

THE POLITICIZATION OF THE MILITARY

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INTRODUCTION

From 1986 to 1989, about half of the Filipino respondents in nationwide surveys of the Social Weather Stations said that military men who aspired for political power greatly threatened the Aquino government. Metro Manila respondents in these SWS surveys expressed an even more acute perception of this danger, with 50 to 70% reflecting the sentiment.

The remarkably high proportion of those who viewed politicized military men with alarm is associated in the same surveys with a much diminished number of people who believed that the Armed Forces of the Philippines was loyal and obedient to the Aquino government. From a national high of 62% in March 1987, this confidence in military loyalty eroded to a low of 32% in November 1991. The deterioration of this belief in the military's constitutionalism was expectedly more dramatic in Metro Manila, where SWS survey respondents declined from 60% to 27% for the same period. *(Immediately after the December 1989 coup, a special SWS survey found 29% of Metro Manilans continuing to keep faith with the AFP's constitutionalism. The rest reflected skepticism.)*

The apprehension remains unabated close to the end of the Aquino term. In November 1991, even as approximately half of the national sample vacillated regarding the extent of the rebel military threat to the government and the possibility of yet another coup, the balance of those with clear opinions tilted towards a big threat by the rebel military and the likelihood that another coup would take place.

The apprehensive mood of the nation as regards military intervention in political affairs appears to be well-grounded. Surveys of military men just before and after the August 1987 coup confirm the public's fears. The Miranda-Cirpa May 1987 survey of 452 military officers came up with findings indicating much demoralization in the military, a well-developed sense of the multiple capabilities of military men in both civilian and military administration, a strong feeling that the civilian officials lacked decisiveness in managing the country and a dangerously high proportion (33%) who believed that an incompetent civilian leader could justly be ousted by military men using physical force. Any romanticization of military activism as merely a theoretical position is dissipated by forceful events in the last four years. After seven or eight coups (the count depends on who is doing the counting), the reality of a politicized Philippine military is no longer at issue. Aggressive journalists as well as conservative readers of the military are conjoined in this opinion.

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAME

Civilian regimes have always confronted the challenge of mastering the military and compelling it to serve the duly constituted authorities. Liberal democratic theory in particular puts a premium on establishing the limitations of military roles in society and the effective supervision of the military by civilian officials and agencies.

In Third World societies where the establishment of political order and the legitimation of government and its authorities are primary political tasks, the military could blunt civilian constitutional aspirations and expand the military's role into political rule. Conditions of deteriorating public order, a gross breakdown of the national economy and an increasing disruption of the civilian government's ability to perform its basic functions provide opportunities or excuses for military leaders to politically intervene in unstable societies.

A politicized military is an institution where a significant proportion of military men consider it appropriate for the military to be involved in overall government and even to be markedly influential in specific concerns involving the national security. While politicization does not automatically exclude a constitutionalist mind set which could make the military a loyal supporter of the civilian authority, it nevertheless sets boundaries to this constitutionalism. No longer the unconditionally supportive auxiliary required by Platonian as well as liberal democratic political theory, the politicized military would at least demand of civilian authorities that there be "institutions worth dying for." Indicators of the military's politicization span a range of activities, from various attempts to enhance its political position within the framework of civilian government to those which outrightly attempt to wrest political power, as in the case of military coups.

Many reasons are offered to explain the phenomenon of military politicization especially in Third World settings. Some of these are the fragility of post-colonial political orders, the absence of traditional institutions which mitigate or balance an increasingly assertive, guardian-role-oriented military, the effectively hierarchic and modern character of military organizations, as well as feckless and corrupt civilian authorities who head governments unable to govern.

All of these reasons have forceful implications for the rise of the military as a political power. However, they become critical largely due to a change in the modern conception of political community and the role of government. The government is irrevocably perceived as society's primary agency for coping with an expanded range of human basic needs. Furthermore, there is an acknowledgment of the modern polity's participative ethos. The combination of expanded governmental responsibility and popular demands for participation in political affairs make it difficult for civilian regimes to maintain themselves in power even as political and economic conditions deteriorate in their societies. In such circumstances, the civilian authorities resort to building up their military auxiliaries, progressively involving them in political administration and, ultimately, exposing them to the temptations of political control. Civilian abdication or military usurpation has been characteristic of soft civilian regimes, those whose primary handicap has been a gross inability to govern.

Following this line of analysis, this report situates Philippine military politicization in a general environment of societal politicization which spares no sector or institution from its activist influence. The postwar politicization of the country itself is responsible for nurturing activist, political values among military men. The more popular interpretation

(even among academics) that Marcos and martial law administration are responsible for military politicization is not altogether debunked but it is relegated to the status of a secondary insight. Marcos simply accelerated the already ongoing process of military politicization. With or without Marcos, given the overall Philippine political environment and the demographic character of recruits into the military's officer corps, politicization is inevitable. Filipino political leaders must learn to regulate the military's dynamism as a political force or else suffer it as an authoritarian political master.

DATABASE FOR THE STUDY

Studies of the Philippine military are notoriously inept when it comes to databases. Part of the reason has to do with the natural reticence of the military in opening its own database for systematic analysis by non-military men.

The military itself has also not undertaken database build-up for some of the clearly critical dimensions of the military as an institution. *(As simple a concern as an ethnic profile of the military officer corps appears to have remained unattended up to now. Military histories of specific services do not go beyond popular write-ups and project little depth for the serious students of the military. Even military success stories in counterinsurgency operations do not get to be process-documented and thus much of the valuable insights from such experiences eventually are forgotten.)*

Filipino academics and journalists have largely relied on piecemeal information, casual or impressionistic data gathered from possibly compromised sources, and selective interviews. This is the main reason why academic output in particular has been methodologically suspect. *(Foreign academics treating the Philippine military seldom do better. Even a foreign doctoral dissertation which compares Philippine and Indonesian military elites in the 1970s uses data which academics ought to reject outright for being methodologically inappropriately generated.)*

This report uses Social Weather Stations survey data to explore public opinion regarding military and other political matters. All SWS surveys are designed to meet academic standards of questionnaire design, sampling representativeness and field administration. Military views are culled from surveys of the military where the author has been personally or directly involved. Personal interviews across the years with literally hundreds of military personnel have not been explicitly identified in this study but indirectly provide appropriate contexts to some of the more general statements made in the course of writing the paper. Finally, an ongoing study of Philippine Military Academy cadets from classes 1951 to 1991 has generated a database for over 7000 cadets focusing mainly on their demographic characteristics. It is this PMA data which incline the reporter to suspect that politicization was already a dynamic process in the military way before Marcos declared martial law in 1972.

THE ECOLOGY OF POLITICIZATION

There is much apprehension and disillusionment as Filipinos confront a pronounced military tendency towards unilateral assessments of government performance and armed intervention in the nation's political processes. This mindset which defies constitutional limitations on the political activities of men in uniform is stridently denounced by most civilians and some military men. In many public forums, hosts and guests consider it a matter of course that military men be excoriated for their contempt of the duly constituted civilian authority, for being part of the "polititized" military.

Most people who explore military politicization in the Philippines link it to Marcos rule. The observation is often made that Marcos' martial law administration was largely responsible for an interventionist military. By endowing military men with civilian functions and encouraging them to oversee civilian administrators during the period of martial law, by actively involving them in governance and vesting them with corporate interests as influential political actors, Marcos is alleged to have corrupted the fundamental distinction between civilian and military functions and subverted the liberal democratic doctrine of civilian supremacy over the military. Marcos is thus held responsible for a Frankensteinian creature which eventually turned against its own creator in 1986 and since then has seriously threatened constitutional politics in a post-Marcos, "restored democracy."

This view cannot be ignored as regards the manner in which Marcos helped politicize the military, but it probably oversimplifies the genesis of military politicization. It does not pay enough attention to the general trend towards mass politicization in Third-World countries and the involvement of their military establishments in national political management after the end of the Second World War. It is characteristic of parochial analysis to overemphasize one-of-a-kind cases and to exempt one's own political system from a general, even global systems analysis. This extremely limited viewpoint overemphasizes the role of individual political leaders and neglects the broader configurations of socioeconomic and demographic forces which, within a given political culture, more fully reveal the dynamic character of political developments.

As the Philippines, like other post-war emergent nations, frantically tried to bring its citizenry into the mainstream of participative (*not necessarily truly democratic*) politics, more and more Filipinos were indoctrinated into believing that citizenship demands regular involvement and active participation in a nation's governance. Educational policies and programs as well as more general political propaganda repeatedly underscored the critical value of political participation and grossly identified democratic with mass politics. It did not matter that the dynamics of political participation limited most Filipinos to ritualistic involvement in political party work and electoral exercises where the voters' will is regularly subverted by the trinity of gold, goons and guns. The crucial thing was that especially for young Filipinos, the simplistic rhetoric of democratic political participation was taken seriously and a general consensus for political activism as a legitimate political orientation developed.

Political parties, business groups, labor unions, farmers' associations, student organizations, concerned citizens' clubs and other quasi-political societies and fellowships mushroomed in response to the trumpeted imperative for a politically involved and active citizenry. In this frenzy of organizational work, the fiction was that government employees and military men would be immune to the virus of political involvement. Both the civil service and the military after all were supposed to be constitutionally insulated against politically-interested parties and the pressures they were bound to exert on politically crucial resources such as the bureaucracy and the military.

Given a political environment of comprehensive and rapid mass politicization, the military could have maintained a depoliticized character only if heroic efforts had been made to indeed delink it from the rest of Philippine society. No such efforts were exerted. In any case, between the late 1940 and the mid-1980s, the general influence of global and national political environments by themselves would probably not have spared any Third World military institution from being politicized. Given the authoritarian and modernizing orientation of the military, it was much too angelic a belief that it could remain consistently barracks-oriented even as incompetent and even treasonous politicians forged anarchy out of fragile political systems and willfully plundered their people. At the very least, plunder being a tradition of warriors too, the military would have insisted on its share of the spoils. At best, however, the military might have been tempted to cross constitutional barriers and, driven by compulsions like "duty, honor, country," retrieve patriotism in the Pandora's box of general politicization.

THE POLITICIZED OFFICER CORPS

There was no way for the Philippine military to escape being politicized. The soldier's innocent faith in constitutionalism was beleaguered by a political environment which pushed all sectors of society into participative politics and by ruthless political leaders who, in search of directly needed political capital, successfully co-opted the military into serving non-constitutionalist political agenda.

The forays of politicians into military territory were largely successful because of several reasons. First, the politicians were raiding a sector where much discontent was present. Military men traditionally received poor pay, enjoyed little material benefits for themselves and their families, and had low status in Philippine society. They could gripe about discriminatory promotion rates as they became more senior in rank, about corrupt senior officers who appeared to enjoy the protection of political patrons and about poor leadership in the military. They also were much disaffected by political leaders who appeared to be largely unpatriotic and vulnerable to large-scale corruption. To a significant number of military officers, these conditions increasingly generated activist frames of mind and ultimately justified military intervention in national political governance.

OF PRESIDENTS AND POLITICIZATION

Linkages between the military and civilian politicians were firming up long before Marcos declared martial law. Senior military men looked up to political patrons to sponsor their further promotions. *(In the old Jose P. Laurel Library in the Port Area are letters from military men requesting assistance on questions of military promotions and affirming their esteem and loyalty for a presumably appropriately concerned patron. When Laurel was cheated out of the 1949 Philippine presidency, only his patriotic determination not to involve the country in bloodshed kept some military men from engaging in an "unauthorized military exercise.")*

Magsaysay's willingness to cultivate support from a much demoralized military in his bid for political power in the 1950s is not fully recognized as a civilian move helping to politicize this sector. The resulting informal political consortium was facilitated by Magsaysay's being Secretary of National Defense as well as by an American calculation that effectively waging a counter-insurgency campaign required the replacement of President Quirino by a more charismatic *(and, to the Americans, also more tractable)* national leader. Had President Quirino tried to hold on to political power at all costs, Magsaysay, with the military's support and American blessings, could have launched the first coup in Philippine post-war history. Quirino's political pragmatism contributed much to Magsaysay's populist-democrat image through the years.

Marcos' own bid to gain the military's political support is completely predictable to any student of Machiavellian politics. Given his obsessive compulsion to capture political preeminence and given the kind of resources his opponents in politics enjoyed *(a formidable combination of political position, economic power, social status, and media control which he could not hope to neutralize in the short term)*, the temptation for Marcos to activate a dominant political resource to make up for his comparative disadvantage was difficult to resist. The military was there in the mid-1960s, waiting to be the equalizer and more, if Marcos dared.

He had to be President and Commander-in-Chief of the military before he could efficiently harness it to serve his own objectives. The most crucial part of Marcos' power play then was how to finess the Presidency despite his comparatively puny political resource base. Capitalizing on his competitors' disunity and wariness of each other and skillfully feeding the illusions that he would be a most manageable President, he outfoxed traditional politicians and got enough of them to sponsor his successful presidential bid.

The rest is political history. As Commander-in-Chief, Marcos easily consolidated his constitutional and political control over military men. He expanded the range of functions any military legitimately could (and therefore should) perform in Third World national development strategies, enhanced the military's institutional prestige, and improved the pay and material conditions of military men. Less openly, he cultivated politically valuable military officers, managed their military and post-military career towards more gainful

opportunities and maximized personal gains. In his first term as President, Marcos skillfully built a political base within the military, one which transcended the parochial dimensions of ethnicity. Thus, midway between his second term, when he moved to decimate his political opposition through the convenient instrument of martial law administration, Marcos could rely not only on Ilocanos and Pangasinenses but also Tagalogs, Pampangos, Cebuano, Ilongos, Warays, Bicolanos and others within the military to support his political moves.

Martial law administration by Marcos and his military supporters was bereft of military politicization. Not only the appointment of active military men to civilian positions, but the reversal of relative political weights for most civilian politicians and military men underscored the markedly politicized, superior status of the latter. Except for a few national and regional political figures, that is to say Marcos and his immediate political cronies, the military intimidated civilian politicians and government officials practically everywhere.

It did not have to be Marcos who surfaced and personally benefited from politicization within the military. Any other, equally smart President who did not blink when confronted by the nakedness of his own political ambitions would have been able to do what Marcos did. *(Ninoy Aquino probably could have done the deed as well as Marcos. Given his ample political resources, however, he would not have needed the act as badly as Marcos did. Military politicization might have continued to run deep, no more than a strengthening undercurrent in Philippine politics, if Ninoy, not Marcos, had become the dominant political figure in the seventies.)*

The open involvement of the military in political governance was relatively easily effected by Marcos. He found in military men an immense preparedness for the role of political collaborators. Through the years, with hardly anyone noticing it, military men had been coming from sectors of Philippine society where political influence and perhaps even political power were not completely unknown. Familiarity with either bred no contempt for politics among these men. On the contrary, familiarity gave rise to expectations that, in uniform or in civvies, they had a legitimate right to participate in the country's governance. Such men, preconditioned towards politicization before their entry into the military, were easy targets and willing collaborators in uniform to ruthless politicians like Marcos.

A CLOSER LOOK INTO THE MILITARY CADRE: THE PMA CADETS (1951-1991)

There is reason to believe that the young men who eventually entered the military and constituted its core officers had strong interests in political dynamics even before they entered the military. It seems probable also that their experience in the military, both in the field as well as in the military training institutes did not materially subdue their political interests. A logical focus of politicization studies is the Philippine Military Academy, whose graduates disproportionately represent the highest echelons of those accused of conspiring and participating in coups against the civilian government. The recruits into this military

institution bear closer examination if we are to understand why many PMAers are vulnerable to the coup syndrome.

An ongoing study of those who entered the Philippine Military Academy from 1947 to 1987 (*Classes 1951 to 1991*) reveals a recruitment trend of cadets coming from socioeconomically better-off families. Sixty-one percent of the fathers and 54% of the mothers of responding cadets are college graduates. Another 10 to 14% report parents who had some years of college. These figures compare favorably to the national average of less than 10% of the adult population with college degrees.

Twenty-three percent of the fathers are professionals, either in private or government practice. Twenty-three percent more come from the military itself. Businessmen-fathers account for another 7%. Mothers have an even higher proportion who are professionals, about 30%. Nine percent are businesswomen.

Family incomes come largely from salaries, with 56% of the responding cadets acknowledging this source. Business incomes account for 8% and agricultural incomes are reported by 7% of the responding cadets. Mixed income sources (*salaries-business, or salaries-agricultural, business-agricultural and other incomes*) are acknowledged by another 9% of the respondents.

A significant proportion of the cadets were enrolled in colleges and universities prior to entering the PMA; these cadets brought intellectual and political baggage into the military academy. (*In some crucial times, for instance in the late 1950s and early 1960s, such baggage would be critically important as liberal and left-oriented academy instructors reinforced activist, politicized values in their young wards.*) Almost 90% of the cadets had attended college before going to the PMA. Sixty-seven percent of those with college backgrounds come from the best Philippine universities and colleges (*MAPUA, 35%; UP, 25%; De La Salle, 5% and Ateneo, 2%*). Ten percent were scholars or honor students while in college.

Before entering the academy, about 70% of the cadets had taken engineering courses. The rest were in the social sciences (5%), arts and letters (2%), natural sciences (6%), business and finance (5%) and other areas of study (13%).

It may also be noted that of those cadets who took the NCEE, 83% passed with a score of 91 to 100.

One more thing commands attention: the military background of the families to which the cadets belong. Forty-three percent of the cadets have relatives in the military. Nuclear family members (*father [22%], brother [6%]*) account for 28% percent or more than half of those cases. Another 10% of the cadets acknowledge having an uncle in the military. Ten percent of the cadets have at least two close military relatives. These figures could suggest the firming up of a military elite in the country, where core membership is likely to

be gained through a stint in the PMA. (From Class '51 to Class '69, the pre-Marcos cadets, the proportion of cadets with relatives in the military was 30%. Classes '70 to '89, the Marcos period cadets, show a figure of 48%; Classes '76 to '85, the formal years of martial law, 51%; and Classes '90 to 91, the current post-Marcos period, 49%.)

SOME PROVOCATIVE IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

Young men with family and educational backgrounds cited above are not going to be much intimidated by the prospects of meeting and collaborating with civilian politicians, nor by the possibility of wielding political influence and even outright power should the occasion present itself. A better than average socio-economic status marks cadets who have a higher probability of having met influential political figures even before they entered the military academy, of having attended prestigious colleges and universities where outspokenness and activism were integral parts of the effective informal curricula, and thus these cadets might be expected to chafe more at traditional military values of unquestioning and automatic obedience. If they remained quiet as they absorbed their academy lessons and suffered the rituals of academy life, their silence could have been less of submission to military tradition and more of a pragmatic calculation that, in due time, they would themselves be the senior managers of the military establishment. For many cadets and officers in the military, waiting is acknowledged to be a particularly effective tactical option. At times this tactic is elevated to the level even of grand strategy. (*Indeed some of our prominent military leaders with fairly long-term political objectives appear to be devotees of strategic waiting.*)

The increasing politicization of the nation in the last four decades means that the military had no recourse but to recruit from a pool of youthful citizens whose political values inclined them to political activism and intervention. Since the military did not have appropriate mechanisms for eradicating, or at least significantly transforming, these values, they persisted and were reflected in orientations which were dissonant to traditional military outlooks.

It was not only the Philippine Military Academy that was vulnerable to politicized recruitment. Recruitment via the integree route, that is to say either a direct regular or reserve commission for military officers who did not go through the PMA, similarly suffered from having to rely on pool of politicized candidates. When the military had to be expanded fast in the early 1970s to meet the exigencies of martial rule and the secessionist MNLF, it had to take the risk of integrating into the military a large number of people to whom constitutionalism was no more than a formal doctrine.

Today, forces which in the last decades have contributed to developing a politicized nation as well as its military continue to operate. The authorities and civilians in general frantically seek mechanisms for reversing a mind-set favoring interventionism in political affairs by the military. It is problematic whether military men could ever regain their political innocence and once more be confined to the extremely limited world of the barracks. It is

also debatable whether, even if they could be so confined, there is wisdom in maintaining a politically naive military, one which cannot discern the difference between the politically good and that which is politically evil and thus cannot act except to be supportive of any currently prevailing regime.

For some military men, there appears to be already an agonizing search for a more responsible formulation of constitutionalism beyond the legal and mechanical concept of unqualified loyalty to the "duly constituted authorities." In a grossly politicized polity such as modern societies have become, any unqualified conception of any political principle will encounter no more than ritualistic support. (*"Freedom," "liberty," "democracy," "authority," "nationalism" and even "sovereignty" have all suffered unavoidable political qualification. Only lawyers, and even then only naive lawyers, continue to treat these principles as theoretical absolutes.*) There is no reason why constitutionalism must be treated as absolutely impregnable in this age of political limitations. Military men, like all politicized citizens in a modern polity, may have to help situate the appropriate balance between military intervention, impulsively defined, and constitutionalist support, rigidly understood. Military politicization could be compatible with, perhaps even a requisite of enduring, constitutionalist, civilian regimes.

MILITARY POLITICIZATION AND THE CHALLENGE OF CONSTITUTIONALISM

Clearly, the problem of a politicized military and its constitutionalist duty deserves to be stated in more responsible language than that which compels the military to be simply the mindless robots of whichever constitutional authority. The current formulation might be adequate for normal times, but since no one can intelligently describe current times in the Philippines as being normal, the challenge remains to re-formulate a more viable meaning of constitutionalism, one underscoring the symbiosis of civilian and military constitutionalism. One cannot long survive without the other.

Since the beginning of the Aquino administration, constitutionalist probes have focused mainly on the military. This is not hard to understand. After all, the dramatic birthing of this administration in part involved a military which rebelled against its own commander-in-chief, Marcos. Associated with civilian leaders who were perceived to be politically insatiable by the Aquino authorities, the military was much suspected as serving masters other than constitutionalism and the rule of law.

This marked distrust for the military is reflected in the summary and arrogant manner of many civilian officials in dealing with military men, especially in the first year of the Aquino administration. It also underpins the constitutional aberration which mentions the Armed Forces of the Philippines in the Constitution ahead of the legislative, the executive and the judicial agencies of government. (*Article II, Section 3.*) The citation is not an honorable mention, so much as a shrill injunction to the AFP that civilian authority must ever be obeyed by all those in military uniform.

Seven or eight coups later (the count depends on who is doing the counting and what "unauthorized military exercises" are included in the count), the tendency is further reinforced to consider constitutionalism as basically a military-related problem. The increasing numbers as well as seniority of military men involved in coups, the growing sophistication of coup strategy and tactics, as well as the apparently escalating probabilities for coup success (the conventional wisdom is that the last 1989 coup would have been successful if the Americans had not intervened in favor of the Aquino government) — all these factors combine to focus attention on the military challengers to the duly established, constitutional order.

Only recently is there sufficient recognition that all the coups to date failed primarily because enough military men had abided by their government. For a military who had been largely distrusted by its civilian governors, holding fast to the constitutionalist faith must really be seen as a major miracle. (One must not include here men in uniform whose constitutionalism is a function primarily of prudential political calculus.) Military men somehow continue to protect the Constitution and the civilian authorities, despite the latter's clear invitation to coupmaking through their uninspiring and at times even corrupting leadership.

Because of resolute action by enough military constitutionalists in the previous coups, the military as a whole must be acknowledged as no longer the only focal point of constitutionalist challenges. The critical core of constitutionalism must increasingly be recognized as constituted by the civilians themselves, by the civilians who run government as well as the civilians who are the general constituency of government. Military coups are relatively marginal threats to constitutionalism and cannot irrevocably destroy the citizens' democratic commitments. The fecklessness of civilian authorities, however, irreparably shatters the public's confidence in democratic processes and makes the citizenry vulnerable to alternative performing regimes, whether they be democratic or not. Ultimately, democracy and constitutionalism can survive and prosper only when actively performing authorities are able to command the loyalties of their grateful constituency.

Our largely ineffectual civilian leaders need to heed the signs of the times. As of November 1991, between eight to nine out of ten Metro Manilans refuse to rule out non-peaceful means of effecting change in this country. (In the last six years, national and Metro Manila figures on this test item have hewn rather closely.) This is a huge proportion of people who, even as they have marked preferences for non-violence, stare at the possibility of violence in their society and refuse to blink. Many of them might have gone to EDSA last December 8, 1989 to help dedicate the EDSA shrine and most of them were probably inspired by the resolute rhetoric of some of their leaders that sunny afternoon. Nevertheless, beyond the sunny skies and the strident speeches, there persists the nation's immediate and much magnified need for, as that great patriot, Jose W. Diokno, put it, "jobs and justice, food and freedom." Inept civilian administrators cannot hope to continue managing this country with popular support. They must learn to repent, reform, and perform, if they are not going to be overwhelmed by yet another rebellion, uncle or no uncle, this time by a people whose sense of constitutionalism has finally been overtaken by a sense of absolute despair. A politicized military cannot be complacently assumed by civilian authorities as an ever loyal, constitu-

tionalist tool. Even the much-tarnished memory of EDSA in 1986 does not lend itself to this romantic notion.

This kapit-sa-patalim mentality is not all that alien to Filipinos who heroically continue to bear with weak civilian leadership in their society. After the August 1987 coup, Social Weather Stations survey findings in Metro Manila revealed some facets of the crisis of civilian constitutionalism. Those findings inclined this reporter to warn in the SWS survey's analytical report that "[v]arious stresses that weaken the [citizenry's] constitutional commitment may be indicated by responses which point to a pragmatism which has crossed the borders of constitutionalist politics."

"When asked about their perceptions of probable public reactions to another coup attempt or military government as a fait accompli, the responses of those surveyed in September 1987 could indicate some incipient vacillation as regards the absolute merits of an activist, constitutionalist position. The majority prescribe largely passive, spectator-public reactions in case another coup is attempted. Civilians, they say, should avoid being involved and should not side with anyone. At best, the public could pray for the forces of good somehow to prevail."

"This non-active sentiment is carried over into responses of probable ... public reaction to a successful coup which replaces the present government with a military government. Close to half of the respondents anticipate that the citizenry would neither oppose nor support the military government, but close to one-third also predict a probably collaborative citizenry. The firm, uncompromising constitutionalists, a minority of one-fourth, foresee active opposition by the citizenry...."

Citizen actions during the December 1989 coup largely validated the 1987 SWS survey findings and predictions. Perhaps it was a correct assessment of public sentiments which prompted the Aquino administration not to rely on "people power" to save it from the military rebels and, instead, to call on a foreign power for assistance. This inability to rely on its own citizenry for crucial support is tragic enough, but a greater tragedy would have been if the SWS findings as regards citizen reactions to an actual military government turned out to be correct. For Filipinos to even suffer a military government passively, they must first recognize the futility of upholding a civilian government which systematically squanders the nation's human, economic and political resources. Pointedly speaking, only treason by their civilian leaders could possibly drive Filipinos into experimenting even with daunting military regimes. "Kapit sa patalim," most Filipinos would say in such eventuality, with the bitterness of men who realize that nothing more could be done but hope for the best. "Bahala na!"

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