"Rethinking Philippine National Interests: Towards Calibrating National Policies"
This volume of the National Security Review is published by the Research and Special Studies Division (RSSD) of the National Defense College of the Philippines. The papers compiled herein are solely of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views and policies of their affiliated governments and institutions. Comments and suggestions are welcome and may be sent to RSSD, NDCP Camp Gen Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City, 1110 Philippines with telephone number +632 9129125 and email address ndcp.rssd@gmail.com.
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EDITORIAL NOTE

As a nation-state strategically situated in the heart of the Asia Pacific, the Philippines is at the cross-roads of regional security developments. Amidst the dynamic interplay of traditional and non-traditional security threats in the region, the Philippines faces challenges from within and beyond its borders. Against this backdrop, the astute and pragmatic management of the country’s resources becomes imperative. Hence, in addressing the motley security concerns of which it is confronted, the Philippine Government is led to answer the inevitable question of what constitute its national interests.

As it aspires for sustained growth and development within a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous regional security environment, the Philippines must therefore identify and define its national interests. Indubitably, the specific policies and strategies undertaken by the Philippine Government should normatively be hinged upon its national interests. Under the new administration of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, the Philippine Government has identified the country’s national security interests through the National Security Policy (NSP) 2017-2022. The NSP, which underscored the inextricable link between security and development, identified Public Safety, Law and Order, and Justice; Socio-Political Stability; Economic Solidarity and Sustainable Development; Territorial Integrity; Ecological Balance; Cultural Cohesiveness; Moral and Spiritual Consensus; and International Peace and Cooperation as the national security interests of the Philippines.

As a guiding framework for the Philippine Government and defense establishment, the NSP securitizes comprehensive interests as it mirrors the current political leadership’s vision for the country. In charting the ends towards which all government efforts must be directed as well as the ways and means by which these objectives can be realized, President Duterte has provided a preview of how the Government intends to promote Philippine national interests in a dynamic security environment. After more than a year under the President Duterte Administration, it is essential to revisit the discourse on Philippine national interests. As significant political developments redraw the boundaries of security realities for the
Philippines, it is indeed crucial to re-examine not only the specific thrusts of the Philippine Government but likewise the higher values it seeks to preserve and promote. In in its attempt to address national and regional security threats, the Philippines must therefore remain conscious of the way it regards certain acquired values as national interests. After all, as David Baldwin has succinctly defined in his seminal work entitled Concept of Security, security is “the low probability of damage to acquired values.”

In contributing to the national policy discourse on defense and security, the National Defense College of the Philippines (NDCP) presents the National Security Review (NSR) October 2017: “Rethinking Philippine National Interests: Towards Calibrating National Policies.” Divided into three chapters, the NSR 2017 explores into the following questions: 1) What are the national interests of the Philippines and how are they framed?; 2) What are some of the key national and regional issues influencing Philippine national interests?; and 3) How can Philippine national interests be secured?

The first chapter entitled Framing the Philippine National Interests provides unique discussions on the concepts of nationality and nationalism as well as an analytical explanation of how Philippine national interests may be framed.

Using the concept of re-frame as an analytical tool, Dr Segundo Joaquin E Romero, Jr shares his views on the changing nature of Philippine national interests in his article How Duterte Is Re-Framing the Philippine National Interest. Based on a survey of the country’s historical and constitutional development since 1946, Dr Romero summarizes the country’s essential national interests into inclusive security, inclusive development, and inclusive governance. In providing evidence for the re-frame of Philippine national interests under the Duterte Administration, Dr Romero’s article also offers the following analyses: 1) policy comparison of the Aquino and Duterte administration; 2) examination of the internal and external dimensions of prevailing national interests under the Duterte Administration; and 3) identification of shifts in the policy making process in the Duterte

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In his article Discovering the Concept of Nationalism of Today’s New AFP Officer Recruits, Captain Gerralline Pasia PN, MNSA examines the concept and basis of Philippine nationalism as construed by new entrants in the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Officer Candidate Schools. Sharing the findings of his study, Captain Pasia notes that the common theme in the conception of nationalism among the AFP officer recruits is one’s love of country. On the other hand, Captain Pasia explains that exposure in the military is the main influencer of nationalism among the AFP recruits. Based on the findings of his study, Captain Pasia underscores that while military training within the AFP largely contributes to the cultivation of nationalism, the sense of nationalism of the AFP recruits is likewise dependent upon society in general.

In her article The Impact on Human Security of Birth Registration among Families of Irregular Filipino Migrants in Sabah, Attorney Charmaine Serna-Chua, MNSA analyzes the interconnected concepts of nationality and human security in explaining that the right to nationality entails ancillary rights and affords an individual access to social services and state protection. In using the experiences of the undocumented children of irregular Filipino immigrants in Sabah as a case study, Attorney Chua explains that the absence of a nationality is synonymous to the absence of a legal identity. Sharing the findings of her study, Attorney Chua notes from a human security perspective that the absence of a nationality prevents the undocumented Filipino children in Sabah from gaining access to social services in the form of education and medical care as well as state protection from underage employment.

The second chapter entitled Current National and Regional Issues Influencing Philippine National Interests provides in-depth analyses of the most pressing internal and external security issues influencing Philippine national interests.

In her article 30 Years in Search for Peace: The Philippine Peace Process Experience, Dr Jennifer Santiago Oreta examines the peace efforts of the Philippine Government with the CPLA,
RPM-P/RPA-ABB, CPP-NPA-NDF, MNLF, and MILF, highlighting gains and pitfalls of past efforts. In discussing the relationship between the peace process and democratic consolidation, Dr Oreta likewise underscores the importance of ending the use of armed violence for the pursuit of political agendas as well as the right balance between strong institutions and improved avenues for participation in governance. Against the backdrop of the 30-year peace process, Dr Oreta notes the urgency of concluding the peace process in view of two important reasons: 1) armed group leaders, who hold moral suasion and institutional memory are already ageing; and 2) prolonging the peace processes raises the risk of emergent splinter groups.

In her article *Debating the National Interest in Philippine Relations with China: Economic, Security, and Socio-cultural Dimensions*, Dr Aileen San Pablo-Baviera underscores the importance of developing a strategic mindset in managing Philippines-China relations. Through a comparison of the development of both countries, Dr Baviera highlights the stark difference between Philippines and China while unraveling significant economic relations. On the other hand, in examining Philippines-China security relations against the geopolitical rivalry between China and US, Dr Baviera explains why the Philippines must pursue a combination of hedging and accommodation approaches. In discussing the cultural and ideational differences between the Philippines and China, Dr Baviera explains that the “othering” of the latter constrains prospects for bilateral cooperation and should thus be avoided.

The third chapter entitled *Securing Philippine National Interests* identifies national and international considerations in promoting Philippine national interests and provides comprehensive recommendations on how such interests can be promoted.

In her article entitled *Securing Philippine National Interests*, Dr Charmaine Misalucha-Willoughby highlights the inextricable link between domestic and international politics and policies. Dr Willoughby underscores that Philippine national interests may be secured domestically and internationally by focusing on three broad domestic areas—politics, economics, and socio-cultural—aligned with the three pillars of Philippine foreign policy. In this
light, Dr Willoughby explains that the Philippine Government should focus on preserving and enhancing national security; promoting and attaining economic security; and protecting the rights and promoting the welfare and interest of Filipinos on both the domestic and international levels. Expounding on these national interests, Dr Willoughby further identifies certain requisites in the harmonized promotion of these interests, internally and externally.

In his article entitled **Rising Sea Level: A National Security Concern**, Commander Carter Luma-ang reflects on how the global sea level rise brought by climate change presents security implications for the Philippines in terms of significantly diminished land territory and submerged archipelagic basepoints by 2048. Underscoring the 1987 UNCLOS principle of land dominates the sea, Commander Luma-ang explains that the debate on whether the baselines of an archipelagic nation-state should be fixed or relative vis-à-vis changes brought by sea level rise becomes a significant issue. Commander Luma-ang further notes that the use ambulatory archipelagic baselines shall have the implications for the Philippines: 1) Diminished territorial sea and maritime zones; 2) Decreased sovereign rights as a coastal state vis-à-vis increased rights of foreign vessels; 3) Diminished land areas of some local government units and consequently reduction in their internal revenue allotment; 4) The need to review Philippine fisheries code and other agricultural and environmental laws; and 5) The need for a Maritime Zones Law specifying the coordinates of Philippine archipelagic basepoints.

Through the NSR October 2017, the NDCP seeks to contribute to the scant scholarly literature on the theory and practice of national security in the Philippines. More importantly, in support of the Philippine Government and in service of the Filipino people, the College aspires to encourage an intellectual convergence among academics, policy makers, and policy implementers towards the enhancement of Philippine national security.

The NDCP Editorial Board
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### CHAPTER I

FRAMING THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL INTERESTS

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### CHAPTER II

CURRENT NATIONAL AND REGIONAL ISSUES INFLUENCING PHILIPPINE NATIONAL INTERESTS

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CHAPTER I

Framing the Philippine National Interests
The Philippines has dramatically changed since Rodrigo Duterte was elected President in May 2016. One year after taking office, Duterte has, as he promised, made a highly personal, disruptive mark on government policy, programs, projects, and activities. Duterte was elected on his promise of dramatic, immediate, and wide-ranging reforms. His performance in office has clearly brought dramatic change in the Philippine political and governance landscapes, but Philippine society remains divided on the significance, direction, and consequences of Duterte’s leadership and style. One way of taking stock of what has happened is to look at the concept of Philippine national interest and explore whether it has become understood to have the same or different content and meaning. In what ways, if any, has national interest been re-framed? Specifically, this article addresses the following questions: What is a re-frame?; What is the Philippine national interest?; What is the evidence of the re-frame?; And how has Philippine National Interest Been Re-framed Under the Duterte Administration?

Introduction

Overview

The Philippines has dramatically changed since Rodrigo Duterte was elected President in May 2016. One year after taking office, Duterte has, as he promised, made a highly personal, disruptive mark on government policy, programs, projects, and activities. Duterte was elected on his promise of dramatic, immediate, and wide-ranging reforms. His performance in office has clearly brought dramatic change in the Philippine political and governance landscapes. 

*Dr Segundo Joaquin E Romero Jr is presently President of the Universities and Research Councils Network in Innovation for Inclusive Development in Southeast Asia (UNIID-SEA). His areas of specialization include Public development and management, Performance and Project Management, Local governance, Civil Society Organizations, and Productivity Education and Training. He has delivered lectures on these issues at the NDCP.
change in the Philippine political and governance landscapes, but Philippine society remains divided on the significance, direction, and consequences of Duterte’s leadership and style.

One way of taking stock of what has happened is to look at the concept of Philippine national interest and explore whether it has become understood to have the same or different content and meaning. In what ways, if any, has national interest been re-framed?

*What is a re-frame?*

A re-frame is a new meaning or interpretation given to a concept as it moves through time and context. It is the same concept, but the perception of what it consists of, what it contains, what it means, and what it implies, changes. This may be due to a change in the empirical referent of the concept, or a change in the entity perceiving the empirical referent, or both.

A composite re-frame of the national interest is a centering tendency that approximates what would be the emerging (but never fully realized) consensus or common understanding of the term. In other words, a re-frame of the national interest is a negotiated interpretation from various contending re-frames in the minds of various relevant actors.

What makes an attempt to describe a re-frame of the Philippine national interest under Duterte is the lack of an ideology, a belief system, a generalized articulation of what the Duterte administration and his political party, the PDP-Laban, seek to achieve in the six years of his administration. Ferdinand Marcos wrote several books -- *Today’s Revolution: Democracy* (1971); *Notes on the New Society of the Philippines* (1973); *The Democratic Revolution in the Philippines* (1974); *Tadhana: The History of the Filipino People* (1977); *Revolution from the Center: How the Philippines is using Martial Law to Build a New Society* (1978); *The New Philippine Republic: A Third World Approach to Democracy* (1982); *The Marcos Reader: Selected Essays and Speeches* (1982); *Towards a New Partnership: The Filipino Ideology* (1983); *The Filipino Ideology* (1985). Duterte on the other hand articulates his vision of Philippine society in fragmented doses,
in one-hour Presidential chats with various audiences, from the military, businessmen, to boy scouts. These are usually documented and available on Youtube. Someone has yet to put these into one integrated framework.

A re-frame of the national interest may consist of three layers or dimensions – an intent structure re-frame, a strategy structure re-frame, and a consequence structure re-frame.

The intent structure re-frame\(^1\) is the modification of the intent structure that serves as the road map for the nation at various levels. This is the envisioned societal impact, the outcomes targeted by institutions and organizations public and private, and the expected outputs produced by technical and field program and project staffs. For instance, the emphasis on infrastructural development rather than territorial protection as a component of national interest is an intent structure re-frame.

The strategy re-frame is the modification of the ways and means by which the intent is pursued. This may consist of targets that are set, the tools and methods that are deployed, the processes and procedures that are employed. For instance, the Duterte “war on drugs” that focuses on elimination rather than rehabilitation of drug personalities is a strategy re-frame.

The consequence re-frame is the shift in the appreciation and assessment of the national condition as a consequence of administrations and their programs. A current debate is whether a past administration had been part of the solution, or part of the problem.

What is the Philippine national interest?

There has never been a clear-cut definition of the Philippine national interest. In every administration since independence in 1946, there has been a constant effort to define it and give it some recognizable form. The first post-WWII President, Manuel Roxas,

\(^1\) These concepts are drawn from logical framework analysis that links the societal big picture with team level operations in a unified intent structure.
defined national interest in a manner that reflected post-war realities: “The safest course for the Philippines is to follow in the wake of Mother America, whose mighty prow breaks for smaller craft the waves of fear.”

71 years after, the United States remains the most influential nation on the Philippines as a nation and as a people. Yet, the close and special ties the Philippines has had with the United States has been whittled down progressively over the years.

As a colony of Spain for over three hundred years, of the United States for over forty years, and conquered by Japan for over three years, the national interest has had a strong external dimension. In the new millennium, after 11 presidents, a 14-year authoritarian interregnum, two people power revolts, and four constitutions, the shape of the Philippine national interest have become clearer as an ideal, but has remained contentious in its pursuit. Here is a personal attempt to cover the essentials:

1. The national interest is to give every Filipino a decent standard of living. This means the eradication of poverty. Poverty has been the bane of the Filipino from time immemorial. The Filipino lived in an environment of over 7,000 where, without modern technology, inaccessibility and remoteness prevented a more effective and efficient organization of economic, political, and social affairs.

2. Freedom from poverty is understood by Filipino families and by the government to mean ample education and livelihood. Formally, the Philippine constitution has mandated that education should be given the biggest share of the annual national budget. In practice, most Filipino families realize that ten years of formal education (high school graduation) is a bare minimum and a college education is the “guarantee” of an equal chance to earn a decent living. Nevertheless, many Filipino poor families remain poor, because they are unable to educate their children. Government has been expected to provide “social justice” where the iniquities of the past, especially in land tenure arrangements, are reversed. Almost as an act of desperation
under martial rule, many Filipinos went abroad as overseas Filipino workers, fanning to over 100 countries in the world, to eke a living that will provide a significantly higher standard of living – including educational opportunities – to the family.

3. The national interest is to enable and ensure the government provides effective governance, the rule of law, essential public services, in a framework and climate of freedom, human rights, democracy, transparency, and accountability. Government is the primary institution that can serve as the instrument for sustaining the oppressive status quo where the few rich get richer and the many poor get poorer. Government must, therefore, be organized in the name of the people, be for the people and promote their well-being, but most important in securing the first two conditions, be by the people through real, operational opportunities available to all for public participation and for public office.

4. The national interest is to provide not only for the present generation, but for future generations. This requires ensuring that government, businesses, communities, and society as a whole protect the environment and ensure its sustainability even as society maximizes the use of natural resources to create national wealth and welfare.

5. The national interest is to avoid war and open conflict. In relation to other nations and foreign actors, this means subscribing to international law and cooperation, engaging in international and regional organization, and being sensitive to world public opinion. In relation to internal component communities and sectors, this means the rule of law and alternative dispute resolution. In relation to rebel groups that have emerged as a result of the clash of multiple contending collective and historical interests spawned by ethnolinguistic diversity, this means cessation of hostilities and peace-making and peace-building.

6. The national interest is to protect Filipino families and communities and engender their resilience in facing the natural and man-made hazards that have jointly caused perennial loss
of life, property, and created continuing fear and insecurity. Typhoons that bring floods and landslides and climate change that bring drought and pests on the one hand, and crime, drugs, and fires debilitate families, communities, and cities, destroying the resources, capabilities, and opportunities they need for decent standard of living.

All these are clearly, if somewhat abstractly provided in all the constitutions that have framed governance in the Philippines since 1946. All these can be summed up in a venn diagram of the Philippine national interest:

![Philippine National Interest Framework](https://example.com/philippine-interest.png)

**Figure 1:**
Philippine National Interest Framework @SJERomero2017

The diagram suggests that reduced to a bare minimum, the Philippine national interest can be represented by “inclusive security” where all lives matter, inclusive development where all dreams are reachable, and “inclusive governance” governance where all voices
count. The term inclusive is key, because security, development, and governance are all available to the elites, but not for the masses in a nation where inequality (Gini Index of 43 in 2012) and poverty (25 percent below poverty line) reigns. National interest means making security, development, and governance available to the base of the pyramid – the poor, the vulnerable, the disadvantaged, the marginalized, and the voiceless -- as well.

**What is the evidence of the re-frame?**

Where should we look for the “evidence” of a re-frame?

The national interest is conceived in thoughts and expressed in words, and deeds. The ideal conception of national interest (intent structure) expressed in the Constitution, Philippine Development and other reference documents, is important. In the end, the more valid conception of the national interest is how it is translated into reality through the national budget (strategy structure). The national budget determines how the total amount available to government is spent on functions, programs, projects, and activities to deliver public services and goods and support government operations. The actual expenditures in implementation of the budget and their consequences (e.g., cost-benefit), of course, is an even more valid expression of the achieved national interest (consequence structure).

Generally, the sources of our understanding of the national interest is a multiple source package as follows:

<table>
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<th>Phase</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<tr>
<td>Outcome (Consequence)</td>
<td>Elections, satisfaction surveys, elections, objective Indicators of Well-being (e.g., Income, education, health)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Output (Strategy)</td>
<td>National budget, Programs and projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process (Strategy)</td>
<td>Top government appointments, “politics” -- communications and interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Input (Intent)</td>
<td>Elections, theory of change, Policy paradigm, issue salience, media and climate of public opinion</td>
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</table>
Let us elaborate on some of these sources.

Appointments to government positions especially at the department and bureau levels are another expression of “national interest.” These are made by the President, who is elected by the people, alongside the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives who, as the Congress, pass the laws, including the general appropriations act.

The two most important decisions in government – appointments and appropriations-- start out as expressions of sectoral or group interests, consolidated into programs or platforms, and eventually, into policies and laws. Government policy pronouncements, whether coming from the top political and bureaucracy leaders, or from the bottom from public and private-regarding interest groups, are an intermediate source of the national interest. Appointments represent the preferred ideas of government that will be pursued by an administration. “Tell me who your cabinet officials are, and I will tell you who you are.”

Government programs and projects are the expression of the government as it actualizes the national interest. Their intent, process, and consequences both intended and unintended, tell us about the “real” conception of the national interest as pursued by government and the vast multi-layered bureaucracy. Government programs and projects are detailed in the Philippine Development Plan, a five-year plan that serves as an administration’s roadmap for security, development, and governance.

Government communications and interactions within government and the bureaucracy, with the people, with the business sector, and with foreign governments and entities provide the rich details of how the national interest is actually pursued. This process of gleaning the national interest is highly selective and unsystematic, dependent on the identification of specific interactions and meetings. Oftentimes, the much-publicized summits of a president with foreign leaders, negotiations of international agreements, formal conferences and visits, figure prominently. But unrecorded conversations and communications may be as important. The major political events that
influence the prevailing conception of the national interest can be gleaned from the headline stories from day-to-day.

Public opinion and media are important sources of conceptions of the national interest. However, national interest as expressed in public opinion and mass media is so nebulous, fragmented, opinionated, emotion-laden, and ambiguous that we cannot depend solely on these sources. They are useful in providing deeper context to the conception of national interest expressed in the other sources. The prominent and powerful role that mass media has played before, during, and after the elections must also be considered in understanding the re-frame of the national interest. Social media has dramatically increased the recruitment of hitherto politically unaware and inactive members of the Filipino population to intense and extensive participants in the political process.

How has Philippine National Interest Been Re-framed Under the Duterte Administration?

The table in the next page attempts to describe the re-frame of the national interest under the Duterte administration. Several policy areas are selected to represent the dimensions of inclusive security, inclusive development, and inclusive governance. The policy before Duterte (essentially the preceding administration of Benigno Aquino III from 2010-2016) and during Duterte (so far from July 1, 2016 to mid-July 2017).

There is an indicative assessment (made personally by the author) of the efficacy of the policies under each dimension, and a comparison of the efficacy of these policies. This assessment is highly tentative for the Duterte administration, in view of the short period of one year the policies have been in play.

The table serves as a “sacrificial concept” a tentative idea brought forth as a way of eliciting critiques, suggestions, modifications, and enhancement. Its reason for being, and being presented, is that there is no such presentation of a “big picture” of the on-going re-frame of the Philippine national interest. There will be no attempt
at this point to explain or defend the qualitative ratings provided here, only to say they are perceptual data subject to inter-subjective validation.

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<th>Dimensions of National Interest</th>
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<th>During Duterte</th>
<th>Extent of Re-frame of National Interest</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drugs, Crime, Corruption</td>
<td>Ordinary Legal and rehab effort</td>
<td>Extraordinary measures - -War on Drugs</td>
<td>Mod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Insurgency and Terrorism</td>
<td>Hardline stance – no peace-talks</td>
<td>Attraction, accommodation</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Typhoons, earthquakes and Natural Hazards</td>
<td>Coordinated local and foreign assistance</td>
<td>Self-reliant approach (no need for foreign assistance)</td>
<td>Mod</td>
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<td>Arbitration case against China on WPS</td>
<td>Downplay PCA award to reduce tension with China</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Police &amp; AFP Reform</td>
<td>Aggressive equipment modernization</td>
<td>Improve pay and benefits, enlist in war on drugs and crime</td>
<td>Mod</td>
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<td><strong>Inclusive Development</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Poverty &amp; Livelihood</td>
<td>Conditional Cash, Transfer policy, sustainable livelihood program, bottom-up-budgeting</td>
<td>Conditional cash transfer, pro-poor tax reform, end of endo</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Infrastructure and Public Services</td>
<td>Massive infra building using PPP mode</td>
<td>Massive infra building strategy using China grants and loans</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agriculture and Industry</td>
<td>No significant self-reliant posture</td>
<td>Self-sufficiency</td>
<td>Mod</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mobility and access</td>
<td>MMDA and DOTC traffic program</td>
<td>Emergency powers for traffic reform</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor and neglected areas</td>
<td>People’s Plan oriented Housing program for informal settlers and displace persons</td>
<td>Accommodation of Kadamay occupation</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Full subscription and engagement with global climate change action process</td>
<td>Stricter regulation of mining</td>
<td>Mod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inclusive Governance</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Federalism</td>
<td>No national government advocacy and commitment, Civil society championship</td>
<td>Aggressive promotion, national government sponsorship</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bangsamoro</td>
<td>Passage of BBL</td>
<td>Passage of BBL</td>
<td>Mod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local governance</td>
<td>Promote decentralization</td>
<td>Selective recentralization</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responsive bureaucracy</td>
<td>Meritocracy</td>
<td>Party loyalty</td>
<td>Mod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Separation of Powers</td>
<td>Co-equal branches</td>
<td>Presidential dominance</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
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</table>
The Duterte Road to a re-frame of the National Interest

How has the re-frame of the Philippine national interest under Duterte come about? The re-frame of the national interest may be traced to a train of events that led to or occasioned the re-frame.

1. The election of Rodrigo Duterte and specific personalities with their own peculiar conception of the national interest in Congress and local government;
2. The appointment of the multi-sided Duterte cabinet;
3. Rebooting relations with Muslim and communist rebel groups through peace talks;
4. The passage of the 2017 General Appropriations Act;
5. The war on drugs – pronouncements, process, and results;
6. The decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in favor of the Philippines versus China and Philippine reaction;
7. The consolidation of personal power of the President as against contending institutions (Congress, Supreme Court, Commission on Human Rights);
8. Creative harnessing of the police and military for presidential policy enforcement;
9. Articulation of simultaneous shifts in foreign policy – engagement with China and disengagement from the United States; overtures to Russia and disconnecting from the European Union; distancing from international organization, international law, and world public opinion; passive leadership in ASEAN;
10. Using, sustaining, and intensifying a fanatical populism powered by social media to neutralize and defeat opposition and obstruction.

The reframing of Philippine national interest under Duterte apparently has international political junctures, as shown by the election of Donald Trump in the United States and Teresa May in the United Kingdom. Earlier, the rise of Cezar Chavez in Venezuela, and Vladimir Putin in Russia are seen as indicative of a bigger global political climate change that made Duterte in the Philippines possible. The direct, coherent, tangible, powerful, sustainable access of politically aromatic ideas to hitherto non-political and vacant minds has produced spectacular political results, both intended and
unintended.

The more pronounced “theory of change” in previous administrations has been replaced by what other observers have called a “single issue presidency.” Duterte in the driver’s seat is the national interest. Hope and trust in the President has become the main mechanism for achieving the ideal conceptions of national interest – defeating poverty, ignorance, violence, helplessness, inequality, injustice, crime, vulnerability, marginality, and corruption.

Apart from the anti-drug and corruption drive, Duterte promised to shift government to a federal system, re-balance Philippine development towards Mindanao and the poor, solve the traffic problem in Metro Manila, and forge peace agreements with both communist and Muslim rebel groups. He also wanted a more independent foreign posture, distancing from the U.S. and opening new doors of relations with China.

The rise of Duterte with a clear plurality vote has translated quickly into a public approval rating of 91 percent (Pulse Asia Survey covering 2-8 July 2016). This confirmed to Duterte he had the Filipinos’ mandate to undertake comprehensive and transformative change. In March 2017, Duterte’s approval and trust rating were still high at 78 percent and 76 percent, respectively.2

Duterte’s unorthodox leadership methods have polarized the Filipino public. On the one hand are the Duterte Diehard Supporters (DDS), an evocative self-label that plays on the Davao Death Squad (DDS) that Duterte had allegedly used to suppress drugs and crime in Davao. The DDS express relief the streets are now safe from crimes and applaud the numerous initiatives launched by Duterte, such as night curfew on children, freedom of information (executive order), and faster transactions with government.

On the other extreme are the “yellows” that supported the presidential candidacy of Mar Roxas and his vice-presidential candidate Leni Robredo, the handpicked successors of President

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Noynoy Aquino during the elections. This group has led the opposition to the draconian measures of Duterte and decries the impunity of extra-judicial killing (EJK) of drug personalities.

**Internal Dimension of the National Interest**

*Shift to narco-focused interpretation of national interest*

The attention given by Duterte to the anti-drug drive has overshadowed the other elements of his program. These less known initiatives are as difficult to accomplish as ridding Philippine society of drugs and crime. Solving the traffic problem in Metro Manila is clearly almost an impossible task without a long-term systematic solution. Installing a federal form of government is another promise that may take decades.

Duterte has also defined national interest in terms of a war on drugs. Not only has he provided an unprecedented evaluation of the seriousness of the drug menace. He has also taken draconian steps to curb it. Over the last eight months of his term, some 8,000 suspected drug personalities have perished in an aggressive war on drugs, waged by the police as well as “silent and anonymous partners” who have scaled up the war on drugs through extra-judicial killings.

The Police has gone house-to-house in selected neighborhoods to ferret out drug users and pushers, collectively termed “drug personalities.” The mechanism is known as “Tokhang,” a contraction of the Cebuano words Katok and --- hang, which translates into “knock on the door and plead.”

Duterte built a 10,000 bed drug rehabilitation facility inside the Camp Magsaysay complex in Laur, Nueva Ecija in Central Luzon. The facility, built on what was planned to be a prison, was completed in record time with the private donation of a Chinese businessman. Thus far, the facility has less than 200 patients. It seems clear in retrospect that a centralized facility within a military camp that makes it difficult for families to visit their loved ones confined in the facility is not satisfactory.
Duterte has roundly criticized the Roman Catholic Church for not helping enough in rehabilitating drug personalities.

All along, Duterte has dismissed the rehabilitation approach to the drug problem. He claims that after six months of use, the brain of a drug addict is already cooked and is beyond rehabilitation. He has also said he does not have the money to rehabilitate the huge number of drug personalities, which he puts at 4 million. From where Duterte got the figure is unclear, as the police and the drug enforcement authorities claim the figure did not come from them.

The Tokhang approach which has led to the deaths of some 8,000 suspected drug personalities in police and vigilante operations has been much criticized in the Philippines and abroad. Such criticism from abroad has been the primary occasion in which Duterte has cursed President Obama, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon, and UN Rapporteur on Human Rights Agnes Callamard.

Domestic criticism has been met with a scathing, often overwhelming wave of denunciation by Duterte supporters on social media.

Duterte has promised to pardon policemen who are convicted of crimes as a result of his war on drugs. He has gone to the point of saying policemen and women so charged should plead guilty and get convicted immediately so he can quickly grant them pardon.

A telling test of this is the case of Police Superintendent Marvin Marcos and his team of policemen who killed Albuera (Leyte) Mayor Rolando Espinosa while he was locked up in a city jail. Despite findings of the National Bureau of Investigation and the Senate that the incident was a rub-out, Duterte continues to declare that he believes the version of Marcos and his team that Espinosa put up a fight when they went to accost him for illegal possession of firearms and drugs in the wee hours of the morning.

Duterte quickly started his war on drugs. Police knocked on doors throughout the nation to ferret out drug users and pushers. In less than 90 days in office, the war has killed over 3,000 alleged
drug pushers and users who fought back at the police, or hit by unidentified vigilantes. The war also induced the surrender of over 700,000 “drug personalities” to the police. There has been a rush to build rehabilitation facilities, but mostly, those who surrendered are sent home to get out of addiction on their own.

The war on drugs has been an intense, on-going reflection and debate among Filipinos on the core values of the nation, communities, and individuals. Extra-judicial killings are abhorred by many, but are cheered by many others who see it as a necessary and emergency strategy of bringing the drug problem under control.

Dealing with Poverty and Illiteracy

The government departments like the Department of Social Work and Community Development, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Agriculture, continue their social protection and disaster response functions under the Duterte administration. Otherwise, the Duterte administration is not known for its war on poverty. Duterte wants to cut poverty by 25 percent in three years, according to the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC). One idea he has floated is for a percentage of Pagcor (Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation) income from online gaming be given to NAPC to help the poor directly.3

In December 2016, Duterte asked Vice-President Leonor Robredo to stop attending Cabinet meetings, forcing her to resign as head of the HUDCC (Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council). This effectively shifted the leadership of the government’s anti-poverty programs away from Robredo who comes from the opposition Liberal Party.4 Cabinet Secretary Leoncio Evasco Jr was appointed in her stead.

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4 Vicente Nonato, “Robredo asked to stop attending Cabinet meetings, quits post” Philippine Daily Inquirer, December 4, 2016, newsinfo.inquirer.net/850512/robredo-quits-as-housing-chief-leaves-duterte-cabinet
The Kadamay (Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap) occupation of almost 6,000 Government housing units in Pandi, Bulacan in March 2017\(^5\) provides a view into Duterte’s micro-approach to the poverty problem.

The Kadamay is an organization of homeless Filipinos which was energized and inspired by the rise of Duterte to power. They have waited for poverty-alleviation programs to reach down to their level. They have trooped to the National Housing Authority several times, responding to false news that the government is distributing houses. Finally, they found and occupied 6,000 vacant homes intended by the Government for poor families from the police and the military in Pandi, Bulacan. While the occupation was illegal, Duterte eventually relented and has asked the housing authorities to legally confirm the occupation. NHA has re-awarded the houses to Kadamay members.\(^6\)

Apart from this episode, there has been no pronounced Duterte program directed at the poor. The war on poverty has clearly been supplanted by the war on drugs. In fact, it has been observed that most of the people who die from the war or drugs are poor people in the slums. The rich, who have their share of drug personalities, are effectively unreachable by the police in their posh subdivisions.

*From containment to power-sharing*

On the domestic front, President Duterte extended a conciliatory hand to the Communist Party, the National Democratic Front, and the New People’s Army during the election campaign and during his Presidency.

President Arroyo was the last President who ordered the Armed Forces of the Philippines to terminate the Communist Insurgency within a given deadline.


\(^6\) Christian Avendano, “NHA to ‘reaward’ houses to Kadamay members”, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, April 19, 2017, newsinfo.inquirer.net/890217/nha-to-reaward-houses-to-kadamay-members
This, of course, did not happen. In an archipelago of 7,641 islands and islets, it may not be possible to eliminate the New People’s Army lower than the historical low of 5,000 armed insurgents on record.

Realistically, dealing with the NPA has since been a mouthwash strategy – keeping the germs at a minimum, without being able to eliminate them entirely.

Duterte has changed this. He has offered to share power with the CNN – Communist Party of the Philippines, the National Democratic Front, and the New People’s Army. True to his word, he has appointed four nominees of the Communist Party to his cabinet. He has also ordered the release of convicted communists.

Duterte’s partnership overture to the communists has sufficiently been radical as to alarm some quarters in the business sector and the military.  

_Fresh approach to Bangsamoro_

Claiming that he is part muslim on his mother side, Duterte has styled himself as an intercessor for the muslims. Being a Mindanaoan, he claims a special competence in bringing the Bangsamoro and related issues to a resolution. Duterte has initiated a strategy to make peace with all insurgent groups, Duterte also has given Nur Misuari a seat on the peace negotiation table. The Bangsamoro Basic Law has been reviewed by the Duterte administration, and is ready to push it through Congress. The proposed bill gives more concessions to the Muslim Filipino hope of self-governance than the bill proposed under the previous Aquino administration.

While conciliatory to the MILF, Duterte, however, was more combative with regard to the Abu Sayyaf and the Maute group. Upon his assumption of the Presidency, Duterte took a mailed fist policy against the Abu Sayyaf. Troops from the Bicol Region were dispatched

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to Mindanao. The media was full of scenes of tearful goodbyes as soldiers bid their families farewell.

This mobilization was short-lived. The Davao City market was bombed. The Maute Group, a terrorist group associated with the Abu Sayyaf, claimed responsibility. The bombing was apparently a diversionary tactic to loosen the military’s stranglehold on Abu Sayyaf elements they have cornered. In a few days, Duterte declared a state of emergency, which has been overtaken by the declaration of martial law in the whole island group of Mindanao in May 2017 as a result of the ISIS-affiliated terrorists’ siege of Marawi City.

The Davao bombing (September 2016), the Bohol Abu Sayyaf incursions (April 2017), the Marawi siege (May-August 2017) represent an ever-escalating terrorist actions that has distracted Duterte from his program of government. The Marawi City battle with terrorists continues into August 2017. The government claims the cost of war will not adversely affect the government’s fiscal position, but other sources fear the costs will be extremely high.

*Championship of Federalism*

As the first Philippine President from the southern island of Mindanao, President Duterte has championed federalism as a strategic, comprehensive solution to the ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity of the Philippines. Accommodating such diversity within a single national and political entity has been the impetus for secessionist and

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8 On September 2, the Davao City night market was bombed, killing 15 and wounding 60 others. This happened after Duterte poured in 7,000 more soldiers into Mindanao to finally exterminate the terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group. In reaction, Duterte immediately announced a state of lawless violence throughout the country. On 5 September, a day before leaving for the ASEAN Summit in Laos, Duterte signed a proclamation putting the country indefinitely under a state of emergency on account of lawless violence. The proclamation empowers him to employ the military alongside the police in suppressing all forms of lawless violence nationwide.


insurgencies in the country.

Federalism has been the advocacy of the PDP-Laban Party, the party founded by Aquilino Pimentel, Jr, under whose banner Duterte ran during the last elections. Federalism has been one of the tantalizing transformations that Filipinos have debated for decades as the ultimate end-point of the decentralization policy embedded in the 1987 Constitution and operationalized by the Local Government Code of 1991. In advocating a federalist form of government, Duterte is tapping into a wide base of support, except that the idea of federalism remains rudimentary in the minds of most Filipinos. The Local Government Code set forth a review of the decentralization process every five years since it was promulgated in 1991. However, Congress has failed to undertake a single review. This has stunted the implementation, development, understanding, and acceptance of local autonomy by the people.

The federalism project of Duterte, however, is not supported by the studies, consultations, and staff work that should make the proposal credible. It requires a constitutional amendment the political and logistical preparations for which have not begun to materialize.

Duterte realizes that the window to shift the Philippines during his term is small. He has asked Congress to start the move towards federalism this year (2017). While it is not clear how he will maneuver this, Duterte says if federalism cannot be done nation-wide, he will still push for federalism in Mindanao.\textsuperscript{11}

\textit{Postponement of Barangay elections}

The barangay elections scheduled for October 2016 was postponed to October 2017 by law. Then on 4 October 2017, President Duterte signed the law postponing the elections scheduled on 23 October to May 2018.\textsuperscript{12} The foremost need cited for the postponement

\begin{itemize}
  \item Jeoffrey Maitem, “Duterte: Mindanao will go it alone on federalism, if needed”, \textit{Philippine Daily Inquirer}, Feb 5, 2017.
\end{itemize}
is to ensure barangay councils are free of drug personalities.\textsuperscript{13}

The postponement of Barangay elections and the extension of the terms of barangay captains as may yet be a radical reframing of the relationship of the President and the people, where the President substitutes his personal preferences for the wisdom of the people in electing their barangay leaders.

This re-frame of the essential democratic process has far-reaching consequences and impact on inclusive governance.

\textit{Rehabilitating the legacy of Ferdinand Marcos}

A major re-frame of the national interest that partakes of a change in the climate of opinion is the rehabilitation of the legacy of Ferdinand Marcos.

Voting 9-5 with one inhibition, the Supreme Court paved the way for the burial of Ferdinand Marcos at the Libingan ng mga Bayani. This has gone against the grain of dominant national consciousness since the People Power Revolt of 1986. Duterte’s support for the burial of the remains of Ferdinand Marcos at the Libingan ng Mga Bayani shows the determination of Duterte to pursue his course of action regardless of public opinion, and existing rules. Both public opinion and the rules can be adjusted to conform to his direction.

The corollary to this re-frame is his support for Bongbong Marcos in his protest against the elected Vice-President, Leni Robredo. Part of Duterte’s image of the national interest is to have Marcos take over from him as President. All this, presupposes, that Duterte and Marcos have some commonality in terms of a roadmap for the Filipino nation moving forward.

External Dimension of the National Interest

*Shift from U.S. to China in perceived mutuality of military and economic interests*

Duterte has augured a new stance in Philippine foreign relations, distancing the Philippines from the United States. He has called for the removal of U.S. soldiers in Mindanao, and the cessation of joint U.S. - Philippine patrols in the West Philippines Sea. On the other hand, Duterte has continued to be conciliatory towards China, and has made overtures to Russia.

It was Ferdinand Marcos who said Philippine-American relations were “too close for comfort and too special for self-respect.” Marcos did not quite close the “door” to U.S., but he opened “windows” to the USSR and the PRC.

Duterte has significantly reversed the tenor and pace of Philippine-American relations, stopping scheduled Balikatan exercises, publicly insulting President Obama and the United States in the ASEAN Summit in Laos in September 2016.

Duterte has unabashedly declared friendship with China and Russia, to the point of backpedaling, even seemingly repudiating, the judgment of the Permanent Court of Arbitration that awarded the Philippines and denied China’s claim to the Nine-Dash Line theory that makes the South China Sea a Chinese lake.

While it is clear that the Philippines does not want an unwinnable war with China, it is odd that the Philippines, with its diplomatic muscle, is not willing to confront the Chinese incursions into the West Philippine Sea more vigorously through diplomatic means. A case in point is the three-month intrusion into Benham Rise.

Faced with an intrusive China, the Philippines under President Aquino did what it did best – turn to international law, international organization, and world public opinion. It filed a case against China before the Permanent Court of Arbitration, based in the Hague. In July 2017, the UN Arbitral Tribunal handed down its decision that the
Philippines has exclusive sovereign rights over the West Philippine Sea (in the South China Sea) and that China’s “nine-dash line” is invalid.\(^\text{14}\)

Only a President who has not served in the Senate and has held a national level position will fail to appreciate the importance of the United Nations to the Philippines. Duterte is such a President, and his limited, parochial worldview perhaps explains his attitude towards the U.N.

Unfortunately, foreign policy is an esoteric subject as far as the ordinary Filipino is concerned. While there are many overseas Filipino workers who benefit from the panoply of protection provided by international law and international organizations, they do not quite see this intangible veneer of benefits.

Which is why Duterte has downplayed the commitments of the Philippines to the United Nations and has gotten away with it.

Duterte makes no apologies for such limited knowledge and experience. It is where he is one with the people, and thus a rally point of his populist appeal.

\textit{Re-casting RP-EU relations}

The strong advocacy of the European Union for human rights has put it in conflict with President Duterte, who has been extremely sensitive to criticism by the EU.

President Duterte said in May 2017 that the Philippines will forego grants from the European Union over the next three years. He means this gesture to preserve the independence of the Philippines from outside interference. The EU has been critical of Duterte’s actions that impinged on human rights. The grants are estimated to total 250

The European Union may be considered one of the most critical development agents in the Philippines. Foreign aid agencies, foundations and non-governmental organizations funded by or associated with EU and its member countries, have operated with much strategic impact in the Philippines in the areas of humanitarian law and assistance and human rights promotion.

The training of the Philippine National Police in human rights, as part of Security Sector Reform (SSR) has been under the auspices of the EU.

Amnesty International, Transparency International, Oxfam GB, Christian Aid, the German political foundations, SIDA (Swedish Aid Agency), AECID (Spanish Aid Agency), among others --- have all been long-time humanitarian actors in the Philippines.

Re-casting relations with ASEAN

The Philippines is one of the five original members of the ASEAN when it was formed in 1967. The deep commitment of the Philippines to Southeast Asian regional cooperation becomes apparent when the Philippine participation in the precursors of ASEAN is reviewed. The Philippines was an active member in ASA (Association of Southeast Asia), and MaPhilIndo (Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia).

The main value of ASEAN to the Philippines was the creation of a security environment. Despite its claim to Sabah, the ASEAN has given the Philippines a level of trust, confidence, and security with its neighbors Malaysia and Indonesia. None of them saw any of the others as a security threat. In fact, security cooperation in terms of border agreements and patrols have intensified.

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The Philippines is currently the chair of the ASEAN. Among the most important issues facing ASEAN is its united stand with regard to the South China Sea disputes, where ASEAN member countries – Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines are claimants to certain geographic features in the South China Sea as against China and among themselves. Other countries like Cambodia, Myanmar, and Laos, on the other hand, are somewhat beholden to China, their immediate neighbor.

What are the prospects for the Philippines and the region? The Philippines will likely continue to slide into a more personalistic and authoritarian rule, as Duterte degrades the opposition to his rule and centralizes and intensifies his control of Congress, the police and military, and support from a sizeable DDS support base. The mainstream media, the Church, the business sector, the academe, and large segments of the upper and middle classes will likely increase their opposition as the EJKs continue and hit closer to home and adversely affect the economy.

The first outing of President Duterte onto the regional and international stage was the ASEAN Summit in Laos in early September 2016. This outing was marred by controversy. President Obama canceled his meeting with President Duterte as a result of insulting language Duterte directed at Obama hours before he enplaned for Laos. Duterte reacted by purposely skipping the ASEAN-US meeting and the ASEAN-UN meeting. Duterte also made an unusual presentation during the ASEAN-East Asia meeting of a massacre by US soldiers of Muslim Filipinos a century ago when the Philippines was a colony of the United States.

Duterte’s actions in Laos show that the Philippine government is bound to be conflicted in its approach to ASEAN. On the one hand, the Department of Foreign Affairs is keen to maintain smooth diplomatic processes in ASEAN. On the other hand, President Duterte has chosen to use the last ASEAN Summit as a forum for advocating Philippine interests. It remains to be seen whether the DFA channel or the Duterte channel will prevail over the next year. In sub-summit ASEAN meetings where Duterte will not attend, most likely the DFA technocratic and professional approach will prevail.
Nevertheless, it is likely that during the chairmanship of the Philippines in ASEAN, the following issues will not be prominent: human rights, promotion of civic and political participation and discourse, promotion of climate change and environmental causes, and international standards and agreements applied to domestic policy. On the other hand, the following issues would likely be promoted: sovereign equality of nations and freedom from external interference in domestic affairs, interest rather than rights-based resolution of disputes, closer relations with China, and regional cooperation in combating drugs and crime.

The ability of the Philippines to provide evenhanded leadership to ASEAN will be in question, as Duterte increasingly rebels against increasing criticism from foreign and international quarters, including the media and advocates of democracy and human rights in fellow ASEAN countries.

An indication of the loss of Duterte’s capacity to represent ASEAN is his being snubbed in the G20 summit in Hamburg, Germany. It is part of international diplomatic tradition that the chairman of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) be invited and attend the G20 summit due to the region’s economic global importance.\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{Policy-making Process on the National Interest}

\textit{Shift from dominant to exclusive executive enunciation of policy}

There has been a visible cooptation of the House of Representatives and the Senate by the Administration. Solons have shifted party loyalties wholesale giving the President a “Supermajority” in the Lower House and in the Senate.

Apparently a strategy to subsume the Congress, Duterte has publicly attacked and humiliated Sen. Leila de Lima, who investigated the human rights allegations against him when she headed the

Commission on Human Rights. On 19 September, his allies in the Senate have removed de Lima as Chair of the Committee of Justice and Human Rights, for having presented a self-confessed member of the Davao Death Squad. The witness testified that then Mayor Duterte ordered the Squad to conduct extra-judicial killing of drug pushers, addicts, and criminals in Davao from 1988-2014.

The limited knowledge by President Duterte of the factual basis for his enormous decision-making powers became apparent when he was asked about Chinese intrusions into Benham Rise. He said he had allowed the Chinese into the extended Philippine continental shelf area east of Quezon Province. Later, it turns out Duterte thought the geographic feature was part of the contested islands in the West Philippine Sea. He had to be briefed by the National Security Adviser more than a week after the interview that Benham Rise was on the east side of Luzon and not on the west side, after receiving criticisms for his unilateral grant of permission to the Chinese to explore in Benham rise.\textsuperscript{17}

Just how far can a President single-handedly and without counsel re-frame the national interest? The President is the primary formulator of Philippine foreign policy. The President of the Philippines has vast powers under the 1987 Constitution.

Duterte remains resonant with many Filipinos. He is seen as their “lawyer.” As such, his actions, no matter how outlandish at times, are cheered as bold moves to protect and advance the interest of the ordinary Filipino, against vested interests, and against the elite.

But is a president who substitutes his own ideas of the national interest the answer? It certainly has jolted the bureaucracy into taking action on policies it has never considered before.

The personalistic reframing of the Philippine national interest in order to escape from the self-serving operationalization of the national interest by the elite is an aberration. At the moment, it has political support from a wide segment of the people because it is seen

\textsuperscript{17}Pia Ranada, “Duterte briefed about Benham Rise after mix-up”, \textit{Rappler}, March 27, 2017, \url{http://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/inside-track/165140-duterte-briefed-benham-rise-mix-up}
as a maverick move.

There is an insidious, perhaps comical calculus at work, where the President is taking donations and blandishments from China such as railroads and bridges that goads him to stop the military, the bureaucracy, and the foreign service from protecting the national patrimony in traditional ways.\(^\text{18}\)

Duterte has made international headlines as a result of the EJKs, and the colorful language he has used to defend his war on drugs. He has bad-mouthed states, international organizations, and their key leaders and representatives like President Barack Obama, Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, the UN Rapporteur on Human Rights, in addition to the Pope and the U.S. and Australian ambassadors whom he insulted.

Duterte has also criticized the United Nations, threatening at one time to take the Philippines out of the organization. He has consistently lashed out in defense against foreign interference in Philippine domestic affairs. The Duterte cabinet tries to soften the impact of Duterte’s abrasive words by clarifying and backpedaling his statements, often blaming media for biased reporting.

\textit{A rainbow cabinet}

Where a government official stands depends on where he sits. Where he sits depends on which sector or sectoral interest he represents.

A new President appoints up to 6,000 top echelon posts in the Philippine bureaucracy. Since the previous administration was a Liberal Party-led coalition, and the toughest competition in the presidential elections came from the Liberal Party, Duterte has found it strategic to replace the appointive officials identified with the previous administration. This has appeared to be an over-reach, because positions that had set tenures were also included. Some

officials, such as Patricia Licuanan, the chair of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) with set tenures refused to tender their resignations.19

The newly installed officials, however, do not represent any understanding or commitment to a program of government, other than all the appointees have some loyalty to Duterte. Many of them had been contributors to his presidential campaign effort, or have had previous association with him.

Often, the appointment of secretaries and undersecretaries coming from different sectors has created a policy stalemate situation within major departments. This is the case in the Department of Labor and the Department of Interior and Local Government.

The pressure on top appointive positions in the bureaucracy comes from Duterte supporters who feel entitled to collect some dividends for investing in his campaign, or for continuing to support him in the face of perceived efforts to impede and impeach him. This has led to in-fighting, demonstrated in three undersecretaries of the DILG engineering the ouster of Secretary Ismael (Mike) Sueno on April 4, 2017.

Without an effort to provide an overarching goal and strategy to the bureaucracy, each secretary becomes a fiefdom. The speeches of Duterte are looked up to as policy pronouncements to be flexibly and creatively interpreted by the government departments concerned.

Cabinet meetings are not sufficient mechanisms for creating the consolidation and alignment of the actions of a bureaucracy of 1.4 million personnel.

The bureaucracy has not been able to work hand in glove with the president, giving him the kind of sound advice needed under the circumstances.

This has rendered his re-frames of the national interest without much strategic value. They are not sustainable.

The appointment of Gina Lopez as Environment Secretary who immediately enunciated a pro-environment conservation policy was a popular Duterte decision. Lopez inspected mining companies up and down the archipelago, closing down some or suspending the operations of others. The Secretary of Finance, Sonny Dominguez and Alan Peter Cayetano, however, came out publicly to contradict or question Lopez’ decisions, leading to her being denied confirmation by the Commission on Appointments. This event signified that Duterte’s position on issues could be controverted by powerful members of his cabinet, or that he was not really committed to his avowed position on these issues.

Over time, it has been shown that there is a lot of in-fighting in the Duterte cabinet. These include the skirmish between Cabinet Secretary Leoncio Evasco’s office with Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol and NFA Secretary Jason Aquino regarding the need, timing, and sourcing of rice importation.

Other in-fighting has led to the resignation of Secretary Ismael Sueno of the Department of Interior and Local Government. Speaker Alvarez, a close Duterte ally, has also publicly criticized Director General Ronaldo dela Rosa of the Philippine National Police, a key Duterte “enforcement” commander.

*The Foreign Relations Community*

The Department of Foreign Affairs is among the most critically affected departments by the Presidential intermittent reframing of the national interest through his off-the cuff speeches.

Generally, Duterte has downplayed the diplomatic approach to containing Chinese intrusiveness in the West Philippine sea.

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Filipino diplomats are also being routinely called by host countries to explain the expletives President Duterte directs their way. This is the case with the United States, the EU, and the United Nations. Senator Alan Peter Cayetano, Duterte’s running mate as Vice-President during the last elections, has been appointed Foreign Affairs Secretary, vice Perfecto Yasay who was denied confirmation by the Commission on Appointments. Cayetano, like Yasay, will likely pursue Duterte’s policies, despite contrary institutional predispositions of the DFA on these issues.

The National Defense Community

The Department of National Defense and the National Security Adviser are also critically affected by the Presidential style of reframing the national interest in every speech.

The military has so far been able to acquit itself from any active involvement in the war against drugs waged by Duterte and the police. The police involvement was abruptly stopped when the Jee Ick Joo kidnap slay went public. Jee was a Korean businessman who was killed right in the National Police Headquarters by senior police officers involved in kidnap for ransom operations.

The wisdom of negotiating with the reputed leaders of the Communist Party in Netherlands rather than field commanders on the ground is an open question in the military.

For the military, the wisdom of negotiating at all with the CNN is not so clear, based on their long experience with this problem.

The declaration of martial law in the whole of Mindanao as a result of the ISIS-aligned terrorists in Marawi City has been an occasion for show the contrast in the positions of Duterte and the DND-AFP on related issues. Initially, the military denied the ISIS connection of the terrorists, but Duterte openly announced that connection when he declared martial law. "A source who was part of Duterte’s presidential entourage in Moscow also told the Philippine Star (daily broadsheet) that Duterte asked Gen. Eduardo Año, Armed Forces chief, for an update on the Marawi siege. The military official assured the president
at that time that the situation was under control. Despite this, Duterte still issued the proclamation.\textsuperscript{21}

The military also continued to receive and use military equipment and advise from the U.S., despite the long-standing Duterte policy of not seeking and accepting aid from the Americans. The military was also not so keen on a Mindanao-wide martial law, and its extension. Nevertheless, eventually, the military acceded to Duterte’s decisions on the scope and extension of martial law to the end of 2017.

\textit{Shift from bureaucracy-informed to President-drive national and foreign policy}

The Duterte program is best represented by the 2017 budget proposal the Administration has submitted to the Congress totaling $71.97 billion. This is 11.6 percent higher than the 2016 budget and is the highest proposed ever. The budget clearly shows the President intends to exercise the primary initiatives. The Office of President will get $430.3 million, up from $61.44 million in 2016. The budget for infrastructure is increased ($16.29 billion to $18.49 billion) or about 5.4\% of the GDP. Agriculture and rural development will get $2.59 billion, public order and safety $4.44 billion. The judiciary gets $698.18 million, an increase of 21.5\% from 2016. On the other hand, the Health and foreign affairs budgets are reduced.

Political dynamics has shifted under President Duterte. The President himself has become the political arena, as he makes all the major decisions – policy and appointments. There has been a re-centralization of power from local to the national government, as local governments now implement initiatives emanating from Malacañang, such as the anti-drug campaign, implementation of curfew. Congress is poised to grant Duterte emergency powers to cut red tape. The climate of public opinion has become polarized. Social media has been intensively and widely used for propaganda. Human rights abuses have become accepted by a large segment of the population as the

price for increased sense of security of the general population.

Shift to contentious and divided public support for government

Duterte’s unorthodox leadership methods have polarized the Filipino public. On the one hand are the Duterte Diehard Supporters (DDS), an evocative self-label that plays on the Davao Death Squad (DDS) that Duterte had allegedly used to suppress drugs and crime in Davao. The DDS express relief the streets are now safe from crimes and applaud the numerous initiatives launched by Duterte, such as night curfew on children, freedom of information (executive order), and faster transactions with government.

On the other extreme are the “yellows” that supported the presidential candidacy of Mar Roxas and his vice presidential candidate Leni Robredo, the handpicked successors of President Noynoy Aquino during the elections. This group has led the opposition to the draconian measures of Duterte and decries the impunity of extra-judicial killing (EJK) of drug personalities.

Degradation of Constitutional Bodies with transparency and accountability mandates

Duterte from the start showed a disdain for institutional checks on Presidential power, publicly criticizing and threatening Supreme Court Chief Justice Lourdes Sereno that he will not abide by Supreme Court decisions. Duterte has also come down hard on his oppositionists in the Senate. Senator Leila de Lima, a critic of Duterte’s Davao Death Squad (DDS) and current war on drugs, was charged as having used the National Penitentiary as a drug production and distribution facility when she was Secretary of Justice under the previous administration. De Lima has been in jail for several months. The humiliation and degrading of de Lima was possible only with the participation of Duterte allies in the House of Representatives and the Senate in conjunction with the Department of Justice headed by Vitaliano Aguirre, another close Duterte ally.

Currently, the Commission on Human Rights and the Ombudsman are two other constitutional bodies that are under
criticism from Duterte and his allies. The CHR has widely criticized the human rights abuses occasioned by Duterte’s war on drugs, on occasion working with relevant UN bodies such as the UN Rapporteur on Human Rights Agnes Calamard, who has ruffled the feathers of the Duterte government. The proposed 2018 budget contains a steep reduction of the budget of the Commission of Human Rights (P5M to P1M).

**Long Term Re-frame of the National Interest**

The reframing of the national interest is largely a personal re-frame by Duterte, with the support of his cabinet, other appointees in government, allies in Congress and in the business world, and a big segment of the Philippine population that has looked to a President they could relate with at the emotional, empathetic, and symbolic level.

The re-frame does not work through existing constitutional institutions and the bureaucracy. There is no design or effort to institutionalize the re-frame as part of the mandate of these institutions and the bureaucracy, except to make them receptive to direct commands from the President. There is no organizational reform effort that will internalize the re-frame of the national interest.

There is also no instrument for carrying the Duterte re-frame of the national interest beyond his lifetime. The PDP-Laban does not have an independent, visible, articulate roadmap for continuing the change that Duterte promised and is currently attempting. The design, if it can be called that, is all in Duterte’s mind, and his idiosyncratic personality and behavior.

Constitutionally, the successor to the President is the Vice-President, Maria Leonor Robredo, who is a champion of the more institution-based, participatory-driven style of governance. Robredo as president will certainly reinvigorate the governance structures.

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22 Audrey Morallo, “Manila to complain to UN over Callamard visit”, *Philippine Star*, May 5, 2017, http://www.philstar.comheadlines/2017/05/05/1697017/manila-complain-un-over-callamard-visit
under the 1987 Constitution to do another re-frame of the national interest.

It is therefore unlikely that the re-frame of Philippine society will continue beyond Duterte. However, Duterte has created clearly disrupted the Filipino elite and public’s comfortable conceptions of what is in the national interest, and how it ought to be pursued. The very sentiment expressed by the people in the rise to power of Duterte makes everybody sit up and ponder how unresponsive the old dispensations were, even if they were performing well based on traditional economic growth measures.

The likely reversibility of re-frames of the national interest in the Philippines as it jumps from one administration to another reveals the weakness of the Filipino polity – there is no mechanism for conjuring and pursuing the national interest over the long term. This mechanism is the programmatic political party, which does not exist in the Philippines.

Political parties have not done their job. There is no continuity in government. The interest of the people cannot be pursued because political incumbents serve themselves. The electoral system is defective because of campaign finance and lack of real political parties.

**Summary and Conclusion**

The rise of Duterte in the Philippines in May 2016 was a major re-frame of the national interest. He represented an unarticulated, diffused, but nevertheless powerful image of it in the minds of Filipino voters.

How did Duterte rise to power so quickly? The 1987 Philippine Constitution holds several clues. The Constitution was the comprehensive solution to the problems that led to the Martial Law regime of Ferdinand Marcos, and to the problem of preventing future forms of authoritarianism itself. It appears there are weaknesses in the constitutional design.
In the elections where Duterte won, there were five Presidential candidates, almost guaranteeing that the winner will not have a majority vote. There was no provision of run-off election between the two candidates with the highest number of votes. None of the candidates were also elected by political party conventions, where there would have been an intramural contest within each party. There were also no real programmatic political parties with loyal members and a distinct ideology. Political campaigns were also privately funded, without support from the state. Political dynasties have also proliferated, despite the Constitutional provision mandating a law to regulate them.

The system of checks and balances among the Presidency, the Congress, and the Supreme Court has often translated into stalemated governance. Despite a decade of reform, the criminal justice system has remained unresponsive, inefficient, and corrupt.

While the Constitution championed decentralization, empowerment of local governments has not reversed the gaps between the countryside and “Imperial Manila.” Mindanao where Duterte came from was woefully neglected in terms of infrastructure and government services. There was a dissonance between the macro-economic achievements of the previous administration and the abject quality of life of the daily lives of the people. One out of four families (25 million) was poor. The sense of frustration with governance, development, and security was skillfully amplified through the social media in the Duterte campaign solidifying and sharpening the Duterte image of a leader who was down to earth, authentic, patriotic, experienced, proven, and confident.

There was also an element of populism and communitarianism symbolized by the popular reference to Duterte as Tatay Digong (Papa Digong). This evokes the regard many Filipinos had of Ferdinand Marcos during his authoritarian rule, where he was “The Apo”, Father of the Nation. This attraction to an authentic folk hero parallels the rise of populist, iconoclastic leaders like Chavez in Venezuela and now Trump in America.
This spiritual longing to put trust in a leader was awakened and consolidated by a deft social media campaign that created this image of Duterte. The rallies of Duterte during the campaign made full use of symbols such as the Filipino flag, which he would kiss and wrap around himself. This attachment to Duterte came mostly from Mindanao and Visayas, where the sense of alienation from a Metro Manila based government was strongest. The rise of Duterte was also facilitated by the neglect of succession planning by the Aquino administration.

The Duterte administration constitutes a re-frame of the Philippine national interest. Like an earthquake that happens because of energy that has accumulated over time underground that eventually releases itself on the surface, Duterte has changed the internal and external political landscape of the Philippines, and on the way to changing the economic and social landscapes as well.

Duterte has tapped into a real, tangible, widespread feeling of neglect by most of the people. Effective, efficient government is no longer enough. It is too slow. What is needed is transformative, revolutionary government. Normal government has not been sufficiently responsive to the needs of the people.

This current cycle of re-frame of the national interest under Duterte is in the league of the Marcos re-frame. It is a challenge to the existing constitution as a framework for government action on current and pressing problems. It is equivalent to a declaration of autocratic rule in terms of the repudiation of what is accepted and normal constitutional and government behavior.

The Duterte re-frame of national interest depends on the use of the bureaucracy and the military and the police. It does not articulate an ideology. It is held together by personal authenticity – genuineness, understood as being crass, even boorish – going down to the level of the ordinary man. Hitting him, criticizing him gives him more strength, because it refreshes the angst that is felt by the ordinary people who are his true believers. The people do not want to let go of their hope – it is a rare commodity, and the feeling of hope is better than any promise of tangible salvation. There is a ready excuse
for failure – the criticism that have come Duterte’s way. It is like the desperate search for a cure for cancer. The search is already paved by an unrealistic predisposition to believe.

As a final word, the Duterte re-frame of the national interest is a counter-re-frame to the way the political elite in previous administrations have re-framed the national interest to their advantage by not fully implementing the spirit and letter of the 1987 Constitution. While set up formally to deliver inclusive security, inclusive development, and inclusive governance throughout its various provisions, government has not been responsive to the expectations and needs of most of the people. The people needed a drastic, more powerful re-frame resonant with their helpless impatience. Duterte promised that re-frame, and that is where the Philippines is at.

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Discovering the Concept of Nationalism of Today’s New AFP Officer Recruits

Gerralline M Pasia, MNSA *

The article inquires on the concepts of nationalism of new Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Officer entrants currently undergoing the pre-entry training. It also discusses the concept of nationalism are formulated, as well as the level of influence of the current curricula of the AFP Officer Training Schools in the development of their concepts of nationalism vis-a-vis national security. The article shares that love of country is a theme of nationalism that cuts across officer recruits of the three major services. Meanwhile, the article notes that indifference and selfishness are the common themes of being non-nationalistic as conceived by the other recruits. The article likewise underscores exposure to the military as the main influencer of nationalism among the AFP officer recruits and notes that the curricula of the AFP Officer Training Schools significantly contribute in ingraining the sense of nationalism among new entrants to the military.

The article, however, notes the simplistic notion of nationalism shared by the AFP officer recruits and identifies the need for the enhancement of the educational and training programs of the AFP Officer Candidate Schools to provide a more substantive and operationalized understanding of the nationalism within the AFP. The article concludes that while the AFP has a significant role in shaping the concept of nationalism of the AFP officer recruits, other institutions within the Philippine society likewise have the capacity to influence the cultivation of nationalism among the youth who potentially become members of the AFP.

Introduction

In the performance of its task, the degree of nationalism of the military cannot be discounted. Nationalism, especially in the military, is a national security issue because it is at the core of

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the socio-cultural dimension, where different sub-categories such as national identity, national values, patriotism, loyalty, culture and many others are attached.

The Philippine military’s concept of nationalism, like their counterparts in the civilian sectors, may, however, vary depending on the factors that contributed to its formation and may even display various degree of depth and breadth of understanding. In this light, this article shall discuss the concepts of nationalism of new officer candidates currently undergoing their pre-entry training in the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Officer Candidate Schools. Specifically, this article shall seek to answer the following questions: 1) What is the concept of nationalism of the new AFP Officer entrants from the Philippine Army, Philippine Air Force and Philippine Navy who are currently undergoing pre-entry training?; 2) How are these set of trainees able to derive those concepts of nationalism?; and 3) What is the extent of the current training curriculum in terms of reinforcing and/or shaping these concepts of nationalism in relation to security?

What Is Nationalism?

There are innumerable scholarly works about nationalism and in each discourse, various historical events about how nations were developed and formed became the bases of defining it and thereupon, the study of the subject were broken down into different categorizations and criteria.

Anthony Giddens defines it by way of symbols and beliefs existing within, held by many and implying connection amongst members of a population, either regional, ethnic or linguistic.¹

Discussing ethnic identity, Paul Brass assumes that it is not permanent but can be subject to influence and therefore can be changed through time. Having said that, he explained three levels of groupings which are: first ethnic category that he defined as a group of people who possess a distinct cultural criteria from other groups creating cohesion within them; then ethnic community that is characterized when the ethnic category defines and establishes

¹ Joseph R Liobera, *Recent Theories of Nationalism*, Barcelona, ICPS, 1999
criteria for exclusion from or inclusion into other groups whereby claiming to be superior or at least equal to other groups; and lastly, ethnic community that is established when the members of the group defines shared language, history, culture in a macro level and then demand a certain level of sovereignty. When these are achieved, then the ethnic community becomes a nation, a political entity that is with recognized rights.²

For Michael Mann, he posits that the development of nationalism is based upon the consideration of what he calls, four sources of power: ideological, economic, military and political. This means that nations were developed as a result of those four powers along the backdrop of how the states responded to ever growing industrialization and geo-political rivalries.³

When globalization became a buzzword in the early 1990s, this was also the period that nationalism took a different meaning away from the traditional concept. In his book Imagined Communities, Benedict Anderson explained that nations are imagined political community able to cross the boundaries of this imagined community or state as when people of that state are living in another state and still able to maintain his attachment to it.⁴

Relatedly, Barry R. Posen defined nationalism as “the propensity of the individuals to identify their personal interest with that of a group that is too large to meet together; to identify that interest on the basis both of a culture that the group shares; and to believe that this group must have a state structure of its own in order to thrive.”⁵

Herbert C Kelman, for his part, suggested that nation-states in the pursuance of meeting human needs and dignity should be

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able to yield a certain degree of sovereignty and be a global player and contributor to such cause by extending their range of empathy to other human races. He further posits that if this is not considered, nationalism shall not only serve as a unifying factor for a nation but a hindrance to improvement of human dignity in a global perspective.\(^6\)

In summary, the different concepts presented by the writers and social scientists which were based on different eras and nations prove to be timeless and as relevant in today’s world. Symbols and beliefs, ethnic cohesion, outside challenges, culture, political structure, affinity and attachment are all contributory factors in the development of nationalism. On the other hand, in as much as this nationalism can be healthy if it is directed within, it can also create wars when the same is used against another nation.

Nationalism and the Philippine Security Environment

At the regional level, the Philippines identifies itself as a Southeast Asian nation, and so therefore, it is affected by the regional dynamics in the area. Hence, any problem affecting the Southeast Asian region directly affects the Philippines foremost of which is the issue on the disputed islands, cays, reefs and shoals in the whole of South China Sea. Individually, the different countries took varying stance on the aggressiveness of China. Vietnam and Indonesia for example, showed strong response against Chinese activities especially in the areas where there are overlapping claims. Philippines on the other hand took the issue to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, while Malaysia took a more restrained approach through diplomatic means minimizing the access of the media to the minimum in order to prevent the rise of nationalist sentiments. However, ASEAN failed to come up with a common stand against China as the group failed to reach a consensus especially from member countries that have no dispute with China. Lately, President Rodrigo Duterte tucked in his sleeves the result of the Tribunal and chose to reconnect and re-strengthen Philippines-China relations through other means.

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In a larger perspective, the Philippines is situated in one of the strategic locations between the East and the West, an area where economic activities between the major powers of those two divide converge. The Manila Galleon Trade Route (1565-1814) was the primary link between Europe thru Mexico to China, where the Philippines was the gateway to China. While it is no longer the case economically, the Philippines remain to be strategically important to the West in terms of geopolitical situation in this part of the region. The Philippines is closest to many flashpoints including Taiwan Strait Issue (between ROC and PROC), the Korean Peninsula (threat of North Korea), China-Japan territorial dispute over Senkaku Island aside from historical issues between them, the strategic importance of Malacca Strait-Balintang Channel route to the dynamic economies in the region and the China-India border disputes. Add to that the Taiwan-Japan-South Korea-China interest in relation to the United States interest in the region aside from the issues on South China Sea as discussed earlier and its effect to Great Power interests. The Philippines is also strategically important in China’s security perimeter in its Southwest area alongside with Japan, Taiwan, South Korea who are all allies of the United States, not to mention the good relations of the latter to the rest of the Southeast Asian countries.\(^7\)

In the local setting, various threats confront the country today. Foremost is the socio-political stability which challenges the opportunity of each and every Filipino to live in peace and harmony regardless of creed, origin and social station. Among the threats included are the threats arising from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the Abu Sayyaf-Maute-ISIS Terrorist Groups, the Communist New People’s Army, organized crime syndicates including problems on illegal drugs, poverty, graft and corruption, severe calamities brought about by climate change and environmental degradation, smuggling, ethnic/religious conflict, transnational crime and cyberattacks.

Considering all of these, how does nationalism come into play for new officers entering the military service vis-à-vis these myriad of national problems both internal and external against the

backdrop of their common individual reasons of competing for a slot in the organization for personal/family economic survival. Is nationalism still relevant to these future military leaders or the more pressing question is “does the AFP training institution put value to the conceptualization of nationalism in order to fit the expectations of the organization, in particular, and the country which they serve, in general?”

**Conceptualizing Nationalism**

**Social Setting and the Conceptualization of Nationalism**

In response to a question posted by an article in the Philippine Star as to what is the major cause of poverty in the Philippines, readers from all walks of life cited the following: corruption in all sectors of the society, greed/love of money, inequitable distribution of wealth among Filipinos where only 10 percent controls the wealth of the nation, oligarchy particularly in “imperial Manila”, ignorance and/or miseducation, rapid industrialization at the expense of agriculture, government inefficiency, too much/dysfunctional politics, overpopulation, misplaced priorities, lack of discipline, poor governance, and colonialism to name a few. However, looking at it from the macro perspective and then zoom to it individually, it can be summarized into F Sionil Jose’s description of lack of nationalism or put simply, lack of one’s love for his/her country.

But nationalism is such a vague word. According to Dr Romeo V. Cruz in his book “Ang Pagkabuo ng Nasyonalismong Pilipino”, the “concept of nationalism is anchored on the concept of nation or nationhood such that any action displaying acts of nationalism actually pushes for reforms that brings development to the majority of the people and not for certain sectors of the society.” He added

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8 “What is the Major Cause of Poverty in the Philippines?”, *PHILSTAR* (Mandaluyong City, Philippines) April 29, 2011.

9 Francisco Sionil Jose, *Philippine Literature* (presentation, Master in National Security Administration, Quezon City, Philippines, April 2017).

10 Romeo V Cruz, *Ang Pagkabuo ng Nasyonalismong Filipino* (Quezon City: Alemar’s, 1975), 64.
that nationalism is not just a knee jerk reaction to certain events.\textsuperscript{11} In the larger Philippine setting, the concepts of nationalism of prominent personalities varied according to the prevailing social setting during their time.

Consider the two most prominent nationalists of their time: Jose Rizal and Andres Bonifacio for instance. If Rizal was credited for liberty and civil rights for the Filipinos, to his credit, it was Bonifacio who articulated nationhood by referring to the Philippine Islands as “Sangkalupaan” or “Katagalugan” which called for absolute independence from foreign power.\textsuperscript{12}

Another key period in the Philippine history is the post-World War II period or the early independence period. During this time, the Philippines was granted political independence, however, much of the Philippine economy remained highly dependent on the US markets and the US also maintained control of military installations. This prevailing situation in the era paved the way for the “Filipino First” Movement championed by a nationalist, Claro M Recto. He is of strong belief that US-bases made a mockery of the nation’s independence exposing it to nuclear annihilation; therefore, he advocated an independent foreign policy. Above all, he also projected the economic aspect of nationalism, which opposed the granting of special incentives to attract foreign investments and instead advocated nationalist industrialization. His concept of nationalism is that it is “...a banner of freedom proclaiming the national interests of the people, to be protected and safeguarded by themselves so that the fruits of their efforts and the wealth derived from their God-given resources shall accrue to them and thus enable all of our people to rise above poverty and march on to prosperity, contentment and dignity.”\textsuperscript{13}

Another event in our nation’s history that can be considered as an event that awakened nationalistic sentiment is the Martial Law

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{13} Mrs Leticia R Constantino, “\textit{What is Filipino Nationalism}”, \textit{The Filipino Mind}, May 17 2005, http://www.thefilipinomind.com/2005/05/what-is-filipino-nationalism-mrs.html
period. It was an era when the hegemony of ruling class before, during and after martial law was threatened by Communism. To suppress the threat, Martial Law was declared. The period is best described for an unprecedented record of extra judicial killings, torture, illegal detention and various human rights violations. The situation was capitalized by oligarchs in the other political divide who also wanted to be in power and inarguably was successful to influence the unsuspecting majority of the Filipinos who were tired of the dictatorship. The EDSA People Power of 1986 brought the Filipinos to a new height of nationalistic pride as the bloodless revolution can only credit itself to the collective people who marched and gathered in EDSA to topple the dictator and enjoy the freedom of democracy.

The post-EDSA period brought a certain level of hope but it was only short-lived. Much unlike the key periods of the nation’s history, this period can be characterized by a long period of relative peace and development in a highly democratized society but is always polarized by the very volatile political landscape.

Corazon Aquino’s Government was acclaimed worldwide for her commitment to democracy but viewed as having accomplished little with regard to the hopes and promises of EDSA People Power. Her presidency survived a series of military coup attempts. At the end of her term, she chose a military general, DND Secretary Fidel Ramos as her anointed candidate for the presidential election. Her anointed won a majority vote over a very popular candidate, Miriam Defensor-Santiago.

Fidel V Ramos’ term is considered as one of the most orderly and productive presidencies in the country. His slogan of “Kaya Natin Ito” as part of his Philippines 2000 program brought back the Filipino people to their sense of being more nationalistic. His major accomplishments include among others: organized cooperatives,

14 Roberto D. Tiglao, “If the Marcos economy was so bad, why is his economic tsar Virata so respected?”, The Manila Times, November 28, 2016, http://www.manilatimes.net/marcos-economy-bad-economic-tsar-virata-respected/298783/

ended power crisis, revival of country’s economy, ended oligopolies in shipping, telecommunications and banking, achieved peace with Muslim rebels and military rebels. He was succeeded by his opposition Vice President Joseph Estrada who won over his anointed House Speaker Jose de Venecia.\textsuperscript{16}

His successor, Joseph Estrada, was a very popular president among the poor riding on his program of Justice, Economy, Environment, Peace. His populist stance, though, did not sit well with many of the country’s powerful businessmen.\textsuperscript{17} He can best be remembered for his declaration of an all-out war against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front for disregarding the government’s offer for peace talks and captured its quarters and other camps where many soldiers died in the said campaign.

During her presidency, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s programs of laying down economic fundamentals for a strong republic were backed up by improvements in policies. Whatever gains however were eclipsed by more than 840 extra judicial killings especially journalists, budget mismanagement, poverty, corruption, and unemployment. Her presidency has further divided the country despite her efforts to unify it as she lost her moral ascendancy early in the process.\textsuperscript{18}

The previous president, Benigno Aquino III, focused on fighting corruption as much as he focused on berating her predecessor blaming her for all the woes the country is suffering even after the initial years of his being president. But he is also blamed for the Luneta kidnapping fiasco, Yolanda rehabilitation mishandling, Mamasapano massacre, corruption charges (too) and even dysfunctional trains of the MRT. While he may be credited for being the President who brought China to court, he is also known for influencing the impeachment of Supreme Court Chief Justice Renato Corona for simple misdeclaration

\textsuperscript{16} Encyclopedia Britannica. The Philippine since 1990. https://www.britannica.com/place/Philippines/Martial-law#ref387420

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.

Up to this period, each government is always characterized by aspirations to bring about peace and development as part of the nation building efforts but as they turn over the national leadership, there lies a chasm that separates the predecessor and the successor which polarizes the political landscape. These cyclic scenarios since 1986 are also marred by charges of corruption that invalidates whatever gains a particular president has achieved.

In this kind of social setting, how do the AFP officer recruits, who were born in the early years of post-EDSA, conceptualize nationalism? Did this scenario of divisiveness influence how they conceive nationalism?

**Evolution of Filipino Nationalism as a Basis for Conceptualization**

According to Dr Romeo V Cruz, PhD, “nationalism, in the context of Philippine experience, initially develops as a consciousness of belonging to one people, oneness and identification with a universal and imperial Spanish society.” In his article “Nationalism in 19th Century Manila”, he said that prior the Spanish occupation, nationalism was not present as the unity of the Filipinos were divided by ethnicity and differences in language.

Elaborating on the concept, he said that the “concept of nationalism is anchored on the concept of nation or nationhood; second, nationalism is not just a knee-jerk reaction in relation to a certain event; and third, an action is considered a display of nationalism if it is pushing for reforms that brings development to the majority of the people and not for certain sectors of the society.” He further outlined that in general, the two kinds of nationalism that perpetrated in the Philippine society consist of one, Conservative Liberal Nationalism, which is borrowed, and two, radical nationalism,

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which was born out of colonial oppression in the idea of democracy, equality, justice, freedom and good governance. According to him, the country’s history from the early 1800s to present is replete with the tug of war of these two general concepts and/or traditions of nationalism.\(^{21}\)

**Ethnicity as Basis for Conceptualization**

According to Thomas Hylland Eriksen, ethnicity is an aspect of social relationship between persons who consider themselves as essentially distinctive from members of other groups of whom they are aware and with whom they enter into relationships”.\(^ {22}\) Francisco J. Gil-White, offered a more simplified definition of ethnicity by way of what it constitutes:

1. **An ideology of membership by descent.** Ethnicity is not culture because the former is biologically inherited while the latter is socially acquired which means that physical appearance, beliefs and practices would manifest an ethnicity;
2. **The perception of a unique and homogenous culture.** To an ‘ethnic’, the culture is his birthright, and not, say for example, religion; and,
3. **Normative inter-marriage.** This means that marriage across other ethnic line is considered immoral or unnatural.\(^ {23}\)

In the Philippine context, ethnicity as a basis for nationalism may at first glance be problematic in view of the strong ethnic ties that take the form of regionalism.

**Culture as Basis for Conceptualization**

Historically, the Philippines does not constitute a nation as the Islands or region is each led by a chieftain. Their individual cultures

\(^{21}\) Cruz, Ang Pagkabuo ng Nasyonalmong Filipino,64


are influenced by their interaction with other countries mostly brought about by visiting traders from nearby countries such as China, India, Indonesia and Malaysia, to name a few, giving Asian touch to its cultural heritage. During the period of Spanish colonization, this multi-culturalism of the Philippine society was superimposed by Christianity which the colonizers introduced but the multi-culture qualities remained. Add to that the instances that these colonizers married Filipinos which resulted to blending of those two cultures. The same thing happened when the Americans colonized the country as well as the brutal occupation of the Japanese interweaving these foreign cultures with the Filipinos even more.

However, according to James Fallows in his article A Damaged Culture, the very culture of the Filipinos leads the country towards self-destruction and self-defeat at a time when some other countries were brought to their productive best by their own culture. Interestingly, the neighboring countries showcased economic development while being short of natural resources, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore – but for the Philippines, Fallows said, the culture makes this rich country poor.

*Education as Basis for Conceptualization*

Education plays a crucial role in awakening and strengthening the sense of nationalism in a society. It unifies the ideas, establishes social cohesion and serves as an effective tool to shape a national identity which is essential in the formation of nationalism.

Leticia Constantino, in her speech, said that education should not serve the purposes of those who control, plan and shape the educational system which was what happened in the days of colonization wherein the educational system served the Spanish and Americans. Constantino emphasized that education should be a vehicle to educating for nationalism and for social awareness and not only for production of knowledge, skills and attitude. It must also inculcate to be pro-Philippines and pro-Filipinos which have national

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24 James Fallows, “A Damaged Culture”, *The Atlantic*, November 1987
pride and sense of national identity.\textsuperscript{25}

\textit{Environment as Basis for Conceptualization}

The different security challenges in various areas of the Philippines—incidence of poverty permeating various parts of the region, long history of conflict including Muslim separatist groups (MILF, MNLF, Abu Sayyaf Group, Maute Group, BIFF), communists, clan wars, criminal groups, proliferation of drugs, inefficiency of government services, corruption in government, lack of economic opportunities—may drive a person drive towards apathy or involvement, either for individual survival or the pursuit of collective national goals. In some areas, the very environment leads a person in committing to an advocacy and participating in organizations that promote the well-being of the majority, or in the other side of the spectrum, using the feeling of indignation to work against the government.

\textit{Military as Basis for Conceptualization}

In his book “On War”, Clausewitz conceptualized the Trinity of War as a set of factors governing the conduct of war. This trinity according to him is the interplay of Government, People (or public) and the Military such that when war shall be conducted or when the state decides to participate in a war, there should be an agreement between the three. Further, he said the outcome of war is decided upon by three factors, namely: Reason, Passion, and Chance. Some interpret passion as nationalism.\textsuperscript{26}

To explain the trinity, Clausewitz said that public opinion shapes government policy, where the government justifies its actions to the public. Similarly, public opinion influences military doctrine and vice versa. In the same manner, military strategy influences political objectives while the government influences military resources.\textsuperscript{27}


\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
More importantly, whoever has with him, the three factors—reason, passion, and chance—will be victorious.

Following Clausewitz concept, Posen posits that nationalism is associated with war especially in the first half of the 20th century. He said that this sense of nationalism drives a person’s commitment and cooperation which may convert to combat power in the area of conflict.  

The AFP as a Case Study

The foregoing is a discussion on the concept of nationalism based on the author’s interview with a selected number of new AFP entrants from the Officer Candidate Schools of the Philippine Army, Philippine Navy, and Philippine Air Force.

Concept of Nationalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARMY</th>
<th>NAVY</th>
<th>AIR FORCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Love of Country</td>
<td>Love of Country</td>
<td>Providing Service to the Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selfless</td>
<td>National Pride</td>
<td>Being Obedient to the Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upholding of Customs and Traditions</td>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Affection to the Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Pride</td>
<td>Selflessness</td>
<td>Brotherhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Sacrifice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Improvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loyalty to the Country</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patronizing Own Products</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: **Yellow** – common for the three Branches of Service; **Blue** – common for PA and PN; **Green** – common for PN and PA

28 Posen, *Nationalism, the Mass Army and Military Power*. 
In terms of the concept of nationalism, the common theme across PA, PN, and the PAF is the Love of Country. Selflessness/Self-sacrifice and National Pride are common between the PA and the PN while Service is common between the PN and the PAF. Unique theme/s include upholding of customs and traditions for the PA, self-improvement, loyalty to country, patronizing own products and principled for the PN and brotherhood for the PAF.

**Ways to Show Nationalism**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARMY</th>
<th>NAVY</th>
<th>AIR FORCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expression thru Little Things</td>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Practicing Customs and Traditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing the General Welfare</td>
<td>Observance of Culture and Tradition</td>
<td>Dedication to Education/Talent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in Traditional Filipino Presentations</td>
<td>National Pride</td>
<td>Providing Service with Unrelenting Will to Sustain It</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observance of Customs and Traditions</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Being Obedient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proactive Partner of Government</td>
<td>Having a Decent Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Preference to Buy Local Products</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: **Yellow** – common for the three Branches of Service; **B Green** – common for PN and PAF

In terms of ways to show nationalism, the three BOS identified observance of customs and traditions (which include giving respect to the flag) as common to them. Providing service (with unrelenting will to sustain it) is common between the PN and the PAF. Unique themes for the PA include expression of nationalism in little things, knowing the general welfare, and participation in traditional Filipino presentations. For the PN, it includes having national pride, support to and giving premium on leadership and being proactive partner of
government. Similarly, dedication to education/talent, being obedient, having a decent work and preference to buy local products compose the unique themes for the PAF.

**Concept of Non-Nationalistic People**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARMY</th>
<th>NAVY</th>
<th>AIR FORCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insensitive</td>
<td>Self-Centered</td>
<td>Indifferent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selfish; Self-centered</td>
<td>Disregard of Customs and Traditions</td>
<td>Xenocentric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence of National Pride</td>
<td>Critical Attitude</td>
<td>Terrorists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grumbler</td>
<td>Absence of National Pride</td>
<td>Self-interested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconscionable, Scofflaw, Abusive of Power</td>
<td>Uncaring</td>
<td>Not Obedient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diminishing Output</td>
<td>People who Left the Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Infidelity</td>
<td>Negatively Criticizing the Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unproductive</td>
<td>Unproductive People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>People who do not have Sense of Utang na Loob (Gratitude)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Traitor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: **Yellow** – common for the three Branches of Service; **Blue** – common for PA and PN; **Green** – common for PN and PAF; **Maroon** – common for PA and PAF

In terms of the concepts of non-nationalistic people, the three BOS considers the insensitive (uncaring, indifferent) as the attribute of not nationalistic people. Self-centered (selfish, self-interested) are also common among them as well as those who are grumblers (with critical attitude) and fond of negatively criticizing the country. People who are unconscionable (terrorists) and abusive of the power
entrusted to them are common to PA and PAF respondents while those who are not proud of the country are common with PA and PN. Unique themes for the PN include people who have diminishing output and who are unproductive, especially those in government service as well as those who practice infidelity (perhaps because it contributes to moral degeneration). For the PAF, unique themes include those who are disobedient, xenocentric, people to left the country, unproductive people, people who do not have sense of gratitude and traitor.

**Advantages of being Nationalistic**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARMY</th>
<th>NAVY</th>
<th>AIR FORCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Encourages Exemplary Deeds for Emulation of Future Generations</strong></td>
<td>Self-Fulfillment</td>
<td>Gained Reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fosters Cohesiveness and Unity</strong></td>
<td>Exemplary Work</td>
<td>Influencing others to Help the Country as Well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fosters National Pride</strong></td>
<td>Positive Contribution to Society</td>
<td>Enjoy Military Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provides Venue for Societal Contribution</strong></td>
<td>Exemplar</td>
<td>Nation Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brings Pride, Honor and Self-fulfillment</strong></td>
<td>Privilege to do Important Tasks</td>
<td>Finding a Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengthens Moral Fiber</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Confidence in one’s Profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sense of Belongingness in the Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Fulfillment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: **Yellow** – common for the three Branches of Service; **Blue** – common for PA and PN; **Green** – common for PN and PAF; **Maroon** – common for PA and PAF
In terms of the advantages of being nationalistic, the common theme is that it is a vehicle to give positive contribution to the society and the country as a whole and that it brings good reputation, honor and self-fulfillment. For the PA and the PN, nationalism encourages exemplary deeds for emulation of future generation. For PA and PAF, nationalism fosters cohesiveness and sense of belongingness in the community. Unique themes for the PA are it fosters national pride and strengthens moral fiber; for the PN, to be exemplar; and, for the PAF, to enjoy military service, be part of nation building, finding a purpose and having confidence in one’s profession.

Disadvantages of being Nationalistic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARMY</th>
<th>NAVY</th>
<th>AIR FORCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limits a Himself of Certain Level of Liberty</td>
<td>Possibility of being Taken Advantaged of</td>
<td>No Disadvantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tendency to become Manipulative; Egocentric</td>
<td>Restrictions</td>
<td>Lesser Time with Family or Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential cause for conflict</td>
<td>Tendency to be Self Righteous</td>
<td>Negative Perception from Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being an Outcast in the Organization</td>
<td>Nationalism as Conditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Expectations may Possibly not met</td>
<td>Wrong Priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relatively Shorter Stay in Military Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Disadvantage Lies in Misinterpretation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: **Blue** – common for PA and PN; **Green** – common for PN and PAF

In terms of disadvantages of being nationalistic, there is no common theme among the three BOS. However, PA and PN see that
being nationalistic gives that person a certain level of restriction, be it self-imposed or not; and, the tendency to become manipulative, egocentric and self-righteous. The PN and PAF shares the perception that to be nationalist, he must be ready to the possibility to be an outcast in the organization or be seen by others negatively. According to PA, being nationalistic may be a cause for potential conflict. PN’s unique themes include possibility of being taken advantaged of or being given a high regard such that the expectation may not be met. PAF identifies several unique themes which include lesser time with family or self, making nationalism as conditional, leads to wrong priorities, ushers to relatively shorter stay in the military.

**Figures of Nationalism and their Attributes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARMY</th>
<th>NAVY</th>
<th>AIR FORCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selfless</td>
<td>Selfless</td>
<td>Patriotic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service-Oriented</td>
<td>Committed to Serve</td>
<td>God-centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the Power to Influence</td>
<td>Dedicated</td>
<td>Visionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated</td>
<td>National Pride</td>
<td>Inspiring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proud of Filipino Culture</td>
<td>Exemplar in Community</td>
<td>Brave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servant Leader</td>
<td>Committed to Learning</td>
<td>In Service of Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise Solidarity and Cooperation</td>
<td>Exemplar in Class</td>
<td>Honorable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to Customs and Traditions</td>
<td>Preserves Culture and Tradition</td>
<td>Selfless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offers Unique Contributions</td>
<td>Voice of the Marginalized</td>
<td>Dedicated to Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principled</td>
<td>Committed to Peace</td>
<td>Source of Wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Humble</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: **Yellow** – common for the three Branches of Service; **Blue** – common for PA and PN
In terms of figures of nationalism, PA and PN mostly identified soldiers, teachers, former co-workers and even relatives while the PAF mostly identified their current and former Commandants. For the attributes, being selfless, dedicated and service-oriented are common to the three BOS while being proud of Filipino culture is common to the PA and the PN. Unique themes for the PA include power to influence, servant leadership, exercise solidarity and cooperation, committed to upholding customs and traditions, and being principled. For the PN participants, unique themes include national pride, being exemplar in class and community, commitment to learning and also peace, being the voice of the marginalized. Unique themes in the PAF has something to do with their sets of Commandants and other PAF officers who they perceive as patriotic, God-centered, visionary, inspiring, brave, honorable, source of wisdom and humble.

**Perception of their Level of Nationalism before entering Military**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARMY</th>
<th>NAVY</th>
<th>AIR FORCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relatively high level of nationalism (4)</td>
<td>Relatively at Very High Level (4)</td>
<td>Relatively at Very High Level (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatively nationalistic (2)</td>
<td>Relatively Lower (5)</td>
<td>Relatively Lower (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatively low level of nationalism (3)</td>
<td>Relatively at Very Low Level (1)</td>
<td>Relatively at Very Low level (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Nationalistic (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms on how they perceive themselves as nationalistic before joining the officer candidate training, 4 PA, 4 PN and 5 PAF participants rated themselves relatively high level; 2 PA participants gave self-assessment of relatively nationalistic, 3 relatively low level and 1 not nationalistic; 5 PN participants gave self-assessment of relatively lower and 1 relatively very low; while for the PAF respondents, 2 rated themselves relatively lower and 3 relatively at very low level.
Perception of their Level of Nationalism after entering Military

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARMY</th>
<th>NAVY</th>
<th>AIR FORCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relatively Improved (6)</td>
<td>Relatively Improved (5)</td>
<td>Relatively Improved Sense of Nationalism (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yet to be improved (1)</td>
<td>Sustained (3)</td>
<td>Sustained (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Answer (3)</td>
<td>Decreased (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Answer (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of their level of nationalism while on training, 6 PA respondents rated relatively improved, 1 yet to be improved while 3 gave no answer. For the PN, 5 rated relatively improved, 3 said their level did not change, 1 said he is more nationalistic before entering the military while 1 did not provide assessment. For the PAF, 9 rated themselves as relatively improved and only 1 said he maintained the level of nationalism as when he was still a civilian.

Influencers of Nationalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARMY</th>
<th>NAVY</th>
<th>AIR FORCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong Family Values</td>
<td>Exposure to Military</td>
<td>Exposure to Military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Fulfillment</td>
<td>Strong Family Values</td>
<td>Personal Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to Military</td>
<td>Personal Reflection</td>
<td>Educational Background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Cultural Values</td>
<td>Personal Reflection</td>
<td>Exposure in their Respective Local Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burden to Contribute to Society</td>
<td>Personal Reflection due to an Event</td>
<td>Childhood Dream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection due to Local Conflict</td>
<td>Social Awareness</td>
<td>Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Social Problem</td>
<td>Exposure to Civic Activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: *Yellow* – common for the three Branches of Service; *Blue* – common for PA and PN; *Green* – common for PN and PAF; *Maroon* – common for PA and PAF

In terms of the influencers of nationalism, exposure to military is common to all the three Branches of Service (BOS); strong family values, burden to contribute to society/perceived social problem and personal reflections due to conflict between the PA and the PN and personal reflection and social awareness or exposure in their local community between the PN and the PAF. Somehow, childhood dream as identified by the PAF is related to self-fulfillment identified by the PA. Unique themes for the PA include strong cultural values. For the PN, unique themes include exposure to civic activities, religion and personal reflection. For the PAF, the unique theme is the important of the education sector in introducing ways on how to be nationalistic.

*Intervention of the AFP to Reinforce the Concept of Nationalism*

The concept of nationalism is expected to be clear to each and every member of the AFP much less the people behind the training of the new officer candidates. To inquire on how nationalism is promoted through the education and training programs of the AFP, the author likewise conducted interview with the heads of various AFP education and training institutions. The foregoing is a discussion on the insights of the said AFP officials on nationalism within the AFP.

According to the Commander of the Air Education Training and Doctrines Command (CAETDC), an Air Force officer candidate develops an ever-increasing sense of nationalism as he learns the magnitude and importance of the profession and experiences responsibilities in higher positions. In terms of the training of the officer candidates, he added that it is the Constitution and the AFP Core Values that provides the guiding principles in the subject of nationalism. On the other
hand, the Commander of the Naval Education and Training Command (CNETC) mentioned that nationalism is taught in light of love for the country and the AFP’s mission to secure Philippine territorial integrity and sovereignty as well as protecting the Filipino people. Meanwhile, the Commandant of the Philippine Army Officer Candidate School (CPAOCs) shared that their program on education and training is being refocused on the Army motto of Service and Security. As shared by Commandant of the Philippine Navy Officer Candidate School (CPNOCS) and Commandant of Philippine Air Force Candidate School (CPAFOCS), there is no published standard on how nationalism is to be taught in the pre-entry training as it is not even in the Program of Instructions. Nationalism, according to them is already embedded in the different lectures and activities. CPAFOCS added that the PAF are not short of officers who have displayed their love for country and share their experiences in various forums attended by the officer candidates.

As people involved in the training, they acknowledge that it is difficult to integrate the officer candidates together “in one boat”, so to speak but what hold them together according to CNETC and CAETDC are the core values. CPAOCs explained that the reason why they are training the officer candidates to be good in patrolling, intelligence, maneuver and the like is to enable the trainees to provide good service to the people upon completion of their course.

CNETC also shared that they conduct Troops Information and Education (TI and E), which include the indoctrination process to sustain the spirit of nationalism. CAETDC expounded on this in explaining that in the PAF, they teach the officer candidates nationalism by associating the subject with the people who have served so well, possess exceptional skills, and influenced the whole organization that not any normal individual could. On the other hand, the CPNOCS noted that they reinforce the sense of nationalism during the quarterly Commandant’s Time as well as the Values Formation. According to the CPAFOCS, they likewise hold the Commandant’s Time twice a month. She admitted, however, that nationalism is not given much emphasis as there are varied topics being discussed.
There is one aspect of the training that is common to all and that is the restrictions or the limited access to internet which is standard in all military training institutions. CNETC believes that the Command needs to be selective in terms of social media and to really to know what are those applicable ones regarding our social and cultural information. To him, information about the current events is not really for the basic courses. The Commandant PNOCS shares the same thought because he believes that such access to information should be given when they are to undergo the Philippine Navy Officers Basic Course. Taking a different view, CAETDC believes the training institution just needs to come up with filters so that access to the internet and social media becomes constructive. Nevertheless, CPAOCS said that at a certain point in officer training, they are given access to what they call clubroom where the class is given access to cable television. With this, they are encouraged to discuss among themselves what they think about the current events.

The aforementioned AFP officials likewise identified the following points of improvement in the AFP’s education and training program vis-à-vis nationalism:

- Strengthening social awareness of officer candidates;
- Strengthening the values system of the officer candidates to complement their appreciation of AFP core values;
- Developing among the officer candidates the attitude of knowing and assessing emerging security situations;
- Recognizing leaders and people of integrity as part of the curricula of the AFP Officer Candidate Schools;
- Including military history subjects, that focus on leadership, as part of the curricula of the AFP Officer Candidate Schools; and,
- Elevating the psyche of officers beyond mere duty fulfillment and towards nationalism.
Conclusions and Recommendations

*The AFP is as a venue to exercise nationalism*

The officer candidates may have been driven by different motivations in entering the AFP (e.g. job and financial security or personal pride) but without the heart for service, they will not have lasted. As expressed by one officer candidate, the best way to survive is to have a sense of purpose and belongingness to an organization that works for the benefit of others. Likewise, as shared by one officer candidate, while civilian citizens will have to search for ways to help the country, military officers have the advantage of being in the field of serving the nation.

These manifestations of idealism should be nourished and sustained as long as they are part of the AFP and thereafter, as responsible citizens. It should be kept from being corrupted by mediocrity, apathy, or the so called rewards of the service such as promotion. The author has seen senior officers who, in the later years of their career, were no longer driven by the desire to serve. They were simply driven by an obsession to be promoted, even at the expense of slandering competitors or worse, putting the organization in a bad light.

It is in this respect that the different organizational strategies of the PA, PN and the PAF in the form of the Roadmap 2028, Sail Plan 2020 and Flight Plan 2028, may be considered game changers in propelling the whole organization to become more professional for the pride and satisfaction of the Filipino people. In this regard, the AFP should remain to be steadfast in its quest to become a more professional organization of world class standards in the coming years.

*Nationalism is enhanced thru military training*

Looking on the response of the 30 officer candidates before their training, only 13 considered themselves to have a very high level of nationalism. During the post-training interview, however, 20 out of the 30 officer candidates expressed that their level of their nationalism
has improved. This means that there were those who really felt the impact of the training.

This is not surprising as the AFP is traditionally considered an avenue for exhibiting nationalism. Surprisingly, however, the concepts of nationalism that the officer candidates shared may be described as bland and lacking in fire expected of the military. An analysis of their insights would reveal the lack of passion that is expected of the military; the same passion that Clausewitz espouses, together with reason and chance, to achieve victory in war. Moreover, it is notable that patriotism and honor were not underscored by the officer candidates as primary concepts of nationalism despite the testimonies from the heads of the AFP education and training institutions that nationalism is being injected into the training through the different core values. This may be considered a reflection of how the officer candidates view the AFP from the outside (i.e., the AFP is more equated with service, selflessness, and dedication). Perhaps future officer candidates shall have patriotism as a preconception of nationalism in the AFP in view of the bravery and heroism of our soldiers in Marawi Crisis, which is still on-going as of this writing. Nonetheless, the AFP should exert more effort in projecting, among their soldiers, how patriotic and honorable the organization really is.

It is important to note, however, that the AFP is not fully responsible for the above-mentioned concern. Indeed, the period in which these officer candidates have developed consciousness was a period of relative peace and development wherein the primary challenges were mostly in the form of disasters and calamities. It is also a period of various attempts on nation building against the backdrop of a divided nation, rampant corruption, and probably excessive democracy. At a certain point, the military was utilized to fill gaps in government service delivery. Hence, service, selflessness, and dedication were prominent themes in the primary concept of nationalism of the officer candidates. Nevertheless, with the changing international and national security environment, it is necessary for the AFP to consider returning to its primary mandate: securing Philippine territorial integrity and national sovereignty and protecting the Filipino people.
The following are some considerations that may help the AFP education and training institutions in improving their respective programs:

- **Quality of instructors on nationalism.** Instruction is a very critical factor in shaping nationalism. The concept of nationalism shared by the officer candidates is a reflection of the quality of instruction.

- **Adequacy of subjects on nationalism.** Although nationalism is embedded in all the lectures and activities, teaching it is still dependent on the lecturer.

- **Adequacy of knowledge on military heroes.** Although not its exclusive responsibility, the AFP should not be remiss in inculcating among its member the history of the country’s military heroes as well as the battles and campaigns they led.

- **Promotion of nationalism thru the AFP’s Core Values.** The value of having living role models in the organization may inspire officer candidates and lead them in understanding and appreciating deeper meaning of core values as well as nationalism.

- **Standardizing the instruction of nationalism.** The limited number of common themes in the concepts of nationalism and attributes of nationalists may indicate the need to develop a standard form of instruction pertaining to the subject.

- **Information access to current events.** In the age of information, the officer candidates should not be deprived of their right to know what is happening in the security environment. Guided critical discussions may provide a venue for cultivating their social consciousness and nationalism.

*The AFP is as good as the people who man it*

As an organization, whose mission is to protect the people and the state, the AFP is dependent on the people that man it. The love of country, search for sense of purpose, and the desire to help the people and the nation, among others, are dependent on how solid foundation of nationalism. Based on the author’s interviews with the officer candidates, the primary motivators or influencers of nationalism are anchored on personal reflection and strong family values which
may also include the exposure to military (family). Based on the data gathered by the author in the conduct of his study, it can be inferred that the efforts of education and religious sector as well as concerned government institutions are inadequate in terms of building a strong foundation for nationalism. Relatedly, in terms of nationalism, the AFP will only be as good as the people it can recruit.

Clearly, the development of concept of nationalism is not the responsibility of one institution alone, much less the AFP. Each citizen bears a patriotic duty in the Philippine society, whether within the family, the basic unit of society, or the Philippine Government. Corollary to this, it is important to inquire on whether other institutions in the Philippine society have their own programs and activities to help strengthen and/or enhance the sense of nationalism of its members.

In the development of strong Filipino nationalistic spirit, following questions need to answered or considered:

- Is there a government agency with the power to require leading media networks to promote nationalism and history in their respective programs?
- Can the Philippine Government revive the Experimental Cinema of the Philippines for the purpose of producing quality historical films of Filipino heroes and require public schools to screen such films for the benefit of public educators and students?
- Can the Department of Interior and Local Government require all local government units to establish historical areas in their public squares to display the deeds of heroic figures from their respective localities?
- Can the Philippine Government encourage the religious sector to incorporate nationalism in their teachings?
- What are the prospects for amending the National Service Training Program Law and once again making the Reserve Officer Training Corps mandatory?
- How can the Philippine Government effectively protect and maintain the country’s national and cultural heritage?
In conclusion, the concept of nationalism of the officer candidates joining the military is based on the foundation laid by the influencers discussed earlier. On the other hand, the AFP concept of nationalism is based on its history, constitutional provisions, its mission, and core values. The way those concepts are taught and indoctrinated to the new officer candidates largely depends on the appreciation of the training staff or lecturers on nationalism. Suffice it to say that the AFP Training Commands can only do so much molding the new officer candidates who already have their own concepts of nationalism prior to their entry into the military training program. When the officer candidates are subjected to the AFP molding process, a new shape of nationalism is formed. This new form integrates two concepts: the personal concept of nationalism of the officer candidates and organizational concept presented in a personalistic manner by the training staff. Given such an arrangement, there is a possibility of molding these officer recruits to become responsible bearer of arms and protectors of the people. However, this would largely depend on how they were trained as well as on the role models they choose.

Based on how society influences the sense of nationalism developed by an individual prior to entering the military, the Philippine society indeed deserves the kind of armed forces it has.

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The Impact on Human Security of Birth Registration among Families of Irregular Filipino Migrants in Sabah
Charmaine A Serna-Chua, MNSA *

This examines the Philippine Government’s registration of birth of undocumented children born in Sabah within the human rights framework. It may be recalled that international human rights instruments have long emphasized that birth registration is a fundamental human right that opens the door to other rights, including the right to a legal identity, access to education and health care and demand for state protection. In legal terms, children whose births were not registered do not exist and their right to a name and a nationality is denied. In establishing the connection between Philippine birth registration and the rights of undocumented children born in Sabah to a legal identity, access to social services and state protection, the researcher conducted document analysis, interviewed subject matter experts, held focus group discussions and traveled to Sabah to observe the challenges faced by these children in their everyday lives. The researcher analyzed the impact of Philippine birth registration on human security, taking into consideration this group of children’s triple vulnerability as children, as migrants and as undocumented migrants. Overall, the study emphasizes the crucial importance of birth registration in fulfilling the right of this highly vulnerable group of children to a name and a nationality; explores the obstacles towards the fulfillment of their rights to education, health care and state protection; and highlights the actions that the Philippine Government has to explore in order to provide them with a meaningful Philippine citizenship.

Introduction

In 2002, the sexual abuse of a 13-year old girl inside a detention center in Sabah triggered a diplomatic row between the Philippines and Malaysia. The homeless child complained that she was raped by three immigration personnel before being “deported” to the Philippines.

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along with thousands of Filipinos in a crackdown on irregular migrants from Sabah. The Philippines immediately lodged a diplomatic protest against Malaysia. Malaysia responded by sending a probe team to the Philippines to look into the case. The team interviewed the child, ruled that she is a Malaysian citizen, and sent her back to Sabah. Prime Minister Mahathir demanded an apology from Manila, which demand was promptly rejected by the late Secretary of Foreign Affairs Blas F. Ople.¹

Almost 15 years later, the problem of undocumented children in Sabah persists, with no solution in sight. The Federal Task Force in Sabah and Labuan estimates that there are more than 30,000 children of irregular Filipino migrants in Sabah, whose births were not registered.² The parents of these children are apprehensive to register their children’s birth with the National Registration Department (NRD), or the Jabatan Pendaftaran Negara, for fear of arrest and deportation. With no official identity documents, these children are legally non-existent and considered “invisible” by society. They can be vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and other violations of basic human rights.³ The situation of these children becomes more dismal when their parents are apprehended and sent back to the Philippines.⁴ Many of these children end up living on the streets, with no documents in support of their identity, as was the case of the 13-year old child who was sexually abused by immigration personnel before being “deported” to the Philippines.

Yet, Article 7 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child guarantees the right of a child to be “registered immediately after birth” (United Nations, 1989). While birth registration does not in itself confer citizenship upon a child, it is extremely important because it establishes a legal record of the child’s name, where a child was born and who his or her parents are. It also enables the child to obtain a birth certificate, which is the most visible evidence of a government’s

² Office of Asia and Pacific Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs, Issue Brief: Undocumented Children in Sabah as of 16 June 2016, 2016, Pasay: ASPAC.
⁴ Office of Asia and Pacific Affairs, Issue Brief.
legal recognition of the existence of a child as a member of society.

Indeed, the importance of universal birth registration has been consistently highlighted in international discussions. The UN General Assembly (UNGA) has included the issues of birth registration and preservation of identity in at least one resolution every year since 2001.

However, for many governments, there remain serious social and political obstacles that prevent them from complying with the duty to ensure universal birth registration. In our region alone, the non-registration of birth of members of indigenous communities and children of irregular migrants proceeds from a variety of reasons. These reasons persist through decades of structural violence and historical narratives of exclusion (United Nations Children’s Fund, 2002).

Filipinos in Sabah: A brief overview of Filipino Migration to Sabah

The free movement of people between Sulu and Sabah has a long history brought about by geographic proximity and economic trade that dates back to the ninth century. The Suluks, Tausugs and Samal of Sulu and Sabah interacted with each other within the network of maritime kingdoms or thalassocracy in Southeast Asia, long before the arrival of the European colonizers in the region.

Previous studies on the movement of people from Sulu to Sabah indicate several distinct waves of migration. The first phase began when the Spanish colonizers pushed towards Sulu and Tawi-Tawi in the late 15th century forcing ethnic groups such as the Suluk and the Bajau to straddle the boundaries of Sabah. Professor Datuk Dr. Ramlah Adam, a senior lecturer at the University of Malaysia, described a period when Sabah even came under the political and administrative

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power and influence of the Sultanate of Brunei and the Sultanate of Sulu. Although those power and influence waned and disappeared over time, many of the traditions and practices from the era of the Sulu Sultanate still subsist among the local ethnic communities in Sabah.\(^8\)

The Japanese scholar Hiromu Shimizu wrote that the second wave of migration consisted of professionals, like English and Math teachers, engineers and technical experts, who were hired by the British North Borneo Chartered Company to work in its logging concessions during the colonial era. These professionals came to Sabah before World War II and they occupied the upper middle class of Sabahan society.\(^9\)

In the late 1960s, Mustapha Datu Harun, a Suluk, held the position of Chief Minister of Sabah. He was believed to have discreetly encouraged many Suluks to move to Sabah during his term of office from 1967-1976. (Kassim, Filipino Refugees in Sabah: State Responses, Public Stereotypes and the Dilemma Over Their Future, 2009)

The third wave of migration started in 1973 with the massive influx of Filipinos to Sabah brought about by the fighting between Philippine government forces and the Muslim secessionist movement. Thousands of families, who were displaced from their homes by the conflict, were accommodated by the State Government of Sabah as irregular migrants. Assisted by the UN High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Sabah Government established a Settlement Unit (Unit Penempatan) in the Chief Minister’s Department to handle refugees who were fleeing Mindanao for the relative safety of Sabah.\(^10\)

Since Malaysia is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees which recognizes the right of persons to seek asylum from persecution in other countries, Filipino refugees were considered by the Malaysian Government as irregular

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migrants. As irregular migrants, they were granted permission to stay in Sabah by the then Minister of Home Affairs under Passport Order Exemption (2) (Amendment). Later, they were issued with registration acknowledgment receipts and work passes which were eventually converted into “IMM13” passes, a codename used by Malaysian Immigration Authorities to refer to these special privilege passes. IMM13 passes allowed holders to legally stay in Malaysia provided they were renewed annually following the provisions of The Immigration Act of 1959. The permission to stay allowed the refugees to stay and work without limitation of time in Sabah, but with limited access to social services, employment opportunities, and public amenities.\(^\text{11}\)

The UNHCR stopped providing assistance to Filipino refugees in Sabah in 1987. With the withdrawal of the UNHCR, the Settlement Unit took complete control of the administration of the refugees. In 1989, the duties and functions of the Settlement Unit were assumed by the Federal Special Task Force for Sabah and Labuan under the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Federal Government of Malaysia.\(^\text{12}\)

The Filipino refugees, who in the 1970s and 1980s were recognized as such by the UNHCR, are now categorized by UNHCR Kuala Lumpur as “people of concern”. Their needs are considered less urgent than the newly arrived asylum seekers. As of 2014, UNHCR Kuala Lumpur says that there are roughly 80,000 Filipinos who are “people of concern” living in Sabah. Most of these refugees, if not all, have chosen to remain in Sabah despite the signing of a peace accord in 1992 between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Moro National Liberation Front.\(^\text{13}\)

Finally, the last wave of migration was composed of illegal migrants who relocated to Sabah in the late 1970s after the Philippine economy ran into difficulty following the oil crisis and the domestic


\(^{13}\) Ibid.
financial scandal involving President Ferdinand E. Marcos. It was said that the movement of these “economic migrants” to Sabah in search of better livelihood was encouraged by Pres. Marcos as a temporary solution to the economic crisis. (Shimizu, 2002)

The Politicization of Migration to Sabah

The Malaysian scholars Shamsul Bahrin and S. Sothi Rachagan suggested in a pioneering study on Filipinos living in Sabah that the real motives of Sabah Chief Minister Mustapha for granting Filipino-Muslims with permission to stay were more than just “humanitarian”. Chief Minister Mustapha, they said, was also driven by economic, political and personal objectives. Economically, the Chief Minister saw the advantages of accommodating the refugees. The 1970s was a time when logging and plantation sector activities in the eastern part of Sabah were expanding, but the state was facing acute labor deficit due partly to the small population size. The arrival of the Filipino refugees was timely as it helped overcome the labor shortage. The refugees were welcomed especially by state administrators and employers.14

Chief Minister Mustapha’s personal and political motives were also related to his religious belief, his origin, and his role as the head of the Muslim-based political party, the United Sabah National Organization (USNO). As the majority of the refugees were Muslims, he felt it was his duty as a devout Muslim to protect his Muslim brothers from Mindanao. Chief Minister Mustapha claimed ancestry to the Sultanate of Sulu where the refugees came from. Moreover, accepting the refugees in Sabah was potentially beneficial to him politically, as their assimilation would help boost membership of USNO and consequently its political strength.15

Further on the issue of the exploitation of migrants for political purposes, Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad was also accused of deliberately legalizing the status of Filipino and Indonesian illegal migrants in Sabah. “Project Mahathir” was allegedly carried out

15 Ibid.
to increase the participation of Malay-Muslims in elections and secure for the United Malay National Organization (UMNO) a strong foothold in Sabah. With the supposed consent of Dr. Mahathir, politicians were said to have made use of Filipino and Indonesian illegal migrants in order to decide Sabah elections.\textsuperscript{16}

Although Sabah is the second largest state in Malaysia, it has played an insignificant role in Malaysian politics until UMNO discovered its potential. When Dr. Mahathir took over the premiership in 1981, Sabah’s politics were considered as underdeveloped. With Dr. Mahathir at the helm in the 1990s, UMNO transformed Sabah into a state that actively participates in Malaysian politics. This incident coincided with the “extraordinary” population growth in Sabah. A large number of illegal migrants from the Philippines and Indonesia allegedly crossed the Sabahan borders to become “phantom voters” in Sabah state elections. During this time, UMNO membership in Sabah jumped to about half a million allowing it to increase its influence in state politics. Sabahan ethnic groups such as Kadazandusuns and Muruts legitimately felt threatened by the growing Muslim community in the state.\textsuperscript{17}

There is a widespread perception that “Project Mahathir” was a serious menace to the native population of Sabah. The issuance of genuine Malaysian Identity Cards (ICs) to illegal Filipino and Indonesian migrants, supposedly with the approval of Prime Minister Mahathir himself, offered these migrants with the opportunity to participate in Bumiputera privileges. Filipinos and Indonesians were considered as the “new Bumiputeras.” These “extra people with ICs” increasingly gained influence in Sabah and practically reduced the Kadazandusuns and Muruts to a minority in their own state.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
Malaysia’s Policy on “Economic” Illegal Migrants

Until the 1980s, the entry of Filipino workers into Sabah was unregulated. Clandestine entry by the workers and their family members was the norm and they were engaged illegally by employers to work mainly in the rural and agricultural sectors. As their number grew, many moved to the urban areas to take up jobs in construction and service industries and this made their presence conspicuous to the general public.\(^{19}\)

By the early 1980s the aggregate number of all foreign workers in Sabah had grown to an estimate of around half a million. Soon, they were perceived as competing with the local urban poor for limited resources. Their sizeable population was soon noticed by the locals and the issue of illegal immigrants found itself in the national political agenda. (Kassim, Filipino Refugees in Sabah: State Responses, Public Stereotypes and the Dilemma Over Their Future, 2009)

Illegal migrants in Sabah soon began to be viewed not just as a threat to border security but a serious challenge to internal political stability. In an attempt to come to grips with the problems caused by the presence and employment of illegal migrants, the federal government started to formulate a foreign worker policy. (Mahadi, 2015) In Sabah and Labuan where the problems associated with illegal migrants are considered grave, the policy on irregular migrants is managed by the Federal Special Task Force for Sabah & Labuan under the National Security Council (NSC) in the Prime Minister’s Department. (Kassim, Filipino Refugees in Sabah: State Responses, Public Stereotypes and the Dilemma Over Their Future, 2009)

Illegal migrants working and residing in Malaysia, more particularly in Sabah, were seen as a security threat. They have no basic rights as residents or workers and they must be rounded up, charged in court, sentenced, imprisoned, and once they have served their sentence, deported.\(^{20}\)


\(^{20}\) A. Kassim, *Filipino Refugees* in Sabah.
Filipino Irregular Migrants: Refugees and “Economic” Illegal Migrants

As pointed out earlier, Malaysia is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention. As such, the Malaysian Government lumped Filipino refugees and illegal migrants together under the general category of “irregular migrants”. The focus of most government policies and actions were not on the status of the refugees but on their socio-economic, political and security impact on Sabah.\textsuperscript{21}

To illustrate, refugee children were initially given access to state schools up to secondary levels. Such access was limited beginning 1995 when the Malaysian Federal Government imposed an annual fee on the schooling of children of refugees. The school fees have to be paid in a lump sum annually at the beginning of the academic year. The imposition of the school fees did not stop refugee children from attending state although many refugee families are poor. Official statistics show that in 2003, over 51,814 Filipino children were in state schools at the primary and secondary levels. However, what led to a decline in the number of refugee children attending state schools in the subsequent years was an amendment to the 1996 Education Act which made it compulsory for all children to present their birth certificates upon enrolment.\textsuperscript{22}

Philippine Government’s Registration of Birth of Undocumented Children Born in Sabah

The Philippine Government has adopted a pro-active approach in encouraging irregular Filipino migrants in Sabah to register their children’s birth with the Philippine Consulate General in Kuala Lumpur (PCG KL). In 2013, the Philippine Statistical Authority (PSA) allowed the registration of children born to irregular migrants in Sabah through the issuance of Memorandum Circular 2013-02 (MC 2013-02), otherwise known as the Guidelines in the Delayed Registration of Undocumented Children in Sabah.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{23} Office of Asia and Pacific Affairs, Issue Brief, 2016.
In view of the vulnerable situation of undocumented children in Sabah, MC 2013-02 was pragmatic as it relaxed the stringent requirement on proof of Philippine citizenship of the child’s parents. By requiring the submission of an affidavit from the village chief certifying on the identity of the child or an affidavit of employment if the person is already working, MC 2013-02, in effect, sets aside the requirement of proof of Philippine citizenship of either parent. For its part, PCG KL has waived the payment of fees for the delayed registration of undocumented children born in Sabah.\textsuperscript{24}

However, there are still Filipino migrants who do not report their children’s birth. One author observed that there is reluctance on the part of these migrants to accept the liberality of the Philippine Government, as most of them “would normally prefer to become Malaysians but they do not have a choice.” This reflects the complexity of the situation of undocumented children in Sabah where “the impulse to escape statelessness is by no means as strong as the impulse to hold out for a particular, preferred nationality that might be gained in the future.” \textsuperscript{25}

Importance of Birth Registration

In 1983, the US International Institute for Vital Registration and Statistics published a technical paper entitled, The National Importance of Civil Registration and the Urgency of its Adaptation to a Modern Society. The handbook was the first document which recognized the two basic functions of civil registration, namely, the collection of statistical data and the documentation of the family organization.

On the function of civil registration in documenting the family organization, the handbook states that the family, as the natural and fundamental unit of society, is entitled to the protection of the state. The juridical system governing the relations between individuals organized within the family and its connection to the state depends

\textsuperscript{24} Office of Asia and Pacific Affairs, \textit{Issue Brief}.

on civil registration laws and procedures.\textsuperscript{26}

In 1998, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) published its seminal article on birth registration and human rights. In the publication entitled, The Progress of Nations, UNICEF highlighted birth registration as the “first right” on which access to other rights depends. The article argued that children who had not been registered are denied their birthright by their very “invisibility.” Without birth certificates, these children spend their lives on the edges of the official world, “falling over obstacles that never arise in the paths of those who had the good fortune to be registered when they were born.”\textsuperscript{27}

\textit{International and Domestic Guarantees to Birth Registration}

International guarantees to birth registration

The right to a name and a nationality has a long and honorable pedigree. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN General Assembly Resolution 217 A III), which was adopted in 1948, emphasized that “everyone has the right to a nationality” and that “no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality.” The right to a nationality was further reinforced in 1959 with the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of the Child (UN General Assembly Resolution 1386 XIV) affirming the right of a child, from birth, “to a name and a nationality.”

The right of every child to be registered at birth is also specifically recognized in Art. 24(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which reads, “Every child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have a name.” (UN General Assembly, 1966) In its General Comment No. 17, entitled, Article 24: The Rights of the Child, the Human Rights Committee said that Art. 24(2) should be interpreted as closely as possible to the right of the child to special measures of protection. As such, the obligation

\textsuperscript{26} D. R. Toral, \textit{The National Importance of Civil Registration and the Urgency of its Adoption to a Modern Society} (Bethesda: International Institute for Vital Registration and Statistics, 1983).

of governments to register children immediately after birth is aimed towards lessening the danger of abduction, sale or of traffic in children, including other forms of exploitation that are incompatible with the enjoyment of the rights provided for in the Covenant. (Human Rights Committee, 1989)

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) reinforced the right of the child to birth registration when it said,

“The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents.” (UN General Assembly, 1989)

The CRC, which has 195 state parties, further provides that parties to the agreement should ensure that implementation of these rights in accordance with their national laws and their obligations under other international instruments, most particularly where the child would otherwise be stateless.

The rights guaranteed under the CRC, including Art. 7, must be observed in conformity with the general principles of the Convention, including non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right to life, survival and development and the right of the child to express his or her views. (UN General Assembly, 1989)

In General Comment No. 7, the Committee on the Rights of the Child emphatically stated that non-registration can impact negatively on a child’s sense of personal identity. Further, children whose births are not registered may be denied basic rights, such as health, education and social welfare. It reminded States parties to take all necessary measures to ensure that all children are registered at birth. This can be achieved through a universal and well-managed birth registration that is accessible to all and free of charge.

In General Comment No.13, the Committee even went a step further by including the failure to obtain a birth registration for the child, “when those responsible for the child’s care have the means,
knowledge and access to services to do so,” as a form of child neglect.

Two of the most recent international human rights instruments both contain provisions relating to birth registration. Article 29 of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Member of their Families (CMW) reads, “Each child of a migrant worker shall have the right to a name, to registration of birth and to a nationality.”28 For its part, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) emphasizes in Art. 18 (2) that children with disabilities shall be “registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by their parents.”29

In its General Comment No. 1 on migrant domestic workers, the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families reiterated the right of a child to birth registration, viz.,

Children of migrant workers shall be registered soon after birth, independently of the migration status of their parents, and be provided with birth certificates and other identity documents. States should take all appropriate measures to ensure that children are not deprived of a nationality. (Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, 2011)

The Philippines is a state party to almost all of the core human rights instruments, except the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. Malaysia, on the other hand, is a state party only to CRPD, Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and the CRC.


Malaysia’s ratification of the CRC came with 12 reservations on the basis of inconsistencies with its Federal Constitution and national laws. However, it gradually withdrew some of its reservations, such that by October 2013, Malaysia only had five reservations to the Convention, namely, 1) Art. 2 (principle of non-discrimination); 2) Art. 7 (the right to register a name and nationality at birth); 3) Art. 14 (freedom of thought, conscience and religion), 4) Art. 28 (free and compulsory education for all) and 5) Art. 37 (freedom from torture and deprivation of liberty).

Irregular Filipino migrants in Sabah

As earlier discussed, “irregular migrants,” as they are officially referred to in Malaysia, refer to both refugees and illegal economic migrants. The earliest work on refugees was that of Yahya Ismail who, in 1979, wrote about the problems of the Vietnamese refugees in Malaysia. Subsequent works on refugees include that of Bahrin and Rachagan who in 1984 examined the arrival of Filipino refugees into Sabah and the basis of their accommodation by then Chief Minister Mustapha, the responses of various ethnic groups in Sabah, and the implications of the entry of the Filipinos on Sabah politics.³⁰

In the first half of 1990’s many works on illegal economic migrants started to emerge. Rachagan wrote about the Malaysian experience with Filipino and Vietnamese illegal migrants.³¹ Kurus also did a study on Indonesian and Filipino irregular migrants who came to Sabah for economic reasons. Kurus said that the economic turmoil of the mid-1990s affected the capacity of Sabah to provide employment to both local and foreign workers. He however predicted that while Sabah was working towards reducing its dependence on foreign workers, it was highly likely that Sabah would continue to depend on migrant workers in the short and immediate term. The Sabah experience, he argued, suggested for the need for a more systematic approach in order to regulate the flow of migrant labor in the state.³²

Human security

In 1994, the UN Development Program (UNDP) released its precedent-setting Human Development Report which radically shifted the security paradigm from the realm of states to the level of individuals. In rationalizing the shift, the report argued,

“The concept of security has for too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from the threat of a nuclear holocaust. It has been related more to nation-states than to people. Forgotten were the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who sought security in their daily lives. For many of them, security symbolized protection from the threat of disease, hunger, unemployment, crime, social conflict, political repression and environmental hazards.” (UNDP, 1994)

The report submitted that the concept of security is composed of two main aspects, viz. 1) safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression; and 2) protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, in jobs or in communities. (UNDP, 1994)

The Commission on Human Security (CHS), which was established in 2001 in response to the call of UN Secretary-General Annan for a world “free of want” and “free of fear”, endeavored to develop a concept of human security for use in policy formulation and implementation. On May 2003, the Co-Chairs of the Commission, former UNHCR Sadako Ogata and Prof. Amartya K. Sen, presented the Commission’s final report entitled, Human Security Now. The report succinctly defined human security thus,

“Human security means protecting vital freedoms. It means protecting people from critical and pervasive threats and situations, building on their strengths and aspirations. It also means creating systems that give people the building blocks of survival, dignity and
livelihood. Human security connects different types of freedoms – freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to take action on one’s behalf.”

Prof. Sen has, in an earlier work, expounded on the concept of human security by presenting a theoretical framework that involves two core normative claims, viz., 1) the freedom to achieve well-being is of primary moral importance; and 2) the freedom to achieve well-being is to be understood in terms of people’s capabilities. “Capabilities”, in this context, is used to refer to the people’s real opportunities to do and to be what they have reason to value. Prof. Sen wrote that social change must be pursued in terms of the richness of human life proceeding form the change. However, the quality of human life is complex in itself. It is in this sense that Prof. Sen proposed the “capability approach” which sees human life as a set of “doings and beings”, collectively known as “functionings”. The evaluation of the quality of life that proceeds from social change is strongly related to an assessment of the individual’s “capability to function.”

This study constitutes an attempt to examine how these children’s “rightlessness” and “de facto statelessness” affect their human rights. It also constitutes a humble attempt to expand the knowledge base on society’s efforts to capacitate these children for them to have real choices and make informed decisions concerning their lives upon attaining the age of majority.

Presentation and Analyses of Data

The study was undertaken to determine the impact of the Philippine Government’s registration of birth of undocumented children born in Sabah on human security. Specifically, this study was carried out to: 1) determine the opportunities that may be explored by undocumented Filipino children born in Sabah whose births had been registered by PCG KL; 2) determine the relevance of birth registration to this group of children’s realization of basic human rights; 3) identify the factors that impede the ability of these children to access

the opportunities associated with birth registration; and 4) identify the measures that may be adopted by the Philippine Government to further protect and promote the rights of this highly vulnerable group of children.

This section constitutes a presentation of the results of the study and is broken down into four sections, viz., legal identity, education, health, and protection from exploitative labor. These sections constitute the themes or concepts linked to birth registration which came out during the data analysis phase of the research. Through the ensuing discussion, this chapter hopes to underscore the relationship between the registration of birth of undocumentd children born in Sabah and their access to services and state protection.

The first three research questions will be answered within the framework of each of the four identified themes or concepts.

**Legal Identity**

At the outset, the researcher was faced with the difficulty of determining the exact number of undocumented children born in Sabah whose births had been registered by PCG KL, as PCG KL does not have an adequate system for keeping track. The reports of birth (ROB) of undocumented children born in Sabah are sent to the PSA, through the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), together with all ROBs registered by PCG KL all over Malaysia. These reports are sent to the DFA on a monthly basis, more particularly on the month immediately following registration. It is however important to point out that PCG KL conducts around 10 to 12 mobile consular missions to Sabah every year.34

FGD respondents acknowledged that their children’s possession of a Philippine birth certificate means that their children have been recognized by the Philippine Government as Filipino citizens. The children, on the other hand, cannot be said to have an adequate grasp of the concept of citizenship. When asked if they are Filipinos, most of the children answered that they are “Bajaus”. As regards the use of the children’s birth certificates, the FGD respondents

indicated that have no plans at the moment to go back permanently to the Philippines. As such, they admitted, that they cannot find an immediate use for their children’s birth certificates.

Indeed, when asked about the benefits of birth registration, all of the FGD respondents emphasized the role which a birth certificate can play in facilitating the issuance of another legal identity document – a Philippine passport. Respondents believed that a Filipino cannot possess a Philippine passport without being birth registered.

MC-02-2013, which effectively allowed the registration of birth of undocumented children born in Sabah, paved the way for irregular Filipino migrants born in Sabah to be issued with ROBs and consequently regular Philippine passports with five-year validity. While there is also no system in place to track down those who had been issued with Philippine passports following the registration of birth, key informants and FGD respondents relate that possession of a Philippine passport has allowed some irregular Filipino migrants, who have reached the age of majority, to be issued with work permits in the agricultural sector or Visit Passes for Temporary Employment (VPTE), also known as Pas Lawatan Kerja Sementara in Bahasa Melayu. Many of these workers were sponsored by plantation employers, including state-owned plantations, in Sabah.

Indeed, as stated in the first chapter, under Part VII of Malaysia’s Immigration Act of 1959, Sabah authorities have the power to issue passes or permits for non-Sabahans to enter, stay or work in Sabah. As such, an employer in Sabah wishing to employ foreign workers needs to obtain a license from the State Labor Department and a recruitment quota from the Committee for Foreign Workers in Sabah. (Department of Labour, Sabah, 2016). The quota is normally based on a “worker-per-acre” estimate, which essentially means that the number of foreign workers that may be sponsored by a plantation owner is based on the hectares cultivated. Upon approval, the employer submits an application for the issuance of the necessary VPTE to the Immigration Department. The Immigration Department either approves, subject to restrictions, or denies the issuance of the VPTE. VPTEs are issued for a period ranging from three to five years and may be regularly renewed thereafter. Insofar as the Malaysian
Government is concerned, the Philippine passport constitutes a valid legal identity document upon which the grant of an immigration visa may be made.

On the other hand, the possession of a Philippine birth certificate or a Philippine passport or both can further marginalize irregular Filipino migrants. These two legal identity documents can easily identify irregular Filipino migrants and their children who may be subjected to detention and subsequent deportation. The possession of a Philippine passport by a Filipino refugee, who holds an IMM13, is also not allowed by the very fact that he is a refugee and is suffering from persecution in his home country. As was shared by a key informant, holders of IMM13 who apply for passports are strictly advised not to show their Philippine passports to Malaysian authorities nor disclose to their employers, co-workers or neighbors that they had been issued with a Philippine passport.

**Access to education services**

An amendment of Malaysia’s Education Act of 1996 requiring the presentation of a birth certificate prior to enrolment effectively denied undocumented children access to education. Many children who do not have birth certificates, including children of irregular migrants and refugees, were forced to drop out of school.

Key informants said that, to date, there is still no government policy or guidelines for the provision of education to refugees, asylum-seekers and irregular migrants. However, stories of undocumented children who do not have birth certificates being allowed to attend public schools at the primary level have consistently cropped up during discussions conducted in this study. The State Economic Planning Unit of Sabah, in its joint publication with UNICEF entitled Children in Sabah: Situation Analysis, also acknowledged that there are undocumented children who do not have birth certificates but were allowed to attend public school upon the consent of the headmaster. The parents, however, are expected to produce the necessary birth certificate when the children complete Primary Grade 6. At this time, the children are again required to submit a birth certificate to be allowed to sit for the Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR), or commonly known as the
Primary School Achievement Test. Primary students have to pass the UPSR for them to gain admission to secondary school.

In cases where the headmaster has given his consent for an undocumented child to attend his school, the school admission application of the child is submitted to the District Education Office. The application is reviewed by the district office after which it is forwarded to the Sabah Education Department for final decision. If the education department approves the application, the child is admitted to school and the family pays an annual fee of RM120 for primary education. (State Economic Planning Unit, Sabah, 2015) Parents are required to be knowledgeable in navigating through the lengthy application process which could, however, be hampered by the parents’ illiteracy.

PH-MY Memorandum of Understanding on Education

In February 2014, Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert F. Del Rosario and Malaysian Minister for Education II Dato’ Seri Idris bin Jusoh signed the Philippines-Malaysia Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Field of Education (“PH-MY MoU on Education Cooperation”). Under the agreement, the two sides agreed to explore cooperation in the areas of education assessment, technical and vocational training, information technology, science and mathematics, and a community-based alternative education program for Filipino children in Sabah. Several months later, the Philippine Embassy in Kuala Lumpur (Kuala Lumpur PE), Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with six ALCs in Sabah to enhance the capacity of these centers in providing basic literacy skills to Filipino children.\(^\text{35}\)

In the meantime, Kuala Lumpur PE continuously monitors the operation of the Filipino-run ALCs, provides guidance on management concerns and grants limited financial and material aid. The financial aid provided by Kuala Lumpur PE has allowed the ALCs to purchase tables, chairs, computers and electric fans for use in the centers. Some of the centers were also able to renovate their facilities through the financial aid provided.

\(^{35}\) Office of Asia and Pacific Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs, Issue Brief.
generosity of members of the Filipino community and other non-government organizations who regularly contribute in the fund-raising activities supported by Kuala Lumpur PE.

Filipino-run Alternative Learning Centers in Sabah

While Filipino-run ALCs do not require the presentation of a Philippine-issued birth certificate prior to enrolment, some of these centers emphasize the importance of having legal documents and encourage parents to register their children’s birth with PCG KL.

The need for an alternative education program for undocumented children was recognized by some members of the Filipino community as early as 2010. One of the key informants to this study said that she noticed many out-of-school children despondently roaming the streets of Kota Kinabalu after government schools imposed the requirement of a birth certificate prior to enrolment. She knew that these school-age children are exposed to greater risk of exploitation and violence. She also feared that these children could be easily lured into gangs and probably exploited by adults for activities such as glue sniffing, gambling and drug peddling.

The ALCs visited for this study are located in rented and crammed houses. Two of the centers visited had classrooms on the top floor accessible only by narrow and steep flight of stairs. They do not carry any name boards as they are not recognized by the Malaysian Government and hence legally not allowed to operate. They prefer to remain inconspicuous for fear of attracting the wrath of government authorities and being shut down. These centers also do not issue certifications of learning to their students.

It is common to find students who are much older than the grades they are meant to be in. As such, there were older children who were mixed up with younger kids in primary one. From interviews, it was found out that once these students are over 14 years of age, they tend to drop out. Key informants explained that at this age, parents would rather have their children earn to reduce the financial burden on the primary breadwinners.
Unfortunately, the teachers are at risk of being detained and arrested as their VPTE classify them as agricultural workers. In one center visited, the teacher had her passport confiscated by Sabah authorities because she was caught teaching. Her two other co-teachers had also been invited for questioning by immigration authorities. During class, she had to explain to her students that classes at the center might have to be suspended for an indefinite period time so as not to incur the wrath of Sabah authorities. One teacher has commented that the direct effect of such clampdown is low attendance among students in the weeks following the center's re-opening of classes.

The students, their parents and their communities

The parents recognize the important role that education plays in their children's lives. For them, the ALCs function as agents of change for their families and communities as well. Their children are now able to apply basic literacy and numeracy skills in their daily lives. Some parents said that their children can now help them determine if they are being paid the proper wages by their employers. They also welcome the efforts of the teachers to instill values in their children such as manners, cleanliness, personal hygiene and health habits.

Alternative Learning Centers run by the UNICEF, the Indonesian Government and NGOs

Informants interviewed for the study confirmed that there are many other organizations in Sabah which provide alternative learning opportunities for undocumented children who do not have access to government schools. As mentioned earlier, Kuala Lumpur PE has reached out to some of these centers. These ALCs are licensed by the Malaysian Government.

Access to health services

Access to health services in Malaysia is difficult for non-citizens, especially for irregular migrants and their children. This is due to the fact that non-citizens are required to pay a higher fee for consultations and hospital services.
Informants further said that undocumented people are reluctant to approach government health facilities for fear that they may be reported to immigration agencies, detained, penalized for violation of immigration laws and deported to the Philippines. Government hospitals require the presentation of Malaysian identity cards, birth certificates, or immigration documents issued by Malaysian authorities prior to the grant of health services. The presentation of documents, however, in government facilities does not automatically result in a waiver of fees since only Malaysian citizens are entitled to free health coverage.

**Protection against exploitative labor**

While registration of birth is expected to play a role in protecting children from underage employment, it did not appear to do so for the children subject of this study. Since there is no existing mechanism that will allow the Philippine Government to collaborate with the Malaysian Government in protecting the rights of undocumented Filipino children against underage employment in Sabah, this group of children remains vulnerable to be engaged in paid or unpaid work that could be harmful to them.

Informants from the ALCs were one in saying that many children drop out of school at around 14 years of age to earn a living and help with the expenses at home. A key informant interviewed at a counseling center, which caters mainly to irregular Indonesian migrants, said that a lot of young people go to the center to ask for help in finding work. These young people would reason out that they need to find work to augment the family income. While the FGD respondents said they will not let their children stop with their schooling to let them work, there is no assurance that the same sentiment holds true for the majority of the families of irregular Filipino migrants in Sabah. Even the Sabah Government has acknowledged in a 2015 report of the State Economic Planning Unit that people in Sabah leave school early to enter the labor force.

Key informants explained that enforcement of child labor laws would not only frustrate the interests of children, who are driven to work as a means of survival, but also the interests of employers,
who benefit from the cheap labor that children offer. Indeed, as it is with most developing countries,

**Summary of Findings**

*Legal Identity*

In this study, it is established that birth registration presents a direct impact on the fundamental right of an undocumented child, who was born to an irregular Filipino parent in Sabah, to a name and a nationality. In brief, legal identity is a direct and important consequence of birth registration. Once registered and issued with a birth certificate, the child will have proof of his very existence, name, details surrounding his birth, parentage, and national identity or citizenship. As was emphasized in the introduction, while birth registration does not in itself confer citizenship, it is essential for acquisition of citizenship based on each country’s law. The child registered now has a legal identity and proof of his citizenship which he acquired from one or both of his parents. It may also be used to enable the holder to access other identity documents, such as a passport.

In the case before us, the issuance of a Philippine birth certificate to an undocumented child born in Sabah facilitates his access to a Philippine passport. The possession of a Philippine passport, in turn, presents an opportunity for the undocumented individual to legalize his immigration status through employment. The possession of a passport could also facilitate the individual’s travel to the Philippines or even to a third country which could accommodate him for a variety of reasons, viz., leisure, legal migration for employment or migration arising from marriage to a citizen of a third country.

However, it is also important to reiterate the observation made by a key informant that proof of legal identity may be used adversely against individuals as a means of identifying non-citizens when they come in contact with formal services or legal systems. Proof of legal identity is important for protecting citizenship rights, but not the rights of non-citizens, especially so in Malaysia where the disparity between the rights of citizens and non-citizens is highly pronounced.
Access to education

Theoretically, once nationality is established, the door is opened for the child to enable him to exercise the rights and enjoy the privileges and services that the nation offers to its people. However, in the case of the children subject of this study, the research revealed a mixed picture regarding the relationship between possessing a Philippine birth certificate and access to basic services, such as primary education.

There was no one among the key informants and the FGD respondents who said that they knew of a case where an undocumented Filipino child born in Sabah was denied access to primary education because his parents presented to school authorities a Philippine issued birth certificate. Undocumented parents in Sabah hesitate against enrolling their children in public schools, which require the submission of a birth certificate prior to enrolment, as it might expose their immigration status. Their poverty, on the other hand, prevents them from enrolling their children in private schools because of the hefty school fees. As such, these undocumented children face other more fundamental barriers in accessing primary education – illegal immigration status and poverty – than the lack of a birth certificate. Nevertheless, undocumented children born in Sabah were found to be at risk of exclusion from school in all contexts – either directly because of the Malaysian policy requiring the presentation of a birth certificate or indirectly because of the fees imposed in private schools and the Malaysian policy imposing fees for non-citizens who wish to attend public schools.

It is in this context that the Philippine Government pursued a policy of encouraging an alternative education program, which is geared towards basic literacy, for undocumented Filipino children. The study found out that there was no indication that a birth certificate is required prior to enrolment in alternative learning centers.

Access to health services

Education is not the only state service effectively denied to undocumented Filipino children in Sabah. Medical care is also less
easily available to this group of children, regardless of the fact of birth registration. As was stressed in the preceding section, non-citizens, whether legally or illegally staying in Sabah, are denied access to state-subsidized health care. While there is no national law which explicitly denies undocumented children from availing of health services, considerable obstacles on the ground prevent this group of children from accessing this basic human right. The barriers stem from the lack of a Malaysian-issued birth certificate which indicates the children’s citizenship, to the fear by the parents that they would be reported to immigration authorities, and to the inability of the parents to pay the fees for services. Even where there is no duty imposed on hospitals to report an undocumented patient to state authorities, the fear of detection among parents prevents them from taking their children to public health institutions. In sum, the study found that there is no positive association between the Philippine Government’s issuance of a birth certificate to an undocumented child born in Sabah and his access to health care.

Protection from exploitative labor

Lastly, the potential of birth registration to support the child’s right to protection against a wide range of abuse and exploitation has been widely considered as a benefit of registration. However, in the subject of this research, the possession of a birth certificate will not protect the group of children studied from underage employment. As was stressed in the preceding section, poverty leads undocumented Filipino children to seek informal and undeclared work which puts them beyond the reach of available protection mechanisms.

Conclusions

The Philippine Government’s registration of birth of undocumented children born in Sabah constitutes a fulfillment of its obligation to promote the rights of a child to a name and a nationality as embodied in the CRC as well as its commitment to “provide legal identity for all, including birth registration,” expressed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At the moment, the major challenge for the Philippine Government is to provide a meaningful
citizenship to undocumented Filipino children, whose births had been registered by PCG KL.

The research has persistently highlighted the profound interdependence of basic children’s rights. To ensure their healthy development, children should be given a name and a nationality and granted access, at the minimum, to education and healthcare. To deny access to one of these rights is to affect the enjoyment of all other rights. To deny access to any of these rights is to limit the number of opportunities that will be available to these children throughout their lifetimes.

It has been argued in similar cases that the denial of opportunities and services to children probably stems from the host government’s decision to penalize parents for violating immigration laws or deter those who might want, in the future, to violate immigration laws. While it is difficult to conclude on the possible reasons behind the host government’s denial of access to vital opportunities for the children subject of this study, the consequence of the host government’s action is certain -- de facto statelessness for this highly vulnerable group of children.

The obstacle to rights realization is much more complex than the absence of legal identity. As such, while birth registration might reduce the number of “effectively” stateless persons, it certainly will not reduce the number of unprotected persons.

In the case of undocumented Filipino children subject of this study, the registration of their birth automatically granted them with a legal identity, which they may use in their transactions with the Philippine Government. However, such legal identity may not be invoked against the Malaysian Government which exercises authority over the place where these children reside. In short, these children have become “functionally” stateless -- stateless in the sense that despite their having a nationality, they cannot turn to the state where they live for protection and assistance. Their having had their births registered did not translate to an automatic access to basic social services inasmuch as the grant of social services in their place of residence is closely linked to the host government’s regulation of
its population and immigration policies. The children’s irregular immigration status has trapped them inside a tangled web of de facto statelessness. Such exclusion, which results in a condition called “rightlessness”, has profound human rights repercussions.

A child’s “rightlessness”, brought about by his exclusion from the community where he resides, jeopardizes his claim to attention, protection and care by the state. He is excluded from state services that are essential for his survival and development, namely, primary health care and education. The child, in effect, is punished and held culpable for his parents’ decision to give birth to him while the parents are in an irregular situation. The child is deprived of key elements that will help him develop his human capability to lead the kind of life he has reason to value, including a consistent education and health services.

In short, while birth registration in the present case provided the children whose births were registered with a legal identity and proof of such identity, it did not necessarily lead to a protection or promotion of their basic human rights associated with the grant of legal identity. Indeed, in the context of this study, it was established that while the absence of legal identity might constitute a serious impediment to a good life, the grant of legal identity is not a guarantee thereof.

**Recommendations**

*For PCG KL to continue to raise awareness on the importance of PHL birth registration among families of irregular Filipino migrants in Sabah.*

Registration of birth is of paramount importance. No Filipino child born abroad, regardless of immigration status, should be denied his right to a name and a nationality accorded to him under international human rights instruments to which the Philippines is a state party.
For the DFA, DepEd, CHED and TESDA to collaborate towards the negotiation of a government-to-government agreement with Malaysia to ensure that undocumented Filipino children are granted access to an uninterrupted education in Sabah.

Individuals and society benefit from the right to education. As has been emphasized throughout this study, education is fundamental for human security and development. It is a powerful tool in developing the full potential of everyone and in promoting individual well-being.

Solicit the Malaysian Government’s consent for efforts to provide basic medical services to undocumented Filipinos in Sabah.

The Philippine Government may seek partnerships with Filipino multinational companies (MNCs) in Sabah to provide basic medicines and health services, through medical missions, to irregular Filipino migrants as part of these companies’ corporate social responsibility. All efforts to forge partnerships with MNCs in Sabah should be disclosed to the Malaysian Government. Vulnerable and marginalized groups in societies are often less likely to enjoy the right to health. The lack of attention to undocumented children in Sabah constitutes a violation of their basic human rights.

Explore the possibility of opening a Philippine Consulate General in Kota Kinabalu to service the needs of Filipinos living in Sabah.

There is an overriding need to establish a consulate in North Borneo to service the consular needs of Filipinos who live in the island.

For the DFA to support efforts to continue discussions on the human rights of stateless persons in the agenda of the AICHR and ACWC.

ASEAN created and empowered both the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the ASEAN Commission on the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) with robust human rights agenda. While both bodies have been criticized
for lack of independence and weak enforcement capabilities, as they do not have reporting and complaints mechanism, they are capable of providing a forum for sustained discussion on important human rights issues.

For the Department of Justice and the DFA to explore the possibility of including an agenda item on the crafting of minimum standards for the treatment of stateless persons in the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (Bali Process).

Since its inception in 2002, the Bali Process, which is co-chaired by Indonesia and Australia, has effectively raised regional awareness on the causes and consequences of people smuggling and trafficking in persons. Since the discussion in the Bali Process includes issues concerning irregular migration, an inclusion in the agenda of an item relating to the crafting of minimum standards on the treatment of stateless persons, may be explored.

For the DFA to support efforts to encourage continuous discussion on statelessness in the different UN bodies and mechanisms.

Discussions on the issue of statelessness must not be limited within the UNHCR. Statelessness is a particularly important social and political child-rights issue because children are particularly dependent on states. As such, discussion on efforts to reduce statelessness in all its forms (de jure, de facto, or effective statelessness), especially among children, must be encouraged and supported in all available UN fora.

Other researchers are encouraged to conduct related studies on the level of human security of undocumented Filipino children born in Sabah. A case study documenting the life of an undocumented Filipino child born in Sabah would prove interesting and valuable.


House of Representatives (15th Congress). *House Resolution No. 204 Urging the Department of Foreign Affairs to Establish a Philippine Consulate in a State in the Federation of Malaysia Nearest Sabah*. Quezon City, December 13, 2011.


Plyer vs. Doe, 80-1538 (US Supreme Court June 15, 1982).


CHAPTER II

Current National and Regional Issues Influencing Philippine National Interests
30 years in Search for Peace: The Philippine Process Experience
Jennifer Santiago Oreta, PhD *

The Peace Process with the communist and the secessionist armed rebel groups have assumed national prominence during the presidency of Pres. Corazon Aquino in 1986. Under her stewardship, peace tables with the communists and the Moro armed groups were opened. Several prominent personalities imprisoned during the Marcos administration were released as a sign of goodwill.

More than thirty years after, the peace negotiations have moved forward, but the armed conflicts are seemingly far from over. Despite the headways achieved by the different peace tables, armed rebel groups face internal squabbles and factionalism, posing challenge to the government especially in determining which faction is recognized by the members as legitimate.

This paper attempts to examine the peace efforts of the government. It looks at the gains and pitfalls of past efforts and provides recommendations on how to move forward with the peace process.

The author also argues that there is an urgency to find a logical exit to finally settle this national concern. The urgency is premised on two things: First, all of the leaders of the major rebel groups are ageing. While these groups would argue that their rebellion is not dependent on leaders, the reality is that the institutional memory is and will always be lodged with the founders and the old guards. They hold moral suasion over the younger leaders and members. Admittedly, however, moral suasion is one thing, control is another. And this leads us to the second concern – these rebel organizations have experienced splits along the way, and the longer the peace settlement is achieved, the greater is the danger of disgruntled members leaving the organization to start their own group. Hence, the author believes that while the rebel groups are still intact, a political settlement with these rebel groups must soon be achieved.

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Introduction

From the perspective of democracy, the fundamental goal of the peace process is to convince armed rebel groups to end their use of armed violence in pushing for their desired political and social reform.

In a democracy, groups must compete using the best argument and advocacies to win people on their side. This principle stems from the basic premise that people have the inherent capacity to think, reason and choose the best or the most beneficial option for them. At the heart of this democratic tenet is the basic respect for the inherent rationality of every single person. This is the essence of the term ‘sovereign’ people – that each and every one has the inherent gift to think and judge for themselves. This gift of rationality makes everyone equal – regardless of gender, wealth, age, religion. The gift of rationality is also the basis of the basic rights and freedoms of individuals. The basic rights – also referred to as human rights – puts salience on what it means to protect and respect this gift: since we have the capacity to think and judge for ourselves, we must first and foremost be guaranteed to live (right to life); to express our views (freedom of expression), join groups or organizations who share our opinions (freedom of organization and assembly); to pursue our desired quality of life (right to property); and to be guaranteed that we will not be persecuted and prosecuted because of our views (right to liberty).

The role, hence, of the elected representatives and political leaders of the sovereign people is to put together rules, systems and structures that can best protect and promote this inherent gift of rationality. The leaders are selected by the people to serve their interest – hence, the term ‘public servant.’ The people on the other hand must select from among themselves who can best advance their individual and collective well-being.

Using armed violence, hence, to impose the group’s agenda on what kind of change they want - socially, politically, and economically - violates the fundamental right of people to think and pursue the option that best satisfies their well-being. Using armed violence to dictate
the political agenda of the group assumes that the armed group - and not the sovereign people - is the preeminent judge of what is best for the community and the nation. That’s why the use of armed violence to advance a political agenda is dictatorial and should have no space in a democracy.

Democracy is at the heart of the peace process. The goal of the peace process is to remove the use of armed violence in politics, and allow everyone to compete and pursue their desired political agenda under the rule of law. Negotiations hence is done to find a peaceful settlement between the legitimate government and the armed rebel group(s). Parallel with peace negotiations would be peacebuilding activities where communities affected by armed conflict are assisted to improve their economic and political conditions, at the same time addressing the proliferation of guns and other instruments of violence in communities, and justice is served especially to the victims of violence.

*The peace process as part of the democratization project*

The peace strategy of the Philippine government has to be taken within the larger frame of the democratization process. Since 1986, the country has embarked on a process to weed out the remnants of dictatorship and facilitate the strengthening of the democratic institutions. The major challenge of democratic consolidation is finding the right mix and balance of strengthening the rootedness of institutions on the one hand, and improving the avenues for people participation in governance on the other. Since 1986, the Philippine state has been painstakingly putting in place the pillars and bricks of a democratic system. Thirty-one years, hence, the process is still on-going.

When President Marcos was removed from power in 1986, the long road to reinstating democracy started. President Corazon Aquino released the rebel leaders imprisoned by Marcos - Jose Maria Sison, Nur Misuari, Alex Buscayno being the most prominent ones - and opened the peace negotiations with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Communist Party of the Philippines/ New People’s Army/ National Democratic Front (CPP/NPA/NDF). Not
long after, however, the talks with the CPP/NPA/NDF (represented by the NDF) collapsed and Sison went on exile to the Netherlands. This started the on-and-off mode of peace negotiations with the CPP/NPA/NDF that currently is on its 31st year.

The CPP/NPA/NDF would also suffer major splits, the first with the Cordillera People’s Liberation Army (CPLA) that signed a ceasefire agreement with the government in 1986 under President Corazon Aquino, and a closure agreement in 2011 under Pres. Benigno Aquino III. The second major split happened in late 1990’s with the “RA” and “RJ” break-up. “RA” stands for the re-affirmist or those who reaffirm their commitment to the strategy of armed struggle and the leadership of the CPP; “RJ” are the rejectionist or those who reject the strategy and leadership of the party. Aside from several party stalwarts leaving the organization, the Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Manggagawa–Pilipinas/Revolutionary Proletarian Army/Alex Boncayao Brigade (RPM-P/RPA-ABB), the urban guerilla group of the party, also decided to call it quits and eventually signed a ceasefire agreement with the administration of Pres. Estrada in 2000.

The MNLF would also sign the Final Peace Agreement (FPA) in 1996 under the administration of President Ramos, and the implementation of the commitments of both the Philippine government and the MNLF would immediately commence and continue until this day.

The negotiations with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) started under the Arroyo administration, and the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) was signed in 2015 under the administration of Pres. Benigno Aquino III. Under the current administration of President Duterte, the implementation of the political commitments as well as the normalization process (demobilization of arms and forces) continues.

Needless to say, the peace process with the major rebel groups have steadily advanced over the years, most of which are in the implementation stage of the process. It is only the peace negotiations with CPP/NPA/NDF that is remains a challenge.
The goal of the peace process is to find a mutually acceptable political settlement so that rebel groups would voluntarily demobilize their arms and forces and partner with the government in community and state building. When fighting ceases and the security situation stabilizes, the government can fully concentrate on improving the quality of life of the poor, and the private sector can intensify its efforts to fuel investment and generate livelihood and employment.

Fissures and Splits

Despite, the progress in the peace process, armed conflict is far from over in the Philippines. As is the trend with armed groups, splintering usually happens especially if there are several strong-willed leaders in the organization. This is what has happened with CPP/ NPA/ NDF, where the CPLA and RPA-ABB separated from the mainstream organization; this happened as well with the MNLF and the MILF.

A. The Communist Front

1. Cordillera People’s Liberation Army (CPLA)

The Cordillera People’s Liberation Army (CPLA) separated from the CPP/ NPA/ NDF in 1986, bringing with it more than a thousand members. CPLA however would also witness a split from the time it signs the Mount Data Accord in 1986.

“The implementation of the Mount Data Peace Accord of 1986 and Administrative Order 18 were hampered by the issue of factionalism within the ranks of CPLA. As a matter of fact, the CPLA and CBA (Cordillera Bodong Administration) history is marked by a crises of leadership, internal rifts and splits and unification.” (Peace 101, 2006:72)

In 2011, the group led by Arsenio Humiding signed with the Government of the Philippines the “Memorandum of Agreement Towards the CPLA’s final Disposition of Arms and Forces and its
Transformation into a Potent Socio-Economic Unarmed Force.” This document is regarded by some as the ‘exit’ agreement that would finally end the issue of CPLA. Humiding’s leadership, however, has been challenged by the Sugguiyao group, the latter claiming that they are the real leaders of the CPLA. The peace process nevertheless moved forward with the CPLA, with President Aquino signing the Executive Order No 49, s. 2011. Livelihood and integration package were made available to members of the group, development interventions were downloaded to the communities affected by the CPLA conflict, and the CPLA converted itself into a civilian, unarmed organization called Cordillera Forum for Peace and Development (CFPD), formally removing the vestiges of the ‘liberation army’ character. (OPAPP, 2016)

Still, the Sugguiyao faction continues to challenge the group. The major problem is the fact that Sugguiyao’s group remains armed. This, therefore, continues to pose peace and security challenge in the Cordillera communities. Adding to this complex situation is the fact that a small unit of the New People’s Army continues to operate in the Cordilleras. Since the CPP/ NPA/ NDF regards all those who leave the group as traitors, the safety of the members of the CPLA/ CFPD remains to be threatened.

2. Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Manggagawa–Pilipinas/ Revolutionary Proletarian Army/Alex Boncayao Brigade (RPM-P/ RPA-ABB)

The Alex Boncayao Brigade (ABB) was formed in the 1980’s as the urban hit-squad unit of the CPP/ NPA. The ABB broke off from the movement in the early 1990’s, largely due to disagreement over strategy and tactics, decision making process, and focus (i.e. its debate with the CPP leadership on the need to focus on urban insurrection versus rural-based guerrilla warfare). The break-up also coincided with the RA-RJ split within the CPP/ NPA/NDF. (Intl. Crisis Group 2011)

The ABB group remained underground and pursued the urban insurrection strategy. Led by Popoy Lagman and Nilo dela Cruz, the ABB continued the assassination of key personalities in the 1990’s. A
rift between Lagman and dela Cruz would eventually lead to a split in the group in 1997. Lagman would be assassinated in February 2001, the culprit and mastermind remained unsolved to this day.

The faction led by dela Cruz forged an alliance with the Revolutionary Proletariat Army of the Tabara group of Negros Occidental, thus the name RPA-ABB. This group would later on forge an alliance with Rebolusyonaryong Partido Mangagalawang Pilipinas (RPM-P) located in the Central Mindanao Region.

Under the administration of President Estrada, peace negotiations with the group formally commenced in January 2000, and a ceasefire agreement was entered between the Government and the RPM-P/ RPA-ABB on 21 June 2000. This ceasefire remains to this day.

However, a split would later happen in the group. In 2007, the Tabara-Paduano Group (TPCG) and the Nilo dela Cruz group (NDCG) parted ways. This posed a problem with the government, considering that several confidence building activities have already been done to pave the way for an eventual formal peace agreement between the Government and the rebel group. Given the split, the government had to deal with the two factions. Unfortunately with the Nilo dela Cruz group, it was haunted by another split, allegedly between Nilo dela Cruz and a faction led by his own son. Hence, the government moved forward with the peace process with the Tabara-Paduano Group, and continues to wait for the NDCG to settle their leadership issue.

3. Communist Party of the Philippines/ New People’s Army/ National Democratic Front (CPP/ NPA/ NDF)

The insurgency problem of the CPP-NPA has spanned four decades\(^1\) and counting. Formal peace negotiations were launched during the time of President Corazon Aquino, and to date, has spanned 31 years, 6 Panels and 5 presidencies, with President Duterte as the 6th President to confront the problem. Over 40 rounds of negotiations have been completed since 1992. Both parties have agreed to adopt The Hague Agreement in 1992 where it is stipulated that four (4)

\(^1\) The NPA was formed in Dec 1969.
substantive agenda must be agreed upon by both parties to end the armed rebellion. These four agenda items are (a) Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL); (b) Comprehensive Agreement on Socio-Economic Reform (CASER); (c) Comprehensive Agreement on Political and Constitutional Reform (CAPR); and (d) End of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces (EOF-DOF).²

More than ten (10) Agreements and Joint Statements on procedure have been issued since the start of the negotiations. However, of these number, only one substantive agreement, the CARHRIHL has been achieved; others are simply statements and/or agreement on procedures.

While the strength of the NPA peaked at, allegedly, 25,000 during the mid-80’s,³ it significantly decreased during the period from 1986 to 1995 due to the following factors: the removal of Marcos and the return to the democratic system, election of popular Presidents, increased confidence towards the government, the Philippine National Police’s (PNP) Lambat Bitag, and the military campaign plans of the AFP. “A confidential Philippine government assessment obtained by The Associated Press says the number of guerrillas declined to 3,800 with more than 4,500 firearms in the first half of 2016, with about 700 of the country’s 42,000 villages affected by the insurgency.”⁴ 

² A Supplemental Agreement on The Hague declares that the agreements are to be treated as sequential (i.e. to be signed one after the other, in chronological order); and that prior to moving from one agenda to the next, there has to be satisfactory implementation of the signed agreement first. For instance, since it is CARHRIHL that was signed, there has to be satisfactory implementation of CARHRIHL first by both parties before moving to the next agenda.


these figures are accurate, then it means that the 3,800 NPA members only constitute .0038% of the population (at 100 M population), and the 700 villages (Barangays) that are affected by their presence only constitute 1.67% of all the 42,000 Barangays in the country.

The negotiations with the CPP/ NPA/ NDF has been an on-again-off-again arrangement. Every change in administration creates a renewed push, and negotiations would again resume. However, just as in the past, accusations of violations would be hurled by both sides and the goodwill period would soon be over, until the next administration comes in again. This is the major reason why negotiations with the CPP/ NPA/ NDF continues 31 years since it started. The rebel group has all the time to wait; usually, it is the administration in power that is on a tight schedule given its term of office. This, according to some, is the major reason for the delay in the negotiations. Observers, however, quipped that the group is not really sincere in the negotiations and is just getting all concessions it can get, and when it can no longer do so, they leave the negotiating table and wait for the next administration to start over again.

The government, particularly from the time of Pres. Arroyo, has long suspected that the Utrecht-based NDF negotiators no longer have the command of the ground, and several events actually proved this. Very recently, even Joma Sison and CPP leaders admitted that they have “no control over all units of the New people’s Army.” Nevertheless, the government remained hopeful that achieving a peaceful political settlement is still achievable, and that the members of the armed group would tow the party-line when that happens.

Under the current administration of President Duterte, peace talks have again been revived. The major difference this time is the fact that the President declares that he shares the same sentiment as the Communist Party. His ties with Jose Maria Sison, his former professor at Lyceum, was also highlighted even during the campaign. Members of the Government peace panel for talks with the CPP/ NPA/ NDF are also known for their sympathy towards the group. The President appointed NDF-nominated leaders in the Cabinet, and released on bail

most of the alleged NDF consultants who are in prison to participate in the negotiations. The set of general principles that puts more flesh to The Hague Agreement seem to lean on the position of the NDF.

Still, the fragility of the talks cannot be underscored. Last February 2017, the talks again almost collapsed, when the President declared that “talks are terminated,” and “JASIG (Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantee) is terminated;” and when he ordered the “arrest (of) communist consultants;” and declared “the NPA are terrorists.” Prior to these declarations, accusations and counter accusations were hurled by both sides. What has triggered the President’s ire, though, was the killing of three off-duty soldiers in their civilian clothes, unarmed and had just withdrew their salary in Bukidnon. The three were killed last February 01, 2017; the bodies were riddled with 76 bullets or an average of 24 shots each, all done in close range. The brutality of the act angered the President, leading to the harsh pronouncements and the collapse of the talks.

Since the February pronouncement of the President terminating the talks, NDF consultants out on bail were ordered

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7 JASIG is a 1995 GPH-NDF agreement that guarantees that NDF consultants of the peace process will not be arrested; and GPH consultants will not be harmed if and when they are in NPA-controlled areas. Both parties have submitted the names of their respective consultants, and the list was kept in a safety deposit box in the Netherlands. In 2011, upon the arrest of some NPA leaders claimed by the NDF as covered by JASIG, the GPH requested to validate the names with the list in the Netherlands. Upon opening the safety box, however, it was found that the NDF list is not in hard copy but kept in a diskette that unfortunately was corrupted. Since the list cannot be opened, the NDF requested to reconstitute the list. The Aquino government didn’t agree, and this became a major cause of the breakdown in the talks. Under the Duterte administration, the GPH agreed for the NDF to reconstitute their JASIG list.


to return and/or are hunted by authorities. Other NPA leaders are also getting arrested, focused-military operations have no let-up, resulting to casualties and a number of NPA members surrendering to authorities. The NDF lobbied heavily to have the talks revived, fielding groups especially those who are sympathetic with the CPP/ NPA/ NDF to exert pressure to the government. The President has since acquiesce to open the talks again but under certain conditions, which include “ceasing of the so-called ‘revolutionary tax’ also known as "extortion;" ceasing the ambushes on military personnel; ceasing burning of property; and ceasing provocative and hostile actions.”

Still, throughout the three rounds of negotiations under the Duterte administration, there were clear indications that the NPA commanders on the ground are not in-sync with the NDF negotiators. For instance, while the unilateral ceasefires (of both parties) were in effect, and especially during or shortly after the 19-25 January 2017 negotiations in Rome, Italy, several incidents of violent activities by the NPA have been reported:

- On January 21, 2017, NPA members ambushed soldiers in North Cotabato
- On January 29, some 30 suspected NPA members clad in Philippine Air Force (PAF) uniforms and in full battle gear stormed the detachment of CDHI, the office in-charge of securing Pico de Loro Resort, Batangas, at 7:3 p.m.
- Suspected NPA rebels snatched two soldiers in a remote village

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13 Both parties declared unilateral ceasefire in August 2016; both parties lifted their respective unilateral ceasefire in February 2017
- Two off-duty soldiers in civilian clothes and riding a motorcycle were taken by NPA rebels in Makilala, North Cotabato.  
- On the shooting of the three soldiers in Bukidnon on 01 February 2017, Fidel Agcaoili, the head of the NDF Negotiating team, when asked, even insinuated that that it was probably the AFP who was responsible for the death of the soldiers but blame it on the NPA, not knowing that Allan Juanito, NPA spokesperson for the Northcentral Mindanao Region, already acknowledged that it was their unit who was responsible for the death of the three soldiers.

Moreover, it was the NPA Spokesperson, Ka Oris Madlos who declared that the NPA is lifting its unilateral ceasefire effective February 10, 2017.  

"The August 28, 2016, unilateral declaration of interim ceasefire issued by the Central Committee of the CPP (CPP-CC) and the National Operations Command of the New People’s Army (NPA-NOC) is hereby terminated," NPA spokesperson Jorge "Ka Oris" Madlos said in a statement.

Note that Madlos made the pronouncement on February 1, barely a week after the 19-25 January 2017 round of negotiations publicly declared by the NDFP as “successful.” The timing of Madlos' pronouncement strongly indicates the disconnect of the Utrecht-based negotiators with the dynamics of the NPA decision making on


17 Ibid.


The point of this long treatise is the fact that the Utrecht-based negotiators have been gone far too long that they obviously have no significant clout anymore with the local leadership of the armed group. Indicators are clear that the NPA local commands, especially the Northeast Mindanao units are operating on their own. The notion of a cohesive, unified communist armed movement may have been true in the past, but after the great splits – with the CPLA, with the RPM-P, RPA-ABB, and with the key personalities who joined the “RJs” or the rejectionist – the Leninist’ central command concept seemingly is no longer true. The government has long suspected this divide, but it is under this current administration that this chasm between the old-guards of Utrecht and the local commands became most pronounced.

B. The Bangsamoro Front

1. Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)

The signing of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement was historic as it signals the end of the war between the Government and the MNLF. The 1996 Final Peace Agreement (FPA) serves as the “closure” document where both parties agree on the remaining deliverables in order for both parties to really say goodbye to armed hostilities.

The reality, however, is very different from what is written on paper. While agreements have been signed, fighting remains an on-and-off process.

After the 1996 FPA, factions of MNLF were engaged by the government in socio-economic projects and community-driven development, i.e. the Act for Peace – Peace and Development Communities\(^\text{21}\) during the Arroyo administration, and the Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan (PAMANA)\(^\text{22}\) program under the Aquino

\(^{21}\) For more information of the ACT-PDC, see https://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/AnnexesFeb2013.pdf

\(^{22}\) PAMANA stands for Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan. It is a development-flagship program under the PNoy administration, meant exclusively for conflict-affected areas. It is currently being continued by the Duterte administration.
administration. The Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) government also forged agreements with MNLF leadership on the establishment of peace and development monitoring mechanisms.

“The 1996 FPA had as its basis the 1976 Tripoli Agreement. The FPA provided for the establishment of an interim institution called the Southern Philippine Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD), to be headed by Misuari, which would be responsible for supervising and coordinating development projects in an area designated as Special Zone for Peace and Development (SZOPAD). SZOPAD covered all the provinces specified in the Tripoli Agreement. After three years, a plebiscite would be conducted asking the provinces on the SZOPAD whether they would like to join the “expanded” autonomous region for the Muslims. However, due in part to the disappointing performance of the SPCPD, only one additional province and one additional city joined the autonomous region - leaving the problem to fester in the other provinces.” (OPAPP-DDR Guidebook, 2016)

A Tripartite Review Process (TRP) was undertaken by the parties - the Government, the MNLF and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in 2007. The TRP was meant to speed up the implementation of the commitments contained in the 1996 FPA.

Meanwhile, the MNLF has divided into factions, primarily under the leadership of Nur Misuari on the one hand, and under the leadership of Muslimin G. Sema on the other. Some of the MNLF communities – primarily those allied with Sema - have been partnering with the ARMM and OPAPP (Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process) in the development of their respective communities. It is the group allied with Misuari who remained critical of the government’s peace and development interventions. This ‘critical stance’ towards the government would later on manifest in the 2013 Zamboanga siege, allegedly instigated by Nur Misuari. The 2013 Zamboanga siege also hampered the TRP review process. To date, criminal charges and a warrant of arrest have been filed against
Nur Misuari; but in the effort to forge peace with the MNLF-Misuari faction, the carrying out of the warrant of arrest against Misuari was suspended under the Duterte administration.\textsuperscript{23}

2. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)

The MILF separated from the MNLF in 1977 when fifty-seven (57) MNLF leaders opposed the 1976 Tripoli Agreement. They “petitioned the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Muslim World League (MWL) for the ouster of their Chairman Nur Misuari and for the installation of MNLF Vice-Chair Salamat Hashim.”\textsuperscript{24} (OPAPP-DDR Guidebook, 2016:21)

The group formally split from the MNLF in 1984, its stronghold being in Central Mindanao, particularly in areas where the Maguindanao language is dominant.

The MILF, unlike the secular character of the MNLF, is more religious in character. The MILF in fact aims to establish “a genuine Islamic system of government, and the application of a real Islamic way of life in all aspects of their lives.” (OPAPP-DDR Guidebook, 2016: 22)

After seventeen (17) years of on-and-off negotiations, the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) was signed in 2015 under the administration of Pres. Benigno Aquino III. The current administration of President Duterte is focused on the implementation of the political commitments as well as the demobilization of arms and forces as contained in the CAB.

The MILF is not immune, however, from splits. Ameril Umbra Kato formed the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and separated from the MILF in 2008. Kato questioned the "MILF's

\textsuperscript{23}The suspension of the warrant of arrest was initially until April 2017; it has since been extended until November 2017.

\textsuperscript{24} Both Salamat and Misuari co-founded the MNLF.
capability to face the government in peace negotiations.” The BIFF continues to fight the government and is suspected to provide shelter and cover to terrorist individuals.

Prospects for peace

Today, thirty-one years after, the peace process has moved forward but the armed conflicts are seemingly far from over. Despite the headways achieved by the different peace tables, armed rebel groups face internal squabbles and factionalism, posing an even more challenge to the government especially in determining which faction should be recognized as the legitimate representative of the group. The legitimacy of the leadership of said armed groups is critical in as far as formal negotiations and ultimately political concessions are concerned.

A logical and to a large extent, “face-saving” conclusion especially for rebel leaders must be achieved by the current administration if we are to put a final period to armed rebellion. This is premised on two things: First, all of the leaders of the concerned rebel groups are ageing. While these groups would argue that their rebellion is not dependent on leaders, the reality is that the institutional memory is and will always be lodged with the founders and the old guards. While the founders are alive, they continue to hold moral suasion over the younger leaders and members. But moral suasion and control are two different things. And this leads us to the second concern - the rebel organizations have experienced splits along the way, and the longer the peace settlement is achieved, the greater is the danger of younger cadres breaking up into several more factions. Hence, while the group is still intact and can be reigned-in by the leadership, a political settlement must be achieved.

If one looks closely, the root of the decades long conflict has already been identified by the National Unification Commission (NUC) Report to President Fidel V. Ramos in 1993. Said report was the result of nationwide consultations especially at the regional and provincial

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levels held in 1992 to 1993. The report classified into five categories the root causes of Philippine internal armed conflicts:

1. Massive and abject poverty and economic inequity, particularly in the distribution of wealth and control over the resource base for livelihood;
2. Poor governance, including lack of basic social services, absenteeism of elected local officials, corruption and inefficiency in government bureaucracy, and poor implementation of laws, including those to protect the environment;
3. Injustice, abuse of those in authority and power, violations of human rights, inequity, corruption and delays in the administration of justice;
4. Structural inequities in the political system, including control by an elite minority, traditional politicians and political dynasties, and enforcement of such control through private armies; and
5. Exploitation and marginalization of indigenous cultural communities, including lack of respect for and recognition of ancestral domain and indigenous legal and political systems.

From the time of President Corazon Aquino, the convergence strategy has already been used in varying degrees by the different administrations. However, the limitations of the approach undertaken in the past was either it was concentrated only with the military or there was no organizational and structural support to coordinate the convergence of efforts.

The convergence of government programs is the peacebuilding component of the process and is meant to complement the peace negotiations. It hopes to bring services to conflict affected areas.

Under the Aquino administration, two mechanisms of convergence were created. The first is the PAMANA, a program that is solely dedicated to bring development and good governance in conflict affected communities; second is the Whole of Nation Approach (WNA), an inter-agency platform that is primarily focused on short-term and immediate needs of conflict affected communities.
PAMANA was led by OPAPP, and technical working groups (TWG) composed of the agencies involved in the implementation of programs are created. The TWG is meant for agencies to coordinate and synchronize their projects to maximize the impact in conflict affected communities. Provincial-level TWGs as well as a national-level TWGs allowed for closer coordination, both in policy and operations.

The WNA was led by the Cabinet Cluster on Security, Justice and Peace through the Executive Director of the Cluster. The WNA initiated service caravans that bring together national agencies and local agencies to visit and provide service to select conflict affected areas. Aside from being a ‘government on wheels’ type of intervention, the bigger role of the WNA’s Service Caravan is to bring to the attention of national agencies the situations in conflict affected areas, at the same time that it impresses upon the residents of these communities the solidarity of national government leaders as regards their plight.

In order to ensure continuity of the pertinent programs by the agencies, it is important that government issues a national security policy and strategy to serve as anchor for the government’s cohesive security-related plans, programs, projects and activities. It will tie and align together campaign plans on internal security operations (ISO), support to peace initiatives, and civilian/community relations to the civilian agencies’ outputs for the diplomatic, legal, and development efforts.

As for the peace negotiations, only the peace table with the CPP/ NDF/ NPA remains; the other, as discussed, are already in various degrees of implementation of the political settlements. It is crucial, thus to revisit the approach with the communist insurgents. Apart from the obvious disconnect between the Utrecht-based negotiators and the local NPA commands, it was reported in March 2017 that the CPP has elected new and younger leaders. Given that the Utrecht-based leaders have been in exile for more than 30 years, the young cadres of the rebel group most likely have very little encounter with the NDF panel, Sison, Agcaoili, Jalandoni, Ledesma, and de Lima. The generation-gap, the length of time that the Utrecht-based negotiators have been away, and the physical distance of the NDF negotiators and the local NPA command put to question the capacity of the NDF panel
to deliver on their commitment once they sign an agreement with the government. It maybe high time to consider negotiating with the NPA local command, or as some would call as ‘local peace talks.’

**Final words**

While peacebuilding efforts continue from one administration to the next, it is the peace negotiation that needs particular attention. Of the major groups discussed, only the peace table of the CPP/ NPA/ NDF has remained in negotiation-phase until now. This begs the question on whether the approach at negotiation must be reevaluated especially considering that the government has been negotiating with the group for 31 years. Most if not all of the five-member panel of the NDF negotiating team are all in their late 70’s to mid-80’s and have been away from the country for decades. It is thus important to ask if the NDF negotiating panel still knows the organization they are representing and vice versa; or is it a case of the NDF panel arrogating upon themselves a leadership position that is unrequited and not recognized by the group they represent.

The local leadership of the NPA have been sending clear signals that it is them, not the NDF panel in Utrecht, that call the shots. Instead of waiting for the local command(s) to formally declare a split from the party, it is necessary that they be recognized for what and who they really are. If the immediate objective is to end the armed violence that victimizes communities, local negotiations should be seriously considered. Otherwise, we might be confronted with the eventual splintering of the group into smaller local armed groups that are dispersed in a number of villages, engaging in tactical alliances with criminal gangs and syndicates.

As for the Bangsamoro peace process, it should be noted that an added complication is the fact that terrorist organizations’ area of operation dangerously intersects with the areas populated by MILF and MNLF members, creating a fertile condition for cross-pollination of ideologies and grievance. It is thus crucial to show proof that political settlement actually produces positive results for communities affected by armed conflict, if only to mitigate the possibility of disgruntlement in the ranks feeding on the manipulation by and eventual recruitment of terrorist organizations.
References


How do Filipinos define the national interest in the country’s relations with China? There is little consensus on this, partly because of the lack of a shared strategic worldview. On the one hand, we want to use China’s economic strength for our own national development; on the other hand, our territorial disputes with China are our greatest national external security concern, particularly amidst doubts about the strength of US commitment to our defense. Because we cannot ignore either dimension of our relations with China, a “hedging” strategy – combining power balancing behavior with accommodation of China – seems the prudent thing to do.

From Arroyo to Aquino to Duterte, however, successive governments’ China policies have instead been like swinging pendulums. One government sees only a China threat; another chooses to see only a China opportunity. Neither the swings away from, nor the swings towards China have provided satisfactory solutions.

Indeed, the strategies we take to defend Philippine sovereignty and territorial integrity must be weighed carefully against the risks entailed, the prospects of success, and the long-term repercussions on the region. For the Philippines, the primordial goals as we relate to China are to minimize risks or threats, and to maximize opportunities for our welfare and security. Both are important, as we do not wish China to become an enemy (which can happen if we over-estimate the risks), nor do we wish to become her client-state (if we overstate the opportunities).

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The Philippines: a fragmented nation, lacking a strategic worldview

When we think about our relations with other countries, for instance China and the United States, or how to resolve the territorial disputes in the South China Sea, what is the national interest? There is often no consensus among Filipino stakeholders on how to define the national interest in our foreign relations. This should not be surprising, because there is a lack of consensus among Filipinos on many things relating to the State. This is partly an outcome of democracy and pluralism, but there are also deeper roots such as geographic fragmentation and its consequence of parochialism, manifested as strong tribal and ethnolinguistic loyalties. And then there are sharp class divisions rooted in socio-economic inequalities. Moreover, a history of colonial subjugation, poor governance and internal conflicts add to the faultlines of a society already suffering from a weak sense of nationhood.

The Philippines also happens to be a young nation - forged by external forces (colonialism, geopolitics, global capitalism) as much as by internal dynamics, and since it became an independent state, it had not sufficiently been tested by major diplomatic challenges and security threats so as to have developed a worldview that may be considered strategic by any measure.

It is, of course, important to forge agreement on what a nation-state's primordial interests are, and to make sure that this agreement represents the sentiments of the vast majority of the population. The responsibility for leading the process of defining this traditionally rests not only with the ruling class and economic elite, but also with the nation's thinkers. Sadly, since Spanish and American colonial times, despite the efforts of revolutionaries and reformists who fought against foreign occupiers, and despite the not insignificant contributions of genuinely patriotic statesmen in our history, the Philippine political elite turned out to be rather self-serving. Many of our politicians chose to protect and advance private interests, becoming instruments of foreign influence and backward ideas rather than leading the struggle to unite the people into becoming a truly independent and progressive nation. That colonial policies themselves may have brought some good
along with the bad is beside the point. Members of the ruling class conspired to maintain an oligarchy that decades hence, continues to hold the country’s democracy and development hostage. Meanwhile, internal strife continues to pit Filipino against Filipino in what are now some of the world’s longest-running rebellions.

At the same time, we were protected in all directions by the oceans from potentially predatory neighbors. This, and the misplaced sense of certainty that we would be defended from any external aggressor by the United States by virtue of our "special relationship", led to complacency about our security from external threats. Thus, there was little reason for our leaders to develop a strategic mindset or to even take much interest in what took place outside our shores, arguably with the exception of Washington, D.C. Indeed, following formal independence, involvement in the Cold War on the side of the United States meant aligning our ideology and foreign policies with those of the metropole rather than seeking an independent path. And this, with few exceptions, shaped our perceptions of and policies toward our neighbors and toward the world.

In a nutshell: rising China and laggard Philippines

For the most part, the Filipinos and the Chinese have peacefully coexisted as close neighbors for centuries, having built a relationship founded on trade, cultural influences and people-to-people interactions, as evidenced by the Chinese diaspora throughout the islands, and tributary missions from Butuan and Sulu traveling to China as early as the Song (960-1279 A.D.) and Yuan (1278-1368) dynasties, respectively. Chinese and Filipinos also shared a proud history of resistance against both Western and Japanese imperialism, even extending material support for each other’s liberation movements, which we know from contacts between Aguinaldo and Sun Yat Sen, from Chinese reformer Liang Qichao’s writing of his admiration for the brave Filipinos who fought not one but two Western colonial oppressors, and from accounts of the Wha Chi company of Chinese-Filipino guerillas fighting the anti-fascist war on Philippine soil.
Subsequently, Communist Party rule in China, the persistence of our own home-grown communist movement, and the ideological influence of the United States during the Cold War led successive Philippine governments to mistrust China and fear its intervention or subversion. China was therefore seen in the Philippines as both a "red menace" and a "sleeping dragon" that had to be approached with vigilance. On the other hand, in the eyes of the then ultra-leftists in Beijing, Manila was little more than an "imperialist running dog". During Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution, there was a basis for such fear and distrust, with evidence of Chinese support for local communists. Nonetheless, for as long as we hosted major US military facilities and remained a true ally to the US, the elites who ran the country felt confident and protected. Only after the Washington-Beijing rapprochement had started in 1972 (as the Sino-Soviet conflict grew) was it possible for Ferdinand Marcos and Mao Zedong to normalize ties in 1975.

In the next four decades, under the policy of "reform and opening up" introduced by Deng Xiaoping in 1978, China moved away from the export of its model of revolution, turned to more market/capitalist methods of economic management, diplomatically engaged former adversary states, and saw its economic power and political influence grow. In time, newfound affluence inspired growing confidence and nationalism among its people. New wealth also began to bankroll rapid military modernization that, combined with nationalism, translated into a more assertive posture in relations with neighbors, particularly its territorial disputes with Japan in the East China Sea and with the Philippines and Vietnam in the South China Sea.

Deng Xiaoping's earlier call for China to "bide one's time and hide one's capacities" in order to protect China's image in the international community had been supported by his successors Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao. However, this was abandoned by its current leader Xi Jinping, who seemed to prefer flaunting China's improved military capacities and challenging neighbors with whom it had territorial disputes, although he fell short of directly confronting the United States. Thus, concern grew among neighbors and other countries about a "China threat", which China tried to downplay
by promoting first a narrative of "peaceful rise" and then one of a "community of shared destiny".

But the single biggest contributory factor to China's economic success, supported by correct domestic policies, was its strong linkage with the global economy-including markets for its burgeoning exports, and sources of capital and technology for its rapid industrialization. Such dependence on international cooperation and on economic globalization became a continuing constraint on how China would use its power and manage growing nationalism.

In the meantime, the Philippines grew only in fits and starts during most of these last four decades. Political instability continued to wrack the country, evident in the post-martial law years of contested democratic restoration, unfinished peace processes with leftist and separatist armed movements, the emergence of new radical movements espousing violent extremism, and the polarizing politics of the last several administrations - whether elitist or populist in nature. A silver lining lay in the country's demographic advantages - i.e., having a young, talented population - except this, too, was being eroded by the deteriorating state of education, a lack of good jobs at home (as government failed to pursue industrialization and remained focused on the promotion of overseas employment), and social ills such as rampant crime and use of illegal drugs, all of which the ineffective state was not able to address.

More recently, we have experienced a longer streak of economic growth lasting some fifteen years, despite being surrounded by regional and global economic crises. This brings some optimism that the country may have turned the corner on past boom-and-bust growth patterns. But it is “jobless growth”, hardly inclusive, that we have achieved. Now what we need is a convergence of correct economic policies, successful governance and security sector reform, the attainment of domestic peace and social harmony, and a stable regional security and economic environment to attain better, more inclusive and sustainable growth.

A sea-change in foreign policy and security perspectives also occurred in the 1990s after the Philippines, through a close Senate
vote, opted for closure of the US military facilities in Clark and Subic. This led to a qualitative shift in the nature of our relations with the U.S. Although the Mutual Defense Treaty remained in effect, the treaty did not offer clear-cut guarantees of protection for the Philippines in the event of territorial disputes with neighboring states. Washington had all along made it clear that it would remain neutral on the sovereignty disputes in the South China Sea, and chose to be ambiguous on how exactly it would interpret its alliance obligations given hypothetical scenarios of the Philippines getting involved in conflicts. Without the major American military bases, US obligations to the defense of the Philippines became even more murky, and this at a time when China was beginning to assert its sovereignty over contested islands in its surrounding seas.

Interestingly, notwithstanding the disputes over the Kalayaan Island Group and later over Bajo de Masinloc, China had become one of the Philippines’ major export destinations and import sources since the 1990s. Today, more and more Filipinos are looking to China not only for commercial opportunities but for employment, recreational and educational benefit as well. New migration from China to the Philippines has also grown, encouraged by proximity, cultural similarities, economic opportunity and the availability of social support systems provided by earlier migrants. What followed was the Asian financial crisis in 1997-98 and the global financial crisis of 2008-09, the latter leading to economic decline of the Philippines’ traditional markets and sources of credit and investments (primarily the United States, Japan, and Western Europe). China, with its huge foreign exchange reserves and immense market potential, became a beacon for the Philippines, and for other countries in Southeast Asia and the developing world.

Moreover, in the last few years, the forces of anti-globalization have grown more influential -- manifested as US retreat from free trade under Trump's “America First” policy, the United Kingdom's vote to leave the European Union (Brexit), the growth of right-wing populism and immigration restrictions in the West, among others. In contrast, China’s avowed commitment to free trade, connectivity and integration, its establishment of new development funding windows like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the "win-win" Belt
and Road initiative, purported to offer regional states some comfort and promise.

**Amidst geopolitical competition and power transition**

In the late 2000s, China found itself facing a unique conjuncture in the international political system. The US had been weakened by simultaneous unwinnable wars in the Middle East, a global financial crisis that began with its domestic financial mismanagement, and deep internal political divisions. Yet, the Obama government during its second term was seeking to "pivot" to Asia, a region that had by then developed very close economic and political-diplomatic ties with China. China, on the other hand, albeit affected by the global financial crisis, continued to enjoy economic growth and a generally peaceful external environment characterized by good relations with its immediate neighbors. The United States and China were locked in a situation of economic interdependence, but elements of economic competition and geopolitical rivalry were also on the rise, as each began to blame the other as being responsible for their respective problems (i.e., the economic woes of the US and China's suspicions about US containment strategies).

Consistent with pundits' predictions of the 21st century being the Asian century, world observers have now begun to speak of an impending "power transition" or "power shift" (the former a process and the latter a point in time when the US would no longer be Number One because China would have acceded to that status). China had, in 2010, surpassed Japan in being the world's second biggest economy, after it had already become the world's largest trading nation. China is expected to surpass the US in size of economic output in about two decades. From a military perspective, the scenario of China becoming Number One seems farfetched yet, but in the last several years, China had acquired two aircraft carriers, and developed new weapons systems that could directly undermine certain strategic advantages the US had hitherto enjoyed. It had naval vessels that were deployed in the Horn of Africa for anti-piracy missions, and now has a military presence in Djibouti. Moreover, it is now considered an indispensable player in addressing both high security issues such as nuclearization
of North Korea, and new challenges such as climate change, natural disasters, and threats to the environment.

This anticipation of power transition, even at the level of discourse, began to have an impact on the behavior of governments, particularly that of China where hubris seemed to have set in. The world witnessed its much more assertive demeanor in the East China Sea and South China Sea. Beijing also began to more openly question Washington's dominant role - particularly its system of alliances and efforts to develop new security partnerships as part of the rebalance strategy. US allies - the Philippines, Japan, Australia, South Korea, and its virtual allies such as Singapore - became targets of Chinese pressure, criticism and coercive diplomacy, including subtle threats against their economic interests and, in the case of the Philippines and Vietnam, threats against third parties who appeared to support them. Chinese interlocutors began to call on Southeast Asian counterparts to stake their future with China, to build a "community of shared destiny" as it were, and to pursue Asian solutions to regional security problems (pointedly excluding the United States).

Where does the Philippines, a traditional ally of the US, but proximate to China and embroiled in a territorial dispute with this rising power, find itself in the midst of major power rivalry and such scenarios of impending power transition? Like many other countries in East Asia, geographic proximity and economic interests point out the necessity of maintaining close relations with China, while security concerns indicate the need to ensure US presence and preparedness whether in order to deter or constrain potential Chinese aggression, or simply to help preserve stability and order by other means. But the idea of a dichotomous approach, i.e. accepting China's economic leadership while continuing to rely on US security guarantees -- an idea which is in fact gaining some traction among regional observers -- can only become less and less viable over time as the competition between the two major powers grows in both economic and security arenas.

The pressure on regional states to choose between China and the US becomes strong when competition (rather than cooperation) becomes the dominant feature in the relationship between the
two powers, and when either or both of them as a consequence demand allegiance from secondary powers to be directed against the other. In recent years, that seemed to be the case, with the Obama administration’s pivot or "rebalance" policy signalling that the US will not stand idly by while China establishes itself as a regional power in East Asia at US expense, or tries to turn the South China Sea into an internal lake.

The Obama “rebalance”, unfortunately, was strong in rhetoric but modest in action. The PH-US Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement or EDCA was one of its hallmarks; at the time of EDCA’s signing in 2014, the Philippines had filed an arbitration case against China and was facing its wrath. EDCA would allow for US prepositioning of equipment and the presence of troops in more Philippine locations, creating a higher state of preparedness should contingencies require it. Obama touted EDCA as a signal of US’ “ironclad commitment” to defense of the Philippines. The US also transferred three old Coast Guard cutters for commissioning by the Philippine Navy, stripped of their weapons and instruments -- a modest level of assistance which some might even interpret as hesitation or fear of entanglement on its part rather than as a demonstration of a robust alliance.

The US response to China’s assertive and coercive actions focused instead on conducting occasional Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPS) in the disputed waters. FONOPS were intended to challenge China’s expansive maritime claims but only insofar as the US defines its primary interest in the area as maintaining freedom of navigation. China, however, seemed undeterred by US FONOPS in its reclamation and island construction activities on the features that it already occupied, with the result that it now has an airstrip and harbors in the Spratlys capable of receiving and launching PLA vessels and aircraft. China even countered that it, too, believed in freedom of navigation, while criticizing the motives behind US operations. To the credit of US, a warning by American officials that they would consider a Chinese move to occupy Scarborough Shoal a "red line" not to be crossed seemed to have a greater deterrent effect, as China desisted from taking such action.
"Choosing" between China and the US becomes problematic as well when there are few well-functioning platforms for managing regional security outside of the roles that the two powers themselves play. For instance, when multilateral arrangements or international norms and rules are deemed ineffective, there may be few constraints on the behavior of big powers, so between a perceived threat and even a hesitant ally (US) there may not really be much of a "choice" for the Philippines but to engage in balancing behavior against the source of threat. That, too, seems to be the case now, with ASEAN losing credibility as a driver of regional processes due to lack of unity of purpose. If ASEAN does not take a more pro-active role, individual member-states and even middle powers who tend to rely on ASEAN-centered multilateralism to shape the region's security might be left to fend for themselves, seeking alternative modes of security cooperation with each other, and sometimes (as in the Malaysian and Singapore cases) with China itself. The Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam have all been strengthening their respective maritime security capabilities and deepening defense dialogue with the US and other likeminded states; however, they continued to emphasize the importance of their economic relations with China.

While the Philippines faces a similar situation as these other countries, it also has certain relevant properties that are quite unique. Unlike the other South China Sea claimant-states in ASEAN, the Philippines is a formal treaty ally of the United States. As such, the two countries are ostensibly bound to each other's defense by the 1953 Mutual Defense Treaty, and yet the real position of the US as far as the South China Sea issue was concerned was more ambiguous. US is wary of getting unnecessarily drawn into conflict by its weaker ally, yet it must be mindful that its inaction on behalf of an ally would place at risk its credibility as a regional leader and as the major global power. Thus the Philippines was expected to help pave the way for a US pivot, and yet neither provoke China nor entrap the US into its territorial rivalry with China.

At the same time, unlike other US allies such as Japan, South Korea and Australia, the Philippines is a developing country and therefore in greater need of whatever economic benefits it can draw from ties with China. Thus, while the Philippines could not bandwagon
with China because of the perceived threat to its sovereignty and territorial integrity, a strategy of solely balancing with the US against China was also not logical even for economic reasons alone. That leaves the Philippines the option of pursuing both balancing behavior (internal balancing through defense capability building and external balancing through alliance action with the US, Japan, etc.) and engagement/accommodation of China (strengthening economic links, resuming defense diplomacy and embarking on bilateral negotiations for managing disputes). The net effect that the Philippines hopes for is that it can stand on a safe middle ground, through what others will describe as a strategy of “hedging”.

Policy of pendulum swings

With limited state power to pursue even its rightful maritime entitlements and legitimate security interests, and faced with a difficult “choice” between the two major powers, successive Philippine governments appear to pursue contradictory or inconsistent policy directions with regard to the territorial and maritime disputes. Rather than keeping to a safe middle ground, recent policy seems to have been swinging wildly from one end to the other, like a pendulum quite suddenly unhinged. Presidents Fidel Ramos and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo were able to cultivate ties with both US and China at a time when Washington-Beijing ties were more cooperative. Subsequently, the growing competition between the two powers – now being fought out in the South China Sea, of all places -- has sent Benigno Aquino III leaning very much towards the US, followed by Rodrigo Duterte sharply leaning towards China a year into his administration.

The decisive factor for these policy shifts has been differences in elite perception of the extent to which China is a threat, and the extent to which the US may be relied upon to balance Chinese influence and power in the South China Sea.

The territorial and maritime disputes between the Philippines and China first came to a head in 1995, after discovery that the Chinese had built facilities on Mischief (Panganiban) Reef near Philippine-held islands in the Spratlys. As Chinese activities
grew in the vicinity of Scarborough Shoal in the late 1990s, there were further incidents, but escalation was avoided and dialogue pursued through normal diplomatic channels. Inasmuch as four of the six claimants (Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines and Brunei) were now part of ASEAN after 1995, multilateral efforts between China and ASEAN also transpired, leading to the signing of a Declaration of Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea in 2002, followed by a set of implementing guidelines for the DOC that came nearly 9 years after. In August this year, China and ASEAN agreed on a framework for a "Code of Conduct" in the South China Sea, which many hope will be a legally-binding agreement with more specific provisions for conflict prevention and crisis management. While China was not the only party to engage in unilateral acts of sovereignty, its actions grew more bold and more brazen over time, mobilizing various military, paramilitary and civilian instruments of the state and deploying them against weaker neighbors. The Chinese PLA ventured as far south as Indonesia’s Natuna gas fields and James Shoal off the coast of Sarawak in Malaysia, raising alarm bells even for these two nations that earlier had relatively sanguine views of China. Meanwhile, China’s island construction activities, whereby isolated reefs were transformed into suspected military bases in a very short period of time, now serve as a permanent reminder of China’s irredentism.

The Philippine response to China’s growing assertiveness in the South China Sea involved multiple platforms - the acquisition of naval and Coast Guard vessels, strengthening alliance coordination with the United States, establishing new strategic partnerships with neighboring states, promoting multilateral dialogues between ASEAN and China, and finally, filing suit over China’s violations of Philippine rights under UNCLOS. In 2013, the Philippines under Benigno Aquino III had given up on bilateral dialogue with China, emphasizing instead a legal approach to challenge China’s territorial claim and declaring support for the US “rebalance”, thus reinforcing China’s belief in his government’s hostile intent. The same array of policy options remain available to the Duterte administration, but for now, its choice is to pursue bilateral consultations and negotiations while de-emphasizing both the alliance with the US and the need to exact China’s compliance with the arbitral tribunal’s ruling. Compliance will be difficult to obtain from China, as it could potentially involve demands for China’s
departure from Mischief Reef and Scarborough Shoal, both found to be within Philippine EEZ.

On the surface, neither the Aquino approach nor the Duterte approach seems to have the complete ingredients for success, although intractable disputes of this sort naturally require years, if not decades of diplomacy to bear fruit. Without a sustained process of bilateral negotiations with China, how could Aquino have leveraged the support of allies, ASEAN concern, international public opinion or the arbitral decision to exact compromise of any sort from China? On the other hand, without the support of key allies (whom Duterte has chosen to antagonize), absent efforts to build high quality ASEAN consensus on the issue, and without utilizing the arbitration victory, what leverage does the Duterte administration think it brings to the negotiating table with China?

The "othering" of China

Aside from economic and security considerations affecting Philippine perceptions of and relations with China, another – albeit secondary - factor in relations may be the gap between their two cultures and worldviews. Important ideational differences between the two peoples exist and have led Filipinos to engage in an "othering" of China (if one may borrow a concept from anthropology), and at times to react to China as if China itself were the antithesis of the Philippines. The Philippines is democratic (or so we claim); China is authoritarian. The Philippines is a diverse, tolerant and open society; China is a closed and relatively homogenous society with a cultural superiority complex. The Philippines is a spiritual, predominantly Christian, nation; China is materialist and officially atheist. The Philippines is a maritime nation; China is a continental power (but is determined to become a maritime power, too). The Philippines is weak and tends to be complacent in the face of great power threats; China is strong and ambitious and driven by historical resentments. In filing a case against China under UNCLOS, we imagined ourselves a David to China's Goliath. The Philippines, being a developing country and small state, insists on law and institutions as a counter to power; China is all about "might is right", at least in many Filipinos' imagination. The
Filipinos genuinely admire Western models and values; China takes from the West only the lessons that will help strengthen and glorify China.

From these dichotomies, it becomes easy to conclude that we have little in common with China and the Chinese, and therefore to cast our lot with China is not only impractical, it is also not being true to ourselves. Another way of putting it is to say that the Philippines is the *yin* to China's *yang*, but as a matter of fact, in ancient Taoist *yin* and *yang* philosophy, there is a complementarity and unity of opposites. It is not the intention in this paper to argue that cultural or ideational differences make compromise and cooperation impossible, only to point out that they exist and may potentially have some effect on the dynamics of bilateral interactions. Nor does the paper argue that shared values are an absolute prerequisite to successful conflict resolution, as tolerance and acceptance of differences can go a long way. Neither are shared values a sufficient condition for good interstate relations, as realists know well.

The differences pointed out here, in my view, are largely a function of the modern political systems and recent historical contexts of the two countries – contemporary artifact rather than immutable law or truth. Instead of “othering”, both the Philippines and China can make more progress in relations and achieve their goals in less costly ways through more empathic understanding of each other’s needs and fears. This does not mean foregoing a more strategic approach to our China relations. On the contrary, building one’s material capabilities for defense of sovereignty and territorial integrity will be very helpful for credible diplomacy, and absolutely necessary for the management of contingencies. However, at the end of the day, the role of a stronger defense posture should be to encourage rather than prevent a meeting of the minds.

**New pathways or dead-ends?**

Where then does the national interest lie with respect to Philippine relations with China, against the backdrop of maritime disputes, geopolitical competition and expected power transition between the major powers?
Sovereignty and territorial integrity are fundamental to the survival and well-being of the State (China's as well as the Philippines'), and it is incumbent upon any government to defend them against encroachments, particularly those that occur beyond the bounds and in violation of international law and universally upheld norms. But rather than being ends in themselves, sovereignty and territorial integrity are but instruments – among many instruments -- to sustain the welfare and future, and even the identity, of a nation. Thus the means, the strategies, the parameters or limits of their defense must be weighed carefully against the risks entailed, the prospects of success, and the long-term repercussions on the region of actions taken in the here and now.

The Philippines-China relationship will always be one that is asymmetric, given all that we know about these two countries. China can no more help being big and perceived with anxiety by smaller neighbors, than the Philippines can help living in the large shadow that China casts in the region. Our geographic location is a given; whether we choose to see it as liability or turn it to strategic advantage is something that can be shaped through human agency. Our history, too, cannot be changed until we decide to make new and more meaningful history and to put our collective energies behind the effort.

In the same vein, China’s leaders behave according to the paths trodden by their predecessors. Unfortunately, responsible, progressive, and peaceloving big powers are not made overnight. In some respects, foreign and security policies under Xi Jinping are even retrogressive – and decades spent by previous Chinese leaders building the country’s image as worthy of trust and legitimacy are coming undone. The pathways that are being taken by China appear driven by both domestic and external forces, but the outcomes are not accidental nor are the actors unthinking. The Philippines must absolutely be strategic in approach, and having a laggard economy while vested interests and navel-gazing elites hold back the country’s progress will no longer do. Both Manila and Beijing need time and experience to mature into the best versions of themselves, but the Chinese Party-State enjoys the advantages of a long view, discipline, resources, and a proven capacity for self-correction.
In the meantime, what should the Philippines – an archipelagic country that is rich in natural resources, a developing nation with a large, young and talented population, a clumsy democracy unable to flourish due to bad governance and internal political and social conflicts -- set as its goal in its bilateral relations with China? Is it not to minimize risks to our welfare and security from this rising power, and also to maximize advantages for our welfare and security from this very same rising power? To focus on just one and not the other, while China is still an evolving power, will be shortsighted and reckless. The Philippines needs to develop a confident and mutually respectful relationship with China, such as might be possible given the asymmetry in size and power between the two. There are two roles we do not want China to play: that of an enemy, and that of a new patron. To focus only on the risks and threats from China may create security dilemmas and turn China into an adversary, if not an enemy; while to focus only on its potential economic largesse may turn the Philippines into a client-state. Neither situation serves the national interest.

Economic complementarities do exist where Chinese capital, technology and experience can help support the infrastructure, industrialization and development needs of the Philippines, which in turn will create new markets and business opportunities for Chinese enterprises; and all these without surrendering a single inch of Philippine soil. Should the Philippines trust China (its government, its enterprises, its people)? The processes of economic engagement and political accommodation of China will have its share of risks and challenges, and there will be failures and misadventures. Spoilers to cooperation – and there will be many - will also need to be managed carefully in order to avoid either the emergence of new tensions or a relapse into conflict.

With respect to the competition between the major powers, is seeking a “safe middle ground” – equidistance, equibalance or nonalignment -- even possible or desirable for the Philippines? Given the traditional friendship and strong alliance ties between the Philippines and the US on one hand, and the recent years’ animosity against China on the other hand, such a policy can only be created through a smart combination of hedging (balancing and accommodation) measures directed at both powers. As in the past,
China’s behavior will be the determining factor of the Philippine posture. Hostile and bullying behavior will merit the same response whenever and wherever it takes place, and a lesson that China must take to heart is that while it takes so much time and energy to build confidence and trust, it takes very, very little to destroy that trust. While a balanced relationship with both great powers may be in the long-term Philippine interest, in the short-term the conditions that will support such a posture have yet to be established. The new facilities - potentially military bases - on Fiery Cross Reef, Subi Reef and other features in the Spratlys recently built by China will serve as a constant reminder to take caution.

On the part of the US, if it did not “lose” the Philippines in 1991 when it allowed acrimony over the military bases negotiations to poison an otherwise generally unproblematic alliance, it has risked doing so a number of times since. Building trust between adversaries may be a great challenge, but maintaining trust among allies is not a picnic, either. Convergence of interests needs to be buttressed by agreement on the means of addressing common problems, which can be achieved only through mutually respectful, consultative processes rather than condescension by one or blanket invocation of imagined “special relations” by the other. Recognition that not all interests converge all of the time is also very important. Both sides must read correctly the signals that say if it is time for the alliance to evolve in order to survive, or else die a natural death.

The Philippines plays an important role by virtue of its location, links with ASEAN, and alliance connections with US, Japan, and Australia, in China’s attainment of its broader foreign policy goals. This may create opportunities for compromise and cooperation with China in general, and in the South China Sea in particular. But the process must be guided by a strategic outlook, in which redefinition of the national interest will be a key component.
CHAPTER III

Securing Philippine National Interests
Securing Philippine National Interests

Charmaine Misalucha-Willoughby, PhD *

As a small state in a world of great powers, the Philippines needs to leverage its position and secure its national interests simultaneously at the domestic level and at the international level. This two-pronged approach of implementing policies domestically and internationally can aid the Philippines not just in achieving, but also in and guaranteeing its security. Domestically, the Philippines should focus on three broad areas: politics, economics, and socio-cultural. Policy recommendations are offered under each area. Internationally, the Philippines should continue to embrace the three pillars of Philippine foreign policy that are enshrined in the Constitution: the preservation and enhancement of national security, the promotion and attainment of economic security, and the protection of rights and the promotion of the welfare and interest of Filipino overseas. Similarly, concrete policy recommendations are offered under each foreign policy objective.

The Philippines finds itself in a unique set of geopolitical circumstances. On one hand are great power dynamics. China’s assertive moves in the South China Sea/West Philippine Sea color not just the relationships within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), but also the trajectory that the regional organization will take. This is especially germane, considering that the Philippines assumes chairmanship of ASEAN in 2017 and can thus direct the agenda of the organization and its future relations with the rising power in the region. Adding to the complexity of ASEAN-China relations is the role of the United States in Southeast Asia: the rebalance strategy under the Obama administration underscored America’s continuing presence in and active engagement with the region. The extent of the US’ commitment to the region, however, is likely to shift

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with the assumption to Office of President Trump in the United States in January 2017.

Apart from great power dynamics, the Philippines is likewise in a unique set of domestic circumstances. President Rodrigo Duterte’s election in 2016 catapulted an administration that enjoys a high satisfaction rating of 72 percent.¹ His strongman image appeals to a population that has been frustrated by previous administrations. Similarly, his crackdown on crime and corruption launched a campaign that is seen by many as a difficult but necessary step to move the country forward. While this may have paved the way for international concern regarding extrajudicial killings, a strained relationship with the US, and ever closer ties with China, the Philippines must realize that as a small state in a world of great powers, it needs to leverage its position and secure its national interests simultaneously at the domestic and international levels. This two-pronged approach of implementing policies domestically and internationally can aid the Philippines not just in achieving, but also in guaranteeing its security.

In view of this, the paper offers recommendations for how the Philippines can secure its national interests via two levels of analysis. Domestically, the focus should be on three broad areas: politics, economics, and socio-cultural. Internationally, the Philippines should continue to embrace the three pillars of foreign policy that are enshrined in the Constitution, which are the preservation and enhancement of national security, the promotion and attainment of economic security, and the protection of the rights and the promotion of the welfare and interest of Filipinos overseas. As the areas under the domestic level correspond with the three pillars in the international level, the Philippines as a whole must realize the inextricable link between domestic and international politics and policies. Moreover, while various levels of analysis may be distinct from each other, in no way are they mutually exclusive. Hence, securing the national interests of the Philippines depends on recognizing the value of the interconnectedness of domestic and international politics.

Securing National Interests Domestically

In order to secure Philippine national interests, focus must be given on domestic politics. This section examines three broad areas: politics, economics, and socio-cultural. Each of these areas corresponds with the three pillars of Philippine foreign policy (national security, economic security, and protecting Filipinos overseas), and therefore lends credence to the close linkage between domestic and international politics. The three sub-sections below offer policy recommendations on how the Philippines can secure its national interests domestically.

Preserve and Enhance National Security

Preserving and enhancing national security in the domestic level requires three things. First, military modernization must proceed. Second, a follow-through must be done on the peace processes in Mindanao and with communist insurgencies. Third, drug-related crime must be addressed in cognizance of international concerns regarding extrajudicial killings. These are further discussed below.

Proceed with military modernization. Republic Act 10349, also known as the Revised AFP Modernization Program, was approved in December 2012 under the administration of former President Benigno Aquino III. While the focus then was on external security and ensuring that the Armed Forces of the Philippines achieves a minimum credible defense status to protect the country’s sovereign integrity, the current Duterte administration shifted the priority to internal security. Specifically, this entailed prioritizing military operations in Basilan, Sulu, Central Mindanao, and other areas in the southern part of the country. Military modernization in this context then means upgrading the technology to include protective equipment for personnel on the ground, combat systems for nighttime operations, as well as better communications equipment. In this sense, it can be argued that military modernization requires focusing on the basic welfare of military personnel. This plan must proceed. Once this is

done, the AFP will be better equipped to deal with both internal and external security.

**Follow through on peace processes in Mindanao and with communist insurgencies.** The shift to internal security is in response to two land-based insurgencies in the country: the Moro insurgency in western Mindanao and the communist insurgency across the nation. The 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro provides for a significant devolution of powers from the central government to Moro authorities. In 2015, however, the House of Representatives and the Senate failed to pass the Bangsamoro Basic Law, the legal instrument to enact the Agreement. Meanwhile, Duterte has announced in his first State of the Nation address a unilateral ceasefire with communist groups. The Communist Party of the Philippines reciprocated by issuing a ceasefire order as the first round of peace talks concluded in August 2016. The most sustainable solution to these two insurgencies that is on the table to date is a federal political system. While this requires revising the 1987 constitution, there is no clear blueprint as to how to go about this. Also, going the federal route will likely face strong opposition as doing so will enhance the political dynasties in the Philippines. These matters need to be addressed before a move towards a federal system can proceed.

**Tackle drug-related crime.** The war on drugs is at the heart of the current administration’s platform. While this is a noteworthy agenda, drug-related crime must be addressed in a wide spectrum. Dealing with drug dealers must be complemented by efforts to rehabilitate drug users. Moreover, this is nested in a series of other linked issues: addressing the problem of the proliferation of drugs means better and more efficient coordination with law enforcement agencies domestically and internationally, not to mention that local prison facilities must be overhauled, that rehabilitation centers must be built, and that social programs must be instituted in order to enable the reintegration of people to society.

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The promotion and attainment of economic security requires the continuation of current macroeconomic policies. Aside from this, tax reform must be instituted in order to narrow the gap between socio-economic classes. Competitiveness must be increased in order to ensure ease of doing business in the country. Finally, annual infrastructure spending must be accelerated in order to support these economic strategies.

**Continue macroeconomic policies.** Sound macroeconomic fundamentals are to be continued in the Duterte administration. These policies resulted in positive credit ratings, a strong balance of payments position largely due to a steady growth of the export of goods and services coupled with the continued inflow of remittances from overseas Filipino workers, and a reduction of the fiscal deficit. The current administration must nurture this positive economic environment as this will form the basis for the successful implementation of Duterte’s eight-point economic agenda. The only way that this can be sustainable, however, is if national security is guaranteed, that is, that military modernization proceeds, that insurgencies are stanched, and that crime is controlled. In short, the preservation and enhancement of national security, as discussed above, is the prerequisite for promoting and attaining economic security.

**Institute tax reform.** Tax revenue collection efforts must be revamped, first and foremost. This must thereafter be complemented by reforms within tax collecting agencies. Alongside these must be social programs to aid lower-income households, such as support services to small- and medium-sized enterprises to increase productivity and improve market access, as well as the improvement of the conditional cash transfer program. This can ultimately lead to the narrowing of the gap between socioeconomic classes.

**Increase competitiveness and ease of doing business.**

competitiveness and the ease of doing business in the country. Raising the bar for businesses can only be good for the economy as a whole because firms realize that they need to up their ante and cement their comparative advantage if they want to survive. This brings up the feasibility of revising the rules on foreign ownership of businesses in the Philippines. However, this kind of business climate can only be accomplished by instituting sound policies to ensure the safety of businesspeople and consumers alike. Thus, reducing transaction costs and cutting red tape in setting up and doing business in the country should be a priority. Again, this can only be viable if national security concerns are addressed.

Accelerate annual infrastructure spending. Ease of doing business can thus be ushered in by improving the Philippines' infrastructure. Frequent power cuts and a poor transportation system increase business costs and undermine economic activities. Duterte has spoken of the establishment of a railway for the country with the help of China. If this is to push through, consideration must be made of maritime issues in the South China Sea/West Philippine Sea. A railway should not come at the cost of strained ties with allies. Another infrastructure that needs attention is telecommunications. Improving these facilities can be accomplished by forming private-public partnerships that are geared for the provision of faster and more efficient services.

Protect the Rights and Promote the Welfare and Interest of Filipinos

The third area of focus under the domestic level of analysis is socio-cultural. Here, policy recommendations emphasize human and societal security. In particular, rural and value chain development ought to be developed. Also, the Philippines must invest in the development of human capital. Finally, social protection programs must remain on the agenda. These are especially geared towards lower-income households to assist them even their chances of market access and opportunities.
**Promote rural and value chain development.** Rural producers are the starting point of most value chains. Helping them capture market opportunities improves overall value chain performance. In the case of the Philippines, focusing on small farmers should be the way to go. Farmers’ organizations play a key role here as they help reduce poverty and enhance food security. Moreover, they also help empower women and youth in agricultural production. Another way to promote rural and value chain development is to ensure security of land tenure. This must be addressed in order to tackle price volatility, reduce poverty, and enable small farmers to meet the growing demand for food.

**Invest in human capital development.** A strong human resource base is necessary to supplement policies that boost productivity and economic progress. A logical place to start is improving the quality and levels of education of people. Education instills skills that affect people’s lives and social development in many ways. In this case, science, technology, and the creative arts must be promoted.

**Improve social protection programs.** Social protection can play a key role in reducing poverty and inequality. Initiatives here can include the promotion of formal employment, reduction of inequalities in education, and the extension of the coverage of community-based schemes. Government efforts are central to make sure that the poorest are helped and that they have access to services. In the Philippines, this can take the form of strengthening the implementation of the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Law.

Securing the Philippines’ national interests domestically therefore requires a three-pronged approach of policies targeting the political, economic, and socio-cultural areas. These are tied to each other and policies therefore spill over to other areas. These must be further harmonized with policies in the international level.
Securing National Interests Internationally

Philippine foreign policy is hinged on three pillars that are laid down in the Constitution. These are the preservation and enhancement of national security, the promotion and attainment of economic security, and the protection of the rights and the promotion of the welfare and interest of Filipinos overseas. These three are aligned with the areas discussed previously under the domestic level, which are the political, economic, and socio-cultural aspects. The correspondence of the foreign policy pillars and the domestic policy areas highlight the interconnectedness of the two levels of analysis.

Preserve and Enhance National Security

In the international level, the preservation and the enhancement of national security depends on improving the Philippines’ relations with the United States and China. At the same time, the country must boost its strategic partnerships with Vietnam and Japan. Assuming the chairmanship of ASEAN in 2017 will push the Philippines to harness its membership in the regional organization. By doing so, it can similarly leverage its membership in the United Nations.

Improve relations with great powers. The Philippines finds itself in a unique situation where it is a long-time ally of the current hegemon, and at the same time, it bears the brunt of the assertive moves of a rising power. Caught in this nexus, the Philippines must therefore know how to take advantage of its position without having to choose one over the other. Explicitly siding with one while alienating the other, or playing them off against each other, may make for good realpolitik, but considering the maritime issues in the South China Sea/West Philippine Sea and the arbitration award in favor of the Philippines, the country cannot afford to make enemies with anyone. A sound foreign policy improves, rather than disrupts, relations with others.

Boost strategic partnerships. Related to improving relations with great powers is enhancing the Philippines’ strategic
partnerships with small states and middle powers like Vietnam and Japan. Vietnam is a claimant state in the South China Sea disputes, and while the recent arbitration award in no way addresses the competing claims between the Philippines and Vietnam, areas of cooperation can nonetheless be identified. The Philippines’ current strategic partnership with Vietnam can thus be the platform for identifying these areas of cooperation and where initiatives can take root. The Philippines can also find mutually beneficial gains from its strategic partnership with Japan. Not only is Japan one of the biggest donors of official development assistance to the Philippines, but it is also a close ally of the United States. It may be time then for a more formal relationship with Japan instead of a strategic partnership.

Harness membership in ASEAN. The Philippines assumes the chairmanship of ASEAN in 2017. As such, it can determine the regional organization’s future trajectory. The South China Sea/West Philippine Sea issue must remain on the agenda. Given the Philippines’ closer ties with China, it is understandable for the former to be more circumspect and more sensitive of the latter’s position. However, the maritime disputes are more than just a sovereignty issue. It is, at the same time, a fisheries issue, an environmental issue, a commercial issue, even a transnational crime and counter-terrorism issue. Hence, the South China Sea/West Philippine Sea cannot be taken off the agenda despite the Philippines’ ever closer relations with China.

Leverage membership in the UN. The Philippines must likewise take advantage of its membership in the United Nations. The challenges facing the country are transnational in nature. Hence, addressing them requires close coordination and cooperation with the rest of the international community. The war on drugs in the domestic realm can only be effectively and sustainably addressed when it is done in accordance with international norms and principles. The Philippines accomplishes nothing if it continues to operate in the belief that the domestic realm is immune from the international realm.
Promote and Attain Economic Security

In the economic sphere, the Philippines can secure its national interests internationally via three avenues. First, it needs to deepen its commitment to the ASEAN Economic Community. Second, it needs to utilize regional free trade agreements to its advantage. And third, it needs to capitalize on its membership in regional and international bodies.

Deepen commitment to the ASEAN Economic Community. The AEC is one of the pillars of the ASEAN Community. Moving towards economic integration can only be advantageous to the Philippines as this opens the country to more resources, opportunities, and markets. This, of course, presupposes that local companies are in a position to compete with others in the region. At the same time, a deeper commitment to the AEC entails that foreign companies can easily set up businesses and investments in the country. Thus, the Philippines’ domestic economic policies, which can only be assured when national security is guaranteed, will inevitably determine its ability to further its engagement with the AEC.

Harness regional free trade agreements. Alongside the AEC, the Philippines must also utilize free trade agreements. To date, the Philippines is part of seven free trade agreements that have been signed and are in effect. These agreements prove to be one of the most effective ways of opening up foreign markets for exporters. They also reduce barriers to trade, protect local interests, and enhance the rule of law in the partner country. The reduction of trade barriers and the creation of a stable and transparent trading and investment environment make it easier and more cost-effective for local companies to export their product and services to trading partner markets. In short, the Philippines loses nothing by ensuring that local companies

The FTAs that the Philippines is part of and that have been signed and are in effect are the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement, the ASEAN Free Trade Area, and ASEAN’s FTAs with Australia and New Zealand, India, Japan, China, and South Korea. The Philippine-European Free Trade Association Free Trade Agreement has been signed but not yet in effect. Meanwhile, negotiations have been launched for the ASEAN-Hong Kong, China FTA, the Philippine-EU FTA, and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. “Free Trade Agreements,” Asia Regional Integration Center: Tracking Asian Integration. Available at https://aric.adb.org/fta-country, accessed 28 December 2016.
have access to foreign markets, and that foreign investors can set up shop in domestic markets.

**Leverage membership in regional and international bodies.** Taking advantage of the Philippines' membership in, for example, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and the World Trade Organization can be crucial in promoting rural and value chain development. Capitalizing on memberships in regional and international bodies can enhance market dynamics and relationships between the different actors in the value chain. Ultimately, this can strengthen the whole market system, including enterprises, business relationships, financial networks, supporting functions, rules and norms, and the business environment. As in national security, a sound economic policy improves international relations.

*Protect the Rights and Promote the Welfare and Interest of Filipinos Overseas*

The protection of Filipinos overseas, which is the third pillar of Philippine foreign policy, calls for several things. First, the government’s capacity to deliver services must be augmented. This can be achieved through the creation of public-private partnerships. Second, agreements with destination countries must be reached. Overall, improving international relations is advantageous for the Philippines as it is through such that overseas Filipinos are protected and their interests promoted.

**Augment the government’s capacity to deliver services.** One way to complement the government’s ability to deliver services is via public-private partnerships. PPPs can bring greater efficiency and sustainability to the provision of infrastructure and services like water, sanitation, energy, transport, telecommunications, health care, and education. They combine scarce public funding and private-sector technology and innovation to provide better quality public services through improved operational efficiency. PPPs can also ensure operational transparency and efficiency. Hence, it is crucial for the government to enhance its relations and partnerships with private
Reach agreements with destination countries. An effective collaboration mechanism between countries of origin and destination ensures that migration takes place in accordance with agreed principles and procedures. The Philippines is the country of origin with the most bilateral agreements: 13, according to the International Labor Organization. Twelve of these 13 bilateral agreements are with labor receiving-countries, and 1 with a labor-sending country. These agreements offer a form of protection for Filipinos overseas.

Conclusion

The crux of securing the Philippines’ national interests is harmonizing the policies in the domestic and international levels. This paper argued that one way to do this is by aligning three areas in the domestic level – politics, economics, and socio-cultural – with the three pillars of Philippine foreign policy. By doing so, linkages and continuities in domestic and international politics and policies can be seen.

Similarly, the intricate connections between domestic and international politics demonstrate that one level of analysis is not mutually exclusive from another. Hence, policies implemented in the domestic realm have ramifications in the international realm and vice versa. An appreciation of this nuance can make for a more prudent and more sustainable way of ensuring the Philippines’ national interests.

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References


Rising Sea Level: A National Security Concern

Carter S Luma-Ang, MNSA

This examines the Philippine Government's registration of birth of undocumented children born in Sabah within the human rights framework. It may be recalled that international human rights instruments have long emphasized that birth registration is a fundamental human right that opens the door to other rights, including the right to a legal identity, access to education and health care and demand for state protection. In legal terms, children whose births were not registered do not exist and their right to a name and a nationality is denied. In establishing the connection between Philippine birth registration and the rights of undocumented children born in Sabah to a legal identity, access to social services and state protection, the researcher conducted document analysis, interviewed subject matter experts, held focus group discussions and traveled to Sabah to observe the challenges faced by these children in their everyday lives. The researcher analyzed the impact of Philippine birth registration on human security, taking into consideration this group of children's triple vulnerability as children, as migrants and as undocumented migrants. Overall, the study emphasizes the crucial importance of birth registration in fulfilling the right of this highly vulnerable group of children to a name and a nationality; explores the obstacles towards the fulfillment of their rights to education, health care and state protection; and highlights the actions that the Philippine Government has to explore in order to provide them with a meaningful Philippine citizenship.

Climate Change has become an everyday topic. There is not a single day that the television or the newspaper does not carry news or features related to climate change. Perhaps one of the predominant effects of climate change is sea level rise.

The Fifth Assessment Report (AR5, Table 2.1) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) showed that the

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likely range for sea level rise can even go as high as 0.38 meters in 2048 and up to 0.82 meters in 2081-2100. Some studies also suggest that the sea level can further rise to five meters if the Antarctic Ice Sheets melt.

Despite the attention given to climate change nowadays, discussions have focused generally on environmental and social impacts. The Philippines, even with its archipelagic nature, does not seem to give much discussion on how sea level rise will affect its territory and maritime zones. On the other hand, the international community is already voicing out opinions on how to address complications of shifting coastlines brought about by sea level rise.

The limits of a State’s territory are defined by the coastline—where the land meets the sea. The adjacent sea area can also be claimed by the coastal State as its territorial waters where it can enforce its domestic laws. Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), a coastal State has the right to establish the breadth of its territorial waters up to a limit not exceeding 12 nautical miles (NM) measured from the baselines. The state can also have a contiguous zone which may not extend beyond 24 NM from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured.

The coastal State is further entitled to an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) which shall not extend beyond 200 NM from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured.

Under the UNCLOS, which is called the Law of the Sea treaty, the baselines are the reference for all maritime zones that a coastal State is entitled to. There are three types of baselines under the UNCLOS—normal baselines, straight baselines, and archipelagic baselines. Under the Republic Act (RA) No. 9522, the Philippine uses archipelagic baselines for its archipelago (Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao) and normal baselines for the Kalayaan Island Group (KIG) and Bajo de Masinloc.

Then normal baselines is the actual low water line of an island or feature. Thus, it moves with the sea level. When the sea level rises, the coastline and baseline move landward thereby reducing the
land area of the island or feature. The movement also reduces the effective area of the territorial sea surrounding the island or feature. If the island or feature will be totally submerged underwater, it will lose entirely its territorial sea.

Straight baselines are employed in localities where the coastline is deeply intended and cut into, or if there is a fringe of islands along the coast in its immediate vicinity. Archipelagic baseline is a special type of straight baselines. To be considered an archipelagic baseline, it must conform to the requirements set in Article 47 of the UNCLOS.

Under the UNCLOS, only islands or naturally formed bodies of land above water at high tide can have maritime zones. Article 121 of UNCLOS states that “an island is a naturally formed area of land, surrounded by water, which is above water at high tide.” Thus, if a feature is underwater at high tide, it is not an island and cannot have maritime zones.

Coastal States, including the Philippines, use outermost islands and drying reefs in designing their baselines in order to claim bigger maritime zones. It is expected that many, if not all, basepoints of the Philippines will submerge underwater if sea level rises. However, no one knows up to what extent the land will shift and how much the maritime zones of the Philippines will change with such submerging of basepoints. With this question in mind, the author generated models that will show the scenarios in 2048 and 2100 using the projection of sea level rise by the IPCC and the digital terrain model from the National Mapping and Resource Information (NAMRIA) 2013 IfSAR data. The Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar (IfSAR) is a powerful approach in generating high-resolution digital data through the use of Digital Elevation Model (DEM) and Orthorectified Radar Image (ORI).

The data extracted from the models shows that the country will lose around 2,946.50 sq.km. and 6,151.52 sq.km. of land areas with 0.38-meter and 0.82-meter sea level arise is larger than the islands of Cebu and Catanduanes combined. Unlike land area, the total length of coastline increases as sea level arises.
Aside from the effect on the land area and coastline length, sea level rise causes location of points of the archipelagic baselines to submerge permanently underwater and the normal baselines to shift landwards. The shifting of the baselines causes subsequent effect on all the maritime zones measured from it.

The question that haunts States that used archipelagic baselines is whether the submerging of locations of points joining the baselines would result in shifting of baselines and the maritime zones that are measures from them. Experts seem to have different views on this.

Arsana (2010) believes that “other types of straight line type baseline are also potentially threatened by sea level rise as such baselines need to be anchored to the coast as represented by the low water line.” This opinion conforms with the principle “the land dominates the sea” which was declared by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the North Continental Shelf Cases (1969). In its decision, the ICJ outlined the principle by saying “the land is the legal source of the power which a State may exercise over territorial extensions to seaward.” Thus, change in the land configuration causes change in the limits of the maritime zones.

Groups that promote fixed baselines have reference only to Article 7(2) of UNCLOS which states: “Where because of the presence of a delta and other natural conditions that coastline is highly unstable, the appropriate points may be selected along the furthest seaward extent of the low-water line and notwithstanding subsequent regression of the low-water line, the straight baselines shall remain effective until changed by the coastal State in accordance with this Convention.”

Article 7(2) is also called the Bangladesh provision because it was included to accommodate the position of Bangladesh. Other than that, there are no articles in UNCLOS dealing with shifting baselines.

Article 7(2) does not refer directly to appearing or disappearing islands or change of coastline due to sea level rise. The “highly unstable” was used to describe Bangladesh coastline at the time
of the Convention and was not referring to the future configuration of the coastline. At the moment, there are no cases decided by any international tribunal on shifting baselines.

What the Philippines can do is to develop plans and activities that will address the situation when it comes to a point that the international community agrees to adopt fixed or ambulatory baselines.

The effect of sea level rise to the baselines has a high impact because of the baselines would shift, it will change the regime of the maritime zones measures from it. It also has a subsequent effect on the implementation of local laws and the nature of navigation allowed on an area of water.

If the baselines would shift landward, an area of water that was previously considered as archipelagic water will become part of the territorial sea. A portion of the territorial sea will also become part of the EEZ and portions of the EEZ will become part of the high seas. The authority of the coastal State and the privilege of foreign vessels change in the area affected.

Under the UNCLOS, the following are the kinds of navigation allowed in each maritime zone:

![Image: Change in Panay Island due to Sea Level Rise (SLR)]

**Figure 1:**
Change in Panay Island due to Sea Level Rise (SLR)
The figure shows images from the model of Panay Island with SLR of 0.38m and 0.82m. The red represents the submerged areas.

The following images show the scenario for Bajo de Masinloc when sea level rises. The figures were generated by the author using NAMRIA Chart 4723A as background.

**Figure 2: Bajo de Masinloc depicted in a nautical chart**
Left image – blue line represents the outer limits of the territorial sea.
Right image – blue area represents the belt of the territorial sea.

A coastal State has the right to establish the breadth of its territorial waters up to a limit not exceeding 12 NM measured from the baselines. If the island or rock completely submerges, will the territorial sea remain despite the ‘disappearance’ of the land and baselines from where its limits were measured from?

To argue that the territorial sea remains will be against the principle of “land dominates the sea”. Contrary to the loss of the coastal State, the international community gains more when ambulatory baselines are adopted because an area previously considered as territorial see becomes part of the EEZ or the high seas. Foreign vessels have more privileges in the EEZ and high seas than in internal waters and territorial sea.

While it is perceived that fixing baselines would promote stability and prevent conflict, it also restricts the right of a coastal State to extend its maritime zones when circumstances change in the future. The case of Banua Wuhu in Indonesia is rare but not impossible.
New islands, as high as 90 meters, are occasionally formed by this submarine volcano. Unfortunately, the islands would disappear after a few years later. Banua Wuhu would have been an interesting example. If baselines are fixed, a State will not be able to claim territorial sea or additional EEZ in the new island.

The model of sea level rise in 2048 and 2100 show that there are at least twenty-one (21) Philippine Archipelagic Basepoints (PAB) locations that will be permanently underwater. In this situation, the low water did not recede. Instead, the feature on which it is located is totally submerged. If the idea of ambulatory baselines is followed, the basepoint would have to be transferred to the nearest feature above water.

In the domestic area, land area is used in the computation of the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) of barangays, cities and municipalities, and provinces. The Local Government Code of 1991 (RA 7160) provides how the share of local government units is allocated. Under the Code, land area is 25 percent of the formula for determining the share of each province, city and municipality, and barangay.

Following the formula of the Code, a coastal barangay that has an area submerged in water will lose a portion of its IRA. A land-locked barangay will not have the same problem and would even have a bigger share of the IRA since even without increasing its land area, its proportion to the total area will be increased due to the reduction of area of another barangay.

The ongoing delineation of municipal waters will also be affected by sea level rise because similar to the UNCLOS, there are no provisions in the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998, Department of Environment and Natural Resources Administrative Order No. 2001-17 (DENR DAO-17) and Department of Agriculture and Administrative Order No. 2004-01 (DA AO 2004-01) dealing with changing coastlines. The municipal waters are also measured from the municipal baselines—where the land meets the sea. A dilemma will have to be faced if during the negotiation in the future between adjacent municipalities, the actual coastline is different from how it was described in the submission.
Recommendations

There is no international laws that measure power or responsibility of a State according to its land area. Thus, the Philippines should not be affected in its political relationship with other countries despite its shrinking areas.

In local governance, there are laws that use land area, coastline and outermost points in their provisions for implementation such as the Local Government Code and the Philippine Fisheries Code. These laws must be amended to prevent any unjust effect on coastal local government units.

Simple beacons are recommended to be construction in locations of basepoints that will have the biggest impact on the breadth of the maritime zones if sea level rise happens. Simple warning structures which may not be in the same standards as expensive aids to navigation would also be acceptable. It may even be appropriate to construct a marker indicating it is a basepoint for the archipelagic baselines of the Philippines.

The Maritime Zones Bill should be revised to state specifically the limits of the maritime zones by listing the coordinates of the limits. At present, the Bill includes a general statement that the outer limits of the territorial sea and the EEZ shall be 12 NM and 200 NM from the archipelagic baselines, respectively.

A special and large scale (larger than 1:200,000) chart should be punished showing the baselines (low water line) of the island and limits of the territorial sea in the Kalayaan Island Group and Bajo de Masinloc. The existing Chart 4723A is scaled at 1:1,250,000 which is not ideal for showing the baselines and outer limits of the maritime zones because the features are too small to be measured in this scale.

It is still inconclusive whether baselines are fixed or ambulatory. As Schofield (2009) summed it: “when the UNCLOS was being drafted, sea level rise was not a major issue and no provisions on sea level rise were included. At the Third United National Conference on the Law of the Sea, it was generally not anticipated that sea level
rise would engender such radical shifts in normal baselines and changes in insular status. Consequently, LOSC does not necessarily provide mechanisms to deal with this novel problem.”

However, more experts seem to favor the ambulatory baselines. Therefore, existing laws and policies of the country should be reviewed and amended, if necessary, including the proposed Maritime Zones Bill, to ensure that the alarming impacts of sea level rise in the future will no greatly affect how the Philippine Government manages its own territory and maritime zones.

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Book Review
Setting Expectations

Renowned scholar Graham Allison offered a much welcome addition to this discourse through his magisterial book “Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’s Trap?”

(Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017)

Manmar C Francisco

There is no dearth of discussion about how to avoid cataclysmic confrontation between and among major powers, especially in the presence of nuclear weapons. Policy-makers, scholars, and pundits alike have made their own significant contribution to the ongoing conversation about the great-power contest, particularly between the People’s Republic of China and the United States of America. Renowned scholar Graham Allison offered a much welcome addition to this discourse through his magisterial book: Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’s Trap?” which is essentially an invitation to appreciate the parallelism between the current China-US competition and the previous great-power dynamics in history.

In his Destined for War, Allison outlined the treacherous currents of the relations between a rising and a status-quo power, warning that history is replete with examples of devastating wars brought about by miscalculation, hubris, and paranoia. He also made extensive discussion about historical lessons on the strains and pressures in one’s alliance system when faced with a powerful adversary.

Allison’s cautionary discussion of the dynamics between China and the US bears great relevance to how small regional players, such as the Philippines, navigate the currents and vicissitudes of great-power politics. Through Destined for War, one can have a cogent realist appreciation of China’s meteoric rise and the implications for Philippines-US bilateral relations. The book convincingly sets expectations about how exposed Ph-US ties can be to the deterioration

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or improvement of China-US relations. The book also seems to suggest that the strategic options for the Philippines might be sorely limited because much of the solutions to the security predicaments in the region rely on the calculations and threat perceptions of the Americans and the Chinese.

*Destined for War* implores for a reckoning of American and Chinese interests, especially in the Asia Pacific Region. In the context of Ph-US relations, such reckoning will most certainly involve inconvenient questions about the extent to which the US will defend the Philippines against China’s increasing assertiveness. The strategic value of a certain level of commitment by the Americans to the Filipinos in relation to the Chinese is certainly an agenda that is not beyond review by the decision-makers in Washington, and even Beijing. “What’s in it for me?” or “Is it worth it?” are questions that will and should figure prominently in American strategic calculation in relation to the defense of the Philippines.

Allison’s *Destined for War* does not necessarily paint an utterly hopeless and totally catastrophic picture of the future for the region that houses a rising military power as well as the forces of an established one. He does not claim in absolute terms that the Americans and the Chinese will eventually clash violently to both sides’ utter destruction. However, he does say that in avoiding war, the two powers ought to undertake clever diplomatic moves, challenging concessions, and serious sacrifices. Towards the end of his book, Allison spells out general policy options or “clues” for both China and the US that seem to invite a painful rethinking of the hierarchy of their respective interests. The road to peace is long and winding, fraught with potholes, often narrow than wide, but the road does exist. There is a way out of Thucydides’s trap, so says Allison.

Nonetheless, against this seemingly gloomy backdrop of realpolitik, the Philippine security and foreign policy establishment may revisit, reexamine, and perhaps recalibrate the country’s national interests and policy options, no matter how limited these might be. Given the wide range of possibilities that can be brought about by cooperation or competition (or some combination of both) between China and the US as discussed (and implied) in *Destined for War,*
well-meaning foreign policy-makers in the Philippines would be better served by constantly monitoring the emerging and prevailing threat perceptions and calculation in both Beijing and Washington. It would be wise for policy-makers and pundits to appreciate how easy or difficult it might be for the two powers to (re)locate the Philippines high or low in their respective priorities.

As Beijing and Washington engage in the process of identifying what specific “sacrifices” should be made in the name of “peace,” Manila should not expect that its interests would be left untouched. In the world of possibilities, the assumptions that the Philippines works under and the expectations that it sets for itself might have tremendous implications for the country’s prosperity, territorial integrity, sovereignty, and survival.

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