

# Marcos Forever: Apologists' Resistance to Anti-Marcos Persuasion and Anti-Disinformation Efforts

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## ABSTRACT

The late dictator Ferdinand E. Marcos Sr.'s declaration of martial law in the Philippines involved thousands of enforced disappearances, executions, and torture incidents. Despite the countless atrocities, the late dictator and his living family have been regaining their socio-political acceptability largely due to historical denialism and systematic disinformation in the form of fake news. Even with the anti-disinformation and anti-Marcos persuasion strategies of various scholars, activists, and news organizations that aim to counter the pro-Marcos propaganda both outside and inside digital spaces, there still is an alarming number of Marcos apologists among Filipinos carrying pro-Marcos sentiments. This research paper sought to investigate the possible ineffectiveness of such strategies and to view them through the lens of the persuasion resistance framework proposed by Fransen, Smit, and Verlegh (2015). Using a multiple case study design and in-depth semi-structured interviews, the study inquired into the resistance of purposively sampled Marcos apologists to representative anti-Marcos persuasion and anti-disinformation messages. The participants belong to different generations, including Generation X, Millennial, and Generation Z. Results showed that the participants exhibited the resistance motives of distrust, inertia, and reactance through their adopted strategies of contesting, biased processing, empowerment, and avoidance. The multiple case analysis—composed of within-case analyses and a cross-case analysis—also elicited the emergent resistance motive of antagonism, and emergent resistance strategies of dismissal and redirection among Marcos apologists.

**Keywords:** disinformation, historical denialism, Marcos apologists, persuasion resistance, social influence

## INTRODUCTION

On the night of September 23, 1972, as he appeared on national television, the late dictator Ferdinand E. Marcos Sr. placed the whole Philippines under martial law. The corrupted authoritarian rule was the late dictator's response to the series of national crises that he himself contrived. These crises included an alleged communist insurgency, a Muslim separatist movement, militancy among the Filipino populace, and other notorious events that Marcos Sr. had identified as threats to national peace and order (Mijares 1976).

Upon Marcos Sr.'s imposition of martial law, the military began the crackdown on his political enemies, media critics, activists, labor leaders, and even business rivals who dared to challenge his dictatorship. This military crackdown resulted in approximately 1,000 enforced disappearances, 2,000 executions, and 7,000 known incidents of torture in addition to an unknown number of illegal arrests (Chua 2012). The martial law under Marcos Sr.'s regime, described as an authoritarian regime that has grown to be absolutely corrupt and evil, was foremost an outright attack on democracy in the Philippines (Mijares 1976).

On November 18, 2016, despite the strong opposition of activist groups, families of the disappeared and executed, and the general public, the remains of the late Marcos Sr. were buried in the national heroes' cemetery of the Philippines. For the past years, the remaining members of the Marcos family were also able to secure seats in the government, for instance, Bongbong Marcos in the Philippine Senate (2010–2016) and as the national president (2022–present), Imelda Marcos in the Philippine House of Representatives of Ilocos Norte's Second District (2010–2016), Imee Marcos in the Philippine Senate (2019–present), and Sandro Marcos in Philippine House of Representatives of Ilocos Norte's First District (2022–present), to name a few (Fonbuena 2019). The Marcoses regaining their social acceptability and good reputation despite their family's atrocities is largely attributed to historical distortion (Limpin 2021). Historical distortion is popularly described as the falsification of the past through the gradual revision of the collective memory (Berdos 2020). In the Philippines, similar to several societies of the past and present, historical distortion is considered to be politically motivated (Mendoza 2019).

The principal method of Marcos-related historical distortion is disinformation which, compared to misinformation, is intentionally deceptive or misleading (Berdos 2020). Various disinformation strategies are being used, including the construction of Marcos commemoration sites such as the Marcos Presidential Center in Batac, Ilocos Norte (see Figure 1), pro-Marcos publications including the late dictator's autobiography titled *Every Tear, A Victory*, and proliferation of fake achievements attributed to Marcos Sr. (Berdos 2020). The most recent and persistent disinformation strategies involve the outright denial of the recorded human rights violations and the material and political corruption that happened during the dictator's martial law (Mendoza 2019).

Statistical economic data are no exception. False economic data provided without context are being abused by the pro-Marcos propaganda machine to argue that the Marcos regime paved the way for the Philippines' golden age of economic growth in the 1980s (Mandrilla & Punongbayan 2016). In light of all these disinformation strategies offline and online, scholars and activists alike argue that Marcos-related historical distortion is politically motivated, well-funded, long-standing, and most importantly, systematic (Limpin 2021).

In recent years, several academic institutions and media companies in the Philippines have employed strategies to counter the long-standing attempts at historical distortion related to Marcos Sr. (Limpin 2019). From educational materials to fact-checking campaigns, various strategies are being implemented by scholars, journalists, activists, and advocates to battle revisionist propaganda and remind the Filipino people of the martial law atrocities.



**Figure 1: Remains of Marcos Sr. inside the Marcos Presidential Center in Batac, Ilocos Norte.**

Source: Villamor (2016).

These strategies were designed not only to inform Filipinos and counter false information but also to convert back those who are already exhibiting pro-Marcos sentiments. Such individuals or groups are often referred to as Marcos loyalists, Marcos sympathizers, or most recently, Marcos apologists (Robles 2016). Despite the multitude of anti-disinformation and anti-Marcos persuasion strategies over the years, there still is a persistent and evident re-emergence of Marcos apologists among Filipinos (Santos 2020).

The act of persuasion constitutes only half of the whole persuasion process. An individual's resistance to said persuasion is the other, often neglected half of the equation (Knowles & Linn 2004). The study of persuasion resistance was also a product of recognizing such negligence in the fields of social influence, persuasion research, and communication studies. In line with these observations, the research argues that the persistent re-emergence of Marcos apologists and their pro-Marcos sentiments cannot be fully attributed to the lack of quality education in the Philippines. This research posits that the proper recognition and understanding of persuasion resistance tendencies among Marcos apologists is also lacking. After all, the effectiveness of persuasion lies not only in the improvement of persuasion itself but also in the recognition and reduction of resistance among the targets of persuasion (Knowles & Linn 2004). In light of these arguments, the present paper puts forth a qualitative inquiry into the persuasion resistance behaviors of select Marcos apologists.

### ANTI-MARCOS PERSUASION AND ANTI-DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

Many human rights activists, advocates, and scholars believe that an effective way of creating a humane society centered on peace and justice is institutionalizing and integrating human rights education in the basic educational system (Abuso 2019). To ensure that citizens never forget the atrocities of their past rulers, a society must look for methods to remember its history in the most accurate manner. These methods may include education, legal constitution, culture, and the arts (Guillermo 2021). European education and laws, for example, stipulate potential sanctions related to Holocaust denial (Abuso 2019).

In the Philippines, there are attempts as well to institutionalize and integrate martial law education in the basic educational system. However, the existing research on Marcos Sr. and the EDSA (Epifanio de los Santos Avenue) People Power seems to downplay the atrocities of the Marcos family and highlight their contributions and political achievements instead (Reyes and Ariate 2019). Currently, the most accurate and trustworthy martial law education comes in the form of public lectures, symposia, roundtable discussions, scholarly publications, physical or digital archives, film screenings, and art exhibitions (Abuso 2019).

The academic-oriented Third World Studies Center of the University of the Philippines Diliman was established in 1977, partly as a response to threats to democracy, activism, and freedom of thought in countries such as the Philippines (Reyes & Jose 2013). It became the university's center for critical discussions from the period of martial law (1972–1981) until today. In 2013, the center held a public forum series that sought to discuss martial law experience, its negative and allegedly positive legacies, and the collective memory that the current Filipino society holds.

All of these past, present, and future initiatives by scholars and activists are directed towards the creation of a "counter-archive" (Reyes & Jose 2013). A martial law counter-archive, through anti-Marcos persuasion and anti-disinformation campaigns, is envisioned to battle the revisionist propaganda of the Marcoses and impede their complete political re-emergence in the future. The vision for a counter-archive is born out of the collective sentiment to counter the whitewashing of the brutal dictatorship under Ferdinand Marcos Sr.'s regime (Reyes & Jose 2013). Amidst the multitude of persuasion and information strategies, it cannot be denied that the battle for a just and truthful collective memory is far from over (Santos 2020). Statements of facts, historical research, and news articles are still struggling to counter the myth-making machines of the Marcoses.

Apart from the lack of collective memory and faulty educational system, the persuasion and information campaigns of scholars and activists are also faced with challenges on social media and online websites (Santos 2020). Marcos apologists and historical revisionists have established a massive online network of pro-Marcos accounts and pages on Facebook. While most of these accounts and websites use fabricated identities, they have greatly aided the pro-Marcos propaganda through the simple acts of liking, commenting, and sharing apologist posts to abuse social media algorithms (Elemtia 2021). More recently, social media platforms such as X (formerly known as Twitter) and TikTok have become the newest hosts of the Marcosian disinformation campaign. The presidential elections in 2022 have also made Marcos apologists and shadow propagandists more aggressive than ever (Limpin 2021). While the challenges faced by the anti-

Marcos and anti-disinformation efforts, Filipinos on social media are relatively recent, persuading and countering disinformation among Marcos apologists has always been a persistent and complex struggle (Berdos 2020).

### **MOTIVES FOR RESISTING PERSUASION**

As a field of study, persuasion resistance has gained relevance and popularity starting with McGuire's Inoculation Theory (1961) and Brehm's Reactance Theory (1966), both being well-established persuasion resistance theories of the 1960s (Tormala & Petty 2004). Prior to this development, scholars had only studied the enhancement of persuasion through the enhancement of its design, route, style, and content (Knowles & Linn 2004). Resistance then became recognized as the other, relatively unexplored, half of the persuasion process. The study of resistance, including the reduction thereof, as an alternative approach to achieving and understanding persuasion served as a modern academic turn in the fields of social psychology, communication, consumer research, sociology, and political science (Ahluwalia 2000).

The first category of resistance motives is premised on the idea that humans have an innate need for freedom which they are naturally inclined to preserve. Humans have the desire to freely choose for themselves and act on their own judgments (Brehm 1966). Acts of persuasion, in particular, are perceived as threats to this freedom as the goal of persuasion is to shift the attitude, influence the opinions, or encourage actions among the targets of persuasion. When individuals experience threats to or deprivation of their freedom, they enter a psychological state called reactance which then motivates them to restore or maintain their freedom by rejecting persuasion (Knowles & Linn 2004).

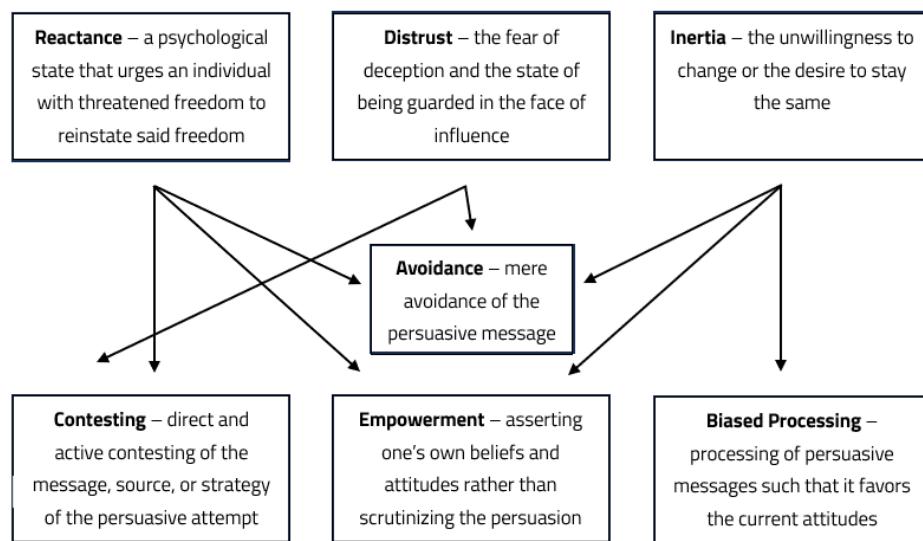
The second category of motives in resisting persuasion is distrust. Many individuals reject persuasive messages due to the fear of being deceived and taken advantage of (Knowles & Linn 2004). People often desire to hold accurate beliefs and attitudes, even if the supposed accuracy is objectively questionable, resulting in keener defense mechanisms against persuasion and scrutiny of persuasive messages. Motives behind persuasion are also questioned in light of this category.

The third category of motives for resisting persuasion is inertia. This persuasion resistance motive is primarily anchored in an individual's reluctance to change (Fransen et al. 2015). Instead of focusing on the reinstatement of autonomy or the scrutiny of persuasion, inertia is simply concerned with the preservation of the status quo and avoidance of new belief territories. Scholars argue that inertia as a motive for resistance is based on individuals' fear of change and uncertainty, as these two motives are associated with loss of control over a new and unfamiliar situation.

### **STRATEGIES FOR RESISTING PERSUASION**

While persuasion resistance has a rich body of literature at its foundation, there has not been one type of literature that has integrated all accepted knowledge into a single framework prior to Fransen, Smit, and Verlegh's Strategies and Motives for Resisting Persuasion (SMRP) Framework (2015) for persuasion resistance. The SMRP framework is recognized as the initial attempt to not only consolidate but also integrate the rather disconnected concepts and findings under the persuasion resistance scholarship.

At the top of the SMRP framework (see Figure 2) are the three persuasion resistance motives (from left to right), namely freedom threats or reactance, concerns of deception or distrust, and reluctance to change or inertia. These resistance motives are linked to particular resistance strategies that, based on past studies, serve as the cognitive and behavioral manifestations of each of the resistance motives (Fransen et al. 2015). For example, individuals whose freedom is threatened by a persuasive message will enter the psychological state of reactance and will seek to reinstate the threatened freedom through contesting and empowerment strategies. A study by Dillard and Shen (2005) demonstrated that reactant individuals tend to counterargue against a persuasive message or source more than non-reactant ones. Attacking the message or the source of the message, where attacking is done to weaken the threats to freedom, is seen as a method of restoring autonomy (Fransen et al. 2015). Studies also conclude that reactant individuals may use empowerment strategies. When an individual's freedom is threatened, empowering one's own arguments is seen as a method of reassuring the original attitude and increasing resistance against the persuasive message (Brehm 1966).



**Figure 2: Strategies and Motives for Resisting Persuasion Framework.**

Source: Fransen et al. (2015).

In the context of distrust or concerns of deception, people were observed to exhibit contesting among other resistance strategies (Fransen et al. 2015). Individuals who fear being deceived or misinformed tend to be more critical of the message, source, and strategy of the persuasion. On the other hand, individuals who exhibit inertia or reluctance toward change are more likely to use empowerment and biased processing strategies to preserve their original attitudes (Ahluwalia 2000). Since individuals exhibiting inertia are concerned with retaining their current positions, scholars argue that an empowerment strategy is likely to be adopted as this strategy also aims to retain the current beliefs and attitudes (Compton & Pfau 2009). Such individuals also use biased processing as a resistance strategy. In an attempt to maintain the status quo, they tend to downplay the threats of the persuasive message and highlight the effects of their current arguments (Ahluwalia 2000).

Lastly, the SMRP framework argues that avoidance strategy can be adopted to fulfill all three motives. Instead of directly and actively resisting influence, individuals may choose to avoid the sources of the influence altogether. Unlike contesting, empowerment, and biased processing, which are used by resistant individuals during or after exposure to a persuasion attempt, avoidance strategies are adopted before exposure and are used as anticipatory resistance methods (Fransen et al. 2015). When individuals detect threats to freedom, show concerns of deception, or are reluctant to change, they can first adopt the passive avoidant strategy towards persuasion and lessen the need for the three active strategies.

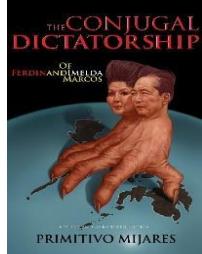
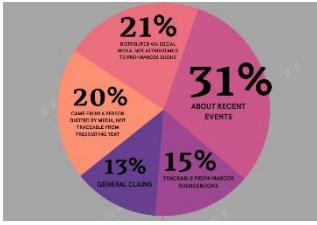
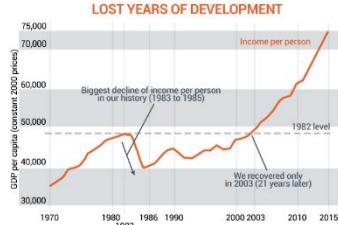
### PERSUASION RESISTANCE AMONG APOLOGISTS

As previously mentioned, the present paper puts forth a qualitative case inquiry into the persuasion resistance behaviors of select Marcos apologists. The study was designed to develop an in-depth understanding of real-life, contemporary bounded systems called cases (Creswell & Poth 2018). In this research, a case refers to a Marcos apologist carrying pro-Marcos sentiments and resisting anti-Marcos persuasion and anti-disinformation efforts. This paper sought to investigate persuasion resistance motives and strategies through in-depth semi-structured interviews not only to establish context, but also to acquire a deeper understanding of the communication phenomenon. More specifically, this research took a multiple case design to allow for participant triangulation and a more detailed description of persuasion resistance tendencies among Marcos apologists through within-case analyses and a cross-case analysis.

Anonymized Participants	Background
Rey	24 years old, male, customer service representative Rey is aware that the term "Marcos apologist" has a negative connotation. For Rey, being a Marcos apologist is his <i>"chosen path"</i> (Interview with Rey 2021).
Judy	27 years old, female, customer service representative Judy used to be against Marcos Sr. when she started college. Upon meeting her pro-Marcos professor, Judy changed her mind and felt that <i>"a whole new reality"</i> (Interview with Judy 2021) was shown to her.
Regine	28 years old, female, customer service representative Regine shared that she grew up in a household that supports the Marcos family and that she has been a Marcos supporter for as long as she remembers.
Cardo	45 years old, male, small business owner Cardo shared the most information about the history of Martial Law and appeared the most confident about it. Cardo is the guardian of Janine, the youngest among the Marcos apologist interview participants.
Janine	16 years old, female, student of humanities and social sciences Janine lives in the same household as Cardo and considers herself a Marcos supporter like her guardians.

**Table 1: Background of each anonymous Marcos apologist participant. Source: Interviews.**

Recruited through a purposive criterion sampling wherein the criteria included specific age ranges, and support and defense of Marcos Sr., the participants of this study (see Table 1) consisted of one Marcos apologist from Generation X (43–57 years old, born 1966–1980), three from the Millennial generation (23–42 years old, born 1981–2000), and one from Generation Z (12–22 years old, born 2001–2011) following the generational age ranges cited in several local and international studies (Krause 2012; Posadas and Fernandez, 2015; Schroer 2012). Informed parental consent was secured from the guardians of one participant who was 16 years old at the time of data collection. As defined by relevant literature, a Marcos apologist is a Filipino individual expressing defense of the late dictator Marcos Sr. in light of the latter's martial law atrocities and acts of corruption (Guillermo 2021).

Material	Title	Description
	Approved Human Rights Violations Claims (HRVMCB)	This specific material enumerates the verified count of human rights violations during martial law, including extrajudicial killings, disappearances, tortures, rape, abductions, and illegal detainments.
	The Conjugal Dictatorship of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos (Mijares 1976)	An academic initiative against the social and political restoration of the Marcos family involves a community-consolidated collection of research articles, class resources, and conference materials uploaded to a cloud storage application. The references include the works of Primitivo Mijares.
	Traceable Sources of False Information Supporting the Marcos Family (Berdos 2020)	An investigative article by Vera Files that explores the disinformation networks and mechanisms built by pro-Marcos groups. An important conclusion of this article states that Filipinos are systematically disinfomed and manipulated by distorted versions of history found online and offline.
	Lost Years of Development under the Marcos Administration (Mandrilla & Punongbayan 2016)	An article by Rappler that focuses on debunking the myth that the Philippines experienced the golden age of economic growth under Marcos Sr. The article explains how the Philippines during martial law is actually considered the "Sick Man of Asia."

**Table 2: Representative anti-Marcos and anti-disinformation materials presented to participants. Source: author.**

The research instrument is a semi-structured in-depth interview guide that consists of questions and probes seeking to elicit the resistance motives and strategies of select Marcos apologists. This included providing examples of anti-Marcos persuasion and anti-disinformation materials (see Table 2) and asking about their initial reactions, interpretations, degree of acceptance or rejection, and resistances. The interview guide also drew specific pro-Marcos and anti-Marcos artifacts from social media that were used to expose the participants' degree of agreement and identification with the Marcos-related sentiments and resistance.

### PERSUASION RESISTANCE OF MARCOS APOLOGISTS

After performing five within-case analyses to elicit the salient resistance motives and strategies of each participant, a cross-case analysis was conducted to compare the cases and identify overlapping attitudes and behaviors. The findings of the within-case analyses (see Table 3) and the cross-case analysis are discussed in this section. The elicited motives and strategies include those that already exist under the SMRP Framework (Fransen et al. 2015), and some that emerged only during the interviews and after the case analyses.

Anonymized Participants	Resistance Motives	Resistance Strategies
Rey	reactance, inertia, distrust	contesting, empowerment, biased processing, dismissal
Judy	distrust, inertia, antagonism	avoidance, contesting, biased processing, empowerment, redirection, dismissal
Regine	inertia, distrust, antagonism	empowerment, dismissal, contesting
Cardo	distrust, antagonism, inertia, reactance	biased processing, dismissal, contesting, empowerment, redirection
Janine	reactance, inertia, distrust	dismissal, contesting, empowerment

**Table 3: Resistance motives and strategies of each participant**

**listed in descending order of salience. Source: author.**

### Distrust Motive: Fear of Deception

The most salient motive for resisting persuasion among the five Marcos apologist participants is distrust. This motive involves resisting influence out of the fear of being deceived, manipulated, or disinforming by the sources of persuasion (Fransen et al. 2015). Across all case participants, the motive of distrust manifested as a fear of being deceived by anti-Marcos individuals and organizations through their persuasion and anti-disinformation materials. The participants are not convinced by data such as statistical figures and graphs, arguing that such information can be easily manipulated by anti-Marcos entities to serve their own interests. Judy, for example, answered "*The list of human rights violations that they are showing me, are they sure that it was really Marcos who ordered their execution? Unless I see any proof of it, I will not believe them*" (Interview with Judy 2021). The Marcos apologists seem to value empirical truth, but strongly doubt statistics and published research due to the disparity between the presented information and what they currently know, and the assumption of an existing ulterior motive behind the persuasion. The Marcos apologists

favor what they currently know and believe as the truth, then exhibit distrust towards other information that contradicts their existing beliefs.

### **Inertia Motive: Reluctance toward Change**

The second most salient persuasion resistance motive among the case participants of the study is inertia. This motive involves the desire to stay the same, unmoved, or unchanged (Knowles & Linn 2004). Inertia among the case participants is unique because their apparent stubbornness results not only from the mentioned desires but also from a desire to defy. The Marcos apologists choose to resist influence and to remain unmoved to show defiance, demonstrating their capacity to stand their own grounds in the face of facts. Inertia now becomes a performance of power and integrity. Regine, the case participant who grew up in a Marcos-supporting household, shared that she would never become an anti-Marcos proponent mainly because she has been a Marcos supporter for as long as she can remember: *"Whatever my belief is about them [the Marcos family], I will stand by it. I really am a pro-Marcos"* (Interview with Regine 2021).

### **Reactance Motive: Threats to Freedom**

The third motive for resisting influence among the case participants is reactance. This motive involves the innate desire for autonomy and freedom, i.e., a desire to think, believe, and act based on one's accord (Brehm 1966). Among the Marcos apologists, reactance is manifested as respect for each other's opinions. As Rey has implied, *"We have our own beliefs. I will tell you what I know, but I will not force you to believe what I believe. In the same way, you can tell me what you know but you cannot force me to believe it"* (Interview with Rey 2021). The case participants packaged their desire for autonomy and freedom as a simple wish to respect others and be respected by them. Reactance also serves as a protective mechanism, asking for respect so that one's own opinion will not be challenged. Among the case participants, Janine most frequently mentioned her desire for autonomy compared to older interviewees.

### **Antagonism Motive: Perceiving an Enemy**

This emergent motive called antagonism, identified during the interviews, involves resistance that results from an antagonistic, hostile, or entirely negative perception of the source of influence. In this motive, the source of influence is viewed as an enemy. While distrust can be associated with antagonism, the latter takes a higher level of doubt not simply caused by fear of being deceived or manipulated but also by anger or hate directed at the source of influence. This antagonistic tension serves as a psychological wall between the sender and receiver of the persuasive and informative messages. Among the case participants, Judy, Regine, and Cardo exhibited the most antagonistic perception of organizations, institutions, and individuals involved with anti-Marcos persuasion and anti-disinformation campaigns. Rappler, one of the news organizations in the Philippines that openly perform fact-checks on Marcos-related claims, is considered an enemy of the truth. Cardo, for instance, answered *"Rappler, in my opinion, they are very unfair with their news. That is why their founder was convicted with libel, because they always slander the government. They have always been"*

*like that*" (Interview with Cardo 2021). These Marcos apologists not only feel distrust toward anti-Marcos individuals and organizations but also view them as threats and direct opposition.

### **Contesting Strategy: Attack on Persuasion**

The most common strategy for resisting persuasion among the case participants is contesting. This strategy involves counterarguments that seek to challenge the content, source, or strategy of the persuasive message (Fransen et al. 2015). The types of content being contested by the case participants include anti-Marcos messages that debunk the golden age economy during the martial law, discredit the Marcos family of their claimed accomplishments, enumerate the human rights violations during martial law, and expose the ill-gotten wealth of the late dictator. A major part of the case participants' contesting strategy is how they position the anti-Marcos entities in the least favorable angle and proceed to attack them. As a result of distrust and antagonism, it appears that the first instinct of the Marcos apologists is to attack the identities and histories of the anti-Marcos individuals and organizations.

### **Dismissal Strategy: Discrediting the Attempt**

The second most salient strategy for resisting anti-Marcos persuasion among the case study participants is dismissal. Identified through the interviews, this emergent strategy involves treating the persuasive message as unworthy of serious attention or consideration. Dismissing the persuasion attempt also includes showing indifference or reducing its relevance to oneself. Among the case participants, dismissal strategy includes the utterances "*I don't care*" (Interview with Regine 2021), "*Listening to that won't make me rich*" (Interview with Judy 2021), and "*Let them be*" (Interview with Janine 2021). The Marcos apologists do not necessarily avoid persuasion in this strategy. Instead, they pay minimal attention to the message, then dismiss it outright. Janine, the youngest among the case participants, even showed willingness to dismiss the opinions of the entire generation she belongs to. According to Janine, her generation is not yet knowledgeable, autonomous, or old enough to participate in political discussions related to Marcos Sr.

### **Empowerment Strategy: Asserting the Position**

The next strategy for resisting persuasion among the case participants is empowerment. This strategy aims not to weaken the anti-Marcos argument but to strengthen one's own pro-Marcos arguments in the face of influence. Empowerment is achieved either through self-assertion, which involves independently improving one's arguments through research and reasoning, or through social validation, which involves seeking out and aligning with others who share similar beliefs. Among the case participants, the most used empowerment strategy is social validation. All five participants resorted to the knowledge of the elderly who lived through the Martial Law era, arguing that what they know and believe align with what the older generation had directly experienced. While select participants also used self-assertions to empower their arguments, all of them were more likely to depend on what they learned from older individuals with similar beliefs.

### **Biased Processing Strategy: Understanding with Partiality**

Another salient persuasion resistance strategy among the case participants is biased processing. This strategy involves being selective with the available information or imposing double standards, wherein stricter moral or logical criteria are used against the opposing position (Fransen et al. 2015). When asked about her reaction to articles and websites that enumerate the human rights violations under Marcos Sr., Judy insisted that she needs proof on this matter before she believes it. However, when provided with visual and statistical proofs from legitimate sources, Judy still appeared resistant. Rey and Judy also argued that the atrocities committed during the martial law imposed by Marcos Sr. should not be a burden on his living family members. However, they were more likely to criticize Leni Robredo—the former vice president of the Philippines and the current president Bongbong Marcos' primary rival during the 2022 presidential elections. Most of such criticisms were based on the public service scandals of Robredo's political predecessors.

### **Redirection Strategy: Changing the Subject**

Redirection is the last salient strategy used by the case participants to resist anti-Marcos messages and anti-disinformation materials. This strategy is an emergent one which involves the attempt to both distract and shift the focus of the current communication to a different yet relevant topic as a way of resisting persuasion. Redirection is not simply avoidance, as the latter strategy is passive and entails the absence of attention or cognition, while the former entails actively attending to the persuasive message but chooses to shift away from it.

Among the participants of the study, redirection is mostly observed in the utterances: *"Let's talk about the Aquinos"* (Interview with Cardo 2021)—another influential political family in the Philippines—or *"What about the massacres enabled by the Aquinos?"* (Interview with Judy 2021). In this strategy, Marcos apologists resist persuasion not by contesting anti-Marcos persuasion, empowering their own pro-Marcos arguments, dismissing or processing information in a biased manner, but by leading the communication transaction to a different direction. Instead of discussing the topic at hand, the case participants shifted the topic to resist the impact of the original dialogue. While such a strategy can be described as escapist or intentional deflection, redirection appears to be some participants' convenient yet effective method of resisting facts.

### **Avoidance Strategy: Refraining from Contact**

The remaining strategy presented in the literature is the least observed one among the interviewed Marcos apologists. This strategy of avoidance involves placing a physical, mechanical, or cognitive distance between the self and the source of influence (Fransen et al. 2015). When asked if they choose to block, mute, or unfollow any account that shares anti-Marcos materials, to place a virtual distance between themselves and the anti-Marcos reports, they said that they do not. They believe that blocking or muting those who challenge one's beliefs is not a reasonable action as this will only make one appear threatened and less open to opposing discourse.

## CONCLUSION

The present research concludes that the select Marcos apologists exhibit a multitude of persuasion resistance motives and strategies in deflecting the influence of various anti-Marcos persuasion and anti-disinformation efforts in the Philippines both outside and inside digital spaces. Such motives include fear of being deceived or manipulated by anti-Marcos individuals and institutions; mere desire of retaining pro-Marcos beliefs and reluctance toward changes in beliefs or attitudes; value for personal autonomy and freedom as a Marcos supporter to think, believe, decide, and act on one's own accord; and perception of anti-Marcos individuals, organizations, and other similar entities as enemies.

The resistance strategies exhibited by the select Marcos apologists include several distinct approaches. They contest the content, source, and strategy of anti-Marcos persuasion and anti-disinformation materials. Additionally, they process persuasive or informative content in a selective and biased manner to preserve their current pro-Marcos position. Empowerment of their own pro-Marcos arguments is achieved through either self-assertion or social validation. Furthermore, they dismiss persuasive or informative anti-Marcos messages as unworthy of serious consideration or attention. They also redirect the dialogue from Marcos-related atrocities and disinformation to other related issues involving different individuals or organizations. Lastly, they avoid the source of influence, even if minimally.

The research also supports the assumption that these motives and strategies are not mutually exclusive and can be exhibited by resistant individuals simultaneously (Knowles & Linn 2004). The research also demonstrated how these motives and strategies tend to overlap and interact with each other during persuasion transactions. Distrust and antagonism, for example, seem to amplify each other's impact on the motivation for persuasion resistance among the recruited Marcos apologists. Contesting and empowerment strategies also appear to complement each other in the process of resisting anti-Marcos influence.

Second, the present research concludes that existing anti-Marcos persuasion and counter-disinformation strategies, aimed at counteracting the political restoration of the Marcos family, show signs of ineffectiveness when confronted with motives and strategies for persuasion resistance. Academic, journalistic, and social media efforts may be hypothesized as having reduced impact in the presence of motivated and strategic resistance to persuasive and informative anti-Marcos messages. Initiatives such as fact-checking, publications, museums, investigative articles, visual documentation, historical research, and social media posts may not be as impactful as previously assumed by social justice institutions. Such conclusions, however, still need to be investigated further. The findings illustrated to some extent how the political restoration of the Marcos family and the purification of the Martial Law legacy could be reinforced not only through historical distortion and systematic disinformation network in the form of fake news, but also by on-ground resistance to anti-Marcos persuasion and anti-disinformation strategies among Marcos apologists.

Most importantly, the present research illustrates the situation of social justice efforts in the Philippines in the face of persuasion resistance motives and strategies among Filipinos. Beyond the issue of historical denialism and popular pro-Marcos sentiments, the research implies that

persuasive and informative materials that seek to forward social causes need to be revisited and investigated in terms of their effectiveness among resistant Filipino citizens, regardless of whether such movements concern a specific political issue or not.

Given its limitations in terms of sample size and generalizability, the present research recommends replication that involves a larger number of Marcos apologists recruited through an extensive quota sampling technique, and a confirmatory method that will cross-validate the resistance motives and strategies elicited from the participants.

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