

**STRATEGY
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CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES IN PHILIPPINE SECURITY

BY

**LIEUTENANT COLONEL RAMON G. SANTOS
Philippine Army**

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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Lieutenant Colonel Ramon G. Santos
Philippine Army

Colonel (Ret.) Donald W. Boose, Jr.
Project Advisor

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U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

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ABSTRACT

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The United States has long maintained a strong presence in the Asia-Pacific region, but the strategic picture is now changing. Discussions and debates center on the need for institutions and processes to enhance and expand the post-Cold War security cooperation and collaboration in the region. The situation is complex. Unlike in Europe, Asians have no experience in multilateral security alliances. The states have differing perceptions of threats and historical and cultural disputes suppressed by East-West alignment in the past are now emerging. East-Asia is a vigorous economic region, but is also politically fragile. Various forms of internal problems add to the strained external relations among neighboring states. This research paper concludes that Confidence-Building Measures can strengthen regional security cooperation and improve the security of the Philippines.

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PREFACE

Southeast-Asia is more peaceful today than at any time in its history. Its economy is vigorous. It is really surprising that less than a decade ago the member states were at the brink of armed confrontation against each other. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the strategic environment began the transformation process that still is being seen today where Vietnam and Laos (and soon, most likely, Cambodia) became members of ASEAN. The sovereign states in the region have experienced animosities and ill-feeling towards each other in the past not of their own making. The examination of so called cultural differences would show that misperceptions and "mirror-imaging" are primary causes of misunderstanding. The problem lies in erasing those misperceptions and in there place to build trust among themselves. The present level of cooperation is greatly enhanced when institutions and communication lines are relied upon in cases of security inquiries. The first important step, therefore, is putting in place processes that encourage trust and confidence.

INTRODUCTION

After the end of the Cold War, Asia was doing relatively well in pursuing regional peace and stability. With strong encouragement from the United States, various ways of finding a lasting peace in all aspects were pursued. The process was initiated both from government and non-government organizations. Military counterparts are among the most serious "scholars" who are trying innovative ways of accommodating each other's national and military interests.

In Southeast Asia, the harmonious relationship was quite surprising. Philippines and Malaysia postponed indefinitely any decision on the Sabah issue¹; China has been on record that South China Sea conflicts will be tackled in "peaceful ways" and the communist regimes of Laos and Vietnam were welcomed to ASEAN. Even the government of Burma was accepted despite tacit disapproval from western allies.

While this security and cooperation measures are welcomed by everyone in the region, there are still disputes and historic misunderstandings between and among the Southeast Asian nations². The financial crises that befell the region last year provide a great occasion to find out how strong the ties are among them. Just as the disputing nations were gaining footholds of relationships based on trust and confidence, the economic debacle brought on by high inflation and unemployment will surely test their friendship³.

Among the nations under stress is the Philippines. From a difficult period of transition to democracy, the country is beset with internal security problems that have a direct effect on its economic development. Unlike the new and potential tigers of the region, the Philippines is the only one that has not yet reached its potentials. While the export-led strategies of Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia have been greatly successful, the Philippines has failed.⁴ Slowly, however, President Ramos has been quite successful in bringing a turn around of its economy. It is therefore to the benefit of the country that external problems not rise at this time when it is focusing its entire effort internally. The occupation by the Chinese of the Mischief [Panganiban] reef has brought to light the urgency of peace in the region. Instability in the Southeast Asia region will surely exacerbate the difficulty of improving economic conditions. Thus, security is the precondition to economic development. The purpose of this research paper is to determine whether confidence and security building measures are applicable to the Philippine security situation.

CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES

The present stability in Southeast Asia is holding despite the financial crises. Until recently, however, direct discussions among the neighboring nations were not encouraging in terms of multilateral arrangements. The world is supposed to be peaceful after the end of the Cold War, but the multipolar configuration

now arising is becoming more volatile than before. Nations aligned in the east-west camps are now fighting with each other.⁵In Europe, several measures for dialogue were experimented with in the 1970's to prevent armed hostilities because of misunderstandings. These steps became known as Confidence-Building Measures [CBM]. The trust and confidence that was established between the feuding nations became a model to other regions experiencing conflicts and tension.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the world expectantly waits for economic transformation to replace the old system where government efforts were focused on defense expenditures. Security concerns has been expanded to other areas and old disputes between nations have been dug up. These threaten the relatively stable relationship that had resulted from the new security alignments. Thus, it is imperative to create an atmosphere of trust and belief that no apparent danger exists to each nation's security. This can be achieved only if the actions of other states in pursuit of their interests is seen as benign. This is where the confidence-building measures can bring openness and establish communications, enhancing security.

Clearly, the balance of trust is achieved only with the cooperation of all parties involved; trust cannot be established by the efforts of only one side.⁶

The ideal condition for building confidence is when both sides have accurate information about the other's intentions.

This is particularly true in the sphere of military capability. For example, military actions for self-defense can be easily perceived by the other side as gearing towards offensive capabilities which will be answered in turn with arms build-up by the perceived targeted nation or culture. This phenomenon is known as "security dilemma". To create a favorable climate of relative peace the rejection of such old habits of mutual suspicion has to first be in place. This has to be done slowly, making concessions on peripheral issues along the way in order to establish communication lines.⁷ Such constructive interactions between NATO and Warsaw Pact countries were accomplished through exchanges of information using non-confrontational approaches of confidence building. Such approaches may be applicable in East Asia.

The importance of CBMs has grown in the international arena. They are increasingly used in managing various kinds of situations to avert conflicts, especially in regional crises. Through an exchange of information, the intentions of the mistrusting parties maybe correctly interpreted stabilizing the volatile situation. An example of preventing armed hostilities was when a US cruiser accidentally shot down an Iranian plane in the Persian Gulf because of the ship's computer error. The facts of the accidental shooting, rather than the perceived intentions of the US ship were the basis of inquiries.

While the concepts and implementation procedures of CBMs are being debated continuously, there are common elements and ideas that are widely accepted. In a 1982 study, the United Nations concluded that the "goal of the confidence-building measures is to contribute, to reduce or in some instances eliminate the causes of conflict like mistrust, fear, and tensions"⁸. In discussions of CBM definitions, several problems have emerged. For instance, the complementarity of political and military issues has been the subject of much debate as to whether each is to be taken separately or both must be in one package. This is a contentious issue for both the US and Russia. The former wants them treated separately, the latter wants them as one package simultaneously.⁹

Since the agreements on arms reduction, the CBM concept has acquired its own definitions and classifications. The sphere in which it is understood depends on the aims to be achieved, ranging from initiation of dialogue to elimination of certain nuclear delivery systems like ICBMs or space exploration. CBMs have become complex. It was easy to agree on what to achieve to establish the climate of confidence, but the "road of CBMs is winding and uphill most of the way."¹⁰ For the purpose of this paper, CBMs are defined as measures or actions that address, prevent, or resolve uncertainties among states both in formal or informal ways, voluntary, bilateral or multilateral, military or

political. These measures fall under one or more of the following:

- exchanging information
- exchanging observers
- allowing inspections
- agreement on "rules of conduct"
- unilateral restraints on military action.

In addition, while different forms, level and classifications shall be discussed, the focus of the study shall be on military aspects of CBMs.

PHILIPPINE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Among the nations of Southeast Asia, the Philippines is remarkable in its diversity in terms of its history and culture. Many of the developmental problems facing the country even after the Cold War can be traced to these patterns of diversity. The Philippines is an archipelago located east of Vietnam and northeast of Malaysia. It consists of more than 7,000 island with three major groupings: Luzon, the largest of the three, Vizayas, and Mindanao. Before the Christian era, there was extensive trading with China evidenced by archeological findings. By the turn of the 14th century, there was already a thriving Muslim settlement in southern Mindanao. In 1521 Ferdinand Magellan claimed the country in the name of the Spanish king, Philip. The Spanish colonial rule lasted until 1898, when a successful revolt

resulted in the proclamation of independence on June 12 1898. Before the Filipinos could enjoy their freedom, however, the United States took the country as their first and only colony in Asia. The US domination was completed when the first proclaimed president, General Emilio Aguinaldo, was captured in 1901. Following the Japanese occupation and the end of World War II, the US granted independence on July 4 1946.

COLONIAL LEGACY¹¹

Spanish Era

The long Spanish rule and the short but profound American rule left a legacy of disunity. The lack of national identity, as the Philippines has been characterized by historians, is the principal cause of the internal strife which makes it difficult for the Philippines to achieve its real potential as a sovereign state. This problem has deep roots. The boat people of the early tribal Filipinos came from Indonesia in the pre-Christian era. They settled in widely dispersed islands of the archipelago. Lacking a common language and general culture, they did not find loyalty outside of their clans. Even today, their descendants find difficulty persecuting erring members of their community. Within a clan, the authority of the clan leader is almost absolute. The individual member will not survive the "outside world" if they are banished from the protection of the group. Even today this personality cult centered on the leader is carried on in the political life of Philippine society.¹²

The Spanish colonial regime also shaped Philippine culture. The distribution of large tracks of land to selected families by the religious orders contributed to the formation of the elite groups. By Spanish tradition, the friars actually controlled not only the public morals but also the administration of the country, including executive functions. The descendants of these landed families --the "oligarchy"-- today control the political and economic sources of power in the society. Stamping out the oligarchy was one of the reasons given by President Marcos for putting the country under Martial Law in 1972. When he was deposed twenty years later, the oligarchs were still in power. Meaningful economic reforms today are still very hard to carry out by nationalist Filipinos because such reforms call for liberalization of the oligarchs' monopoly. Those few who are able to ingratiate themselves run as politicians backed up by the favors of the elite and they enrich themselves by corruption.¹³

United States Era

Committed to individual freedom and national independence, the Americans found it difficult to accept their status as an imperial power [even at this modern age]. In 1898, many arguments on what to do with the Philippines were set forth and rationalized. Finally, by a single vote majority a proposal to annex [i.e., colonize] the country was passed by the U.S. congress. The reasons given were where: that it would be

"cowardly and dishonorable" to return the islands to Spain; that France or Germany would grab the Philippines if the United States were to abandon them and that the Filipinos are "unfit to govern themselves", and therefore, it was the duty of the United States to "uplift and civilize and Christianize them"¹⁴ The US colonial regime took into account the heritage of more than three centuries under Spain. However, they retained the Spanish civil laws which greatly favor the landowners since the magistrates are of the same themselves. Attempts were made to break the large landholdings by declaring the church lands as public property that could be sold to the public. But again, the elite in connivance with unscrupulous Americans bought the land for themselves. The Land Reform Act passed by President Aquino in 1989 was greatly emasculated in that the grip of the landowners is still strong. This is one reason why the insurgency movement, which originated from the peasant rebellion, continues to be a threat to the country's national security today.

In spite of these obstacles, the Filipinos advanced more rapidly politically than most of the other western colonies. Political reforms were granted, including election of a legislative assembly. In the early 1930's, the Great Depression helped the Philippine independence movement because U.S. sugar and tobacco interest groups wanted to end the free trade arrangement that allowed the Philippine products a free entry to US markets. Organized labor joined the farming lobbyists to

prevent the influx of Filipino cheap labor which have been entering the US freely because the Oriental Exclusion Act of 1924 did not apply to the Filipinos. In 1934, the Tydings-McDuffie Act was passed granting commonwealth status to the islands and providing for complete independence by 1946. The act also provided for tariffs and quotas for import into the United States of Philippine products.

The US presence from 1898 to 1946 integrated the socio-political and economic structures of the Filipinos. They have uplifted the country to a democratic way of politics, introduced a system of public education incorporating English as the national language, and fostered a cadre of highly trained technocrats, bureaucrats and entrepreneurs. Today the Philippines is more "westernized" than some of the US counties. Not only is the present military structure a mirror image of the US but the doctrine and materiel are as well.

After independence in 1946, a series of democratically elected presidents ruled the country. Although suffering from problems that originated in the colonial era, economic growth was experienced in 1965. There was a relative political stability despite the unequal distribution of wealth. But the patron-client relationships handed down by the Spanish still exists with deep personal relation impinging on good governance¹⁵.

The formal democratic processes ended on September 21 1972, when President Ferdinand Marcos placed the whole country under

Martial Law. President Marcos was the first re-elected president after the war. Protecting its strategic interests in the region, the US supported President Marcos until his exile in February 1986.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Democracy And Values

The formal institutions of the Philippines have functioned in democratic ways as reflected in the constitution and adherence to a bill of rights. The separation of powers and checks and balances are incorporated in the fundamental law of the land. In practice, however, the country is ruled by small families acting as dynasties. Even today, following the restoration of democracy in 1986, baronic clans control the countryside. The country's archipelagic nature has compounded the clannish mentality left behind by the Spaniards. The dynastic nature of the culture is the result of the still pervasive poverty. The poor owe their livelihood to their patrons. Because the Filipino's loyalty is first and foremost to his family, his allegiances to others are secondary in nature. The family is oftentimes extended through rituals and tradition like sponsorship or the *Compadre* system and marriage. In the *Compadre* system the loyalty is formalized: the higher-status sponsor is expected to provide prestige, support network, and identity-status to the lower-status person being sponsored. In return, the lower-status family provides loyalty, respect and electoral support. Politicians vie for as many

sponsored families they can get in order to have wider electoral bases. This kind of personalistic loyalty, among other reasons, hampers the full democratization of the government.

The Philippine economy has likewise suffered because of the feudal system that has existed since Spanish times. When the Americans tried to open the economy, the people lost even more control of their economy to outside forces especially the multinational corporations and unscrupulous family dynasties.

Political Economy of Development

Before the Americans came, there was already a land-owning elite whose livelihood was based on the basis of agricultural products for export. The democratic processes developed under the American regime remain under the control of this land-owning class. This elite class was used by the Americans in their subjugation and pacification campaign. As they used their privileged position to gather more wealth they secured their status as a political elite. Hence, no strong bureaucracy was developed that could pursue a genuine economic structure independent of this land-owning class, and no democratic program. Thus, the country today is basically ruled by the powerful elite class pursuing their own interests. The present administration of President Ramos has initiated a liberalization program and although there is stiff resistance from interest-vested groups, the program has been successful in breaking up the various cartels in farm products, and the monopolies in

telecommunications and banking. Among the nations hit by the recent financial crises in Asia, Philippines is the country least affected largely because of the economic structural transformation that was initiated, with difficulty, in 1988.

Relations With The United States

Since the US occupation in 1898, the Philippine's foreign policy has been aligned with that of the United States. The Filipinos consider the Americans as their special friends and protectors. They tend to emulate American ways more than they do those of their Asian neighbors. To the Americans the relation is business-like; to the Filipinos, it is a bond,-- an emotional one.

The issue of America's domination of the country has been a recurring propaganda issue for the nationalist movements. During the government of President Aquino, her administration pursued active nationalist policies for genuine independence from the United States. The nationalists took the view that the presence of US bases inside the country was an affront to Philippine sovereignty and an illustration of dependence on the US. After months of negotiation, in 1991, the Philippine Senate rejected the renewal of the US bases.

When Filipino nationalism became intensified in the 1990's, the relationship with the US went sour ending in the US pullout from the Subic and Clark bases. These bases were the largest US military installations outside of the continental United States

[CONUS]. Despite the negative developments, the foreign policies of the country are still closely linked with those of the US. The United States is a key donor, with Japan in the Philippine Assistance Plan which offered some relief and new credit to the country. The economic investment of US corporations in the Philippines exceeded one billion dollars in 1996.

Relations With ASEAN Neighbors

The Philippines is geographically lucky in that, unlike the other Southeast Asia nation, it has no bordering state. Its people are aware however, that their country's existence is dependent on the neighboring nations. Hence, the country is an active proponent of regionalism. This became more pronounced after the American pullout. In the quest for regional cooperation, the country has initiated and organized several regional cooperatives, the most successful of which, is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations or ASEAN.¹⁶ ASEAN was conceived to pursue economic, social, cultural and technical cooperation. In 1993, ASEAN Regional Forum [ARF] was created to provide mechanism for the discussion of security matters in the region. In general, the Republic of the Philippines enjoys friendly relations with its neighbors. Although there are disputes with Malaysia regarding the Sabah claim, the two countries have formal diplomatic ties. The issues of most concern to the Filipinos are the disputes in the South China Sea where China together with Taiwan, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam also lay

claims. The country has tried to extract from the Americans a promise that it would defend the Philippine claims in the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea as part of the Mutual Defense Treaty, but the US has refused to interpret the Treaty openly so.¹⁷

PHILIPPINE SECURITY CONCERNS

Since it has no border problem, the Philippines perceived no external problem. However, its strategic location in the South China Sea has made the country the target and objective of external control. The US colonized it primarily to serve as its forward naval base; the Japanese occupied it as their forward defensive line and the Chinese want to assimilate it into their sphere of control.

There are also two old and one new challenges to the existence of the Philippine state: communist insurgency, Muslim secessionists and military rightists. In 1983, the rightists led by some members of the military formed a reformist organization which was instrumental in toppling the Marcos regime. These three distinct threats have substantially lost their vitality through the government's reconciliation efforts, internal rift within the rebels' ranks, and lost of popular support.

COMMUNIST INSURGENCY

In the past, dissatisfaction and injustice committed against the peasants were common because of land tenancy and abuses by the landlords. In central Luzon, a peasant revolutionary

organization was formed after the end of World War II. This peasant movement was well organized because of their experiences and training during guerrilla operations against the Japanese forces. The *Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas* or Communist Party of the Philippines [CPP] was organized in 1930¹⁸. The leaders of the Communists, who were from central Luzon, led the uprising in 1950. When the rebellion failed, the movement waned but their supporters and remnants played important roles when the Communist Party resurfaced in 1968. Since 1980, there has been a marked decline in the mass support base of the CPP. The communist movement suffered from the collapse of USSR and the general decline of communism in eastern Europe. One major reason was the irreconcilable rift among the cadres who differed how to proceed with the revolution without foreign support. From a peak of 30000, the CPP ranks decreased to less than 5000 in 1996. Early this year the initial phase of a peace accord was finalized and is now being implemented with high hopes.

MUSLIM REBELLION

The Muslim separatists have been fighting a battle of attrition since 1972.¹⁹ They are demanding a separate Muslim state in southern Philippines. When they modified their demand to autonomy instead of secession, a peace accord was also signed with them. The Muslim rebellion cost more than 120,000 lives lost in both camps. In 1996 thirteen provinces in southern Mindanao were granted full autonomy under an elected assembly headed by

the founder of Muslim rebellion. The government also agreed to integrate into the armed forces selected Muslim rebels.

MILITARY RIGHTISTS

With the declaration of Martial Law in 1972 by President Marcos, the Philippine military assumed larger role in the society.²⁰ The military budget grew rapidly as it became the main instrument of President Marcos to perpetuate his power. Selected military officers became administrators of "juicy" government agencies, moving away from the long tradition of political non-partisanship. As public support withdrew from the military, the young officers assigned in the field became demoralized and discontented about the way the military was being used. In 1982, a small group of mid-level officers formed the Reform the Armed Forces Movement [RAM]. This organization spearheaded the "Peoples Power" revolution that toppled President Marcos and installed President Aquino in 1986. Despite attempts to de-politicize the military, they become emboldened and staged several failed coups d'etat.

When President Ramos, the former Chief of Staff of the military, was elected in 1992, he engaged the military rebels in dialogue and negotiation and instituted military reforms that eliminated the rightist threat. The focus and future trend of the military are towards professionalization. In 1993, the Senate passed the Modernization Act of the military.

CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES IN PHILIPPINE SECURITY

Confidence-Building Measures [CBMs] played an essential role in improving the relations between the East and West during the Cold War. They helped to facilitate a process of interaction when no hostile intentions were intended. they also provided enough transparency to build up trust not to react aggressively on matters concerning security. Important lessons maybe learned from the European experience. One lesson is that timing is critical.²¹ It is the main purpose of this study to determine the applicability of CBMs in the present atmosphere²² of global peace to Philippine security both for internal and external security concerns.

There is relative calm in the security environment today-- more than at any time of Philippine history. However, there is anxiety about the future security. This feeling is true especially to the Filipinos. The Philippines feel that it can no longer depend on the United States when US interests are no longer focused on Southeast Asia.²³ There was tremendous fear that the country would not be able to stand alone after the US left its bases in 1991. It now appears that the country has successfully passed its difficult transition from authoritarianism to having a democratic nation with an independent foreign policy. The financial crises that hit the whole region of east Asia will test the financial restructuring the Philippines instituted in 1980's. While there is no doubt

that economic interest is closely link with security, the crisis will not be touched in this paper.

The Filipinos look at democracy in two aspects²⁴: after the authoritarian rule of 1972-1986, the people want the right to participate in government affairs both internal and external and the necessary freedom of speech, press and other basic freedoms to make participation meaningful. In short, they want to make their own choices. There are concerns and challenges to this simple wish because there are threats, inside and outside of the country. How to handle these challenges without the use of, or threat of, the use of force is the principal end of Confidence-Building Measures. In the following paragraphs the security concerns of the Philippines are discussed. It will then be determined if CBMs can defuse the tensions.

ON INTERNAL SECURITY CONCERNS

In the last three decades of the counterinsurgency campaign, reconciliation was at the center of government's effort. However, most of the time reconciliation was only a pause for both parties to refit and regroup their resources. Preventing armed clashes and retaliatory raids that arise out of misperception has rarely been given attention. Experiences show those rebel groups "defend" the people against the government's allegedly harsh actions. It is very difficult to terminate armed hostilities once they start. Old and unresolved issues fuel further fighting. Given the *amour propio* or high regard for self-esteem, of the

Filipinos, no one among the combatants will withdraw from the fight.

Unlike an immediate offer of reconciliation, Confidence-Building Measures can stabilize the situation without determining winners or losers. CBMs do not actually prevent armed confrontations but they can regulate operations and provide assurance of benign intentions. In the Philippine context, CBMs are best initiated by a third party rather than by the belligerents. The clientist nature of the Filipinos leads them to obey the wishes of their patrons. In this case the role of the church personalities²⁵ to mediate must be sought. The powerful influence of religious leaders was evident when President Marcos was toppled in an almost bloodless "Peoples War" in 1986. Confidence and trust are a misnomer in CBMs. It is difficult to establish these in so short a time period. What the CBMs will do is create and stabilize the situation by providing tangible assurances regarding the purpose and intentions of each party. In the case of insurgency, only short term CBMs should be employed.²⁶ Examples are establishing cease-fire agreements, or the observance of cultural holidays common to all. For instance, during the Lenten or Christmas seasons. During these holidays, the Filipinos have long tradition of being more accommodating and receptive to Christian ways. There are social pressures to cease fighting and come to the negotiating table. In the past when this type of talks were held, they have broken down because of alleged

"violations" of the cease-fire agreements. During investigations, it was found that violations were done without the sanction or approval of the party concerned. In short, it was only a misperception that violations had been done deliberately, taking advantage of the lull. With communications in place,²⁷ the misunderstanding could have been easily verified. The CBMs should focus on the establishment of these reliable communication lines. More than any time, the prevailing peace now is the best time to establish "operational barriers" through an agreement on certain issues. The matter of amnesty can be discussed. The amnesty program offered in 1986 for the insurgents, and in 1990 for the rightist are in effect. There were those who applied, but many insurgents do not trust the government to honor the amnesty. They have reason not to, since incidents of kidnapping and execution on both sides occurred in the past²⁸.

It is surprising that literature on the use of CBMs in internal war is almost nil, perhaps because of the previous US-Soviet division. During the Cold War, the main thrust was the containment of communism. The end of that conflict gives pro-democratic governments like the Philippines an opportunity to voluntarily and unilaterally provide measures that will ensure the rebels of their safety. Suggestions as to the type of confidence-building measures to be undertaken should come from a third party. A viable approach is called the "Track Two", in which members of the academe, personalities with proper

credentials, and political scientists can recommend to the government how to proceed on this kind of CBM²⁹.

Foreign support for liberation wars has practically dried up after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Even China has stopped its covert support of Maoist communism. The communist movement in the Philippines has lost its popularity among the masses, but not their sympathy. There are legitimate issues the Communists have fought for. Injustice is one issue in which the majority of the people believed, but the assassinations of known corrupt government officials were not condoned by the masses. The long term solution to the insurgency problem is not the goal of CBMs.³⁰ The establishment of processes to discuss the options are the aim. Given that the conflict is near, the government will have to make arrangements that the rebels are not marginalized. CBMs can help by in putting in place a mechanism where the rebels are properly taken care of. One pressing demand is for the atrocities of the soldiers to be addressed. Again, the matter of "justice" is sensitive for both parties since they are both guilty to some extent of crimes and human rights violations. Finding the acceptable mix of solution is not a CBM issue, nor is trust. They are not a panacea.³¹ Instead, they must be viewed as a door for further discussion. The basic transformation of the problems of insurgency can be taken later. It maybe that the appropriate CBMs to pursue are not directly related to the conflict. In the case of Flor Contemplacion, the Filipina hanged

in Singapore in 1994, the government's response of cutting diplomatic ties united the people and set the stage for dialogue. During this time, several dialogues took place regarding cease-fire; and they were ultimately successful. For a while, clashes stopped. Thus, in the European experience, timing in introducing CBMs is critical.

Since rebellion and insurgency are practically a manifestation of grievances where the people are made to judge the legitimacy of both the rebels' and governments' actions, it is important that CBMs proposed are not seen as propaganda³² to alienate the rebels. In the case of Muslim secessionism, peace talks often failed because the government did not look at the historical disputes between Muslims and Christians. In 1995, the town of Ipil, a Christian community, in Southern Mindanao was attacked by Muslim rebels. The town was torched and almost 200 civilians were killed in retaliation for perceived anti-Muslim demands for a peace settlement.

CBMs are small but important steps, which, taken together with other measures, could enhance stability in the Philippines and improve internal security. The use of third a party to initiate the CBMs is effective in the Filipino culture. Religious leaders are preferred. The three major grouping of insurgents [Maoist insurgents, Muslim secessionists, and military rightists] should be dealt with separately because they are different in sub-culture orientation.

Up to now, CBMs have not consciously been used for the resolution of internal war. The Westerners have usually seen insurgency as a war of annihilation, seeing the annihilation of the rebel group as the only way to victory. The insurgency in the Philippines is unique in the sense that popular support is very strong. During the Marcos regime, when the military was almost "untouchable" and superior in arms and equipment, the rebels had more supporters and sympathizers. The people saw the insurgents as their army, the "people's army". The insurgents are now losing popularity because everybody is "weary and tired" of the long and protracted conflict. The practicality and flexibility of CBMs may now be applicable to internal stability. The proper timing is right now when there is a strong clamor by the people for resolution. Moreover, a number of political leaders known to be sympathetic to the rebels' cause are in the legislative assembly. They have the trust of the insurgents. More importantly, the regional norm today is peace and economic development.³³ The most important factors for effective CBM are when participants desire to cooperate and there is a demand for harmonious relations. These factors, along with other reasons explained, are currently present in the Philippines.

ON EXTERNAL SECURITY CONCERNS

Although the Philippines has no perceived external threat, it is greatly concerned with regional security issues in Southeast Asia. It is apparent that the security environment in the region

has a direct effect not only on security matters but on economic as well.

In the 1970's the Philippines began realigning its foreign policy away from the US. In search of trade partners other than the West³⁴, it strengthened its economic ties with Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia. Dropping its cultural hatred against Japan, it increased joint-ventures with them in natural resources. Another policy change was the establishment of diplomatic ties with mainland China when it voted its support for China's UN membership in the early 1970's. This expansion policy was further broadened with unofficial contacts with Soviet Union and other European countries. In 1976, formal ties with communist countries and non-aligned states were formalized. The use of military force against the Muslim secessionists was even curtailed to better the relations with Arab states. It should be noted that, despite this broader policy base, the ties with the US remain very strong, if not still dominant. As the Philippines sought greater balance in its regional relations, it oriented itself toward development and pragmatism. Still, external relations remain uncertain. There is the Sabah conflict with Malaysia and the multinational disputes concerning South China Sea³⁵.

SOUTH CHINA SEA DISPUTES

The dispute over the Spratly Islands is sensitive to the security of the Southeast Asian region not only because it

involves six littoral states in the area but also because of the strategic importance of South China Sea to the world. The first question that can be asked is whether an informal process of confidence-building measures will bear the fruits of peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Even when the security of the Philippines was practically under US in the early days of post-1946 Independence, the country sought good relations with its Asian neighbors, early attempts to form a viable regional organization failed. One reason was that the early organizations were formed by external powers, like the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization[SEATO] where Thailand and the Philippines are now the only regional members. Regional cooperation also did not succeed because of deep suspicion among the state leaders. MAPHILINDO [Malaysia, Philippines and Indonesia] was an example of such an attempt; and the ASA [Association of Southeast Asia] of Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines. The realization that their patron superpowers acted only in their own self-interest finally led the regional leaders to give strong support to regional cooperation. They experimented with various mixes of relationships based on their distinct cultures and history. Rejecting one single regional goal, they focused their cooperation in pursuit of national goals and interests. When ASEAN was formed, it was agreed that the common culture of consensus and consultation should be the basis of cooperation. Since its conception in 1967, ASEAN has been

criticized for its lack of concrete achievement.³⁶ Today, it is a functioning organization proceeding slowly, but moving towards a better mutual understanding of each other's and the region's needs. From this perspective, the Philippines will greatly contribute in the resolution of its own conflicts and lead the other nations in finding acceptable solutions. The concepts of Confidence-Building Measures, tuned to the culture of the Asians is the first step. The heterogeneous nature of the Southeast Asia region makes it outright difficult to employ multilateralism as was done in Europe. Following are some of the way in which CBMs might be applicable to the South China Sea dispute.

INSIGHTS AND PROSPECTS

COOPERATION RATHER THAN COORDINATION.

The personalistic nature of the regional leaders leads to a preference for informal structure and greater reliance on personal relations. This kind of arrangement has beguiled the westerners but this is the only way cooperation will work in the region. Among the ten nations of ASEAN, the Philippines has the least number of "enemies." Chinese cooperation, has been difficult to assure one. The real intention of the Chinese has baffled its Asian neighbors who fear that military options are preferred by the Chinese. Recently, force has been displayed when, in 1996 Chinese naval forces occupied Mischief Reef, one of the islands under dispute. Mischief Reef lies just 200 miles from

the Philippines. Fortunately, as the Chinese are trying to win over allies in Southeast Asia it did not contest the forceful ejection of their landmarks by Philippine soldiers. In 1996, the Philippines and China exchanged defense attachés. Presently, military "courtesy calls" are being finalized between the military commanders of the two countries. Using consensus and personal ties, ASEAN members "persuaded" China to publicly announce that the Spratly matter is a multinational issue, unlike Taiwan, which it considers as an internal matter. This is a great concession from the Chinese. The "building blocks" used to reach this stage were laid by the groundwork of CBMs.

In the case of the Sabah claim with Malaysia, the two state leaders simply agreed to ignore the matter and focus their cooperation on economic activity. Since then, the relations between the two countries have been. It is hoped that, when the time is "ripe", the status of Sabah will be resolved in Asian way.

NON-INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS.

Westerners have not fully grasped this concept in the culture of Asians. It is a genuine basis of their relationships. It may be seen as an excuse to avoid fulfilling one's commitment, but it is not so. This principle has made ASEAN survive its conflicting cultures³⁷ The membership of Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar has strengthened ASEAN solidarity, whatever the skeptical critics would say. China would not agree to any terms of peaceful

settlement in its disputes if not for the solid front that ASEAN has "silently" showed. The Philippine history of colonialism has made it tolerant of others' beliefs. It has the patience and capacity to understand the other countries' way of living and running their government. If ever there are issues concerning internal policies, it is best to use the gradual, methodical approaches of CBMs. For Asians, the process of interactions is more important than the end product. This is especially true in the initial phase. Thus, in the settlement of the South China Sea dispute, it is better to establish communication links through personal relations rather than official delegations. China will surely disagree with any multi-lateral discussion of arrangements or equal partitions of the islands as have been proposed in the past. However, environmental issues affecting the disputed area will be received favorably. Vietnam and the Philippines started joint scientific explorations early last year. Their initial report on the effects of sea pollution has gained interest among the littoral states, many of which will join the next investigation in 1999. China has said it will send delegations. The personal friendship among the scientists is a viable communication link to help policy planners of the countries involved. The concept of shame or face saving in Asian culture is also deeply imbedded. Unlike the western culture, where objectives are clearly defined, the Asians will not confront one another if it will cause embarrassment.³⁸ Thus, the simple

question of asking China about its intentions is considered to be provocative. CBMs in arms reduction in the European context are measurable and this makes the parties feel safe. The objectives are clearly stated. This kind of defining of the goals and responsibilities will not work in Asia, much less in Southeast Asia. When President Ramos and President Jiang met at November 1996 APEC meeting, it was expected that there would be confrontations. Instead the two leaders sang a duet of Elvis Presley's "Love Me Tender." It was a conclusion to their agreement to conduct military delegation visitations on a regular basis. In 1997, the Command and General Staff Course[GSC] students of the Philippines visited Beijing for three days.

CBMS AND MULTILATERALISM.

The development of multilateralism in the resolution of the South China Sea dispute will not work well simply because bilateral agreements are easier to make and, more importantly, easy for control by the stronger state like China³⁹. But perhaps, CBMs on other issues in which it is easy to establish links will lead to joint or multilateral arrangements later. The present prevailing peace is a good time to look for "peripheral" concerns common to the disputing nations. Piracy is one problem the littoral states are commonly facing and only joint action among them can solve it. Again, in this case the CBMs are used to lay the foundations and not aim for the solution. While this kind of approach is tedious, it helps to demonstrate to the claimants,

especially China, the benefits of multilateral arrangements for peaceful settlement. Another gain from this indirect approach is the norm and rule of behavior that it will develop over time. The evolutionary nature of CBMs will greatly help in laying the building blocks for confidence that make stability possible. National interests and goals are better served when actions of neighbors or intentions are not seen as hostile. The confidence and trust are enhanced when there are reliable, trustworthy and open lines of communication.

CONCLUSION

The Philippines is enjoying the most peaceful time in its history. The problem of insurgency --communism and Muslim secessionism--was resolved early this year with the signing of peace accords with the rebels; the military rightist rebellion has been satisfactorily put aside; and relations with its Asian neighbors are smooth and warm.

The most important step now is to sustain, and further improve the prevailing relative stability. Having emerged from a difficult transition and somehow still feeling its own way after US had left, it must look for itself the appropriate relationships to catch up in economic and security development. The flexibility of confidence-building measures is well suited to the present situation in the Philippines. This research paper found that even in the internal security matters, the CBMs were successful in "winning over" the rebels. Through small steps of

voluntary CBMs, the government was received well in their intentions to appreciate the legitimate demands for nationalistic policies. In foreign relations, the Philippines led the ASEAN members in slowly building up the personal communication lines with former adversaries. The establishment of technical working groups[TWGs] to find acceptable policy in South China Sea dispute is already a working model for other contentious issues

There are pre-requisites, however for determining which CBMs will work well. Essential to establishing trust is an understanding of the "strategic culture" of participants. The modernization brought about by the colonial era have not eradicated the Malay culture that distinguishes them from the westerners. The CBMs used in ironing the peace accords with the insurgents took into consideration the groupings as a "collective." In this approach, the strong identification of the members with the rebel organization and the responsibility of the leaders with their men were given the basis of peace settlement. An example is the integration to the armed forces of the rebels. With this the leaders showed that the interests of their men were taken cared of. One lesson learned on the failure of CBM was when the hierarchy of the rebel group was attempted to be broken for "divide and conquer" technique. The concept of Hierarchy still pre-dominates the Philippine culture. In another instance, the CBMs on the selected amnesty program for the members failed. The

advice of the "elders" of the collective had to be taken for the program to be successful.

There is much to be welcomed in the changes in the strategic environment after the US withdrawal from the Philippines. As it is still changing, conflict and disputes remain. As the nation least prepared to defend itself, the country has to rely on friendship, not to buy time to arm itself but for a long and lasting peace in the region. Its experiences in the regional security arrangements are characterized by bilateral relations. However, to increase its contact in the region, it is active in multilateral and cooperative fora. The most successful is the ASEAN. Presently, the most pressing need of security element for the country is its dispute in South China Sea. The lack of solid US support based on the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty, deters any definite actions. Present developments on CBMs involving the contesting states are very promising. In 1996, China expressed its willing to discuss the dispute in multinational level. Resulting from previous CBMs among the ASEAN, the Chinese agreed to put in place Technical Working groups[TWGs] to investigate policy options. As a practical form of opening communications, the quasi-diplomatic Conference on the south China Sea was convened in 1994 in Bukittingi, Indonesia. In a classic CBM technique, the agenda covers a broad range of topics concerning the area of dispute. An exchange of views and carefully worded statements released at the end reflect their government's

influence or stand regarding several proposals of reducing the tension. General agreement were passed on the following principles: no use of force to settle the dispute; possibility of undertaking cooperation for mutual benefit of overlapping claims and self-restraint not to complicate the conflicting claims. These principles have been reaffirmed in subsequent meeting of similar conferences CBMs have been criticized as more of process than substance. This is happening in this case. Until now, the participants are unable to agree on fundamental matters such as the size and boundary of the disputes. Although it is agreed the peaceful means is the way to resolve the issues, they could not agree on what process to proceed for cooperative solution, much less on specific time frame. The only concrete result was the agreement to establish working groups on resource assessment and scientific research. The most important accomplishment in the opinion of this researcher is their commitment to meet regularly. As was explained, the Asian culture is critical for any CBM to be effective. The goal of CBMs in Southeast Asia is not finding the solution but rather a consensus on how to arrive at it. Thus the European model will not work well. In Europe-CBM style, objectives are clearly defined. Besides, among the members of ASEAN there is a preference for informal structures. They also place greater emphasis on personal relations. This cultural difference takes the Asians longer to formulate even than the

problem itself [The westerners blink their eyes incredulously at this relationship].

There is already existing a diverse set of relations between the Philippines and its Asian neighbors unconsciously built upon over the period of just being as Asians. They have common patterns and habits on security and economic interests. The strong consensus among them is to expand and explore these ties. for broader cooperation. The Philippine experience to make CBMs work is to start small, proceed slowly. As the Southeast Asia region becomes aware of the need for interdependence, its member nations become conscious that none among their friendly neighbors have hidden intentions other than to have a mutual peace and stability that works for the benefit of all.

(7,900 words)

ENDNOTES

¹ Sabah is an island in the southwest of Malaysia. It was originally part of the Sultanate of Sulu. Sulu is part of the Philippines. In 1700's, the Sultan of Sulu leased Sabah to the Sultans of Sabah who sub-leased the island to the West India Company of the United Kingdom. When Malaysia was granted its independence, Sabah was made part of it. Philippines has since then claimed Sabah.

² The end of the Cold War has set the stage for ASEAN members to pursue positive cooperative security. However, enduring territorial disputes, mistrust, competing claims and increase military spending have combined to weaken the potential for regional peace structures. Dr. Sar Desai, Southeast Asia: Past And Present, 4th ed. [Boulder: Westview Press, 1997], 145.

³ Leif R. Rosenberger, "Southeast Asia's Currency Crisis: A Diagnosis And Prescription," Contemporary Southeast Asia, [December 1997], 223-251.

⁴ Among the causes are "crony capitalism", weak banking laws and especially the presence of small elite class which control the economic and political aspects of the society. Claude A. Buss, Cory Aquino And The People Of The Philippines, [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987].

⁵ Sheldon Simon, "Southeast Asia: In The Regional Crossroads," in The Future of Asian-Pacific Security Collaboration. [Washington DC: Lexington Books, 1988] 65

⁶ The prerequisites of dialogue have been explored in the literature of conflict/dispute termination and arms control and disarmament. A Soviet view on these measures is explained in Igor Scherbak's Confidence-Building Measures And International Security, A Soviet Approach [Geneva: UNIDIR, 1996]

⁷ When future intentions are linked to the past histories of the nations, the mistrust of historical events brings down the trust which has been established painfully and slowly. The case of Japan's brutalities in WW II is a classic example.

⁸ The United Nations has conducted series of studies on disarmament. See "Proceedings of the Baku Conference, 2-4 June 1987." UNIDIR, 1988. United Nation Publication Sales no. GV E. F8801. Likewise, various peace institutes in the world have continuously sponsored/supported studies of different approaches to regional stability. The list of these institutions can be found in Lubek Wanton's Peace Organizations [Geneva: UNIDIR, 1993].

⁹ Scherbak, 19.

¹⁰ Marie-France Desjardins, Rethinking Confidence Building, [New York: Adelphi Papers No. 307 [1996], 20.

¹¹ The "Colonial Mentality" of the Filipinos was the result of two differing cultures that have settled in their social psyche.

Nationalists have played this attitude against the continuing lack of national identity and weak political will. See Teodoro Agoncillo, Filipino Nationalism, 1872-1970 [Quezon City: R.P. Garcia Publishing, 1974].

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Renato Constantino, Neocolonial Identity and Counterconsciousness [New York: White Plains, 1978].

¹⁴ Benedick J. Kerkvliet, The Huk Rebellion: A Study Of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines [Berkley: University of California Press, 1977], 34 and 72-82.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Donald McCloud, Southeast Asia: Tradition And Modernity In The Contemporary World [Boulder: Westview Press, 1995], 16.

¹⁷ Stephen Shalom, The United States And The Philippines: A Study Of Neocolonialism [Philadelphia: Human Issues, 1981]

¹⁸ Kerkvliet, 34.

¹⁹ David Sturtevant, Popular Uprisings in the Philippines 1840-1940 [New York: Cornell University Press, 1976] The Moros have a proud history of fighting for their existence independent of the Filipinos. Although the Morolands were under Spain and American authority, the peace settlement was more of a treaty arrangement.

²⁰ Bernardo Villegas, "The Philippines in 1986: Reconstruction in the Post-Marcos Era", Asian Survey [February 1987] 194-205

²¹ Ralph Cossa, Asia-Pacific Confidence-Building Measures ed., [Washington DC, CSIS, 1995] 92. See also James Macintosh, "Confidence-Building Measures: A Conceptual Exploration" in RB Byers et al eds., Confidence-Building Measures And International Security [New York: Westview Press, 1987] 9-30.

²² The present "peace" today results from the absence of superpower competition. With only the US as the superpower, there is a "strategic calmness." Accordingly, pacifists argue that the environment calls for dialogue to make the world stability lasting. Scherbak, 20.

²³ Larry Wortzel, "ARF: Asian Security Without A US Umbrella", linked from USAWC available from <<http://Carlisle-army.mil/ns-usassi/pubs/96/aseanp.2html>> accessed on February 2, 1998.

²⁴ Alejandro Lichauco, Nationalists Economics: History, Theory And Practice [Quezon City, Philippines: 1988] 4

²⁵ Constantino, 78

²⁶ Desjardins, 50

²⁷ Fr. Ed dela Torre, interview by author, April 1986 Quezon City, Philippines

²⁸ Amnesty International, "Violations of Human Rights in the Philippines" UN Report March, 1989.

²⁹ Amitav Acharya, New Regional Order in Southeast Asia: ASEAN in the Post-Cold War Era [London: ISSI, 1993] 39,

³⁰ This is one disadvantage of CBMs--they do not work for a solution. As US Secretary Perry has said " it [CBM] is a solution looking for a problem." It should be understood, however, that in the Asian culture, the "process of talking" is more important than arriving at a conclusion. See Donald McCloud, "Bases for Political Community in Traditional Southeast Asia" in McCloud, 41

³¹ Cossa, 24

³² Ibid., 28

³³ Rosenberger, 223

³⁴ McCloud, 212. The "independent" action of President Marcos was welcomed by the nationalists but the US was dismayed. Political analysts claim that this was the start of US "cold feelings" toward the Philippines. See also Renato Constantino, The Philippines: The Continuing Past [Quezon City, Philippines: The Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1978].

³⁵ Despite the Philippines' claim, the relationship with Malaysia is very warm. The Malaysians want formal withdrawal of the claim but Philippine senators refuse to do so. In the meantime, the issue was set aside by both parties. McCloud, 213.

³⁶ Juan Magno, ASEAN: Talking Box [Manila: University Press, 1990]

³⁷ Ralph Cossa, Confidence and Security-Building Measures: Are They Appropriate In Asia? [Hawaii: Pacific Forum, 1995], 8

³⁸ McCloud, 59. The concept of personal shame has been part of the Malay culture ever since their migration from Indonesia in the pre-Christian era. See also Roland Dolan, 88.

³⁹ Among the Southeast Asians, friendship is generally considered between two parties only. The idea actually is partnership against a common enemy.

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