

The State's Capacity to Change: *The Case of Poland and the Philippines*

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ABSTRACT

The processes which occurred in the Philippines in 1986 were perceived as similar to the ones which took place in Poland in 1980-1981. This perceived similarity is based on some aspects of the state structure and on the fact that in both cases society rebelled against the regime. By looking into the two cases we analyze the repressive regimes as being a product of a specific constellation of political, social and economic processes which emerge on national and international levels. We focus on the interaction between civil society and the state in the authoritarian context. Among the structural determinants which has precipitated the fall of Marcos regime we see: absence of successor to Marcos in his own ranks, disenchantment of the middle classes, support of the catholic church and the aggregated fear of the communist takeover. In Poland, on the other hand, the delegitimization of the state, fading of the official ideology and rupture in economic plans have led to the emergence of social movement which, however, was completely unable to capitalize on such structural processes as disenchantment of various social groups. Consequently, the monolythic myth of Solidarity was destroyed.

THE EVENTS OF FEBRUARY AND MARCH, 1986 have focused the world's attention on the Philippines. The first days after Mrs. Corazon Aquino's victory, because of the climate of joy and hope it produced, were frequently compared with the very first period in Poland after Solidarity was created (September, 1980). Perceived similarities between the Polish and Philippine cases stem from two factors. The first is an ideology, or normative theory used by the respective regimes in order to make their grip on and control over society more effective. In both cases the rulers used state apparatuses to forge the solidaristic, functionally-interrelated society. In the organic-statist tradition this has been achieved by applying corporatist policies. Organic-statism as an ideology can be located somewhere in the middle between command socialism and classical liberalism (Stepan 1978). The latter implies

“limited pluralism” in the community, while command socialism implies a “monist community” (*ibid.*:41). In the case of Poland, the technique was labelled as ‘limping pluralism’ but in fact it approached the organic-statist model.

The graphically interpreted location of the three models (Figure 1.) explains the superficial similarity of the two analysed cases. It was based on the fact that both regimes approximated the organic-statist model by increasing the state role in structuring society. According to Stepan, if the state elite “has any aspirations to rule by hegemony rather than by coercion” new institutional arrangements are needed with ample normative justification (1978:47). The organic-statism becomes then the strongest philosophical tradition to provide a rationale for such rule. In both cases, however, the important aspect of the organic tradition, i.e. self-management, is absent.

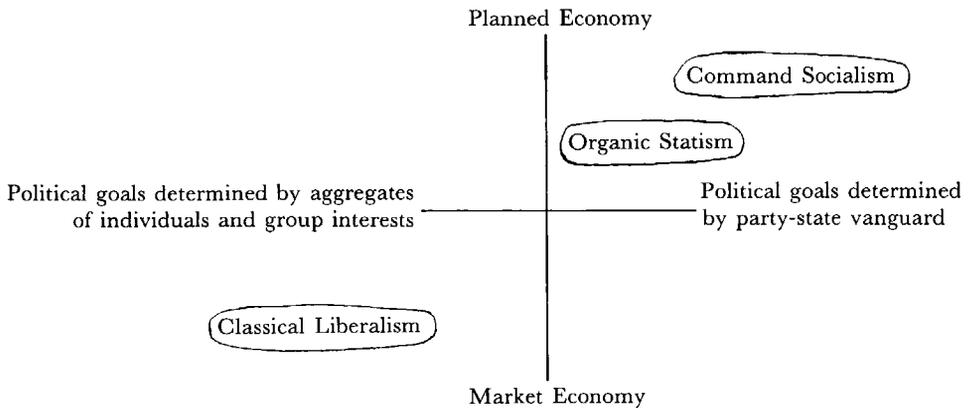


Figure 1. Location of three models in terms of means through which political and economic goals are determined. Source: Stepan 1978:41.

The second reason for the perceived similarity between the two cases is the image of a unified society against the regime. Such impressions resulted mostly from the fact that in both cases it was middle urban class that took to the streets; the impressions were not based on systematic, well-grounded knowledge of the two countries. Such knowledge is nonexistent so far.

Due to peculiar specification, the East European countries are analysed separately from the Third World countries, and by different experts. Countries of the ‘really existing socialism’ are usually studied in terms that are derived from Western democratic experience. Such an approach to the East European political system so far fails to notice that respective societies—while changing—have not yet changed politically to the extent that will permit drawing inferences from models that have developed in the institutional or political