Ancient and pre-Spanish Era:

It is believed that the first inhabitants of the Philippines arrived over many thousands of years ago. It is commonly thought that they migrated over a land bridge, which existed at that time, from the Asian mainland.

The next known inhabitation is when the Negrito or Aeta arrived in the islands. However, they were driven back by several waves of immigrants from Indonesia, only to be followed by the maritime peoples of the Malayan islands.

Although there is little written about this period of history, the next major steps are the time period from around 5000 BCE (Before Common Era, aka, BC) through around 500 CE (Common Era, aka, AD).

There is much written on the Austronesian peoples of the Southeast Asia area and their descendants. These peoples were the seafaring people who traveled to distant parts of the world during this period of history. Some historians believe that these peoples settled in the southern regions of the Philippines and eastern regions of Indonesia. What is known, about this period, is that blade stone technology, dating back to around 5000 BCE reached the northern portions (Luzon area) of the Philippines. There are several postulates concerning migration and maritime trade during this time period.
DATELINE: 1411. The empire of Sri Vijaya of Malacca (or Melaka) Malaysian archipelago was the largest kingdom in the pacific. Some say the Visayas region of the Philippines were once part of this empire hence the name Visaya derived from Vijaya.

It is known that there were many warring peoples in the Philippines as early as 2000 BCE. Within the past 20 years, remnants of stone walls have been found in the province of Ifugao. Based on dating techniques of the tools and artifacts found in the same area of these walls, it has been shown that they were build during this period, 2000 BCE. It is theorized that these stone wall outlines were the traces of an ancient fortress. This was thousands of years before any Spanish influences.

Mines have been found in the Philippines, dating back to at least 1000 BCE. There physical presence and the written history by the early Spanish settlers suggest that the Filipinos were actively mining for precious metals thousands of years before peoples in other regions of the area. The type of metals that were mined included silver, copper, gold and iron. Many of these metals were used as decorations for their homes as well as on their personages.

During this same period, in history, the peoples of the region were building the rice terraces and other agricultural wonders that are known as common place today through the Asian communities.

One group, known as the Igorots, build stone walls, dams, and canals that still mystify engineers. These hydraulic works were created from stones greater in bulk than those of the Great Wall of China.
One of the most remarkable ancient pottery finds ever in Southeast Asia was a burial jar from Manunggul Cave in Palawan. It is an elaborately designed burial jar with anthropomorphic figures on top of the cover that represent souls sailing to the afterworld in a death boat. It is dated to as early as 710 - 890 B.C. The Manunggul jar was declared a National Treasure and its portrait is on the 1000 Philippine peso bill.

The figure on the rear is holding a steering paddle with both hands; the blade of the paddle is missing. Both figures appear to be wearing a band tied over the crown of the head and under the jaw. The manner in which the hands of the front figure are folded across the chest is a widespread practice in the Philippines and Southeast Asia when arranging the corpse. The prao is carved like a head with eyes, nose, and mouth. This motif of carving is still found on the traditional sea vessels of the Sulu Archipelago, Borneo, Malaysia. The execution of the ears, eyes, and nose has similarities with the contemporary woodcarvings of Taiwan, the Philippines, and many areas in Southeast Asia.

Various teams of international archaeologists have been quietly excavating in Cagayan Valley and Batanes over the past few years, trying to solve one of the most important Asian puzzles of all: the journey of homo sapiens into Southeast Asia and Oceania. Among the more interesting clues they are considering are a sophisticatedly-mummified corpse from Palawan, carbon-dated to 4,300BC (3 millennia older than Tutankhamen, and thus contemporaneous with opium-eating Mesopotamia); a bronze needle from Peñablanca, Cagayan dated to 2,280 BC (two millennia before our Metal Age); shell axes much older than those excavated from Oceania; and nine long-voyage Butuan boats, the oldest of which had a minimum carbon-date of 235AD.

Maitum Anthropomorphic Potteries - The anthropomorphic secondary burial jars from Pinol, Maitum, Saranggani Province in Mindanao date back to the Metal Age. The site had been dated to 830 +/-60 B.P. (cal. date of A.D. 70 to 370) and 1920 +/- 50 B.P. (cal. date of 5 B.C. to A.D. 225).

The radiocarbon dates were obtained from the soot samples taken from the small earthenware vessel found inside one of the anthropomorphic burial jar. These burial jars are made of earthenware designed and formed like human figures with complete facial characteristics. These were associated with metal implements; glass beads and bracelets; shell spoon, scoop, bracelets and pendants; earthenware potteries with incised designs and cut-out foot-rings; non-anthropomorphic jars.

Maitum Anthropomorphic Potteries

Leta-leta cave archaeology

Leta-leta Cave, Langen Island, El Nido, Palawan was excavated in 1965 by Dr. Robert Fox. Leta-leta Cave is an important burial site belonging to the Late Neolithic Period where an assemblage of stone and shell artifacts associated with sophisticated pottery and nephrite adzes and axes were recovered. Other materials include stone ornaments and shell beads.

Shell Scoop
Pre-Spanish influence, modern day:

Today, many historians dispute when modern Philippine history began. Some believe it to have started as early as the 13th century. It was during this time that 10 datus from Borneo, each with a hundred of his kinsmen, landed in what is now known as Panay Island in the Visayas. From this time to the early 16th century, the region, now known as the Philippines, was ruled by independent tribes of peoples.

Following this modern ‘discovery’ of the Philippines, as some historians put it (vs. Magellan), the country and its peoples began to see rapid advances in social and economic development.

For instance, around the year 1380, it is believed that the Arab-taught Makdum arrived in the Sulu archipelago, establishing what became a powerful Islamic sphere of influence over the next hundred years.

During this same period in history, the Philippines was already established as an active trading center. It is known that many merchants and trading ambassadors from the surrounding areas, including Siam (Thailand) and China, came to Cebu to pay tribute to the king and arrange trade agreements.

Pre-Spanish Tagalog script

Baybayin or Alibata (known in Unicode as the Tagalog script) is a pre-Spanish Philippine writing system that originated from the Javanese script Old Kawi. The writing system is a member of the Brahmic family (and an offshoot of the Vattelutu alphabet) and is believed to be in use as early as the 14th century. It continued to be in use during the Spanish colonization of the Philippines up until the late 19th Century. The term baybayin literally means syllables. Closely related scripts are Hanunóo, Buhid, and Tagbanwa.

Pre-Spanish Philippine built ship

The Philippine sailing ships, or praos, shown in La Perouse's drawings had double sails that seemed to rise well over a hundred feet from the surface of the water. Despite their large size these canoes also had double outriggers. Some larger sailing vessels mentioned by Antonio De Morga and others did not use outriggers. All the commentators agreed that the Filipinos had first contact were engaged in long-range trading with their Asian neighbors. The various kingdoms of the islands ranged as far West as the Maldives on the southwest coast of India and as far north as Japan. The earliest Spaniards commented on how peoples from both regions would regularly be blown from one region to another.

MORO LANTAKA or Swivel CANNON

This weapon gave the Spanish much trouble when conquering the Philippines islands. The Moro type Lantaka is one of the most awesome weapons of the Pre-Spanish Filipinos. These guns were placed on flexible swivels which the Spanish technology never thought of at that time. This great construction allowed to quick track a moving target. Some LANTAKA's construction featured two revolving barrels. This cannons, probably the oldest form of portable ordnance in the world, was hand bored. these Lantakas eventually reached South America and are considered ancestors of the Gatling gun.
Pre-Spanish war, fishing, hunting-spears


Types of knives and daggers for cutting, piercing and stabbing

Young Bagobo warriors provided with their characteristic side arms. Davao Province, southeastern Mindanao.

Bagobo warriors

Types of wavy and straight-edged krisses

Types of wavy and straight-edged krisses, Moro, Mindanao, and Sulu Archipelago. No. 1. Old type of serpentine grooved blade provided with ornamental guard piece and sword breaker fastened with single stirrup; round wooden grip covered with bands of braided rattan. Moro, Mindanao. 2. Datto’s kris, of recent production; blade inlaid with sinuous, dragonlike pattern in yellow metal; grip of wood. Lake Lanao, Moro, Mindanao. 3. Serpentine blade inlaid with figured patterns in yellow brass; improvised handle of wood. Moro, Mindanao. 4. Long, tapering serpentine blade; curved guard of silver; elaborately carved horn handle. Kris type showing Spanish influence. 5. Slightly sinuous steel blade; handle wrapped with braided waxed cord on grip section; carved pommel of sea cow ivory; plain old-style wood scabbard. Moro. 6. Straight-edged, slightly curved blade; handle covered with braided cord bands which also serve to fasten spiked stirrup extension for fastening guard and handle to blade. Moro. 7. Serpentine blade; hardwood handle overlaid with banded sheet silver and braided silver cord; crutch-shaped pommel of solid silver. Jolo Island. 8. Serpentine blade; grooved and inlaid with gold metal; single stirrup; wood handle banded with silver and wrapped with silver braid; carved cockatoo-shape ivory pommel.
Magellan and the Spanish influence:

Even though early history is clearly one of tribal rule that engaged in a bustling economy, European historians credit the voyages of Magellan, and succeeding expeditions from Spain, as the official accreditation and discovery of the region. When he was credited with the discovery of the Philippines, it was already inhabited by peoples whose culture and modernization was by no means that far behind most other areas of the world.

These ‘primitive’ peoples, found by Magellan, were also ‘peoples of the sea’. They used a navigational instrument similar to a compass and were much more skilled and experienced in all types of fishing and fisheries activities.

This ‘discovery’, the historians point out, is relevant, because it is what placed the Philippine archipelago on the maps of the world.

It occurred when he, Ferdinand Magellan, a Portuguese explorer, landed at Homonhon Islet, near present day Samar, claiming the lands for Spain. It is believed that this event occurred on the 17 day of March in the year 1521. He was later killed on the Mactan Island of Cebu in a clash with native warriors who were led by a chieftain named Lapu-Lapu.

The Philippines, a jewel of Spain

During this time in world history, Spain was in fierce competition with Portugal to dominate, through colonization, the lands of the world.

Clearly the Philippines was a prize catch for Spain, based on its number of islands and its size; which, at the time, was estimated to be larger than it actually was. However size alone was not what made it a great prize -- its location made it a worthy and valuable catch. The archipelago was formally named Las Filipinas, in 1543 by Ruy Lopez de Villalobos who followed Magellan to this territory. It was named in honor of Spain's King Philip II (actually the Crown Prince, who was actually excommunicated from the Catholic Church, by the Pope Paul IV in 1552). It was known to be composed of thousands of islands and islets (now known to be 7,107), and spanning over eighteen hundred (actually 1854) kilometers from north to south, stretching from China to the north to the Indonesian archipelago at the south. Permanent Spanish occupation began in 1565, and by 1571 the entire country, except for the strictly Islamic Sulu archipelago, was under Spanish control.
The northern most tip of the country, Y'ami, of the Batanes Island group, is only 241 kilometers south of what is known as Taiwan today; while the southern most tip, Sibutu of the Tawi-Tawi group of islands, is just 14.4 kilometers north of what is known as Borneo. Thus, the Philippines, was located in a strategic location, both politically and economically. They were the window to the New World.

To its east is the Pacific Ocean and beyond it, the New World (the Americas). To the west are the kingdoms of Indochina including modern day Cambodia and Siam (Thailand) while southwest is Malaysia.

**Christianity's introduction**

Spanish colonizers succeeded in introducing Christianity to the islands. Still today, Christianity represents over 85% of religious beliefs. They were highly successful in the region of modern day Luzon and Visayas but were unsuccessful in Mindanao, south region, where Moslems staved off the Spanish efforts.

Of course there are many recorded horror stories, of historically significant, where the Spanish forced the induction of Christianity upon the 'heathens' of these islands -- leading to thousands of deaths and tortures of the residents of the islands.

Still today, many small towns and remote barrios celebrate, through re-enactment in fiesta stage plays, called moro-moro, the forced conversion of the peoples to Christianity by the threatened force of the Spaniards. These plays always end the same way -- most of the people convert and find 'happiness' in their new found religion, while the remaining are either killed or flee to the mountains, to be hounded by the Spaniards the rest of their lives.

**Unrest for Spain**

Spain's rule lasted from the 16th through the 19th century, with much of its rule fraught by a series of revolts. For instance, when three Filipino priests were executed for national activities, a group of reformists formed the Propaganda Movement. This movement paved the way for the Philippine Revolution, years later.

The Spanish made serious tactile errors, during their reign, when dealing with the peoples of the Philippines. For instance, toward the end of the 19th century, there was a young doctor-writer, named Jose P. Rizal, whom they arrested and later executed. His crime? He actively, and publicly, criticized Spanish officials, verbally and through the written media (in two novels) during the 1880s-90s. His scathing criticisms concerned the methods used by the Spanish to rule the Philippines. Rizal, at the age of 30 was eventually imprisoned and on 30th December 1896, executed! This execution enraged the people deeply adding to the build up of injustices by the Spanish against them.
A note on Rizal: Due to his bravery and forsaking of personal safety, through his deeds and written actions, Jose Rizal is now recognized, by historians, as one of Asia's true nationalist. He is often compared to other Asian heroes, like Dr. Sun Yat-sen, of China.

Dr. Jose P. Rizal

Philippine Revolution

The Filipino independence movement was in a state of growth during this same period, ultimately leading to the Philippine Revolution. After Rizal's arrest and exile, Andres Bonifacio, a self-educated man of humble origins, founded a secret society, the Katipunan, in Manila. This organization, modeled in part on Masonic lodges, was committed to winning independence from Spain. Rizal, Lopez Jaena, del Pilar, and other leaders of the Propaganda Movement had been Masons, and Masonry was regarded by the Catholic Church as heretical. The Katipunan, like the Masonic lodges, had secret passwords and ceremonies, and its members were organized into ranks or degrees, each having different colored hoods, special passwords, and secret formulas. New members went through a rigorous initiation, which concluded with the pacto de sangre, or blood compact. The Katipunan spread gradually from the Tondo district of Manila, where Bonifacio had founded it, to the provinces, and by August 1896 - on the eve of the revolt against Spain - it had some 30,000 members, both men and women. Most of them were members of the lower-and lower-middle-income strata, including peasants. The nationalist movement had effectively moved from the closed circle of prosperous ilustrados to a truly popular base of support.

The Revolution, itself, was first led by Andres Bonifacio and then later it was taken up by Emilio Aguinaldo.
The 1896 Uprising and Rizal’s Execution

During the early years of the Katipunan, Rizal remained in exile at Dapitan. He had promised the Spanish governor that he would not attempt an escape, which, in that remote part of the country, would have been relatively easy. He retained, to the very end, a faith in the decency of Spanish "men of honor". Consequently, an informer had tipped off a Spanish friar about the KKK society’s existence, and Bonifacio, his hand forced, proclaimed the revolution, attacking Spanish military installations on August 29, 1896. The governor, apparently forced by reactionary elements, ordered Rizal’s arrest en route despite nil substantial evidence to link him to the revolt. He was sent back to Manila to be tried by a military court as an accomplice of the insurrection.

Under a new governor, who apparently had been sponsored as a hard-line candidate by the religious orders, Rizal was brought before a military court on fabricated charges of involvement with the Katipunan. The events of 1872 repeated themselves. A brief trial was held on December 26 and - with little chance to defend himself - Rizal was found guilty and sentenced to death. On December 30, 1896, he was brought out to the Luneta and executed by a firing squad.

Rizal’s death filled the rebels with new determination. At a convention held at Tejeros, the Katipunan’s headquarters in March 1897, delegates elected Aguinaldo president and Bonifacio to the post of director of the interior.

President of the Revolutionary Assembly at Tejeros

Interestingly, while Emilio Aguinaldo was mayor (1895) of Kawit in the province of Cavite, he had directed attacks against the Spanish military's presence in Cavite. This, with the death of Rizal became the focal point in the nationalist revolt. During this time he was given the title of general by his followers.

As 1897 wore on, Aguinaldo himself suffered reverses at the hands of Spanish troops, being forced from Cavite in June and retreating to Biak-na-Bato in Bulacan Province. In August armistice negotiations were opened between Aguinaldo and a new Spanish governor. By mid-December, an agreement was reached in which the governor would pay Aguinaldo the equivalent of US$800,000, and the rebel leader and his government would go into exile to Hong Kong (when they failed to succeed in their insurrection against the Spanish). Aguinaldo established himself in Hong Kong, and the Spanish bought themselves time. Within the year, however, their more than three centuries of rule in the islands would come to an abrupt and unexpected end.
Americas first entanglement:

In April 1898, two months after the American warship "Maine" was blown up at Havana Harbor in Cuba by Spain, America declared war on Spain (Spanish-American War).

May, 1898, a battle erupted in Manila Bay between the American naval fleet and the Spanish fleet. The Spanish flotilla of ships was completely destroyed.

Declaration for Independence

During this same period Aguinaldo, who was in Hong Kong, was encouraged to return to the Philippines by the United States as the Spanish-American War had moved from the Caribbean to the Philippines. Once back home, General Emilio Aguinaldo verbally proclaimed independence for the people of the Philippines on 12th of June 1898, from the window of his home in Cavite (South of Manila).

With this declaration, he became, in theory, the first president of the Philippine Republic. Aguinaldo is best remembered with his famous line: "We may lose hope in winning this battle for freedom because of inadequate force in terms of weapon, but one thing is never lost, our dream to die for the cause of true independence." This is where the Philippine flag was first raised. Within a week of each other, the nation will commemorate two events of great national significance — the declaration of independence in Kawit, Cavite, on June 12, 1898, and the birth of national hero Dr. Jose Rizal on June 19, 1861.
However, independence was to be short lived, due to the under pinning of power that was going on between Spain and America. It has been theorized, by some historians, that the Spanish and Americans had, shortly after this total massacre at Manila Bay, met secretly and agreed to continue "battle", satisfying the Spanish code of honor, and after a time the Spanish would surrender.

On 13 August 1898, with Filipinos fighting along-side of Americans on Philippine soil, the end to the Spanish-American War was taking place.

The twist? When the American and Filipino forces seized, through battle, Intramuros, on this very day in 1898, the Filipinos did not know that these foreigners, fighting at their side, would become a new threat to their independence. When the Spanish at Intramuros surrendered, the Filipinos were prevented from entering the encampment -- by? -- these same Americans. This, of course, implanted distrust of the 'ally' foreigners, eventually culminating in another horrible battle for freedom -- the Filipino-American War.

The Treaty of Paris

During this time of Philippine proclaimed independence, America's domination started. Unknown to Aguinaldo and fellow Filipinos, Spain, not recognizing their independence, and America wanting the islands, the archipelago was ceded (with Puerto Rico and Guam) to the United States, later that year, in December, for $20 million USD, under the "Treaty of Paris".

The Philippine-American War

With the Spanish defeated, on 14 August 1898, America immediately established a military law government in the Philippines declaring its rule by a military governor. This new dictatorship, by a foreign power continued until the beginning of the Philippine-American War.

Once again, the Filipinos were put in a position to fight for their independence. On 4 February 1899, an American private fired upon and killed a Filipino soldier for simply crossing the San Juan bridge, triggering the War. This new fight for independence, now against their allies in past battles, the Americans, was waged for six years, ending in 1905. Aguinaldo was captured in 1901, during the war, and when war ended (1901), he swore allegiance to the United States, which then annexed the Philippines, retiring from public life.

With the fighting stopped, peace was finally at hand, with everyone focusing on peace time events. Finally, the Philippines were able to focus on the future, leading to decades of progress.
The Jones Law and the Communist party

In 1916 the Jones Law was enacted by the American government. This was the first official commitment of the American government that would grant the Philippines its independence. This law as significant because it created a bicameral Philippine Legislature.

However, dis-satisfaction, against both the American rule and the Philippine Legislature was growing and in 1930, the Philippine Communist Party was founded by Crisanto Evangelista. Initially, its members were considered radical peasants, however, many people from the professional and labor sectors had become members.

A Philippine Constitution

In March 1934, then President of America Franklin D. Roosevelt, signed the Tydings-McDuffie Law. It provided for the creation of a Philippine Constitution and the establishment of a Commonwealth government that would run for 10 years in “preparation” for a complete political independence.

In 1935, while under American rule/guidance, President Roosevelt approved the Philippine Constitution, and the country established its own formal government. It was a Commonwealth type government, authorized by Constitution. Manuel L. Quezon was sworn in as President of the Philippine Commonwealth, and his vice-president as Sergio Osmeña. This was the beginning of the transitional phase to full independence for the Philippines.

The Japanese and WWII years: But war returned to the islands in 1941. Japan responded to American General Douglas MacArthur’s declaration of Manila as an “Open” city, by bombing Manila destroying much of the city. Japan immediately and brutally continued to annex the Philippines. The peoples of the Philippines, in alliance with American forces, fought some fierce and bloody battles during this period. The battles were focused in the northern region of the country at Bataan and Corregidor.

On April 9, 1942, the Japanese defeated the Filipino and American troops at Bataan. With the defeat of Bataan, the in-famous “Death March” of Filipino and American soldiers had begun.

--- it was also during this time, the famous speech of General Douglas MacArthur was made, “I came out of Bataan and I shall return” (while on exile in Australia) few weeks before the Fall of Bataan.

Then in May, 1942, the Filipino-American defense forces surrendered to the Japanese Imperial Forces at Corregidor.

Although the Filipinos and Americans had fought gallantly, the Japanese were clearly the victors. With surrender, many Filipinos fled to the hills, waging guerrilla war against the Japanese which lasted about four years.
During these years, the Japanese used the people of the Philippines as cheap, often forced, labor.

The Imperial Forces forced many Filipino women into work performing ‘comfort’ services. These women were often placed in houses of ‘prostitution’ and forced to perform sex acts for the Imperial Japanese soldiers.

In late 1943, under Imperial Forces rule, a Japanese sponsored National Assembly was held making Jose P. Laurel the president and Benigno Aquino Sr. and Ramon Avancena vice-presidents of the Assembly.

On October 20, 1944, Allied forces under MacArthur’s command, landed at Leyte Island - thereby fulfilling MacArthur’s vow to return to the Philippines. The “Battle of Leyte Gulf”, considered the greatest naval battle during the history of WW2. The victors were the Filipinos and Americans.

This defeat is believed to be the most important one in Philippine history, leading the way to the liberation of the Philippines.

General Douglas MacArthur - Leyte Landing 20th October 1944.

Americas final rule:

On the 4th of July in the year 1946, America finally relinquished any colonization claims, granting total independence to the Philippines. Thus lowering, for the last time, the US flag of dominance, raising the flag of the Philippines, alone, as the flag of the land. For America this was a doubly important date since July 4th is the day America celebrates their own independence from the rule of Great Britain (4 July 1776). In 1962, then Philippine President Diosdado Macapagal changed the date of Independence Day rites to 12th of June, (based on General Aguinaldo’s proclamation of independence for the people of the Philippines that occurred on 12th of June 1898 in Kawit, Cavite).

Early Independence Period:

World War II had been demoralizing for the Philippines, and the islands suffered from rampant inflation and shortages of food and other goods. Various trade and security issues with the United States also remained to be settled before Independence Day. The Allied leaders wanted to purge officials who collaborated with the Japanese during the war and to deny them the right to vote in the first postwar elections. Commonwealth President Sergio Osmeña, however, countered that each case should be tried on its own merits. The successful Liberal Party presidential candidate, Manual Roxas, was among those
collaborationists. Independence from the United States came on July 4, 1946, and Roxas was sworn in as the first president. In 1948 he was succeeded by Elpidio Quirino. The early years of independence were dominated by U.S. assisted postwar reconstruction. The economy remained highly dependent on U.S. markets, and the United States also continued to maintain control of 23 military installations. A bilateral treaty was signed in March 1947 by which the United States continued to provide military aid, training, and matériel. Such aid was timely, as the Huk guerrillas rose again, this time against the new government. They changed their name to the People's Liberation Army (Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan) and demanded political participation, disbandment of the military police, and a general amnesty. Negotiations failed, and a rebellion began in 1950 with communist support. The aim was to overthrow the government. The Huk movement dissipated into criminal activities by 1951, as the better-trained and -equipped Philippine armed forces and conciliatory government moves toward the peasants offset the effectiveness of the Huks. This Huk Rebellion (1945-53) complicated recovery efforts before its successful suppression under the leadership of President Ramon Magsaysay.

Populist Ramón Magsaysay of the Nacionalista Party was elected president in 1953 and embarked on widespread reforms that benefited tenant farmers in the Christian north while exacerbating hostilities with the Muslim south. The remaining Huk leaders were captured or killed, and by 1954 the movement had waned. After Magsaysay's death in an airplane crash in 1957, he was succeeded by Vice President Carlos P. Garcia. Garcia was elected in his own right the same year, and he advanced the nationalist theme of "Filipinos First," reaching agreement with the United States to relinquish large areas of land no longer needed for military operations. In 1961 the Liberal Party candidate, Diosdado Macapagal, was elected president. Subsequent negotiations with the United States over base rights led to considerable anti-American feelings and demonstrations. Macapagal sought closer relations with his Southeast Asian neighbors and convened a summit with the leaders of Indonesia and Malaysia in the hope of developing a spirit of consensus, which did not emerge.
The Marcos Era:

Ferdinand Marcos a Nacionalista Party leader, came to dominate the political scene for the next two decades, beginning with his election to the presidency in 1965. During his first term, Marcos initiated ambitious public works projects that improved the general quality of life while providing generous pork-barrel benefits for his friends. Marcos perceived that his promised land reform program would alienate the politically all-powerful landowner elite and thus it was never forcefully implemented. He lobbied strenuously for economic and military aid from the United States while resisting significant involvement in the Second Indochina War (1954-75). In 1967 the Philippines became a founding member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Marcos became the first president to be reelected (in 1969), but early in his second term economic growth slowed, optimism faded, and crime rates increased. In addition, a new communist insurgency, this time--starting in 1968--led by the new Communist Party of the Philippines-Marxist-Leninist and its military arm, the New People’s Army, was on the rise. In 1969 the Moro National Liberation Front was founded and conducted an insurgency in Muslim areas. Political violence blamed on leftists, but probably initiated by government agents provocateurs, led Marcos to suspend habeas corpus as a prelude to martial law.

Proclamation 1081 and Martial law was declared by Marcos on September 21, 1972, and he did not lift it until January 17, 1981. During this time, he called for self-sacrifice and an end to the old society. However, in the “New Society” Marcos’s cronies and his wife, former movie actress Imelda Romualdez-Marcos, willfully engaged in rampant corruption. With her husband’s support, Imelda Marcos built her own power base. She became governor of Metropolitan Manila and minister of human settlements. The previously nonpolitical armed forces became highly politicized, with high-ranking positions being given to Marcos loyalists. In 1979 the United States reaffirmed Philippine sovereignty over U.S. military bases and continued to provide military and economic aid to the Marcos regime. When martial law was lifted in 1981 and a “New Republic” proclaimed, little had actually changed, and Marcos easily won reelection to another term as president.
The beginning of the end of the Marcos era occurred when his chief political rival, Liberal Party leader Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, who had been jailed by Marcos for eight years, was assassinated as he disembarked from an airplane at the Manila International Airport on August 21, 1983, following medical treatment in the United States. Marcos cronies were charged with this crime but were acquitted. Aquino, however, became a martyr and his murder the focus of popular indignation against a corrupt regime. The Catholic Church, a coalition of old political opposition groups, the business elite, the left wing, and even factions of the armed forces all began to exert pressure on the regime.

There also was foreign pressure and, feeling confident with the support given by the Reagan White House, Marcos called a “snap” presidential election for February 7, 1986. When the Marcos-dominated National Assembly proclaimed Marcos the winner, Cardinal Jaime Sin and key military leaders (including Minister of Defense Juan Ponce Enrile and acting Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces Lieutenant General Fidel V. Ramos) rallied around the apparent majority vote winner, Aquino's widow, Corazon Cojuangco Aquino. The People Power Movement—a popular uprising of priests, nuns, ordinary citizens, and children, supported by defecting military units—ousted Marcos on the day of his inauguration (February 25, 1986) and brought Aquino to power in an almost bloodless revolution now famously called “EDSA Revolution”.

The Aquino Years and Beyond:

Corazon Aquino had wide popular support but no political organization. Her vice president, Salvador H. "Doy" Laurel, had an organization but little popular support. Enrile and Ramos also had large stakes in what they saw as a coalition government. The coalition unraveled quickly, and there were several attempts, including unsuccessful military coups, to oust Aquino. She survived her fractious term, however, and was succeeded in the 1992 election by General Fidel Ramos, who had served loyally as chief of staff of the armed forces and secretary of national defense under Aquino.

Fidel Ramos worked at coalition building and overcoming the divisiveness of the Aquino years. Mutinous right-wing soldiers, communist insurgents, and Muslim separatists were convinced to cease their armed activities against the government and were granted amnesties. In an act of reconciliation, Ramos allowed the remains of Ferdinand Marcos—he had died in exile in the United States in 1989—to be returned to the Philippines for burial in 1993. Efforts by supporters of Ramos to gain passage of an amendment that would allow him to run for a second term were met with large-scale protests supported by Cardinal Sin and Corazon Aquino, leading Ramos to declare he would not run again. And succeeded by Joseph Estrada for the Presidential seat.
Joseph Estrada, who had served as Ramos's vice president and enjoyed widespread popularity, was elected president in 1998. Within a year, however, Estrada's popularity sharply declined amid allegations of cronyism and corruption and failure to remedy the problems of poverty. Once again, street rallies supported by Cardinal Sin and Corazon Aquino took place. Then, in 2000 Senate investigators accused Estrada of having accepted bribes from illegal gambling businesses. Following an abortive Senate impeachment trial, growing street protests, and the withdrawal of support by the armed forces, Estrada was forced out of office on January 20, 2001. Vice President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was sworn in as Estrada's successor on the day of his departure.

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (is the daughter of the late President Diosdado Macapagal). Her accession to power was further legitimated by the mid-term congressional and local elections, when her coalition later won an overwhelming victory, but the elections were fraught with allegations of coercion, fraud, and vote buying. Arroyo's initial term in office was marked by fractious coalition politics as well as a military mutiny in Manila in July 2003 that led her to declare a month-long nationwide state of rebellion, as a result of which charges were filed against more than 1,000 individuals. Arroyo had declared in December 2002 that she would not contest the May 2004 presidential election, but she reversed herself in October 2003 and decided to run. She was reelected and sworn in for her own six-year term as president on June 30, 2004. With this new mandate, she was able to move with greater assurance on the political and economic reform agenda that had stalled during her first term in office.

see also "100 significant events in Philippine history"

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