

The midwife of democratic voice: the military of Portugal and the Philippines

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Abstract

During the last quarter of the previous century, the dictatorship of Salazar-Caetano in Portugal and Marcos' dictatorship in the Philippines were driven from power via rebellions led by revolutionary officers. Provoked by the politics of the dictators, which weakened military professionalism and created paramilitary units, the officers organized in the Armed Forces Movement, MFA, in Portugal and the Reform of Armed Forces Movement, RAM, in the Philippines decided to support reforms and democracy. The aim of this paper is to, via a comparative Landman's approach, describe and explain the role of the military in the collapse of long-standing regimes. Accordingly, there is given discussion about how did these movements establish and what was their role in democratic transition. The contribution of this paper is reflected in the fact that it represents the first and so far the only comparative analysis of the role of the military in the transition of these two countries. Many papers that are focused on transition considering the military as a factor of problematic influence. On the contrary, the focus of this paper is on the role of the military as an initiator, i.e. a promotional factor of democratic change.

Introduction

Portugal's transition to democracy began on Thursday, April 25, 1974, in Lisbon with a coup d'état of young officers organized within the Armed Forces Movement (*Movimento das Forças Armadas* – MFA). This

coup, also known as the “Carnation Revolution”¹, overthrew the authoritarian Salazar-Caetano regime institutionalized during the 1930s, and then in 1961 dragged the Portuguese armed forces into a protracted colonial war. On the other hand, the democratic transition in the Philippines began in late February 1986, when the “People Power Revolution”, led by Corazon Aquino, overthrew the dictatorial regime of Ferdinand Marcos². The revolt encompassed huge masses of people, but also a part of the military, i.e. the Reform the Armed Forces Movement, RAM.

Without intention to be exhaustive, there can be identified some of the common characteristics of the Portuguese and Philippine transition:

1. Portugal was under the personal dictatorship of Antonio Salazar and Marcello Caetano, and the Philippines was under the personal dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos³. The basic characteristic of this regime is that a leader is a source of power and that power depends on closeness to the leader and his support. However, the origins of these dictatorships were different. In the Philippines, it was the result of a coup, and in Portugal it began with a military coup in 1926, but later new leaders established civilian rule;
2. The Portuguese and Philippine dictatorships experienced an immediate collapse. In both authoritarian regimes, there were no conditions for the transition to democracy via negotiation or transaction. First of all, the Portuguese and Philippine dictators were not ready to voluntarily hand over power, but tried to keep it for as long as possible. At the same time, the initiative for the reforms from insi-

¹ On April 25, the citizens of Lisbon supported the action of young officers, took to the streets and put red carnations in the barrels of their rifles, hence the name “Carnation Revolution”. Linz J.J. – Stepan A., *Demokratska tranzicija i konsolidacija: Južna Evropa, Južna Amerika i postkomunistička Evropa*, Filip Višnjić, Beograd 1998, p. 146.

² The Philippines under Marcos showed a strong tendency towards sultanism. *Ivi*, p. 77.

³ For more information regarding the character and type of Salazar-Caetano regime and Marcos regime, please see: Blagojević J., «Komparativna analiza Markosove i Salazar-Kaetanove diktature», in «Medijski dijalozi: Časopis za istraživanje medija i društva», in *Media Dialogues*, 13-14, 5 November 2012, pp. 567 – 579.

de was almost impossible, as reformers were weak and hardline conservatives were dominant. Caetano had launched some liberal reforms, but without result. Also, in the Philippines, in the environment of Marcos, there were not democrats, or even liberals. Consequently, both dictatorships were overthrown via riots;

3. Finally, in overthrowing the Salazar-Caetano dictatorship and the Marcos dictatorship, it is impossible to ignore the role of the non-hierarchical military factor⁴ – middle-ranking officers and their associations that aimed to support reform and democracy: The Armed Forces Movement in Portugal and the Reform the Armed Forces Movement in the Philippines.

The aim of this paper is to, via a comparative Landman's approach⁵, describe and explain this last mentioned common feature of the Portuguese and Philippine transitions. Accordingly, at the following pages is given discussion about how these movements established and what was their role in democratic transition. The contribution of this paper is reflected in the fact that it represents the first and so far the only comparative analysis of the role of the military in the transition of these two countries. There are plenty of papers dealing with this issue separately or in comparison with some other countries, but there is no paper that analyses similarities or differences between these two countries.

The Military Position in Personal Dictatorships

One of the biggest mistakes of dictators in Portugal and the Philippines was the alienation and demoralization of the military. The Armed Forces Movement arose because the Portuguese government and military forces were unable to win the colonial wars in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau, while the Reform the Armed Forces Movement in the Philippines arose as a reaction to the inefficiency and corruption in the Philippine military.

⁴ *Ivi*, p. 143.

⁵ Landman T., *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics: An Introduction*, 3rd ed., Routledge, Abingdon and New York 2008.

"Decree 353-73" and the Armed Forces Movement

Unlike France and Great Britain, which embarked on the path of decolonization, Portugal provided military response to the demands for independence in the mentioned African countries. The war was not only long (1961-1974), but also very expensive with far-reaching consequences to ordinary people lives.

In the late 1970s, it was difficult to find a family whose at least one member had not fought in Africa. About 7,700 Portuguese soldiers were killed and close to 28,000 wounded during the war⁶. By the early 1970s, nearly half of GDP had been spent on maintaining an army of 150,000 troops⁷. The percentage of the total labor force in the military increased from 6.5% in 1970 to 8% in 1973⁸. In addition, the war led to a large emigration of the population, only about 100,000 young Portuguese emigrated to Europe, North America and Africa with the intention to avoid military service. The number of legal immigrants in the countries of the European Economic Community grew steadily from 6,500 in 1960 to 156,000 in 1970. Only in France were half a mil-

⁶ Bermeo N., «War and Democratization: Lessons from the Portuguese Experience», in *Democratization*, 14, 3, 2007, p. 391.

⁷ Lloyd-Jones S., «Portugal's history since 1974», in *CPHRC Working Papers*, ISCTE, 2, 1 November 2001. Available at: <http://www1.ci.uc.pt/cd25a/media/Textos/portugal-since-1974.pdf> (accessed 28 December 2021).

⁸ Labor shortages combined with "war factors" have prompted many capitalists to consider the authoritarian regime. They found themselves between the cost-effectiveness of maintaining colonies in Africa and the reorientation of the Portuguese economy towards Europe. Portugal became a member of EFTA in 1959 and was to liberalize its tariff restrictions over a period of 15 years. As the deadline approached, many industrialists were deeply concerned about the level of their competitive advantages when meeting European companies. They demanded that the state protect them with infrastructure that would enable the advancement of their competitive advantages by stopping depleting resources in the colonial war. As the war prolonged "entry into Europe", many competitive economic forces stopped supporting the regime. However, it should be noted that there were those companies that benefited from the war, because they were involved in industries that functioned for the needs of the war or were of significant interest in colonial trade. The war created a clear distinction in interests between those who saw their business future in Africa and those who saw their business future in Europe. The *Expresso* weekly magazine is an important channel for expressing the anti-war sentiment of the business and technocratic elite. Bermeo N., *op. cit.*, p. 393.

lion Portuguese⁹. Colonialism has done great damage to Portugal's reputation in the world: from 1961, when the United Nations supported India's invasion of Goa, to 1971, when the Pope in Rome warmly received freedom fighters from the Portuguese colonies in Africa.

Separated for a long time from home and family, the Portuguese soldiers felt forgotten and abandoned. At the beginning of the war in Africa, in 1961, the regime strengthened colonial institutions and increased the metropolitan bureaucracy in charge of colonial affairs. When it became clear that Portugal would not easily win the war, the Caetano launched a "heart and mind" campaign to stifle the mobilization of Africans. However, it did not significantly affect the indigenous population, but the political beliefs of the Portuguese military. This was particularly pronounced in Guinea, where civilian action programs contributed to raising officers' awareness of social inequalities¹⁰. They often criticized the way "white" immigrants treated blacks, and they listened to their aspirations for freedom. The distinction between Portuguese officers and Portuguese colonists became, over time, deeper. As many as 75% of the officers were against the war¹¹. Moreover, the events of the 1960s and 1970s spurred a strengthening of the revolutionary sentiment in the military. The first among them was the loss of the Portuguese Goa in 1961 due to the Indian invasion with 30,000 troops. Soldiers didn't follow Salazar's order to resist and consequently he dismissed a considerable part of the military¹².

An event that was crucial for the officers' decision to renounce their loyalty to the dictatorial regime in Lisbon was the issuance of Decree-Law 353-73¹³, by the Caetano government. As the conditions of war became more difficult, the Portuguese's desire for a military career declined. By the end of 1965, the National Military Academy was admitting far more students than enrolled. In the 1973 class, only 30

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ivi*, p. 397.

¹¹ *Ivi*, p. 399.

¹² «The Military Takeover of 1974», in *Country Data*, January 1993. Available at: <http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-10993.html> (accessed 10 January 2022).

¹³ *Ibid.*

officers graduated¹⁴. Thus, officers who were on the battlefield feared that there would soon be no new captains to replace them. The regime decided to fill that vacuum, passing a decree that made it easier to obtain the rank of officer. Consequently, career officers educated at the Military Academy who had waited years to advance, felt humiliated and betrayed.

The officers were dissatisfied not only with the issue of professional status, but also with low salaries¹⁵ and long stays abroad under difficult conditions. They were also upset because the USSR, China and other Eastern Bloc countries supplied weapons and other equipment to the rebels, while they lacked modern weapons, because the United States and some other NATO countries imposed an embargo on Portugal's arms imports¹⁶. This led to the creation of the Armed Forces Movement by 200 mostly middle-ranking officers (captains, majors)¹⁷. The MAF emerged in November 1973, as a dissident group made up of individuals of different political orientations: center-right, right-wing and left-wing. This spectrum of opinion reflected the ideological spectrum of society as a whole. The demand for the creation of a large armed force from a small population had led to a deep encroachment on Portuguese society in order to "feed" the military machine. In fact, the Portuguese Armed Forces represented Portuguese society, as more than one million Portuguese were in overseas service when the revolution began. Unlike countries where the military lives in military castes as an isolated subculture, the Portuguese war was too long and demanding for such kind of isolation.

Marcos' "Praetorian Guard" and the emergence of the RAM

The non-politicized and professional Philippine military, which has been organized in line with the model of the US military since the

¹⁴ Bermeo N., *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Since members of the armed forces were very poorly paid for their military engagement, they also worked in the civic sector: as teachers, advisors, businessmen, etc. *Ivi*, p. 399.

¹⁶ «The Military Takeover of 1974», *op. cit.*

¹⁷ Cuzán A.G., *Democratic Transitions: The Portuguese Case*, Rimaneli M., edited by, *Comparative Democratization and Peaceful Change in Single-Party-Dominant Countries*, St. Martin's Press, New York 1999, p. 123.

American colonial period, thanks to Marcos' policy during martial law period¹⁸, has become a significant actor in the political process.

The Philippines' military expenditure was higher than that of all other ASEAN countries¹⁹, thanks to U.S. military aid, which more than doubled in the first five years of the martial law. Between 1973 and 1984, total U.S. military aid amounted to some \$ 519 million²⁰. Despite the fact that it had large financial resources, the military remained under civilian control, i.e. under political control of Marcos and his clique. Marcos and his loyal provincial governors had a decisive influence on the election of provincial commanders²¹. Marcos was seeking to ensure the loyalty of the armed forces via the granting of great powers and honors on the basis of

¹⁸ On September 21, 1972, Marcos signed Proclamation No. 1081 placing the Philippines under Martial Law, in response to growing unrest across the country, the formation of the New People's Army – NPA, an armed revolt advocating for the equitable distribution of wealth and land reform, and the bloody Muslim separatist movement in the south island of Mindanao led by the Moro National Liberation Front – MNLF. Using his extraordinary powers, Marcos established full control over the Philippine army, abolished freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and many other civil liberties, and enacted Constitution that was contrary to all democratic rules, principles and procedures. Kann P.R., «The Philippines Without Democracy», in *Foreign Affairs*, 52, 3, 1974, p. 623. Marcos exercised presidential power under the old presidential system, but at the same time usurped the power of the prime minister under the new parliamentary system. Krstić Z., «*Savremeni politički sistemi zemalja Jugoistočne Azije*», in *Službeni glasnik*, 2007, p. 47. He abolished media outlets that criticized his rule and ordered the arrest of political opponents. For more information, please see: Blagojević J., *op. cit.*; Kann P.R., *op. cit.*

¹⁹ For more information about ASEAN please see: Calvoceressi P., *Svjetska politika nakon 1945*, Globus, Zagreb 2003, p. 547.

²⁰ Hedman E.-L. – Sidel J., *Philippine Politics and Society in the Twentieth Century: Colonial Legacies, Post-Colonial Trajectories*, Routledge, London 2000, p. 47.

²¹ *Ibid.* The military had great authority in passing and enforcing presidential decrees, while in some places local military commanders assumed positions previously held by local elected officials. However, the extent of the military's involvement in civilian affairs depended on whether local military commanders or local civilian officials had a close relationship with the president. Marcos was surrounded by a small group of civilians and generals, only a few of them were high-ranking and had a powerful position in society. The military, made up of about 65,000 people, including some 25,000 members of the Philippine military police, had not had much influence in large part of the country. Kann P.R., *op. cit.*

family and friendly ties. The top of the armed forces was elected based on the personal preferences of the president. It is best described by the example of appointing a school friend and personal driver Fabian Ver as a Chief of Staff and the head of the internal security network and a cousin General Fidel V. Ramos for Chief of Philippine Constabulary.

Marcos often disrupted the formal chain of command, bypassing Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile, and allowing loyal generals to perform their duties even after fulfilling the conditions required for retirement. Moreover, under Ver the Presidential Security Unit, PSU grew into the Presidential Security Battalion, PBB of 2,000 troops, and later transformed into a larger independent command – the Presidential Security Command, PSC. The position of the head of PSC gave power to Ver to command the forces of all four services, plus the Metro Manila police force, and to enjoy a power equivalent to the deputy chief of the military. However, even after his promotion to chief of staff in 1981, Ver essentially retained control of the PSC. As one observer noted: «When he became chief of the Philippine military... Ver left the formal command of the PSC to Santiago Barangan. In reality, Ver and his sons were de facto in control of the PSC. Colonel Irwin Ver was the PSC chief of forces and Rexor Ver the commander»²².

During the martial law period, the Philippine armed forces transformed into Marcos' "Praetorian Guard", which supported the corrupt regime, contributing to the disappearance of traditional military professionalism and the emergence of military factionalism²³.

The described relation of the Philippine president towards the military, led to the alienation and demoralization of young officers who graduated from the elite Philippine Military Academy in 1971²⁴. During their four-year studies, close ties developed between them, especially later in the fight against "internal enemies": the New People's Army and the Moro National Liberation Front²⁵.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Croissant A. – Kuehn D., «Patterns of Civilian Control of the Military in East Asia's New Democracies», in *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 9, 2009, p. 195.

²⁴ Hedman E.-L. – Sidel J., *op. cit.*, p. 48.

²⁵ For more information about the mentioned movements, please see: Santos S.M. – Santos P.V.M., *Primed And Purposeful Armed Groups And Human Security*

They were outraged by the fact that generals and a favored group of Fabian Ver – favored soldiers sat in Manila, in luxury, under Marcos' patronage, while young forces fought the country due to the Philippine dictator's inability to quell the riots peacefully. In addition, young officers' aversion to generals, who should have retired a long time ago, and who made it impossible for them to advance in the service, has increased.

During the first half of the 1980s, various members of the '71 FVA Class rose to the rank of major and colonel and took direct operational control of important commands. Middle-ranking young officers emerged as the group with the greatest propensity and capacity for some kind of armed mobilization against the regime. By comparison, senior officers of the Philippine Armed Forces who commanded a significant number of troops were «too high to be impartial (because Marcos appointed them to those positions) or too rich to any worries»²⁶.

In 1982, five '71 FVA Class²⁷ graduates formed the Reform the Armed Forces Movement, whose primary goal was «professionalization and military reform»²⁸. In May 1985, members of the RAM began to express their views in the national media, and secretly planned to carry out the coup. Following the assassination of Marcos' fiercest opponent, Benigno Aquino, in 1983, who also advocated for the professionalization of the military as part of a broader strategy for economic and political reform in the Philippines, the RAM was strengthened by de facto protection from the US government.

The RAM was led by Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile, who disobeyed Marcos because the dictator gave Fabian Ver dominant control over the armed forces. By 1986, about 4,000 officers and soldiers had joined the RAM²⁹. They were upset and dissatisfied with corrup-

Efforts In The Philippines, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Quezon City South-South Network for Non-State Armed Group Engagement, Geneva 2010; Krstić Z., *op. cit.*, p. 81.

²⁶ *Ivi*, p. 48.

²⁷ Hilsdon A.-M., *Madonnas and martyrs: militarism and violence in the Philippines*, Ateneo de Manila University Press, Manila 1995, p. 18.

²⁸ Gretchen C., «Theories of Military Intervention in the Third World: Lessons from the Philippines», in *Armed Forces & Society*, 17, 2, 1991, pp. 191-210.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

tion inside the military and its inefficiency in quelling the communist and Muslim uprisings, as well as the loss of regime's respect among the people³⁰.

The position of military under Salazar-Caetano regime and Marcos regime was very similar, in the context of their main traits: deprofessionalized, politicized, corrupt, disappointed. In order to stay in power, Marcos bribed members of the armed forces and placed loyalists in leading positions, establishing competing paramilitary and security units. On the other hand, Salazar and his successor Caetano wanted to preserve the colonial empire at all costs, so, exhausting both the military and the civilian population, they created dissatisfaction with their rule equal to Marcos. These leaders were not ready for any reforms, changes, but were sinking more and more into their self-confident policy, forcing the military to take on a political role and deprive them of power.

The Role of MFA and RAM in the Dictatorship Breakdown

The nature of the undemocratic regime, i.e. the politics of its ruling elite, significantly determines the character of the regime initiator and the manner of its termination. In the ruling elite of the Caetano and Marcos regimes, absolute control was held by hardliners who did not have the capacity needed to launch a reform process that would lead to democratization, i.e. they were not ready to open negotiations with opposition forces. Accordingly, the only way of transition from personal dictatorships in Portugal and the Philippines was the collapse, whose main actors are: regime hardliners and radical opposition.

The transitional approach is based on the theoretical assumption that actors are autonomous and act as a whole. The Portuguese and Philippine undemocratic regimes can be defined as unified and autonomous given their hierarchical character. This cannot be said for the

³⁰ Schirmer D.B. – Shalom S.R., *The Philippines reader: a history of colonialism, neocolonialism, dictatorship and resistance*, KEN Incorporated, Quezon City 1987, p. 276.

opposition made up of different groups. However, they were united by the desire for democratic breakthrough, i.e. the abolition of the dictatorial regime, and they remained united at least until April 1974, i.e. February 1986.

The main interest of the Caetano and Marcos regimes was to stay in power. This could only be achieved by a complete or partial solution of the existing problems or by initiating reforms that the opposition would accept. On the other hand, the primary interest of the opposition was a complete change of regime. This was possible achieved only by accepting the reforms initiated by the regime or via a *coup d'état*. In the case of a coup, the regime had two options: to use force to quell the rebellion or to remain passive (*bloodless revolution*).

The Salazar-Caetano regime, thanks to the deeply infiltrated secret police in all structures of society, very quickly and efficiently suppressed several coup attempts by various opposition groups. On March 16, 1974, more than 150 members of the Armed Forces Movement were arrested for attempting to attack Lisbon. However, in less than a month, on the night of April 24-25, the MFA overthrew the regime without much resistance and laid the foundations for democratization. In fact, the regime opted for option number two for the first time: it did not use force, there was only a sporadic shooting in which five people were killed and 15 wounded³¹.

Paramilitary and security units loyal to Marcos monitored every sphere of Philippine society, in order to prevent a possible coup attempt. However, they failed to prevent the RAM from joining, on the *Epifanio de los Santos Avenue* “People Power” revolt that overthrew Marcos and led Corazon Aquino to the post of President of the State. In the case of the Philippines, the regime also opted for option number two, because Marcos knew that if he provoked a bloody revolution, he would not have refuge in the United States.

The Carnation Revolution

Marcello Caetano inherited the burden of the colonial war, so in order to ensure the loyalty of the citizens, he launched a series of “Re-

³¹ Hersvik J. – Larsen S.U., «Democratic breakdown and transitions to democracy in Portugal», in *Portuguese Journal of Social Science*, 2, 3, 2004, p. 178.

forms with Continuity”. In response to the labor shortage, he initiated changes in the labor sector, tolerating some strikes and contributing to the adoption of more flexible labor laws. The regime’s National Union party began to talk about pluralism, and the 1969 elections were “less rigged” than those held after 1920³². However, this partial liberalization did not prevent the erosion of support for the regime, as dissidents were a subject of the brutal force of state coercion. The regime did not allow public criticism of the war and the prisons were full of political prisoners.

Consequently, liberalization was not initiated with the aim of full democratization, but rather in order to strengthen support for the colonial war. Liberalization had at least one consequence in favor of the later democratic regime: the consolidation of the liberal wing of dissidents who had strong ties with various sectors of civil society. After the revolution, these forces were the basis of the democratic center and the center-right, providing an alternative to citizens who were against both socialism and the old regime.

In the spring of 1974, the MFA-led opposition, aware of the regime’s failed reform efforts, began planning an action aimed at changing living and working conditions by changing the form of government. Civil society did not participate in these plans, due to the degree of coercion applied by the Caetano regime.

The Association of Medium-Range Officers (captains, lieutenants and majors), from all three branches of the Portuguese Armed Forces, planned and carried out a coup without any ties with institutional power structures. Senior officer didn’t participate in the planning and conducting of the coup. Thus, the Movement of the Armed Forces, also known as the Captain’s Movement³³, did not take care of the military hierarchy, but arrested their superior officers and took over their command.

However, the leadership of the MFA was aware that it needed a high-ranking officer who would be the head of the transitional government after the revolution and be the “face” of the Movement. Such a

³² Bermeo N., *op. cit.*

³³ Moreira D., «Transitional foreign policy: actors, institutions and norms», in *Portuguese Journal of Social Science*, 4, 3, 2005, p. 137.

person had to possess three qualities: to be clearly distanced from the old regime, to be respected by the “core” of the military; and finally, to be capable to gain the public support³⁴.

There were disagreements among senior officers about the government’s colonial policy. The right wing was represented by General Kaúlza de Arriaga, a former commander-in-chief in Mozambique who advocated a military solution to the wars in Africa. On the other hand, more moderate officers, such as former military commander in Angola and former the chief of staff of the armed forces, General Francisco de Costa Gomes and former military commander in Guinea Bissau and deputy the chief of staff of the armed forces, General António de Spínola, favored negotiations with African independence movements.

Since the vast majority of officers supported the second option, based on the above criteria, their choice was reduced to two personalities: General Gomes and General Spínola.

In February 1974, Spínola published a book, *Portugal and the Future (Portugal e o futuro)*³⁵, in which he advocated a political solution to the colonial conflict. He proposed the establishment of a federal structure consisting of Portugal and its former colonies where indigenous population would have certain degree of autonomy, while Portugal would still have privileged access to resources. This book became the best-selling book of that period. Spínola became famous, but lost the position in the old undemocratic regime. However, Spínola’s view was contrary to MFA’s African policy, which guaranteed the colonies complete independence.

At the same time, a large number of members of the MFA Coordination Committee, a limited group of officers planning and leading the coup, served under Spínola’s command in Guinea-Bissau, and defined his command as very authoritarian and uncompromised. Accordingly, the Movement decided that Gomez would be the president of the republic, while Spínola would be appointed for the chief of the staff.

After the coup on April 25, 1974, Caetano stated that, in order to fill the power vacuum, he would hand over power only to General

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Chilcote R.H., *The Portuguese Revolution: state and class in the transition to democracy*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham 2010, p. 123.

Spínola. Under pressure, MFA accepted this request and Spínola and Gomez swapped positions: Spínola became president of the republic, and Gomez the chief of the staff. By May 4, 1974, the structure of the transitional government was completed³⁶.

People Power Revolution

The repressive politics of Ferdinand Marcos caused dissatisfaction among various members of Philippine society: Communist Movement New People's Army, Moro National Liberation Front, students, church members, some economic oligarchs, unemployed politicians, skeptical social reformers, RAM, etc. However, these opposition forces did not have much in common, without antipathy to Marcos. Also, taking into account the regime's repressive power, opposition rarely publicly expressed their dissatisfaction. Thus, Marcos' dictatorship, from the 1970s to the early 1980s, feared more potential, rather than real threats.

However, there was the growing unwillingness and inability of Marcos' projected New Society state to implement successful economic and social reforms, and to respond properly to the demands of the Muslim independence movement. In addition, the regime's legitimacy based on economic growth had been called into question by rising oil prices in the 1970s, that led to economic stagnation, depression and inflation³⁷.

The fiercest opponent of the dictatorial regime was Benigno Aquino. In order to prevent Aquino's victory in the elections, Marcos ordered his arrest in 1973. Benigno released in 1979 for medical treatment in the United States. Upon his return in 1983, he was killed at Manila Airport by a contract killer, who was also killed immediately by his clients. The investigation referred to the Chief of Staff General Fabian Ver and two other generals, but they were officially acquitted.

³⁶ Moreira D., *op. cit.*

³⁷ The economic base of the New Society was attacked by the 1973-74 oil crisis as well as the followed global recession. In the Philippines, where 90% of oil was imported, energy costs quadrupled, while commodity export prices fell. Marcos reacted by borrowing and spending more, thus doubling the Philippines' foreign debt between 1979 and 1983. Hantington S.P., *Treći talas: demokratizacija na izmaku dvadesetog veka*, CID, Podgorica 2004, p. 53.

This tragedy opened eyes of many Filipinos regarding the shortcomings and cruelties of Marcos' rule.

Meanwhile, the Enrile-led RAM planned to stage a coup and establish military-civilian rule³⁸. However, in order to regain domestic and international legitimacy, Marcos suddenly, on November 7, 1985, on American television in the show “Sunday with David Brinkley” announced the election for February 7, 1986³⁹, a year before the regular presidential election. Consequently, the Movement postponed the planned coup.

U.S. didn't officially support the RAM conspiracy, but also didn't try to stop it and protect Marcos. These tendencies to plan and carry out coups against the Marcos regime reflected not only the strengthening of solidarity, awareness and readiness for collective action by dissatisfied young officers of the Philippine Armed Forces, but also the growing challenge to undemocratic rule appeared by civilians.

The RAM was primarily formed and cultivated under the patronage and protection of the Minister of Defense, Juan Ponce Enrile, while the leader of the Movement was Colonel Gregorio Honasan, Enrile's senior adjutant since 1975, and '71 classmates Colonel Eduardo E. Kapunan and Colonel Oscar B. Legaspi, who were recruited to the security unit of the Ministry of National Defense.

During his tenure as Secretary of Defense, Enrile amassed enormous personal wealth, built a business empire, secretly financed the purchase of sophisticated, expensive, highly destructive weapons and hired a retired British Special Air Service instructor to train Honasan, Kapunan and their staff. However, Enrile's influence had been declining in recent years, and, as already pointed out, Marcos often bypassed him in order to communicate directly with his loyal chief of staff, General Ver. Amid growing uncertainty and instability in Manila after 1983, patronage over the RAM promised Enrile not only a growing reputation among U.S. officials, but also provided him with military personnel to use the aforementioned arsenal of weapons against Ver in the case of Marcos sudden death or departure from power.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Boudreau V., *Grass roots and cadre in the protest movement*, Ateneo de Manila University Press, Quezon City 2001, p. 32.

In the planned elections, according to all impartial data, she won Corazon Aquino, who had been at the head of the opposition since the murder of her husband Benigno Aquino⁴⁰. However, the Government's Commission on Elections (COMELEC) published data according to which Marcos won the presidential election⁴¹ and the National Assembly (which was under his control) officially confirmed it on February 16. In addition, Marcos uncovered a conspiracy by the RAM and issued a wanted circular for Enrile and his supporters. They retired to Camp Aguinaldo and Camp Crame, joined Deputy Chief of Staff Fidel Ramos and on 22 February 1986 requested Marcos to resign. Marcos replied, by sending loyal units led by Ver to quell the rebellion. However, Cardinal Sin⁴², via Catholic-run Radio Veritas, called on the people to bring food and other necessities to the rebels, as well as non-violently resist to the troops.

Reaction of hundreds of thousands of Filipinos indicated that elections were just a form and that the "voice" of the Philippine population was not really respected. For the next four days, a huge mass of people (*People Power*) associated with the Association of Middle Officers, opposed the tanks and machine guns of government troops. However, violent confrontations were prevented because Filipino soldiers did not want to shoot at the people. No foreign ambassador at-

⁴⁰ Crisostomo I.T., *Cory. Profile of a President*, 1st edition, Branden Pub Co., Brookline Village 1990, p. 181.

⁴¹ According to COMELEC data, Marcos won 3,056,236 and Aquino 2,903,348 votes, while data from the National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) showed that Marcos won 4,806,166 and Aquino 5,576,319 votes. Goldman R.M. – Pascual H., «NAMFREL: Spotlight for Democracy», in *Journal of World Affairs*, 150, 4, 1988, p. 228.

⁴² In the Philippines, the church had become a main institution that condemned repression, defended human rights, and fostered democracy. Church organizations and buildings provided refuge and support to opponents of the regime. The church founded the National Movement for Free Elections. In fact, the most extreme political interference of church leaders took place in the Philippines. Cardinal Sin sent a letter to all parishes in the Philippines advising Catholics to vote for a person who represents «gospel values, modesty, truth, honesty, respect for human rights and life». Cardinal Sin may have played a more active and significant role in overthrowing the regime and changing the national political leadership than any Catholic priest after the seventeenth century. Hantington S.P., *op. cit.*, p. 64.

tended Marcos' inauguration ceremony on February 25, after which US Senator Paul Laxalt⁴³ advised him to “cut and cut cleanly”. It had become clear to Marcos that he no longer had US support and same evening he went into exile with his wife Imelda Marcos.

Discussion and Conclusions

Based on the given historical data, there are given noticed similarities and differences in the collapse of non-democratic regimes in Portugal and the Philippines. The great support enjoyed by the Portuguese and Philippine authoritarian regime, had waned over time. Their leaders were unaware of how unpopular or even hated they were by various social groups. Events that reflected the weakness of the regime, i.e. the loss of the military support in both cases and the election fraud in the Philippines highly contributed to manifestation of the described dissatisfaction.

The military represents the basic support for authoritarian regimes. If it does not provide support, strike against the regime or refuse to use force against those who threaten to overthrow the regime, the regime falls. In the collapse of the Salazar-Caetano regime in Portugal and the Marcos regime in the Philippines, dissatisfaction of the military was crucial. However, before the military turns its back on the government, the opposition must be broad-based. When the opposition took to the streets of the Philippines, military units did not shoot at broad-based groups consisted of intellectuals, members of political parties, trade unions, the Catholic Church, etc. On the other hand, in Portugal MAF overthrew the dictatorship without any previous support.

During the collapse, resistance was very weak from both the Portuguese police and Marcos' “loyal units”. That was the main reason why both leaders were overthrown without bloodshed. Unlike the leaders of authoritarian regimes, who left political life dues to a transaction or change through negotiations, those leaders who have been remo-

⁴³ Bolton J.R., «Bring Back the Laxalt Doctrine», *Policy Review*, August 2000. Available at: <https://www.hoover.org/research/bring-back-laxalt-doctrine> (accessed 10 January 2022).

ved via collapse have an unfortunate fate. Caetano and Marcos were expelled from the country.

The new Portuguese and Philippine civilian governments used almost the same means of depoliticizing, professionalizing, and reforming the armed forces. Since the military was the main initiator and leader of the coup and that it had its own body that oversaw the transition, it could be inferred that establishing civilian control over the military was more difficult in Portugal. However, the reality is different. Portugal has established a model of civil-military relations that characterizes liberal democracies, while in the Philippines, even today, one of the main obstacles to the consolidation of the democratic order is a politicized military.

The reason for such a position of the military in post-transition Portugal and the Philippines can be found in the described degree of its political involvement in the power structures of the dictatorial regime, the Movements' attitude towards democracy after the coup, and the missions entrusted to them under the new regime. The Philippine Armed Forces continue to focus on resolving internal conflicts that create a need for political engagement. On the other hand, the Portuguese military has focused on defending the country from external danger, thanks to the overall democratic strength of the Portuguese citizens and well-led reforms. After the coup, there was a two-year period of six 'provisional governments' in Portugal, from 1974 to 1976, during which, a military body The Council of Revolution, consisting of 20 officers was established in 1975. The promise of MFA to hold elections in one-year period saved the Portuguese transition. They created new democratic forces which paved the way for transition. Executive, legislative and judicial branches ceased sharing power with The Council of Revolution in 1982, which marked the end of Portuguese transition and consolidation⁴⁴.

⁴⁴ Rezola M.I., «The military, 25 April and the Portuguese transition to democracy», in *Portuguese Journal of Social Science*, 7, 1, 2008, p. 7; Lisi M., «Rethinking the role of the Portuguese Communist Party in the transition to democracy u Portuguese», in *Journal of Social Science*, 7, 1, 2008, p. 17; Cerezales D.P., «Fascist lackeys? Dealing with the police's past during Portugal's transition to democracy (1974–1980)», in *Portuguese Journal of Social Science*, 6, 3, 2007, p. 160. Moreira D., *op. cit.*, p. 138; Pinto A.C., «The Legacy of the Authoritarian Past in Portugal's

Today, Portugal, as a member of the European Union and NATO, functions as a semi-presidential democracy, in which the military, like other interest groups, lobbies to protect its interests, benefits, budget and position in society. Only some extreme event can push her back into politics. In the Philippines, the military did not have a government body that it dominated, but it repeatedly tried to overthrow the new democratic regime. The members of the RAM in the Philippines, eager to increase the political power, joined Marcos' loyalists and attempted six *coups d'état* during the rule of Corazon Aquino (1982-1990)⁴⁵. In order to protect the stability of the democratic rule from the military intervention, Corazon's followers gave to the officers significant privileges such as appointments to important positions in the government, raise of their salaries, etc. The elected governments have not had enough institutional and organizational resources, nor the political capital to cope with the military. Consequently, the Philippine presidential democracy⁴⁶ has been quite unstable, where corruption and nepotism have been accepted as normal paths for political and personal advancement⁴⁷.

Democratisation, 1974–6», in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 9, 2-3, June-September 2008, p. 269.

⁴⁵ The East Asia Brometer conducted a survey in six countries of the region (Japan, Korea, Mongolia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand) asking respondents to decide whether to return to authorized rule, offering them three alternatives: a civilian authoritarian regime, a one-party regime and a military dictatorship. The data obtained showed that the military dictatorship is the least popular in all surveyed countries, except in the Philippines, where as many as 37% of respondents had said that they supported military rule. At the same time, the Philippines had the highest and overall percentage of support for undemocratic regimes: 30% of Filipino respondents favored some of these forms of government. Shin D.C. – Wells J., «Is Democracy the only Game in Town», in *Journal of Democracy*, 16, 2, April 2005, p. 93.

⁴⁶ Taking into account that the political system of the Philippines has been modeled on the American one, the central place in the political life of the country is occupied by the president, who is elected directly by the citizens, for a period of six years, without the right to be re-elected. The President formed his cabinet from his closest associates, and he/she is at the same time the head of state, the prime minister, the commander of the armed forces and the head of the ruling party or coalition. Krstić Z., *op. cit.*, p. 98.

⁴⁷ See more about the Philippine party system in: Ufen A., «Political Party and Party System Institutionalisation in Southeast Asia: A Comparison of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand», in *GIGA Working Papers*, 44, 2007.

These findings have important implications on transitology, taking into account the described role of military officers in collapse of long-standing regimes. Strategic approach to democratization, i.e. understanding of the role of different transition actors and their strategies is impossible without considering the role of the military. Many papers that are focused on transition considering the military as a factor of problematic influence: in the form of establishing some form of military rule or supporting a hated regime that has lost domestic and international legitimacy. On the contrary, the scientific focus of this paper is on the role of the military as an initiator, i.e. a promotional factor of democratic change.

The findings of the paper make good base for further research regarding the role of the military in transition process, while it should certainly be kept in mind that the role of the military in regime change depends on factors such as the existence of organized civil society, the opposition movement, international support, etc.

The significance and originality of this paper is reflected in a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach that connects political changes and the role of military in disseminating certain policies and ideas. The findings of this study would help senior executives in understanding the importance of relationship between military and politics of as well as in defining foreign policy goals and strategies in relation to these countries.

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