

Rhetorical Motives of the Marcos Family in Select Media Statements

JETHRO BRYAN ANDRADA

IMARI JAZMINE TAMAYO

NIQUE JADE TARUBAL

University of the Philippines Baguio

ABSTRACT

The Marcos political comeback in the Philippines is intimately tied with collective forgetting and historical negationism. Due attention has been given to Marcos-related disinformation that features such content and which is often spread online with the use of influencers and social media pages. Yet, the Marcoses themselves are personally involved in defending, justifying, and negating the controversies of the first Marcos regime. A pentadic analysis of 158 statements from the Marcoses among select media content shows that the Marcos “script” tends to spotlight the actions of Marcos Sr. Their dominant pentadic ratio is Purpose-act, and the underlying motives surfaced from this ratio and in their statements include 1) attacking the opposition, 2) humanizing the Marcoses, and 3) negating and distorting history. Having turned to the political actors themselves, the study’s findings provide a more intimate understanding about how politicians and political families can use rhetoric to forward certain agendas. Since political statements, narratives, and stories are essential in giving direction to history, scrutiny of Marcosian rhetoric and the motivations inherent in them provide a view as to how they have framed and how they may continue to frame the legacy of Marcos Sr., especially in the context of Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr.’s rise to the presidency. Finally, by analyzing statements about a dictatorial regime, the study’s results contribute to the study of political communication in the Southeast Asian region and the Global South, where the appeal of liberal democracies is waning and, in its place, authoritarian interest is growing.

Keywords: historical distortion, Marcos, pentadic analysis, political rhetoric, rhetorical motives

THE MARCOS FAMILY IN CONTEMPORARY PHILIPPINE POLITICS

The year of 1986 was a defining moment for democracy and politics in the Philippines. After over two decades as president, Ferdinand Marcos Sr. was ousted in the famed EDSA People Power Revolt, attended by almost four million people (Boquet 2017). The EDSA People Power Revolt culminated with Corazon Aquino, the wife of late Marcos critic Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino, claiming the presidential seat and the exile of the Marcos Family to Hawaii nine days after the revolt (Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines, n.d.).

While the Marcoses faded to the background, the challenge for the Aquino administration became the reconstruction of a democracy that had crumbled due to the “increasingly authoritarian, corrupt, and damaging” actions of Ferdinand Marcos Sr.’s regime (Timberman 1987), the repercussions of which the Filipino people continue to feel today in the form of P470 billion worth of foreign debt (IBON Foundation 2016; Alconaba 2018; GMA News.TV 2007) and over 11,000 unresolved cases of human rights violations (Human Rights Violations Victims’ Memorial Commission n.d.), among others.

Despite the historical documentation of Ferdinand Marcos Sr.’s rule as a time of impunity (Berry 1987; Robles 2016) and economic ruin (De Dios 1984; De Quiros 1997), the Marcos family has successfully enacted their return to the current political scene, the “stunning” culmination of which was the recent win of Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. in the 2022 presidential elections (Solomon 2022; Agence France-Presse 2022). After 36 years, a Marcos has once again assumed the presidency, with a landslide win of 31,629,783 votes (see Figure 1), no less (Tan 2022), surpassing the 15-16 million range of past presidents (McCargo 2022). Progressive groups and individuals like Kontra Daya, Kabataan Partylist and martial law survivors, however, have denounced the 2022 presidential elections as fraudulent and anomalous, due to the quick counting of votes despite some malfunctioning vote-counting machines (VCMs) (ANC 24/7 2022; Gregorio 2022).

Since the return of the Marcoses to power and even more so after the end of the first Aquino administration, the memories of the Marcos regime’s excesses “gradually faded from the national narrative as well as social memory” (Kadir 2019, 8). In the context of Ferdinand Marcos Sr.’s controversial internment at the Libingan ng mga Bayani in 2018, Pangalangan et al. (2018) noted that the late dictator’s burial was an indication of the fleeting nature of social memory in the country, claiming that “ousting the dictator Marcos was worth risking life and limb in the trenches, yet unworthy recollecting from the opulence of swivel chairs and keyboards” (144).

Concurrent with the weakened remembrance of the events that took place during the Marcos administration is the proliferation of alternative recollections of the era. While historical data maintains that Ferdinand Marcos Sr.’s rule brimmed with human rights violations and wanton corruption,

narratives of his years being the Philippines' "golden age" continue to circulate in online spaces (Uyheng et al. 2020). The Marcoses' narrative of victimhood also shifts the blame for the country's worsening social and economic conditions towards the "yellow" administration, activists, and journalists (Uyheng et al. 2020), framing themselves as the victims of such groups (Ong 2022). Such a narrative, despite running counter to historical records and facts, appeals to certain audiences who have become disenchanted with the promises of liberal democracies (Ong 2022; Chang et al. 2007).



Figure 1: The official results of the 2022 Philippine Presidential Elections. Source: Peña (2022).

In many instances, the Marcos family members have also spoken up about Marcos Sr.'s regime, martial law, and the other issues tied to their family. They have a continuous record of defending, justifying, or blatantly denying the various inequities that took place under Ferdinand Marcos Sr.'s 21-year rule, often focusing instead on the good his regime brought the country (Jalea 2020; Greenfield 2019; Cepeda 2018). Bongbong Marcos's YouTube channel even has entire playlists dedicated to glorifying his father's time in office (Bongbong Marcos 2018a; Bongbong Marcos 2018b). As seen in Figure 2, Juan Ponce Enrile talks to Bongbong Marcos about Martial law and refutes the claim that 70,000 people were arrested during that time.

Using Kenneth Burke's (1945) dramatistic pentad, this study aims to analyze the statements and stories peddled by the Marcos family members regarding the Marcos regime. Scrutiny of these texts offers a chance to identify the techniques they use to defend Marcos Sr.'s rule, and the rhetorical motives that underlie their statements. This study is especially relevant not just because Bongbong Marcos has won the presidential elections but because it can be a starting point for a more critical analysis of the discourse politicians employ when trying to persuade, save face, manage controversies, or even distort established fact.



Figure 2: A screengrab from the first episode of 'Enrile: A Witness to History.'

Source: Bongbong Marcos YouTube Channel (2018)

Since this study also taps into historical negationism, it will lend additional information to the study of Philippine history by exposing how historical accounts can be twisted or reinterpreted to serve certain political ends, and how such ends are subsequently reflected in the rhetoric of the political actors.

Whereas other studies have focused on the proliferation of disinformation and pro-Marcos narratives with the use of trolls, influencers, and other social media tools (Ong & Cabanes 2018; Talamayan 2021; Uyheng et al. 2020), this study turns its attention to the Marcoses themselves and their statements in various media, thereby providing a novel contribution to the growing literature on political rhetoric and media scholarship in Southeast Asia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Rise, Fall, and Return to Power of the Marcos Family

Ferdinand Marcos Sr.'s first term as president was marked by numerous crises, with the former president aiming to address these using community development and infrastructure programs (Agoncillo 1990). Increased government intervention in agriculture, specifically in rice production, however, caused rice prices to soar (Abinales & Amoroso 2005), while various officials received kickbacks from the construction of roads and other structures (Abinales & Amoroso 2005). The country's economic problems would worsen during Marcos's second term due to the unbridled spending power given to the central government (De Dios 1984). The mishandling of the country's economic resources drove the Philippines to recession in the 1970s (De Dios 1984), spurring the devaluation of the Philippine Peso and stoking social unrest (Robles 2016). Marcos's propagandist Primitivo Mijares (1967) said Marcos had taken advantage of these social conditions to legitimize one-man rule.

Martial law was formally declared on September 21, 1972, to "suppress all forms of lawless violence" and insurrection or rebellion (Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines n.d.). Thousands of opposition leaders, politicians, and activists were arrested shortly after, with a report from Amnesty International (1976) claiming that 30,000 people were incarcerated after martial law was imposed. Cases of human rights abuses also spiked during this period, with the Human Rights Violations Victims' Memorial Commission (n.d.) documenting 11,103 victims of killings, forced disappearances, and torture, among others. A common trend among those who endured such abuses, according to Amnesty International (1967), was their criticality of the government. Alongside the regime's brutality was its plunder of the nation's coffers, as proven by the Marcoses' numerous graft and corruption cases today (Buan 2018; Buan 2021).

In 1983, however, the death of Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, a known critic of Marcos, triggered widespread resistance among the ranks of the masses (Robles 2016). Millions mourned Aquino's death, and protests and demonstrations were revitalized after his passing. In response to rising public pressure, the Marcos campaign called for a snap election in February 1986. This pitted the strongman against

Corazon Aquino, Ninoy's wife. The elections themselves were marked by violence and fraud, however (HRVVMC n.d.), and after Marcos won, public rage eventually spilled over into a historic protest. Nine days later, with an enraged mob of Filipinos pounding at the doors of the presidential palace, Marcos and his family escaped to Hawaii via chopper (Greenfield 2019).

Five years after the ouster of the Marcos family and two years after the death of Marcos Sr., Imelda was permitted to return to the Philippines (Alabastro 1991). Imelda's first political win was in 1995 when she won as congresswoman of Leyte, her hometown. Imelda also vied for the presidency after but withdrew. She would, however, become the congresswoman of Ilocos Norte from 2010 to 2019 (Gonzales & Pobre 2017).

The Marcos scions Maria Imelda Josefa Remedios "Imee" Marcos and Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. also secured for themselves political positions since the family's return. From 1998 to 2007, Imee became the second district representative of Ilocos Norte (Gonzales & Pobre 2017). She also served as the governor of the same province from 2010 to 2019. She is currently a senator in the Philippine Senate.

Bongbong Marcos, like his mother and sister, also seized numerous government posts. He became the second district congressman of Ilocos Norte from 1992 to 1995, its governor in 1998, and its second district representative again from 2007 to 2010. Marcos Jr.'s entry into the national political scene was in 2010 when he won the senatorial elections with more than 13 million votes (Bueza 2015). In 2016, Marcos Jr. tried his luck for the vice presidency but was defeated by Leni Robredo. An unconvinced Bongbong would file a protest at the Supreme Court and claim electoral fraud (Esmaguel II 2016). The Supreme Court would junk this protest due to lack of evidence in 2021 (Litonjua 2021).

Marcos Jr. and Robredo would eventually face off again in the 2022 national elections. Despite the controversies surrounding Marcos Jr. and his family, Pulse Asia surveys consistently showed Bongbong as the top choice for president (Lalu 2022). True enough, the polls reflected overwhelming support for Marcos Jr., as he won the presidency with more than 31 million votes (De Guzman 2022).

Marcos Sr. and His Legacy of Forgetting

A culture of forgetting began to be fostered in the Philippines after the Marcoses left office and especially after the post-dictatorship administration (Pangalanan et al. 2018; Kadir 2019). In fact, the roots of what Pangalanan et al. (2018) call the "Marcosian lie" can be traced back to the failure of the post-Marcos government to do good on its promises of development and change (Cordoba 2019). The Aquinos, who initially served as the poster family for democracy and were well-known opposition

figures against the Marcoses, have suffered considerable blows in their reputation then and now. Armed with a serious reform agenda, Cory Aquino's initiatives to restore democracy and reconfigure the government were initially impressive, yet the results of these plans were either underwhelming or nonexistent by the end of her term (Rocamora 1991). To strengthen democracy, a new Constitution was drafted, one that allowed for the existence of a bicameral Congress. Counter to its purpose of democratizing governance, however, elite and oligarchic families – including those related to Cory – filled Congressional seats (McCoy 1993), effectively bringing back the “clientelist electoral regime of the old” (Quimpo 2013). Agrarian reform, one of the core promises of the Aquino administration, also did not come to fruition. It took the death of thirteen protesting farmers in the infamous Mendiola massacre for the Aquino administration to conk out the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) (Rocamora 1991). Still, even this legislation was lacking and drew comprehensive critique from progressive groups as it did not aim to redistribute land in favor of the peasantry or address their immediate demands (Lara & Morales 1990; Leones & Moreno 2011).

An Aquino would again take the presidential seat in 2010. Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino III, Cory's son, relied on a reform-driven agenda for his political campaign. He also capitalized on the recent death of his mother to increase his political influence and harness reformist sentiments from a citizenry that had grown tired of the corruption of the previous administration (Thompson 2010). His presidency, however, also contributed to the decreasing confidence in the opposition party due to the scandals that revolved around his term, including, but not limited to, the Special Action Force 44 (SAF 44), heavy traffic in Metro Manila, and the *tanim bala* scandal (Pangalangan et al. 2018).

The internment of Ferdinand Marcos Sr. in the *Libingan ng mga Bayani*, approved by the Supreme Court, is proof that forgetting has even been embedded in the legal system, with part of the court decision even claiming that the nation should move forward and let the issues surrounding the Marcoses rest (Peralta 2016). Additionally, a study of school textbooks in the country found that the topics surrounding the Marcoses and martial law are not fully discussed in the school setting (Cordoba 2019). It was also found that nationally endorsed history textbooks were skewed to favor the Marcos family (Uyheng et al. 2020). Moreover, teachers of Philippine History, a required course for higher education institutions, revealed that even though martial law is considered a priority topic when discussing the history of the Philippines, these discussions were only “minimal or *pahapyaw*” (Abuso 2019).

These instances indicate that the collective memories shared by Filipinos regarding the first Marcos regime are waning and can thus be renegotiated and even distorted. Historical negationism, a term connoting deliberate distortion and falsification of facts to forward political agenda (Domingo 2021), is intimately associated with Marcosian attempts to retell history, and social media, with its cheap cost, growing number of users and virality (Vonderschmitt 2012), has proven to be fertile ground for this

phenomenon to occur (Ong & Cabanes 2018).

There is, in fact, a whole set of myths that surround the Marcos family, the most common of which is the "golden era," an umbrella term encompassing several misconceptions that persist to this day. An analysis of over 900 pro-Marcos YouTube videos and 10,000 YouTube comments found that the 'golden era' angle was played up by attributing the Marcos name to an age of prosperity and international esteem (Uyheng et al. 2020). Supporters point out that during Marcos Sr.'s rule, the prices of goods were low, and the peso's value rivaled that of the dollar (Diola n.d.). Official records show, however, that this was not the case. From the 1960s to the 1980s, poverty incidence had jumped from 42% to a staggering 59% (Asian Development Bank 2009), and contrary to widespread belief, the peso crashed and lowered in value by nearly half in the 1960s (De Quiros 1997).

Also closely tied to the economic misconceptions about the Marcos years is the myth that it was marked by productivity and development (Afinidad-Bernardo n.d.), with supporters lauding Marcos Sr. for the infrastructure built under his term which is still used today. Economists, on the other hand, flag most of these projects as wasteful, having been used as a cover-up for the administration's corruption schemes and forming a large chunk of the Marcos debt which Filipinos continue to pay to this day (De Dios et al. 1984; De Quiros 1997). Along with the myth of the golden age is the misconception that the martial law years were a period of peace and order. Supporters usually claim that the Marcos regime was a time of peace and order by saying that the regime's strict rules imposed discipline on the people and that those who were apprehended and/or killed were rebels (Charleston et al. 2012). Historical accounts are in stark contrast to these claims, branding the time of martial law as a period of violence and impunity (Robles 2016).

Collectively, posts and videos featuring Marcosian myths bank on the audience's feelings of nostalgia making them yearn for a romanticized period that never actually existed (Talamayan 2021). At the same time, the blame is shifted toward the "yellow" administration and/or the activists involved in resisting the Marcos administration's excesses (Uyheng et al. 2020). Content of this kind is designed to evoke anger and is characterized by its tendency to polarize. The message is often delivered with high populist overtones, using an us-versus-them narrative and employing vernacular used by the poor (Talamayan 2021).

Content creators also erode support for credible sources of information by tagging media outlets, historians, and journalists as biased or 'yellow-leaning' (Uyheng et al., 2023; Talamayan 2021). Such narratives of victimhood from the Marcos camp find resonance in the "deep stories" and resentful sentiments held by citizens who view Philippine democracy as dominated by corrupt traditional politicians (Ong 2022; Chang et al. 2007). Presently, pro-Marcos content also influences politics. Apart from convincing fanatics to adore Marcos Sr.'s rule and distrust the post-martial law government, they

also urge their audiences to pin their hopes for a better future on the existing Marcoses, counting on them to bring back the alleged glory years the country once had (Talamayan 2021).

Burke's Dramatistic Pentad

Kenneth Burke originally developed the dramatistic pentad as part of his theory of dramatism, whose main aim is to study how a person's way of speaking shapes their motive for communicating (Burke 1945). The pentad is not concerned with finding an absolute truth. Instead it is a method of analyzing the strategic use of language by the speaker (King 2009). Burke sees that language and thoughts can be used as "modes of actions" that can persuade an audience to adhere to a speaker's motive (Burke 1945).

Burke states that life is not like a drama but is the drama itself, where all the characters are motivated to behave in a particular fashion (Griffin 2012). He emphasizes using forms to catch an audience's attention and invite participation. Forms allow us to set expectations and become satisfied when they are fulfilled; we expect that stories have endings and problems have solutions. In Burke's pentad, he emphasizes using dramatic forms as one of the most common ways that we interpret events. It is not just theatrical in nature but instead imitates circumstances that we experience in real life. Thus, "dramatic form exists logically prior to our experience" (King 2009, 170). He also emphasizes motive, espousing the idea that people act out of purpose and then offering the pentad as a tool to unpack how these motives manifest in speech acts (Burke 1945). It is important to note that the pentad is not a scientific formula despite its tidy structure. Rather, it is a heuristic device that rests on the views of the critics (King 2009). Birdsell (1987) concurs with this observation, claiming that:

"A great deal of the pentad's explanatory power rests upon the assumption that the terms in fact are ambiguous, that there is no consistent rule for applying the terms across situations, and that there is not necessarily a single, "correct" rule for applying the terms in any particular situation...The critic then is responsible for the fresh interpretation of the text" (Birdsell 1987, 277).

Dramatistic Elements, Pentadic Ratios, and Worldview

To analyze the rhetorical motives that the Marcoses wish to forward in their interviews and video logs, the researchers examined statements from the Marcoses in 28 videos using the elements of Burke's dramatistic pentad: *act*, *agent*, *scene*, *agency*, and *purpose*.

According to Kenneth Burke (1945, 14) an *act* is any verb an agent consciously made. "It answers the

question: what is the action? What is being done? What is going on?" (King 2009, 169). He emphasizes that for an occurrence to be considered an *act*, the *agent* must deliberately take part in its occurrence. Accidents like stumbling or falling are termed as motions because the agent did not intend the action to occur. Specifically for this study, we categorized the projects, policies, events, and actions implemented by the Marcoses under this pentadic element.

The pentadic element *agent* consists of 'who' performed the *act* (Burke 1945). It refers to the person or persons behind the action (King 2009). According to Burke (1945), the *agent* can be described as the person who did the *act* in a sentence or utterance. However, words that describe personal properties (e.g., idea, will, intuition) and motivational properties (e.g., drive, instinct) can also be categorized under this element. The agents for this study include Ferdinand Marcos Sr., the president of the Philippines from 1965 to 1986 who was known for declaring martial law in 1972; Imelda Marcos, the wife of Marcos Sr.; Imee Marcos, the first child of Marcos Sr. who has been a senator since 2019; Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr., the son of Marcos Sr. and the current president of the Philippines; Juan Ponce Enrile, the Justice Secretary and Defense Minister during Marcos Sr.'s administration and now the Chief Presidential Legal Counsel of Marcos Jr.; the opposition, and other actors present in their statements.

The *scene* is the pentadic element that answers the questions of 'when and where' the *act* occurred. It refers to the spatial and temporal aspects of a rhetorical event or any word that describes the context of an event (Burke 1945). It may also refer to "the context of the act" (King 2009, 169). In this study, the Philippines was used as the spatial setting, while historical epochs such as Ferdinand Marcos Sr.'s first term as president, his second term as president, martial law, and post-martial law consist of the temporal setting. Other general descriptions of scenes like 'society' and 'environment' are also included in this category, and in certain circumstances, even the immediate settings of the speakers in the video materials.

Agency refers to an agent's instruments or means to perform a specific *act* (King 2009). It answers the question 'How did an actor do the act?' (Burke 1945). The researchers identified propaganda, legal proceedings, arguments against the opposition, and deflection from accountability as some of the instruments that the Marcoses use to advance their motives.

Lastly, *purpose* answers the question 'Why did the agent do the act?' (Burke 1945). "It has to do with the justification for the action" (King 2009, 170). Aside from this definition, Kenneth Burke did not provide other descriptions for this pentadic element, a critique emphasized by Em Griffin (2012). For this study, 'to defend the Marcos name', 'to portray the Marcos regime positively', 'to maintain political power' and 'to attack the opposition' were some of the *purposes* identified by the researchers.

Depending on the situation, an element in the pentad may occasionally stand out and impinge on the

other elements. When this happens, a "ratio" is formed (Burke 1969) and arises an opportunity to analyze the rhetoric of a speaker and his motive (Dunn 2018). Any two dramatistic elements can become a ratio (see Figure 3), with 10 possible combinations: scene-act, scene-agent, scene-agency, scene-purpose, act-purpose, act-agent, act-agency, agent-purpose, agent-agency, and agency-purpose (Burke 1945). "In theory, one might use more than twenty ratios by pairing each term with every other term in sequence. This level of complexity is seldom necessary for critical practice, however" (King 2009, 171). For the purpose of this study, the statements of the Marcoses are seen as persuasive acts. Therefore, each term will be paired with the pentadic element Act; Scene-Act, Purpose-Act, Agent-Act and Agency-Act.

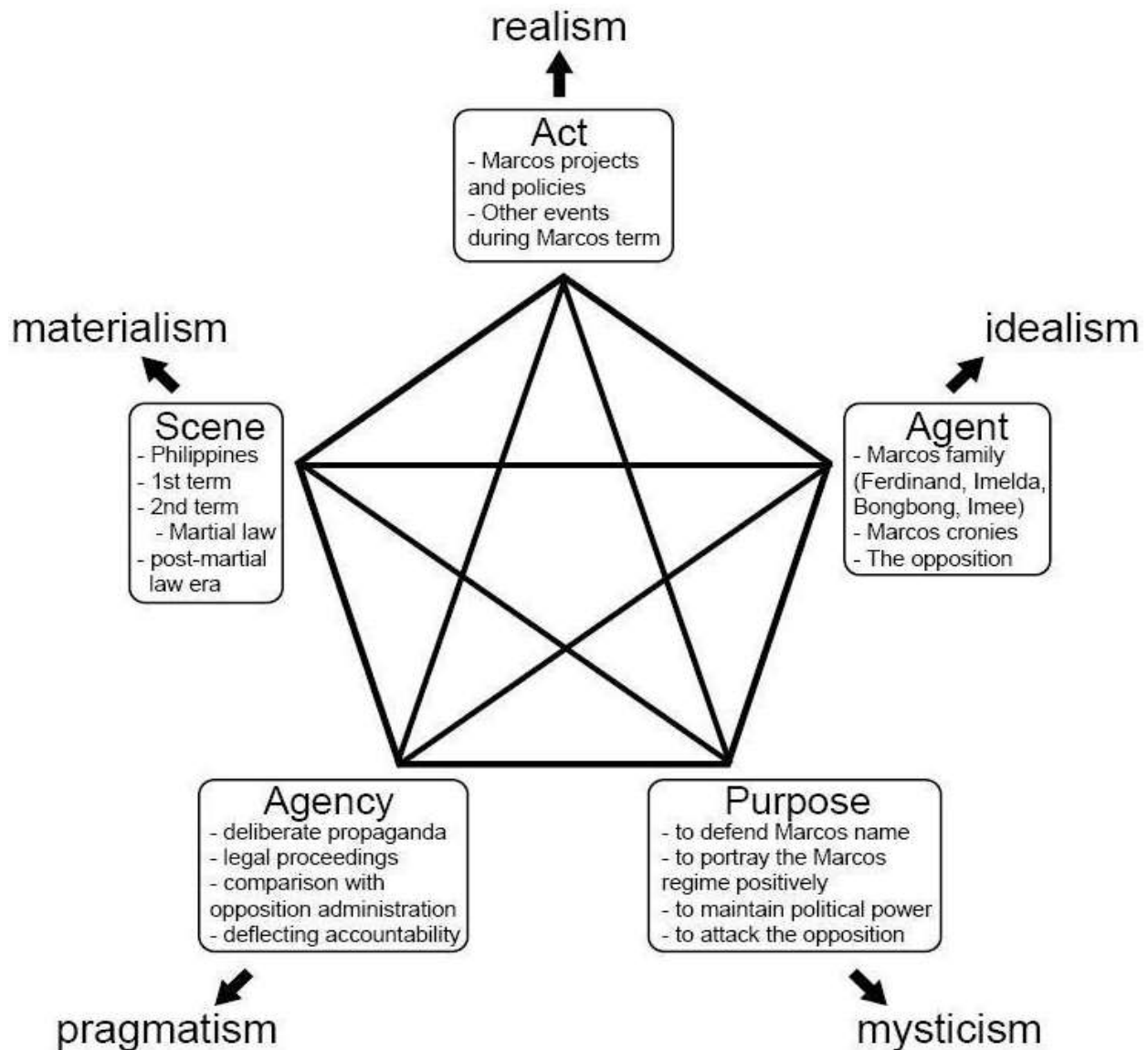


Figure 3: Operational Framework of Burke's Pentad. Source: Department of Humanities - ISS (n.d.).

Each ratio is as valid as any other, but there is always a dominant ratio that a speaker emphasizes

(Burke 1945). Once a dominant ratio has been identified, it can be used to reveal and explain the motive inherent in a statement (Burke 1945). In some instances, a particular pentadic element can be the most influential among the five. This follows Burke's belief about motive and how rhetors can emphasize specific parts of a narrative to forward that motive (Burke 1945). Depending on which pentadic element is emphasized, the worldview of a speaker can be based on idealism (agent-focused), pragmatism (agency-focused), realism (act-focused), materialism (scene-focused), or mysticism (purpose-focused) (Burke 1945, 128) (see Figure 3).

Burke's pentadic analysis is commonly used for analyzing speeches of known politicians. Bloomfield and Tscholl's (2018) pentadic analysis compared the rhetoric of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in their campaign speeches during the 2016 presidential elections in the USA. Here, they found out that Trump frequently used the agent-scene ratio in his rhetoric, which is reflected by his reliance on his authority to back up his arguments (Bloomfield & Tscholl 2018). Dunn (2018) examined the farewell address of President Barack Obama in 2017, analyzing how the outgoing president used his rhetoric to motivate his audience to influence the next "politics" to come. Apart from speeches, however, pentadic analysis is also used to analyze many other forms of rhetoric: The Montana Meth Project, an anti-drug campaign (Dickinson 2009); the picnic as a company event in New Zealand (Walker & Monin 2001); jurisprudence on *Cohen vs. California*, a case on wearing a shirt with expletives (Griffiths 2007); and a movie titled "The Armstrong Lie" (Anderson 2017).

METHODOLOGY

Through purposive sampling, the researchers selected 28 videos released from 2003 to 2022 as units of analysis for this study: 17 media outlet interviews with the Marcoses from YouTube, nine videos from Bongbong Marcos' YouTube channel, and two documentaries. The 17 media outlet interviews are divided into two categories: 1) short interviews that range from two minutes to 10 minutes, and 2) extended interviews that span from 15 to 30 minutes, while the nine propaganda videos selected range from three to five minutes. Lastly, the documentaries *Imelda* and *the Kingmaker* are an hour and 40 minutes each.

Purposive sampling was used in this study because it allowed the researchers to select data while considering what would satisfy the objectives of the study (Treadwell 2016). These videos were chosen based on four criteria: speaker, video content, accessibility, and balance of sources.

The speakers in the videos are primarily Imelda Marcos, Imee Marcos and Ferdinand Marcos Jr. since the best source to obtain data for this study would be the living members of the Marcos Family who talk about and defend the patriarch's rule. Meanwhile, although Juan Ponce Enrile is not from the

Marcos family, his statements were also analyzed in this study since he enjoyed a prominent and well-documented role in Marcos Sr's administration. He was also Bongbong Marcos's interviewee in the latter's two-episode vlog "A Witness to History," also published on Bongbong's YouTube channel.

The content of the aforementioned speakers in the selected videos is all related to the Marcos regime. The accessibility of the video chosen materials was also considered. It is fitting to analyze Marcosian rhetoric from Facebook and YouTube since, as social media platforms, Allcott et al. (2019) showed that Facebook is a hotspot of false information, and Lewis (2019) emphasized the vast role of YouTube as a "political influencer."

Lastly, the videos were also selected to balance content from outside sources, and those from the Marcoses themselves. The interviews from media outlets and documentaries are considered third-party sources. In contrast, the videos from Bongbong Marcos' YouTube channel are considered propaganda directly coming from a member of the Marcos family.

As for the analysis of the data, this study used pentadic analysis, a form of rhetorical analysis that aims to unpack motives and assess which element plays the most essential part in a narrative (Burke 1945). In conducting this study, the video materials were first transcribed. Afterwards, a coding sheet was used on all the statements to account for the dramatistic elements. The dominant pentadic element was determined by counting which pentadic element featured the most among a list of pentadic ratios. There is, however, no clear-cut rule in assigning pentadic elements. In this case, Birdsell (1987) suggests that the pentad is an ambiguous tool without rigid rules that govern its use. Because of this orientation, the "fresh interpretation of the text" falls on the judgment of its critic (Birdsell 1987).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Of the 28 video materials analyzed, 158 statements were coded using pentadic analysis. Andrew King (2009) proposed that finding the most critical pentadic term depends on the patterns observed in the text. He stated that "patterns are determined by repetition frequency" (King 2009, 176). The pentadic element with the highest observed frequency was act, with 110 statements. As such, this became the most important pentadic element. Thus, the Act was paired with all the other elements of the dramatistic pentad: Purpose-Act, Scene-Act, Agent-Act, and Agency-Act.

The high degree of emphasis given to the Act indicates that action is central to the rhetoric of the Marcoses. This means they embody the philosophy of realism in their rhetoric, believing that "the truthfulness of any belief rests upon the closeness of its correspondence with reality" (King 2009, 169).

After pairing Act with the other terms in the pentad, a persistent trend in the analysis was the recurrence of the Purpose-Act ratio, with almost half of all the coded statements exhibiting this ratio. King (2009, 172) describes this ratio as “In order to get X you have to do Y,” implying that actions are deliberately done to fulfill specific ends.

Rhetorical Motives

The rhetorical motives outlined here surfaced from the statements that exhibited a Purpose-Act ratio. Burke (1945) claims that a dominant ratio in a narrative can be used to deduce, reveal, and scrutinize its underlying motive. In line with the abundance of the Purpose-Act ratio, the Marcoses’ primary rhetorical motives are as follows: 1) Attacking the Opposition, 2) Humanizing the Marcoses, and 3) Negating and Distorting History.

Attacking the Opposition

Under this motive, narratives show active hostility towards the opposition, formally or in snide commentary. Most of the negative sentiments are focused exclusively on the prominent members of the Aquino family and their administration. However, other personas and organizations are also identified, such as the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). In the context of the Marcosian narratives under this rhetorical motive, the Act often consists of framing the actions of Cory Aquino, the “yellows,” the Americans, and the New People’s Army (NPA) as actions done to exact revenge on the Marcoses, deceiving the people, and hoarding power.

An example of this is present in Bongbong Marcos’s interview with Juan Ponce Enrile regarding the events that transpired during martial law, specifically the growing social unrest and insurgency that the government needed to address in the 1970s.

Enrile: Ninoy Aquino and I met in the house of Ramon Silay in Urdaneta village, he was my neighbor. Paul Aquino is still alive, he was present in that meeting, he was the one who reported to me that he had the meeting with the leadership of the communist party, they were discussing a coalition government.

Marcos Jr.: But this was together with the Liberal Party at the time?

Enrile: He was a member of the liberal party (Marcos 2018a).

In the quotes above, Enrile and Marcos Jr. red-tagged members of the Aquino family and the Liberal Party. Collaborating with the CPP is framed to create a coalition government that will oust Marcos from

power. The Liberal Party is thus presented as an organization that deliberately allied itself with enemies of the state so they could grab power. The vilification of the Aquino government has not waned even over time, as reflected in the following statements from Imelda:

Imelda: Cory Aquino disallowed Marcos to be buried. The Aquinos have been very unjust, inhuman to the Marcoses, not only to the living but also to the dead (Greenfield 2019).

Imelda: No less than the son of Cory is president now. Between the mother and the son, you cannot tell who's worse (Greenfield 2019).

Such statements cast the Aquinos not only as inhumane (not even allowing Marcos to be buried), but as petty and unwilling to compromise. This line of thinking also rehashes the age-old feud between the Aquinos and the Marcoses, which has been characterized as an endless and dramatic "epic" since Ninoy Aquino and Ferdinand Marcos Sr. first became political rivals during Marcos Sr's first term (Villaluz 2014). Only this time, Imelda reframes it to liken then-president Noynoy to his Marcos-hating mother, mirroring the narrative of "insurgent nostalgia" where the blame is placed on the Aquinos and those who defied martial law as the cause of the downfall of the country (Uyheng et al. 2020).

Concurrent with this tendency, media practitioners are also depicted in a bad light from the Marcoses' point of view, mainly due to their reports about the atrocities of the family. The following quote by Imelda talks about the media's effect on the Marcoses:

Imelda: It really... it hurt us a lot, especially in media-wise, because the problem with the media is, the gun can kill you only up to the grave, but the media can kill you beyond the grave into infinity (Greenfield 2019).

Bongbong Marcos: And you believe that propaganda was a very large aspect of the yellow movement?

Enrile: They have always been like that, even during the time of your father. They had people in all the media outlets.

Bongbong Marcos: In your view, has the role of the media increased or decreased over the years?

Enrile: Definitely increased especially with the speed of communication now. We have the cellphone, the social media, you can read the news in your cellphone and you can also text your opinion. They can manipulate public opinion, even the surveys will be suspect at that point (Marcos 2018b).

Both quotes above acknowledge the immense power of the media before depicting it as a tool used to oppress the Marcoses. Imelda highlights the hurtful words that they used to talk about their family.

Bongbong Marcos and Enrile, on the other hand, play around with the accusation that the media and the Aquinos are colluding with one another to deceive Filipinos and “manipulate public opinion.”

Eroding media trust has long been associated with Marcos and Duterte fan pages and groups (Huang 2023), and such a trend transcends not only the supporters but the political actors themselves. In a country where the media is sought after as an information source primarily because of convenience and second only because of reliability (Chua et al. 2021), undermining the credibility of media institutions pushes Filipinos further away from legitimate news agencies and towards alternative sources of information that are not always dependable, such as influencers (Arugay & Baquisal 2022).

Humanizing the Marcoses

This rhetorical motive encompasses all the statements that the Marcoses use to appeal to the emotions of their viewers. It relies principally upon statements with the aim of humanizing the Marcoses by painting them as ordinary people with no political power or influence and as victims of history. Also included here are statements that urge the public to listen to the narratives of the Marcoses and those who benefitted from Ferdinand Marcos Sr’s regime.

In five separate interviews, Imee Marcos consistently appealed for the chance to explain their side of the story and call for inclusivity. In an interview with INQUIRER.net in 2019, Imee Marcos was asked about her opinion regarding the University of the Philippines’ intention to teach its students about martial law. She humanized her family’s involvement by stating that their side should also be considered when teaching the course, as can be inferred from the following:

Imee Marcos: I think maganda rin if pinag-aaralan (ang martial law), at least sana bigyan na lang kami ng pagkakataon, sabihin rin kung ano nangyari sa pagkaalam namin. ‘Yon lang naman ang importante don, na may viewpoints ng bawat isa at marinig ang bawat isa.

(Imee Marcos: I think it’s good that they are going to study it [martial law], but at least give us a chance, let us tell you how it went from our point of view. That’s the only thing important about it, that there is a viewpoint from each side and that both are equally heard) (INQUIRER.net 2019).

Imee: Oo, pagbigyan na lang lahat kung ano yung opinion nila, ako naman tinitii ko rin, e di yung iba makinig din naman sana. Actually, sa tingin ko kasalanan din ng pamilya namin kasi naging tameme na rin kami, tinamad na rin kaming magsalita, hindi na namin binabahagi yung alam namin, di na rin kami nakikikwento kasi parang nagiging nakakapagod na, e. But that’s not a good attitude to take, I think it’s very important that we share whatever

information we have, what we have is personal knowledge, the experience and the truth that we own and share it with the rest, and that's the only way we'll have a multifaceted, complete perspective on this historical event.

(Imee Marcos: Yes, let them have the opinions that they want, I will just endure it but I hope others will listen, too. Actually, I think my family is also at fault because we chose to stay silent, we were too lazy to talk (about our side), we didn't share what we knew, we no longer talked about our story because it just became exhausting. But that's not a good attitude to take. I think it's very important that we share whatever information we have, [and] what we have is personal knowledge, the experience, and the truth that we own and share it with the rest, and that's the only way we'll have a multifaceted complete perspective on this historical event) (INQUIRER.net 2019).

Contrary to this, however, Director of HRVVMC Carmelo Victor Crisanto argued in an interview with Rappler that the Marcos brand has been rehabilitated because of its resilience and resources, which it used to "invest in trying to tell their side of the story, their narrative, their interpretation of history," (Bolledo & Barroso 2022).

Attempting to portray their life as simple or poor is another way that the Marcoses try to appeal to the emotions of their audience. The following quotes from *The Kingmaker* and *Imelda*, respectively, revolve around Imelda's success despite the challenges she encountered in her life:

Imelda: Well, I had a beautiful and very happy childhood until I was eight years old, but when I lost my mother, it seemed like I lost everything. And being orphaned by my mother and left with nothing, I was always looking for someone to love me. This created my character (Greenfield 2019).

Imelda: I know it's sticking out like a sore thumb in that area with little houses beside it, but I wanted to show them, "Look, who was Imelda? I come from a third-world country, third-class province and I was orphaned and look, Imelda made it." If Imelda made it everybody can make it (Diaz 2003).

These statements of Imelda that center on her poverty and struggle are not new. Even in a court hearing on her fraud and racketeering case in 1990, Imelda's defense team defined her as "this poor girl who drank out of foxholes during the war" (Rempel 1990). Imelda's rags-to-riches story helps "obscure" the negative things associated with her, including corruption and criminality (De Guzman 2023). Therefore, this narrative is so effective that even in the book *"The Untold Story of Imelda Marcos,"* people refer to Imelda's biography as a story of rags-to-riches (Navarro-Pedrosa 1969).

Humanizing the Marcoses also involves statements that deflect accountability. Their rhetoric here

takes on a defensive purpose, shielding the Marcoses from accountability for atrocities committed under the rule of Marcos Sr. The need for an apology or acknowledgement of past mistakes is also consistently downplayed. In instances where a Marcos family member does apologize, the statement is quickly diluted with counter-arguments that place blame away from the Marcos family and instead spotlight the alleged good the Marcos patriarch brought to the country.

Consider the following quotes from Imee Marcos in DZMM TeleRadyo (ABS-CBN News 2018) and Bongbong Marcos during INQUIRER.net's coverage of the 2016 vice presidential debates (2016), respectively:

Imee Marcos: *subalit yung sinasabi na admission na tantamount sa pagsasabi na kasalanan namin, mahirap naman, kasi hindi ko alam yung mga pangyayari noon, batang-bata pa kami at wala pa sa awtoridad na akuhin yun.*

(Imee Marcos: but what they're saying, the admission that is tantamount to an admission of guilt, this seems difficult because I didn't know what was happening then. We were so young and we didn't have the authority to take responsibility for what happened) (ABS-CBN News 2018).

Bongbong Marcos: I will apologize for every – I have said this before, and I will say it again, I will apologize for any wrongdoing I may have done, any mistake that will have caused anyone any pain or hardship, but I can only apologize for myself (INQUIRER.net 2016a).

Imee's act, in this case, is her defense of herself, while the purpose is to emphasize her being young and unaware of what was happening when her father was president. Bongbong, on the other hand, separates himself from his father and regime by saying that he can only apologize for himself and no one else. This subsequently paints Bongbong as someone willing to make reparations for his mistakes while at the same time distancing himself from the wrongdoings of Marcos Sr.

Negating and Distorting History

Under this rhetorical motive, the Marcoses and their allies actively alter and reinterpret legitimate historical accounts or attempt to mislead by emphasizing only specific narratives that favor their point of view. Another significant trend here is the justification of actions committed during the reign of Marcos Sr. by framing them as a result of the social conditions of the time. Statements that glorify or exaggerate the "good" that the Marcoses have done also belong under this motive. Collectively, however, all the narratives here aim to peddle some form of alternative understanding of history and deny established facts. An example of this can be found in the documentary *Imelda*, where at one point,

Imelda contests the number of deaths that occurred in the construction of the Manila Film Center, a project she was directly involved in:

Imelda Marcos: The attack on Mrs. Marcos was that I, in my hurry to build things very fast, I just left the dead there, which was a big lie. Immediately, get every piece of debris and found four and we did not stop until each and every one of them and each and everyone's family was compensated (Diaz 2003).

In the quote above, Imelda contests historical facts by claiming only four died when the building's roof collapsed on November 7, 1981. The Martial Law Museum (n.d.) states, however, that the actual death toll was 169, with most of the victims buried in the concrete. Similarly, Juan Ponce Enrile and Bongbong Marcos negate historical accounts with sweeping declarations about the Marcos regime in *A Witness to History*:

Enrile: Name me one person that was arrested because of political or religious belief during that period. None.

Marcos Jr.: They were all for criminal acts.

Enrile: Name me one person that was arrested simply because he criticized President Marcos Jr. None (Marcos 2018c).

Enrile implies that no person was arrested during martial rule because of their political beliefs, religion, or opinion. In reality, Amnesty International (1976) reports that around 30,000 individuals were arrested shortly after the declaration of martial law in 1972, including opposition leaders and activists. Concurrent with contesting historical data, the Act-Purpose ratio is used not only to distort history but to paint the Marcoses in a good light, as exemplified in the following quote in *The Kingmaker*:

Imelda Marcos: You're facing the mightiest sword of justice of the world, and you're alone, widowed, and homeless and countryless and penniless. The jail would have been a welcome thing. It would be free board and lodging. Anyway, on my birthday, July 2, 1990, not guilty on all counts (Greenfield 2019).

Imelda Marcos: I won it because of the truth (Greenfield 2019).

In the quotes above, the distortion of history comes in the form of focusing only on key events to establish the innocence of the Marcos family. Attention is primarily on Imelda's acquittal from federal fraud and racketeering charges in 1990. Imelda and her family's other corruption charges were not mentioned, such as the \$25 billion worth of assets the Supreme Court declared ill-gotten (*Republic of the Philippines v. Honorable Sandiganbayan* 2003) or her conviction of seven counts of graft for stashing P200 million in Swiss foundations in the 1970s (Associated Press 2018). Again, in *The*

Kingmaker, Imelda continues to cherry-pick historical events that favor the Marcoses' point of view, yet she also vies for sympathy in several instances:

Imelda Marcos: It's not true that we flee from our country. We were kidnapped. They told us we were going to Paoay, a town in Ilocos, only to be brought to Hawaii.

Imelda Marcos: The PCGG just would confiscate anything they wanted to get that they felt was stolen (Greenfield 2019).

The quotes above serve another distinct purpose: to portray the Marcoses as hapless victims. Imelda plays this narrative up in her statements to depict their family as unwilling to flee and, therefore, innocent. This trend of playing the victim continues in the second quote, with the act being the PCGG's claiming of anything "they felt was stolen." The purpose here is to emphasize that the confiscation was based on the value of a particular asset and not because it was ill-gotten. In truth, the Philippine Commission on Good Government (PCGG) was created to retrieve exactly the ill-gotten wealth the Marcos family accumulated during their 21-year rule (Aquino 1986). As of 2021, the Commission has recovered assets from the Marcoses worth about 174 billion pesos (Buan 2021).

CONCLUSION

When all the rhetorical motives are interlinked, the overall rhetorical motive of the Marcoses is to defend the legacy of Ferdinand Marcos Sr. and to sustain their political power. By identifying the dominant pentadic element (Act) and the dominant pentadic ratio (Purpose-Act), the rhetorical motives of the Marcoses surfaced: 1) attacking the opposition, 2) humanizing the Marcoses, and 3) negating and distorting history. As these motives are reflected in several different instances, from documentaries to media outlet interviews, it can be concluded that the Marcoses exhibit consistency in their statements, adhering to a particular "script" that mirrors their rhetorical motives.

In relating the Marcoses' rhetorical motives to past events, their worldview of realism promotes the belief that they are the main actors responsible for the former prosperity of the country and should thus be entitled to some form of political security. They exaggerate how they were the only presidential family to maintain peace and discipline compared to other regimes. Their worldview also exposes their preference for national development over the welfare of individuals who were victims of atrocities and human rights violations under the rule of Marcos Sr. Lastly, their worldview highlights power and security as some of their prime motivation, since their statements serve as means to gain further influence, power, and privilege.

The political story or narrative concept is central to this study's relevance. Applied to the study's

findings, the Marcoses' narratives can affect the past, present and future of contemporary Philippine politics, as these statements can shape people's perceptions about the first Marcos administration. Since narratives give "direction to history, to the present, and to the future" (Chandoke 2000), combating the narratives of the Marcoses, especially the ones that seek to whitewash historical data, is crucial to forming accurate and critical historical accounts. The hierarchy of memories emphasized in narratives where some memories are deemed more significant than others can also contribute to the culture of forgetting Marcosian atrocities. Here, forgetting is not just about erasing the past but limiting the information that can be gathered about it (Hirst & Coman 2018), or in the case of the Marcoses, employing rhetoric that seeks to contest historical fact and portray themselves as "misunderstood victims in Filipino history" (Ong 2022, 400).

The prevailing narratives regarding martial law will hence highly influence whether society will see it as a "golden era" or a time of injustice. Thus, the recognition of these narratives is important since they can be used as a starting point to correct historical negation about martial law and prevent collective forgetting about the events that happened at the time. Given the prevalence of disinformation, especially in various social media platforms, the results of this study can further contribute to the body of research about the growing spread of deceptive propaganda. They can subsequently aid in fighting it.

The identification of the Marcoses' narratives and motivations can help historians and fact-checkers devise more effective ways of correcting prevailing myths about the era of the first Marcos regime and prevent the institutionalization of these ideas into society. In the process of surfacing the Marcoses' rhetorical motives, this study has also unveiled specific values and ideologies that underscore the family's statements. Thus, there is an opportunity for future research to gauge the effectiveness of Marcosian rhetoric from a cultural perspective. Since Burke's (1969) concept of consubstantiality posits that persuasion becomes easier if the speaker and the audience share common identities and values, determining similarities between the value system of the Marcoses and the general Filipino populace can help explain why Marcosian rhetoric is so compelling and so resonant with the "deep stories" that Filipinos hold (Ong 2022).

Lastly, this study can serve as a framework to analyze the motives of other politicians and national leaders through an analysis of their statements and rhetoric. This study also offers possible explanations for and academic approaches to studying historical negationism by scrutinizing not only the supporters, but also the actors involved in contesting historical fact. Ultimately, the findings here can serve as a useful supplement to the study of Philippine history, particularly of the Marcos's regime, by revealing the recurring narratives that the Marcoses used to forward their political agenda.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

JETHRO BRYAN ANDRADA is a journalism instructor at the University of the Philippines Baguio. He graduated with a degree of Bachelor of Arts in Communication, major in Journalism at the same university, with the distinction of magna cum laude. His research interests include political communication, social media, and disinformation.

IMARI JAZMINE TAMAYO is a fourth year Bachelor of Arts in Communication student, majoring in Journalism and minoring in Speech Communication at the University of the Philippines Baguio. Her research interests include journalism, political communication, and rhetoric.

NIQUE JADE TARUBAL graduated from the University of the Philippines Baguio with a degree of Bachelor of Arts in Communication, major in Speech Communication, with the distinction of cum laude. She is currently teaching undergraduate courses at Kingsville School of Liberal Arts in Pangasinan. Her research interests include education, political communication, and rhetoric.

✉: jsandrada1@up.edu.ph

✉: ictamayo@up.edu.ph

✉: nbtarubal@up.edu.ph