

21st Century Philippine Civil-Military Relations: WHY PARTNERSHIP INSTEAD OF SUBORDINATION?

Renato C. De Castro *

The paper examines the structure of civil-military relations in 21st century Philippine politics. It observes that contemporary Philippine civil-military relation is a partnership rather than a subordination of the military to civilian authority. This partnership is an upshot of the Arroyo Administration's directive to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to formulate a national military strategy focused on internal security and to spearhead the counter-insurgency campaign. The AFP pursued this partnership through its internal security operations and the Philippines' bilateral relations with its only major ally--the United States. Despite its growing influence in Philippine politics, the military has restrained itself from taking over the reins of government. The restraining factors are: the AFP's reluctance to expand its current functions, the Philippines' vibrant civil society, and the Philippine-U.S. security alliance. In conclusion, it notes that the Aquino Administration's pressing political challenge is to assert civilian control over the military by changing the context of Philippine civil-military relations. This change requires the AFP—touted as Southeast Asia's most ill-equipped armed forces—to take a back seat in the counter-insurgency campaign, and to focus on its long overdue arms modernization program.

During his 2010 election sorties, presidential candidate Benigno Aquino III alleged that the Arroyo Administration colluded with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in the massive 2004 electoral fraud in Mindanao and in the extra-judicial killings of political activists aligned with the left-wing Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the New People's Army (NPA). Mr. Aquino vowed to sack the military commanders linked with these anomalies. When he won three high-ranking AFP commanders prematurely retired from the service so as not to strain, supposedly, the uneasy relationship between the newly-elected president and the military. The purge of these ranking military officers reportedly

* Dr. Renato Cruz De Castro is a full- professor in the International Studies Department, De La Salle University, Manila, and the holder of the Charles Lui Keung Professorial Chair in China Studies.

demoralized the AFP's rank and file.¹

When he assumed office on 1 July 2010, however, President Aquino began humming a different tune. His Department of National Defense Secretary, Voltaire Gazmin, promised to fast-track the long-overdue AFP modernization program. He quickly initiated a major defense plan and mobilized other sectors of the society to source funds for the ill-equipped Philippine military.² During the welcome ceremony for the incoming AFP Chief of Staff General Ricardo David, President Aquino exhorted the military to defend democracy and be at the forefront of government reform. He committed his administration to fully support the long overdue AFP modernization program.³ He ordered Secretary Gazmin to make the AFP modernization an "instrument" to strengthen the country's military capability. Sounding like his predecessor during his first command conference as the commander-in-chief, he directed the AFP to eradicate the communist insurgency while upholding human rights.⁴ This mission, he declared, must be accomplished in three years. He also pledged to improve the living conditions, particularly the benefits, of both the AFP and Philippine National Police (PNP) personnel, and pushed for the leasing of military reservations to bankroll the AFP modernization program. In his first state-of-the-nation address, President Aquino even proposed to lease the Philippine Navy's (PN) real estate to private commercial developers so as to raise US\$100 million for the purchase of four new patrol vessels as part of the PN's fleet modernization program.⁵

President Aquino's pronouncements and decisions on military matters reveal his strategic gambit to maintain the civilian government's partnership with the AFP. In a liberal democracy like the Philippines, the military is in principle under absolute civilian authority and control. The civilian authorities formulate the national security policy and determine the function of the armed forces in its implementation. However, developments at the advent of the new century have transformed the Philippine military into a coercive institution that considers itself,

¹ They were AFP Chief of Staff General Delfin Bangit, National Capital Region (NCR) Commander Rear Admiral Feliciano Angue, and Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ISAFP) Commander General Romero Prestoza. Cf. Jaime Laude, "P-Noy Brushes Off Controversies at First Command Conference," *The Philippine Star* (13 July 2010). p. 10.

² Jaime Laude and Alexis Romero, "New DND Chief Vows to Fast Track AFP Modernization," *The Philippine Star* (1 July 2010). p. 18.

³ Delon Porcalla, "Noy to AFP: Defend Democracy," *The Philippine Star* (3 July 2010). pp. 1-8.

⁴ Jaime Laude, "P-Noy Brushes Off Controversies at First Command Conference," *The Philippine Star* (13 July 2010). p. 10.

⁵ Edith Regalado and Jaime Laude, "Navy Lots for Lease to Business Groups," *The Philippine Star* (29 July 2010). pp. 1-8.

politically, as an equal of the civilian government. This phenomenon originated from the AFP's leading role since 2001 in the government's internal security campaign, which has not only enhanced its stature but also cemented its partnership with the civilian authorities in governance.

Thus, this article explores contemporary Philippine civil-military relations. It addresses this main question: What is the context of the civil-military partnership in 21st century Philippine politics? It also examines these corollary questions: How did the defense policy in the 1990s facilitate the Philippine military's assumption of the status as a partner rather than a subordinate of civilian authority? How and why did the Arroyo Administration foster this partnership? Will this partnership lead to a military domination of Philippine society? And finally, what is the future of this civilian government-military partnership?

Anomaly in Civil-Military Relations: A Partnership?

The study of civil-military relations focuses on the threat posed by the military institution (the existence of a large professional army) to the popular rule by a civilian government, and to the individual citizen's political and civil rights.⁶ This challenge can be overcome by enforcing "absolute" civilian control of the military that could be effected through a series of constitutional check and balances, and by promoting professionalism in the military. Samuel Huntington's *The Soldier and the State* (1957), Morris Janowitz's *The Professional Soldier* (1961), and Samuel E. Finer's *The Man on Horseback* (1976) tackled this thorny issue. These works centered on the democratic control of the armed forces i.e., the subordination of the armed forces to democratically elected (civilian) political authorities, who decide on matters relative to the defense of the country.⁷

Mainstream literature on civil-military relations considers the liberal democratic states as the norm. Assumedly, the civil society's liberty and the government's adherence to democratic values depend on a disciplined, effected and subordinate military--one that is focused on external, rather than domestic conflicts

⁶ John P. Lovell, "Civil-Military Relations: Traditional and Modern Concepts Reappraised," *Civil-Military Relations: Changing Concepts in the Seventies* (New York; London: The Free Press and Collier MacMillan Publishers, 1974). p. 11.

⁷ For an interesting summary and discussion of the works of Huntington, Janowitz, and Finer see Laura R. Cleary and Teri McConville, "Commonalities and Constraints in Defense Governance and Management," *Managing Defense in a Democracy* (Eds) Laura R. Cleary and Teri McConville (London and New York: Routledge, 2006). pp. 5-6

or politics.⁸ A liberal democratic state requires civilian control or supremacy over the military. Simply put, it is the obedience which the military owes to the *civis*, the state.⁹ Civilian control or supremacy is achieved by appointing civilian politicians, instead of military officers, to positions of responsibility and by granting key decision-making powers to civil servants.¹⁰ It also involves the dynamic process of “negotiating and renegotiating the boundaries between military expertise and civilian oversight, within an overall framework of assured civilian supremacy.”¹¹ Accordingly, a democratic-liberal system with its absolute civil authority and civilian control over the military is the most appropriate political framework that developing countries should adopt. Any act in which the military breaches or challenges civilian authority or the civil society is seen as an impediment to a liberal democracy’s ability to govern. This military interference in civil affairs may lead to a garrison or a praetorian state. Hence, a militarized or garrison state is a political aberration that should be avoided.

World-wide, however, civil-military relations appear porous and anomalous as the military establishment and civilian regime have yet to determine the right balance within the existing political system. Many non-Western countries are haunted by the prospect of a coup d’état, military junta, praetorian regime, and antagonistic relationship between the military and civilian authorities. There is also much confusion about democratic governance, civil authorities, and civilian control over the military, and in the way these terms are applied in a given society. In most parts of the non-Western world, these highly nuanced political concepts and their application in governance may lead to unbalanced and strained civil-military relations.

In some states, a skilled and professional armed force is often managed by a weak state incapable of imposing civilian control. As a result, the military becomes highly politicized, and develops the ability to thwart a fledgling democracy and to effect the militarization of the civil society.¹² Moreover, force plays a crucial role in the efforts of many non-Western states’ to achieve internal consolidation. Thus, their militaries are deployed quite freely on a massive scale in support of nation-building—especially in relations to segments of minority communities that

⁸ Harvey M. Sapolsky, Eugene Gholz, and Caitlin Talmadge, “The Military and National Politics,” *U.S. Defense Politics: The Origin of Security Policy* (New York; Oxon; Routledge, 2009). p. 43.

⁹ Cleary and McConville, *op. cit.* p. 6.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 6

¹¹ Sapolsky, Gholz, and Talmadge, *op. cit.* p. 43.

¹² Cleary and McConville, *op. cit.* p. 6.

resist “national” integration.¹³ Because of coercion’s centrality in the process of political-domination and nation-building, these militaries in several non-Western countries are not necessarily subordinate to civilian authorities.

Observing different patterns of civil-military relations in several democratizing countries in Central and Eastern Europe, and Africa, Cleary and McConville noted these anomalies:¹⁴ (a) a form of civil-military relations which is confrontational rather than cooperative; (b) a legislature which has the power to check the executive (and the military) in theory, but not in practice; (c) the formulation of defense policies that are either inadequate or absent; (d) civil servants who are unable to provide objective direction to decision-makers because they politicized or militarized; and, (e) distrust among politicians, the military, civil servants, the media and civil society, itself.

Confirming these abnormal patterns, Harold Trinkunas and David Pion-Berlin argued that despite widespread democratization, politicians in Latin America pay little attention and give low priority to defense policy.¹⁵ While economic issues and public education generate public debates in the region, civil and political societies are relatively silent on and aloof from national defense issues. Trinkunas and Pion-Berlin attributed this behavior to: (a) the historically unique professionalism of Latin American militaries’ that has made them suspicious of civilian authority and has imbued them with protagonist sentiment vis-à-vis civilian politicians; and (b) the absence of security dilemmas, existential threats, and arms race enabling civilian authorities to ignore defense issues without incurring great risk to national security.

Aurel Croissant and David Kuehen also saw this atypical pattern of civil-military relations in East Asia’s new democracies.¹⁶ In an article, Croissant and Kuehen argued that many East Asian (specifically in Southeast Asia) democracies are still plagued by military officers who continue to intervene in and influence political affairs. They mentioned that although democracy in the Philippines has survived several coup attempts, the military’s institutional power has increased

¹³ Muthiah Alagappa, “Introduction,” *Coercion and Governance: the Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia* (Ed) Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001). pp. 10-11.

¹⁴ Cleary and McConville, *op. cit.* p. 8.

¹⁵ David Pion-Berlin and David Trinkunas, “Attention Deficits: Why Politicians Ignore Defense Policy in Latin America” *Latin America Research Review*, 42, 3 (2007). 1. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/218134746/1369080E0ED7BD...>

¹⁶ Aurel Croissant and David Kuehn, « Patterns of Civilian Control of the Military in East Asia’s New Democracies,” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 9 (2009). pp. 187-217.

in ways that weakened civilian authorities.¹⁷ Thus, the Philippine government (like the governments of Thailand and Indonesia) has neither the institutional and organizational resources nor political capital to control the military. Controlling the military will surely provoke a backlash from officers disgruntled at the “meddling” civilians.¹⁸

The notion of a civil-military partnership is an anomaly in the literature on civil-military relations (CMR). Mainstream CMR literature views the different patterns of civil-military interactions in a continuum of civilian control at the one end, and military rule or a garrison state at the other end.¹⁹ Accordingly, the continuum of civilian control is characterized by obedience rendered by the military to the civilian authority. Civilian control means the subordination of the armed forces to democratically elected political authorities who formulate the national security policy.²⁰ The military can be consulted or ordered to provide civilian policymakers with relevant military and technical information on national security matters. However, as a general rule, the involvement of armed services in the decision-making process should be minimized. At the other end of the continuum, military rule is marked by key members of the armed services formulating all political structures, processes, and policies, and depriving civilians the decision-making prerogative.

This civil-military partnership occupies the wide gray area between the continuum’s two extreme ends. Moving to the continuum’s opposite direction, the second form of partnership allows the military to participate in the vital decision-making process pertaining to national security affairs. In this case, the military becomes an interest group and even a political-broker that can convince key decision-makers to adopt its position on national security matters. In effect, the military goes beyond its instrumentalist role, and emerges as a political actor. In such a situation, the military becomes involved not only in the implementation but also in the formulation of the national security policy.

In the narrow sense, national security policy pertains to the total preparation for war as well as the conduct of it. It deals—through clearly defined and limited objectives— with the wide political, social, and economic dimensions of national security. The formulation of the national security policy is deemed beyond the

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 196.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 207.

¹⁹ Paul Chambers, “Understanding Civilian-Military Relations Today: The Case of Thailand: The Case of Thailand with Implications for Emerging Democracies in Asia,” *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review* 10, 20 (December 2010). pp. 2-2.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 6.

competence of the military institution, though it should offer pertinent advice concerning the strategic dimension of the problem. The question of offsetting cost, political and otherwise, and the consequent determination of political gains or liabilities of the national security policy are not only a question of civilian responsibility but also a realm where the military institution should never intrude into.²¹ In a relationship of partnership, however, the civilian authorities provide the military an opportunity to be involved in determining the priorities of the national security policy beyond its mandated function of pointing out the strategic advantage or disadvantage which might be expected to follow from a specific course of action. The military is involved in the determining how the defense budget should be spent, on conducting diplomatic relations with an ally country, and on how the military campaign should be waged. Consequently, the military limits the civilian authorities' freedom of maneuver in formulating and implementing the national security policy.

This phenomenon of civilian-military partnership is apparent in Latin American countries as Thomas Bruneau and Richard B Goetz observed that in Latin America, civilian authorities have little of limited knowledge of national security matters.²² Thus, in-depth knowledge and professional mastery of organized violence enables senior military officers to challenge civilian control of national security matters. This anomalous pattern of civil-military relations occurs because: (a) disinterested or uninformed (in national security matters) civilian authorities give the military a *carte blanche* to deal with any national security concern (insurgency, criminality, or even external defense); (b) the military builds its own political space within this policy-making area; and, (c) the military develops a sense of parity *vis-à-vis* the civilian authority regarding national security issues. This civil-military partnership, in the long-term, can open the floodgates of further military interventions in politics. As in Latin America, this type of civil-military relations has become apparent in 21st century Philippine politics.

The Context of the Partnership—Internal Conflicts

The military's pervasive role in 21st century Philippine politics can be traced to its primary and enduring mission—internal security. Since its independence in 1946, the Philippines has been plagued by various forms of insurgency. Thus,

²¹ Bernard Brodie, "Strategy as a Science," in *Strategic Studies: A Reader* (Ed) Thomas G. Mahnken and Joseph A. Maiolo, (Oxon, U.K.: New York, U.S.A.: Routledge, 2008). p. 13.

²² Thomas Bruneau and Richard B. Goetz, "Civilian-Military Relations in Latin America," *Military Review* 86, 5 (September/October 2006). p. 1. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/225315074/fulltext/1368A2994...>

for more than half a century, the AFP has concentrated its attention, efforts, and resources on containing domestic rebel movements. The first major challenge to the Philippine government and its military was the Hukbalahap (People's Army against the Japanese) or Huk rebellion from the mid-1940s to the 1950s. Immediately following the establishment of an independent Philippine state in 1946, the unified, armed, and widely dispersed Hukbalahap insurgents posed a direct and real challenge to the government. The movement was weakened with the capture of its leaders and the return of most of its members to the government fold in the mid-1950s. Then in the '70s, the country experienced two separate and persistent insurgencies that have cyclically flared up and abated, resulting in more than 50,000 deaths. On the mainland of Luzon and on several Visayan islands, the Communist Party of the Philippines---National Democratic Front (CPP--NDF) and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), mounted a major rebellion that involved hit-and-run tactics, bombings against the Philippine state, and assassinations of landowners and local government officials.²³

In Mindanao, meanwhile, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) waged an ethno/religious insurgency to gain autonomy or independence for the island. This resistance which began with sporadic clashes between Muslim rebels and government forces developed in the mid-1970s into full-blown battles involving nearly 15,000 to 30,000 MNLF fighters against the AFP. In the late 1980s, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), a more militant secessionist group, emerged and mobilized its forces for the creation of Muslim Mindanao, an entity separate from the predominantly Christian Philippine state.²⁴ A breakaway faction of the MNLF, the MILF had a more pronounced Islamic orientation. Then, in the 1990s, the fairly new and notorious insurgent group, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), staged several spectacular high-profile hostage seizures in Mindanao.²⁵

More than six decades of highlighted and myopic focus on internal security have taken their toll on the AFP's conventional capability. The military expended much resources on internal security operations to the detriment of its external defense capability.²⁶ Its capability has stagnated because its main materiel remains

²³ For an interesting history of the communist movement see Kathleen Weekly, The Communist Party of the Philippines 1968-1993 (Quezon City, University of the Philippines Press, 2001).

²⁴ See Nathan Gilbert Quimpo, "Back to War in Mindanao: The Weakness of a Power-based Approach in Conflict Resolution," in Philippine Political Science Journal Vol. 21, No. 44 (2000). pp. 99-126.

²⁵ Jeffrey M. Bale, "The Abu Sayyaf Group in its Philippine and International Contexts: A Profile and WMD Threat Assessment" Center for Nonproliferation Studies, (master thesis, Monterey Institute of International Studies Date unknown). pp. 41-42

²⁶ AFP Capability Board, The AFP Modernization Program: Annual Accomplishment Report (Quezon City: Camp Aguinaldo, 2006). p.1.

a light infantry-centered force structure geared for counter-insurgency. The AFP's long wars against diverse insurgent groups reflect the milieu of Philippine civil-military relations, which is characterized by a weak state trying to attain an effective monopoly of coercion within its territory while undergoing the arduous process of state-building.²⁷ Thus, force or coercion figures prominently in the state's effort to achieve internal consolidation with the military relegated to the role of maintaining a semblance of domestic/internal security.

Forging the Partnership

With the overthrow of President Ferdinand Marcos during a military-led popular uprising in February 1986, the authoritarian regime's power structure was dismantled. Policies which made the military subordinate to civilian authority were formulated. President Corazon C. Aquino demonstrated civilian supremacy over the military when she retired or transferred overstaying generals, and abolished the Presidential Security Command (PSC), and the National Intelligence Service Agency (NISA). More significantly, she re-established democratic institutions, like the Philippine Congress and an independent media, to restore basic human rights and civil governance.

The Aquino Administration also launched an intensive program of re-education and retraining to instill professional/democratic values at all levels of the Philippine military. Despite these demilitarization efforts, some AFP units repeatedly rebelled against the Aquino Administration. From July 1986 to December 1989, seven coups d'état were staged against the government. The most serious was the military putsch on 1 December 1989 when elite Marine and Army Scout Ranger units attacked the AFP Headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo, seized parts of the country's financial center, and even bombed the presidential palace. Fortunately, the majority of the AFP top brass remained loyal to the government and the embattled Aquino Administration survived all the coup attempts. Some of these rebellious military officers later succeeded in entering mainstream politics. Again as an institution, the Philippine military was subordinated to the national legislature and local politicians. It also shifted its focus from internal security to external security after the withdrawal of U.S. military facilities from the country in

²⁷ Noel M. Morada and Christopher Collier, "The Philippines: State versus Society," in *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences* (Ed) Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001). p. 550.

the early 1990s.²⁸

President Fidel Ramos continued his predecessor's efforts "to return the military to the barracks." He refused to extend the stint of senior military officers beyond their tour of duty. He also fostered an era of democracy and liberalism by strengthening civil society and other liberal and autonomous institutions such as the mass media, non-governmental organizations, religious groups, and political parties. These measures firmed up the social bases of democratic consolidation vis-à-vis any attempt at militarization and the return of authoritarian rule. More importantly, President Ramos took concrete steps to redirect the military from internal security to external defense when U.S. military assistance was ended in 1992 with the closure of American military facilities from the country.

To back up the country's maritime claim in the South China Sea, the Ramos Administration pushed for the modernization of the armed forces. The AFP Modernization Law was passed in early 1995 when China had finished building structures and a helicopter pad at Mischief Reef. Posthaste, the Philippine military began developing its external defense capabilities, and planned the acquisition of multi-role fighter planes, off-shore patrol vessels, long-range maritime patrol craft, naval multi-role helicopters, coastal patrol boats, and a naval missile system.²⁹ This shift to external defense forced the AFP to scale down its counter-insurgency campaign. Internal security operations (ISO) were transferred from the military to the newly-established and inexperienced Philippine National Police (PNP). To transform into a conventional armed forces, the AFP deactivated its village-based self-defense system, and suspended its military operations against the insurgents presuming (wrongly) that the insurgency problem would be reduced to a mere police or law-enforcement matter.³⁰

The Arroyo Administration, however, changed this thrust by co-opting the AFP. The partnership between the military and the civilian government started during the 2001 popular street protest that led to the ouster of incumbent President Joseph Estrada. After 11 senators voted against a motion to unseal an envelope containing incriminating pieces of evidence against President Estrada during his impeachment trial for bribery, graft, and corruption, the AFP's withdrew its support to its commander-in-chief. This action destroyed the delicate balance between

²⁸ Eva-Lotta E. Hedman, "The Philippines: Not so Military, Not so Civil," *Coercion and Governance: the Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia* (Ed) Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001). p. 181.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 6.

³⁰ See Department of National Defense, *Annual Report 1997* (Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City: Office for Public Affairs, 1997). pp. 10-20.

the civilian authorities and the military as it created the perception that any sitting/seated president could only stay in power if he or she has the AFP's support.

When Gloria Macapagal Arroyo assumed the presidency in January 2001, she unwittingly boosted this “unholy alliance” with the military. She visited military camps, increased the benefits for military personnel, and designated retiring AFP Chief of Staff General Angelo Reyes as Secretary of National Defense. She also appointed retired military officers who helped her during the February 2001 mutiny to important government positions. When former President Estrada's supporters laid siege to the presidential palace in May 2001, the military along with the police, suppressed the protesters. Eventually, former President Arroyo, as the head of the civilian government, became a compromised figure whose continuance in office became dependent on the support of “loyal” senior military officers in particular, and of the Philippine military in general.³¹ Finally, she ordered the AFP to formulate a roadmap for ending all domestic insurgency and to confront the three major armed threats to her fledgling administration—the communist movement, the MILF, and Abu Sayaff Group.³² To hold on to power, she found it expedient to link the counter-insurgency campaign with the country's development plans and policies. This move enabled the AFP to participate in the formulation of the national security policy, and to be a key player in 21st century Philippine politics.

Fostering the Partnership: The Focus on Internal Security

In the late 1990s, the CPP-NPA experienced a resurgence as its armed membership swelled from 4,541 in 1995 to a high 10,238 in 2001 with the number of rebel firearms increasing from 4,580 in 1995 to 6,409 in 2001.³³ At the start of the 21st century, party cadres and armed insurgents consolidated their existing 95 guerrilla fronts and intensified their recruitment and politico-military activities through the conduct of mass protest actions in the urban areas and armed struggle in the rural areas. Earlier in 1998, the Philippine Congress passed Republic Act 8551, which transferred the responsibility for counter-insurgency from the PNP back to the AFP. Then in 2000, the series of armed clashes with the secessionist MILF

³¹ Mark Besson, “Civil-Military Relations in Indonesia and the Philippines: Indonesia and the Philippines,” *Armed Forces and Society* (June 2007), p. 12. <http://afs.sagepub.com/content/early/2007/06/15/0095327X7303607> (accessed 8 September 2010), p. 12.

³² Raymond G. Quilop, Darwin Moya, and Czarina Ordinario-Ducusin, *Putting an End to Insurgency: An Assessment of the AFP's Internal Security Operations* (Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City: Office of Strategic and Special Studies, 2007), p.23.

³³ *Ibid.* pp. 9-10.

compelled the AFP to prioritize internal security over external defense.³⁴

With these renewed threats, the government channeled all its attention and resources to domestic security. In June 2001, President Arroyo issued Executive Order No. 21-S-2001 creating “A Coordinative and Integrative System for Internal Security.” This led to the formation of the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security which eventually drafted the National Internal Security Plan (NISP). The NISP prescribed the general political framework and policy guidelines for coordination, integration, and acceleration of all government actions on the insurgency problem. It committed the entire government machinery to eliminate the root causes of the insurgencies and neutralize the rebels by applying the “strategy of holistic approach.”³⁵ This strategy required the maximum use of grass-roots intelligence, intensive coordination of all policies and actions at all government levels, and active government-civil society partnership. More significantly, the AFP was tasked with spearheading the nation-wide counter-insurgency campaign.³⁶ In operational terms, the AFP formulated the plans for national security and briefed other government agencies on the security situation in insurgency-infested areas.

Accordingly, the AFP completed and released its *2001 National Military Strategy*.³⁷ The 36- page document detailed AFP’s priorities and plans for the early 21st century. It called for “a focus-and-contain” policy which meant defining defense objectives by identifying priority security threats while down-playing others. It also suggested that scarce government resources be concentrated in areas where they would have a greater impact rather than spreading them thinly in many places and rendering their effect negligible or inconsequential.³⁸ The document confirmed the fact that the communist rebels, the Muslim secessionists, and the ASG posed the greatest threat to public order and security.³⁹ Containing armed insurgencies with finality warranted a holistic approach.⁴⁰ Thus, the AFP utilized the comprehensive operational method of “Clear-Hold-Consolidate-Develop” which applied all its combat power and rehabilitation efforts on the enemy to achieve the maximum,

³⁴ Department of National Defense, Annual Accomplishment Report 2007 (Quezon City, Department of National Defense, 2008).p. 5.

³⁵ Romulo Yap, “A Review of the Government’s Counter-Insurgency Strategies,” National Security Review (August 2007). p. 36.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 37.

³⁷ General Headquarters Armed Forces of the Philippines, AFP National Military Strategy (Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City: General Headquarters, 2001).

³⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 20-21.

³⁹ *Ibid*. p. 16.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*. p. 16.

tangible, and decisive effect.⁴¹

In January 2002, the AFP released an Internal Security Operational-Plan (ISO) called “*Bantay Laya*” (Freedom Watch). Using the NISP framework, the ISO was devised to inflict the communist movement a strategic defeat within the next five years. However, this timetable was derailed by the AFP’s operations against the ASG. Thus, in 2006, the ISO was revised and it stated that after the eradication of the ASG, the AFP was to redeploy its resources to reduce the influence, membership, and number of the communist movement and to dismantle its politico-military structure.⁴² The 2006 ISO aimed to defeat the CPP/NPA/NDF by 2010.

The 2006 ISO prescribed the triad concept in which AFP units conducted simultaneous combat, intelligence, and civil-military operations in a communist-controlled or -influenced village or cluster of villages. This comprehensive strategy included legal offensive, information warfare, and developmental activities directed against the political, military, and territorial components of a communist guerrilla front. A triad operation is applied not only in the countryside but also “white areas” or urban places under communist influence. In these undertakings, the military became the microcosm of the government as it performed various civilian functions such as those of construction worker, teacher, health provider, and even a community activist. The inherent danger here was that the military might perceive the civilian government as weak, ignorant of the problem, and capable only of a supporting role in the counter-insurgency campaign. Likewise, this situation increased the military’s political and administrative power to constraint or to challenge other state institutions operating in the so-called rebel-infested territories.

The Arroyo Administration’s *Bantay Laya* (Freedom Watch) was patterned after the Aquino Administration’s and later, the Ramos Administration’s *Lambat Bitag* (Fishing Net) strategy. It deployed of Special Operation Teams (SOTs) in combination with civil-military operations. However, Freedom Watch differed in these respects: (a) Freedom Watch used the “Win-Hold-Win” tactic that involved a lengthy deployment of combat units in rebel-infested territories; (b) the AFP assumed full responsibility in the conduct of both combat operations and socio-civic/humanitarian missions; and, (c) the government concentrated most of the military’s assets and resources in the pursuit of a particular objective—the defeat of all the insurgent movements by 2010. In adopting the Freedom Watch Strategy, the Arroyo Administration bolstered the military’s role in domestic security planning and implementation, which, in effect, “makes the civilians dependent on the military’s coercive power and thus, inhibits the reduction of military prerogatives

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 26.

⁴² Yap, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

in internal security.”⁴³

Consolidating the Partnership: Revitalizing the R.P.-U.S. Alliance

Another aspect of the partnership between the Arroyo Administration and the Philippine military was the revitalized Philippine-U.S. security relations after 9/11. Until 1992, the U.S. provided substantial financial, equipment, and logistical support to the Philippine military as part of the U.S. bases’ compensation package. The importance of such aid especially in the AFP’s capital outlay and military supply was tough to ignore or understate then, and could not be overemphasized now. When U.S. military aid dried up after the 1992 withdrawal of American military forces from Clark Air Base and Subic Naval Base, the AFP was not prepared for the consequences. With nearly 80% of the defense budget allotted to personnel cost, the Philippine government could not source the US\$200 million that Washington gave annually. This amount covered about 67% of the AFP’s acquisition and maintenance cost. Moreover, the Philippine Congress, in preparing the national budget, did not provide for the AFP for losses when the Military Assistance Program (MAP) and the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program ended. In the meantime, the AFP’s combat capability declined in the late 1990s as its aging and near obsolete military equipment, dependent on U.S. security assistance for maintenance and repairs, became unserviceable or were cannibalized for still usable parts and to reduce maintenance cost.

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the U.S. and the subsequent formation of a U.S.-led coalition on the war on terror, Philippine-U.S. security relations improved dramatically. President Arroyo readily supported the Bush Administration’s anti-terrorism campaign, and facilitated American temporary troop deployment in Mindanao as the second front on the war on terror. Shortly, the AFP was granted access to the U.S. military’s excess defense articles. From 2002 to 2004, Washington provided the AFP a C-130 transport aircraft, two Point-class cutters, a Cyclone-class special-forces landing craft, 28 UH-1H Huey helicopters, and 30,000 M-16 assault rifles.⁴⁴ More importantly, it participated in several large-scale training exercises with American forces. Training exercises between the AFP and U.S. Armed Forces were focused on counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism warfare, logistics and equipment maintenance, intelligence training, and civic-military operations. The Philippine government viewed U.S. security assistance as a transitory, but

⁴³ Croissant and Kuehn, *op. cit.* p. 187.

⁴⁴ Business Monitor International, *The Philippine Defense and Security Report Q2 2006* (London: Mermaid House, 2006).p. 25.

nevertheless, an important part in sustaining the AFP's overall combat capabilities while it waited for substantive modernization.⁴⁵

The improved Philippine-U.S. security relations could be attributed to the partnership between the Arroyo Administration and the Philippine military. After 9/11, the Arroyo Administration was hard-pressed to revive Manila's alliance with Washington. The overriding goal was to secure American support to shore up the AFP's counter-insurgency/counter-terrorism capabilities, and to foster the military support for the Arroyo Administration. Manila's warming up with Washington could lead to increased U.S. military assistance until the Philippine government could finance the AFP modernization program. Thus, despite opposition from left-wing and nationalist groups, the Arroyo Administration took the calculated risk of facilitating American involvement in the AFP's military campaign against radical Islamist groups. Observing the impact of post-9/11 U.S. military assistance on civil-military partnership in the Philippines, a Filipino academic warily noted:

Renewed U.S. military assistance has not only improved the Philippine armed forces' ability to mount an armed campaign against the Abu Sayaff... It has also exponentially boosted their capacity for civil-military operations in Mindanao with U.S. funding for humanitarian and reconstruction activities... Inadvertently, the U.S. push for broader defense reforms in the Philippines has produced a military exhibiting greater visibility in matters outside of combat (delivery of social services and infrastructure support), greater military involvement in development tasks where previously it has neither a mandate nor budget, and a more substantive military push for integration of civilian efforts with their own.⁴⁶

Consequences of the Partnership

The Arroyo Administration's 2001 directive of a holistic approach to the counter-insurgency campaign gave the AFP a blanket authority to implement a strategy of "rapid conclusion" of the communist movement by 2010. The AFP increased its operational tempo to meet the deadline by redeploying several army battalions from Mindanao to dismantle the CPP-NPA guerrilla fronts in Luzon

⁴⁵ Joseph Raymond S. Franco, "Military Assistance: Bane or Boon," *Digest* "A Forum for Security and Defense Issues" (2nd and 3rd Quarter 2007). p. 12.

⁴⁶ Rosalie Arcala Hall, "Boots on Unstable Ground: Democratic Governance of the Armed Forces under post 9/11 U.S.-Philippine Military Relations," *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review* 10, 2 (December 2010). p. 26.

and in the Visayas. The 2001 directive also reflected a “pronounced military option” approach to the insurgency problem, which in turn, enhanced the military’s influence in Philippine society.⁴⁷ Indeed, the AFP’s involvement in internal security operations muddled the concept of civilian supremacy in Philippine politics. It allowed the military to perform roles and functions supposedly reserved for civilian administrations. It also developed in the military establishment a critical if not a cynical view of the civilian government.⁴⁸

The counter-insurgency operations, especially in conflict-ridden areas, exposed military personnel to the general incompetence and corruption in local governance. This experience frustrated and disillusioned the rank-and-file and politicized the officers. As the spearhead of the government’s anti-insurgency campaign, the AFP restrained and modified the civilian authorities’ exercise of their unconditional supremacy over the military. Performing tasks traditionally assigned to civilian agencies, some AFP officers questioned the role of the military. They began entertaining the idea that the military might be more capable than the civilian administration in carrying out both the tasks of governance and development.⁴⁹

In hindsight, the AFP sees itself as a deserving, competent, and equal partner of the civilian authority in managing a fractious society like the Philippines. In this partnership, government officials defer to the military in defense and military matters. The AFP hopes that local government units recognize the gravity of the insurgency and the importance of national security.⁵⁰

With government agencies, the AFP identifies, implements, and monitors development projects in insurgency-infested areas. In many instances, it determines the type of civic action programs to be undertaken. The military organization participates in Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation Operations (DRRO), environmental protection and preservation, and civil works particularly through its Engineering Civic Action Program (ENCAP), and community relations program.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Herrboy C. Aquino, “An Analysis of Two Key Security Challenges Facing the Philippine Republic over the Next Ten Years,” *Digest: A Forum for Security and Defense Issues* (3rd Quarter 2010). p. 51.

⁴⁸ See Raymond Jose G. Quilop, “Military Influence in a Democratizing Philippines: Challenges and Prospects,” *Digest: A Forum for Security and Defense Issues* 2nd Quarter (2005). p. 20.

⁴⁹ Office of Strategic and Special Studies, “In Defense of Democracy: Countering Military Adventurism,” p. 17.

⁵⁰ See Kathleen Anne S. Tolosa, “Towards a Shared Security: Fostering a Partnership between the AFP and the Local Government,” in *Peace and Development: Towards Ending Insurgency* (Ed) Raymond Quilop (Quezon City: Office of Strategic and Special Studies, 2007). pp. 43-55.

⁵¹ General Hermogenes C. Esperon, Jr., “Perspective from the Military: Untamed Conflict: Arrested Development,” *Digest: A Forum for Security and Defense Issues* (Fourth Quarter 2006). p. 9.

Its engineering units build school buildings, farm-to-market roads, water and electrification systems, health centers, and Department of Social Welfare and Development (DWSD) shelters or centers for refugees. Its field units are involved in community development such as in forming cooperatives for ex-rebels with the assistance of the Cooperative Development Authority. Furthermore, regarding security or defense-related matters and foreign policy issues that infringe on Philippine-U.S. security relations, civilian authorities consult military officers who occupy key government post, and influencing government policy.⁵² Thereupon, arises the criticism that Philippine politics is rife with “military-friendly regimes” that even “encourage the influence and participation of the military in running state affairs.”⁵³

During the latter part of the Arroyo Administration, the AFP’s socio-civic activities expanded from the typical infrastructure projects and basic services delivery, to community organizing, and to the creation of a parallel development planning agency—the National Development Support Command (NDSC). Organized in September 2007, the NDSC assisted national development programs by establishing a physically and psychologically secure environment conducive to socio-economic growth. It undertook basic infrastructure, livelihood, and other development projects in conflict (*sic-prone*), underdeveloped and depressed areas of the country.⁵⁴ Even school buildings, and road construction, rural electrification, and educational management were undertaken by the military without the assistance or knowledge of national government agencies.⁵⁵ In essence, projects aligned with national security were given precedence over development programs of the national and local governments.⁵⁶ Finally, the military wanted civilian agencies to assume specific responsibilities in counter-insurgency which is a multi-faceted security challenge that requires solutions beyond what the military can provide.⁵⁷ For the military, the sustained counter-insurgency campaign was the base policy on which the national government’s peace and development agenda could be pursued.⁵⁸

⁵² Quilop, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

⁵³ Office of Strategic and Special Studies, “In Defense of Democracy: Countering Military Adventurism” p. 18.

⁵⁴ Joseph Raymond S. Franco, “Enhancing Synergy within the Defense Establishment,” Peace and Development: Towards Ending Insurgency (ed) Jose G. Quilop (Quezon City: Office of Strategic and Special Studies, 2007)

⁵⁵ Katherine Anne Sigua Tolosa, “The Rhetoric and Practice of Security-Development Nexus,” Digest: A Forum for Security and Defense Issues (1st Quarter 2010). p. 37.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p. 37.

⁵⁷ Raymond Jose G. Quilop, Darwin Moya, and Czarina Ordinario-Ducusin, Putting an End to Insurgency: an Assessment of the AFP’s Internal Security Operations (Quezon City: Office of Strategic Studies, 2007). p. 45.

⁵⁸ Tolosa, *op. cit.* p. 37.

A prolonged counter-insurgency operation, however, forced the AFP to perform non-military functions that otherwise could have been accomplished by civilian government agencies and even by non-governmental organizations. In insurgent controlled-territories, AFP units took on the functions of civilian and government functionaries. For example, a Philippine Army unit in collaboration with the Department of Education's Technical Education Skills and Development Authority (TESDA) held a five-day food processing seminar for 356 households in a suburban area.⁵⁹ An army battalion also conducted dialogues with high school and college students to prevent them from being recruited by local communist cadres. Army units also extended medical services, livelihood training, and information drives on drug abuse and communist infiltration to many informal settlers in the depressed areas of Metro Manila.⁶⁰ The military also headed the Kalayaan Barangay (Freedom Village) Program, a multi-agency enterprise aimed to transform communist-influenced villages into development areas through "high-impact, short-gestation" public work projects like the construction of school buildings, medical centers, and access roads.⁶¹ In this program, the Department of Education and the Department of Public Works and Highway pooled their resources and empowered the Philippine military, through its engineering units, being in-charge to implement various development projects. Doing these mundane civilian tasks, according to an AFP policy paper "caused a number of AFP personnel and officers to lose sight of their traditional role of external defense, thus making them feel that the military can be a viable replacement for the civilian authorities and encourage them to intervene in politics."⁶² Affirming this view, a senior AFP officer wrote:

... the involvement of the military in internal security and socio-economic roles...reveals the weakness of civilian leaders and institutions and enhances the military's belief that it should govern society itself...the deployment and continued involvement of the AFP in (counter) insurgency particularly in taking non-traditional roles where other civilian institutions should take the lead role encourages a politicized military.⁶³

⁵⁹ Delilah Ruth Russell, "The Armed Forces of the Philippines and its Civil-Military Operations: Examining the History and its Renewed Emphasis under President Arroyo," Journal of the Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies 18 (2009).11) p. 128.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p. 129.

⁶¹ Raymond Jose G. Quilop, "Human Security and the Philippine Military: Issues and Thoughts," Digest: A Forum for Security and Defense Issues (1st and 2nd Quarter 2009). pp. 14.

⁶² Office of Strategic and Special Studies, *In Defense of Democracy*... p. ix.

⁶³ Colonel Benito T. De Leon, "Civil-Military Relations in Post-Martial Law Philippines," Digest: a Forum for Security and Defense Issues (Second Quarter, 2005).p. 10.

From Partnership to Domination?

Indeed, the AFP's assumption of a leadership role in the government's counter-insurgency/terrorism campaign, and its conduct of civic-military operations have made it a viable partner of the civilian government in 21st century Philippine politics. Former AFP spokesperson Colonel Tristan Kison succinctly articulated this relationship in the aftermath of the aborted 2006 military mutiny: "We [the military] are one of the strong pillars holding the nation. If we break, the nation will collapse."⁶⁴ A ranking AFP officer similarly observed: "...the Philippine military has evolved into an institution which no longer subordinates itself unconditionally to its commander-in-chief..."⁶⁵ Unfortunately, the AFP's partnership role, as well as the mutinies staged by junior officers in July 2003 and January 2006, has made the Philippine democracy fragile and uncertain. These developments have generated the widespread impression that the Philippine military deems it rightful to intervene in politics and that the civilian government has limited capacity to constrain it from doing so. Another ranking AFP officer cautioned in 2005: "Without any correction measure...and respect to the concept of civilian control, [civilian] administrations will then continue to face serious challenges posed by or from its own military."⁶⁶

Undoubtedly, the AFP has evolved into an influential actor in the Philippine government. Whether this has fostered a popular belief that the military is capable of governing in the strife-ridden Philippine society is another matter. Although exerting a powerful influence vis-à-vis the civilian authorities, the AFP has been restrained by three factors from wresting the reins of governance from civilian leaders. These inhibiting factors are the following:

a) Recognition that in taking over the government, it will be incapable of constructing an acceptable and viable political framework for governance and national development. Exposure to the society because of its counter-insurgency and civil-military functions has indeed led to the politicization of the AFP. However, it has also familiarized the military to the country's socio-economic problems that it knows it cannot solve alone. Further military involvement in other functions beyond its core competence in the use of organized coercion against internal armed threats will strain its limited resources, thereby making it less efficient and effective in its vital function (counter-insurgency). This situation could also lead to a division among its officers and demoralization within its ranks;

⁶⁴ Besson, *op. cit.* p. 12.

⁶⁵ De Leon, *op. cit.* p. 10.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p. 10.

b) Awareness of the civil society's countervailing power. The Philippines has a long tradition of democratic representation with a very active and robust civil society. Although the civilian government seems fragile and susceptible to military influence, it has not yet experienced a major political crisis. The military takes into account that there is still a strong opposition, both in the civilian government and civil society, against any authoritarian rule in which the military will play a central role. Moreover, the Philippine military is very much aware that its clout and involvement in the national economy is more opportunistic and less regularized, making it extremely dependent on the civilian government for resources through the annual defense appropriation;⁶⁷ and,

c) Any attempt of the military to overthrow and replace the civilian government will adversely affect the country's relations with its only strategic ally—the U.S. This will lead to the automatic termination of the much needed American military assistance to the AFP that will worsen its current logistic woes.

Thus, for the meantime, the AFP is content with its partnership with the civilian government. Clearly, it could not simply supplant the civilian government and it is best for it to be concerned with the coercive aspect of 21st century Philippine politics. A defense analyst quipped: “Ideally the AFP’s involvement in governance encompasses both the national and local levels. This could be construed as the AFP taking over the government. Let it be clear that the AFP has no intention of running the government.”⁶⁸

Changing the Context of the Partnership

Currently, the insurgent movements engross the AFP. In the immediate future, however, it will face the ubiquitous Chinese naval presence in Philippine territorial waters and greater assertiveness in the Spratlys.⁶⁹ China's heavy-handed approach to the South China Sea controversy started when the Philippine government passed Republic Act No. 9522 or the Philippine Baseline Act. Shortly after President Arroyo signed the bill into a law in March 2008, China deployed a fishery patrol vessel, and in the following month, sent six more patrol vessels

⁶⁷ See AFP Capability Development Board, *Annual Accomplishment Report 2006* (Quezon City: AFP Capability Development Board, 2007). pp. 28-31.

⁶⁸ Rey Ardo, “Military Dimension of National Security,” *Peace and Developments towards Ending Insurgency*, p. 15.

⁶⁹ For a detailed study of China's growing assertiveness with regards to its territorial claim over the South China Sea see Clive Schofield and Ian Storey, *The South China Sea Dispute: Increasing Stakes and Rising Tension* (Washington D.C.: The Jamestown Foundation, November 2009).

allegedly to curb illegal fishing in the disputed area. These moves manifest China's belligerent efforts to consolidate its jurisdictional claims, expand its naval reach, and undermine the positions of other claimant states through coercive diplomacy.⁷⁰ Hence, with China's assertiveness in the South China Sea, the Philippines urgently needs to develop the capability to protect its vast maritime borders and its territorial claim over some islands in the Spratlys.

The AFP's shift from internal security to territorial defense has gained momentum with the ascendancy of Benigno Aquino III to the Philippine presidency. On several occasions, President Aquino has vowed to pursue the modernization of the AFP. Taking the cue from the president, a joint DND-AFP task force formulated the AFP "Long-Term Capability Development Plan."⁷¹ The plan requires the appropriation of Php421 billion (an estimated US\$8.5 billion) with the lion's share going to the Philippine Air Force (PAF) and the Philippine Navy (PN) instead of the Philippine Army. Of this budget, Php200 billion (an estimated US\$4 billion) is earmarked for the PAF's acquisition of multi-role and lead-in fighter planes, surface attack aircraft, and long-range reconnaissance planes. It also envisions the PN obtaining multi-role attack vessels, off-shore patrol craft, and even surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missiles. Specifically, it rationalizes the upgrade of the PN's materiel for "joint maritime surveillance, defense, and interdiction operations in the South China Sea."⁷²

This thrust of the AFP is highlighted as well in the new AFP Internal Peace and Security Plan (ISP)—Oplan *Bayanihan* (Operational Plan Community Spirit). The plan acknowledges the AFP's lack of capabilities to perform its mandated task of guarding the Philippines' extensive maritime borders and ensuring its security from even the remotest possibility of external aggression.⁷³ It provides a three-year transition period within which the Philippine military will develop the capabilities necessary to undertake unilateral defensive operations against external armed aggression.⁷⁴ The government's long-term goal is to establish a modest but "comprehensive border protection program." This program is anchored on the

⁷⁰ Chin-Hao Huang and Robert Sutter, "China-Southeast Asia Relation: ASEAN and Asian Regional Diplomacy," *Comparative Connection: A Quarterly E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations* (October 2009). p. 5. At http://csis.org/files/publication/0904china_seasia.pdf (Searched date: 28 March 2010)

⁷¹ Office of the Deputy-Chief-of-Staff for Plans (J-5), *DND-AFP Thrust for Capability Upgrade: The AFP Long-Term Capability Development Plan* (Quezon City: Camp Aguinaldo, 2010).

⁷² *Ibid.* p. 8

⁷³ AFP General Headquarters, Armed Forces of the Philippines, *Armed Forces of the Philippines Internal Peace and Security Plan* (Quezon City: Camp General Aguinaldo, 2010). p. 8.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p. 13.

surveillance, deterrence, and border patrol capabilities of the PAF, the PN, and the Philippine Coast Guard that will extend from Philippine territorial waters to its contiguous and exclusive economic zone (EEZ).⁷⁵

In October 2011, the Secretary of National Defense released a Defense Planning Guidance (2013-2018) for restructuring the AFP to a “lean but fully capable” armed forces essential in the maintenance of Philippine territorial integrity and maritime security. It envisages the development of an effective force projection capability to monitor the country’s territorial waters and EZZ. It provides the following measures:⁷⁶

a) Reduction of infantry and marine battalions and the redirection of limited financial resources to key priorities such as theater mobility, close air-support, air-surveillance, and air-defense.

b) Acquisition of naval assets for off-shore patrol, strategic sea-lift, and accompanying base support system and platform to sustained the deployed maritime assets;

c) Development of the AFP’s long-range maritime air patrol and surveillance through the acquisition of assets for long-range maritime air patrol, and accompanying base support system; and,

d) Reactivation of the Philippine Air Defense System (PADS) through the acquisition of air surveillance radar and a squadron of air defense/surface attack aircraft to provide air defense coverage over areas of high concern.

In its first 17 months in office, the Aquino Administration spent Php33.596 billion (US\$387 million) to boost the AFP’s internal security and territorial defense capability.⁷⁷ According to Secretary Gazmin, the DND-AFP signed a 138 defense contracts that will be implemented in the next five-years to improve the AFP’s force protection, maritime surveillance, transportation, and combat support system.⁷⁸ Former AFP Chief-of-Staff Lieutenant General Jessie Dellosa (of the

⁷⁵ National Security Council, National Security Policy 2011-2016 (Quezon City: National Security Council, April 2011). p. 39.

⁷⁶ Secretary of National Defense Voltaire T. Gazmin, Defense Planning Guidance, 2013-2018 (Quezon City: Department of National Defense, 11 October 2011). pp. 11-16.

⁷⁷ BBC Monitoring Asia-Pacific, “Philippines Spends US\$387 million on Armed Forces Upgrade” BBC Monitoring Asia-Pacific (16 January 2012). p. 1. <http://search.proquest.com/news/docview/916135970/fulltext/1348...>

⁷⁸ Anonymous, “AFP Modernization Program in Full Swing-Gazmin,” The Philippines News Agency (18 March 2012). p.1. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/928841133/1367BFEC0AA BC...>

Philippine Army), promised to support the AFP's shift to territorial defense. His major areas of concern include: the full implementation of the Internal Peace and Security Plan; organizational reforms to ensure fiscal transparency within the military establishment; strengthening the AFP's territorial defense capabilities; and modernizing the PN to enhance maritime security in the West Philippine Sea.⁷⁹ Then in January 2012, the DND revealed the reduction in the number of army and marine battalions to channel resources as well as personnel to current priorities such as maritime security and territorial defense.⁸⁰

The Aquino Administration's pronouncements and efforts to modernize the AFP are perceived not only to appease the military but also to transform the context of 21st century Philippine civil-military relations. Giving the AFP the necessary equipment, technical expertise training, and role for external defense will arrest its involvement in domestic politics. In such a situation, military officers and soldiers need to train and upgrade their skills, expertise, and capability in territorial defense instead of discharging constabulary functions, and undertaking socio-economic activities.⁸¹ Although contribution to national development, implementing socio-economic projects to support counter-insurgency operations prevents the Philippine military from pursuing its primary task of confronting external threats. To ensure the return of what Samuel Huntington called "objective civilian control over the military" in 21st century Philippine politics, the Aquino government has acknowledged that:

...The infusion of new combat equipment would pave the way for better appreciation of service members of their role in society. Operating advanced military equipment requires specialized knowledge and training. A military preoccupied with the technical aspects of soldiery would be less inclined and interested to dip its hands in political issues...⁸²

⁷⁹ The Philippine News Agency, "New AFP Chief Vows to Focus on Territorial Defense, MILF Peace Talks," Philippine News Agency (13 December 2011). P. 1 <http://search.proquest.com/news/docview/910568320/fulltext/1348...>

⁸⁰ BBC, "Philippines Mulls Reorganization of Military to Boost Territorial Defense," BBC Monitoring Asia-Pacific (02 January 2012). p. 1. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/913215230/fulltext/1348735E9...>

⁸¹ See Raymond Jose Quilop, "East Meets West: The Concept of Liberal Democracy and the Role of the Military," in *Globalization, Democracy and the Philippine Military*. p. 29.

⁸² Office of Strategic and Special Studies, *op. cit.* . . 33-34.

Conclusion

A political legacy of the Arroyo Administration is a military that regards itself a partner, rather than a subordinate of the civilian government. The previous administration, threatened by urban unrest, courted the military for political support, and assigned it to formulate a national strategy to address internal security concerns. In the process, the military was tasked with spearheading the campaign against domestic armed threats, and revitalizing the country's alliance with the U.S.

The crucial challenge to the Aquino Administration is to restore civilian control over the military that has become politicized and too confident of its role as an equal partner in Philippine politics. This goal can be achieved by changing the context of 21st century Philippine civil-military relations. It involves diverting the focus of the military from leading the counter-insurgency campaign onto developing a credible territorial defense capability. These are clearly Herculean tasks for any government considering the insurgents' resilience in the past, and the enormous resources involved in modernizing the ill-equipped AFP. Nonetheless, relegating the Philippine military to playing a subordinate role will make it more responsive to the duly elected leaders' political direction and control. This, definitely, will ensure that stability and dynamism of Philippine democracy for the next generation of Filipinos.

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