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Democracy in the Philippines and Chile

During the year 1989, many people all over the world began to challenge their governments to favor democratic societies. The end of the twentieth century was shaped by the fall of communism as well as extreme struggles against dictatorships in many corners of the globe. Twenty to thirty countries, including Poland, South Africa and Ukraine, were transformed rapidly by democratization movements. The emphasis on nonviolence was an important aspect of these revolutions. They provided a significant wakeup call to the larger economic powers who thought that democracy was a privilege that could only be enjoyed in wealthier states, demonstrating instead that it was a system of order that any country could achieve with enough hard work.

The ending of the famous Cold War would be the beginning of many of these revolutions. Although the Cold War did not involve any direct military conflicts between the United States of America and the Soviet Union, it provoked many proxy battles, such as the wars in Korea and Afghanistan. The Cold War entailed an ideological contest between Soviet communism and U.S. capitalism, leading to a long war in which the two nations relied on forging alliances in many different ways, whether through Soviet support of other communist movements or U.S. industrial support through such measures as the Marshall Plan in Europe and the postwar occupation of Japan. The United States advertised the war as a struggle for freedom against tyranny as seen in the Truman Doctrine, in which President Harry S. Truman promised U.S. support for all free nations against Soviet communism (Truman). The contest heated up to

the point where both world powers had atomic weapons pointed at each other, which could have resulted in a third world war, or worse. After the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, free elections ended communist regimes in Europe and the USSR was broken up into separate independent republics (Kenney 8).

The final years of the Cold War witnessed the emergence of democratic revolutions both in the Philippines and Chile. With the Cold War coming to an end, the threat of communism declined, which led the United States to alter its pattern towards lending support to these anti-communist dictatorial regimes. This produced corrupt governments that increasingly found their hold on the public declining as the people challenged their authority, embracing the mantle of human rights to demand political change.

People in the Philippines had been living under the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos since 1965. Those seeking to end his corrupt regime considered two main methods of overthrowing Marcos: military coups and public insurgence. Military coups were not the preferred option, as they usually ended up installing other dictators, which the people of the Philippines did not want (Kenney 78). Citizens also were suspicious of U.S. influence in the Philippines, recognizing their strategic value in the Cold War. Marcos declared martial law in 1972, abolishing congress and exiling opposing politicians, most famously Senator Benigno Aquino. Aquino returned to the Philippines in 1983 with the intention of leading a democratic movement; however, he was executed immediately upon his return. This left the Philippines in a terrible position, but they were ultimately saved by three factors. First, the Catholic Church and its leader, Cardinal Jaime Sin, supported nonviolent change against the Marcos regime, which meant they could use their influence to get people to support the movement. Second, Aquino's widow, Corazon, returned after her husband's death to speak out about human rights and

democracy. Third, a new people's movement emerged, as organizations such as the "Justice for Aquino, Justice for All" (JAJA) was established (Kenney 79). This organization staged dozens of protests and demonstrations during their time. By 1985, Marcos had lost most of his international support, with the exception of President Ronald Reagan. The democratic movement within the Philippines expanded to challenge the Marcos regime. Nevertheless, Marcos staged a new election in February 1986 with the belief that he would win. Corazon Aquino ran against Marcos in this election, and NAMFREL's tabulation indicated that she had defeated him in this election. However, Marcos falsified the results and ensured that he was declared the winner.

Aquino then initiated a nonviolent form of protest that called on all Filipinos to boycott government-controlled firms, such as San Miguel beer, the government press, and "crony" banks and hotels ("Civil Disobedience Campaign 88-91). This was designed to reduce the amount of money flowing into the government. As Aquino stated, "The availability of massive amounts of cash to Marcos and his cronies is what permits them to continue with their repressive activities" ("Civil Disobedience Campaign" 89). This was also meant to scare the international agencies in order to apply more pressure on the government to work with the people of the Philippines. In the end, the Marcoses fled to Clark Air Force Base (Cariño, 98), and Corazon Aquino became president.

As with the Philippines, a military dictatorship installed and supported by the United States operated in Chile. In 1973, the United States supported a coup d'état against democratically elected Salvador Allende, a socialist, who was believed to threaten U.S. copper interests in the country and to open the door to communism in South America. The newly-installed Gen. Augusto Pinochet brought on a great economic expansion, but his regime ended the lives of thousands of Chilean people who opposed him. He was considered almost

bulletproof until the economy fell in 1982, causing protests to erupt across the country. Copper miners also called a national strike in 1983, which halted the flow of the metal into the United States (Kenney 101). Three significant social movements emerged in this revolution to challenge Pinochet. One worked to publicize the vast number of Chileans that had disappeared under Pinochet's regime. The second involved feminist movements and protests that spoke about what others feared to say and received no backlash from the regime. The third consisted of guerrilla theaters that thrived in the "shantytowns" where poverty and high unemployment prevailed, which educated the public on political and social issues through dramas (Los de Alvear 103-108). Another important factor was the willingness of the Christian Democrat Party and the Catholic Church to cooperate with moderate socialists to forge a political coalition to counter Pinochet's regime.

A turning point in this revolution was when Pinochet, motivated by the events in the Philippines, decided to hold a presidential plebiscite in October 1988 that he was sure he would win. He set himself up as the only candidate on the ballot, along with the option to choose, "No." Originally, the Chileans did not want to pick the No option, as it was deemed futile. However, as Pinochet began to advertise his campaign based on fear, the No-Alliance, led by Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin, developed a poster campaign that empowered the public to reject Pinochet. The No campaign won. This eventually led to a real presidential election in December 1989, which Aylwin ended up winning, as Pinochet accepted the verdict and defeat.

These two revolutions possess significant points in common, regarding both their Cold War relationship to the United States and their use of nonviolent tactics to trigger democratic elections. Revolutionaries challenged dictatorships in each nation, backed by U.S. presidents, which is ironic as the U.S. had previously boasted about its willingness defend people against

“subjugation by armed minorities,” in the Truman Doctrine. The United States viewed each country as a necessary bulwark against communism in the Cold War. The Philippines, a former U.S. colony, was viewed as an ally to the United States in the Cold War and contained U.S. military bases considered essential to counter communism in Asia. Latin America was thought of as the “backyard” of the United States, making Chile an even more vital location for anti-communist government. The democratic revolutionary movements in each country also pursued nonviolence as a means of challenging repressive regimes. Guerrilla theaters staged peaceful protests against Pinochet in the Chilean revolution, while activists in the Philippines staged an economic boycott. Filipino activists relied heavily on disrupting the government and its activities through nonviolent methods, while actions by Chileans seemed almost quiet but deadly. They relied heavily on smaller but powerful forms of disobedience, such as the man who set himself on fire to protest his missing children (Kenney 109). They spread awareness by educating their citizens on the unfairness of the rule, which ended up mobilizing them to vote for the No Campaign in the end. These actions helped bring about elections in each nation that led to democratic regimes, though they came about very differently. Pinochet admitted defeat after he lost during the presidential plebiscite, which made way for a real, fair election that left the country in the hands of Aylwin. On the other hand, in the Philippines, Marcos initially attempted to steal the election, though he was ultimately driven out of his country by the movement led by Aquino.

Additional similarities can be seen in the peoples who comprised each revolution. Both revolutions greatly displayed feminism. In the Chilean revolution, feminists spoke out against the government freely, and Corazon Aquino became the first Filipina president ever. Second, both

revolutions experienced heavy support from those of the Catholic faith, which was an extremely important factor in educating and influencing people to speak up.

It is remarkably interesting learning about the different revolutions that occurred that shaped the way the world is today, particularly those that occurred in Chile and the Philippines at the end of the Cold War. When people think of revolutions, they are often depicted as bloody and frightening, but these two revolutions demonstrate how people can strive toward greatness while opposing their existing conditions peacefully. As a result, protests that have occurred in our current century have shown similar properties as those discussed in this paper. Although the Cold War was a terrible era, the effects it left on the world served as a wakeup call to people living under corrupt governments, encouraging them to challenge those regimes rather than awaiting another war that they would have to fight in unwillingly.

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