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ROMANTICIZING REALISM:

What Does National Security Mean in the NDCP Hymn?*

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Understanding the meaning of “security” as an academic subject is a continuing preoccupation of scholars that enrich the theoretical discourses in Security Studies. The epistemic debates in the field stem from two fundamental perspectives in making sense of security as a concept and as a complex phenomenon. The ontological views, in their pure but otherwise complementary forms, are *realism* and *constructivism*—the latter of which can also be interpreted as idealism.

In the tradition of security thought, realism connotes a state-centric perspective, especially when the subject of “security” has a qualifying term “national” before it. Hence, the realist thinking about “national security” essentially refers to the defense, independence, and survival of the state which citizens are willing to fight and die for. The constructivist challenge, on the other hand, looks at the socio-political dimensions of security using the theoretical lenses of the academic disciplines of Humanities, Social Anthropology, and Public Administration, among others.

The National Defense College of the Philippines (NDCP), which administers the Master in National Security Administration (MNSA) course, is actively engaged in academic

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discussions on what constitutes “national security.” As a multidisciplinary field of study, the MNSA course adopts a comprehensive perspective of national security that is taken to have six dimensions. Specifically, these include the political, economic, socio-cultural, techno-scientific, environmental, and military—which the NDCP has managed to institutionalize in six separate subjects in its graduate program. But what does national security really mean in NDCP given its ideal construction of an all-encompassing condition of human security?

The inquiry posed in the research title of this paper is an attempt to join in the theoretical discourse on the meaning of “national security,” as propounded in a National Security Review (NSR) article of Ananda Devi Almase on “What the Subject of Security Really Means: A Look into the Content and Context of the 2011-2016 National Security Policy (NSP) in the Philippines.”¹ In search of a scholarly thought on how security is understood in the policy realm, the study looked into the principles and politics of the NSP *vis-a-vis* the Philippine development plan, defense agenda, and the State of the Nation Addresses of the President.

* The idea behind analyzing the lyrics of the College Hymn to unravel the living ideology of the academic institution came from Prof Chester Cabalza, the Course Director of the Socio-Cultural Dimension in the Master in National Security Administration (MNSA) Course in NDCP.

To note, the NSR article propounded that:

“From a Public Administration perspective, “national security” is qualified as a public good whose enjoyment by individuals in a sovereign nation does not deprive fellow citizens from equally benefitting. It must be taken into account that the “publicness” of national security stands not for the exclusive benefit of individuals or particular groups, but for the general well-being of a people as a nation. This means that while the welfare of people is integral to national security, the latter is more concerned with the state of the nation as an aggregate whole. The primary interest on the security and survival of the state is demonstrated by the fact that individual liberties and sectoral concerns can sometimes be sacrificed, when necessary, for the greater good.”²

To continue with the discussion on the conceptual foundation of national security, this essay seeks to understand the underlying theoretical principles of national security in the text and context of the NDCP Hymn. To note, the Oxford University Press defines **hymn** as a “song, text, or other composition praising or celebrating someone or something.”³ A living piece of poetic literature, the NDCP Hymn serves as a rallying symbol which students, alumni, and personnel identify with.

Through the moving lyrics of the song, how does the NDCP, as a training and educational institution for military commanders and future national leaders, extol the traditional and enduring values of national security?

This paper thus asks, how does the College hymn, as an emblematic song of praise, able to reify and glorify the very principles of national security and of the NDCP? Through the moving lyrics of the song, how does the NDCP, as a training and educational institution for military commanders and future national leaders, extol the traditional and enduring values of national security?

The Lyrics of the NDCP Hymn

- 1 ***Pandayan ng puso, isip at diwa***
A foundry of heart, thought and spirit,
- 2 ***Dalubhasaang pambansa***
is our National College;
- 3 ***Sa pagtatanggol ng baya't bandila***
In defending the country and the flag
- 4 ***May patnubay ni Bathala***
We are guided by God
- 5 ***Ang katatagan ang tanging lunas***
Stability is the only solution
- 6 ***Sa katiwasayan ng Pilipinas***
to Philippine security.
- 7 ***Ginigising mo ang kaisahang lakas***
You awaken our united force
- 8 ***At pag-ibig sa bayang wagas***
and pure love for the country.
- 9 ***Kulturang sarili ay mababakas***
In our indigenous culture, it can be traced
- 10 ***Na tayo ay maharlikang likas***
that we are inherently noble.
- 11 ***Ang kahirapan ng kahapo'y nagwakas***
The sufferings in the past ended
- 12 ***Sa masaganang bukas***
for a bountiful future.
- 13 ***Ang pinakadakilang tuntunin mo***
The greatest principle
- 14 ***Na tumimo sa puso ko***
that is ingrained in my heart
- 15 ***Sa layang natamo***
is for the independence we gained,
- 16 ***Ilaan ang buhay ko***
I shall devote my life;
- 17 ***Ang layang natamo***
The independence we gained
- 18 ***Dapat lang na ipagtanggol ko.***
must always be defended.

The Themes and Meanings of the NDCP Hymn

On “pandayan”

The Filipino word “pandayan” means a place for smithing or honing of metals into artistically crafted pieces of armors and ornaments. In earlier times, there was an adage that “the greatest chiefs are the best iron-workers,”⁴ making smithing as a noble

profession. This can be attributed to the fact that only the wealthiest *datus* or tribal chieftains had the money and means to import raw materials used in forging metals. The old saying was propagated in the epic stories of blacksmiths in Philippine literature and cinema.

One popular saga in Philippine pop culture is the legendary character of “*Ang Panday*” (The Blacksmith), created by veteran writer-director Carlos J. Caparas for Filipino comic books in the 1970s.⁵ The character was further popularized by the late Fernando Poe Jr., the King of Filipino movies, who starred in the *Panday* film in the 1980s. It was during this decade when the NDCP Hymn was written by Mr Romeo L. Pena, a member of MNSA Regular Class 22.

The recurring theme of love of country and defense of its freedom with the guidance of the Divine Providence imbibes a patriotic and inspired stance.

The use of the Filipino word “*pandayan*” in the first line of the Hymn regards the NDCP as a foundry where hearts, thoughts, and spirits (*Pandayan ng puso, isip at diwa*) are developed. It is a place where knowledge is sharpened, values are shaped, and leaders are made. Through the smithing process, metals are melted into liquids and poured into molds—resulting into solidified metal castings of desired shapes and sizes. With this analogy, NDCP is promoted as an institution that trains military and civilian students in national security administration through scholarly work, leadership exercise, and love of country. A molder of character, NDCP is personified in the 7th and 8th lines of the Hymn as having the human ability to awaken, inspire, and unite the people in defense of the beloved country’s independence.

On love of God, country and independence

The recurring theme of love of country and defense of its freedom with the guidance of the Divine Providence imbibes a patriotic and inspired stance. The mention of God or “*Bathala*” in the 4th line of the Hymn shows the Filipino people’s devotion to a Supreme Being, which goes along with patriotism—notably the two most cherished principles of Filipino ideology in Philippine administrative history.

In 1939, President Manuel L. Quezon issued Executive Order No 217 or the Code of Citizenship and Ethics with 16 principles, foremost of which were belief in the Divine Providence and patriotism.⁶ Quezon, as well as Jose P. Laurel—the President installed during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines, staunchly inculcated patriotic values among Filipinos, especially the youth. As a matter of policy, the patriotic philosophy was propagated in public schools in an effort to instill in the minds of the young generation the primordial value of protecting the state as the embodiment of the Filipino aspiration for self-determination. The call for self-sacrificing citizens who are willing to give up their lives and individual liberties in the defense of the state thus became the order for the latter to survive.⁷ In the era of a world war, the duties and service of citizens to the state came first before individual rights and liberties for state survival.

It can be seen that the patriotic theme in the NDCP Hymn is reminiscent of the traditional values of national defense and security during the time of war and before the Philippine independence in 1946. Whether this timeless theme remains relevant in the changing security landscape and political temperament in the

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The Theoretical Underpinnings of the NDCP Hymn in Security Studies

The interpretations of the NDCP Hymn come from both literal and contextual meanings of its lines and lyrics. This leads to a subjective understanding of the realities and metaphors in the artful language of the song. As a literary piece, the College Hymn uses both the realist and constructivist tones in idealizing national defense and security.

In the fifth line of the Hymn, it is conveyed that stability is the only solution or key to national security, the latter of which mainly refers to freedom from threats or foreign aggression. By accentuating that stability is the sole solution to a problem of national security, the realist undertone excludes the socio-cultural, political, economic, and environmental factors which humanist proponents emphasize in the national security agenda.

It is interesting to note that there is no reference to the populist notion of human security in the musical piece. The absence of this social bias in the NDCP Hymn makes the subject of national security conspicuously state-centered. The premise is clear: stability is the **only** key. The message is that there is national security if national sovereignty is guarded, and potential threats, either external or internal, are warded off.

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Because of the emotionally powerful constructs of patriotism and national defense in the NDCP Hymn, the ontological view and theoretical approach of realism is placed in proper perspective. Notably, this realist inclination in the notion of national security was editorialized in the special anniversary issue of the NSR, published by NDCP in 2013, with the theme “Reawakenings: The Study of National Security at 50.” As the Editorial Team of the Research and Special Studies Division (RSSD) noted in the beginning:

“From *idealism* after the First World War to realization of real and persistent conflicts in the Second World War and beyond, studies on *security* have been highly influenced by the lens and language of *realism*. As a powerful theoretical tradition in International Relations and its subfield of Security Studies, *realism* provides systematic explanation and understanding of the security environment in which threats are real. It has brought back security theorizing to its senses, by making the discourse on *realpolitik*, armed conflicts, and state survival in an anarchic international community even more vibrant and vigilant.”⁸

In the NDCP Hymn, the referent object in national security is clearly the state and its hard-fought freedom and sovereignty. These can be existentially threatened anytime, and as the lyrics of the Hymn tell, the hard-earned freedom of Filipinos has a legitimate claim to survive.

Consistent with the academic literature in Security Studies, securing national interests remains the priority of sovereign states. From the standpoint of self-interested states, political decisions and domestic policies are made in the name of national objectives. This is especially true in an anarchic international community where national defense is a basic function of a state to survive.

The state and threats against its freedom and independence are objective, substantiating the realist meaning of national security in the

NDCP Hymn. Clearly, these are the key constructs in characterizing the state of national security. The Hymn conveys that as long as the nation-state is stable, which means it is free from aggression and threats, there is national security.

Related Nationalist Hymns

To better understand the nationalist theme of the NDCP Hymn, a brief exploration of similar musical masterpiece shows that love of country, collective identity, and national pride constitute what it means to be secure as a nation.

For one, “*Pilipinas Kong Mahal*” (My Beloved Philippines), composed by Francisco Santiago in 1931, has the same patriotic tone as the NDCP Hymn. Santiago’s composition came at a time when a Filipino government and the prospect for Philippine independence were being lobbied in the United States (US). Played in our native *kundiman*, “*Pilipinas Kong Mahal*” epitomizes the solemn and noble Filipino desire to be free and sovereign.

Another rousing, anthemic song is “*Ako ay Pilipino*” (I am a Filipino) that is filled with the same expression of nationalistic pride. Composed by George Canseco in 1981, “*Ako ay Pilipino*” was first sung at the inauguration of Ferdinand Marcos as President of what he dubbed as the “New Republic,” after lifting his ten-year martial rule in the country. To propagandize the Filipino ideology of the Marcos government, the song “*Ako ay Pilipino*” asserts a sense of national pride in being a Filipino. This collective identity as a nation is the very idea behind the state-centric romanticism of national security.

Conclusion

In Security Studies, the subject and scope of security is challenged by the “wide-versus-narrow” debate, as well as by what appears as an anti-statist sentiment of idealists that demand for social, political, and economic security from government.

In NDCP, the study of national security is segmented into several components or “dimensions” which are institutionalized in the titles of six separate courses in the MNSA program, namely: (1) Military Dimension; (2) Socio-cultural Dimension; (3) Political Dimension; (4) Economic Dimension; (5) Techno-Scientific Dimension; and (6) Environmental Dimension.

As a College and as a government bureau, the NDCP exercises both the academic discipline and administrative function to define what national security really means in accord with the politically popular framework and agenda of the Executive. Thus, the demands for human security, good governance, and sustainable development are adopted and accommodated in what is

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supposed to be an elite and specialized field of security and strategic studies under the defense department. Apparently, however, the comprehensive notion of national security that is promoted by NDCP is not reflected in the timeless lyrics of its College Hymn.

What does “national security” really mean in the NDCP Hymn? It pertains to the security of the nation-state through the preservation of the hard-fought freedom and independence of Filipinos. It means the ability, unity, and resiliency to defend the country against threats to its integrity and sovereignty.

Nevertheless, if the NDCP is really bent to take the multi-dimensional character of national security as its “official definition”—despite the categorical term “national” attached to that kind of security—is the institution then willing to change its endeared Hymn in a bid to be in the mainstream of public administration discourse?

National security, in the lyrics of the NDCP Hymn, is synonymous to national stability, a condition that is real and objective.

For a nation that has undergone wars, revolutions, and dictatorial rule; courage, freedom, and independence are the rousing ideals that can rally and unify Filipinos in different periods of history. These are the very ideals that are immortalized and romanticized in songs of praises and inspiration for Filipinos, such as the NDCP Hymn. As it is sung by the NDCP alumni and administration, the traditional, realist view of state security and national defense is effectively played in their conscious and subconscious thoughts.

In its campaign for a multi-dimensional notion of national security, the NDCP must revisit its time-honored symbols, which include the NDCP Hymn, as well as ruminate on the theoretical heritage of “national security” as it is understood by real scholars. And as the College reflects on the epistemic niche of national security, it should also introspect on the core principles that make it distinct from other fields of study.

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the security of the nation-state as the mandate of the defense department under which the College is subsumed?

In the midst of this scholarly inquiry on the disciplinary and distinguishing character of NDCP, the College Hymn continues to inspire its denizens and embolden the very essence of national defense and security in the country. For even as the political ideologues try to reinvent what “national security” is all about, the NDCP Hymn romanticizes the stark realism of patriotism and nationalism in defending the state.

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Endnotes

¹ Almase, Ananda Devi D. "What the Subject of Security Really Means: A Look into the Content and Context of the 2011-2016 National Security Policy in the Philippines." *National Security Review*, 2013: 84-106.

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⁷ *Ibid.*, 103-104.

⁸ National Defense College of the Philippines. *Editorial Note in The Study of National Security at 50: Re-awakenings, National Security Review*, pp 1. Quezon City: Research and Special Studies Division, National Defense College of the Philippines, 2013.