rather than merit, professional and non-partisan loyalty to the flag, for recruitment, promotion and deployment policies in the AFP. Thus, Marcos' choice of General Fabian Ver to become AFP Chief of Staff in July 1981 was dictated by Ver's unquestionable loyalty to Marcos. While General Fidel V. Ramos was a distant Ilocano cousin of Marcos, his image was that of a professional soldier, highly regarded in Washington, and whose very professionalism could make his behaviour unpredictable in the event of a political crisis. Subsequent events were to prove Marcos right. The AFP had grown