



## *Razor's Edge*

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# *SONA: Typhoon Of Lies, Tirades And Detours On Mandate*

**NEW YORK, NY July 28 (PinoyGlobal)** - What a paradox: in the midst of a world economic crisis vividly reflected in the gnawing hunger of our people, the State of the Nation Address (SONA) of Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo the other day at the Batasan, was a sharp contrast to the nation's searing poverty. The SONA was unique in that it exhibited hidden wealth that only heightened the pain and misery of the less privileged.

That solemn moment, in which the president reports to the nation, was a veritable fashion show for fabulous ladies' gowns and display of unbridled wealth. But more than anything, the hypocrisy and arrogance of the nation's political stalwarts pervaded the atmosphere of glee. Wives of cabinet members, bureaucrats and legislators and even opposition leaders, were bedecked in gold and diamonds and lavishly attired to fit a royal reception in the British Empire.

The irony of it all, is that Pres. Arroyo presides in a third world country that thrives on panhandling from friendly governments and has been throwing Filipinos to different parts of the world to help support the sagging economy. The shindig we saw at the Batasan did not jibe with that background. The glitz and pomp was a far cry from the plight of the poor just outside the grand ballroom or ceremonial hall, if you will. What hurt the eyes was the flood of policemen and soldiers guarding the Congress building. Most certainly it was not a testimony of our people's love for an outgoing president.

In any case, after Pres. Gloria Macapagal-

Arroyo's State Of The Nation Address the people were transfixed to disappointment. Although, in fairness to her whatever truths she mumbled about were confined to the things she did. And that is saying a lot for the little she "accomplished" in nine years.

The fly in the ointment is that she deliberately avoided to elucidate, on what she should have done but failed to do during her long years of incumbency. Her manipulative address made her unworthy of the trust of constituents listening and watching her on TV. As a critic wisely said, how can we judge her performance if she has not told us what promises she complied with and what were left out. To give her a fair rating the facts should have been made clear in her SONA.

People could not make heads or tails out of her ambiguity on succession. I believe this was on purpose, to give her a leeway to renege on her words, as she is wont to, if the itch for power persists before her term ends. On this she was not just cunning but a sadist as well because she knew foes would sweat cold guessing if she will abdicate the presidency to the next legitimately elected president or not?

All she said on the subject of succession is "I never expressed the desire to extend myself beyond my term," which by and large was taunting the citizenry, not just the opposition. Champoleon, who deciphered the cryptic message of the Rosetta Stone would have ended up a mental case with her disquieting vagueness on that subject. The late comedian Yoyoy Villame himself would have died due to mental stress were he with us today.

Tradition dictates for the outgoing president to mention the matter of succession in his/her last state of the nation address. Cory Aquino was not a politician in the true sense of the word, as her only brush with politics was serving coffee and cookies to Ninoy and her late husband's political cronies in their house.

After Ninoy's martyrdom in 1983 her life abruptly changed. She was suddenly catapulted to the presidency. Nonetheless, it never occurred to Cory to dishonor her office by keeping the people at a loss as to her plans on the day her term ended. Without equivocating, she clearly said she would attend the oath taking of her successor.

Fidel Ramos, who still deludes himself to be the Philippines' greatest president (as a comedian perhaps), grudgingly declared in his last SONA that he will step down at the end of his term, or something to that effect.

In contrast, not only has GMA left a void for speculation but she deliberately kept the nation in the woods about whether she will exit on June 30 or use extra-constitutional methods to glue herself in the Palace of the people. On this there are a couple of scenarios prepared by her National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales just in case she opts to go against her mandate to step down. Meanwhile, her silence on the issue has ignited all kinds of conclusions that make it unhealthy for our peace and tranquility.

The cunning cautiousness of her words is unnerving: "I never expressed the desire to extend myself beyond my term." This was meant to give her a chance to backtrack and say that she never promised to abide by the term limits when she opts to do otherwise. This brings to mind her deceit before the 2004 elections that she was not going to run, but then she not only ran but even cheated her adversary (the now-deceased Fernando Poe Jr.) of his victory.

Instead of sending a clear message about the future of her return to civilian life she went for the jugular, firing poignant attacks at her political foes. Using the SONA, Gloria made the snide remark that "If you want something done, do it hard, do it well. Don't pussyfoot. Just do it. Don't pander, and don't say bad words in public." Feeling alluded to Sen. Mar Roxas whipped back "Gloria, I have to say bad words in public because of bad deeds done in secret." Boy, what a sharp retort!

Gloria continued with sneak attacks on former presidents Fidel Ramos and Joseph Estrada. Sardonicly,

she said: "I am accused of misgovernance. Many of those who accuse me of it left me the problem of their misgovernance to solve." And "we have done it," the peeved president said. She fumed with more recrimination saying - "I am falsely accused, without proof, of using my office for personal profit. Many of those who accuse me of it have lifestyles and spending habits that make them walking proof of that crime." "We can read their frustration. They had the chance to serve this good country and they blew it by serving themselves."

Madam, you ask for proofs of your misgovernance. Your government's sins of commission and omission are a chain. It would be redundant to recite them here. On infrastructure alone we can have a 20 field day beginning with the Diosdado Macapagal Boulevard that cost Juan de Cruz P302,000 or US \$ 5,491 per lineal meter. This is blatant because on the same road on the other side, SM Group spent only P54,000 or \$982 per lineal meter.

What about the over-price of the P600 million (\$11 Million) Legaspi bridge? Was that above board? This is not to mention the overpricing of other bridges and buildings of the government. Have you forgotten the big black eye of your administration, that notorious National Broadband Network/ZTE deal, which you had to rescind because its foul smell could not be kept hidden?

What about the "Jose Pidal" multi-billion peso bank accounts your husband is accused of having kept? And how can you explain the fast hike of your assets and bank account that zoomed after you became senator in 1992? Did it not start at P6.7 million to P72 million shortly thereafter? By now since you became president - your wealth could not be accounted by even the mathematicians of ancient Greece - forget it!

And did not Rodolfo Lozada, who exposed the notorious ZTE transaction, have to seek shelter for his life in a convent of nuns? What can you say about the "Hello, Garci" scandal in which your own voice was caught on audio tape becoming both your political Watergate and moral Waterloo? You only harped on the dubiously "positive" economic forecasts in your SONA, Madam, what about the many negative economic indicators showing the failures of your administration especially when it comes to helping our impoverished people, who include our country's pathetic huge number of homeless children? The examples of your failures and malfeasance just seem endless since you usurped power from Erap in 2001!

If I were you Madam, I will stop daring the people to prove the charges of corruption leveled against you and

your governance, because the boundless incontrovertible facts will aggravate your embarrassment and predicament with the law. If you fought Miguel Cotto in the ring you will come out with more black and blues all over your body, and the public might think you ran into Frankenstein. Just step down after your term and maybe even the opposition will let you enjoy your peace and retirement.