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The Philippines in a Changing Southeast Asia

Conference Papers

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LT Deborah J. Mitchell

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PREFACE

The papers in this volume were written for presentation at a conference on, "The Philippines in a Changing Southeast Asia," sponsored by the Defense Academic Research Support Program (DARSP) and held at the United States Pacific Command, Camp H. M. Smith, Hawaii, February 27 - March 1, 1989.

The conference met to explore current political and military trends in the Philippines and place those developments into the larger context of changes taking place in Southeast Asia. The deliberations went well beyond the issues contained in these papers and included an intensive roundtable discussion on the questions of the future of US military bases in the Philippines. These papers are being distributed in this form to enable more than just those who attended the conference to benefit from some of the ideas and information presented at the meetings.

The success of the conference and the appearance of these papers was due to the efforts and dedication of many individuals. However, we would like to single out for special acknowledgement, the major contributions of Pat Lanzara in the planning and running of the conference at the US Pacific Command and in the preparation of the manuscript for publication.

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THE NEW ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES AND THE AQUINO REGIME

By Benjamin N. Muego, Bowling Green State University

It has been more than three years since Corazon C. Aquino, then an obscure and self-effacing political housewife, was catapulted to the presidency of the Philippines. It turns out that the military mutiny (now simply referred to as EDSA* in coffee table books) that toppled the fourteen-year rule of Ferdinand E. Marcos¹ on February 25, 1986, was a failed coup d'etat organized by former Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and a cabal of opportunistic colonels² who banded together under the aegis of an organization called Reform the Armed Forces Movement.

Two of EDSA's principal actors, the renegade Colonel Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan and opposition Senator Juan Ponce Enrile have since become bitter critics of the Aquino government, while a third, Defense Secretary Fidel V. Ramos, continues to be allied with the president, and indeed, has emerged as her principal protector. Since Aquino's assumption of the Philippine presidency three years ago, there have been at least three coup attempts against her government by various groups of disgruntled military officers and enlisted men.

What exactly is the role of the military in the Aquino government? Specifically, is the New Armed Forces of the Philippines (NAFP) significantly different from its predecessor organization under Marcos? Has the NAFP, under a new leadership on both ends (Ramos as its civilian leader and Lieutenant General Renato S. de Villa as Chief of Staff) become more "professional" and less

** Epifanio de los Santos Avenue is the avenue between Camp Crame and Camp Aguinaldo where the majority of the public demonstrations occurred prior to Marcos' removal from office. EDSA is now used as a common name for the military mutiny.*

politicized than three years ago? How do the current officers and men of the NAFP regard Aquino as a national leader, in contrast to Marcos and her other predecessors in office? And finally, has the NAFP sufficiently neutralized the troublesome factions³ that appeared to cause so much polarization and instability within the military organization in 1986 and 1987? This paper shall attempt to answer these questions as it examines the "influence of the military in Philippine politics."

The Armed Forces of the Philippines in Brief

The Armed Forces of the Philippines, renamed the New Armed Forces of the Philippines by Ramos in February 1986, consists of three service branches--the Army, Navy and Air Force. A fourth "branch," the Philippine Constabulary (PC), restructured by the Marcos regime into the "Philippine Constabulary/Integrated National Police," with the "integration of all police forces under the control of the PC chief,"⁴ was originally given primary responsibility for combating the communist insurgency in the 1950s. The 1987-1988 edition of the Military Balance estimates the PC/INP's current manpower strength at 50,000.⁵

While exact figures are unavailable and estimates of the NAFP's active troop strength varies, the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies puts the Philippine Army's active manpower level at 62,000; the Philippine Navy's (including the Marines and Coast Guard), at 26,000; and, the Air Force's, at 17,000, for a total of 105,000 active duty military personnel.⁶ The aggregate number balloons to 273,000 if PC/INP and para-

military personnel as well as Army, Navy, and Air Force reservists are added to the total.⁷

The current Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) had its beginnings in 1901 when the president of the Second Philippine Commission directed the United States Army to create an "insular force to protect the lives and properties of the people."⁸ This meant, among other things, mopping up operations against remnants of the Philippine Revolutionary Army of General Emilio F. Aguinaldo. While Aguinaldo was captured by American military authorities on March 23, 1901, scattered guerrilla-type resistance continued until 1906 when the last Filipino "rebel" general surrendered.⁹

For three decades the "insular police force" called the Philippine Constabulary (PC) proved equal to the tasks for which it was established by the American colonial authorities. The PC successfully quelled peasant uprisings and carried out a variety of other police functions. As World War II loomed on the horizon, however, the mandate of the PC was enlarged to include "national defense," a development that in turn, led to the birth of the Philippine Army.¹⁰

The initial recruitment, organization and training of the Philippine Army (Scouts) fell on the shoulders of General Douglas MacArthur who retired from the United States Army in 1937. A year earlier, MacArthur was conferred the position of Field Marshal of the Philippine Army by Commonwealth president Manuel L. Quezon. As a military organization, the Philippine Army (Scouts) was subsequently integrated into the United States Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE), with MacArthur, who was recalled to active service by the United States Army in 1941,¹¹ as its supreme commander. Filipino soldiers fought alongside Americans against the Japanese invaders. During the Japanese interregnum--after the fall of Bataan and Corregidor in 1942--elements of the Philippine Army (Scouts) took to the hills to wage a relentless guerrilla effort against the Japanese army of occupation.

The post-World War II Philippine Army, the forerunner of the current Armed Forces of the Philippines had three basic missions: (1) to defend the state against external attack; (2) to promote internal security; and, (3) to maintain peace and order.¹² In addition, it was assigned three corollary

functions: the training of reservists, supervision of military training in both high schools (PMT) and universities (ROTC), and the administration of the Philippine Military Academy and other service schools.¹³

In the 1950s, the Philippine Constabulary, at the time already an integral part of the AFP, spearheaded the government's successful two-pronged effort against an insurgency waged by the Partidong Komunista ng Pilipinas and its military arm, the Hukbalahap, soon after the restoration of Philippine independence by the United States on July 4, 1946. Under the leadership of Ramon F. Magsaysay, first as the AFP's civilian head (as Secretary of National Defense under President Elpidio Quirino), and later as president of the Philippines, the AFP succeeded in effectively "break[ing] the backbone of Philippine communism."¹⁴

For almost two decades, from the early 1950s to the early 1970s, the Armed Forces of the Philippines--with the possible exception of the Philippine Constabulary which continued to carry out its principal mission of maintaining peace and order throughout the archipelago--virtually disappeared from the public limelight. While there were occasional stories during the period about military operations that resulted either in the capture or death of such notorious Huks as Kumander Linda Bie and Kumander Sumulong, among others, these stories were generally accorded only secondary or tertiary importance in the mass media. This was due in part to the fact that by the 1960s, the once ideologically monolithic Huk organization had degenerated into rival bandit gangs. These competing Huk factions engaged in protection rackets, prostitution, and gambling, especially in and around American military installations in Angeles, Pampanga, and Olongapo, Zambales.

Perhaps the most significant event that took place in the mid-1960s which indirectly involved the AFP, was the debate over whether the Philippines should become involved in the Vietnam War. In 1964, President Diosdado P. Macapagal, no doubt responding to pressure from official Washington, submitted a proposal to the Philippine Congress asking it to authorize the dispatch of a military contingent to Vietnam. Opposition to the scheme, especially from Filipino students, turned out to be so intense, however, that Macapagal and congress-

sional leaders were forced to water down the proposal by agreeing to send a non-combatant engineering contingent instead (PHILCAG).

It was not until Marcos' declaration of martial law on September 21, 1972, and his invocation of a "real and immediate threat" to national security by alleged Maoist communists, that the Armed Forces of the Philippines once again took on a high profile. For nine years, during martial law proper (from the proclamation of martial law on September 21, 1972, to its ceremonial lifting on January 17, 1981), the Armed Forces of the Philippines received top media billing, along with the Marcoses and their cronies, in the metropolitan and provincial mass media.¹⁵ The military's political clout and overall influence continued well into the so-called New Republic until the Marcoses were sent into exile on February 25, 1986.

During martial law proper, the AFP more than quadrupled in size,¹⁶ and in several places around the country, military officers replaced elected civilian officials as policy makers and in general, as dispensers of political and economic favors from the central government.¹⁷ This was in addition to the AFP's traditional role of keeping the peace. By 1972, the AFP was combating two determined insurgencies--the Moro National Liberation Front/Moro Bangsa Army, fighting for an independent Muslim homeland in Mindanao; and the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army, nationwide. Both insurgencies spread to other parts of the country within a year of the declaration of martial law, and unlike other insurgent groups in the past, were led and manned by highly ideological, well trained, and disciplined cadres.¹⁸

From the beginning, the Armed Forces of the Philippines enforced the edicts, decrees and letters of instruction of the martial law regime and guaranteed its existence. Interestingly enough, the NAFP plays similar related roles--that of enforcer and guarantor--vis-a-vis the Aquino government. Not only did a military mutiny against Marcos cause Aquino to become president; the continuing loyalty of the NAFP's civilian and military leadership, particularly that of Ramos', has saved the Aquino government from collapse on at least three occasions. From all available evidence, it appears that had Ramos withdrawn his support for Aquino at the crucial time, it is doubtful whether she would have

survived the latest threat on her government waged, ironically, by the same military personnel whose defection to her camp on February 24, 1986 marked the beginning of the end for Marcos' thirteen years of virtual one-man rule. In retrospect, Honasan and his co-conspirators must have expected Ramos to remain neutral, or in a worse case scenario, to offer only token resistance. Instead, Ramos unequivocally sided with Aquino and personally directed the loyalist counter-attack that routed the mutineers and sent Honasan fleeing for his life.

Filipino Attitudes Towards the Military

Unlike Indonesia, Thailand, and other Third World countries in Asia and elsewhere, the Philippines does not have a tradition of glorifying her military leaders nor the military establishment. Indeed, very few of the Philippines' authentic heroes, with the possible exception of Antonio Luna, Gregorio del Pilar and maybe, Emilio F. Aguinaldo, were of distinctive military backgrounds. Even Andres Bonifacio, organizer and supreme commander of the Katipunan, the clandestine mass-based organization that initiated military action against Spain in 1896 was not a military figure; he was a man of the masses, a plebeian who disdained the epaulets and pomp of military rank. Other Philippine national heroes like Jose P. Rizal, Apolinario Mabini, Marcelo H. del Pilar, Manuel L. Quezon, Wenceslao Q. Vinzons and Claro M. Recto, to name only a few, were intellectuals or men of letters, not men on horseback.

It is not surprising, therefore, if in general Filipinos tend to downgrade the military as a career choice. Indeed, the AFP traditionally recruits its officer corps from Philippine society's middle and lower classes; while its enlisted personnel and non-commissioned officers, in Morris Janowitz' felicitous phrase, are "drawn mainly from the rural hinterlands."¹⁹ A 1969 study conducted by Quintin R. de Borja on the "career motivations of the Philippine military elite," suggests that the AFP officer corps' geographical origins are predominantly rural.²⁰ The study's respondents were senior AFP officers all of whom were alumni of either the Philippine Constabulary Academy (PCA) or the Philippine Military Academy (the PCA is the forerunner of the present PMA). A large percentage of the respondents viewed their admission to the military

academy as a rare educational opportunity;²¹ an "opportunity structure" that provided them with an effective ladder for upward social mobility.²²

An apparent upshot of the low socio-economic status and rural geographical origin common among the AFP officer corps and rank and file is the relatively low esteem in which men in uniform are held by the Philippine social elite and rather paradoxically, even by middle and lower class Filipinos. The Philippine military's already negative public image was exacerbated in the martial law period by widespread reports of military atrocities, human rights abuses, and graft and corruption. There was a dramatic, albeit brief, reversal in public attitudes towards the military after EDSA, according to the Ateneo Social Weather Stations Public Opinion Report of July 1, 1986, when 58 percent of those polled indicated that they noted a "great improvement in the military."²³

Nevertheless there are not very many Filipinos, except perhaps those with military training themselves or presently affiliated with the AFP, who would put the military on top of their lists of career options for their children. Consequently, a high percentage of cadets admitted to the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) and other service academies²⁴ are the male offsprings of PMA alumni or active-duty military personnel who regard a PMA appointment as a virtual guarantee of elite status within the military establishment. Apparently, most Filipinos would rather send their children to the prestigious University of the Philippines, Ateneo de Manila University or De La Salle University, to study law, medicine, engineering, or other non-military professions.

The Politicization of the Armed Forces

In the second Philippine republic,²⁵ "civilian control over the military was effectively shared by Congress and the executive [branch]."²⁶ Congress, who was responsible for approving defense appropriations, ratified the president's recommendations for the promotion of senior commissioned officers--through a bipartisan and bicameral Commission on Appointments--and through its quasi-judicial and oversight powers, "conducted investigations when military activities [appeared to be] ... prejudicial to the public interest."²⁷

While it would be grossly inaccurate to suggest that political patronage on the matter of military promotions did not exist during the second Philippine republic, the Commission on Appointments performed a salutary function--as a counterpoise to the chief executive, denying the latter plenary authority on matters of high military appointments and promotions. While on balance, most presidential nominees were confirmed by the Commission, individual legislators who served in the body claimed to have had a significant input into the process.

This was especially true when control of the legislative branch was held by the opposition party as was the case during the presidency of Diosdado P. Macapagal.²⁸ In contrast, Marcos and Ver served as a two-headed but singular commission on appointments during the martial law years. Through his other role as Director-General of the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA), Ver compiled extensive dossiers on all prospective flag-level selectees. Those who passed muster on the question of loyalty to Marcos and his regime were promoted or "extended" while those who failed were either prematurely retired or turned down for promotion.

In other words, the civilian and military establishments in the second Philippine republic seemed to coexist smoothly, with each side knowing its legitimate place in the legal-political system. The principle of civilian supremacy over the military, one of several constitutional ideas Philippine founding fathers borrowed from American constitutional law in 1934, and incorporated into the 1935 Constitution, appeared secure. The AFP officer corps and rank and file were socialized early on, into the idea that the military is an instrument of the sovereign will, and as such is subordinate to the duly constituted civilian authority.

While politicization--an acute awareness of, and sensitivity to, political issues and problems and a readiness to influence political events and outcomes--within the AFP did not begin nor end with Marcos, it cannot be gainsaid that the phenomenon reached new heights during the Marcos regime. What is unclear is whether the AFP's rapid politicization was part of Marcos' master plan or the consequence of the de-professionalization²⁹ of the AFP as a result of, among other things, favoritism, cronyism, and corrupt personnel policies. In any

case, Jose T. Almonte, former head of the Marcos think-tank, Philippine Center for Advanced Studies (PCAS), but like many former top Marcos-era bureaucrats and functionaries, bailed out shortly before EDSA, comments that "promotions became a matter of outsmarting fellow officers and proving personal loyalty to President Marcos."³⁰ The dichotomy between "national security and the personal interests of President Marcos became blurred," and the "...military establishment itself became an operator, a dispenser and a beneficiary of political and economic largesse and patronage."³¹

What is clear is that some officers were more politicized than others. By and large, younger mid-level officers, especially members of the Philippine Military Academy's 1971 graduating class (Honasan and his classmates) appeared to be more adept in staking out and nurturing political causes. In contrast, older officers some of whom were products of American service academies and command and staff schools, seemed reticent to do so. The latter group appeared genuinely deferential to the principle of civilian supremacy; the notion that soldiers must honor and obey the nation's basic law and eschew partisan political activity. Indeed, many retired military officers who opposed Marcos did so in the name of the 1935 Constitution.

Ironically, however, EDSA may well have inflated the politicized military's collective self-image, especially in relation to what it perceived as its role in effecting political change. So when the civil and military "reforms" they had hoped to help institute did not materialize and economic rewards were not forthcoming, they turned against Aquino and sought her ouster from office. These restive military officers must have felt that if they could bring about the overthrow of Marcos, at the time a far more formidable foe, they could similarly force Aquino out of office.

This is not to say that the entire AFP has come to embrace the politically activist role advocated by its highly politicized military personnel. These politicized military men "are those who, particularly during the martial law period, by their vital access to top political leaders and sensitive information, developed an appreciation for political power and the various advantages its possession conferred."³² The non-politicized military men, on the other hand, are "those who have largely

remained professional military men, often discomfited by political or quasi-political functions the military has had to assume."³³ The bulk of the AFP's current leadership is evidently of the latter group, although a "new, loose network of officers with ranks between lieutenant and major call[ing] themselves Reform the Armed Forces Movement II," have recently been coalescing into a pressure group within the AFP, over a growing list of grievances.³⁴

The Aquino-Military Relationship

The relationship between the military and Aquino during the last three years has followed a see-saw pattern, with the first five months--the so called "honeymoon period"--characterized by a surfeit of mutually reinforcing declarations of praise and support. This was not entirely unexpected. After all, Aquino and her politically savvy advisors--many of whom had no great admiration for the military--knew that if it had not been for the AFP, Marcos would still be in power.

By July 1986, however, barely six months after EDSA, the first signs of military discontent³⁵ with Aquino and some of her government's initial decisions, e.g., the release of virtually all political prisoners including Jose Ma. Sison, the putative founder of the Communist Party of the Philippines, surfaced. Several hundred heavily armed soldiers, drawn from various military units in northern, central and southern Luzon, forcibly took over the government-owned Manila Hotel in a coup attempt. While the mutineers were undoubtedly encouraged, some say, even paid, by Marcos' Kilusang Bagong Lipunan, the event was the first overt manifestation of the NAFP's restiveness.

The July coup attempt also brought to the fore lingering military resentment--especially on the part of ideological hard-liners--over Aquino's alleged "coddling" of left-wing activists and her appointment of such "human rights lawyers" as Joker K. Arroyo, Renato A. V. Saguisag, and Augusto "Bobbit" Sanchez,³⁶ among others, into her cabinet. Military leaders charged that Arroyo and his colleagues were either "communists" or "communist sympathizers." While the coup attempt, like others to follow failed, it highlighted the tenuous relationship the new government had with the military establishment and the extent to which factionalization had served to

undermine the esprit de corps of the entire military organization. The benign form of punishment--thirty military pushups and a public pledge of allegiance to the flag and the government--meted out to the mutineers merely reinforced what many skeptics were already saying about Aquino; that she was a weak and vacillating leader, reluctant to make hard and controversial decisions.

The second major military attempt to destabilize the Aquino government took place in January 1987, when yet another band of disgruntled military personnel forcibly took over a Metro Manila television broadcasting facility (GMA-7) and held it for over two days as negotiators on both sides searched for a peaceful solution. According to knowledgeable observers, many of the enlisted personnel involved in the second coup attempt were also involved in the coup attempt at the Manila Hotel six months earlier.

One of the GMA-7 military mutineers' grievances was Aquino's allegedly "soft approach" vis-a-vis the communist insurgency. The mutineers also assailed the sixty-day truce that Aquino negotiated with the communists, and in place at the time, as well as then ongoing negotiations between government representatives and those of the National Democratic Front's (NDF).³⁷ Moreover, the military rebels denounced what they claimed was the government's "double standard" on the issue of human rights,³⁸ and once again called for the dismissal from the cabinet of Arroyo and his proteges.³⁹

The military also demonstrated its unhappiness with the Aquino government when it voted against the ratification of the draft Constitution on February 2, 1987. While the vote in favor of ratification ran at an eighty-five to fifteen percent ratio nationwide, the 1987 Constitution was rejected at approximately the same ratio in the country's military installations or polling places where military personnel and their dependents cast their votes. Ratification was overwhelmingly rejected at Camp Crame and Camp Aguinaldo (the headquarters of the AFP and the Philippine Constabulary, respectively), as well as at Villamor Air Base, the headquarters of the Philippine Air Force. While both Ramos and former Defense Secretary Rafael M. Ileto blamed an "organized disinformation campaign" supposedly waged by followers of Honasan and Ponce Enrile for the vote outcome, it was clear that a substantial

number of armed forces personnel voted "no" on the draft document because they were unhappy with the new government.

By far the most serious coup attempt against the Aquino government was the one staged on August 8, 1987, by Honasan and his RAM colleagues. It resulted in at least fifty-three fatalities, most of whom were civilians, and the razing of the AFP's main building at Camp Aguinaldo. It also resulted in the arrest and detention of several senior officers, including at least one flag-level officer.⁴⁰ But the third coup attempt was also significant in another sense; it finally drove Aquino to drop all efforts at winning over disgruntled officers unhappy with her government, and forced her to embrace a harsher strategy towards the CPP/NPA, an approach that some of her military advisers have urged her to follow from the start.

The August coup attempt also led to a shakeup at the Defense department. General Ileto, who replaced Ponce Enrile as Defense Minister in December 1986, resigned his post and was promptly replaced by Ramos who had earlier relinquished his position as NAFP chief of staff to de Villa. The abortive coup also forced the Aquino government to institute long-awaited reforms within the military organization, including significant salary increments for military personnel. Low salaries--especially at the enlisted personnel level--inadequate supplies, and poor working conditions are among several legitimate grievances pro-military interest groups and their supporters in the national legislature have been raising against the central government for several years. In addition to these salary increases, there were other non-monetary benefits extended to military personnel and their dependents by the government in conjunction with the private sector.⁴¹ At another level, Aquino attempted to consolidate her new popularity among military personnel by commending the soldiers who risked their lives and forswore personal allegiances in defense of her regime.

The Military in Civilian Positions

It was probably during Magsaysay's abbreviated presidency⁴² when the AFP in general, and military officers in particular, enjoyed their highest level of popularity. Like Marcos some twenty years later, Magsaysay appointed a number of active-duty

military officers to high civilian or cabinet-level positions.⁴³ Unlike Marcos, however, Magsaysay did not need the pretext of martial law to reassign deserving military officers to positions in the civilian bureaucracy, nor did he do so for ulterior motives. The evidence suggests that Magsaysay tapped the services of active-duty military officers because rightly or wrongly, he believed them to be "clean, honest, and efficient public servants."

In contrast, it appears that Marcos appointed active-duty and newly-retired military officers into high-level civilian positions for two basic reasons. First, ranking officers considered to be too "independent-minded," relative to Marcos and the AFP chief of staff, were often prematurely retired in order to eliminate them as possible threats to the regime. Second, some retired officers were "rewarded" with diplomatic appointments, presumably in order to discourage them from engaging in anti-regime activity,⁴⁴ as they became beholden to Marcos and Ver. Conversely, officers who met the litmus test of loyalty to Marcos and Ver were promoted at a rapid pace and "friendly" senior officers well past the mandatory retirement age had their tours of duty extended, in some cases, several times over.⁴⁵

Favored active-duty and retired military officers were assigned to good and well paying jobs in the civilian bureaucracy. According to one study, there were over a thousand military men "detailed outside of the AFP to work with various civilian agencies and private functionaries" as of October 31, 1983.⁴⁶ While most of the military men who held executive civilian positions during the Marcos regime have since been recalled to the active service, the practice of appointing retired military personnel to key positions in the civilian bureaucracy continues under Aquino.

In addition to Ramos and Ileto,⁴⁷ some of Aquino's better known retired military appointees and the positions they hold in her government are: Major General Jose Magno, presidential advisor for military affairs; Major General Salvador Mison who was specifically tapped to clean up the graft-ridden Bureau of Customs; and former Army chief Major General Fortunato Abat who is one of several under-secretaries in the Department of National Defense. Two ranking retired Navy officers also occupy key positions in the Aquino government--Alejandro Melchor, a retired Navy captain and one of Marcos'

former executive secretaries, is the Philippines' ambassador to the Soviet Union, while former Navy chief and commodore, Tagumpay Jardiniano, is the Philippines' Postmaster General. Ironically, Marcos' highly successful postmaster general, J. Roilo S. Golez, who like Melchor is a graduate of the United States Naval Academy, is also a former naval officer.

Impact of the Military on Domestic Policy

The military's impact on public policy, especially in the domestic arena has been significant in the last two years. It may be argued that the fear of another coup has caused the Aquino government to toughen its stance towards the communist insurgency and its sympathizers. For now the Aquino government appears to have abandoned its negotiation-amnesty track in favor of a mailed fist policy. President Aquino's recent exhortations to her troops to "unsheathe the sword of war" and "to go after the communists with every weapon at their command" came in the aftermath of the third coup attempt, in which once again, the mutineers accused her of being "soft" on communism. Without a doubt Aquino intended the policy reorientation as a rebuttal of sorts to the military hard-liners, standard accusation that she has been "tentative" in combating the CPP/NPA.

Much to the dismay of human rights advocates in the Philippines and elsewhere, as well as of the progressive wing of the Catholic clergy, Aquino has also publicly endorsed the activities of right-wing vigilante groups such as the *Alsa Masa* of Davao City and the CACA in Cebu.⁴⁸ Apparently, Aquino was not dissuaded by the fact that during the last two years vigilantes have been linked to some of the most gruesome atrocities against suspected communists and alleged communist sympathizers.

Instead, in a controversial move, Aquino has sought the institutionalization of right-wing vigilante groups by supporting the establishment of an 80,000-strong para-military organization called Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Units (CAFGU). Critics of the proposal suggest that CAFGU uncannily resembles Marcos' notorious Civilian Home Defense Forces (CHDFs). It will be recalled that the CHDF was repeatedly cited by organizations like Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists for grave human

rights violations and other crimes in the name of anti-communism during the martial law period, and as an organization contributed to the armed forces' negative public image.

In spite of vocal opposition from at least eleven out of twenty-three senators, however, Aquino appears determined to fight for the approval of CAFGU's projected PS 585 million budget for 1989. President Aquino's strong support for the CAFGU and her request for a PS 22.4 billion budget for the military--a projected increase of PS 8.6 billion over last year's budget of only PS 13.8 billion--reflects a strong commitment to the AFP and her administration's hard-line stance towards the nineteen-year old communist insurgency.

It also suggests that Aquino is determined to continue to improve military wages and benefits, one of several initiatives she undertook towards the end of 1987, an issue about which she has very few options. If she continues to ignore the abysmal material and economic conditions under which military personnel and their dependents toil,⁴⁹ she may unwittingly cast herself and her government as "anti-military," and provide more ammunition for agents provocateur like Honasan to alienate even more military personnel from the civilian government. To the extent that Aquino has positively responded to perennial military grievances, either willingly or out of fear, she has allowed the military to shape the national agenda and budgetary priorities for years to come. While a pro-military tilt may create problems for her government relative to other sectoral interests all competing for their lion's share of government appropriations, Aquino has evidently decided that taking a pro-military stance at this point in time in her presidency is well worth the risk.

Conclusions and Observations

Like Marcos before her, Aquino needs the support of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in order to survive. This is truer at the present time than when Marcos declared martial law in 1972, because today's NAFP is a highly politicized body, well aware of its potential for effecting political change. Unlike Marcos who had an outstanding military record--or at least he had, until the "record" was seriously questioned by Bonifacio H. Gillego--Aquino had to overcome two negative gender-based presumptions. First, that as the Philippines' first

female commander-in-chief, she was not "tough enough" to do the job; and second, that she was predisposed to distrust the military establishment.

After three years in office, Aquino seems to have overcome both presumptions and is in the process of establishing her own discrete credibility as commander-in-chief. She appears to have the majority of the officer corps on her side and has gained the respect of the rank and file over the last several months as a result of her efforts to improve the economic well-being of the NAFP's enlisted personnel and officer corps. The resolute manner in which she has dealt with military recalcitrants has also begun to elicit respect from her military detractors. Finally, her putting her political popularity on the line in an effort to secure from the Congress the largest NAFP budget ever, will certainly win her even more friends in the military. As Aquino's reputation improves in the military's eyes, so will the military's loyalty to her government.

Because the relationship between Aquino and the military has improved, the military's overall political stock is bound to improve as well. Perhaps the most dramatic example of the military's newly found political clout was Aquino's ouster in late 1987 of Arroyo, who as executive secretary, was one of the president's closest and most trusted aides. Secretary Arroyo's departure from the cabinet, and those of other human rights lawyers' was ardently sought by military hard-liners from the beginning. It should be pointed out, however, that Arroyo's departure was also demanded by the so-called Council of Trent, a loose coalition of conservative Catholic laity in the president's inner circle.

The Aquino-NAFP entente is borne of mutual need and shared ideological convictions. Both Aquino and the NAFP are staunchly anti-communist, and both see the CPP/NPA insurgency as the greatest threat to national security and political stability. President Aquino knows that she needs the support and protection of the military establishment if she is to survive challenges to her authority from both the left and the right. In like manner, the military leadership needs Aquino's tremendous popular support as a source of legitimacy, because like most Filipinos military officers tend to be quintessential *seguristas* who would rather hitch their wagons to that of an immensely popular and charismatic leader, not to that of an agent provocateur's whose track record in

predicting political outcomes is, to say the least, abysmal.

As an organization, the NAFP has improved considerably during the last three years. But whether the NAFP will ever achieve true professionalism is another question. As alluded to earlier, there are those who argue that as an organization, the Philippine military has never been truly professional. It will take years to completely eliminate the remaining vestiges of the Marcos-Ver years, when personal and political loyalties, not merit, were the principal determinants of promotions and assignments. As one soldier put it on June 7, 1986, professionalization in the NAFP calls for "promotions and assignments based on merit, leadership by example, reform in the procurement system, investigation of unexplained wealth among officers, and tighter discipline."⁵⁰

With the retirement of thirty flag officers on March 25, 1988, the projected retirement of two more senior generals by mid-1989, and the oath-taking by twenty-five new generals on December 28, 1988,⁵¹ Aquino has completely recast the upper NAFP echelon. This means that all flag-level officers appointed by Marcos are out and the so-called "Cory generals" are in. In a related move, Aquino has also announced her support for a proposed piece of legislation that would extend by an additional two years the tours of duty of the vice chief of staff, deputy chief of staff, and the four major service commanders. According to the 1987 Constitution, only the chief of staff can serve for a "maximum of three years," regardless of whether he is past the mandatory 30-year service limit or the 52-year age limit.

The NAFP still has serious problems with equipment, mobility, logistics, support and training. As a result of poor training, for example, de Villa concedes that combat units have been wasting scarce resources, e.g., expending an average of 23,000 rounds of ammunition for every insurgent killed. Former Defense Secretary Ilo's assessment is even more scathing: "...soldiers go up the mountains, they come back with empty magazines--and yet no casualties on the enemy side. What [they are waging] is acoustics warfare!"⁵²

There is also a problem with the ratio of combatants to support staff. The ratio of approximately four support staff to one combatant needs to be

reduced, according to Ramos, and for that reason, "even cooks and clerks [are] being assigned to combat units in a bid to enhance the NAFP's teeth-to-tail ratio."⁵³ General Richard G. Stillwell (USA, ret.), however, cautions that actually, the NAFP's combatant to support staff ratio is much worse. Stillwell suggests that "out of the Philippine Army's 160,000 men, only 30,000 are directly relevant to counter-insurgency tasks."⁵⁴ Predictably, General Stillwell's figures are disputed by the NAFP which insists that Ramos' four to one ratio is an accurate reflection of the Philippine Army's manpower profile.

Two recent public opinion surveys indicates that the NAFP has regained some of the popular support it lost during the martial law years.⁵⁵ An Ateneo de Manila University Opinion Poll conducted nationwide among 1,200 respondents in July and August 1988, gave the military an 80 percent general approval rating. The second opinion poll, the semestral Makati Business Club Survey covering the period January to June 1988, gave the Department of National Defense and the NAFP a 68 percent approval rating (up from only 46.8 percent in the previous semester). Incidentally, Ramos and de Villa received approval ratings of 79 and 74 percent, respectively, in the Ateneo de Manila University Opinion Poll. This bodes well not only for the NAFP but for the future of civil-military relations in general.

And how about the politicization of armed forces personnel? Has the process been neutralized, maybe even reversed? It is hard to tell since there are no extant studies on the socialization of the rank and file. It is noteworthy, nevertheless, that fraternal organizations, like Brother, IROG, MOVER, etc., which were highly visible and outspoken soon after EDSA, have been quiescent during the last few months, while the Guardians and RAM have evidently gone underground.

The politicization of the military will probably continue indefinitely, although the process will neither be as strident nor as confrontational as it was in the past. For to paraphrase an old bromide, once soldiers are out of the barracks, it would be virtually impossible to march them back in. A politicized military is among other things, an unpredictable military. This is a lesson that Marcos and other

leaders of his ilk have learned the hard way in the recent past.

Endnotes

1. Marcos was elected to the first of two four-year terms in 1965, and reelected in 1969 (the first post-war Philippine president to be so honored). In 1972, however, he declared martial law and assumed plenary powers.
2. In addition to Colonel Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan, some of the other RAM brain trusters were: Lieutenant Colonel Eduardo "Red" Kapunan and Captain Rex Robles (PN), Captain Felix Turingan (PN), and Colonel Jose T. Almonte. For a fascinating account of the various plots and scenarios that led to EDSA on February 25, 1986, see Francisco Nemenzo, "A Nation in Ferment: Analysis of the February Revolution," in *The Aquino Alternative* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), pp. 35-42.
3. For a discussion of the genesis, nature and dynamics of factionalization within the Armed Forces of the Philippines, see Benjamin N. Muego, "Fraternal Organizations and Factionalism Within the Armed Forces of the Philippines," *Asian Affairs*, 14 (Fall, 1987), pp. 150-162.
4. Carolina G. Hernandez "The Role of the Military in Contemporary Society, in *Army Historical Review*, 1 (January March 1984), p. 4.
5. See the *Military Balance*, 1987-1988 (London: The International Institute of Strategic Studies, 1987), p. 170.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. "Philippine Constabulary: 60th Anniversary," in *Armed Forces of the Philippines* (August, 1961), p. 28.
9. See Richard B. Morris and Jeffrey B. Morris (eds.), *Encyclopedia of American History, Bicentennial Edition* (New York: Harper & Row publishers, Inc., 1976), p. 620.
10. Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 1091.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Hernandez, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
13. *Ibid.*
14. For an extended case study of how Ramon F. Magsaysay broke the "backbone of communism" in the Philippines, see Alvin Scaff, *The Philippine Answer to Communism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1956).
15. Because the press was tightly controlled during most of martial law, only persons or organizations approved of by the Marcoses received any significant media coverage. Negative stories about the armed forces, e.g., atrocities against suspected communists and communist sympathizers, torture of political prisoners, and human rights violations were generally suppressed by martial law censors like the Media Advisory Council.
16. According to Felipe B. Miranda, in "The Military," in R. J. May and Francisco Nemenzo (eds.) *The Philippines After Marcos* (Sydney: Croom Helm Pty Ltd, 1985), on pp. 94-95, "in 1982, about 347,000 men [and women] comprised the Philippine military and its reserves. One out of every 145 Filipinos is either with the active military or could be activated to join it."
17. Hernandez, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
18. The Huk rebellion in the 1950s which was primarily concentrated in central and southern Luzon and in the western Visayas, was led by the partidong Komunista ng Pilipinas, which was Moscow-oriented (in contrast to the revitalized Communist Party of the Philippines which is Beijing oriented). At about the same time, there was a Muslim uprising in Sulu led by a Tausug warrior named Hadji Kamlon.
19. Morris Janowitz, *The Military in the Political Development of New Nations: An Essay in Comparative Analysis* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 28.
20. Quintin R. de Borja, "Some Career Attributes and Professional Views of the Philippine Military Elite," *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, XIII (October 1969), pp. 400-402.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Janowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
23. *Ateneo Social Weather Stations Public Opinion Report*, July 1, 1986, p. 9.
24. The Philippine service academies are: the Philippine Military Academy in Baguio City, Mountain Province; the Lipa Flying School in Lipa, Batangas; and the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy in Manila.
25. Benjamin N. Muego uses the term Second Philippine Republic to refer to the Philippines from 1946 through 1972 in his work, *The Spectator Society: The Philippines Under Martial Rule* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1988).
26. Miranda, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
27. *Ibid.*
28. At the time of Macapagal's presidency, the House of Representatives was controlled by the opposition Nacionalista Party. The Speaker of the House, Jose B. Laurel, Jr., was an archfoe of Macapagal. While the Philippine Senate was initially held by Macapagal's Liberal Party, the defection of erstwhile Senate President Ferdinand E. Marcos to the Nacionalista Party towards the end of Macapagal's first term placed both houses under opposition control. Marcos defected to the Nacionalista Party after

it became apparent that Macapagal would be re-nominated by the Liberal Party as its standard bearer in the presidential elections of 1965. As expected, Marcos was nominated by the Nacionalista Party as its standard bearer and went on to decisively defeat Macapagal.

29. Deprofessionalization implies that the AFP was ever truly professional, an "arguable" proposition according to William M. Wise, a Pentagon analyst. For the rest of Colonel Wise's analysis, see "The Philippine Military After Marcos," in Carl H. Lande (ed.) *Rebuilding a Nation: Philippine Challenges and American Policy* (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute Press, 1987), p. 436.

30. Jose T. Almonte, "Towards Reshaping Philippine Martial Traditions," in M. Rajaretnam (ed.), *The Aquino Alternative* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), p. 80.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Miranda, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

33. *Ibid.*

34. See Rodney Tasker, "Another Great Escape," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 24, 1988, p. 42. According to Tasker, the apparent catalyst for the growing unrest was the "suspicious killing of Lt Col Francisco Baula [one of the original Ramboys] while in military custody on October 15, 1988."

35. The coup attempt of July 7, 1986, in front of the posh Manila Hotel at the Luneta was staged by several hundred soldiers who were trucked into Manila from various military units in northern and central Luzon. Most of the soldiers involved were wearing headbands with the identifying name Guardians. As the coup was in progress, Arturo M. Tolentino, Marcos' vice-presidential running mate, proclaimed himself president, and named the members of his "cabinet."

36. Joker K. Arroyo, a well-known lawyer and old family friend of the Aquinos, was Executive Secretary; Saguisag was Presidential Counsellor; while Sanchez was Minister of Labor and Employment. All were active human rights lawyers during martial law, and were accused by hard-liners in the AFP as either "communists" or "communist sympathizers."

37. The sixty-day truce was supposed to extend from December 8, 1986 through February 8, 1987. The National Democratic Front, the left-wing umbrella organization that was designated to negotiate for the CPP/NPA, was represented, at the talks by Saturnino Ocampo, Carolina Malay (Ocampo's wife), and Antonio Zumel. The talks collapsed in late January, 1987, after both sides accused the other of bad faith and of attempting to sabotage the talks.

38. The GMA-7 coup participants, led by a Colonel Oscar Canlas, complained about the government's alleged double-standard

on the issue of human rights. They alleged that the government, through the Commission on Human Rights, dealt harshly with military personnel accused of human rights violations and yet turned the other way when confronted with human rights violations by the CPP/NPA.

39. Some of the Arroyo "proteges" the military hard-liners wanted fired were: Teddy Boy Locsin, presidential speech writer; Jun Factoran, Dodo Sarmiento, and Dangal Elma, among others; all held the rank of assistant executive secretary at one time or the other.

40. Brigadier General Edgardo Abenina, who was promoted to flag-level rank, by President Aquino, in 1986, joined Colonel Honasan's unsuccessful coup d'etat on August 28, 1987. He is currently being held "under house arrest" as the Judge Advocate General readies court martial proceedings against him and other officers implicated in August coup.

41. According to General Renato S. de Villa, AFP chief of staff, in an interview with Pete C. Borja of the *Manila Daily Bulletin*, on December 27, 1988, the following non-monetary programs were also available to AFP personnel and their dependents: (1) a permanent educational grant to a child of an AFP and INP member who is killed in battle against the insurgents; (2) a similar educational program through the auspices of the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities [PACU] designed basically to help orphans of soldiers go through school without any financial hassles; and (3) a formal agreement between the AFP and the Philippine College of Surgeons for free surgical services to AFP and INP personnel injured in the line of duty.

42. Ramon F. Magsaysay, the Philippines third post-war president, was unable to serve a full four-year term, as he was killed in a plane crash in 1957. During his brief presidency, Magsaysay had excellent rapport with the military (he served as Secretary of National Defense before his landslide election to the presidency in 1953).

43. Among active-duty military officers tapped by Magsaysay to serve in his cabinet were Colonel Osmundo Mondonedo, Colonel Frisco T. San Juan, and Colonel Eleuterio M. Adevosio.

44. Two of these flag-level officers who were either retired prematurely or denied "extension" were General Manuel T. Yan, former Chief of Staff, who was appointed ambassador to Thailand; and General Rafael M. Ilcto, former deputy chief of staff, who was appointed ambassador to Iran.

45. The tours of duty of two former chiefs of staff, General Romeo C. Espino and General Fabian C. Ver were "extended" more than once. So too were the tours of other lesser ranking generals and/or commodores and rear admirals favored by Marcos.

46. Miranda, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

47. Fidel V. Ramos is Secretary of National Defense and Chairman of the General Military Council while Rafael M. Iletto is President Aquino's newly-designated National Security Adviser. Iletto replaced a civilian, Emmanuel Soriano.

48. Among other known right-wing vigilante groups are: Puluhan, Guerrero de Jesus, Kilusan Laban sa Komunista, Nakasaka, Surit-Surit, and Sagrado Corazon del Senor. For details, see *The Military Balance*, in loc. cit., p. 110.

49. Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, James A. Kelly, in a testimony before the Sub-Committee on East Asian Affairs of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate, 98th Congress, 2nd session, on September 8, 1984, gave a graphic description of the conditions under which AFP soldiers worked, thus: "Some units are short on uniforms and boots and others sometimes forage for food during field operations and resort to palm oil to lubricate

weapons.... Transportation is extremely limited. On one island only two trucks are available for two battalions. Many units are without tactical communication equipment, forcing commanders to rely on runners to transmit operation orders." For the full text of Secretary Kelly's testimony, see *The Situation in the Philippines and Implications for US Policy* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1984).

50. Almonte, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

51. The two senior generals who are scheduled to retire in July, and August 1989, are Major General Antonio J. Sotelo and Major General Mariano P. Adalem. For details, see *The Manila Chronicle*, December 28, 1988, p. 1.

52. See *Asian Defence Journal* (April 1988), p. 94.

53. *Ibid.*

54. *Ibid.*

55. See *Manila Daily Bulletin*, December 27, 1988, p. 6.

STRATEGIC DEBATES AND DILEMMAS IN THE PHILIPPINE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

By Gareth Porter, The American University

From 1982 to 1986 the leadership of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) was engaged in a protracted debate over its strategic line. While a relative consensus was restored in late 1986, it is evidently a partial and unstable consensus, which could easily give way to a new period of intense struggle over the direction of future strategy. This paper attempts to reconstruct the evolution of past strategic debate and analyzes the factors and dynamics most likely to shape the debate in the coming years. It also focuses on some of the strategic dilemmas that the party's capabilities and constraints pose for the Communist leadership in its quest for political power.

The Evolution of Strategic Debate: 1974-1986

The people's war strategy of the CPP began as an adaptation to Philippine conditions of Mao Zedong's revolutionary strategy for China. CPP founding Chairman Jose Maria Sison, like Mao, believed that the key to successful revolution was to organize the peasantry and establish rural base areas.¹ He identified the Philippines as a "semi-colonial and semi-feudal society," in which the US used the feudal landlord class to perpetuate poverty and maintain control of the peasantry. An agrarian revolution and "peasant war," he argued, was necessary to deprive the US of its social base. Hence the "principle stress" in the CPP's strategy was the rural areas and the peasantry, while the "secondary stress" was on the cities.²

CPP strategy has followed the Maoist model in assuming that the armed struggle would move through three stages: a defensive stage, in which the New People's Army (NPA) would be clearly inferior militarily to the Armed Forces of the Philippines

(AFP), the strategic stalemate stage, in which the insurgents would have military parity with the AFP, and a counter-offensive stage, in which the NPA would be stronger. Originally, the final phase of the conflict was expected to conclude with columns of NPA troops from the north and south converging on Manila in a general offensive.³

In the original people's war doctrine, urban political work had the purpose only of supporting the armed struggle. At first, urban organizing was aimed exclusively at generating recruits for the armed struggle in the countryside or at providing other support services for it, and that meant that urban work was almost entirely illegal in character.⁴

The CPP Third Plenum in 1975 concluded that preparations for urban uprisings in the cities would be premature, because they should not be "separated from the progress of the revolutionary armed struggle in the countryside."⁵ (The NPA was then still in its infancy.)

Only in 1976-77 did the party declare that the main form of struggle in Manila-Rizal and other government-controlled areas was to form legal organizations and struggles to improve living and working conditions.⁶ The primary task of the party in the cities was now to organize urban "mass movements and legal struggles," while cadre, technical and material support from the guerrilla fronts was relegated to a secondary position. Even so, the purpose of urban mass movements was to "plow the ground and sow the seeds in areas where the NPA can do the harvesting."⁷

The concept of united front is one of revolutionary classes, not compromise between revolutionary and non-revolutionary political forces. The basic forces of the revolution are assumed to be the proletariat, the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie. To com-

plete the revolutionary united front, Sison argued, the party must mobilize the left wing of the "middle bourgeoisie" (i.e., nationalist businessmen).⁸ In the early 1970s, Sison had expressed disinterest in legal united fronts for tactical purposes across ideological lines, writing, "the real united front for the people's democratic revolution is one for waging armed struggle."⁹ Only in the late 1970s, under Sison's successor as CPP Chairman, Rodolfo Salas, did the CPP accept the necessity for legal united fronts with liberal democrats and others. These alliances, however, could be only on the basis of "national democratic" programs or slogans--i.e., those that were in line with the CPP's own positions. Thus the people's war strategy disdained alliances that would dilute the party's anti-feudal and anti-imperialist demands.¹⁰

Sison and the other founding leaders of the CPP-ML opposed on principle "parliamentary struggle," participation in Philippine government-sponsored elections, as "reformist" and contradictory to the party's revolutionary aims.¹¹ The post-Sison leadership later accepted the idea of parliamentary struggle, but only "under certain conditions," and only to "advance people's war."¹² In practice, parliamentary struggle has been viewed as fostering "reformist illusions" or "parliamentarist beliefs--the idea that it would be possible to oust the "fascist regime" or solve fundamental socio-economic or political problems through elections.¹³ No legal party representing a national democratic viewpoint was created by the CPP through the entire Marcos dictatorship period.¹⁴

Until the late 1970s the only argument against the people's war strategy within leadership bodies came, ironically, from the founding commander of the New People's Army, Commander Dante (Bernabe Buscayno).¹⁵ In a series of arguments and debates with Sison in 1974-75, Dante called for primary stress on legal political struggle, with armed struggle continuing as a secondary form. Dante also disagreed with Sison's analysis of Philippine society, proposing on the basis of his own investigation of rural society that the party's organizing focus should shift from the peasantry to urban and landless agricultural workers. This viewpoint was branded as "empiricist" by Sison and the other Politburo members.

By 1978 the calling of interim National Assembly elections by Marcos provoked an intense debate on the issue of political, and especially parliamentary struggle. The Manila-Rizal regional leadership of the CPP advocated alliance with Benigno Aquino's opposition Laban party in the elections, while the national leadership called for a boycott. The Manila-Rizal leadership felt so strongly about the necessity to participate that they violated organizational discipline by going ahead with their own policy of alliance with Laban in the 1978 elections. They were punished by removal from their positions.¹⁶

In 1979, the party leadership, eager to step up urban struggle movements nationwide and also to ensure central control over its development, eliminated the Manila-Rizal regional organization and placed district level party organizations in the Manila-Rizal region under the direct control of the newly created National Urban Commission. Along with the United Front Commission, the National Urban Commission, became the new center for critical thinking about revolutionary strategy.¹⁷ These two commissions argued that there were unsurmountable obstacles to a military victory over the Philippine army, which had grown enormously under Marcos and had subdued the Muslim insurgency in Mindanao by 1979. They pointed to the fact that the CPP's experience with attempts to smuggle arms from the People's Republic of China had not been favorable, further underlining the strategy's lack of realism.¹⁸

The two-party commissions also questioned whether Sison's formulation of a "semi-colonial, semi-feudal" Philippine society was accurate, again suggesting that capitalist development might already be far advanced in the Philippines. They argued for a strategy that would put primary emphasis on a combination of developing urban mass movements and united fronts with liberal democrats and reformists. They proposed that more cadres be put into organizing in the towns and cities, with the emphasis on the urban middle class and workers.

Another challenge to the people's war strategy came from the National Democratic Front's (NDF) summing up of its experiences in 1979 in anticipation of a revised draft program. The NDF summing up by Horacio Morales, reflecting the ideas of Italian Marxist theoretician Antonio Gramsci, emphasized

the hegemonical influence of bourgeois democracy in Philippine culture and the necessity for CPP and NDF strategy to take account of this factor. That argued against the expectation that the AFP could be confronted and defeated militarily and for a strategy of working within the AFP to win over a section of the military. It also argued that church hierarchy was one of the major power centers exerting enormous socio-cultural influence over the society. It argued that the NDF had to make alliances with those sectors of the church that were more liberal or reformist and work with them.¹⁹

Morales was also responsible for the drafting in 1980 of a revision of the 1973 NDF program that was far more open to alliances with independent political forces than anything that had come out of the communist movement. But that draft was rejected by the CPP leadership and was never published.²⁰ After Morales and Serrano were arrested in 1982, a new, more orthodox, draft program was circulated to various leftist groups and individuals, and published in revised form in 1985. It reaffirmed the principle that all forms of political struggle were for the purpose of "preparing the ground for further advances by the people's armed forces."²¹

The arguments by the United Front and Urban Commissions in social formation, cultural hegemony, and other objective obstacles to people's wars led to a debate within the top leadership bodies on whether the people's war strategy, which was still identified with Maoism and the Chinese model, was appropriate to the Philippine revolution. One consequence of the debate was a decision to conduct an investigation in all parts of the Philippines on whether the "social formation" had become capitalist. There was special interest in Mindanao, where it was widely believed foreign agribusiness companies had introduced capitalist development during the 1960s and 1970s. Although not all the regions had completed the investigation, the leadership concluded that feudal and semi-feudal economic relations still predominated both in Mindanao and in Central Luzon.²² Meanwhile, Sison defended his "semi-colonial, semi-feudal" thesis from his jail cell with a new analysis explaining that the comprador bourgeoisie--those Filipino businessman linked with foreign corporations--had indeed replaced the landlord class as the primary ex-

ploting class in the Philippines, but that it was linked more to feudalism historically and currently than to industrial capitalist development."²³

Meanwhile, regional commissions, with wide latitude to formulate their own policies, were experimenting with new approaches to strategy that diverged significantly from the Chinese model and substantially modified the prolonged people's war strategy. The Mindanao Commission, according to one former Mindanao cadre, tended to be more pragmatic and less dogmatic than the central party leadership. It was ready to go beyond the people's war, which it felt was too limiting and to apply the revolutionary experiences of the Nicaraguan, Salvadorean and Vietnamese revolutions. By 1981, they were studying documents on the Nicaraguan and Salvadorean experiences, which emphasized the importance of urban bases and urban insurgency, and urban based popular strikes.²⁴

The impact of the alternative revolutionary models was soon apparent in Mindanao. Units of the New People's Army, the "Armed City Partisan Units," were introduced for the first time in Davao City in 1982 with the dual tasks of assassinating informers, intelligence agents and other unpopular government figures, and helping to organize political bases in poor urban barangays.²⁵ And after the assassination of Benigno Aquino in 1983, Mindanao pioneered the use of the *Welgang Bayan* (People's Strike), which was an adaptation of the Nicaraguan and Salvadorean use of work stoppages.²⁶

By 1985, the combination of the urban partisan warfare, the demonstrated capability to paralyze the city with transport strikes and CPP/NPA control over most of the poor neighborhoods in the urban area of Davao City had come close to defeating government power in the Philippine's second largest city. This led Mindanao cadres to suggest that an "urban insurrection" strategy might replace protracted people's war as the method of completing the revolutionary struggle nationwide. They argued that mass demonstrations, transport strikes and urban sabotage operations in all major cities simultaneously would enable the CPP to seize power without the military defeat of the government.²⁷

As early as 1982, the CPP leadership had recognized the need to review and revise the people's war strategy by drafting a new document on "strategy

and tactics" (*estrategiya-taktika*) to serve as the master plan for the struggle. The drafting of that document was discussed, according to one former politburo member, at every one of the body's meetings from 1982 onward. But no clear consensus emerged within the politburo and central committee on the issue, as different "camps" emerged in support of different strategic lines: the traditional Maoist model, the "Nicaraguan" model (a two-stage insurrectional movement in which the first urban uprising is defeated but polarizes the country sufficiently to give the left undisputed leadership over the movement) and the "Russian" model (a two-stage revolution along the lines of the Russian revolution in 1917). The drafting of a new strategic plan was never completed.²⁸ According to one mid-level cadre, the "urban insurrection" model, which could lead to either "Nicaraguan" or "Russian" scenarios, had the support of about twenty percent of the central committee membership in the 1982-83 period, but by 1985, about forty percent supported it.²⁹

In the absence of agreement on a clear-cut alternative to the prolonged people's war strategy, the tendency in the CPP leadership in the 1982-86 period was to continue with the existing strategy while trying to assimilate the urban partisan warfare and *Welgang Bayan* tactics of the Mindanao Commission into it--to adjust the strategy without giving up its essential principle of the primacy of armed struggle.³⁰ The importance of urban mass movements in the CPP strategy increased in 1984, although *Welgang Bayan* were still seen by the majority of the CPP leadership as preparatory to the popular uprising that would be coordinated with the final military offensive by the NPA.³¹ The Central Committee met in late 1985 and called for a three-year plan to build up the New People's Army. But it also created a new substage of the strategic defensive which it called the strategic counteroffensive. The criterion for entering this new substage would be the capacity to launch counteroffensives or uprisings within major urban centers.³²

The announcement by Marcos of a snap Presidential election in early 1986 re-opened the issues of electoral and united front policy in CPP strategy. Many party cadres involved in united front and urban mass movement work noted that the snap Presidential election had united the bourgeois op-

position, that the middle forces were strongly committed to participation, and that masses viewed it as an opportunity to express their opposition to Marcos. The National Urban Commission responded to the boycott decision by sending an "urgent appeal" to the Executive Committee that an outright boycott be avoided, and that the party seek to cooperate with progressive organizations participating in the elections, even while exposing its "sham" nature.³³

Strategic Debate after Marcos: 1986-1988

The decision by the Executive Committee to boycott the snap Presidential election of February 1986 and the massive demonstration of "people power" that brought down the Marcos regime precipitated an even more intense debate within the party over strategic line. In the aftermath of the peaceful transition to the Aquino government, it was generally agreed within the party that it had suffered a serious political defeat. The CPP Politburo authorized the National Urban Commission (NUC) to begin publishing a journal that would air "contradicting views" on current issues, and in the first issue off the new journal, the NUC blamed the boycott mistake on the strategic orientation underlying the people's war strategy itself. The Executive Committee was blamed for having a "fetish" about achieving a higher sub-phase of the defensive stage of the people's war that caused it to miss the crucial opportunity to participate in mass movement in Metro Manila, and for a "doctrinaire tendency" that slighted the need for broad legal alliances with liberal democrats and even "bourgeois reformists" against fascism.³⁴

Dissident cadres campaigned openly for an alternative to the people's war strategy. One of the key theorists of the insurrectionary line circulated three papers that formulated the alternative position in detail. Writing under the name "Marty Villalobos," this cadre--a veteran of the Mindanao experiments in the early to mid-1980s--noted caustically that the people's war strategy was still hoping to achieve the next substage of the strategic defensive stage in a few years time, while the Marcos regime was toppled in three months by the forces supporting Aquino. Instead of the Marcos regime being "encircled by the countryside," it was defeated by an "urban uprising which relied mainly on forces mobilized from within Metro Manila."³⁵ The author

thus hinted at the skepticism that impatient mid-level cadres increasingly felt by the mid-1980s that a strategy that depended on classical military victory was unrealistic.³⁶

Villalobos argued for an insurrectional strategy, patterned on the Nicaraguan experience, that would make urban mass movements the focal point of the struggle and relegate armed struggle in the countryside to a secondary, supportive role. In this strategy, the struggle would not be divided into stages defining the strength of the two parties, and guerrilla warfare would intensify but would not develop into regular mobile warfare as in the prolonged people's war strategy. Moreover, there would be much more emphasis on alliances with opposition bourgeoisie, to achieve national unity against the regime.³⁷ In the spring and summer of 1986 the insurrectionary strategy was attracting much wider attention among party cadres in Metro Manila. According to one cadre, a number of meetings and conferences were held in Manila in 1986 focusing on the idea of urban insurrection as a distinct strategy.³⁸

Meanwhile, the Aquino government's restoration of democratic institutions and the popularity of President Aquino herself has posed new issues for intra-party strategic debate. In the spring and summer of 1986, the primary focus of strategic debate shifted from the relative importance of military and political struggle to the character of the new regime and how the party should relate to it. That political assessment, in turn, had obvious implications for united front work as well as military planning.

The majority of the leadership held that the Aquino government represented no fundamental change from Marcos, since it represented the "semi-feudal, semi-colonial ruling classes," and served their interests.³⁹ It conceded that there was a relatively progressive element within the government that could be allied with against the "reactionaries" in the state--especially the military--but regarded it as weaker than the rightist elements in the government.⁴⁰

Some critics of the people's war strategy within the leadership agreed that the Aquino government was essentially reactionary, while others argued that it had a liberal democratic character. But all these critics argued that the Aquino government repre-

sented a victory for "bourgeois democracy" and offered the revolutionaries "democratic space." They also observed that Aquino herself had overwhelming popular support, and that the main danger facing both democratic and revolutionary forces in the country was fascism.⁴¹

These two divergent analyses of the new political situation gave rise to two different scenarios for the future development of the political system and the revolution: the majority of the Executive Committee and the Politburo of the party believed the primary tendency was for Aquino's reformist segment of the ruling class to "consolidate" with the reactionary segment. A secondary tendency, however, was toward fission between these two factions. They hoped that, either way, there would ultimately be a radicalization of urban mass movements and middle forces and increased support for armed struggle. But they argued for a strategy of driving a wedge between liberal and "fascist" segments of the ruling class, even if it meant greater risk of a constriction of "democratic space," in order to force liberal democrats to move left. They favored a temporary tactical shift to negotiations with the Aquino government but a quick return to open confrontation with it in time to oppose the constitution.⁴²

The advocates of an alternative strategy valued the preservation of democratic space more than provoking a showdown between Aquino and the right by opposing Aquino's efforts to establish a new democratic constitution. They believed that a coup attempt by the right against Aquino was a distinct possibility and viewed it as an occasion for bringing the urban insurrectionary strategy into play. If and when it should occur, they wanted the Aquino faction of the government and its supporters as strategic allies. They pressed the central leadership to make plans for such a scenario, including greater efforts to improve relations with liberals and reformists. Hence they favored a policy of critical collaboration with Aquino beyond a brief period of negotiations for propaganda purposes, both to preserve democratic space and to facilitate united front work with supporters of Aquino.⁴³

Another unresolved issue in 1986 was the role that parliamentary struggle should play in overall revolutionary strategy. While both advocates and critics of people's war strategy agreed in principle

that electoral struggle should be one of the party's forms of struggle, the former still viewed it narrowly as a means of increasing support for armed struggle, while the latter gave it a much broader and more central place in revolutionary strategy. For some, the participation by a legal left party in national elections even opened up the possibility of equal stress in the CPP's line on armed and unarmed struggle.⁴⁴ For others that was never a serious possibility.

Even before the boycott debacle, the CPP had agreed that the CPP's participation in local elections would be a means of helping consolidate guerrilla fronts.⁴⁵ By electing candidates aligned with the CPP in areas already controlled by the NPA, the party could prevent their foes from using municipal governments to carry out counterinsurgency campaigns and even use the resources of those governments to support guerrilla fronts. Hence the Partido ng Bayan was created by the CPP primarily to participate in local elections and to prepare for the strategic counteroffensive sub-phase.⁴⁶ For the defenders of people's war participation in national elections could not be a major form of struggle on a part with armed struggle.⁴⁷

For the insurrectionists and advocates of "popular democracy," however, electoral struggle was a "strategic lever" rather than an adjunct to people's war. The lesson of the February 1986 Presidential election, in their view, was that national elections could trigger a crisis within the ruling classes and even be an occasion for one faction to seize power from another. The parliamentary elections of 1987 could be an opportunity for the reactionary forces to strengthen their forces against Aquino and thus, could be another "flash-point" in Philippine politics. These cadres, as well as a number of former CPP officials involved in Partido ng Bayan, contended that the party should make a serious effort to compete for National Assembly seats, not because they could win, but because it was important to be part of an electoral coalition with progressive and liberal forces if such a flash-point should occur.⁴⁸ For a smaller number of cadres who embraced the concept of "popular democracy" electoral coalition was seen as a vehicle that could lead to some power sharing arrangement at the national level.⁴⁹

The CPP's strategy throughout most of 1986 reflected the leadership's tactical adjustment to new political realities as well as some degree of com-

promise between the opposing tendencies within the leadership. One concession to dissidents in the leadership was that "anti-fascists" forces who did not accept the party's program or support armed struggle were now included within the "national democratic revolution," making way for a shift to a tactical alliance with the Aquino government's liberal wing against its "fascists" opponents, such as Marcos loyalists, warlords and private armies. These adjustments represented both an upgrading of the "anti-fascist" aspect of revolutionary struggle--as distinct from its "anti-feudal" and "anti-imperialist" aspects--and a shift in the relationship between armed and political struggle, with the open mass work and united fronts taking on greater importance.⁵⁰ Hence there was a consensus on entering into negotiations with Aquino for a cease-fire and political settlement, despite misgivings about slowing the development of the NPA.⁵¹

The debate within the party leadership on the Aquino government was resolved primarily by developments in government policy and personnel. During the summer and fall of 1986 the general perception within the CPP was that Aquino was moving to the right with regard to political and economic issues, and that the progressive segment of the government was losing ground steadily to the right.⁵² The view that Aquino represented bourgeois democracy and was objectively progressive was thus weakened and by December 1986, discredited within the party leadership. A consensus emerged between advocates of people's war and of the insurrectionary strategy within the leadership that Aquino had "consolidated as the pro-US reactionary faction in power...."⁵³ So no one in the leadership opposed the resumption of active armed struggle and the effort to defeat Aquino's constitution in February 1987.⁵⁴ The National Urban Commission, which had been a center of criticism of the people's war strategy, was dissolved, and the Manila-Rizal Regional Party Committee once again replaced it.⁵⁵

The end of the leadership debate on Aquino and her government did not mean that dissident views had disappeared within the party. Critics of the people's war strategy still sought a reformulation of the party's concepts of united front and coalition government. They integrated into their alternative strategy the concept of "popular democracy" put forward by former NDF cadres Edicio de la Torre and

Horacio Morales while they were in jail in 1983-84 and advanced after their release in 1986. The objective of the "struggle for popular democracy," they contended, should be a multi-class coalition government that allows independent political forces from the progressive element of the ruling classes to have the dominant role. They argued for a dilution of the national democratic line in united front work, making anti-fascism the minimum criterion for tactical and strategic alliances. They also called for an overhauling of the National Democratic Front organization, on the grounds that it was virtually indistinguishable from the party and was driving away progressive organizations.⁵⁶

The dominant faction in the party leadership viewed the concept of "popular democracy" as a dangerous ideological deviation. CPP documents captured by the military in 1988 revealed that the CPP leadership condemned the concept as "counter-revolutionary," "anti-party" and "collaborationist."⁵⁷ In Negros Occidental CPP chairman Nemesio Demafiles and other key party leaders in the province who had come out openly in favor of "popular democracy" were expelled from the party in mid-1987 as "collaborationists" and "reformists."⁵⁸ A special theoretical conference in May 1987 targeted "right opportunism" and "reformism" for ideological struggle.⁵⁹

The issue of parliamentary struggle also continued to create tensions within the party. Even after the idea of electoral alliance with pro-Aquino parties collapsed in late 1986, dissident cadres viewed the Partido ng Bayan (PnB) as an opportunity to help win over unpoliticized masses and achieve firmer alliances with middle forces through involvement in the national assembly elections of 1987. But by the time of the campaigns for the 1987 National Assembly elections, the CPP leadership had downgraded the role of parliamentary struggle.

Officially, the party considered support for PnB candidates to be a secondary task, to be subordinated to work in support of the armed struggle; in fact, it asked people not to vote for the PnB slate and ordered two openly national democratic mass organizations, the KMU labor confederation and the KMP peasant association to withdraw from their involvement on behalf of it.⁶⁰ The CPP leadership was clearly upset that the PnB had chosen to form a joint Senate slate with the Volunteers for Popular

Democracy of Horacio Morales and Edicio de la Torre and that Senate Candidate Bernabe Buscayno, the NPA's first commander as Commander Dante, had criticized the armed struggle strategy during the campaign. After the PnB suffered devastating defeat in both house and Senate races, CPP spokesman Satur Ocampo made it clear that the result showed that "those who think that this is an (alternative) to armed struggle are wrong."⁶¹

Urban-oriented NDF and CPP cadres were also critical of the party's boycott of the constitutional referendum, observing that the CPP had sustained yet another political defeat. Not only did the party find itself bracketed with the right-wing opponents of the constitution, they noted, but supporters of Aquino could claim overwhelming repudiation of both the right and the left when the constitution was approved by 75 percent of the voters.⁶² Despite pressures from the party leadership for reaffirmation of the primacy of armed struggle and the dangers of overemphasis on parliamentary struggle, dissident cadres continued to circulate documents advocating that political struggle, including electoral struggle, be assigned the central role in revolutionary strategy.⁶³

The existence of even limited "democratic space" in which a legal left party can operate has thus helped to consolidate an ideological and strategic role within the party oriented toward political struggle, including participation in elections and broad united front efforts, more than armed struggle. Cadres involved in legal political work as well as legal personalities who have influence within the party, like Morales and Buscayno, have a strong interest in reducing the level of political violence. Armed struggle against the Aquino government hinders their efforts to create united fronts with progressive personalities who regard Mrs. Aquino as the only alternative to the right. Assassinations by NPA "armed city partisans" or "sparrows" also exposes such legal personalities to right-wing retaliation. They have objected strongly, therefore, to the increased number of assassinations by armed city partisan units and their introduction into Manila in 1986.

While the people's war strategy thus survived what appeared to be a crisis of confidence, the post-Marcos period has, in effect, sharpened intra-party strategic differences which existed during the Mar-

cos era. Even if the Central Committee and Politburo of the CPP chose in 1987-88 to unite around a reaffirmation of a modified people's war strategy, the history of dissent and debate, as well as objective conditions that have provoked the debates, suggest that renewed debate at the leadership level is likely within the next two or three years.

Constant and Variable Factors in the Strategic Debate

The CCP debate on the revolutionary strategy will continue to be shaped--as it has in the past--by its capabilities and opportunities and constraints inherent in the social and political environment of the Philippines and international politics, and the internal nature of the CPP as an organization. Some of these factors may be considered as constants, since they are not likely to change in the future, while others may be treated as variable factors, given the degree of uncertainty that prevails. Among the constant factors, the following are analyzed as most important in shaping the character and dynamics of strategic debate: the cultural importance of bourgeois democracy in the Philippines, the existence of core socio-economic rural constituency with a stake in the victory of the NPA, the historical memory of the party's first generation of leaders of the previous communist party's experience, and the dominant role of Manila in Philippine politics. Among the variable factors, this section will discuss three external variables (the difficulty of obtaining arms, the degree of polarization within the government, and the nature of the regime's institutions" and one internal variable (the degree of leadership stability).

The importance of democratic institutions and culture as a factor in the CPP's debate is easy to underestimate, because most party leaders have always tried to deny it. But the commitment of the urban and rural population as well as the political elite to parliamentary/electoral politics has constrained the party's ability to achieve a strategic breakthrough since the Marcos regime was ousted in 1986. Because the vast majority of voters have accepted voting as a way of life, boycotts of elections have tended to marginalize the party politically rather than enhancing its status.

A sector of the party's urban-based cadres, as well as some of its higher-ranking cadres involved in urban and united front work have long argued that

the party must adapt itself to that cultural reality and accept both political pluralism and participation in national elections as a central element in its strategy. Despite the party's present condemnation of popular democracy as a reformist, anti-party concept, the commitment of many urban-based cadres in particular to bourgeois democratic institutions ensures that some variant of the popular democracy strategy will continue to be an alternative to a unilateral seizure of power by the party. The existence of a relatively large core constituency for the CPP/NPA in the countryside will continue to be a key factor in the politics of CPP strategy. Although no hard statistical evidence is available, reports from visitors to the NPA zones report that the core of the movement's mass base of political support consists of poor tenants, farms workers and other who have derived tangible economic benefits from the presence of the NPA and are therefore committed to armed struggle--even if the party cannot promise it victory in the short or medium term.⁶⁴ This mass base, which the CPP claims numbers about two million people, generally feels that the NPA has the initiative and cannot understand why there should be a cease-fire with the government.⁶⁵ Its readiness to support people's war for an indefinite period provides party officials with a rationale for the continued primacy of people's war, since halting it or reducing its role could be interpreted as betrayal of its supporters.

The intra-party debate has long been influenced by the reality that Philippine politics are so dominated by what happens in Manila. While the strategy of people's war assumes that the cities can be strangled by a movement that emerges from the countryside, few CPP leaders would deny the decisive importance of Metro Manila in shaping the politics of the entire country. As the events of February 1986 demonstrated, popular protests there have the capacity to bring down a government in a very short time. The success of "people power" put the advocates of people's power on the defensive, and its after-shocks have by no means ended. The CPP leadership has been forced to give the capital area greater and greater emphasis, even as it has reemphasized the centrality of armed struggle.⁶⁶

Another internal factor that has been an obstacle to the CPP's moving to give greater emphasis to parliamentary struggle is the collective historical

memory of CPP leaders who joined the party in the late 1960s or early 1970s. When they joined the Communist Party of the Philippines Marxist-Leninist, they were acutely aware that they were explicitly repudiating the ideological-strategic legacy of the orthodox Moscow-oriented party, the PKP, which had tried to seize power prematurely in the late 1940s, were defeated and then shifted to parliamentary struggle.⁶⁷ The old party quickly became irrelevant, and young intellectuals who were excited by the boldness of Maoism moved into the breach.

Although the first generation of party members has now disavowed the specifically Maoist elements of the party's ideology and strategy, it remains extremely fearful of adventurist strategies promising short-term victory or relying too much on parliamentary struggle. Some of the analyses and proposals of advocates of urban insurrection and popular democracy are bound to remind these veterans of the very strategies over which they left the PKP.⁶⁸ That such memories still weigh heavily on a majority of the CPP leadership is suggested by the evidence that it was ready in 1987 to offer the chairmanship to founding Chairman Jose Maria Sison. Sison appears uncritically committed to the doctrine of prolonged people's war and, just as strongly, he rejects any notion that legal or parliamentary struggle could play a primary role in revolutionary strategy.⁶⁹

The single most significant variable influencing the strategic debate--and one whose importance is likely to increase in the near future--is the ability of the CPP to obtain modern arms for the NPA. Except for an aborted arms shipment from China in 1971 and a purchase from the PLO in the early 1970s, the CPP has been unable to find an external source of arms supply. Nor has it received financial support from abroad.⁷⁰ Although the party abandoned its anti-Soviet attitude sometime in 1985 and apparently began to seek arms from the Soviet Union, Moscow has shown by its recent diplomatic initiatives that it sees far greater gains from improved relations with the Aquino government than from backing the CPP. Other possible sources of arms in the Third World, such as the PLO, Libya, Vietnam and North Korea, are seeking greater diplomatic respectability in the West and are unlikely to be interested in that role.

The lack of an external source of weapons appears to stand in the way of insurgency's achievement of military parity with the AFP. Although people's war strategy does not require numerical parity to achieve the stalemate stage, CPP strategists figured in 1986 that they needed to improve the ratio of government to insurgent troops from 20:1 to 10:1 in order to achieve the stalemate stage.⁷¹ Evidence from both AFP and CPP sources suggests that the number of high-powered rifles in NPA hands did not grow appreciably during 1986 and 1987.⁷² Captured internal CPP documents indicate, moreover, that NPA guerrillas held only about 7,600 high-powered weapons in 1988--about 40 percent of what the AFP had previously estimated.⁷³

The lack of weapons also appears to be the main reason why the NPA has not grown in recent years, even in regions where it can draw on significant popular support.⁷⁴ The decision of the CPP central committee in February-March 1988 to increase the number of battalion-sized attacks against AFP units to capture more high-powered weapons no longer appears to be an effective strategy for increasing total weapons, if the AFP's claim to have captured more weapons from the NPA than were lost to them during 1988 is accurate.⁷⁵

Skepticism about the ability of the CPP to obtain arms from foreign sources, which has figured in intra-party debates on strategy since the early 1980s, continues to be one of the most sensitive issues for the CPP leadership. United Front Commission Chairman, Satur Ocampo, conceded in an August 1986 interview with the author, "The possibility of building up heavy weaponry is a problem that has to be confronted," adding that the party leadership had conducted studies on the problem. His failure to express confidence that the problem would be resolved suggests that Ocampo has harbored serious doubts himself.

Those continuing to defend the people's war strategy may feel rising pressure to demonstrate both to skeptics in the leadership and at lower echelons that the problem of arms supply will be resolved within a reasonably short period of time. Mid-level cadres in different regions of the Philippines were reported to have given up the notion that the NPA could defeat the AFP militarily unless it can obtain heavy weapons from a foreign source.⁷⁶ Former Central Committee Chairman Rodolfo

Salas, who has been identified as a strong proponent of people's war, claimed in an interview in early 1987 that the Soviets and Vietnamese had offered arms to the CPP, but with unacceptable conditions, and the claim was repeated by party leaders in at least one province.⁷⁷ The decision by the CPP leadership to spend nearly half its military budget for 1988 (15 million pesos) on an effort to buy arms on the international market and to land the arms during the first half of 1988 is another indication that the leadership feels some urgency about solving the arms supply problem.⁷⁸

All this suggests that what remains of the people's war strategy may be vulnerable to a new round of strong criticism unless party leaders can show evidence of a breakthrough in arms supply. If the party were to find a way to obtain a much larger numbers of weapons as well as heavy weapons, it would virtually assure that the existing strategy would be continued. In the absence of an assured weapons pipeline, however, the CPP may be forced to abandon the predominantly military route to power.

A second variable that will bear upon the intra-party debate is the degree to which the Philippine government is perceived as polarized between liberal democratic and rightist-authoritarian wings. As we have seen when Aquino's government appeared to have relatively strong liberal faction in 1986, it stimulated pressures within the CPP leadership for a modification of strategy that put less emphasis on armed struggle and more on strategic alliance with liberal democrats and even reformists against "fascism." It encouraged advocates of parliamentary struggle to press for electoral coalitions with more liberal political forces. When Aquino was seen to move to the right and the liberal wing appeared to lose its influence in the government, the response was to return to a modified people's war line. The Aquino government, or its successor, would have to demonstrate that it is willing and able to pursue different policies toward the economy and insurgency than those desired by the US and the Philippine military in order to restore the notion of elite polarization.

Intra-regime polarization between liberal left and right and the threat of the restoration of authoritarian regime would tend to give impetus to both urban insurrectionist and popular democracy tendencies in

the party. An actual coup by the right, on the other hand, would almost certainly play into the hands of the people's war advocates, convincing them that the party would now have the support of the "middle forces" for stepping up armed struggle. As one urban cadre put it, "A rightist coup would simplify matters for the party, but the ideological debate would be sidetracked."⁷⁹

The final variable to be considered is the degree of leadership stability within the CPP. It is logical to assume that leadership turnover would make it more difficult to make major changes in the party's ideological and strategic line. The tendency in periods of uncertainty or simply security problems which limit the opportunities for Central Committee or Politburo meetings is naturally to try to build on existing policies and program rather than to try radical alterations. Only a leadership which is stable, confident of its tenure, and capable of carrying out wide consultations with lower echelons would be capable of making such a change. Plans for a party congress in 1987, which would have been the first since the founding of the party in 1968, were tied to the need to carry out a fundamental reassessment of the party's strategy and to arrive at a new consensus.⁸⁰ But the congress was never held, perhaps because the leadership itself had reached at least a temporary consensus on strategy and tactics.

After a period of four years in which there was very little, if any, change in the leadership bodies, late 1986 ushered in a period of unprecedented leadership turbulence for the CPP. Between September 1986 and March 1988, nearly the entire Executive Committee of the party and many other central staff members and regional party leaders were either arrested or resigned. There have been indications of both personal and regional rivalries and increasing suspicions of government penetration of party leadership organs, with former party Chairman Salas blaming another Executive Committee member for his arrest.⁸¹ If these leadership conditions continue, the possibilities for a more fundamental shift in strategy would appear to be dramatically reduced.

Options and Dilemmas for the CPP

Given the configuration of capabilities and constraints sketched out here, the CPP faces difficult tradeoffs and therefore dilemmas regardless of the

direction its strategy takes in the near future. A decision to give greater emphasis to one element of the strategy automatically means greater risk or sacrifice of another element. There are four broad alternative strategies that the party could pursue over the next few years, each of which carries its own set of problems, risks and costs, as well as advantages.

1. Continue to pursue the modified people's war strategy, putting primary emphasis on a gradual, balanced nationwide build-up the NPA and consolidating the political support of the peasantry, while increasing the movement's urban-based political-military capabilities for taking advantage of any opportunities for seizing power more rapidly.

2. Continue to make armed struggle the primary form of struggle, but move away from gradual accretion of political-military power and concentrate its limited military assets on making the greatest and most immediate political-psychological impact on the government, both in rural and urban areas;

3. Reduce armed struggle to a secondary role and concentrate political efforts primarily on Metro Manila, focusing on organizing urban mass movements, with militant labor unions as the core, aimed ultimately at an urban insurrection, which would be supported by armed city partisan units and by NPA actions in surrounding provinces.

4. Pursue the same strategy as option three but promote parliamentary struggle to a major role.

The option of pursuing the present modified people's war strategy would have several advantages for the CPP. First, it would base revolutionary strategy on its primary advantage, the support of armed struggle by the organized mass base that it has established in approximately twenty percent of the country's barangays. The organized mass base probably provides the bulk of the recruits for the party and the NPA and much of the financial-material support as well.⁸² Second, it would avoid the high risks of a strategy that would depend on a single major uprising in Metro Manila.

However, there are heavy risks associated with this strategy. It is generally agreed that it cannot succeed without a major external source of weapons, which is unlikely to materialize. While much of the mass base may be willing to wait indefinitely for a

breakthrough, the strategy is likely to lose all credibility for leadership cadres in the provinces. Moreover, resource constraints and class conflicts in the barangays are likely to create increasing difficulties for financing the NPA while maintaining political support. The costs of trying to increase military operations nationwide are likely to continue to increase faster than the local resource base, as they have in the past few years. As the demands on the mass base for material sacrifices become greater, the party must infringe even more on the interests of landowners and middle peasants to maintain its core constituency's support.⁸³ That is likely to result in the exodus of more prosperous strata from NPA-dominated barangays, along with the capital and technical know-how needed to sustain the agricultural economy of the NPA zone.⁸⁴ In short, even under the most optimistic assumption, continued efforts to increase the level of armed struggle is likely to strain the economic and political base of the revolutionary forces in the countryside.

Presumably the second strategic option would mean NPA attacks on strategic targets such as power, communications and transport systems, to enhance the NPA's prestige and convince both rural and urban populations that the government's grip is loosening. Possible movement in this direction was suggested by the military tactics of the NPA in the Bicol Peninsula in fall 1987, when two strategic bridges linking that region to the rest of Luzon were blown up, and three others were partially damaged.⁸⁵ The other move toward using the NPA for short-term high-impact operations was the increase in sparrow killings, especially in Metro Manila in 1987-88. Proponents of an active campaign against selected targets by Armed City Partisan Units in Metro Manila have argued that it has given impetus to the advancement of urban mass movements and opens up options to the movement other than prolonged people's war, such as "armed urban uprisings."⁸⁶ They also see the increased number of liquidations as projecting "psychological strength" over the government.⁸⁷

Both of these two innovations, however, have incurred heavy political costs. The popular reaction in the Bicol region to that departure from past NPA tactics were so negative that an NPA spokesman disclaimed responsibility for some--though not all--of the damage to the bridges.⁸⁸ Although the NPA has

acquired more explosives for use in sabotage attacks, political officers reportedly opposed their use because of negative political impact on the population affected.⁸⁹ Similarly, the step-up in assassinations by sparrow units in Metro Manila may have solidified the support of some sectors of urban poor communities, but it made it more difficult to repair the damage done to united front efforts with the middle class left activists, who objected strongly to that tactic. Legal left personalities have called for a halt in sparrow operations, partly because they expose legal leftist activists to assassination by right-wing vigilantes or security forces. Urban cadres generally regard the sparrow units as having set back urban political work between 1986 and 1988.⁹⁰

In general, efforts to leap over the stages of development of armed struggle by focusing on military targets that would have maximum impact could have the opposite effect from the one desired by the party. This strategy would be precisely what Sison had in mind when he commented that "there may be weaknesses when military operations run too far ahead of laying the political and ideological groundwork."⁹¹

The CPP has edged toward a strategy based on the centrality of a possible urban insurrection for years. Most recently, it organized a "quick reaction force" of 20,000 demonstrators from various national democratic organization that could be mobilized within three to five days, giving it a greater capability to respond to political crises.⁹² In order to concentrate on the urban insurrection strategy, however, it would have to divert more cadres and financial resources away from the NPA's rural operations and into the cities. It would have to concede that the struggle is not going to be won from the countryside, become more attuned to the nuances of legal Philippine politics, and accept a non-dominant role in coalitions of left-leaning political groups.

The problem with this strategy is that it depends entirely on the emergence of an "insurrectionary situation" in the Metro Manila area. No one knows when such a situation might arise, and it is highly risky to place all the party's bets on that one possibility. A wrong assessment of the situation could lead to a massive defeat more serious than the political setbacks of 1986-87. Meanwhile, the reduction of the armed struggle risks the possibility of the

government gaining sufficient momentum to begin an unravelling of the political-military apparatus of the CPP in the rural areas. In short, it would trade the certainty of a strong, relatively stable system supporting a powerful military struggle for the uncertainties of urban politics.

The fourth strategic option would simply add to the third option a new emphasis on a capability for participation in electoral politics. It would thus acknowledge the fact that both the people's war and urban insurrectionary routes to power may be blocked for the foreseeable future and adapt the party's strategy to that reality. It would maximize the party's attractiveness to urban middle class progressive forces by showing that it accepts pluralism and democratic practices, giving credibility to its efforts to enlist independent groups in tactical or strategic united fronts against "fascism."

On the other hand, a strategy anchored in parliamentary struggle would mean competing with the government and conservative political forces on terrain that is most advantageous to the latter. The CPP lacks the financial resources, the command over communications media, the ability to influence the unpoliticized masses and the elite networks in the provinces that have always dominated electoral contests in the Philippines. The party's own revolutionary organization in the countryside can partly compensate for these disadvantages, but not enough to win a share of power commensurate with its present political-military influence.

In short, the CPP faces a difficult situation in which any strategy that it might choose in the coming years would incur serious, if not insurmountable, problems. It has been precisely because of these unavoidable dilemmas that the party leadership has been unable in the past to resolve their debate on strategy and have instead tried to straddle the fence and combine divergent strategies. And because of these dilemmas, the CPP is likely to avoid the unadulterated application of any of the strategic options discussed here.

Endnotes

1. After three years of heavy military defeats, Sison did depart from Mao's principle of establishing "stable base areas" in his seminal 1974 work. Instead of inviting the AFP to concentrate its forces on such base areas, the CPP deliberately dispersed its

bases and forces across the entire Philippine archipelago and making each guerrilla front self-sufficient and autonomous in applying broad policies. See Amado Guerrero, *Specific Characteristics of People's War in the Philippines* (Oakland, California: International Association of Filipino Patriots). A xerox copy of the mimeographed version of the manuscript, dated December 1, 1974, is located in the Southeast Asian office, South Asian Division, Library of Congress. For informed commentary on this work, see Francisco Nemenzo, "Rectification Process in the Philippine Communist Movement," in Lim Joo Jock and S. Vani, eds., *Armed Communist Movements in Southeast Asia* (Hampshire, England: Gower, 1984), pp. 90-92.

2. Amado Guerrero (Jose Maria Sison), *Philippine Society and Revolution* (Manila: Pulang Tala Publications, 1971), p. 113-117, 231, 281-282.

3. See CPP Central Committee, "Our Urgent Tasks," (mimeographed), p. 25. This important document was drafted by the leadership June 25, 1976, following the Third CPP Central Committee Plenum in late 1975.

4. See "Grasp the Principles of Revolutionary Mass Movements," January 1978 (mimeographed), pp. 29-30.

5. "Our Urgent Tasks," pp. 12, 29 and 36.

6. *Ang Bayan*, May 1, 1977, pp. 1-2.

7. "Grasp the Principles..." p. 32.

8. Guerrero, *Philippine Society and Revolution*, pp. 233, 241-243. At a forum at the University of the Philippines on "united front" in August 1986, Sison was still making exactly the same argument about the nature of united front in the Philippine revolution.

9. Guerrero, *Philippine Society and Revolution*, p. 284.

10. After August 1983 the CPP refused to join with "reformists" such as Corazon Aquino in a coalition calling for Marcos to step down. Instead the CPP insisted on its own distinctly revolutionary slogan, "Oust the US-sponsored dictatorship." Moreover, the party leadership rejected the principle of equality with liberal democrats and social democrats in forming a broad anti-Marcos political alliance in 1985 and ended up with an organization (BAYAN) that reflected only the party's own "national democratic" line. Interview with a CPP cadre involved in united front work, Manila, August 19, 1986. For more detailed discussion of these points, see Gareth Porter, *The Politics of Counterinsurgency in the Philippines: Military and Political Options*, Philippine Studies Occasional Paper no. 9, Center for Philippine Studies, University of Hawaii, 1987, p. 34.

11. Armando Malay, Jr., "The Influence of Mao Zedong Thought on the Communist Party of the Philippines Marxist-Leninist," in Thereso C. Carino, ed., *China and Southeast Asia:*

Contemporary Politics and Economics (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1984), p. 49.

12. Drafting Committee, NDF Secretariat, *Program of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, Revised Draft*, January 1, 1985, p. 6.

13. See "Planning for a Post-Marcos Era," *Liberation*, January-February 1985. For a defense of the boycott of the 1986 Presidential election after the fact, see Sol Del Pilar, "When a Zigzag Turn is a Longer Route," *Praktika*, vol. 1, no. 2, August 1986, pp. 105-110.

14. Sison himself later claimed that he had favored the creation of such a party prior to his arrest in 1977. When asked why he believed no legal national democratic party had been created after his arrest, he responded, "Maybe it was because the creativity of the leadership was too limited." Interview with the author, Manila, August 29, 1986. Others in the party with whom the author has spoken are skeptical of Sison's claim, noting that he was silent on the matter when he was still leading the party.

15. This description of Dante's views is based on an interview with a former senior CPP official, Quezon City, July 3, 1988.

16. Paul Petitjean, "After the Election: Reassessment in the Revolutionary Left," *International Viewpoint* (Montreuil, France), no. 100, June 2, 1986, p. 8; interview with CPP cadre, Manila, August 19, 1986.

17. This description of the arguments from these two party commissions is based on conversations with Horacio Morales and Isagani Serrano, Quezon City, July 5, 1988. Morales is believed to have been head of the National Democratic Front and Serrano was Chairman of the National Urban Commission during this period.

18. The only substantial arms shipment from abroad was the abortive effort to bring arms from China via the ship Karagatan, which was intercepted by government troops in 1971. For an account by then CPP member Victor Corpus, see Annabelle Cueve Clutario, "The Saga of Victor Corpus," *Veritas*, April 13, 1986, pp. 18-19; *Manila Times*, November 7, 1956.

19. Conversation with Morales, July 5, 1988.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Program of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, p. 6.

22. Interview with a former CPP Central Committee member, Quezon City, August 19, 1986. One of the researchers in the Mindanao study recalls that the study was unfinished in 1982 when he was arrested in the government raid in which Edgar Jopson, Chairman of the Mindanao Commission, was killed. The researcher's own initial impression was that Mindanao was already

experiencing a capitalist form of agriculture, but he recalls that Jopson was firmly convinced that it was still feudal and semi-feudal. Interview with former NDF member, Davao City, January 19, 1986.

23. Julieta de Lima-Sison, "Jose Maira Sison on the Mode of Production," *The New Philippine Review*, May-July 1984, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 28-36.

24. Interview with former Mindanao CPP Cadre, Manila, September 2, 1986.

25. Gene A. Veloso, "How Many Will Fall: The Sparrow Knows," *Mr. and Ms.* (Special Edition), July 10-16, 1987, p. 15; William Chapman, *Inside the Philippine Revolution: The New People's Army and Its Struggle for Power* (New York: Norton, 1987), pp. 167-169.

26. Interview with former Mindanao-based CPP cadre; Chapman, *op. cit.*, pp. 230-231.

27. Chapman, *op. cit.*, pp. 174-176.

28. Interview with former politburo member Ignacio Capegsan, who claims that he quit the party in 1986, in *The Manila Chronicle*, November 13, 1988, p. 4. The explanations of the "Nicaraguan" and "Russian" models are provided in Marty Villalobos, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15.

29. Chapman, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

30. Marty Villalobos, "On the Insurreccional Strategy," unpublished manuscript, March 30, 1986, p. 8.

31. For the most comprehensive discussion of the role of "people's strikes" in CPP strategy, see *Ang Bayan*, December 1983, pp. 2-4.

32. Interview with CPP cadre, Manila, August 24, 1986.

33. "Some Clarifications," *Praktika*, vol. 1, no. 2, August 1986, pp. 111-112.

34. See "Against the Snap Election Boycott Tactic," by National Youth and Student Department, *Praktika*, vol. 1, no. 1, May 14, 1986, p. 35, and "When a Zigzag Turn is Shorter than a Straight Route," by the Editorial Board, *Ibid.*, pp. 22.

35. Villalobos, "On the Insurreccional Strategy," pp. 1, 5.

36. Chapman, *op. cit.*, 121-122.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-5.

38. Interview with CPP Cadre, Manila, September 2, 1986.

39. This group within the leadership held that liberal democracy cannot thrive in the Philippines, because of the society's semi-feudal, semi-colonial nature. The distinction between the Marcos and Aquino government's was, from this perspective, minimal. Interview with CPP cadre, Manila, July 4, 1988.

40. *Ang Bayan*, June 1986, p. 2. For an articulation of this viewpoint by the original theorist of people's war in the Philippines, see Jose Ma. Sison, "Political Report" to the Founding convention of Partido ng Bayan, August 30, 1986 (mimeographed).

41. Interview with CPP cadre, Manila, August 24, 1986, Carol Victoria, "A Reply to the Resolution," pp. 53-59.

42. Interview with former high-level CPP official and member of the National Preparatory Committee, Partido ng Bayan, Manila, August 19, 1986, interview with Ocampo.

43. Interview with CPP cadre, Manila, September 2, 1986.

44. Interview with Satur Ocampo.

45. *Ibid.*

46. Interview with CPP cadre, Manila, September 2, 1986.

47. According to Ocampo, "There remains a good deal of skepticism, which still outweighs the optimism--that electoral struggle could become a major aspect of the struggle." *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*

49. Interview with CPP cadre, August 24, 1986.

50. *Ang Bayan*, July 1986, pp. 4-6.

51. The rationale for the negotiations policy is laid out in, Memorandum from the Executive Committee, Central Committee, to Territorial Commissions and other party organs, "Negosasyon Tungkol sa Cease-fire" [Negotiations about a Cease-fire], July 1986.

52. Interview With Ocampo. Manila, September 1, 1986; interview with CPP cadre, Manila, September 2, 1986.

53. Jose Maria Sison, "The Continuing Struggle in the Philippines"--part III, *National Midweek*, June 29, 1988, p. 35.

54. Interview with CPP cadre, Manila, July 4, 1986.

55. *Manila Bulletin*, July 22, 1988, pp. 1, 11.

56. Interviews with CPP cadres August-September 1986. The concept of "popular democracy" advocates a pluralist system in which "people's organizations" that are independent of the state or party have important roles. For a recent explication of the concept, see "Edicio de la Torre, "The Politics of Popular Democracy," in *Two Essays on Popular Democracy* (Quezon City: Institute for Popular Democracy, 1986), pp. 1-10.

57. *Philippine Star*, March 19, 1988, p. 3; *Manila Bulletin*, March 29, 1988, p. 17.

58. Demafiles and other CPP cadres in Negros had continued to hold to the view that the Aquino government was bourgeois-liberal and favored the extension of the cease-fire with the government even after the central leadership ordered a resumption of the military offensive. *Manila Bulletin*, March 29, 1988, pp. 12, 17.

59. Private communication from a Filipino journalist, October 1987.
60. Interview with PnB official, Quezon City, July 3, 1988; interview with a CPP cadre, Manila, July 4, 1988.
61. *Taliba*, (Oakland, CA), June 1, 1987.
62. See Fiel Sebastian, "On the Left's Electoral Defeat," *Katipunan* (San Francisco), November 1987, pp. 13, 16.
63. *Ibid.*
64. See Porter, "Philippine Communism after Marcos," p. 18.
65. Interviews with CPP cadre, August 24, 1986 and July 4, 1988.
66. One way the leadership tried to readjust prolonged people's war to the recognition of Metro Manila's centrality was to introduce armed partisan warfare into the region in April 1986. Sheila Coronel, "Glimpses into the Life of a Sparrow," *Manila Chronicle*, June 24, 1987, pp. 1-6. By 1988, there were an estimated 1,299 armed insurgents in the Metro Manila region.
67. The history of the PKP's decline and fall is recounted in Francisco Nemenzo, "Divergence and Consensus: Trends in Philippine Communism," unpublished paper, 1982. An abbreviated version is published as "Rectification Process in the Philippine Communist Movement," Lim Joo Jock and S. Vani, eds., *Communist Movements in Southeast Asia* (Hampshire, England: Gower, 1984), pp. 71-101. This paper forms the basis for a summary account in David Rosenberg, "Communism in the Philippines," *Problems of Communism*, September-October 1984, pp. 29-33.
68. One young militant reports that older party members "tell us that we left the old party on account of its erroneous view of society. Do you want us to be back to where we were twenty years ago? You are too young to remember that." Interview with national democratic activist, Quezon City, July 5, 1988.
69. See, for example, Jose Maria Sison, "The Continuing Struggle for the Philippines," part IV, *National Midweek*, July 6, 1988, pp. 34-36.
70. See the report based on captured internal party documents in *Philippine Daily Globe*, December 12, 1988, p. 6.
71. Interview with former CPP Chairman Rodolfo Salas, *Veritas*, February 12-18, 1987, pp. 18-20.
72. Tracing the evolution of AFP intelligence estimates of NPA armed strength and total manpower is complicated by the practice of using only the lowest end of the range of estimates used internally. For the published data provided by AFP intelligence, see Porter, "Philippine Communism after Marcos," pp. 16-17, and *Manila Bulletin*, July 18, 1988, p. 19. A CPP cadre claims to have seen a Politburo assessment that said the NPA gained "more than 100 rifles during 1987" and that total armed strength "has remained stable for several years." Interview, Manila, July 4, 1988.
73. *Manila Bulletin*, July 16, 1988, p. 19. The discrepancy between the official NPA figure and AFP estimates may be explained largely by the fact that AFP estimates include arms other than high-powered weapons. See *Philippine Daily Globe*, November 13, 1988, p. 1. Jose Maria Sison, who was making an apparently exaggerated claim of 16,000 weapons in NPA hands, admitted that only "about 10,000" were automatic rifles. See *Philippine Daily Globe*, March 2, 1988, p. 2.
74. The NPA would appear to have stayed at approximately 23,000 to 25,000 men for the past three years, indicating a leveling off of growth. CPP documents indicate that recruitment in the strategic Southern Tagalog area in 1987 had fallen off to only 67 more men than were lost through casualty or surrender. See *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, April 15, 1988. One non-party visitor to the NPA zone in the Bontoc Peninsula reports being told that the NPA has been unable to increase their numbers, despite its capability to move freely throughout the region even in daytime, because it cannot equip more troops. Interview, Manila, July 3, 1988.
75. See James Clad, "Anatomy of a Red Revolution," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 28, 1988, p. 12; PNA, November 17, 1988, FBIS-EAS-88-222m o, 45.
76. Chapman, *op. cit.*; Walden Bello, *The Manila Chronicle*, June 19, 1988, p. 10.
77. Yomiuri Shimbun, January 15, 1987; *Manila Bulletin*, January 8, 1987.
78. See *Manila Bulletin*, July 19, 1988 and *Manila Bulletin*, December 5, 1988.
79. Interview, August 19, 1986.
80. Ocampo commented in September 1986--at a time when there was openly admitted debate about how to interpret the new political reality--that a party congress to be held the following year would be "an excellent occasion for unifying the perspective on the national situation, strategy and tactics." Interview, Manila, September 2, 1988.
81. Interview with CPP cadre, July 4, 1988. Also see Radio Veritas, November 16, 1988, FBIS-EAS-88-221, November 16, 1988, pp. 47-48 and Radio Veritas, December 30, 1988, FBIS-EAS-88-251, December 30, 1988, p. 53.
82. Publication of data from captured CPP documents regarding the party's national central fund and the budget of the NPA are misleading, since they focus attention only on resources controlled by central party organs. The NPA budget for 1988 was only 32.3 million pesos, or about \$1.5 million, *Philippine Daily*

Globe, December 5, 1988) while the total CPP budget is 55.2 million pesos, or about \$2.6 million (James Clad, "High Cost of Waging War," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 28, 1988, p. 13), and tax collections nationwide are estimated to run as high as 150 million pesos, or \$7 million (*Manila Bulletin*, July 20, 1988). So it is clear that the bulk of the resources needed to support the NPA come from the barangay population itself and are spent at the local level.

83. It has already begun to do so by carrying out land redistribution on a wider scale, after trying for years to maintain a more compromising policy toward noncultivating landowners. See *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, November 3, 1988; Michael D. Marasigan, "Liberating the Land," *Business Day Magazine*, February 13, 1987, p. 12.

84. See Clayton Jones, "Filipino rebels' 'class' dilemma," *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 29, 1986, p. 6; James Clad, "The Stalemate Island," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 15, 1987, p. 14.

85. This tactical decision may well have been made by regional party leadership. See *Manila Chronicle*, March 18, 1988.

86. Sheila Coronel, "Glimpses into the Life of a Sparrow," *The Manila Chronicle*, June 24, 1987, p. 6; *Manila Bulletin*, July 17, 1988.

87. *Manila Bulletin*, July 20, 1988.

88. AFP dispatch, September 25, 1987, FBIS-EAS-87-186, p. 22.

89. *Philippine Daily Globe*, December 5, 1988, p. 6.

90. See Paulynn Sicam, *The Manila Chronicle*, March 18, 1988; P.N. Abinales, *The Manila Chronicle*, May 22, 1988, pp. 9-10; Walden Bello, *The Manila Chronicle*, June 19, 1988.

91. Quoted in "On the Other Hand" column by Antonio C. Abaya, *Business World*, July 9, 1988, p. 4.

92. *Manila Bulletin*, July 18 and July 22, 1988.

Annex: The Strategy of the MNLF

The strategic problem confronting the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) stands in sharp contrast to that faced by the CPP. For a variety of reasons, the MNLF must strive to achieve its minimum goal of autonomy for the Muslim majority provinces of Mindanao and the islands to its West primarily through a combination of negotiations with the Philippine government and the cultivation of diplomatic support abroad. Despite the fact that the MNLF waged a relatively successful armed struggle in the 1970s against a numerically superior foe, the resumption of guerrilla warfare now appears to be ruled out even as an adjunct to the Front's predominantly diplomatic strategy. External support has always been a central element in the MNLF's strategy, and the external variable will continue to be the single most important in determining the strategy and tactics that the MNLF can pursue.

The strategy of the MNLF since the Aquino presidency began can best be analyzed in the context of the changes which have taken place both within the Philippines and in the international arena since the MNLF first began its armed struggle against the Marcos regime in 1972. The MNLF came into existence only after four years of methodical violence by Christian terrorist groups against Muslims. It had a vision of a sovereign Moro state that would encompass both Sabah and the Southern Philippines. It had a territorial base for receiving supplies, training, rest and recuperation, in Sabah whose leader Tun Mustapha was supportive. With relatively large fighting forces, the MNLF tried to use conventional tactics against the AFP.¹

The MNLF soon learned that it could not concentrate its forces against the AFP without exposing itself to superior firepower and shifted to guerrilla tactics that avoided military defeat. Its organizational cohesion was increasingly strained by tendencies toward warlordism and localism, differences among leaders over terms of settling the war, and the fact that much of its leadership was living in Libya. The MNLF's Sabah base was eliminated by the electoral defeat of Tun Mustapha in 1976. And the Islamic Conference, on whose support the MNLF had

come to depend, refused to endorse its demand for a sovereign nation. These factors pushed the MNLF to sign the Tripoli agreement, an autonomy pact with Marcos brokered by the Organization of Islamic Conference.²

While Marcos subverted and manipulated the Tripoli agreement from the beginning, other factors further weakened the MNLF after 1976; military assistance from the major supporters of the MNLF--Libya, Saudi Arabia and Syria--dried up, and Saudi and Egyptian governments supported the formation of the Bangsa Moro Liberation Organization (BMLO), which favored parliamentary struggle, to the Libyan-supported MNLF. The Armed Forces of the Philippines increased, which doubled its forces from 57,000 in 1971 to 113,000 in 1976, continued its buildup to 150,000 by 1980, while as many as half of the original 20,000 MNLF fighters returned to the government side in return for various economic benefits.³ Finally, between 1977 and 1982 the Islamic insurgency itself splintered into three rival groups, based more on personal rivalry and ethnicity as on differences of policy: Nur Misuari's MNLF, Hashim Salamat's faction which was led by Maguindanaons based in southwestern Mindanao, and a "reformist" MNLF faction, led by Maranaos from northwestern Mindanao.⁴ By the early 1980s, the MNLF insurgency was no longer considered a major threat to the Marcos regime, given its political isolation and loss of support.

By 1985, however, the MNLF found the situation favorable for a new effort to regain the initiative against Marcos. As the Marcos regime slid into deeper political crisis following the assassination of Senator Aquino, and the NPA began to spread its control over a large part of the countryside, Marcos could no longer concentrate 80 percent of his forces against the MNLF as he had done in the past. The MNLF leadership concluded, therefore, that the conditions were ripe for launching the "second phase of the Bangsa Moro revolution."⁵

The aim of this second phase was to renegotiate more favorable terms, under circumstances that the MNLF leadership hoped would weaken the Marcos regime's bargaining position and strengthen his own. Marcos fell before Misuari could even broach the subject of new negotiations, but the MNLF believed that President Aquino would feel the same pressures to negotiate an agreement with the MNLF

in order to free up troops and budgetary resources for the more serious threat of the New People's Army.⁶

The second-phase strategy involved generating diplomatic pressure from the Islamic states on the Aquino government to negotiate, building up its military potential and mass political support, getting the government's recognition as the representative of the Muslim population in Mindanao and reunifying the fragmented Islamic political front. It did not involve military pressures on the government, however.

Before meeting with President Aquino in September 1986, Misuari convened a 4-day Bangsa Moro Congress at which he consulted some 10,000 to 20,000 supporters on the peace talks.⁷ The meeting with Aquino helped Misuari to consolidate his political-military position by attracting back to the organization many of the former MNLF soldiers who had earlier surrendered to the government, as well as foreign-trained commanders who returned from exile.⁸

At the meeting with Aquino, Misuari agreed to a "cessation of hostilities," formalizing a de facto ceasefire that the Islamic insurgents had observed since the beginning of Aquino's presidency. At the same time, he toughened the MNLF's negotiating stance, rejecting the Tripoli Agreement as a basis for a new agreement and demanding a separate Islamic state in Mindanao.⁹ That was only an opening ploy, aimed at making his back-up position in the negotiations with the Aquino government in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in January 1987--autonomy for 23 provinces in the southern Philippines--seem more moderate. But Misuari was forced to further reduce the MNLF's demands in order to get the support of splinter groups he needed to reunite once again under the MNLF banner. Misuari returned to the Tripoli agreement, which provided for autonomy for the 13 provinces with an Islamic majority, in return for their signing a unity pact in June 1987.

Nevertheless, the talks broke down over the government's insistence that autonomy had to be subject to the will of the new Congress and a plebiscite, denying, in effect, that the Tripoli Agreement superseded the new constitution.¹⁰ The next phase of MNLF strategy was to exploit the support of Islamic states to further enhance the organization's

status and to increase pressure on Aquino to give in to the Tripoli Agreement. The MNLF leadership was particularly interested in upgrading its observer status in the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) from observer to full membership, which it hoped would give the organization "embassies" in the capitals of all Islamic states and, hence, increased financial and military assistance.¹¹

But political rifts within the OIC and shifting economic forces constrained the MNLF diplomatic offensive. While Libya remained a strong supporter of the MNLF's demands, other Islamic states, including Saudi Arabia and Indonesia, were wary of giving support to a secessionist Islamic movement, because of the dangerous precedent it could set.¹² Moreover, the Philippines, once dependent on Arab oil supplies, now had significant bargaining leverage with Islamic states in the Middle East. First, the glut in the world oil market meant that the Philippines could threaten to shift its purchases of oil to Asian or Latin American states. And second, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and other Arab states depended on Filipino workers, making them vulnerable to a boycott.¹³ The OIC failure to approve the MNLF's request for membership was a major setback for its strategy.¹⁴

Despite the rebuff, the MNLF continued to pursue a strategy of using the support of Islamic countries to bolster its negotiating position. Responding to a new government offer for negotiations, a MNLF spokesman said future negotiations would have to be outside the new constitution and involve the OIC.¹⁵ Thus far the Aquino government has shown no hint of flexibility regarding the MNLF's demand for autonomy for the 13 provinces, suggesting that Manila is convinced that the Moro problem is manageable without new negotiating concessions. It has been observed that the Moro forces have only one week's supply of ammunition or less, thus severely limiting their capacity to wage a new war against the government.¹⁶

Indeed, the MNLF leadership has demonstrated extreme caution regarding the use of armed force to advance its goals, repeatedly deciding to pass up the opportunity to threaten a new war in order to bolster its negotiating position. The ceasefire agreement with Aquino, reached in September 1986, has been maintained by the MNLF, in sharp contrast to the CPP/NPA decision to go back to armed struggle

after only a 60-day ceasefire. While the government has made repeated statements suggesting MNLF plans for an offensive, Misuari and other spokesmen have always denied any intention to resume armed struggle, even if the government refuses to negotiate on the basis of the Tripoli agreement. Misuari himself declared in March 1988, "We will go to war only in self-defense, absolutely in self-defense," thus giving up the threat of force as a bargaining chip.¹⁷

There appear to be three major reasons for the MNLF's abjuring even the threat of armed struggle as part of its strategy. First, it is aware that it does not have the logistical support for a new war, as AFP officers have pointed out; second, it must reassure its conservative supporters in the OIC, notably Saudi Arabia, that it will wage a peaceful political struggle for autonomy, in order to maintain even the limited political support that it has enjoyed from the OIC;¹⁸ third, neither the Muslim population of the southern Philippines, nor Muslim leaders are prepared to support an armed struggle. As Misuari has conceded, the people are "tired of war."¹⁹ By mid-1988, there were already indications that some MNLF leaders who had come back to the MNLF after splitting off earlier were wavering in their opposition to government plans for autonomy within the context of the constitution.²⁰

In summary, the MNLF's political weakness and isolation in the Philippine domestic context, its dependence on the support of the OIC, and the conservatism of its Islamic backers impose tight constraints on the organizations strategy. The MNLF has little realistic choice but to continue with its diplomatic approach, without armed struggle or even the threat of violence to back it up.

Endnotes

1. See Aziz Ahmad, "The War Against the Muslims," *Southeast Asia Chronicle*, No. 82, February 1982, p. 15-16.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-18.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21; *Arabia: The Islamic World Review*, April 1986, pp. 19-21.

4. *Arabia*, April 1986, pp. 20-21. Datu Firdausi Abbas, secretary-general of the Bangsa Moro Islamic Party and a leader of the "reformist" faction, declared in September 1986, "We will never recognize Misuari as the sole leader of the Bangsa Moro people. How could a Tausug rule over the Maguindanaons and the Maranaws?" *The Manila Chronicle*, September 19, 1986.

5. Interview with MNLF Chairman Nur Misuari, *Ang Katipunan*, April 1986, p. 8.

6. Agapito "Butz" Aquino seemed to confirm this belief when he said the government wanted to negotiate with Misuari, because, "once we settle this one, we can tackle the really big problem--the communist insurgency." Christine Araneta, "Moros Rush to Resolve Conflict," *Ang Katipunan*, June 1986, p. 6.

7. AFP dispatch, September 3, 1986, FBIS, Asia and Pacific, September 4, 1986, p. P1; *Philippine Daily Express*, September 5, 1986.

8. *Manila Bulletin*, September 20, 1986.

9. *Philippine Daily Express*, September 4, 1986. The MNLF does not consider the demand for a separate state to represent "secession," since it does not regard the Moros as ever having been part of the Philippines.

10. Wicks Geaga, "Why the Talks Stalled," *Ang Katipunan*, November 1987, p. 9.

11. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, March 4, 1988.

12. "Analysis" column by Armando Doronila, "OIC Ambivalence on MNLF Bid for Membership," *The Manila Chronicle*, March 2, 1988.

13. See *Business World*, March 2, 1988.

14. For the six-point declaration of the OIC at the close of its foreign ministerial conference, see *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, March 29, 1988.

15. *The Manila Chronicle*, April 18, 1988.

16. *Philippine Daily Globe*, March 21, 1988; AFP dispatch, February 19, 1988, FBIS-EAS-88033, February 19, 1988, p. 53; comment by Chairman Ernesto Maceda of the Senate Committee on National Defense and Security, "Issues and Answers Program," Quezon City Radio-Television Arts Network, March 7, 1988, FBIS-EAS-88-045, March 8, 1988, p. 46.

17. Kyodo dispatch, March 23, 1988, FBIS-EAS-88-056, March 23, 1988, p. 48.

18. AFP dispatch, March 8, 1988, FBIS-EAS-88-046, March 9, 1988, p. 28. The same considerations have evidently forced Misuari to renounce any alliance with the Communist insurgents, despite their convergent interests, efforts by the NDF to woo Misuari, and public support for the MNLF by the National Democratic Front. See Misuari's negative comments on the CPP/NPA in an interview in *Ang Katipunan*, April 1986, p. 8. A tactical alliance between the two insurgent military organizations have been reported only in the two Lanao provinces. Malaya, February 29, 1988 and *The Manila Chronicle*, December 20, 1987.

19. *Ibid.* The renunciation of armed struggle as a strategy was further underlined by the MNLF's civilian spokesman Ustadz Sharif Zain Jali, who said the MNLF was "not ready to fight anew with the Philippine Armed Forces" and that fighting was not a solution to the crisis. *Business World*, March 1, 1988.

20. See the comments by Nur Khan, who had surrendered to Marcos in 1985 but had remained Misuri in 1986. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, May 9, 1988.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REFORMS OF THE AQUINO GOVERNMENT

By David Rosenberg, Professor of Political Science, Middlebury College

Introduction

This analysis is a preliminary attempt to evaluate the early political and economic reform efforts of Philippine government under the administration of President Corazon Aquino. First, it provides a brief historical background to the dramatic transition from the Marcos government to the Aquino government. It discusses the political changes and reforms contained in the creation of the current government, the fourth Philippine Republic. Second, it reviews the major indicators of economic performance, such as growth and distribution of output. Third, this analysis examines the major problems in need of reform, including the high rate of population growth, the high level of unemployment, and the unequal distribution of income. Fourth, it examines government priorities and policies, such as land reform and meeting basic needs, which attempt to overcome these major problems. Fifth, it describes distinctive Philippine cultural factors which influence and limit government reform efforts, such as the tradition of strong families and weak states, and the symbolic value of elections in reinforcing family oligarchies. Sixth, it estimates the prospects for the Aquino government in achieving its national reform objectives. Seventh, it evaluates Philippine government reform efforts in comparison with other Asian countries. It concludes with some observations on Philippine-American relations.

Political Changes from Marcos to Aquino

On September 23, 1972, the Philippines ended its long experiment with Western-style democracy. On that day, Marcos proclaimed martial law throughout the country and began a drastic transformation of Philippine political institutions. He rapidly began to dismantle the superstructure of constitutional government which had been transplanted to the Philippines under American

colonial rule. Congress was dissolved, civil liberties were sharply curtailed, and the constitution of 1935 was replaced. A "New Society" was proposed by President Marcos to be implemented by a new style of government, "constitutional authoritarianism." Marcos claimed that the loss of civil liberties and representative government was the regrettable but temporary price that Filipinos would have to pay for political stability, economic growth, and social reform. But there is also considerable evidence to indicate that Marcos was not willing to implement the necessary policies to achieve these objectives.

Marcos changed the institutions of Philippine government to centralize and personalize his control over the main sources of power and wealth in the country. "Crony capitalism" left deep structural flaws in the economy. The "green revolution" benefited some Filipino farmers, but it also led to the creation of a large and durable class of landless peasants and urban squatters. Many lost their traditionally local and conservative orientations and became ripe for radical mobilization. The role of the Church changed drastically from having been the staunch supporter of the status quo to being the constant critic of government. Liberation theology led some in the Church into organizing Basic Christian Communities and other social and political action groups to seek redress for popular grievances. Patron-client ties--the fundamental building blocks of Filipino political power--were torn apart. The military became highly politicized and tainted by frequent reports of abuses. And a new generation of rebel leaders succeeded in creating a New People's Army to achieve national liberation through armed struggle. In February 1986, Ferdinand Marcos was forced out of power, ending nearly twenty years of rule. Ultimately, his New Society failed because it was not producing its promised benefits of political

stability, economic growth, or social reform. Instead, there was increasing instability, persistent poverty and more violence than there had been before Marcos.

The "People Power" movement and the establishment of the Aquino government created an extraordinary opportunity to overcome the social and cultural obstacles to Philippine development and democracy which had been exacerbated during the Marcos years. In its first year, the Aquino government averted civil war; it replaced a failing and corrupt dictatorship, with a minimum of bloodshed. It restored a free press. It slowed the country's economic decline; it received a substantial infusion of emergency foreign aid and debt repayment concessions; it ratified a new constitution; it restored the faith and pride of many Filipinos in their country. All this, however, only gave the country a brief respite to plan and implement comprehensive, long term solutions to revitalize the economy and to reform and retrain the civilian and military bureaucracies.

Free and honest elections during 1987 were crucial to stabilizing the political situation and restoring confidence in the economy. The first electoral test of the Aquino government was the constitutional plebiscite on February 2, 1987. The government had been in legal limbo after Mrs. Aquino scrapped the 1973 Marcos charter in March 1986 and replaced it with her own temporary "freedom constitution." The new constitution reflects Aquino's centrist views and emphasizes the protection of human rights and safeguards against presidential abuses. It limits the presidency to one six-year term and indicates that Aquino will be president until 1992. It puts emphasis on a new 24-member Senate and a 250-member lower house which would have the right to overrule any presidential declaration of martial law. The charter allows US military bases to remain until the current agreement expires in 1991. It makes any extension of that agreement contingent on approval by the Senate which could also call for a nationwide vote on the issue. Another article prohibits the use and storage of nuclear weapons in the Philippines unless it is in the national interest for temporary and exceptional reasons. The new constitution also bans abortion, abolishes the death penalty, calls for massive land reform, demands equality of the sexes, and restores dozens of

freedoms taken away during Marcos rule. Aquino campaigned for the constitution but several groups opposed her. The CPP denounced it because "it leaves unchallenged the rule of US imperialism." KMU opposed it because it did not go far enough in mandating land reform or removing links between the national economy and "US imperialism." It represented "an irreversible drift to the right," not "the interests and demands of workers." On the right, the constitution was opposed by former Defense Minister Enrile and supporters of former President Marcos. Enrile called the Aquino government a "dictatorship."

With shrill and militant opposition from the left and right, the centrist Aquino government managed to survive 1987 with its popularity and program intact after the constitutional plebiscite on February 2, the national legislature elections on May 11, and the local and regional elections on August 24. Despite the constant threat of political violence, the Aquino government provided a political leadership and framework for dealing with the numerous problems facing the country.

The normalizing effects of free and fair elections were offset by the polarizing effects of confrontational politics, including demonstrations, strikes, vigilante actions, coup d'etat attempts, and assassinations. Labor groups held strikes and demonstrations to protest price increases. The protests over food and oil prices were signs of growing discontent with a perceived lack of progress made by the Aquino government after two years in power. The left-wing Malaya referred to "the people's growing disenchantment with the regime" and said that "questions unasked before will have to be answered." The centrist *Daily Inquirer*, a strong supporter of Aquino, warned of "signs of a new cronyism" like that which plagued the regime of deposed President Ferdinand Marcos. President Aquino reshuffled her cabinet and removed her closest adviser, Executive Secretary Joker Arroyo. The military had been pressing for the removal of Arroyo, as well as another adviser considered to be a leftist, special legal counsel Teodoro Locsin. Arroyo, considered by many Filipinos to be second in power only to President Aquino, had been increasingly condemned as a leftist by military and business leaders in the wake of the attempted coup. The military had accused Arroyo of interfering with its

efforts to put down the revolt and of being too lenient toward the communist insurgents. Vice President Salvador H. Laurel also left his cabinet post as foreign minister on September 16, citing "basic, fundamental differences" with Aquino's policy toward the communist rebels. Laurel announced he would open an anti-communist publicity campaign nationwide. Soon after these developments, a top leftist leader was shot to death on September 19, 1987 in Quezon City, near Manila. Leandro Alejandro, secretary general of the left-wing Bayan coalition, was shot repeatedly in the head by gunmen firing from a passing vehicle. Alejandro was the second Bayan leader slain in the past year. Aquino warned that the government would use force if necessary to break a series of nationwide strikes that was disrupting the Philippine economy. "I will not allow an unruly minority to use the rights of labor ... to achieve a communist victory," Aquino declared. The May 1 Movement, a leftist federation of trade union, began the nationwide strikes in October 1987 to protest low wages, but some business and military officials believed that the wage issue was a secondary concern of the May 1 Movement. They maintained that the movement had close ties to the Philippine Communist Party and that its ultimate goal was to destabilize Aquino's presidency.

There were several coup attempts in the first two years of the Aquino administration, mostly by left-over Marcos loyalists and by the new "RAMboys" of "Gringo" Honasan. Deposed President Ferdinand Marcos was foiled in a plan to return from exile in the US to the Philippines, where dissident soldiers had attempted a coup on January 27, 1987. The soldiers had seized a suburban Manila broadcasting complex but failed in their attempts to take over military installations and the main power company. They did not end their rebellion until learning that the scheme by Marcos had failed. Colonel Oscar Canlas claimed that the soldiers merely wanted a tougher government line against communism and communist guerrillas. General Fidel Ramos, chief of staff of the armed forces, ordered the arrest of four high ranking officers linked to the attempted coup. Thirteen officers and 359 soldiers of lower ranks were detained, pending investigation of charges linked to the uprising. But other observers said the chief of staff had to contend with the widespread feeling among officers and the ranks

that the rebels were "merely principled anticommunists." Some of the officers implicated in the coup attempt (such as Brigadier General Jose Maria Zumel and Colonel Rolando Abadilla) were highly placed in the Marcos government and had also been involved in the so-called Manila Hotel incident, a military uprising organized by Marcos backers in July 1986.

The most serious attack against the Aquino government was launched by mutinous Philippine soldiers in Manila in the early hours of August 28, 1987. Fifty-three people--12 government troops, 19 rebels and 22 civilians--died in the fighting, according to government figures. Hundreds of others were wounded, including the president's son. By 8 a.m., the rebels had taken control of the Camp Aguinaldo military base--the army headquarters where the revolt against Marcos had begun--as well as the Philippine air force headquarters at the Villamor air force base. Forces loyal to the government began counter-attacking at Camp Aguinaldo around noon, but it was nearly 12 more hours before General Ramos announced that the base had been totally secured and all mutineers there had been captured. The attacks on Aguinaldo included bombing and strafing of the base by World War II vintage aircraft, and the use of artillery fire and tanks. Outside of Manila, the rebels took control of the Philippines' second largest city, Cebu City, when the commander of the local constabulary, General Edgardo Abenina, placed the provincial governor and city mayor under arrest. To show their control, the rebels flew inverted Philippine flags, a symbol also used by other mutineers. But as the rebellion in Manila crumbled, General Ramos relieved Abenina of his command and civilian leaders reassumed formal control of the city. US officials repeatedly expressed their support for the Aquino government. President Reagan expressed "America's unqualified support for President Aquino." State Department officials cited progress made by the Aquino government toward establishing stability in the Philippines. The US reportedly told mutiny leaders that all US military aid would be cut off if the coup succeeded.

The uprising, at least the fifth against Aquino, was led by soldiers linked to the Reform the Armed Forces Movement, which had helped to topple Marcos. Aquino said that over 1,350 soldiers took part in the revolt and that 1,033 were in custody. Colonel

Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan, the leader of the revolt, remained at large until his arrest in Manila in December. While the mutiny apparently found few sympathizers among civilians despite growing discontent with the Aquino government, the continued unease with the Aquino regime within the military posed an ongoing threat to the Philippine president. Army Chief of Staff General Fidel Ramos (now Secretary of National Defense) underscored that threat September 1 when he said that the problem of factionalism in the armed forces "probably has become more serious than before." To help improve military morale, Ramos called for a 60% pay increase for enlisted men and a meeting of the National Security Council to review the government's fight against communist and Moslem insurgents. But deeply-rooted problems persist within the military, as dramatically evidenced in April 1988 by the escape of Colonel Honasan in collusion with two dozen of his ostensible jailers. He has vowed to continue his struggle against the Aquino government.

Mrs. Aquino has acceded to most military concerns. Pay increases, promotions, and other material benefits have been extended to military personnel. Military and defense representatives sit in the Council of State as well as the National Security Council. Mrs. Aquino retains a retired general as her advisor on military affairs. She has frequent dialogues with national and regional commanders. Several key civilian posts have been given to retired officers. Civilian officials alleged to be sympathetic to the left have been removed from office. Counter-insurgency budgets and operations have been stepped up. All in all, the military has acquired a decisive voice in national politics.

Vigilante groups have exacerbated the trend toward violence. In early 1987, Aquino ordered the dissolution of "all private armies and other armed groups," but the next day the government issued a "clarification" saying "no immediate steps" were required to carry out the order. The country's new constitution bans private armed forces. Human rights advocates accused such groups of preying upon innocent civilians. But many in the military welcomed the bands as allies in the fight against the stubborn communist insurgency. Aquino's personal military adviser, retired Brigadier General Jose Magno, had made known his admiration for the Civilian Home Defense Force, a 40,000-member

militia that was the only group specifically named in the president's March 16 order. On March 29, President Aquino told a campaign crowd in Davao City that unarmed vigilante groups were a legitimate example of the "people power" that had helped propel her into office. Aquino said that civilians would be encouraged to organize into patrols that would deny the rebels freedom of movement but would carry only such traditional weapons as machetes.

Unlawful killings by government and government-backed forces have become the most serious human rights problem in the Philippines since mid-1987, according to a recent Amnesty International report. Most of the victims have been people suspected of sympathy for the communist insurgency; many of them have been members of legal left-wing organizations. The killers have belonged to regular military and police forces, paramilitary civil defense forces and community-based "vigilante" groups acting with government support.

By one count, there were 260 private armed bands in the Philippines. These ranged from the private armies of warlords to the jungle religious sect commonly known as Tadtad ("Chopchop," in Tagalog). The first and most celebrated of these was *Alsa Masa* (Tagalog for "Arise masses"), a band that dominated Agdao, a slum district in Mindanao Island's Davao City. The group contained more than half of an estimated 13,000 anti-communist vigilantes in the country, according to a confidential government survey reported in the press. According to a recent Amnesty International report, torture cases by the military and police in the Philippines have increased as the government has stepped up its fight against communist insurgents. This "pattern of torture" has reemerged even though the government has enacted constitutional and legal measures to outlaw brutality. No military or police officer has been convicted of a serious human rights offense since Mrs. Aquino came to power in February 1986.¹

Economic Performance

Initially, President Aquino pursued a policy of economic recovery, government reform, and reconciliation with communist guerrillas and secessionist Muslims, despite some contrary views in her cabinet and the military, as well as hostile and sometimes

violent objections from left-wing militants and left-over Marcos loyalists.

In its first national development plan, the Aquino government gave a high priority to "(a) alleviation of poverty, (b) generation of more productive employment, (and) (c) promotion of equity and social justice." It aimed to reduce poverty from 59% of all households to 45% by 1992. The government's *Agenda for Action for the Philippine Rural Sector* gave high priority to adopting an anti-poverty focus in rural areas, comprehensive land reform, and the elimination of bias against agriculture. Reflecting this emphasis, the government's *Medium Term Development Plan* indicated an increase in investment in agriculture from 9.3% (1981-1985) to 12.7% (1987-1992) of total public sector investment.

The Aquino government is attempting to regain the confidence of the domestic and international business community which was badly shaken by the "crony capitalism" of the Marcos years. If so, it must reverse the trend of declining savings rates, bank deposit withdrawals, capital flight, and the high number of bankruptcies and mergers. It must attract the return of the many Filipinos, in particular skilled workers and professionals, who left the country during the Marcos years to seek better opportunities abroad.

In an economy that shrunk by almost 12% from 1983 to 1986, "our first concern and priority is the problem of mass poverty and unemployment," said Finance Minister Jaime Ongpin. He called his economic program "private enterprise with a social conscience." It gave top priority to increasing domestic food production and the promotion of small and medium rural industry. The National Economic Development Agency (NEDA) prepared an *Agenda for A People-Powered Development* which detailed policies to increase jobs, incomes, and productivity in the rural sector by public spending on schools, irrigation, water supply, small ports, agro-forestation, and rural roads. A \$200 million program of road-building and housing construction to create up to 1 million new jobs was proposed for 1987.

In many ways, Ongpin and Central Bank governor Jose Fernandez were following economic policies that were similar to those of Cesar Virata, former

Marcos prime minister and finance minister. These include keeping the peso stable; keeping inflation under control; and keeping interest rates down. Ongpin and Fernandez also observed the guidelines of IMF conditionality; liberalizing trade; privatizing government corporations and development banks; and raising taxes to increase government revenues. The government moved to increase the terms of trade in agriculture by removing export taxes on agricultural products and by dismantling the trade monopolies and price supports for rice and corn. The government promised to sell its state-owned companies--including banks, coconut-oil mills, hotels, food manufacturing companies, and trading companies--to raise about \$7 billion over the next few years.

Aquino has managed to "slowdown the slowdown" of the economy. Key industries are beginning to increase production again. Industrial activity, including manufacturing and construction, had suffered a decline of 10.2% in 1985 and a decline of 2.7% in 1986; however, it then turned upward for an increase of 7.9% in 1987 and an increase of 10% in 1988. Gross national product had declined about 4% in 1985, but then increased by 1.5% in 1986; for 1987, GNP increased 5.7%. For the first half of 1988, there was an increase in GNP of 6.8% for 1988; despite a slowdown in the second half of 1988, there were still some indications that the government would reach its target of 6.4% for the whole year. Inflation is down. In 1984, it was raging at about 50%. For 1988, it was below 10%. Construction boomed throughout 1988, due to demand for urban space for commercial and residential expansion. This contrasts sharply with the period 1983-85, when construction was virtually at a standstill.

Export prices for gold, copper, and copra are up while oil import prices are down. Exports, especially manufactured products such as semi-conductors and electronic micro circuits, have performed well, but their growth has failed to keep pace with imports. There is a small boom in prawn cultivation, garment factories, and electronics assembly plants. However, these bright spots have few linkages within the domestic economy. Most are subject to the volatility of external market demand.

Economic growth has been slowly increasing, based on the revival of consumer demand, construc-

tion, and manufacturing sales, especially in the Metro-Manila region. The agricultural sector has stalled, however. Recent government figures show that output of most major crops was the same or even a little lower than the previous year.² The benefits of this growth need to be used to rebuild long-neglected transportation and communications systems, power supplies and other components of the economic infrastructure. Electricity and telephone services were especially strained by the recent economic expansion. Power stoppages became so common that some factory owners put in standby generators. Continued growth will require a major upgrading of basic infrastructure (especially power supply, telephone and postal services, and transportation systems) and a speed up of government processing of business licenses and documents.

Domestic investment has increased significantly after the disinvestment years of 1983-86; however, the hoped-for infusion of funds from the United States and Western Europe has failed to materialize. Japanese and Taiwanese investors, on the other hand, have lined up investment proposals totalling more than \$200 million. The pace of new investment will remain slow due to apprehensions about political instability and frustrations about dealing with cumbersome regulations and bureaucracies. As a result, prospective investors have gone elsewhere. For example, in 1987, the Philippines received only 4% of all the investment going to Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and The Philippines.³

The Philippine economy remains vulnerable to fluctuations in the world market. The recent surge in economic growth in the Philippines (8% in the first quarter 1988) is mostly due to lower oil prices and higher gold and copra prices. Some export earnings have increased (e.g., copra), but the long term prospects for most traditional exports are poor. It is uncertain how long the current commodity price rise will last. According to many reports, world market prospects are gloomy. What worked for South Korea and Taiwan during the boom years of the 1950s and 1960s may not work for the Philippines in the 1970s and 1980s because of changes in the world economic environment.

The Reform Agenda

Growth of Population and Labor Force. Population growth rate is perhaps the most basic factor of social change. Estimates of population growth rates vary from 2.5% to 3.0%, among the highest in Asia. The high population growth rate and correspondingly high labor force growth rate have become problematic in relation to the poor record of economic growth and job creation. The combined result of these factors is that real wages have declined for over two decades. It can be expected that population growth rates will remain high where basic needs have not been met.

The government's aim should be to restrict fertility so as to reduce the population growth rate from the current 2.8% a year to 2.0% by the year 2000. Information by income categories shows that the poor have higher fertility and low contraceptive rates than higher income groups. At the same time, the largest unmet demand for contraceptives is found lower income women. A part of this discrepancy appears to be due to the lack of access to family planning services by lower income households. Overall, the level of Government expenditures on family planning should be increased and the delivery of services made more effective. While the existing clinic and community based network is an effective delivery mechanism, it should be expanded so as to reach more families, and integrated with the delivery of nutrition and health care. Government funding for family planning, however, has been cut back.

The ability of the economy to generate more jobs deteriorated sharply under the Marcos regime. It has been estimated that each P1 million of output resulted in more than 200 jobs in the 1960s as compared with 160 in the 1970s and only 100 from 1980 to 1986. The capital-output ratio worsened from 4:1 in the 1970s to 11:1 in the 1980s. These data can be explained by capital flight and corruption during the Marcos years which resulted in chronic unemployment and underemployment.

The outlook for the future is equally difficult. Every year about 750,000 new entrants join a labor force that already contains about 5 million underemployed or unemployed workers. This labor force will be expanding even more rapidly in the future because of the compounding effect of high population growth rates. The new labor force for the rest

of the century has already been born. It is estimated that about 16 million new entrants will join the labor force in the next 15 years. Without major changes in policies, it is not clear where these additional job-seekers will be absorbed. Millions of new job-seekers have not been absorbed by the formal labor market.

For the future, projections indicate that even a 6% growth rate of GDP will barely provide enough jobs so as to keep real wages from declining further. The World Bank *Poverty Report on the Philippines* forecasts that real wages would drop 3% between 1988 and the end of the century even if GDP rose by 6% a year. Substantial growth in real wages will be difficult to attain unless there is a significant drop in population and labor force growth rates. Hence, the Philippine economy needs a massive transfusion of investment funds as well as a high priority to job creation in the allocation of capital in order to reduce current unemployment and provide jobs for new entrants to the labor force.

Labor policy is a crucial challenge to the Aquino government. Almost 3 million workers out of a total labor force of 21 million became unemployed during the economic contractions of the last three Marcos years. Another 5 million are underemployed. For workers with jobs, real wages declined by 6% from 1983 to 1986. This has led to the rapid growth of militant labor movements such as the May First Movement (Kilusang Mayo Uno or KMU). Founded in 1980, it now claims to have more than half a million members, making it the largest labor organization in the country. Its strength is concentrated in Metro-Manila where most of the country's industrial capacity is. In 1986 and 1987, KMU called over 500 strikes against employers. Its goals are to organize political and economic power for workers, to use strikes and demonstrations to achieve higher minimum wages, better working conditions, and collective bargaining agreements with management in industry and government. Initially, it maintained "critical and principled support" of the Aquino government. However, KMU gradually withdrew its support of the Aquino government. One key development in KMU's reorientation was the resignation of Labor Minister Augusto Sanchez, a former human rights and labor rights lawyer who was criticized by many businessmen for not effectively stopping the wave

of strikes. During 1988, the number of strikes declined sharply, due to the high number of collective bargaining agreements signed in the wake of the strikes. Many of these agreements will expire in 1989.

Income Inequalities. Basic needs have not been well met in the Philippines because the economic growth that has occurred has not been widely distributed. Income distribution is highly unequal in the Philippines. It has been estimated that the top 10% of the population had more than 15 times the income of the poorest 10%. The Philippines' income distribution appears particularly unequal when compared with some other developing countries in the region, such as South Korea and Taiwan.

Unequal distribution of income is also indicated by infant mortality rates and malnutrition rates. The overall infant mortality rate is 60 per 1000 live births—one of the highest in Asia and six times higher than the US rate. Two-third's of the infants are underweight in their first year of life because they do not get enough to eat. During the early 1980s, on the island of Negros, starvation was widespread among the children of unemployed sugar cane workers. In contrast, while the average Filipino consumes only about 89 percent of the calories needed for adequate nutrition, the country exports about 800 calories per person per day in the form of coconut oil alone.

According to the *1985 Family Income and Expenditures Survey*, nearly 30 million people out of a population of 56 million were living in absolute poverty, in the sense of having an income that did not enable them to satisfy basic needs. This represented a significant worsening of the situation from a decade earlier. Using comparable definitions, in 1975 the incomes of about 45% of families were insufficient to meet basic needs; in 1985 the figure had risen to 52%. Taking into account the increase in the population over this period, it means that an additional 12 million persons had been recruited into the ranks of the "absolutely poor." Given the high population growth rate and the highly unequal distribution of income, mass poverty is likely to increase.

Poverty is concentrated in the rural areas, among small-scale, subsistence farmers and agricultural

laborers. After 20 years of declining real wages, they are frequent victims of intimidation, extortion, and repression by private armies of security guards and other paramilitary groups. The rural poor have become cannon fodder for both sides in the growing civil war.

There are other indicators of worsening poverty. The foreign debt burden of the Philippines soared from \$1.6 billion in 1972 to nearly \$28.6 billion in 1988. The Philippines is now one of the most debt-ridden nations in the world. About 42% of its export earnings are consumed by interest payments to its foreign creditors. About \$2 billion or 18% of its proposed 1989 government budget will go toward interest payments to its foreign creditors. In 1987, debt servicing required US\$ 3.1 billion, but new loan inflows came to just US\$ 1.5 billion; hence, there was a net outflow of some US\$ 1.6 billion.

The Philippines is also Southeast Asia's greatest exporter of people. In the United States, Hong Kong, Singapore, and throughout the rest of Southeast Asia and the Middle East, migrant Filipinos have found work in nursing, ship-crewing, construction, road transport, domestic service, and entertainment. In mid-1988, about 600,000 Filipinos were awaiting immigrant visas to the US; visa applications were up 25% from the previous year. Almost all are seeking a better life abroad.⁴

The Philippines has fertile volcanic soils, abundant rainfall, extensive fishing grounds, mineral deposits, including gold and iron ores, and a relatively well-educated population. However, the mismanagement of resources has led to environmental degradation; unequal access to resources has contributed to poverty and increased pressure on natural resources; and population pressure has exacerbated both poverty and environmental degradation.⁵ Hunger and poverty in the Philippines are vastly out of proportion to the natural wealth of the country. Other countries with much less natural wealth have achieved much more prosperity. The difference can largely be explained by the government's development priorities and performance.

Government Policies

The historical pattern of economic growth in the Philippines was not inevitable; nor was it natural. It has been influenced at many points by government

policies. Past government policies have exacerbated high population growth rates, declining real wages, an unequal distribution of wealth and income, and the stratification of social classes. These trends have occurred, not despite economic growth, but because of it. Given the high population growth rate and the highly unequal distribution of income, a higher economic growth rate *of the same style* could create more poverty rather than alleviate it.

Many policies have now been undertaken which attempt to correct these earlier policies. In addition, the inequality of ownership of assets could be reduced. Cooperatives or collectives could be formed. Subsidized interest rates for agriculture could be removed so that loans to large-scale, capital-intensive farm operators do not crowd out small-scale, labor-intensive farm operators. The availability and cost of credit could be shifted so that small borrowers could obtain affordable credit, and capital-intensity would not be encouraged. Research and development could be concentrated on low-cost and labor-using agricultural and craft technology. Assets in the form of useful training could be provided to poor families. Among all the many possibilities, there is a widespread consensus that high priorities ought to be given to land reform and meeting basic needs.

Land Reform. Land reform is long overdue. The government estimates that 90% of the country's agricultural land is in the hands of just 10% of the population. Two-thirds of all poor farmers are full or partial tenants. In addition, there is a growing body of landless agricultural workers who lack access to land. The problem is particularly acute in sugar land areas, where large estates are operated with landless wage labor.

There are many compelling reasons for the government to pursue agrarian reform. It can ameliorate a significant amount of rural poverty. It can give the government a large (although poor) base of support in the countryside. It can increase productivity. It can give the government an opportunity to restructure the declining sugar industry. It can increase investment in industry by compensated landowners. Historically, land redistribution has been a prerequisite to sustained development in post-war Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, India, Malaysia, and other developing countries.

Land reform can also reduce one of the major causes of the communist insurgency. Leaders of the communist insurgency have said repeatedly that land imbalances are at the heart of their movement. They advocate a "land-to-the-tiller" policy in which they have seized idle or abandoned holdings without compensation. Their message is addressed to the great majority of farm workers who work on land they do not own as low-paid laborers or as sharecroppers who give their landlords as much as half their crop.

The Aquino government has found it difficult to generate the political will or administrative capacity to achieve its stated goals for land reform. Indeed, there are very few cases in the Philippine historical experience where government has successfully implemented a comprehensive land reform program. There are very few cases anywhere in the developing world where a democratic government has implemented a land reform program on its own people. In Asia, there have been a few cases--post-war Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea--where land reform was accomplished but only with extraordinary external pressure and assistance.

The current Philippine government land reform proposal appears to be just as vulnerable as past attempts to procedural delays, legal loopholes, and obstructionist tactics by landlords and other rural elites. If land reform is attempted within an ambiguous scope, at a slow or indeterminate pace, or with qualified funding, then it may create numerous conflicts and controversies that may detract from the overall rural development effort.

For example, the government's high-level Agricultural Policy and Strategy Team pointed out in its 1986 *Agenda for Action for the Philippine Rural Sector* that "the minimum requirements for a successful land reform are: (1) the dismantling of private armed groups (which have been used by landlords to intimidate the peasantry), (2) a democratically-based and non-economically based selection of local officials, whose loyalties would be more to the masses of their constituents than to the economic powers of their areas, and (3) the effective administrative separation of the function of promoting agricultural and natural resource productivity from the function of promoting land justice." So far, none of these "minimum requirements" has been achieved. A land reform bill has been passed

by the legislature, but its funding and implementation remain uncertain. With a seven hectare retention limit for each individual owner, the land reform bill will not change the status quo, given the large size of Filipino families.

Despite the complexity of land tenure patterns and the political difficulties of any redistribution scheme, land reform is a necessary part of any government strategy for rural development; however, it is no longer a sufficient solution due to population pressures and the growth of the non-farm rural labor force. Other complementary policies must be considered. For example, better rural roads, particularly those linking rural areas to markets, investments in small-scale, communal irrigation, and rural electrification would be highly beneficial. The system of research and extension needs to be improved, so that extension workers can reach poor farmers in remote areas and provide appropriate technological packages suited to their environment. The adaptation of modern technologies by small farmers will require improvements in the system of rural credit as well. Given the scarcity of arable land and the limited labor-absorbing capacity of agriculture, industrial development must also be pursued. Current government strategies recognize the growing poverty problem and the need to combine equity and efficiency objectives. However, the major emphasis of these new policies appears to be on increasing farm output and profitability. While this approach may benefit medium and large-scale farmers, it is not clear that it will benefit small-scale farmers. Increased output of domestic food crops by innovative medium and large-scale farmers could lower overall farm prices and thereby further impoverish small-scale farmers. The urban population might benefit from lower food prices; however, small farm operators who market their surplus output would face a reduction in income unless they too had access to new technologies and markets. Hence, government policies must be carefully designed and monitored to ensure that the rural poor actually do receive their intended benefits.

Meeting Basic Needs. In general, there is a need to reverse the many government services which discriminate against the poor. The system of government expenditures and taxation has been regressive. Taxes on income are widely evaded, there is no effective capital gains tax, and collection of taxes on

real property are extremely low. While nominal tax rates are high, actual collections are low, so that the overall tax effort on the Philippines is low in comparison with similar countries. The result is a regressive taxation structure in which poor families pay a higher proportion of their income in taxes than higher income families.

The poor have not been the major beneficiaries of government expenditure programs in the social sectors. The benefits of public education have been greater for higher income students. In health, most public resources have been devoted to expensive urban-based curative services. Housing subsidies, both in financing loans and in providing shelter, have mainly benefited the upper half of the income ladder. The Philippines spends less than half of what other countries at comparative levels of development spend on social services. In some cases, government programs already have extensive coverage (e.g., primary education), but there is a need to improve the quality of services. For example, although the majority of the poor have access to elementary education, the educational system in the Philippines is regressive at all levels. At elementary levels, poorer students receive lower quality services. In secondary education, there is not only inequality within public schools, but also lack of access to the higher quality private system. Subsidies are highest at the post-secondary level; they go mostly to higher income students. In areas such as nutrition, health care and family planning, there is a need to expand both the quality and coverage of services offered. Basic needs can be more easily satisfied by the poor themselves after removing the bias against them in national policies.

Cultural Limits to Political and Economic Reform

Comprehensive reforms may be essential for development and democracy in the Philippines; however, is the current government willing and able to implement them? What cultural values determine the agenda of Philippine politics? How do Filipinos decide "who gets what, when, and how?" Lasswell's axiom of political analysis directs our attention to the study of the value patterns of a society. The key values are safety, income, and deference. The few who get the most of any value are the elite; the rest are the rank and file. An elite preserves its

ascendancy by manipulating symbols, controlling supplies, and applying violence. This is true in the Philippines as elsewhere. While there are many important regional and ethnic variations throughout the archipelago, there are a few widely-practiced, distinctive cultural means of political domination, in particular, the tradition of political dynasties and the symbolic value of elections in reinforcing social stratification.

Strong Families and Weak Governments. Historically, through generations of bitter experience, Filipinos have learned that the state cannot provide most services that the citizens of other nations expect from their governments. In this century, the state has collapsed, partially or wholly, at least four times in the midst of war and revolution--during the Philippine Revolution (1896-1902), the Japanese occupation (1941-45), the post-war Huk communist revolt (1947-55), and the "people's power revolution" (February 1986). After independence in 1946, moreover, the Philippine central government effectively lost control over much of the country to powerful regional war lords. With their economic power and monopoly of local political office, backed by well-armed private armies, the war lords terrorized the peasantry and extracted a de-facto regional autonomy as the price for delivering votes to Manila politicians. Moreover, the Church, the nation's other leading source of power, has either served the colonial state or remained socially uninvolved.⁶

"What Church and state cannot provide, the family must," observes McCoy in his recent study of family oligarchies in the Philippines. "It provides employment and capital; educates and socializes the young; assures medical care; shelters its handicapped and aged; and strives, above all else, to transmit its name, honor, lands, capital and values to the next generation."⁷ McCoy posits two ethical standards in the Philippines--one for the family and another for the wider world:

- Within the family, Filipinos are honest, loving, loyal, open and affectionate. At home the guard comes down and one can be oneself.... Outside the home or compound, the world is beset with violence, duplicity, mendacity and corruption. Open and intimate at home, Filipinos don a mask of excessive politeness that conceals a cal-

culating behavior when they go out into the society at large. Partners will steal, rivals will murder, bandits plunder, allies betray--all in a society without government to provide order or assure any redress. In such a chaotic universe, the individual charts his or her course carefully. Each move--in business, politics and government--is done through personal contacts with family, old school chums or ritual kin. All of the passion, power and loyalties diffused in more developed societies are focused on the Filipino family. It commands an individual's highest loyalty, defines his life chances, and becomes his emotional touchstone.⁸

Political Family Dynasties. Philippine political parties often are coalitions of powerful families. Governments can become the private property of the ruling family, as the Marcos era demonstrated. Leading banks are often an extension of family capital (Bank of Commerce was Cojuangco, Manila Bank is Laurel). In the world of elite politics and business dealings, a family name is a negotiable asset for a young aspirant. An elite family's political legacy can be inherited, divided and disputed. Along with their land and capital, elite families are supposed to transmit character and characteristics through the generations. Although individuals can and do rise through elections, parties and voters seem to feel that a candidate with a "good name" has a certain advantage. A Laurel in Batangas, an Aquino in Tarlac, an Osmena in Cebu and a Lopez in Iloilo will always poll strongly. Along with the division of lands and jewels, families apportion candidacies for provincial or municipal office among their heirs.

Whether board-room battle or presidential election, ordinary Filipino observers often perceive major national events through a family paradigm. Provincial and local politics often seem little more than intra- or inter-family battles. The familial aspect of national politics was particularly evident during the 20 years of the Marcos era. Although foreign observers analyzed Marcos' martial law regime in terms of issues and institutions (land reform, insurgency), most Filipinos focused on the family dynamics underlying the power struggle amongst the leading actors--to cite a few, Marcos,

Romualdez, Osmena, Lopez, Aquino, Laurel, Cuenco and Cojuangco. Although Marcos posed as an institutional reformer battling the vested interest of the old oligarchy, a cynical populace saw the familial basis of his self-interest. Marcos' attack on the oligarchy sprang from a falling out with his wealthy patron, Don Eugenio Lopez. Marcos portrayed his martial law dictatorship as a social revolution from above, but his regime soon lost its populist thrust and became a coalition of rising families (Marcos, Romualdez, Benedicto and Cojuangco) expropriating the wealth of established elites (Jacinto, Lopez, Toda, and others). He sought to transform his dictatorship into a dynasty by destroying potential opposition and constructing a ruling coalition of families.⁹

The most destructive and bitter political battles often occur within families. Although siblings usually manage to settle their material disputes over business or inheritance without open conflict, cousins often fall out over division of their elders' political legacy. With Corazon Cojuangco Aquino's family, for example, the bitter battle between her husband Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, Jr. and her first cousin Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco, Jr. began within the family over the control of a bank owned jointly by their parents. The older generation of Cojuangco siblings had managed the bank for 20 years without conflict, but the next generation of owners, now cousins not siblings, soon fell out in a simple power struggle for control. Once begun, the breach could not be healed and soon erupted in open political competition that led Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco, Jr. to ally openly with Ninoy's worst enemy, Ferdinand Marcos. Breaking with his cousins, Danding formalized his ties to Marcos by becoming baptismal godfather to Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. and thus compadre or fictive brother to the President.

The reaction against martial law, the so-called "EDSA* revolution," and the ascension of Corazon Aquino's government all raised hopes for the prospects of a more democratic political system in the post-Marcos era. Mrs. Aquino came to power in

**Epifanio de los Santos Avenue is the avenue between Camp Crame and Camp Aguinaldo where the majority of the public demonstrations occurred prior to Marcos' removal from office. EDSA is now used as a common name for the revolution.*

February 1986 with a revolutionary mandate for change and no significant debts to the old political families who had generally allied with Marcos' KBL party. However, after initial attempts at reconciliation with the rebels proved futile, Mrs. Aquino made major concessions to the military and has gradually moved into an alliance with traditional regional elites to create a stronger base for her government. Family oligarchies are re-emerging through the newly-created electoral apparatus.

The results of the May 11, 1987 elections show that 130 out of 200 candidates elected to the House of Representatives belonged to traditional political families, while another 39 are relatives of these families. Only 31 elected representatives were "new political leaders;" that is, not related to the traditionally dominant political families. Several of these ran "anti-dynasty" candidates. On the other hand, of the 169 representatives from the traditional political clans, 102 are identified with the pre-1986 anti-Marcos forces, and 67 are identified with pro-Marcos clans. Of the 24 elected senators, the overwhelming majority are from traditional political clans who were prominent in the pre-martial law period.

According to Resil Mojares, there is a simple reason many Filipinos offer for the continued political dominance of a few old families; society itself has not changed very much.¹⁰ They may add that the old clans have a built-in advantage; they are already rooted, established and wealthy and therefore they have a head start over all the others. Many political clan leaders are recognized for their considerable skill in formulating strategies and alliances in electoral politics. They have the ability and the means to transform the electoral process into an ideological ritual to justify their domination.

Elections as Ideological Rituals. Americans first introduced elections in local government. Given the history of Filipino alienation from national government, this assured the dominance of local issues and local factions in politics. The suffrage requirements effectively limited political participation to the leading families of the town. The provincial elections, which were next introduced, on an indirect basis, established the pattern of family alliances that has since become a distinct feature of Philippine politics.

Under Spanish colonial rule, Filipinos had already learned to rely heavily on family and kin to provide for their social welfare. Under American colonial rule, the close connection between family and politics was probably strengthened and projected on a national scale. The national elections of 1907 did not change the situation in its essential aspects. Writes Corpuz, "a truly national campaign involving genuine national organizations did not materialize.... The political organizations which fought out the 1907 elections, therefore, were provincial blocs of the leading families; these blocs were united by the political slogans of the moment into loose national confederations."¹¹ Provincial family groupings became and remain the basic unit of national politics.

Elections have become so deeply established in Philippine political culture that they have become a synonym not only for politics but for democracy itself. Elections are an exercise deeply inscribed in the Filipino political imagination. Over the present century, elections (both local and national) have been held for an average of once every two or four years. They involve a great mass of Filipinos: there are over 26 million voters in the country today, virtually the entire adult population. Elections are keenly contested and voter turn-outs are very high. Even under martial law, Marcos felt constrained to attempt to achieve legitimacy through a series of plebiscites, referenda, and elections. Since Corazon Aquino came to power two and a half years ago, there have been two national elections and one national plebiscite. In the May 11, 1987 elections, there were 84 candidates for 24 senatorial seats and 1899 candidates for 200 congressional seats. In the January 18, 1988 local elections, there were over 150,000 candidates for 16,454 seats. This works out to an average of over 3 candidates for each senate seat, 8.5 candidates for each local government post, and 9 candidates for each congressional seat.¹²

Theoretically, an election is the time when society takes cognizance of itself and citizens are most self-conscious, observes Mojares. It is a season of stock-taking. Citizens reflect on their collective state and history; they make choices about leaders, policies, and futures. The "democratic space" is visible: incumbents offer themselves for popular judgment; alternative candidates present alternative ideas for government; there is a public exchange of views;

finally, the voter weighs his options, enters the ritual inner sanctum of the polling booth, and casts his ballot.

The reality, of course, is not so tidy. In the Philippines, the "democratic space" is greatly reduced by a number of factors. The party system is undeveloped. Elite personalities and particularistic concerns are more important than programs and policies in public debate. Most candidates espouse the same platitudinous objectives. Only those with substantial wealth can organize an electoral campaign. They usually dominate the public space available: public sites for daily rallies, radio broadcasts, newspaper space, wall space for posters and handbills. Various forms of graft, corruption, intimidation, and terrorism are widespread. Through these restrictive factors, the electoral process has become the arena for factional competition among traditional elite families.

The "dynastic instinct was in full flower"¹³ in January 1988 local elections. In Cebu, the Osmena family--a political family dynasty since the 19th century--saw John Osmena win as Senator in the 1987 elections; then his brother Emilion became governor, and his first cousin, Tomas Osmena, became mayor of Cebu City in the January 1988 elections. Aquino's immediate family tightened its grasp on local patronage positions in Tarlac and elsewhere in central Luzon. On the other hand, Aquino's maternal relations, the Sumulong's, lost their election bids in an election made notable by the "anti-dynasty" campaigning efforts of Jovita Salonga, president of the Philippine Senate. Speaker of the House Ramon Mitra also consolidated his control over local patronage positions in his province of Palawan. The style of politics increasingly seems no different from previous eras.¹⁴

The Power of Symbols. It has often been said that electoral success in the Philippines depends on "goons, guns, and gold." There is a fourth factor, however, which is at least as important. It can be described colloquially as the fourth "g" of "glitter" or "glamour," or more generally as the power of symbols. "It is the way of power to surround itself with an array of things to be believed and admired, credenda and miranda," wrote Charles Merriam in his classic study of *Political Power*.

- "No power could stand if it relied on

violence alone, for force is not strong enough to maintain itself against the accidents of rivalry and discontent. The might that makes right must be of a different might from that of the right arm. It must be a might deep rooted in emotion, embedded in feelings and aspirations, in morality, in sage maxims, in forms of rationalization among the higher levels of cultural groups. The eye, the ear, the aesthetic sense, must be attracted and enlisted also, if whole-souled admiration and loyalty are to be maintained."¹⁵

The importance of symbols and ceremonies of power has long been recognized in Philippine politics. It is evident in the art of oration, palabas, pulitika, and in the theatrical spectacles of parades, rhetoric, music and song in national political rallies at Plaza Miranda and in village plazas throughout the country. Through the use of symbols, power seeks to project itself into prestige, and prestige to transform itself back again into power. In the Philippines, the power of symbols and the role of mass psychology in the construction of power has been studied by Ileto,¹⁶ Mojares,¹⁷ and Kessler.¹⁸

The manipulation of symbols by elites is useful in explaining recent politics in the Philippines. It explains how Marcos was able to maintain power as long as he did, after years of declining economic performance and increasing opposition. His "New Society" of "constitutional authoritarianism" deftly (and cynically) employed both the traditional symbols of machismo and caudillismo emphasizing personal leadership as well as the modern symbols of the electoral and constitutional due process emphasizing popular sovereignty.

It explains how Cory Aquino was swept into government by a wave of popular legitimacy, despite the superior economic, organizational, and coercive resources of the Marcos government. She was, in her own words, "just a simple housewife;" but she was also the best-known victim of Marcos rule; she had no known political ambitions; she was honest, unpretentious, and deeply religious. As the widow of a martyr, she symbolized the suffering of a nation seeking political and spiritual redemption. She not only gave Filipinos a chance to save their country from continued rule by the Marcos government; she also gave Filipinos a chance to redeem

their self-esteem and national pride. The adroit use of yellow clothing, ribbons, and party banners was a conscious symbolic appeal to unite anti-Marcos forces.

The Philippines lack a symbol of state that might provide continuity for the national political community. There is no functional equivalent to Emperor Hirohito, King Carlos, Queen Elizabeth, or any transcendent symbol. The closest thing to it is the church. Hence, religious iconography played an important role in unifying People Power forces during the Marcos ouster of February 1986. Through mass media and popular media, Cory Aquino's victory became a victory of symbols over "goons, guns, and gold." She became "Saint Cory of the Yellow Revolution."¹⁹

The persistence and the reemergence of the old dominant political families in the elections of 1987 and 1988 have dispelled hopes about the prospects for development and democracy in the Philippines. As elections restored provincial elites, Aquino restored expropriated corporations to the old oligarchy. For example, the Lopez family, which had been stripped of its wealth and driven into exile by Marcos, has returned to Manila and is rebuilding its national economic holdings and its provincial power base.

Elections are still held, but they don't have the symbolic power they used to have. The elections of Ramon Magsaysay in 1954 and Corazon Aquino in 1986 both were important in recharging the symbolic power of elections but neither had much long-lasting value. In the 1984 National Assembly elections and the 1986 presidential election, Filipino voters showed that they prefer ballots to bullets or boycotts, but voter withdrawal and resistance is increasing. Mojares notes that politicians have found that it is increasingly difficult to get the voters out. They have to invest more in mass media usage. They have to organize more complicated electoral machines, involving *lidars*, movers, canvassers, ushers, runners, and poll-watchers. They have to devise more sophisticated means of intimidation and fraud.²⁰

At the same time, political mobilization outside the electoral arena is increasing. This is evident in the development of radical trade unions, Basic Christian Communities, various cause-oriented groups, the

Moro National Liberation Front, the Muslim Independence Liberation Army, the Cordillera People's Liberation Army, private paramilitary forces and vigilante groups, and especially the "New" Armed Forces of the Philippines and the new People's Army. All these groups want a larger say in national and local politics. They all oppose the traditional family oligarchy control over electoral politics. They are all willing to struggle for power in the "parliament of the streets," through "acoustical warfare," or in the underground.

Prospects

After 20 years of concentrating wealth and power, given the fragile government consensus and threats of political instability, will the Aquino administration be able or willing to pursue genuine reforms for national development? Will the Aquino government be able to formulate specific policies to reduce poverty and vigorously implement them according to an explicit timetable? Will it remove the bias in favor of higher-income groups and capital-intensive, large-scale, urban, established enterprises in national policies concerning taxes, credit, investment, housing, education, health care, nutrition, and family planning? Will it be able to overcome "pork-barrel politics," the primacy of private gain over public benefit, and other forms of graft and corruption of "public service?"

The Aquino government has considerable support for its political agenda. Mrs. Aquino still retains a lot of personal popularity. Many of her early rivals for political leadership have been removed, in particular, Juan Ponce Enrile and Salvador Laurel. The Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army have suffered several setbacks. Military coup attempts have ceased. "Despite its drift and passivity," the *Asia 1989 Yearbook* notes, "the government of President Corazon Aquino achieved slow but steady consolidation."²¹ And the government still has strong support from the church, the business sector, and the international community.

Mrs. Aquino has not converted her personal popularity or her government's popular support into a more durable form of political organization. She has not formed or endorsed or joined any programmatic political party. However, there are some attempts to do this by many around her, including her

brother, Paul Aquino, as well as Ramon Mitra, Raul Manglapus, and Aquilino Pimentel. These political leaders and their faction, in particular, LAKAS and PDP-Laban, may evolve into a durable political party. In July 1988, these groups formed the Lakas ng Demokratikong Pilipinas (LDP), with the support of Aquino's younger brother, Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, who also headed the PDP party. At its first national convention in Manila during September 1988, LDP delegates elected Ramon Mitra, Speaker of the House of Representatives, as party president, and Emigdio Tanjuatco, also a congressman and an Aquino relative, as secretary-general. It appears to be a loose coalition of patronage-mined politicians. Another smaller but more cohesive coalition is the Liberal Party, led by the President of the Senate, Jovita Salonga. This pattern of chronic maneuvering within loosely organized factions indicates a return to the traditional patronage party system of the pre-Marcos era.

Along with factionalism, corruption has also reappeared in national politics. The Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG), created to try to regain the "ill-gotten wealth" of Marcos and his cronies, was itself accused of corruption by the Solicitor-General, Frank Chavez. In July 1988, Aquino replaced the PCGG chairman, Ramon Diaz. The commission has yet to prosecute a single crony. "Many are abused, but few are punished," writes one reporter.²² Mrs. Aquino herself is a victim of justice delayed, justice denied. The trial to determine who killed her husband has dragged on for years with no end in sight. Many courts are hopelessly overloaded with work. Cases may take years or even decades to be decided. Associate Justice Antonio Sarmiento says he is just now sitting down to a tax case filed in 1939. Criminal justice is not better. The overwhelming proportion of murders go unsolved.²³

Even prominent criminals in detention can find their way out. In November 1988, Romulo Kintanar, chief of the New People's Army, escaped from detention at national police headquarters in Camp Crame, after being allowed to attend a birthday party of an officer he had befriended. Earlier in 1988, Gregorio Honasan, a former colonel who led the August 1987 coup attempt, escaped with several of his ostensible guards from a prison ship aboard a rubber raft that had been sent to augment

security. And several years ago, Saturnino Ocampo, a former journalist and ranking leader of the rebels, escaped captivity through the back door of the Manila Press Club where he had been allowed to go to vote in an election for club officers.²⁴

With the return of factionalism and corruption, Aquino's popularity may decrease and her governing coalition may lose effectiveness as it attempts to resolve potentially divisive, even explosive, issues, such as land reform, local autonomy, and the status of US bases. These may all be "no-win" issues for Mrs. Aquino in that they may exacerbate inevitable conflicts within her cabinet and among her supporters. For example, National Defense Secretary Fidel Ramos and Foreign Affairs Secretary Raul Manglapus have divergent views on US bases in the Philippines. Compromise solutions--for example, the recent land reform legislation--may be inadequate remedies given the scope of the problem.

Ineffectiveness of government is evident in the early promises of Aquino to divest most of the 296 government owned or controlled corporations. So far, only a few firms have passed into the private sector under any type of divestiture scheme. Government ineffectiveness is also evident in its dismal record in spending already-committed aid money. From a backlog of US\$ 2.2 billion in 1987, the amounts clogged in a bureaucratic pipeline exceeded US\$ 4 billion by the end of 1988.²⁵ Under these circumstances, it seems unlikely that the US Congress will approve appropriations for new aid under the renewed Military Bases Agreement.

Philippine prospects are complicated by some unpredictable factors; in particular, the role of the military in the political system and the outlook for revolutionary and secessionist movements. The military has now achieved a major role in national politics. It has acquired a virtual veto power over cabinet personnel; it has a major voice in national policies and local affairs, especially with regard to a vague and broadly-defined counter-insurgency policy. The military will have a major voice in the next presidential election; indeed, they may even produce a candidate. Fidel Ramos, Secretary of National Defense, has been widely rumored to have presidential ambitions. General Abenina in Cebu, Colonel Aguinaldo in Cagayan, and General Biazon, head of Metro Manila Command, all have expressed diverse views about the political role of

the military in the Philippines. Many military officers already believe they can govern better than civilians.²⁶ By the end of 1988, more than 30 former generals had been placed in high ranking positions within the civilian government, including Ramos himself and Salvador Mison (who became commissioner of customs). "There never has been a fully professionalized military in the Philippines," one scholar asserts.²⁷ Civilian control of the military may be more tenuous now than during the Marcos years. The Aquino government has been unable to reform or remove the remaining repressive instruments in the countryside. Reports of abuse of church workers by military and paramilitary forces persist and continue to swell rebel ranks, especially in Negros and Mindanao.²⁸

Summary and Comparative Evaluation

As a result of the restoration of traditional family-based political dynasties, initial political reforms have not been complemented with essential economic and social reforms. The early momentum for economic and social reforms has been stalled in controversies over land reform and local autonomy. Opportunities created by the "People Power" movement, the establishment of the Aquino government, and its initial political reforms have diminished. Traditional family-based political dynasties have re-emerged to resist proposed government reforms and to resume their domination of national and local politics. Democratic institutions have been revived, but they only provide democracy for the few. Mass poverty remains a massive obstacle to Philippine democracy.

It is difficult to predict Philippine prospects, given all the short-term and long-term political, economic, social, and cultural factors. On the whole, this analysis finds that the major assets of the Aquino government are the relatively volatile, short-term factors of personal popularity, public opinion and commodity prices. But the major problems it faces are the deeply rooted, long-term factors of social structure (inequalities of wealth, income, and opportunity) and cultural values (strong families and weak governments). These problems will only be overcome after many years of sustained, comprehensive effort. However, it is not clear whether the government's initial reform movement is still get-

ting organized and building up momentum or whether it is running out of steam.

According to historical standards of evaluation, the Aquino government has already greatly improved Philippine prospects compared to the political decay of the Marcos years. According to optimal standards, however, much more must be achieved in terms of increased investment, output, and the redistribution of wealth, power, and opportunity in order to reduce population pressures and to reduce mass poverty. Development and democracy have only occurred where population growth rates have been declining and living standards have been increasing. According to comparative standards, if the Philippines is to attain the progress achieved by South Korea, Taiwan, and the other newly-industrializing economies of Asia, then--in addition to the political and social reforms indicated above--the government must also unite national economic leadership to achieve international competitiveness.

Is the Philippines really like other Asian countries? Will it follow the East Asian models of South Korea or Taiwan? It has often been observed that the Philippine political system is more like Latin America than Asia due to its Spanish and American colonial legacies. The prototypes of the Asian model, Taiwan and South Korea, have achieved sustained improvements in real wages, land reform, education, and other reforms to equalize the distribution of income. They have followed domestic and foreign investment policies to promote competitiveness. They have replaced patronage networks with administrative and military reforms to achieve merit systems. They have had decisive leadership by a coalition of technocrats, modern army officers, farmers, and new industrial entrepreneurs. The Philippines has few of these characteristics of the Asian model. Instead, the Philippines possesses many of the traditional Hispanic characteristics; a traditional landed elite dominating key social institutions; a patronage-oriented civil service and patronage-oriented political parties with little ideological or policy coherence (although with a lot of nationalist and reformist rhetoric); industrialists protected from domestic and foreign competition (and therefore, an uncompetitive, oligarchic, and inefficient economy); and massive underemployment and poverty. "The result," observed William Overholt, "is an economy that cannot grow rapidly, can-

not employ its people, cannot distribute income fairly, and cannot pay its debts."²⁹

These historical, optimal, and comparative standards of evaluation can be summarized by two key indicators: real wages and world market shares. The challenge for the Aquino government is to overcome the Marcos legacy of two decades of declining real wages and decreasing world market shares. Much has already been accomplished; however, it is clear that much more needs to be done. Major political reforms have been achieved; complementary economic and social reforms have not. Hence, political pressures--legal and illegal, peaceful and violent--are likely to persist for many years to come.

Philippine-American Relations

In the Philippines, there is a growing movement for greater independence from the United States and stronger ties with Asian neighbors. Some of this new nationalist sentiment is a reaction to the important role the US had in providing the Marcos government with material and diplomatic support. The US supported the IMF structural adjustment and austerity programs for the Philippines during the difficult years of the 1980s. It negotiated a new military bases agreement with a major increase in military aid during a period when economic aid and living standards were declining. Apart from a few cautionary statements, the US did little in response to the growing corruption and repression during most of the Marcos years. However, the assassination of Benigno Aquino, Jr. and its political aftermath forced the US to reassess its priorities in the Philippines.

When she was campaigning for the presidency, Corazon Aquino promised to reassess the Philippine-American Bases Agreement and to pursue closer ties with ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). During her September 1986 state visit to the United States, Aquino said she would keep all her options open for the US bases until the renegotiations. She established a good rapport with President Reagan and dispelled the suspicions of lingering pro-Marcos sentiments within the White House. But there are potential conflicts over the future of American bases in the Philippines and the nuclear-free status of the country. The new constitution allows for legislative and popular referenda on the continued presence of US bases in the

Philippines in addition to the previous method of renegotiating through executive agreement. Legislation is now being considered to monitor the constitutional ban on nuclear weapons.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Raul Manglapus has repeatedly made the argument that other nations who share in the regional security benefits provided by the US ought to also share in the economic and political costs of hosting the bases. Countries who border vital choke-points or sea lanes ought to host some of the military facilities, he argues. And others who derive large economic benefits and trade surpluses under the US security umbrella (in particular, Japan), ought to bear a larger share of the cost of maintaining the facilities. Filipinos are increasingly concerned that their country will become hostage as a target in the event of a superpower conflict. Earlier, the US had been prevented by Marcos from using the bases for combat support during the Vietnam war. In 1985, he also pledged that he would not permit the US to use Clark or Subic to mount an attack against Soviet forces in Indochina. It also seems likely that the Aquino government, preoccupied with a Muslim secession movement in the South, will be reluctant to allow the US to use its bases for power projection to the Persian Gulf or the Middle East. Even within the New Armed Forces of the Philippines, there is considerable distrust of US concern for Philippine security.

The government has a constitutional commitment to achieve a nuclear-free status and has made at least a verbal commitment to the goal of ZOPFAN, a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality for Southeast Asia. Much of this sentiment is part of a general trend over the past two decades in which Philippine foreign policy has become more nationalist, more diversified, and more independent. Nationalist groups, many intellectuals, professionals, and government officials, especially in urban areas, as well as the legal left and the underground left are all highly critical of the bases as a violation of Philippine sovereignty. They will certainly have the prevailing voice in any congressional or popular referendum on the issue. It is unlikely that Aquino would be able to retain her popularity if she campaigned for retention of the bases.

What positive steps can the US and others take to improve Philippine prospects for development and democracy? The United States, Japan, and other

trade surplus nations of Asia can foster Philippine development through economic aid and technical aid, especially through multilateral agencies in which the Philippine government has a voice. Debt service ought to be recycled into domestic investment to meet basic needs and promote development. Only through this approach will there be any chance for sustained development and repayment of foreign debt. A regional investment trust to recycle the cash and trade surpluses of Japan and other Asian nations into capital-starved countries like the Philippines would generate substantial mutual economic benefits. Japan has already increased its contribution to regional multilateral aid (for example, the World Bank's Emergency Supplementary Assistance Fund) and bilateral aid (now higher than the US). This trend could also facilitate a wider sharing of regional security costs. It could lead to a Soviet-American agreement on reducing military activities and expenditures in Asia. With regard to its security interests, the US may have to pursue a multi-faceted approach in order to defuse the highly volatile issue of US military bases in the Philippines. In order to retain its essential military facilities in the Philippines, the US may have to relocate some of its military missions to other locations. It may have to convert some of its facilities to uses with clear mutual security benefits (for example, joint or shared training facilities). It may have to gradually phase out other facilities. If it does all of these simultaneously, then it may be able to retain its most important regional defense facilities and still pursue long-term mutual economic interests in trade, investments, and credits.

In giving any form of aid, however, donors should remember the basic lesson of modernization: the inevitability of change. In the case of the Philippines, a lot of political change is necessary if there is to be any further social or economic progress. If the US were to try to retain its military facilities without basic economic and social reforms by the Philippine government, then the US would become an obvious target for nationalist and reformist opposition groups. As the US begins consideration of a "mini-Marshall Plan" for the Philippines, it may be useful to recall the words of President Kennedy a quarter of a century ago at the inauguration of a similar endeavor, the Alliance for Progress in Latin America:

"those who make peaceful revolution impossible, make violent revolution inevitable."

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INSURGENCY AND REVOLUTION IN BURMA*

By Josef Silverstein, Rutgers University

The year 1988 was unlike any other year in Burma's** short history as an independent nation. It began quietly, but erupted in a revolution which failed as the army put it down violently and restored its dictatorship, and it ended quietly with the people living fearfully under a military determined not to be challenged openly again. At year's end, most of the people in the Burma heartland were resigned to a repeat of the past, but others were hopeful that the new year would bring elections and democracy. Meanwhile, the minorities, during this same period, continued to pursue the civil war which some had been fighting for the past forty years, hopeful that the changing situation in Rangoon would effect their struggles because both they and the people in the Burma heartland have the same enemy and seek the same ends--a peaceful and democratic Burma.

Since achieving independence in 1948, Burma has known neither peace nor national unity. The nation recovered its sovereignty and joined the family of nations before it solved its internal problems. Neither the constitutional democratic leaders nor the authoritarian military rulers who replaced them found solutions to the problems which were in ex-

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***Since this paper was written, the Government of Burma has changed many official place names, which are not reflected in this text. Of particular note: Burma is now Myanmar and the capital, Rangoon, is now Yangon.*

istence before independence and continue to the present.

Today, the original parties in the civil war, several minorities and the Burma Communist Party (BCP), are still in revolt and their numbers have increased over the years as other minority groups took up arms because they felt there was no other solution. So long as these revolts were kept out of the Irrawaddy Valley--the heartland of Burma--and most of the ethnic Burmans supported the government in Rangoon, the nation tolerated this situation, even though it prevented complete administration of the land and economic and social development. However, when revolt in Rangoon and elsewhere in the central region of Burma erupted in 1988, there was a curious absence of linkage between the Burmans and the minorities, despite the fact that they both faced the same enemy--the military dictatorship. While the people in Rangoon called for democracy and the establishment of a multiparty system based on free elections and the restoration of democracy, there was no open call for an end to the forty year civil war against the minorities and their participation in constructing a new political system. Thus, the two struggles remain separate, even though the minorities, at year's end, took steps to join with the people in the Burma heartland and a few emerging leaders in Rangoon began to seek the same ends.

The Civil War: The Preindependence Background

When World II ended, the British sought to rebuild the economy while taking steps to advance Burma to full membership in the Commonwealth. In the prewar years they governed Ministerial Burma--the Irrawaddy Valley and the delta--separate from the hill areas which surround it. Under the White Paper of May 1945, it was the intention of the government to continue the separation until the minorities in the

hill areas were politically advanced and indicated that they wished to join with the Burmans in the future state of Burma. The Burman-lead nationalist movement which arose during the war, opposed this and demanded the immediate unification of all the peoples in the common march to independence.

Amongst the minorities whose historic lands were both in the hill areas and the delta were the Karens. They saw the Burmans as their enemies; during the 19th century wars of conquest, they helped the British and were rewarded with places in the colonial police, military and administration. As early as the 1880s the Karens called for the creation of a Karen State, apart from the rest of Burma.

A second group, the Karenni or Kayah--a kin group to the Karens--had a history of being a recognized independent group before the British conquered Burma and, while their area was included in the colonial configuration because they had entered into a protective alliance with Great Britain, they believed that if the British left Burma, they would recover their previous independence. The other large minorities--the Shans, Kachins, Chins--were willing to discuss their future with the Burman nationalists, who were organized as the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), and they came to trust its leader, Aung San. In Ministerial Burma, the Arakanese and Mons were viewed by the British and the Burmans as part of the latter group because they lived intermingled, there was widespread intermarriage and all shared a common faith, Buddhism. The Mons and Arakanese thought of themselves differently and some members of their communities formed independence organizations.

In January 1947, Aung San and leaders of the AFPFL were called to London where they entered into an agreement with the British government outlining the steps to be taken to achieve independence. Among them was the condition that the minorities would be free to decide whether or not to advance with Burma Proper. The Shans protested being excluded from the negotiations and the Karens openly sought British support for the establishment of an independent Karen State.

Within weeks of his return to Burma, Aung San participated in a meeting with the Shans, Kachins and Chins--held in Panglong, in the Shan States--where all parties agreed to work together for inde-

pendence; he promised the minorities that they could participate in the interim government he was heading and that in a future independent Burma they would enjoy equality and autonomy. This is the landmark agreement upon which many of the minorities base their present claims.

At the constitutional convention in July 1947, the delegates devised the federal union and the configuration of most of the states was agreed upon. In the Burma federal union, the states were unequal; the Shan and Kayah were granted the right of secession after 10 years, if the people of those states wanted to withdraw. The other states were denied that right. Also, the constitution declared that in the Kachin State, there should be equal representation of the Burman and Kachin populations because the state was formed from two different areas. All other states had the right to decide their own representatives. The Prime Minister had the right to name the representative of each state who would serve in his cabinet and that individual automatically became the head of the state. When the named individual was the leader of the majority party in the state, there was no problem; however, when he was not, there was a division between the majority party and the head of state (appointed by the Prime Minister). Finally, the states did not have the economic resources to support state government; therefore, they were dependent upon the central government to meet their financial needs.

The Karens, who didn't want to be part of the Union of Burma, refused to accept the configuration of their state and when the assembly adjourned, that issue was left to be decided at some future time. The basis for the Karen refusal was that the allotted territory did not include all the Karens and that it was not viable economically. At the same time, the Karens, fearful of attacks upon their villages, from Burmans, formed a Karen National Defence Force (KNDO) to protect themselves. The Chins, on the other hand, did not want a state, rather they chose to have a Special Division to demonstrate their closeness to the Burman majority. To compensate for these inequalities, the AFPFL chose a Shan for the nation's first President, allowed a Karen to head the army and let it remain organized on racial lines, and included various provisions in the constitution which nominally gave the minorities local autonomy.

The civil war had a second dimension. The BCP, a key group during World War II in forming the army and the AFPFL, was outmaneuvered by Aung San and the Socialist Party in 1946 and expelled from the nationalist coalition. It could not compete with the AFPFL in popularity and therefore took part in the constituent assembly elections--in districts where the AFPFL had no candidates--and in writing the constitution and generally sought to be seen as an ally and possibly an alternative for the leadership of the nation. Only after the assassination of Aung San in July 1947 and a change in the international communist line from peaceful cooperation to military opposition--which the BCP learned of in December--did the party alter its strategy and prepare for war.

Thus, when Burma became an independent nation in January 1948, it had incompletely defined states, dissatisfaction about the inequality of the states, a minority preparing to defend its people from the Burman majority and a communist party preparing for revolution.

The Civil War: Stage One

On March 28, 1948, less than three months after the declaration of independence, the BCP went into open revolt. It was followed by units of the AFPFL paramilitary force, the People's Volunteers Organization (PVO), and by year's end, the Karens. In addition, a Mon force rose, as did an Arakanese and a Muslim group living in Arakan. Anticipating the Karen uprising, Prime Minister Nu ordered General Ne Win to raise a volunteer force, the *Sitwundans*, to buttress the armed forces. At that moment, Burma's young army was weakened by defections; first, by the 1st and then the 3rd Burma Rifles--all Burman units--to the Communists and second, by the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Karen Rifles--all Karen units--to the Karens. At this point General Ne Win took command of the army from General Kya Doe and reorganized it with Burman officers and men dominating all units regardless of their ethnic names.

The new army, under officers personally loyal to Ne Win, became the vehicle which drove the insurrectionary forces out of the Irrawaddy Valley and gained a reputation for brutality and lawlessness while occupying minority areas under martial law.

While the "stick" was the means of achieving control of the Burma heartland, the government also employed the "carrot." It created an inquiry commission, in 1949, to solve the territorial configuration of the Karen State; that body recommended that the people in the disputed areas decide by democratic vote which state to join. To end the Communist insurrection, Nu announced a 14-point Leftist Unity Plan in mid-1948 which met most of the CP demands, but was rejected because it would not have transferred power immediately to the communists.

Throughout the early months of the insurrections, the Karens, before they took up arms against the state, Shans, Kachins and Chins stood firmly behind the government. Thus preventing a quick victory by the CP, as it hoped; later, the Karens were disappointed when the other minorities did not join them in revolt, as they had hoped.

During the 1950s the insurrections diminished as supporters drifted home under government amnesty programs and the nation began to make some economic progress. In 1958, a split in the leadership of the AFPFL developed and many in the communist party surfaced and formed a legal party, the People's Comrade Party. It, together with other opposition groups, backed the U Nu faction and sought to exercise influence over the embattled leader. However, Nu turned to the army to form a caretaker government and the soldiers halted the drift to the Left.

In the same year, there were growing demands amongst some of the Shans and Karenni to exercise their rights of secession. Others in the two communities began to call for modifications in the constitution which would give them greater autonomy in their areas and equality with the Burmans in national affairs. Resistance to these changes provoked some of the younger members among the Shans and Kachins to form resistance groups and go into revolt. The military in power at the time forced the Shan and Karenni princes to transfer their historic rights to their states and appealed to the peasants and non-nobility to end feudalism and establish democracy in its place. While the army gained some support for its objective; the manner in which it carried out its program neither won popular support nor ended the threat of secession. The Caretaker Government made no overtures to the Communists, believing

that their threat had so diminished, it was not necessary to make any concessions.

When Nu returned to power, following an election in 1960, he sought to address the minority concerns and demands, first by meeting with individual leaders and groups and later promising to hold a "federal seminar" where all would be invited, and hopefully a lasting solution to their problems could be found. The seminar began in mid-February 1962, but never concluded; on the eve before Nu was to give his solution to the problems aired, the military struck, arrested all the members of the government and the minority leaders attending the meeting, displaced the democratic system with a Revolutionary Council and established an authoritarian-dictatorial government.

The Civil War: Stage Two

In 1963, the military rulers of Burma attempted to end the civil wars through negotiations. Ne Win invited all in revolt to come to Rangoon and seek lasting solutions. The Communists--three different groups--Karens, Mons, Kayahs, and Kachins participated, but only a small faction of the Karens accepted the government offer and the civil war resumed. Six years later, U Nu, following his release from jail, left Burma and launched a revolution from the Thai border. Allied with the Mons and Karens, he formed the United National Liberation Front, but his efforts failed and his revolt collapsed. In 1975, the army launched a major attack against the BCP and drove it from the Burma heartland to the China border where it continues to reside and hold power. In 1980-81, the government again tried to negotiate an end to the civil war by meeting independently with the BCP and the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO). As before, nothing came of the meetings and discussions broke off.

The National Democratic Front and Other Minorities in Revolt

A new phase in the civil war began in April-May 1976 when eight minority groups in revolt, joined together to form the National Democratic Front (NDF), under the leadership of General Bo Mya, the head of the Karen National Union (KNU). In addition to the KNU, the new organization included the Arakan Liberation Party, (ALB), Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), Karenni National

Progressive Party (KNPP), Lahu National United Party (LNUP), Palaung State Liberation Organization (PSLO), Shan State Progress Party (SSPP) and United Pa-O National Organization (UNPO); over the years, many of the above, changed their names slightly. Later, the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and the Wa National Organization (WNO) joined, while the LNUP withdrew following its surrender to government forces.

The military goal of the NDF was to unite all who were fighting against the government. As the first stage of military unity, it created an integrated company; but until a truly united army could be formed, each group maintained control of its own armed force and was responsible for the security of its own area. All agreed to assist one another if under government attack.

The NDF's initial political goal was not precise as many of the minorities were seeking independence from Burma. However, by the 1980s, the NDF adopted a common stand--to remain a part of Burma in a new federation based on the principles of equality, autonomy, liberty and self determination; all those who previously wanted independent states, renounced that goal.

The BCP never sought membership in the NDF. Bo Mya strongly opposed its ideology and it, in turn, rejected the idea of a state constructed on a racial basis. Despite its differences with the NDF, the BCP cooperated with individual minorities in their area, providing them with weapons and leadership in order to win and hold their support.

Neither the BCP nor the NDF included all the minorities in revolt. In the Shan State, where the Shans once were united briefly, they separated and united several times. In the early 1980s, there were two Shan State Armies (SSA), one called SSA North, was allied with the BCP, and the other in the south, joined with local opposition groups. The original Shan State Progress Party, which had been created by the united SSA in the 1970s, became a member of the NDF.

In 1984, the SSA South joined with the Shan State United Party (SURA) to form a new group, the Tai Revolutionary Council (TRC). A year later, a third member was added, the Shan United Army (SUA). The TRCs political objective was the creation of an independent Shan State outside the Union of Burma.

But under the leadership of Khun Sa--the head of the SUA--it was more involved in opium smuggling than in politics.

The government in Rangoon refused to recognize the NDF and persisted in referring to its members as bandits, malcontents and opium traders who either could surrender or be eliminated through battle. It was the government's position that the issue of federalism was settled in the 1974 constitution and was not debatable.

Until 1984, the army's military strategy was to launch a series of campaigns during the dry season and retreat when the rains began in order to keep the minority armies out of the Burma heartland. In 1978 and 1979, it sought to defeat the BCP and launched its largest attack--up to that point--to achieve its objective. At that time, the BCP was receiving arms from China and was able to hold the army at bay while inflicting severe casualties; but neither side could defeat the other and the attack ended.

In 1984, the government changed its strategy. It began a sustained campaign against the Karens--the strongest group in the NDF. Starting in the dry season and using aircraft, along with heavy artillery and reinforced ground troops, it attacked several of the enclaves along the Moei River--part of the boundary between Burma and Thailand--held by the Karens. It succeeded in capturing one, Methawaw, but no other. However, by maintaining constant pressure on the Karens, the army succeeded in disrupting the blackmarket trade which, for years, passed through the area and provided the KNU with a sizeable income from taxation. In addition, the army launched other campaigns against NDF members. But, while it could achieve short term success, it had to withdraw from its positions and regroup in order to launch attacks elsewhere. Thus, it could inflict punishment upon the NDF, but could not permanently defeat it.

In April 1986, the civil war took a new turn. The NDF entered into an agreement with the BCP to cooperate militarily against the Burma army but not to interfere in the political activities of each other. They agreed further not to have a common political organization or leadership. The agreement was worked out under the direction of the KIO President, Brang Seng; after its announcement, it was opposed by General Bo Mya; but he was overruled by a

majority vote of the NDF members. At the same time, the NDF agreed to form regional military commands in order to be more effective in responding to government attacks.

A year later, the BCP, supported by the NDF Northern Command, inflicted a sharp defeat to the army in its area; that provoked a strong government response which resulted in the recapture of the lost positions together with the headquarters of the BCP at Pangshang, on the Burma-China border. In the Spring of 1987, the army embarked on its largest campaign ever in the Kachin State and succeeded in capturing the headquarters of the KIO and its army, the KIA. However, while the victories were important psychologically, the Kachins continued to hold most of the state outside the two largest cities, the main roads and the railway line.

The fighting between the army and the NDF has been marked by serious violations of human rights. The army continuously forced villagers to serve as porters and to walk through mine fields ahead of the troops. When they faltered or fell, they were beaten or shot. The army also raped, looted and burned villages suspected of helping the minority forces. In 1988, Amnesty International issued two long reports documenting these violations and continued to issue bulletins of further crimes against noncombatants, with the government either ignoring the charges or dismissing them as interference in its internal affairs.

Even as the war ebbed and flowed, the NDF took major steps toward strengthening and uniting its members. In May 1987 it held its second congress at its headquarters at Manerplaw in the Karen State. It began by readmitting the Lahu National Organization, which had reorganized and resumed its struggle against the government. This brought the membership to ten. Although the Congress met against the background of some disagreement over the previous decision to cooperate with the BCP, nevertheless, the members remained united and chose a new leader, Saw Maw Reh, a Karenni. Some feared that if Bo Mya was dropped as leader, it would break up the NDF; however, the Karens accepted the democratic decision of the organization. The Second Congress also unanimously supported a political resolution which called for the creation of a truly federal union of Burma in which all the people could participate equally, and a multiparty

political system based on the principles of equality, liberty, autonomy and self-determination. The Congress also called for cooperation with any other group in opposition to the Burma military government so long as it did not oppose the NDF's programs and organization. This was a direct appeal to the TRC and the BCP and was to be the foundation for further cooperation between all opposition forces. "It is the firm conviction of the NDF that true unity of all the nationalities and genuine peace can be only by solving political problems by political means and giving democratic freedom to all the people."

As 1988 opened, the civil war continued; the minorities were more closely united than before and the government had little to show for its casualties and the high cost of the war. It had one advantage however; over the quarter century of military rule, the state-controlled newspapers and radio kept up a steady propaganda attack upon the minorities in revolt. With the fighting taking place in the remote border areas, the people, in the Burma heartland, had no real knowledge of why the minorities persisted in the war other than that which the radio proclaimed. Many people in the Burma heartland believed that the minorities posed a threat to the safety and security of the nation. With no counter information from the minorities, the majority of the Burmans accepted the description and analysis offered by the government, and the gulf between the majority and minority communities remained broad and unbridged.

Burma Communist Party and The Civil War

As the first group to go into revolt and remain there until the present, the Burma Communist Party's goals differ with those of the minorities. From the outset it was intent upon replacing the legal democratic government of Burma with a Marxist regime of its own design. It, unlike the minorities, drew its leaders and supporters initially from the Burman population. Until it was driven from the Burma heartland, it offered the most direct challenge to the civilian and the military rulers of Burma.

Unlike the minorities, the BCP wanted a united and centrally controlled Burma, not an ethnically divided federal union. Early in the civil war, the BCP fought against the minorities as well as with them against the army, making their true objectives

toward the minorities difficult to discern. When the BCP, in 1967, began to receive direct aid from China, it used its largesse of weapons as a means of attracting the minorities to unite with it and accept its leadership. For a while, the BCP succeeded in winning the support of elements from the Shans, Kachins, Karens and other minorities living in close proximity. But its alliances with minority groups never were permanent as the latter would not give up their ethnic causes.

It was not until 1978 that the BCP dropped its stand on a Marxist unitary state in favor of a federation and called for a grand coalition of opposition groups under its leadership. It promised to allow each group to have its own state or autonomous area in its version of federalism. The BCP leaders reasoned that at this stage of the revolution, while agriculture formed the basis of the economy, local loyalties and identities were dominant and that a coalition of opposition groups seeking a multiparty democratic state was the way to unite the peoples of Burma and lead the revolution. Later, as the base of the economy changed and the people became more aware of the true nature of the struggle as the Marxist saw it--they would move toward and support the BCP revolutionary goals.

Isolated on the border between Burma and China, with an aging leadership devoted to Maoist ideas and rejecting the changes taking place elsewhere in the Communist world, the BCP depends on the minorities, amongst whom it lives, to fill its ranks and waits impatiently to reunite with the Burman population from whom it was cutoff after being driven to its present location.

Opium and The Civil War

Opium plays an important role in the civil war. It is a traditional crop in the eastern Shan and the southeast region of the Kachin States. Until the 1950s, it mainly was produced and used locally; things changed after elements of the Kuomintang (KMT) escaped from China following the Chinese Communist party victory and took refuge in the Shan State. However, once the KMT in Burma gave up the idea of returning to China, its leaders and troops settled in the eastern Shan State and organized opium production and foreign sale. During the Vietnam War, narcotic sales soared and the

peasants were forced by the KMT and others to produce more to meet the world demand.

Until 1976, the Burma government considered opium as an internal problem; however, as people in the heartland, especially the youth, began to experiment and use it and other narcotics, the military rulers accepted aid from the United Nations and the United States in an effort to eradicate production.

The problems were not simple to solve. The growing areas are in rebel and contested regions, most beyond the reach of the Burma army. Also, several of the minorities, especially in the Shan State were involved, as the income generated from its sale provided funds to buy weapons and enrich some of the leaders. The Karens, on the other hand, were adamantly opposed both to its growth and consumption by their people and would not allow it to pass through its territory to foreign markets. The Kachins eradicated opium from the western portions of their state and encouraged the peasants to grow other cash crops. However, in the Lashio region of the southeast Kachin and western Shan States, it continues to be grown; while the KIO disapproves, they allow the peasants to continue planting and harvesting as there are no other cash crops which will find markets, given the difficulty of the terrain, the absence of roads and other infrastructure. The KIO is on record as opposing opium and will eradicate it once the civil war ends and development comes to that part of their state; meanwhile, it taxes opium grown in its area, but does not market it. Until peace is achieved, it will not deny its people a chance to earn some income.

Since 1979-80, when the People's Republic of China cut the funds it formerly gave to the BCP, the latter turned to opium sale and taxation to make up the loss. The area it controls--the Burma-China border and the land east of the Salween River--produces nearly 50% of all the opium grown in Burma.

While there are many local and foreign opium dealers in the Shan State, it is believed that one of the largest is Khun Sa, the leader of the SUA. With an army of from three to five thousand, well-armed and trained, his area rarely is attacked by the government and his wealth and power in the area is unchallenged.

Because the area of production is largely a no-man's land--as various minorities fight the govern-

ment for control--the military rulers in Rangoon see the two problems as intertwined. Thus, they use military equipment, sold or given to it by foreign states both to make war against the minorities and to eradicate the opium fields. There is widespread corruption in the Burma army with close relationships between it and some of the opium dealers such as Khun Sa, who has used his armed forces to battle the minorities in exchange for noninterference in his opium trade. There also is widespread use of bribery to have the army turn the spray planes away from growing areas and ignore the passage of opium caravans.

In the mid-1980s, the United States convinced the Burma government that it could be more effective in eradicating opium if it adopted a spraying program. From 1985 onward, the Burma army was supplied with special spraying aircraft, pilot training and the chemical, 2,4D, to apply to the fields. Since mixing the spray and applying it is the responsibility of the Burmese, the United States has no way of knowing whether or not it is used as intended or as part of the military campaign against the minorities who are not involved in opium production. More importantly, there have been no ground observers to see that the spray has been applied only to opium fields and that the people and their livestock were removed from danger. It has been reported that the spray has been used in an indiscriminate manner, that proper precautions were not taken in mixing the chemicals before application. It also has been reported that the Burma army used the spray in areas which were held by minorities who were fighting the government and not where the poppies were grown. It is known that the Burma army never sprays east of the Salween, because it never has penetrated the region on the ground.

Despite three years of spraying, the Burma crop has increased to where the US Drug Enforcement Agency reported that in 1988, Burma would produce between 900 and 1,250 tons. The increase is the result both of missed fields and, more importantly, new fields cultivated in order to insure that there would be a sufficient crop to satisfy demand, even if the government seriously sought to stamp out production.

The NDF went on record at its Second Congress as opposed to opium production in its areas and said that once the civil war is ended peacefully, the local

authorities would work with international aid and supervision to bring about crop substitution. It concluded its resolution by saying, "the NDF welcomes any organization that will cooperate with it for narcotics suppression and looks forward to the organization of sensible and effective activities for the purpose." Early in 1988, the leader of the KIO, Brang Seng, announced that the KIA army had seized 50 pounds of opium from the Burma army in the course of their fighting and offered it to the United States as a gesture to show that it does not deal in opium and wants to see its eventual eradication. By year's end, the US had found no way of receiving the narcotic because it does not recognize the KIO or any other opposition group in Burma.

The Revolution In The Burma Heartland

When the military seized power in March 1962, there was no resistance from the public. The military efficiently rounded up all the political leaders and quickly disbanded the Union Military Police, the only other national armed force. But in June, the first open resistance developed. When the students returned to the university they found new restrictive regulations in place. The students responded by calling a strike and the military forcefully put it down; in addition, the soldiers blew up the student union building--the center of student activity since colonial days--and closed the university. It was reopened a few months later, with new rules in effect. In 1963, during the military's talks with the opposition groups to end the civil war, the students openly supported the dissidents; when the talks failed, students were arrested and again, the university was closed.

During this early period, the military also faced resistance from the Buddhist monks who refused to register and carry identity cards. There were a number of small battles in the Mandalay area as the monks resisted and the issue of registration lingered until 1980, as the military rulers feared to arouse the public if they were seen as mistreating the monks.

In the Spring of 1974, there were riots in Rangoon by workers protesting the absence of jobs, rice shortages and high prices. They were unorganized and thus it did not develop further. In December, a more serious riot occurred when the students and monks seized the remains of U Thant--the third Secretary General of the UN--who had been

returned to Burma for burial. Because the government would not do it properly, they brought the coffin to the university campus with the intention of interring it on the site of the student union building. The military rulers responded by sending in troops, retaking the coffin and burying it near the Shwedagon Pagoda. The students fought the police and soldiers, but were beaten and arrested; the university again was closed, as martial law was declared to restore order.

In June 1975, the students again openly protested the continued imprisonment of students arrested in the December riots, the high cost of living and the absence of jobs for graduates. This time workers joined them, and after five days of demonstrations, the military arrested the demonstrators and again closed the university. In the following March, the students called a strike and seized the Convocation Hall on the campus. Their leader was arrested, tried and sentenced to death; and, as always in such incidents, the university was closed.

Thus, despite the popular notion propagated by the military and its supporters that the nation welcomed and supported the dictatorship, in fact, from the outset, there was popular opposition and demonstrations which failed because the participants were unarmed and unable to resist a government willing to shoot and imprison any who opposed it. The students saw themselves as the natural leaders of the opposition; they saw themselves acting in the tradition of the men who lead Burma to independence in the 1930s and 1940s. In more personal terms they were concerned that, under the military, the economy steadily declined and there were few jobs available upon graduation. They were aware that the military did not trust the educated sector of the civilian elite and that was unlikely to change, no matter what they did. The monks too, saw themselves in the tradition of the past, when Buddhist monks were at the forefront of the resistance to British rule in the 1920s and 1930s. Both the students and monks provide a link to the past which was recognized by the public, but, because of fear of the military, the people did not openly support them in most of the events described above.

The 1988 revolution was different; it drew upon this tradition and went beyond. The environment for revolt was created by the economic and monetary issues of the previous year. The economy, despite

some progress in the early 1980s, was in decline. Jobs were nonexistent for university graduates, inflation was growing and because of government incompetence, rice and other food shortages existed in the cities and some rural areas. In August 1987, Ne Win, the unchallenged ruler since 1962, startled the nation by admitting "failures and faults" in the management of the economy and called for open discussion and changes. On September 1, the government suddenly declared that the people were free to buy and sell, transport and store foodstuffs without state interference--thus ending the government monopoly. But, within a few days, it also declared that three units of currency were no longer legal tender and thus seized nearly 80% of the money in the pockets of the people because it had no intention of replacing the old money with new. The students in Rangoon and Mandalay, living away from home and dependent upon the cash they held to meet their expenses, immediately demonstrated and protested. Again, the government responded as before, closing the universities even though the students were in the midst of final examinations. Despite the fact that demonstration hurt everyone, there was no public support for the students.

On March 12, 1988, a fight between students of the Rangoon Institute of Technology and townsfolk at a tea shop triggered the revolution. The police were called and arrests made; on the next day, the town youths, who were arrested, were released. Fighting renewed between students and police resulting in the death of a student leader. A few days later, fighting broke out again over the refusal of the government to turn over the body of the dead youth; instead, it was secretly cremated. On the 16th, students on the Rangoon University campus demonstrated and the police charged in beating and arresting some, while chasing others into the lake behind the dormitories causing death by drowning. Two days later, the students marched to the center of Rangoon to demonstrate against this latest example of police brutality and government indifference. As the police first, and units of the 22nd Light Infantry--an elite unit created in 1987 for riot control--later beat and killed an unknown number of students, ordinary townspeople joined the students in the fight. Hundreds were arrested and it was not until July that the government admitted that 41 died from suffocation in a police van where they were being held be-

cause the jails were too crowded to admit them. This unnecessary show of brutality and indifference clearly undermined whatever confidence the public still had in the government. Thus, when officials said that they would conduct an inquiry into the causes of the riots, no one believed that it would be truthful and that the guilty would be punished. Again, the universities were closed and students sent home. However, before they dispersed, they declared that they had formed a secret student organization, the first since 1964, when all nongovernment groups were outlawed.

On May 30, the students returned to the campus; instead of resuming their studies, they demanded to know the fate of students arrested in March, an accounting of those who died and punishment of those who committed the atrocities. They were enraged by reports of women students being raped in prison and other forms of violation against all those arrested. They were dissatisfied with the official report that said only one student was killed in the March rioting.

By this time public support was growing. This developed in part from a second source--letters written to Ne Win by former Brigadier, Aung Gyi. Beginning in the Spring, he wrote a series of letters which he made public calling Ne Win's attention to economic and social conditions and pinning the blame for the situation on Ne Win's subordinates. More important, he discussed prior events such as who was responsible for the destruction of the student union building in 1962, the attacks on the students in 1974 as well as other government secrets. It was as though he was telling General Ne Win something he did not know, and now that he knew, would take action to correct it. These letters circulated widely and raised the stature of Aung Gyi for his courage and openness. They also helped mobilize public opinion against the government.

On June 21, 5,000 university students clashed with the police and the army. This time they were supported by high school students and members of the public. Untold numbers died as the government declared a curfew and closed the universities indefinitely. It took the government five days to restore calm and order. A curfew was imposed in Taunggyi, Pegu, Prome and other population centers as unrest and rioting spread nationwide.

To quell the unrest, Ne Win called a special meeting of the military-created ruling party, the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP), on July 23. At that meeting, he called for the party to consider the establishment of a multiparty system and announced his resignation as its leader. He also named several other leaders who resigned with him. The party rejected his call for a referendum on the political system; however, it accepted his retirement and dropped some whom he had named. On July 26, the party named Joint Secretary, Sein Lwin, as its leader and head of state.

Sein Lwin was the man who was responsible for much of the past repression of the students. In 1962, as a captain he led the troops who put down the student strike and blew up the student union. In 1974, he led the forces who entered the university and retook the remains of U Thant while suppressing the students and monks. In 1987, he was responsible for organizing and directing the 22nd Light Infantry. Thus, by naming the "Butcher of Burma"--as the students and others dubbed him--the nation's leader, the military rulers directly challenged the students and the public who supported them.

Sein Lwin began by declaring martial law on August 3 and imprisoning Aung Gyi and nine others. The students responded by calling a general strike on August 8. After a massive peaceful demonstration, the military responded by shooting unarmed adults and youths indiscriminately. In the course of the attacks, soldiers entered the General Hospital and killed and wounded nurses and patients under treatment. This naked show of violence shocked the nation and as the soldiers withdrew, the people continued their peaceful demonstrations and call for an end to military dictatorship. The shooting and violence was not confined to Rangoon; it occurred elsewhere in Burma indicating that it was a national revolt against the military rulers.

On August 12, Sein Lwin resigned and on August 19, Dr. Maung Maung replaced him. A civilian lawyer-scholar and close friend of Ne Win, he immediately ended martial law, released the men arrested by his predecessor and spoke about peacefully and legally bringing about the political changes the people were demanding.

His apparent positive responses to public demands were too late and the protests grew in size and num-

ber; as the BSPP leaders and the military-backed administration disappeared, volunteer groups of citizens, students and monks rose to maintain order and perform services. Political groupings began to form; U Nu, and several leading figures from the precoup period formed the Democracy and Peace (Interim) League (DPIL) while students and others formed groups of their own. An important new voice and political leader arose when Aung San Suu Gyi, daughter of Aung San began to speak out. She was in Burma to visit her sick mother when the revolt developed. She called for moderation and the peaceful transfer of power. She, Aung Gyi, and former General Tin U joined together on September 12 to call for the establishment of an interim government and immediately became a major voice in the opposition. As more and more government officials and groups of workers joined the peaceful demonstrations against the government, and called for peace and democracy, rumors spread that the police had opened the jails and released criminals, that government agents were urging the people to riot and loot and were poisoning the water--all rumors which might cause the people to turn back to the army for protection and order. But if that was the intent, it did not happen.

On September 10, Dr. Maung Maung took further steps to placate the aroused public by announcing that the BSPP Congress had agreed to hold elections for a multiparty system and the parliament had ratified the decision. A day earlier, U Nu declared that he had created an interim government and called for the holding of elections in one month. Clearly, the situation was building to a crisis.

As support for change grew, air force and navy personnel joined the popular rallies. Rumors began to circulate that the military might carry out a coup as the people watched the troops position themselves for action.

The disappearance of police and the collapse of government services saw the people organize themselves to respond to food shortages, unrest and inflation. On September 17 there was a major demonstration at the Ministry of Defence at which Aung Gyi called upon the people not to tamper with the armed forces. This, to many, was the turning point in the revolution. Individual soldiers and whole units were beginning to talk to the emerging popular leaders about joining them and possible

punishment for past acts. Aung Gyi's statement, at that moment, seemed to have checked the movement and ended the chance for a peaceful resolution of the struggle. On the next day, Saw Maung, the Minister of Defence and Chief of Staff, displaced the government of Dr. Maung Maung. The new leader created a 19-member State Law and Order Restoration Council which seized power "to halt the deteriorating conditions all over the country and for the sake of the interests of the people." It abrogated the constitution, disbanded the elected assemblies, separated the BSPP from the military, police and civil servants and ruled by decree. The Council included all the regional military commanders, other high ranking military officers and the head of Intelligence, Brigadier Khin Nyunt. That night the military opened fire indiscriminately on unarmed civilians, and for the next two days used excessive force to bring the revolution to an end. In the course of its repression, more than a thousand people are believed to have been killed and several thousand students and others who previously supported the revolution, left Rangoon for the border areas; since peaceful demonstrations were unsuccessful, they hoped the minorities would provide weapons and training for them to continue their struggle by fighting violence with violence.

Although the Saw Maung government claimed it seized power to restore order so that the promised elections could be held, it gave every evidence that it had no intention of hurrying the mission.

The Aftermath: The Civil War and Revolution In Perspective

In the light of the foregoing, there are a number of questions which remain to be answered. First, why did the civil war and the revolution remain separate?

There is no one answer. The NDF was aware of events in Rangoon and issued several statements announcing its support for the revolution and called upon the rising popular forces to join it in forming a truly democratic union, once the military turned power back to the people. But militarily, the people in Rangoon neither asked the NDF to launch an offensive nor increase their pressure on the army; more importantly, if they had been, they were in no position to respond fully. Their strongest force, the KNU, was locked in battle at that very moment with an NDF member, the Mons, over control of trade in

the Three Pagoda Pass area. This internal fight only was resolved on August 24, well after the revolt in Rangoon developed. The fighting between the two made it possible for the army to withdraw the 22nd Light Infantry from Pa-an and send it to Rangoon. There were reports that Brang Seng called for military action against the army to support the revolution, but while his KIA could pin down portions of the army in the north, the remainder of the NDF was too weak by itself to have any real impact.

It should be remembered also that since the military seized power, it kept up a steady propaganda attack upon the minorities in revolt as bandits, malcontents, opium traders and destroyers of the Union. Few people in the Burma heartland had any extensive contact with the minorities and understood why they fought so long. More importantly, the majority of the Burmans fear them and many believe what the military rulers have said repeatedly--that the minorities intend to harm the nation through terrorism, political division or possibly, even conquest. It can be assumed that many of those in revolt feared to call upon the NDF to aid them because it might be seen as an opening to the minorities to seize control of the whole of Burma. As far-fetched as that may seem, the army's use of the rallying cry, "the NDF is coming," could have turned the people back to the army in defense of the nation. It must be remembered that the NDF had no Burman component, even though it sought one, thus making it appear, to those without knowledge, that it was an alien force.

Once it was clear that the military had suppressed the revolt, the minorities did rise up. The Karens launched an attack and recaptured Methawaw on October 12--it had lost it in 1984. The military responded in December with a heavy artillery offensive and recaptured it on the 21st, with announced casualties totalling over 1,200. The Kachins too, attacked and their leader, Brang Sang, said, "Previously, we did not want to take advantage of the situation and give the army a pretext to stage a coup....Now, that has changed and we have launched attacks on government positions all over the country."

The NDF leaders were aware of the gulf between itself and the Burman majority and after the rebellion was put down in September and thousands of students took refuge amongst its members, it marked the first time the two would become dependent on

the other. In November, the NDF leaders met and formed the Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB). Composed of representatives of the minorities, the students, expatriates and later, monks, it gave the new organization a truly national flavor. The announced four goals of the DAB were, the overthrow of the military regime, the establishment of a democratic government, the end of the civil war and the restoration of internal peace, and the creation of a genuinely federal union. The DAB sent out a call to the nation to join it and use all means possible to bring down the soldier-led dictatorship. In a December press release, the DAB said that, if all others fail, it "will find it expedient to act on their behalf with appropriate initiatives and/or options including formation of a Provisional Government."

The creation of this new organization represented an important political step by the minorities. Under the leadership of Bo Mya, it went beyond the NDF both in goals and tactics. The DAB does not replace the NDF; that continues to exist and remains in control of its various armed forces. As explained by the President of the NDF, the DAB is the first step toward a national front, on the order of the post-World War movement under Aung San. It will disappear, he said, when democracy is reestablished in the Burma heartland and the DAB joins with the democratic parties there to form a single national organization. For now, it stands as proof that the minorities see themselves as part of the Union of Burma and they intend to play their role in restoring peace and democracy and writing a new constitution.

A second question which must be raised is who is in charge in Rangoon and what do they want? With hindsight, it seems clear that after the BSPP July meeting, Ne Win remained in charge, but acted behind the scenes. The men who replaced him in the government and party were his men--those he had placed in high office and were the most loyal to him. It often is forgotten that in his speech of resignation, he warned the public that if they interfered with the course of change he had outlined, the army was prepared to shoot and not over their heads. The massacres carried out under Sein Lwin and Saw Maung bear out that promise. Today, it is reported that he still remains in Rangoon--at his home--where he meets regularly with his daughter, Sanda, a Major in the army, and General Khin Nyunt, the head of In-

telligence. It is believed that the three set policy which then is implemented by Saw Maung's government. Given the fact that the State Law and Order Restoration Council is composed of military men only--senior leaders with personal loyalty to Ne Win--the changes in personnel and forms of government are more nominal than real as control continues in the same hands as before.

It often is asked why the military remained intact and loyal to the failed regime, and more importantly, how was it possible for soldiers to shoot unarmed and peaceful citizens. The answer probably is to be found in the training of the army and Ne Win's means of holding his officer's loyalty. When a young man enters the army, he is trained to give immediate response to any command or suffer physical punishment. This is drilled in, over and over, so that it is instinctive to follow orders rather than to think and question. At the same time, the army has provided higher standard of living for its men at all ranks than the civilians enjoy. Special military-run shops, geared to the various ranks, provide goods not available in the market place and at low rates. There is no punishment for taking goods purchased in government stores and selling them at prices many times higher than paid originally and pocketing the difference. The higher the rank, the more goods there are available and the more one can make from their sale.

The loyalty of the officers is believed to be based on a complex intelligence network which provides Ne Win with complete reports on the behavior of all below him. Thus, when, in the past, he wanted to rid himself of someone, he could draw upon the files and charge him with various crimes of corruption or behavior unbecoming an officer and either retire or bring him to trial. Fear of loss of position and benefits, together with fear that Ne Win knows everything about everyone, probably has more to do with the unity of the officer corp than any other factor.

It is believed that there are divisions in the officer ranks. Since 1976, when a group of academy trained officers attempted to overthrow Ne Win, it is believed that he distrusts that sector of the officer corp. There is no evidence that any academy trained officer heads either the nine regional commands or the ten elite light infantry divisions. Instead, he depends on officers who were up from the ranks,

such as Sein Lwin and Saw Maung, or who served under him or were known personally to him. Thus, so long as he remains alive and in Burma, he will continue to hold the army together and rule the nation as he chooses.

Saw Maung, as the mouthpiece of the government, said in December that the army would remain in power until it had achieved four objectives: maintenance of law and order and regional stability, establishment of secure and smooth transportation and communication, provision to the entire population of sufficient food, clothing and shelter, and when these are achieved, the holding of multiparty democratic general elections. In February 1989, Rangoon radio reported that the new election law would be promulgated on March 1, and fourteen months later, elections would be held. Thus, it is clear, the army is in control and has no intention of relinquishing power in the foreseeable future.

What is the state of the opposition? It exists and if one measures the size of the crowds paying homage at the funeral of Aung San's wife, who died in January 1989, or the size of the crowds who attend the rallies of Aung San Suu Gyi, they are as large and as determined as before. The difference this time is that they do not challenge the guns and the men who hold them. Under the Saw Maung Government, parties were permitted to form and now, nearly two hundred have registered. Most are small and personal groups; others are based on ethnicity, religion or location. There are only a few however, which can be considered as national and as possibly serious contenders for power, once elections are permitted.

The National League for Democracy (NLFD), lead by former General Tin U, Aung San Suu Gyi and Aung Gyi is considered the most serious contender for power to have risen. However, when, on December 3, Aung Gyi charged that Aung San Suu Gyi was surrounded by Communists, he was expelled; on the 18th he formed a rival party, the United National Democratic Party (UNDP). He has yet to prove that he can attract the same size crowds and support as the NLDF. A third new political group is the Democratic Party, lead by Thu Wai and Bohmu Aung as a vehicle for U Nu, their close friend, if he decides to contest for power.

While all of the new parties are agreed on the goal of a democratic multiparty Burma, an issue that

divides the two leading contenders, the NLFD and UNDP, is the question of how to resolve the civil war and unite the nation. Aung San Suu Gyi has stated publicly that question only can be resolved after democracy is restored and a civilian government is in place. Aung Gyi, on the other hand, has campaigned on the platform that the civil war must be addressed first and national peace restored before a truly democratic multiparty system can be established. Those who support the NLDF believe that to push the issue will antagonize the military and prevent the restoration of democracy. They believe that it will not be difficult to resolve the civil war after the restoration of democracy as they argue for this two-stage strategy.

Aung Gyi argues differently; all groups in the nation must participate in the initial elections and the writing of a new constitution, if trust is to be established and real peace and national unity are to be achieved. He does not address the practical question of whether or not his strategy will antagonize the military. Rather, he believes that the civil war prevents the nation from developing unity and since the NDF stands for a peaceful resolution of the long struggle and has definite ideas about the future political system, it must be included at the beginning or there will be no resolution at all. Thus, a real political debate has begun on the issue which has divided the nation since independence.

Opposing these parties is the National Union Party (NUP), the reorganized BSPP. Although the San Maung government cut the tie between itself and the party, government obstructions to the campaigning of new parties and support to the NUP, suggests that the break between the government and the new version of the BSPP may not be very real.

The NUP came into existence on October 16 and is most active in the countryside where it hopes to hold the support of the rural population. Since it has not enunciated a position on the civil war and its resolution, as the successor party to the BSPP, there is no reason to believe that it has changed its stand from that of its predecessor.

But civilian politics are more nominal than real. With no election in the immediate future and no consultation between the soldier rulers and the civilian parties, the dialogue on the civil war and the restoration of democracy are irrelevant except as indicators

of where the opposition stands, if and when it has a chance to take power.

There still are the students to consider. They, after all, set the revolt in motion and it was their leaders who mobilized and directed the protests. When the Saw Maung takeover occurred, most of the students left Rangoon and the other urban areas for fear of arrest, torture and even death for their role in defying the military. It is estimated that nearly 10,000 took refuge both amongst the minorities on the border and across in Thailand. As the Karen area was the closest to Rangoon and the border, most went there.

The immediate goal of the students was to obtain arms and training so that they could return to Rangoon and resume the struggle for democracy. But they quickly learned that the minorities were short of weapons and as jungle fighters they had no real experience and knowledge to give them about urban guerrilla fighting. Some of the students were disappointed and drifted back to their homes. But most remained in the border areas, taking what military training their hosts offered and participating in the battles against government forces both as fighters and porters. In some camps, differences arose between the students and their hosts over matters of training, goals and personal relations. But these largely were resolved by year's end.

The minorities generously shared what food, clothing and lodging they had; but it quickly became apparent to the new arrivals that their hosts were not rich and did not have a lot to share. The students were encouraged to build their own shelters with tools and materials provided by their hosts and to organize themselves both socially and politically. Because of the harsh conditions of living in the jungle in the cold season, many of the students became ill, with malaria as the most serious illness. Without enough medication, nets, blankets and other needs, there was little that could be done to help them.

The students came to the border areas as supporters of various new student groups which began to form in March 1988. In the camps, they formed themselves into an umbrella organization called the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF), with each group forming a branch. The headquarters was established at Klerday, in the KNU area. It was a member of the DAB, and represented the Burmans in that organization.

Those students who went to Thailand initially, found sympathy and asylum; however, they were not allowed to be called refugees because Thailand did not wish to create a similar problem with the Burmese that it had with the Cambodians who took refuge earlier on their territory. However, with no papers or standing they were easily victimized and uncertain both of their safety and their future.

The students have expressed no political ambitions for power and have no political organizations and leaders to contest for leadership when the opportunity becomes available. They only want to see democracy, freedom and peace in Burma so that they can resume their studies and return to normal lives. They say that they will support any one or any organization that stands for true democracy and freedom. When pressed, they say that they prefer to support new leaders, ones who have no ties to the past. Therefore, while they admire and respect U Nu as a good and a religious man, they hold him responsible for permitting the military to come to power when he was Prime Minister in the 1950s. Most say they support Aung San Suu Gyi and her party, however, there are those who do not because they believe that she would be willing to allow the military to share power; and if that were the case, the army would displace her and restore its dictatorship. Most say that they would not support Aung Gyi because they do not trust him; it was he, they say, who stopped individual soldiers and military units from joining the people when they were on the verge of victory in September. The students also say that the letters for which he received so much praise, were directed against his fellow officers and not Ne Win, who was responsible for Burma's decline and the people's suffering.

Probably the most important thing about the student presence in the border areas is that they have learned directly about the minorities. All their lives they have heard the government's propaganda about the minorities and their unwillingness to live peacefully under Rangoon's rule. Now, having lived amongst the minorities and having shared their meager possessions, they know what the real situation is. When they finally return to Rangoon and elsewhere in the heartland, they will be able to tell their families and friends the truth, as they experienced it, and will be able to challenge the

propaganda of the army. That may do more to unite the peoples of Burma than any other factor.

Finally, there is the question about the role of the international community in Burma's affairs. As early as April 1988, the Japanese government told the Burmese Deputy Prime Minister that unless changes were made in the economy, Japan might have to seriously rethink its aid program. As tensions grew and the revolt unfolded, the United States, West Germany and Japan cut off their aid and called for a peaceful resolution of the situation. The Germans, in particular, called for the peaceful resolution of the civil war while all decried the army's violations of human rights. Australia and Sweden too, made their displeasure known. India was the first among Burma's immediate neighbors who spoke out strongly against the suppression of the people.

The importance of cutting off aid and not recognizing the government of Saw Maung lay in the fact that Burma has no foreign exchange reserves, has exported very little during the year and has a debt of 4 billion with a debt service ratio of 90%. Thus, it is dependent on the world community for aid, loans, and after being declared a "least developed nation" by the UN in 1987, for debt relief. But West Germany informed the Burmese it would not reduce its portion of the debt so long as the civil war continued and, human rights violations persisted. The US, although a small donor in comparison with Japan and Germany, cut off all aid. Since about half went for narcotics suppression, it meant that Burma's antinarcotics program would be halted. Within the United States, Senators Moynihan and Lugar both spoke up and called upon the government to speak out in the strongest language and take whatever action necessary and the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations asked the US delegation to the UN to request the UN Commission on Human Rights to investigate the violations reported in Burma.

But if these nations used economic and political means to get the Burma military to end its dictatorship and allow free multiparty elections, there were other nations who did not.

Thailand sent mixed signals to the Burmese military. While the Prime Minister said that there would be no recognition of the Burma government until elections were held, General Chavalit con-

veyed a different message. On December 14, he led a delegation to Rangoon where he accepted the assurances of Saw Maung that the students could come home with no fear of reprisals; in return, the Burma government offered important economic concessions in timber and fishing to the Thai general as first steps toward opening Burma's economy to foreign investment and exploitation.

While the Thai press openly criticized the General's trip and agreements, the Thai military went forward and opened a repatriation camp at Tak and encouraged--some say forced--Burmese students in Thailand to go to the camp and return to Burma. At the same time, the Burmese Embassy in Bangkok distributed circulars offering a 5,000 Bhat for anyone who helped bring a student to the embassy.

The first planeload of returned students took off on December 26 and within weeks, both the US Department of State and Amnesty International broadcast reports of arrests, imprisonment and the disappearance of students who had returned either earlier or after the planes began returning students. Despite Burmese denials, the international community continued to press for proof that the government was not victimizing the students. In January, the Burma government arranged for a visit of foreign journalists "to see for themselves." Reports in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times* and other responsible news sources, told of students speaking out, even in front of the military, while others secretly passed notes, about the fears they had and ill-treatment some had received.

More important however, was the criticism in the Bangkok press of Thailand's willingness to trade students for economic concessions; even if they are profitable now, the critics said, in the long run, they would be damaging to Thai-Burma relations, especially, after these students were in responsible positions. The press also criticized their government for not standing with the other powers rather than responding to the overtures of the Burma government.

But the Thais were not alone in moving toward normalizing relations with the Burma government. On February 17, Japan announced that it would recognize the Rangoon dictatorship and resume aid. It argued that China and others had done so and said

nothing about conditions in Burma and their possible change as the reasons for its decisions.

To sum up: for now, the revolution in Burma is under control and the people are under strong pressure from the government; but as before, it may only take a small and insignificant event to cause it to blow up once again--and this time the people may not be as passive. The army is in power and has no intention of relinquishing it. With the elections put off until the middle of 1990, the military rulers can take their time reorganizing the administration and the economy so that they can assure the outcome of the proposed election.

The minorities are in a different position. They still are in revolt and while they still can't defeat the government forces, they hold or contest territory which the government must dominate if its plans to open the economy to foreign investment and exploitation are to be realized. More important, the minorities have links to the Burmans through the DAB and it remains the only national front pursuing

the war against the military dictators. Thus, the situation is not as in the summer of 1988, when the minorities and the Burmans had no links and couldn't forge a united effort against the military. Given these changes the government may be forced to deal with the minorities in a more realistic manner than in the past.

The decision of Japan to follow Thailand and others to seek profits and economic concessions suggests that the resolve of the international community to force Burma to halt human rights violations and restore democracy is evaporating. But the envisioned profits from investment and trade may be illusionary if the revolution and civil war continue making foreign involvement more risky than profitable. The irony may be that the international community will finally become interested in political solutions in Burma when it finds that they are absolutely necessary before safe and successful investment can be made.

ASEAN SECURITY IN THE 1990s*

By Sheldon W. Simon, Arizona State University

The 1990s portend a transition in Southeast Asian international politics parallel to its global counterpart. The scope of these changes will be comprehensive, affecting all regional actors; their direction will be toward a depolarization of security arrangements in which the alignments formed from the 1950s through the 1970s will evolve into more porous arrangements. External mentors (the United States and the Soviet Union), while still active players in Southeast Asia, would no longer claim a dominant influence in regional politico-military affairs. Interactions between Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members and the Indochinese states (Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia) will grow in tandem with new opportunities for Soviet and American economic relations with yesterday's adversaries.

This transformation in regional security will develop from a combination of propitious circumstances in which the actors primarily responsible for the confrontation of the previous three decades are simultaneously seeking change:

- Vietnam is militarily weary, economically exhausted, and politically in crisis as the ruling party faces rampant cynicism throughout the society.
- Both the Soviet Union and China prefer to concentrate on economic construction and are working to effect a mutual detente which will include Southeast Asia.
- Faced with a massive balance of payments deficit and a declining dollar, the United States foresees a lengthy period of no growth defense budgets and a continued low priority for Southeast Asia as a region for naval and air deployments.

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While these conditions suggest a more relaxed security situation for Southeast Asia in the coming years, they do not explain how current problems will be resolved or whether the alterations on the horizon will occur smoothly. Recalling that the polarization of the last three decades at least had a comforting predictability, statesmen now face the more discomfiting prospect of new ties with old enemies while attempting to retain some security guarantees from the current order. It is the task of this paper to examine the major unresolved security issues in Southeast Asian and assess prospects for their resolution during the forthcoming era of political transition. The indigenous capabilities of the ASEAN states to cope with their security concerns will be examined as will Indochina's future relationship to ASEAN. Great Power (the United States, USSR, China) interests in the region will be compared; and the probability for a regional neutralization scheme--The Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality (ZOPFAN)--explored. Finally, new regional conflicts located in the South China Sea may well determine whether Southeast Asia in the 1990s will, indeed, become a "zone of peace."

Background

ASEAN's creation in the late 1960s was based on the belief that local disputes were wasteful and self-defeating. Political consultation to resolve local problems and to present a united front against external challenges would enhance the ability of each state to insure its own integrity. Moreover, reliance upon friendly outside powers for security guarantees by most ASEAN members (Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore) was accepted since it fit the general belief that regional order should not be based on a regional concentration of power. The absence of a strong military component in ASEAN affairs meant that all the Association could offer a threatened member would be diplomatic solidarity. In the case of Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia,

ASEAN's record of support for Thailand proved exemplary. Effective coordination of ASEAN diplomacy against Hanoi's invasion raised the worldwide esteem in which ASEAN was held. Unfortunately, however, the Cambodian conflict also underlined ASEAN's greatest weakness: an inability to protect Southeast Asia from the intrusion of unwanted external powers as mentors to regional adversaries--in this case the Soviet Union for Vietnam and China for Thailand and the international pariah Khmer Rouge.¹ Resolution of local conflicts and the extrication of outside actors has become ASEAN's primary security goal as the 1990s approach.

ASEAN Security Capabilities

If the ASEAN states are to manage their own security environment, then they must develop the capacities to act in a regional setting. In fact, the armed services of these states began to create air and naval forces in the mid and late 1970s as their economies grew sufficiently to permit the expansion of military budgets. This ASEAN shift from a predominant concern with internal insurgencies to the establishment of conventional forces with limited power projection occurred for several reasons: (1) the atrophy of communist insurgent groups in the late 1970s following the split between China and Vietnam and increased political and economic stability within ASEAN societies (excepting the Philippines); (2) concern in Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia particularly about the military capabilities and intentions of Soviet-supplied Vietnam after its invasion of Cambodia; and (3) the realization that to defend and exploit 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) required air and maritime surveillance. By the late 1980s, ASEAN governments had acquired respectable regional power projection forces. (See Table One)² Several ASEAN states were also upgrading their air and naval inventories in anticipation of maritime defense needs in the 1990s.

In addition to acquiring a squadron of F-16s, Singapore is upgrading 50 A-4s with F404 engines which increase thrust by 20 percent while reducing aircraft weight by 1000 lbs. The retrofitted A-4 needs 30 percent less runway and has 40 percent better acceleration, in effect creating a virtually new air-to-air fighter. Combined with E2C AEW

aircraft, the Singapore air force can detect hostile planes at a distance of 400 kilometers, providing an extra 30 minutes to react. With air-to-air missiles, Singapore F5-Es and A-4s constitute a formidable regional air defense around the Strait of Malacca.³ Significantly, Indonesia will provide the Singapore air force with a weapons exercise range in Sumatra being prepared for the joint use of both countries. Thus, Indonesia will be added to Brunei, Thailand, the Philippines, and Taiwan as locations for permanent Singaporean military training facilities.⁴

Malaysia will upgrade its defense establishment with \$3 billion worth of new arms from Great Britain, to include two squadrons (24) of Tornados and two submarines. The Malaysian army will add 50 new 105 mm and 150 mm artillery pieces as well as short range SAMs and air defense radars. In effect, these acquisitions, when deployed in the mid-1990s, will transform the Malaysian military from a counterinsurgency force into one designed to fight a limited regional conflict. (The only other ASEAN member operating a submarine is Indonesia.)⁵

Malaysia's broad gauged force modernization is motivated by concerns over the Soviet naval buildup at Cam Ranh Bay, concern over Vietnam's intentions in the South China Sea, and China's growing blue water capability--all in the vicinity of Kuala Lumpur's offshore oil and gas production wells near the disputed Spratly Islands. Unlike the F-16, acquired by Thailand, Singapore, and Indonesia and primarily viewed as an air superiority aircraft, the Tornado can also be used in ground and naval attack roles. Moreover, the Tornados would be more than a match for Vietnam's MiG-23s.⁶

For Thailand, the F-16 adds an offensive dimension which could be used to hit Vietnamese staging areas in Laos and Cambodia. The decision to acquire the aircraft was made in 1983 when Vietnamese intentions and actions along the Thai border were far from clear. Additionally, because Thai logistics have been so rapidly expended in protracted border fights against Vietnamese army units, Bangkok has also made arrangements for a \$100 million joint weapons stockpile with the United States. In fact, Thai defense officials are developing parallel supply sources: heavier fighter technology, more sophisticated and expensive systems, such as the F-16, from the United States and lighter, more easily maintained, cheaper weapons from China, including

Table One

ASEAN STATES AND VIETNAM'S ARMED FORCES EQUIPMENT
1986-1987

Country	Army	Navy	Air Force
Indonesia	100 AMX-13 Tanks	2 Submarines	81 Combat Aircraft
	41 PT-76 Tanks	12 Frigates armed with Harpoon SSMs	29 Skyhawk A-4s
	114 AFVs	3 Corvettes armed with Exocet SSMs	14 Northrop F-5s
	400 APCs	8 FACs	13 OV-10F Broncos
	170 105mm Artillery	2 Minesweepers	8 F-16s (on order)
	480 M67s ATKs	75 Amphibious Ships	12 Armed Helicopters
	145 Helicopters	17 Combat Aircraft	Remainder misc.
	12 Armed Helicopters		
	12,000 Marines		
Malaysia	26 Scorpion Tanks	4 Frigates armed with Exocet SSMs	72 Combat Aircraft
	394 AFVs	16 FACs armed with Exocet SSMs	39 A-4s
	619 APCs	4 Minesweepers	18 F5 E/Fs
	206 105mm Artillery	2 Amphibious Ships	12 P-7s
	155 ATKs		3 C-130s
Philippines	28 Scorpion Tanks	3 Frigates	51 Combat Aircraft
	45 AFVs	18 Corvettes	12 F-8s (phasing out)
	220 APCs	13 Armed Patrol Craft	10 F-5 A/Bs
	260 105mm Artillery	78 Amphibious Ships	26 T-28Ds
	12 155mm Artillery	9500 Marines	3 F-27s
	3 ATKs	(much of the above equipment is unserviceable)	41 Bell UH-1H Helicopters
	2 Ex-US destroyers on order	25 Airlift Aircraft	
Brunei	16 Scorpion Tanks	12 FACs armed with Exocet SSMs	18 Armed Helicopters
	2 AFVs	2 Amphibious Ships	
	24 APCs		
	12 SAMs		
Singapore	300 AMX-13s Tanks	12 FACs armed with Gabriel SSMs	213 Combat Aircraft
	1000 APCs	2 Minesweepers	76 A-4 Skyhawks
	108 155mm Artillery	1 Corvette (on order)	29 F-74 Hunters
	90 ATKs		4 T-75s
	80 AD Guns		35 F5-E/Fs

Table One (cont)

Country	Army	Navy	Air Force
Thailand	640 Tanks (half in reserve)	6 Frigates	164 Combat Aircraft
	88 AFVs	2 Corvettes armed with 8 Harpoon SSMs	18 F-5/As
	670 APCs	6 FACs armed with Gabriel and Exocet SSMs	36 F-5/E & Fs
	18 130mm Artillery	9 Minesweepers	35 OV-10Cs
	184 155mm Artillery	42 Amphibious Ships	26 Av-23As
	40 105mm Artillery	25 Naval Air	12 A37-Bs
	150 ATKs	S-2Fs and F-27s Combat Aircraft	6 AC-47Ds
	150 AD Guns		20 N-22Bs
	175 Helicopters		3 ELINT Aircraft 8 F-16s on order
		49 Cargo 47 Helicopters	
Vietnam	2050 Tanks	7 Frigates armed with Styx SSMs	270 Combat Aircraft
	20 AFVs	65 FACs	30 Mig-23s
	2700 APCs	29 Amphibious Ships	40 SU-20/22s
	200 130mm Artillery	27,000 Marines	200 Mig-21s
	numerous ATKs		135 Cargo
	3000 AD Guns		200 Helicopters
	SA-7 SAMs		

light tanks, APCs, 130 mm artillery, minesweepers, and four frigates. The Chinese weapons will be sold at approximately 10 to 30 percent of their market value.⁷

These large scale conventional weapons acquisitions imply that despite Vietnamese promises to withdraw from Cambodia in 1990, Thai authorities still see Indochina as a major threat to Thailand's security. Growing dependence on Beijing for weapons, and plans for a Chinese arms stockpile in Thailand, have worried Indonesia and Malaysia, however, Jakarta is particularly concerned that the stockpile could be used to supply the Khmer Rouge, thereby delaying a negotiated settlement to the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia.⁸ The longer term meaning of the arms supply relationship with China indicates a Thai decision to keep a cap on its defense budget so as not to inhibit economic growth while

simultaneously developing a significant regional capability to control its air and maritime zones as well as its land borders.

The only ASEAN military which remains devoted exclusively to counterinsurgency is the Philippines. Military authorities have bemoaned the obsolescence of the air force and navy, noting that the average age of air force planes is 35 years, while the country's ships were at least 45 years old. In effect, neither service can provide credible defense. Indicative of the Philippines' minimal sea defense capability was the navy's admission that it could not defend the Turtle Islands jointly claimed by the Philippines and Malaysia in the event of a Malaysian decision to occupy.⁹

ASEAN's smallest member, Brunei, will probably affiliate with Malaysia and Singapore in the Five Power Defense Arrangement (FPDA) by the early

1990s. Brunei already has strong defense ties with FPDA members who regularly train in Brunei's jungle territory. The FPDA itself (Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain) is welcomed by the other ASEAN states. There seems to be little regional sentiment favoring its dissolution. To the contrary, the possibility exists for an expansion of the current Integrated Air Defense System (IADS) among the five to include Thailand and Indonesia as they acquire AEW and F-16s. Adding Bangkok and Jakarta to the FPDA air defense arrangements would virtually create an ASEAN-wide system for monitoring the sea and air spaces of Southeast Asia.¹⁰ Thailand and Indonesia, Indonesia and Malaysia, and Thailand and Malaysia exercised regularly in the late 1980s so that their armed forces are already experienced in joint maneuvers.

The USSR, China, and ASEAN

From Khrushchev's time, Soviet status in world affairs has been inordinately based on a single dimension--military power. Although a noteworthy achievement, by the 1980s, even that dimension was threatened with rapid deterioration as Russian technological development lagged badly behind the West. Simultaneously, Russian-style communism lost its luster as a politico-economic model for developing states when the Soviet economy fell even further behind world standards. For Gorbachev, the challenge is to rebuild the economic, political, and social basis of his country--the underlying structure of the USSR as a superpower. To achieve these ends, resources must be transferred from military to civilian activities.

There appears to be three new axioms in Gorbachev's security thinking:

- Security is mutual; Soviet security cannot be enhanced at the expense of other states' security;
- Reasonable sufficiency should be the combat basis of Soviet armed forces;
- Soviet strategy should be based on defensive not offensive capabilities.¹¹

The emphasis on stability provides doctrinal support for politico-diplomatic efforts to reduce regional tension. Yet, these efforts could also jeopardize Soviet relations with important allies, such as

Vietnam, who may have to abrogate their own security objectives while Moscow reforms its Southeast Asia policy. One interpretation of the doubling of Soviet aid to Vietnam to approximately \$2 billion annually is that it so increases Hanoi's dependency that the latter has no choice but to support Moscow's policy for a negotiated solution to the Cambodian occupation.¹²

ASEAN is a far more important component of Southeast Asia than is Indochina with four times the latter's population and territory. If the Soviets can reduce the regional perception of Vietnam as a threat to stability, then Moscow can accentuate trends toward multipolarity, weakening US linkages. Beginning with his Vladivostok speech in July 1986, followed by an interview with the Jakarta newspaper Merdeka a year later and the Krasnoyavak address in September 1988, Gorbachev has outlined an Asian (and ASEAN) policy designed to invigorate bilateral relations through economic opportunities. Moscow has proposed joint ventures, ship repair contracts for the Philippines and Thailand, ship building contracts to Singapore, offered to buy Thai rice, especially after the United States failed to honor its commitment, and proposed expanded trade relations with each ASEAN member.¹³ Taking a page from the policy books of the United States and Japan, the Soviets have even offered to assist the Philippines economic recovery through a multimillion dollar assistance package of loans, grants, and technical aid.¹⁴ Nevertheless, Soviet economic inroads have been limited by an inability to provide either the quantity or quality of Western trade, services, and investment. In fact, Soviet exports to ASEAN have declined in recent years because of complaints about obsolescent equipment and difficulty in obtaining spare parts.¹⁵ It seems that any significant enhancement of Soviet economic links to Southeast Asia must await the success of perestroika rather than being a component of it.

Politically, the Soviets may be more successful. In his message of greetings to the December 1987 Manila ASEAN summit, Gorbachev, apparently for the first time, unreservedly endorsed ASEAN's Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) concept, tying it to the achievement of a Southeast Asian nuclear-free zone.¹⁶ Thus, the Soviets have endorsed ASEAN's most cherished security goal, a

policy the Americans do not approve. Soviet officials have also reassured the Philippines that it is not a target for nuclear attack despite the presence of US bases and that no support comes from Moscow for communist rebels.¹⁷

Unlike the Soviet Union which is very much on the outside trying to get in, China sees itself as an ASEAN ally, benefiting from its backing of ASEAN's efforts to elicit a Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia and from its staunch support for Thailand as the frontline state. This current advantage may well be vitiated, however, over time. Indonesia and Malaysia worry about China's ties to the Khmer Rouge and its growing blue water naval capability in the South China Sea. Indeed, China is seen as more of a long term threat to Southeast Asia than is the Soviet Union--a superpower whose homeland is far away and whose forces serve to balance those of the PRC. ASEAN leaders remember that the communist insurgents they battled in the 1970s all identified with Maoism despite Beijing's disclaimer of any material aid. (Ironically, Chinese assistance to the Cambodian resistance recalls the PRC's earlier backing for revolutionaries bent on overthrowing ASEAN governments.)

Even China's modernization policy under Deng Xiaoping, which requires a lengthy period of peace, is viewed suspiciously by many ASEAN analysts, who see its ultimate purpose to augment China's military capabilities. Thus, American aid to the PLA is misguided insofar as it enhances Chinese air and maritime strike capabilities.¹⁸ These concerns appear overdrawn, however, when China's military industries are examined. Bomber and fighter factories have been converted primarily to civilian production, turning out only three or four military aircraft per year. Moreover, US assistance for the avionics of China's F-8 is for a defensive interceptor, not an offensive fighter-bomber. Much the same situation applies to the navy. Naval shipyards are devoting most of their construction time to merchant vessels as part of the economic modernization program. The military ships being built are 1950s and 1960s pattern frigates, destroyers, patrol boats, and diesel submarines, whose primary task would appear to be sea defense against the USSR.¹⁹

To mount an attack on ASEAN, China would have to reorder its domestic priorities and change its defense doctrine, risk weakening its ability to

counter the Soviet Union, and jettison its efforts over the past 15 years to establish good political and economic relations with the Association, in addition to destroying its relationship with the United States and Japan.

Chinese analysts believe their greatest security-related diplomatic success within ASEAN to be the bonds the PRC has forged with Thailand. For a decade Thailand has cooperated in the shipment of Chinese supplies to the Cambodian resistance and has benefited from Chinese military pressure on Vietnam. In 1987, Beijing began to sell a range of military equipment to the Thai army at give-away prices; and in 1989 negotiations began for the creation of a Chinese-supplied arms stockpile in Thailand, an unprecedented event for both countries. Creation of the stockpile would institutionalize the special relationship between Beijing and Bangkok and assure its continuation even after the resolution of the Cambodian conflict.

Chinese analysts believe that Thailand will retain this special relationship as a guarantee against Vietnamese intervention in Cambodia, should the Cambodian outcome turn sour.²⁰ While the United States supports the Chinese stockpile plan as adding to Thailand's security, Indonesia and Malaysia look askance at the prospect of a permanent security link between China and an ASEAN member. They suspect the stockpile could be used to supply the Khmer Rouge and, therefore, further delay a Cambodian settlement. Thai leaders insist that the stockpile will be used exclusively by their own army for rapid resupply in the event of an attack.²¹

The Cambodian Conflict and ASEAN

Central to any assessment of the future of ASEAN security is the resolution of Vietnam's Cambodian occupation and the future role of Indochina in Southeast Asia's regional order. All actors important to the region are either directly involved as political participants in the search for a solution (ASEAN, Vietnam and the four Cambodian political groups) and/or as backers for one or another group of participants (the USSR, China, and the United States). Preferred outcomes range from the maintenance of the Vietnamese-installed Heng Samrin regime in Cambodia (Vietnam) to its complete dissolution and replacement by a Sihanouk-led noncommunist government (Thailand, Singapore,

the United States). The most probable result will fall somewhere in between, through a political solution brought about by the exhaustion of the participants.

Rather than rehearse the convoluted diplomacy of the 1980s over Cambodia, this study addresses the goals of the major actors as they affect the region's future.²² For Vietnam, a significant policy change occurred at the Sixth Party Congress in December 1986 when a reform leadership, bent on ending the SRV's isolation and rebuilding its economy, indicated a willingness to compromise over Cambodia in order to facilitate a withdrawal of PAVN forces by 1990. The diplomatic logjam was loosened some more when Thai Prime Minister Prem Tinsulanonda visited Moscow in the Spring of 1988, eliciting a Soviet promise to encourage Vietnam to broaden its view of an acceptable successor coalition for Cambodia. In the Soviet case, improvement of Sino-Soviet relations had taken precedence over its Vietnam alliance by the late 1980s. In practical terms, the Vietnamese and Chinese preferences began to converge with the former agreeing to include Khmer Rouge "moderates" such as Khieu Samphan in a future Cambodian coalition, while China would accept the Heng Samrin group as a legitimate partner after Vietnamese forces withdrew.²³

Despite the diplomatic retreat, Hanoi's view of its geopolitical security needs have not changed. Its leaders still believe that Indochina is a single security unit and that Vietnam's safety depends on the maintenance of a special relationship with Laos and Cambodia. At a minimum, regimes in these two states must pose no threat to Vietnam's vulnerable western border. A big question, then, revolves around Hanoi's willingness to accept a Cambodian regime in the 1990s, which could well be noncommunist, as long as there were international guarantees that this regime would remain nonaligned. Acceptance of this arrangement would imply that Hanoi had abandoned its 1970s self-image as the leader of a revolutionary vanguard for Southeast Asia. If Vietnam were to see itself as a status quo power, then relations with ASEAN would quickly develop. This trend would be accelerated if Sino-Vietnamese relations improved sufficiently to reduce Hanoi's fear of a possible Chinese drive to its south. Once the SRV believes that China no longer presents a security challenge, the need for a

militant alliance among the Indochinese states is reduced.

Reaching that happy combination of developments remains a major problem for the next several years, however. Despite their ostensible willingness to become just one member of a four-part coalition led by Prince Sihanouk, the PRC-backed Khmer Rouge appear to be preparing for a new onslaught once the Vietnamese have withdrawn most of their forces. The Khmer Rouge refuse to exclude any of their leaders from a post-Vietnam settlement; and their forces may be double those of the 25,000 affiliated with the Sihanouk and Son Sann groups.²⁴ Chinese specialists on Southeast Asia insisted that if the Khmer Rouge were excluded from a negotiated settlement, they would fight. Moreover, even if a four-part coalition government was established, the outcome would still be renewed civil war because of the incompatibility of such a hydra-headed entity.²⁵ This prediction is provided credence with the relocation of Khmer Rouge camps in 1988 to staging areas within a few miles of the Thai-Cambodian border away from any UN Border Relief or Red Cross supervision. International relief officials believe this is the first phase of a Khmer Rouge plan to seize territory inside Cambodia as Vietnamese forces withdraw. Weapons stockpiles were prepositioned in western Cambodia beginning in 1987 in anticipation of these developments.²⁶ Nor is there any indication that China plans to stop supplying its Khmer Rouge client, promising to freeze such assistance only after all Vietnamese forces are out of Cambodia and a quadripartite government is in place.²⁷ It would appear, therefore, that for the foreseeable future, Thailand and China both see the maintenance of a strong Khmer Rouge force to be essential for the destruction of the Vietnamese position in Cambodia. In short, traditional security views still prevail in Bangkok and Beijing despite rhetoric designed to reassure the international community that the Khmer Rouge should not return to power and that China supports the establishment of an international supervisory committee and international peacekeeping forces in Cambodia.²⁸

Western observers believe that Soviet pressure has led Vietnam to compromise on both the withdrawal of PAVN forces from Cambodia and the acceptance of a Khmer Rouge component in a reconciliation government.²⁹ The latter particularly reassures

Beijing that its interests will be represented and is, therefore, in line with Soviet efforts to effect a Sino-Soviet rapprochement. Nevertheless, even after a PAVN exit, Hanoi may have other sources of influence in Cambodia, including the return of up to 300,000 Vietnamese civilians, who had been living in Cambodia in the early 1970s and the transfer of thousands of Khmer-speaking Vietnamese and Khmer Krom soldiers to the Heng Samrin army. Additionally, thousands of PRK cadres have been trained in Moscow and Hanoi and will maintain close ties to the USSR and Vietnam.³⁰ Nor have references ceased in either Hanoi or Phnom Penh about the "Cambodia-Vietnam-Laos alliance of special friendship."³¹

The ASEAN blueprint, supported by the United States, would combine the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces with the internationally supervised disarmament of all four Khmer factions. An international control commission would subsequently arrange elections for a new government.³² (Neither Vietnam nor the PRK are prepared to accept the termination of the latter's government, however.) ASEAN's hope is that a security tradeoff can take place: China's abandonment of the Khmer Rouge in exchange for the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia. This, in turn, would be followed by nonaggression pacts among Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam, allaying mutual security concerns.³³ China's reluctance to abandon the Khmer Rouge inhibits these developments, however, because of other outstanding issues in Sino-Vietnamese relations, related to the border question, the South China Sea islands, and the overall relationship. Until these issues are negotiated, as Leszek Buszynski notes, the Khmer Rouge will continue to be a bargaining chip for China; and ASEAN hopes for a Vietnam-China disengagement over Cambodia will not be fulfilled.³⁴

In effect, Vietnam must make a decision in the early 1990s whether economic reconstruction based on new ties with the West and ASEAN are a greater priority than the maintenance of political dominance in Cambodia. The latter has also precluded normalization with China, while Beijing forges a new relationship with Hanoi's Soviet mentor. The trend of events does not run in favor of Vietnam's current policy. Rather, withdrawal would elicit several benefits: ending the expense of occupation; secur-

ing Vietnam's western border; creating a basis for large scale economic assistance from the West; reducing tension with China; and ultimately, providing alternatives to total reliance on the USSR.³⁵

ASEAN Politico-Economic Relations With Indochina

The ASEAN states are not agreed on Vietnam's future role within the region. Although all members of the Association insist that Vietnamese soldiers return to their own territory, Vietnam's subsequent acceptability as a security partner is an open question. For Indonesia and Malaysia, Vietnam is potentially an important regional partner without whose participation ZOPFAN cannot be achieved. For Malaysia, particularly, once Vietnam ceases to threaten ASEAN security, Hanoi can become a constructive regional member. Singapore and Thailand have held a more skeptical view of the SRV as a possible partner. They are wary of the Soviet connection, particularly, if the United States leaves the Philippine bases in the 1990s. As the frontline state, Thailand has been able to dominate ASEAN policy toward Indochina. While Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta express misgivings over the growing network of politico-military ties between Bangkok and Beijing, neither Malaysia nor Indonesia would break with Thailand over these concerns. A rupture would only enhance China's importance to Thailand and enhance the PRC's opportunities in Southeast Asian affairs.³⁶

Despite political pressures on Vietnam to leave Cambodia, by the late 1980s, Hanoi's economic relations with ASEAN were on the upswing in anticipation of a new era. Malaysia offered technical aid as soon as the Vietnamese troops were withdrawn. Thai consumer goods were finding their way to Vietnam in large quantities via Singapore. Indonesia was trading directly with Vietnam, even selling thousands of tons of fertilizer from a joint venture plant in which Thailand holds equity. The Philippines, too, signed agreements for long term economic and cultural cooperation--all before any political settlement had been reached for Cambodia.³⁷

Thai leaders are reassessing their own influence capabilities in Indochina after a Vietnamese exit from Cambodia; and their conclusions seem promising. Prime Minister Chatchai Chunhawan is taking

a more flexible line toward Indochina, influenced by M. R. Sukhumphan Boriphath, a new foreign policy advisor from Chulalongkorn University's Institute for Strategic and International Studies. Sukhumphan has argued that although Laos is part of Vietnam's security sphere, Thailand can still encourage flexibility in Vientiane's foreign policy and reinforce traditional Laotian ethnic and economic linkages to Thailand.³⁸ Thailand's burgeoning economy, given regular access to Laos and western Cambodia, will create economic spheres of influence with concomitant benefits for Thai security. Cultural affinities between the Thai and lowland Lao based on a common religion, wet rice cultivation, and similar language will also enhance these relations.

Thailand's new diplomacy was formalized through Prime Minister Chatchai's November 1988 visit to Vientiane which culminated in agreements for the development of communications networks, electric power enterprises, and joint ventures for Laotian export industries.³⁹ In effect, Thailand was moving from a defensive posture, fearful of Vietnamese military and subversive intentions, toward a more positive economic diplomacy designed to create new dependencies first in Laos and later, perhaps, in Cambodia.

The Spratlys and the South China Sea Conflict

Even if the Cambodian conflict is settled in the early 1990s, ASEAN security differences with Vietnam and China will persist in conflicting jurisdictional claims over the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea. Located astride the major sea lanes between the Persian Gulf and Northeast Asia and over rich fishing and mineral-laden seabeds, ownership of the islands is both a strategic and economic prize.⁴⁰ The naval and air forces upgrades in several ASEAN states have been motivated in large part by the high stakes of South China Sea control. If the United States leaves the Philippine bases in the 1990s, the perception of a regional power disequilibrium may further ASEAN efforts to build their own force capabilities.

China and Vietnam claim all of the Spratlys, a 33 island archipelago covering over 70,000 miles in the middle of the South China Sea. The Philippines and Malaysia occupy respectively eight and three of the

islands nearest their shores. Vietnam occupies²¹ islands in the west and central part of the archipelago. Hanoi, Kuala Lumpur, and Manila have all stationed forces on some of the islands they occupy. The Philippines incorporated the islands it claims into Palawan province, while Malaysia has upgraded naval and air facilities on Labuan in Borneo to secure sealanes between the Malayan Peninsula and Sarawak as well as to serve as a base for South China Sea operations.

While the ASEAN states among themselves have agreed to the joint development and exploitation of overlapping maritime zones (Malaysia-Indonesia; Malaysia-Indonesia-Thailand) or at least to negotiate their differences (Malaysia-Thailand; Indonesia-Philippines), no such agreements have yet been reached with China or Vietnam. Thailand is also affected since its EEZ overlaps both Vietnam's and Cambodia's. Moreover, Bangkok has refused to accept the 1982 Vietnam-Cambodia maritime boundary accord on the grounds that the PRK is not legitimate government but a Vietnamese surrogate.⁴¹ Thai fishing boats have been seized by Vietnamese naval vessels.

Indonesia and Malaysia have defined a common security interest in developing their South China Sea jurisdictions. They exercise regularly together and with Singapore and Thailand. America's annual "Cobra Gold" maneuvers with Thailand also demonstrate US interest in the region's security. In effect, a series of bilateral and multilateral exercises through the 1980s reveal a growing ASEAN capacity to monitor and perhaps defend each state's respective maritime jurisdiction with the assistance of such security partners as the United States (Thailand and possibly the Philippines) and Australia (Malaysia via the Fire Power Defense Arrangement).

China's activities in the South China Sea increased markedly in the last half of the 1980s. In 1986, the Chinese navy conducted two sets of exercises in the vicinity of the Spratlys. In late 1987, Beijing announced that it had set up a number of "observation stations" in the islands--the first evidence of actual PRC occupation. The Paracels and Spratlys were incorporated subsequently into the new province of Hainan.⁴²

In March 1988, a new phase of the South China Sea conflict began with a naval battle between Vietnamese and Chinese ships. The PLA navy contingent reportedly included three frigates equipped with sea-to-sea missiles and automatic cannon.⁴³ China's military move in the Spratlys was explained privately as an effort to obtain some territory before the other contenders had occupied all significant islands. The timing was optimal because Vietnam was still a pariah in southeast Asia due to its Cambodian occupation. Beijing gambled that the Soviet Union would not respond to a short, decisive naval encounter and, in the event, was proven correct. Not only did the Soviets not endorse Hanoi's claims to the Spratlys, but they urged Hanoi to negotiate a resolution to its differences with the PRC.⁴⁴

The Spratlys clash also raised antennae in the ASEAN states. Indonesian and Singaporean analysts expressed concern over China's action which seemed to contradict its stated intentions to resolve territorial disputes peacefully.⁴⁵ Moreover, China was building an amphibious assault capacity in its South Sea Fleet with some 4000 combat marines and accompanying armor.⁴⁶ Malaysia's foreign minister, Abu Hossan Omar, predicted that if China insisted on enforcing its claim to the full archipelago, the PRC would replace Vietnam as the greatest threat to regional stability in the coming decade.⁴⁷

While China has more than tripled the size of its South Sea Fleet in the 1980s from 20 to 70 vessels, it has also attempted to reassure those ASEAN states with claims to the Spratlys that it is prepared to resolve differences peacefully through negotiations. In other words, China's military muscle in the South China Sea is directed against Vietnam, not ASEAN. This policy is probably of little comfort to Malaysia and the Philippines, however, given the presence of 20 PLA warships anchored in the Spratlys.⁴⁸

Although ASEAN's primary fear in the South China Sea is focused on the possibility of an expansion of Sino-Vietnamese hostilities, it should be noted that an altercation has also occurred between Malaysia and the Philippines. In April 1988, 49 Filipino fishermen were seized in waters claimed by both countries and held by Malaysian authorities for four months. Manila and Kuala Lumpur have agreed to hold talks on their conflicting maritime boundary; but at the same time, each side has sent more forces

to the vicinity--the Philippines with 1000 marines garrisoned there and Malaysia extending its presence from one to three atolls in 1986. Philippine authorities have admitted, however, that they do not have the naval strength to enforce their claims.⁴⁹

The Sino-Vietnamese conflict was extended to the ASEAN diplomatic arena in Hanoi's November 1988 offer to negotiate its overlapping claims with the Philippines, including their possible submission to the International Court of Justice. China's response was to declare any negotiations over the Spratlys which did not include the PRC to be "acts of disregarding China's sovereignty and territorial integrity."⁵⁰

Without the maintenance of external naval forces sympathetic to ASEAN concerns, the Spratlys issue could divide the mainland and maritime states of the Association. Thailand could choose, for example, not to become involved in its partners' conflicting claims if the reassurance of a US naval and air presence was no longer available.

Foreign Bases and the Future of ZOPFAN

Although all ASEAN states prefer American armed forces to remain a familiar feature of the Southeast Asian air and maritime environment, none is keen to play host in an era when foreign bases are seen as a compromise of one's sovereignty. This politico-psychological fact is underscored by the particular historical, political, and economic problems of the Philippines. Historically, the US bases are viewed by many Filipinos as a continuation of colonialism, or, at least, a prominent reminder of the country's dependence on the United States. Politically, the US relationship is still identified with the corrupt Marcos regime, despite Washington's strong support for Mrs. Aquino. Economically, the bases account for perhaps five percent of the Philippines GNP, injecting some \$350 million annually into the national economy. Yet the economic importance of the bases only reinforces the image of Philippine weakness, particularly when the country's leaders openly insist that the islands face no external threat. This perception means that there is little mutuality in the security relationship. The Philippines sees the bases as economically beneficial but as a security benefit only for the United States--in sum a neocolonial vestige. This

combination of factors bodes ill for any long term renewal of the bases arrangement.

Nevertheless, even most of those Filipinos who desire a termination of the bases do not propose a precipitous US exit. That would be both economically and politically destabilizing. It could lead to a loss of foreign investor confidence in the Philippines, a diminution of America's stature in Southeast Asia, and the possible rush of China and Japan into the South China Sea for their own security needs in addition to the prospect of Vietnam exerting its claims to the Spratlys.

With respect to domestic Philippine politics, a precipitous US exit would achieve several goals for the Philippine communist party. First, the removal of the bases would undermine the Philippine-US security treaty and increase the prospects for a non-aligned Philippines. Second, it would lead to a reduction in American financial support for the Philippine government, rendering the latter more susceptible to external pressures and internal challenges. Third, the blow to the national economy of the loss of its second largest employer would undermine Philippine creditworthiness and investor and consumer confidence. Finally, the ensuing economic distress and uncertainty could polarize Philippine politics, leading either to a coalition government progressively dominated by the political left or to a military coup and a new Marcos-style regime. Neither outcome would enhance regional security.

The October 1988 Philippine-US agreement on a compensation package for the last three years of the current arrangement is a hopeful sign that the Aquino government will support the continuation of the bases for at least a limited period after 1991. The Aquino government rejected a Congressional anti-nuclear resolution which would have prohibited nuclear-armed or powered ships from Philippine facilities.

Into this delicate period of transition in Philippine-US relations has been injected the volatile new element of Soviet diplomacy under Gorbachev. In hopes of improving the USSR's stature in the region, weakening the US military presence, and moving Southeast Asia toward ASEAN's ZOPFAN, in September 1988, the Soviet General Secretary proposed the mutual elimination of Soviet and American

bases from Southeast Asia. While the United States immediately rejected the trade as one of "unequal value," the situation created some embarrassment for Washington. Until Gorbachev made his Krasnoyarsk offer, the Pentagon had insisted that Soviet facilities at Cam Ranh Bay contributed a major air and naval base. Subsequently, official US commentary has downplayed the importance of the Soviet bases in comparison to those in the Philippines.

Gorbachev's initiative has not been cost-free for the USSR, however. Vietnamese leaders greeted his unilateral offer to leave Cam Ranh Bay coldly, pointing out that although the Soviets had a perfect right to remove their forces from Vietnam, the bases were Vietnamese territory; and Russian forces were stationed there because of SRV agreement. Emphasizing its independence, in November 1988, Hanoi floated the idea of opening Cam Ranh Bay to other countries to help foster a nonaligned Southeast Asia.⁵¹

The probability for abrogation of the Philippine base arrangements sometime in the 1990s is growing. What are the alternatives for US forces in Southeast Asia? Two outcomes are certain: relocation of the bases will be costly, and forces will be dispersed rather than concentrated in a single country again. One study foresees a transfer of US forces to Japan, South Korea, Australia, Guam, Micronesia and Singapore. Relocation costs could reach \$10 billion plus in the 1990s, including defense construction and vastly increased operating costs during an era when no growth defense budgets are anticipated.⁵² Naval and air bases in Micronesia would be up to 3000 kilometers from Southeast Asia and, therefore, an extra day's fast steaming time from the heart of the region. Nevertheless, with nuclear powered ships and modular microelectronic systems, US Navy surface vessels by the end of the century will probably be able to patrol Southeast Asian waters as effectively as they do today from close-in bases.

Moreover, Thailand and Singapore have told American officials that facilities could be made available on a contingency basis if the United States left the Philippines. Australia Labor government officials seem less accommodating, however, although one reported that he had been told Malaysia would consider hosting some American ships in the event the Philippine bases were closed.⁵³

ASEAN's dominant view on foreign military bases was probably best summed up by Malaysian Defense Minister Tengku Ahmad Rithaudeen, when he said that the status quo should "remain as it is" until a nuclear weapons free zone concept is implemented. At that point, all foreign military bases must go. Until then, arrangements such as the Philippine bases and the FPDA--under which Australian Air Force F-18s are deployed in Malaysia--should be sustained in order to insure a regional balance of power.⁵⁴ Even Indonesia, ASEAN's strongest proponent of a NWFZ, accepts the wisdom of this position. After all, neither ZOPFAN nor a NWFZ is self-implementing. It must be accepted by the great powers. The unilateral exit of the Americans from the Philippines could upset the regional balance and, therefore, undermine the realization of ZOPFAN. As Donald Weatherbee points out, it would move "the strategic frontier between the ASEAN states and the communist states out to a sea zone" without the protection of a large US air and naval presence in the vicinity.⁵⁵

Cross pressures on ASEAN both to accelerate Southeast Asia's neutralization and maintain its security were highlighted in the December 1987 Manila Declaration of the Third ASEAN Summit. In that document, ZOPFAN and a regional NWFZ were cited as the goals of Southeast Asian security. At the same time, however, the legitimacy of security cooperation between ASEAN states and non-ASEAN members "shall continue in accordance with their mutual needs and interests."⁵⁶

Gorbachev's offer to close down Cam Ranh Bay if the Americans leave the Philippines constitutes an effort to accelerate the neutralization process in Southeast Asia. It may be difficult to resist in the coming decade. Assuming the dismantlement of both US and Soviet facilities as well as a dispersal of the former to other parts of the Asian-Pacific, then a scenario suggested by Muthiah Alagappa of Malaysia's Institute for Strategic and International Studies may offer a reasonable procedure. Alagappa states that the termination of US facilities be sufficiently gradual that the Philippine economy can be weaned from the American military, that alternative facilities can be located and built for US forces, and that the ASEAN states themselves can build up their own maritime capabilities to cope with South China Sea contingencies.⁵⁷

Conclusion

As the 1990s approach, ASEAN statesmen see signs of hope for regional security as well as new challenges. The acceptance of Vietnam's political preeminence in Indochina (minus its military presence in Cambodia) may finally end a succession of three Indochina wars dating back to 1945. Yet, the prospect for American (and Soviet) withdrawals from Southeast Asian bases creates a dangerous new maritime environment in which Chinese and Vietnamese claims to the Spratlys would have to be met by ASEAN forces not yet ready to deter or defend.

Gorbachev's conciliatory stance toward ASEAN embodied in the offer to leave the Vietnamese bases if the Americans exit the Philippines represents the Southeast Asian version of a broader Soviet policy designed to separate the United States from its friends and allies via diplomacy. By reducing the perception of the Soviet Union as a threatening power, the Soviets hope to undermine US efforts to sustain a loose ASEAN security coalition against the USSR and to buttress the position of those who object to following Washington's plans for defense burden-sharing.

On the other hand, even the Soviets may have second thoughts about urging a precipitous combined Soviet-American departure from Southeast Asia if such an occurrence leads to stronger ties between Thailand and Singapore with China. The Chinese connection could be particularly important to Bangkok in this instance as a guarantee for Thai security against a Vietnamese decision to occupy Cambodia.

It is also unlikely that Japan will extend its declared security zone beyond 1000 nautical miles from Honshu if both US and Soviet Southeast Asian bases are terminated. Tokyo has devoted considerable economic aid and diplomatic effort in the 1980s to reassure the ASEAN states that it has no intention to engage in military activities outside the Japan-US Security Treaty zone or beyond Northeast Asia. Although the JSDF will have the largest number of F-15s and guided missile frigates deployed in Asia, there would be little reason to move them south of the Bashi Channel. Somewhat more probable would be indirect Japanese assistance for the development of ASEAN defense forces. This would be effected not through the direct sale of arms but through

economic assistance which would help offset national defense budgets. Japan might also be willing to provide dual-use technology.

The most optimistic forecast for the 1990s from an ASEAN perspective would begin with a settlement of the Cambodian conflict providing for the withdrawal of all Vietnamese forces and the creation of a four-part government of reconciliation which the Khmer Rouge could not dominate. Thailand's security would be assured under this arrangement. It would be followed by the signing of nonaggression pacts between the Indochinese states and ASEAN, opening the way for Western and ASEAN development assistance to the three Southeast Asian communist governments. The ultimate purpose would be to associate their economies with ASEAN's regional trade and investment system.

As the decade advanced, both the Soviets and Americans would gradually close down their bases. The Soviets would return to Vladivostok from which Southeast Asia is protected by the Japanese straits and the American and Japanese air and maritime forces around them. The US forces which had previously been stationed in the Philippines would disperse to locations that would still permit them to deploy regularly in the region. These developments, in turn, could lead to an ASEAN declaration that ZOPFAN had been created while, at the same time accepting the continuing presence of American and Australian forces in Southeast Asian waters and air space. Whether such a happy scenario will come to pass awaits the test of time.

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