

Assessing the Expanded Role of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in Nation-Building

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Traditionally, the formal purpose of the Armed Forces is to act against foreign enemies, but in reality they have other and varied functions ... The Armed Forces have a critical nation-building function.

Former President Fidel V. Ramos, 1993

ABSTRACT

Apart from traditionally fighting the nation's wars, the Armed Forces of the Philippines has often played a crucial developmental role in nation-building. Whether such should continue or not, this paper argues that the expansion or diminution of the AFP's nation-building role ultimately depends upon its eventual impact not only on the development of the organization or the nation but on the very survival of the state itself. Supporting its argument, the paper finds evidence in the nation-building history of the AFP during five periods, beginning with the revolutionary era between 1896 and 1901, and concluding with the post-EDSA period up until the present time.

Based on the evidence, it seems apparent that the traditional nation-building role is still best for the AFP and the country, although certain modifications may be in need of adoption. First, the AFP needs to focus more on its core competency of war-fighting than its civil-related activities, given its limited resources. Second, the AFP needs to be streamlined so that the remaining mainstream force composes the combat arms. Third, government has to seriously enhance the AFP's material and technical capabilities. And finally, the restoration of unit cohesiveness and the culture of excellence in the AFP must be made a priority if the organization is to remain effective. This

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includes the elimination of members whose values, character, and behavior do not reflect the best ideals of soldiery.

KEYWORDS: Nation-building, traditional role, developmental role, Armed Forces of the Philippines

Introduction

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has always played a role in nation-building throughout Philippine history. At first glance, this fact seems harmless. However, in the context of the developing world, in which the armed forces has often intervened in order to “save” the nation, such a role may not be that harmless, especially to legitimate civilian authority. This situation continues to exist for the Philippines. Perhaps the relevant question, therefore, is: How should the nation-building role of the AFP be fine-tuned so that it actually serves genuine national interest rather than threatens it?

This paper argues that the expansion or limitation of the nation-building role of the AFP ultimately depends upon its anticipated impact not only on the organization and national development but on the survival of the state. It uses as evidence the nation-building history of the AFP. In particular, the paper examines the nation-building role the AFP has played – first, during the revolutionary period, initially against Spain from 1896 to 1898, and later against the United States from 1899 to 1901; second, during the post-revolution American (and later, Japanese) colonial period from 1901 until the end of WWII in 1945; third, during the early years of the post-WWII republic, from 1946 until the declaration of martial law in 1972; fourth, during the martial law period and the remainder of the Marcos years from 1972 until 1986; and fifth, during the post-Marcos redemocratized era following the EDSA revolution in 1986 until the present time. Thereafter, a general assessment on the impact of the AFP’s participation in nation-building, both on the organization and the state, is presented. Relevant conclusions and recommendations follow the assessment.

The AFP and Its Nation-Building Role in General

For purposes of this paper, nation-building relative to the AFP is defined as any program, project, or activity undertaken by the AFP in ensuring not only the survival of the Filipino nation-state but likewise its development. Throughout the history of the Filipino people, it is apparent that the AFP has played a significant role in nation-building. Even as the AFP struggled to develop itself in its early years, the organization had already been thrust into the role of helping to create a Filipino nation-state by fighting colonial bondage—first, against the Spaniards from

1896 to 1898; then the Americans from 1899 to 1901; and finally, the Japanese from 1941 to 1945.

The nation-building role of the AFP did not cease after the dust of war had settled, however. It was only cast into a new peace-time dimension: that of security and development. Between the end of the Filipino-American War and World War II, the Philippine Constabulary (PC) and the early Philippine Army (PA) – both AFP forerunners – maintained peace and order throughout the Philippine archipelago so that the American colonial, and later, commonwealth government could pursue development in favor of both the American and Filipino people. From the post-war declaration of Philippine independence on July 4, 1946 until the present day, the same pattern has generally evolved, although this time occurring within the framework of a Philippine republic. The AFP has found itself not only securing the Filipino nation-state from long-running communist and Muslim separatist insurgencies, but also playing a significant developmental role in helping to build physical infrastructure, assisting in the management of disasters, and leading the hearts and minds of people from dissension towards national unity. This nation-building role of the AFP was intensified during the martial law period when the military was empowered to assume civil governance and public administration to a very significant extent.

In February 1986, an entirely new dimension in the nation-building role of the AFP emerged when the opportunity for it to assume a far more significant role in determining the security and development of the republic presented itself. The EDSA revolution has permanently altered the doctrine governing the traditional limits imposed upon the nation-building role of the AFP. From then on, certain segments of the AFP nurtured the belief that they can do a better job at advancing Philippine nationhood and not just portions of it. The eminent dysfunctions in the politico-socio-economic system of the Philippine state only serve to encourage this belief. Samuel Huntington validated this belief when he wrote that “What draws soldiers into the political arena is not their own strength but rather the weakness of the political system” (Ramos, 1997:15).

The Revolutionary Period: 1896-1898; 1899-1901

The role of the AFP in nation building began during the revolution against Spain from 1896 to 1898. This move was undertaken by Filipinos in their quest for independence from colonial bondage. It was therefore done in order to create a Filipino nation-state.

The fledgling Philippine army played a crucial role in the revolution. The army evolved as an essential part of nation-building, along with the *Katipunan*

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led by Andres Bonifacio in the very early stages of the revolution, and later, the First Philippine Republic led by Emilio Aguinaldo. Without an organized and capable army, there was no way that the early Filipinos would have attained the goal of nation-building in 1898 against their Spanish colonizers, who had until then ruled the islands for 333 years. In fact, Dery wrote that initially, the Filipinos' "attempts failed because they lacked a vital factor necessary for such endeavor – the existence of an organized and unified army" (Dery, 1995:1).

In the evolving stages of the revolution, however, as the army developed, it became the bastion of Philippine resistance upon which all the other fledgling institutions of the "new" republic depended, not only for their continued operation but their very survival. The army of the First Philippine Republic, formally created by the Malolos Convention in 1898 uniting both rebel advocates of armed revolution and the more peacefully inclined intellectuals (Soriano, 1996:315), "sustained the Filipinos' struggle for self-rule long after the other institutions created by them had collapsed" (Dery, 1995:1) in the face of the enemy's onslaught. Such was the nature of the nation-building role and participation of the early Philippine army, both in the struggle against Spain and in the succeeding one against the United States from 1899 until 1901.

The American Era: 1901-1946

As the 20th century began, the nation-state that the early Filipinos had just created had to be put on hold for another half-century, as the Philippines endured yet another period of colonial bondage – this time under the Americans who won over the Filipinos in 1901. Like their Spanish predecessors, the American colonialists advanced their concept of uniting the islands at the expense of Filipino nationhood. They suppressed Filipino resistance by employing Filipino partisanship, especially that based on ethnic/ geographical diversity – for instance, the use of Tagalogs or Ilocanos from Luzon to suppress Mindanaoans. In this sense, the nation-building capacity of the Filipinos under the employ of the American-created Philippine Constabulary (PC) and Philippine Scouts was itself suppressed throughout the colonial period at least until the advent of World War II. As Golay (1997:464) wrote: "As the war with Spain was transformed into the Philippine–American War at the turn of the century, the US had chosen to share the burden of 'pacification' by co-opting Filipinos into the insular garrison, and in 1901, Congress authorized recruitment by the army of special scout units composed of Filipinos".

The opportunity for a renewal of Filipino nation-building again surfaced with the onset of WWII. Against the oncoming invasion by the Japanese Imperial

Army, both Americans and Filipinos (from all ethnic backgrounds) of the American Commonwealth in the Philippines had to unite for their survival. Thus, in 1941 “President Roosevelt inducted the (newly re-established) Philippine Army into the United States Armed Forces of the Far East (USAFFE)” (Golay, 1997:465). Through these developments, it must be noted that the Filipinos had never lost their appetite for independence. In fact, President Manuel Quezon took advantage of every available opportunity to advance Filipino nationhood.

Thus, in the face of fighting and dying while struggling against Japanese invaders in WWII, Filipinos advanced their nation-building agenda. Of course, once again the quest for Filipino nationhood eluded the Filipinos when Bataan fell to superior Japanese firepower on April 9, 1942, later followed by the fall of Corregidor on May 6 (Zaide, 1983:287-307). Once more, nation-building had to be put on hold from 1942 to 1944, as Filipinos and Americans struggled to survive Japanese occupation where again, Filipinos were forced to act against brother Filipinos, further undermining their developing spirit of nationalism. Such was the condition of nation-building in the Philippines during that period, to which the contribution of the re-established Philippine Army was indispensably significant.

The Post-War Years: 1946-1972

Following the Allied victory in the last great war, Philippine independence was declared on July 4, 1946. The earlier nation-building struggles of the Filipinos had finally paid off. From that day forward, nation-building came into the hands of the Filipinos themselves. And it no longer only signified the quest for self-determination which had already been won, but took on a significantly different form of expression. Nation-building, at that point in Philippine history, had progressed into a new phase – national development – of which security remained a vital component. As a result, this signaled a shift in the role of the armed forces. In reality, however, the nation-building role of the organization from then on was no longer confined to purely security matters. It gradually and significantly involved developmental functions.

Besides its firepower, the armed forces’ equipment and discipline proved valuable nation-building assets. With the new republic came the birth of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The new Republic issued a series of executive orders under the umbrella of the 1935 Commonwealth Act No. 1 to form the Philippine Air Force (PAF) on July 3, 1947; the Philippine Navy (PN) on January 5, 1951; and the AFP as an organization composed of the army, navy, air force, and constabulary on December 23, 1950 (Davide Commission, 1990:28-29). Of course, the Philippine Constabulary and Philippine Army had already been

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established earlier, on July 18, 1901 (Pobre, 2000:99) and January 11, 1936 (Jose, 1992:51), respectively.

The AFP, largely for its material equipment, training, and discipline, was engaged by government in developmental activities as early as the immediate post-war years, especially in rehabilitating war-torn areas. But perhaps the classical representation of its significant contribution to nation-building during the post-war period belongs to Defense Secretary Magsaysay's employment of the AFP in his "Left Hand–Right Hand" strategy against the rebellious Huks in the 1950s. To entice the Huks back into the folds of the law, Magsaysay, on the one hand, utilized the AFP in bringing development onto the far-flung areas of the country in a symbolic extension of the 'left arm' of friendship, as government neglect had been among the Huks' complaints. Magsaysay "mobilized the military in building feeder roads in inaccessible areas, particularly the favorite breeding grounds of discontent and unrest" (HPC, 1978:303), among other developmental projects figured in prominently by the AFP Corps of Engineers.

On the other hand, counter-insurgency operations by the AFP's newly created Battalion Combat Teams (BCTs) were unleashed onto the Huks in areas where the government's developmental initiatives were unwelcome. Anti-Huk operations were largely conducted by the PC and then jointly by the AFP between August 1948 and October 1966 (Agoncillo, 1990:454-457). Between 1950 and 1955, the AFP claimed it had killed over 6,000 Huks, wounded nearly 2,000, captured 4,700, and forced almost 9,500 to surrender (Kerkvliet, 1979:245). Finally, Operation "Thunder Lightning," personally supervised by Magsaysay, decimated the Huks – killing 43, capturing 88, and accepting the surrender of 54 others over a span of 211 days. The four-year Huk rebellion officially ended on May 17, 1954 with the surrender of Huk Supremo Luis Taruc (Greenberg, 1987:128-142).

The demonstrated effectiveness and efficiency with which the AFP dispatched its nation-building functions in both the security and developmental arena perhaps provided the blueprint for which the AFP again became employed some fifteen years later – this time in a much more significant manner.

Martial Law and the Marcos Years: 1972-1986

Much literature has been written about the martial law period in the Philippines and how it has impacted on Filipino institutions and nation-building both favorably and unfavorably. The AFP is certainly one significant institution whose nation-

building role during the martial law period has permanently altered its character and aspirations. Much of the non-combat or developmental role already performed by the AFP until 1972 was significantly expanded by martial law. Contrary to popular political analysis, the AFP did not share equal political power with Marcos during the period. It was only subordinate to him. However, the effective primary subordinate status it enjoyed under the president gave the AFP immense political power – the most it had ever experienced in Philippine history, second only to ruling the country itself. This is a crucial point whose implications have reverberated throughout Filipino nation-building history. Merged with Huntington's observation that the political system's very weakness invited military intervention, the AFP's political power at this time becomes a contentious issue prevalent in developing nation-states like the Philippines.

Like Magsaysay, Marcos understood that development was key not only towards resolving the insurgency problem, but also in advancing the Philippines as a respectable member in the community of nations. In not only intensifying but also accelerating the nation-building agenda, therefore, Marcos turned largely to AFP efficiency and effectiveness in executing his pet programs and projects. The Department of National Defense (DND) / AFP Home Defense Program, begun in 1969, became the official vehicle through which the AFP's contributions to nation-building were channeled. The program proved to be the national doctrine for defense and development in attaining the objectives of national security and development. As Crisol noted in 1978, the program resulted in the "utilization of the AFP as a major resource in nation-building" (Crisol, 1978:116). More specifically stated, the then commanding general of the Philippine Army Fortunato Abat said in a speech: "Whenever the civilian government has deemed it necessary ... we have been directly involved in the responsibilities of public administration and community development" (Crisol, 1978:93).

From the many books Marcos wrote, it is apparent that he understood the Philippine problem more than anybody. Marcos correctly assessed that unless the oligarchy was effectively controlled by government, underdevelopment and social inequity would continue. In fact, he knew that the insurgency and rebellion the country faced were largely due to these injustices. Thus, the strategy Marcos sought to implement was a revolution from the center (Agbayani, 1979:284-287) guided by "constitutional authoritarianism" (Sevilla, 1973:83) – a euphemism for martial law, of course, where the AFP figured in prominently.

Since the insurgencies were into every facet of public life – something already understood from Magsaysay's era – martial law countered by employing

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the AFP in almost every sector and industry. Magsino wrote in 1974 that the DND / AFP Home Defense Program was into “developing a citizen armed force for national security and nation-building” (HPC, 1984:45), “promoting political stability, maintaining peace and order, supplementing infrastructure construction, and engaging in many other socio-economic activities” (Magsino, 1974:100) like managing government-owned or controlled corporations. In fact, Magsino’s study recommended that the AFP’s nation-building role in these areas be expanded, insinuating that the civilians were not doing as good a job as the soldiers anyhow (Magsino, 1974:113-114).

Despite views to the contrary, the nation-building agenda was served during the Marcos period. For instance, in the field of construction alone, “AFP engineer battalions completed a total of 1.33 billion pesos worth of infrastructure projects from 1973 to 1981” (Davide Commission, 1990:50). Criticisms, however, are not also without basis. Perhaps the most criticized of institutions, the AFP had contributed both positively and negatively to nation-building during the period. Despite its positive contributions, however, the AFP stands to account for alleged human rights abuses committed by unscrupulous members unable to handle their immense powers. As a collective institution, it is perceived to have stood passively by even as the legitimate political authority it was sworn to serve gradually lost its legitimacy by its own actions. As the political decay advanced, the increasing weakness of the political system began to attract reformist AFP members, thereby dividing the institution. The nation-building role, therefore, that had maximized the utilization of the AFP’s capabilities and capacities, had also eventually compromised the organization’s values and perception of its limits. Martial rule provided the AFP significant nation-building experience for some to conclude that they could better advance the nation than an incompetent or illegitimate ruler. The opportunity to test this theory occurred in February 1986.

The Post-EDSA Period: 1986-Present

Political analysts say that there have been three golden opportunities in Philippine history which could have brought about meaningful revolutionary reforms but did not. These were the revolutionary government of Emilio Aguinaldo (1898-1901), Ferdinand Marcos’ martial rule (1972-1981), and Corazon Aquino’s People Power revolutionary government (1986-1987). For instance, the latest opportunity had indeed restored democracy, but did nothing to restrain the return of elite democracy or to level the playing field ensuring social equity. As Evangelista wrote in 2002, “democratic institutions were restored, but the return to power of the oligarchs, the series of military coups, and corruption in high places of government negated the gains of the People Power Revolution” (Evangelista, 2002:16).

The success of the four-day EDSA People Power Revolt in February 1986 and the military's vastly influential nation-building role in the previous regime transformed the AFP into a non-traditional military institution, much like the Indonesian military, whose security and developmental roles seemed inevitably intertwined.

Traditional Nation-Building Role: The First Perspective

There are two general perspectives from which to analyze the nation-building role of the AFP after EDSA. The first is that which has evolved in republican states as the traditional perspective. It adopts the Clausewitzian doctrine that the rightful place of the soldier is merely as an extension or instrument of the legitimate political leadership. It was this perspective that the mainstream AFP chose to adopt. The post-EDSA AFP opted to return to the traditional role of the military before martial rule. To appease members who welcomed an expanded role for the AFP, then AFP chief General Fidel Ramos sought active reforms – being careful, however, not to create unnecessary enemies of those from the Reform the AFP Movement (RAM) and Marcos “loyalists” whose numbers and influence were still significant. Under Ramos, “AFP” became “New AFP”. This had two symbolic messages. One, it signaled to the civilian leadership, RAM, and the rest of the AFP that the institution was “going back to barracks” or returning to its traditional role prior to martial rule. Two, it started the AFP’s campaign to win back the hearts and minds of the people whom it had alienated as martial rulers.

The nation-building agenda of the Philippines has not really changed much since Magsaysay and Marcos. Put simply, these continue to be security and development. However, there is now an increased sense of urgency as the effects of overpopulation, dwindling resources, increased international competition, and fast-paced technological development put escalating pressure on the Philippines to not only catch up with the rest of the developing world but to intensify its developmental initiatives. Almost from day one, the Aquino administration was already beset with domestic security problems that had to be effectively managed before meaningful socio-economic reforms could be put in place.

Not unexpectedly, the nation-building capacities of the AFP were maximized in their utility by the Aquino administration. On the security front, the AFP had to allocate resources to counter coups that until then had been devoted solely to counter-insurgency. There were seven coups attempted by military rebels to oust the Aquino government from power: (1) the July 1986 Manila Hotel Incident, (2) the November 1986 “God-Save-the-Queen Plot”, (3) the January 1987 GMA-7 Incident, (4) the April 1987 “Black Saturday” Incident, (5) the July 1987 MIA

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Takeover Plot, (6) the August 1987 Coup Attempt (Davide Commission, 1990:135-200), and (7) the December 1989 Coup Attempt. All failed, but each managed to curtail any nation-building gain that had been acquired until its occurrence.

While there was no coup that had been attempted during the Ramos administration, another nonviolent coup dubbed “EDSA II” unseated President Joseph Estrada on January 19, 2001. In this coup, the mainstream AFP itself had joined the rebels composed of the political opposition and segments of the population which accused the president of gross incompetence and massive corruption.

Again, coups continue to hound the current administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo. On July 27, 2003, 323 junior officers and enlisted personnel from the AFP’s elite units (army scout rangers, navy special warfare group) executed Plan C of their attempted coup by occupying the Oakwood Apartments in the heart of Metro Manila and airing their grievances, which basically attacked moral and material corruption in the AFP and the government of Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo (Feliciano Commission, 2003:32-43). The incident failed and the mutineers were promptly arrested by the mainstream AFP, but not until the incident had already caused a stir both domestically and internationally – another setback for Filipino nation-building.

Since the exposition by the “Hello, Garci” tapes of alleged electoral fraud committed in the May 2004 national elections, recurrent coup rumors have hounded the Macapagal-Arroyo administration. For instance, incidents again transpired on February 24 and March 5, 2006 that saw some high-ranking members of the AFP challenge the administration by attempting a withdrawal of support from the president. Prior to the incidents, some active and retired members of the AFP have been suspected of seeking temporary alliances with the Left against the Arroyo administration. The AFP has been prompt in arresting and monitoring some of these elements.

On the developmental front, members of the AFP no longer occupy any of the civilian positions of power and influence they once did as martial rulers. However, the AFP continues to supplement civilian efforts as nation-building partners. For example, it continues to build and maintain physical infrastructure. According to Lira (2005:56-57), the 54th Engineer Brigade constructed roads and bridges in Central Mindanao representing government in these remote areas between 2001 and 2004. Navarro also wrote that in

2003, the 51st Engineer Brigade did the same in Central Luzon (Navarro, 2003:86-89).

In dealing with disasters, to which the Philippines is prone, AFP participation is almost routinary. One instance of this was cited by Carillo (2005:60-61), who assessed that the Naval Construction Brigade had been effective in its 2004–2005 disaster response operations in Luzon. During the June 1991 eruption of Mount Pinatubo that killed and injured some one million people, displaced and rendered homeless some 12,000 families, and destroyed an estimated 4 billion pesos worth of infrastructure and property around Pampanga, Zambales, and Tarlac, the AFP Engineer Task Force worked with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) in constructing a 47-hectare community composed of 3,000 houses, a 50-bed clinic, and a 120,000-gallon water system in Central Luzon (AFP, 1995:311-312).

In preserving the environment, AFP programs such as “Gintong Nayan,” Oplan “Makakalikasan,” “Adopt a Mountain,” and “Adopt-a-Bay” (Ponce, 2005:60-61) have managed to save 11,000 threatened animal and plant species, 60% of over-exploited fish stock, 15 million hectares of forest from fires and illegal logging, and 1/3 of Philippine coral reefs from vanishing in 30 years (Sabug, 2004:41-45).

The AFP nation-building agenda of security and development aptly captures the inverse interdependent nature of the relationship between the insurgency problem and development. Insurgency tends to rise as development becomes more elusive. To address this, the AFP adopted the “Clear–Hold–Consolidate–Develop” (C–H–C–D) strategy beginning in the late eighties. The strategy, described in the book “Silent War” by Victor Corpus, proved largely effective, at least until the “Consolidate” stage. Here, it must be noted that the “Develop” stage is not the primary responsibility of the AFP but of civilian government agencies and local leaders.

The AFP’s actions in war-torn Marag Valley from the ’70s until the ’90s best illustrate the CHCD strategy. The Valley, which sits astride Cagayan and Kalinga-Apayao in northern Luzon, housed the headquarters of the New People’s Army (NPA) for Luzon where some 1,000 cadres had put up a “shadow” government. Through the combined strategy of security and development, army mobile forces and special operations teams (SOTs) initially cleared the area through combat and psychological operations, and then the constabulary held the area as the territorial force. Thereafter, officials from various agencies consolidated

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government resources preparatory to developing the area. Today, a bustling community of Ilocanos and Itnegs abounds in the area which was gradually developed by a task force composed of elements from social welfare, health, AFP engineers, and non-governmental organizations. The Army Literacy Patrol System (ALPS) project had in fact taught the natives of the valley how to read and write (AFP, 1995:305-307). Insurgency no longer thrives in that area.

Other nation-building tasks the AFP performs today include support to law enforcement, humanitarian relief, and peacekeeping. In law enforcement, the AFP contributes elements to the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (NAKTF), Philippine National Police (PNP), and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), among others (Clement, 2004:49-55). With regard to humanitarian relief, the AFP is regularly mobilized every time there is an emergency, such as the recent mudslides in Quezon and Leyte. Meanwhile, it has also contributed to the international standing of the Philippines by volunteering its resources to help promote world peace in war-torn places such as Cambodia, Haiti, East Timor, Sierra Leone, and Iraq, among others.

Summing up the contemporary nation-building role of the AFP, then President Fidel Ramos said in a speech delivered during the army's anniversary in 1993:

Traditionally, the formal purpose of the Armed Forces is to act against foreign enemies, but in reality they have other and varied functions ... The Armed Forces have a critical nation-building function. Our engineering units are employed in building infrastructures and in rehabilitating calamity areas. Military units provide assistance for health, education, peace and order, environmental protection programs throughout our vast archipelago in our remotest communities (Ramos, 1993:41-42).

The military background of Ramos, the only professional soldier to ever become Philippine president to date, may only be coincidental, but his presidency is certainly uniquely placed in history as something Filipinos can be proud of. The twin nation-building agenda of security and development was certainly achieved during the Ramos years. First, security was attained by making peace with the Left, the Right, and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). Next, due to the stability that was achieved, the developmental agenda through economic reforms was able to advance. As Samuel Tan duly observed in 1997: "Political measures taken to pursue development were aimed at ensuring peace and security by resolving persistent political problems" (Tan, 1997:115). Perhaps, Ramos' example

defines the way members of the AFP should participate if they want to lead in nation-building.

Non-Traditional Nation-Building Role: The Second Perspective

The second perspective on what should be the nation-building role of the AFP after EDSA is that advocated by those who believe that the AFP itself can lead the country's nation-building, perhaps as in Indonesia or South Korea, or transform its capacity to do so, as in early England or France. This perspective essentially advances the adoption of a non-traditional nation-building role for the AFP. It is non-traditional because it lacks history. The common impression that a precedent was martial rule under Marcos is simply not accurate. That experience was not military rule but it certainly was *under* Marcos, a civilian. Even Aguinaldo was a civilian who only assumed the personality of a soldier since it was the call of the day.

Moreover, since this perspective lacks history, much of public opinion and law do not support it. The current policy in the country subscribes to the universally acclaimed republican dictum of civilian supremacy over the military. Overt military rule under any circumstances is simply looked upon as illegitimate. Consequently, much of public sentiment subscribes to what is found in law. Although there are certainly those who advocate otherwise for possibly valid reasons, at the moment, they appear to comprise the minority among the body politic.

Echoing an argument against advocates of the second perspective, David Wurfel criticized in 1988 that "The military was given a political role by Marcos, then seized for itself an even greater one in February 1986, and finds it difficult to retreat to the subordinate status that the constitution requires" (Wurfel, 1988:339). Wurfel warned that the establishment of a military junta "would initiate a vicious circle leading to a new era of political decay". For his part, Lewis Simons in 1987 (16) added that martial rule produced "a disheartened and politicized military force where once there had been professional soldiers committed to a constitution and flag".

The continuing rebellious actions of some members of the AFP only provide further evidence of the fractiousness characterizing the post-EDSA AFP and of the fact that there continue to be advocates of the non-traditional perspective from within the ranks. Whereas past reasons for rebellion had been confined merely to problems besetting the AFP, current justifications by military rebels clearly transcend military issues onto major concerns of nation-building and regime change.

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Although past military rebellions have identified myriads of grievances ranging from incompetent superiors and corruption to political legitimacy, as reported by the Davide (1990) and Feliciano (2003) Commissions and the Mayuga Report (2005), the following summation attempts to understand the rationale for desiring to radically alter the concept of nation-building currently implemented in the Philippines.

The soldier's politicization did not come about from his increased participation in nation-building during martial law. It actually started as soon as the soldier got involved in counter-insurgency operations early on in his career. It does not take long for the soldier in the field to realize that his bullets are not the answer to the insurgency problem—addressing the root causes of the insurgency is. But addressing the root causes of the insurgency hardly belongs to the soldier, although he can address some of them given his limited capacity.

What, then, are the root causes of Philippine insurgency? They now seem so complicated, but the historical and demographic socio-politico-economic fundamentals of Philippine society really explain it quite simply. Elites have ruled and continue to rule the Philippines at the expense of the largely and increasingly marginalized majority. The country has a peculiar culture that allows this “oligarchy” to remain in power through generations. First, elite wealth and political power ensure their re-election using either legitimate or illegitimate means. Second, negative Filipino cultures of patronage, bureaucratic mediocrity, bureaucratic ambiguity, dualism, and graft and corruption (*Varela, 1993:166-176*) enable the propagation of the unjust status-quo instead of allow the bureaucracy to check and balance the power and influence of the elites on behalf of the marginalized masses. Third, the immense size, diversity, and poverty of Filipino society make it extremely vulnerable to elite manipulations. And fourth, Filipinos generally follow the Christian religion, which teaches them to be magnanimous rather than vindictive, leaving retribution to God in the after-life. The bottom-line analysis is that the structure of Filipino society has got it all wrong. For Filipino society to stabilize and develop, it must first be “genuinely” democratic. To be truly democratic, power must be transferred to the long-disadvantaged masses who must themselves pursue self-determination, not the surrogate elites whose collective performance to date betrays the public trust.

Like most Filipinos, the Filipino soldier has come full circle in his realization that if long-lasting nation-building is to be attained by his country, radical and not incremental change must occur to level the playing field of national life. He has come to realize that the insurgency problem he fights at the risk of his life is but a

symptom of the disease that has afflicted the nation he has defended for generations. Knowing this, what must the soldier do? Is the soldier's non-traditional role inevitable? Is there no middle ground between the first and the second perspectives for the soldier?

In finding answers to such questions, Viberto Selochan did a study in 1989 that attempted to determine if the AFP could govern the Philippines. His findings and conclusions remain valid today. These are as follows: First, EDSA I and the AFP's significant experiences in nation-building under Magsaysay and Marcos have given certain officers the confidence that they, too, can govern the country; second, the perceived weakness of civilian leaders and democracy as implemented in the Philippines in instituting meaningful change could result in a restoration of authoritarianism; third, "It is under conditions of political and social crisis that the opportunity exists for the military to seize power because, under these circumstances, the capacity of the civilian government to withstand pressure from the military is less than normal conditions"; and fourth, "Whether the group in the AFP professing its ability and right to govern can institute changes when in government is *debatable*" (Selochan, 1989:42). Selochan's following exposition of the latter is enlightening:

Third World military regimes have not generally made drastic changes in socioeconomic patterns of these societies while politically their authoritarian style of governing has created more dissension than consensus. The groups with which the military is currently aligning itself in the Philippines are unlikely to implement major socioeconomic changes should they participate in government. Therefore, while the AFP is criticizing the government for its inability to address issues that augment the NPA ranks, it is difficult to see how a military-dominated government will be different. Plans for the composition of a proposed military-dominated government cannot be applauded by the majority of Filipinos. The benefits will be for a privileged group of civilians and officers. What is likely to emerge in the Philippines, in the event that a military-dominated regime governs, is accommodation between the military and certain elite groups. New power brokers will emerge as will cronyism and new dynasties. The majority of Filipinos will experience few socioeconomic benefits. Popular acquiescence to the regime could be demanded through repression. But the most important change in society will be the assertion by the AFP of its right to determine the composition and tenure of future governments in the Philippines (Selochan, 1989:42).

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The AFP can likewise take illuminated counsel from the seasoned General Douglas MacArthur who warned the graduating class at West Point that the imperfections of the political system are not for the soldier's "professional participation or military solution". MacArthur reminded those graduating cadets that the inviolable mission of soldiers remains to be winning their nation's wars (Manchester, 1978:833).

The AFP and Nation-Building: A General Assessment

The AFP's participation in nation-building indeed has had a profound impact on the organization. First, the AFP's various nation-building activities have stretched its already limited resources. And the more that the AFP performs non-combat activities, the fewer resources it devotes to its primary competency of war-fighting. Second, the AFP's war-fighting skills have deteriorated as the organization has become more involved in developmental activities. Third, developmental participation has allowed the culture of graft and corruption to seep from its larger environment into the organization, compromising traditional military values of duty and honor. Thus, the more the soldiers become exposed, the more their values become compromised. Fourth, the AFP's acquired culture of graft and corruption from its external environment has increasingly compromised the organization's efficiency and effectiveness. And the more that the external environment tolerates this negative culture, the more the influential members of the organization are encouraged to engage in it. The more AFP resources are lost to graft and corruption, the more the organization is weakened, until it is unable to perform its core functions with equal efficiency and effectiveness as before. To illustrate this, a 2003 study by Hooke (171) at the National Defense College of the Philippines (NDCP) concluded that "with the exception of disaster support, there is no significant relationship between government's strategic military goals and objectives and current AFP capability".

How then should the nation-building role of the AFP be fine-tuned so that it actually serves the organization and genuine national interest rather than threaten them? What seems apparent is that the expansion or limitation of the nation-building role of the AFP ultimately depends upon its anticipated impact not only on the organization and national development but on the survival of the state itself. On the one hand, continuing to adopt the traditional option results in incremental and short-term nation-building reforms that address only part of the need to restructure a society that increasingly benefits the elites while marginalizing the majority poor. On the other hand, adopting the non-traditional option desirably opens the possibility of enabling drastic long-term reforms in nation-building, but it likewise opens up a Pandora's box whose myriad of unknown and potentially uncontrollable

variables may end up worsening the disease rather than providing a definitive cure. Is there a middle ground – a possible third option? Doubtful. But if there were, it would be one that is similar to the country's experience with martial law—its unflattering evaluation of the AFP leaves the recurrence of that era possible but pointless.

Although both dominant choices fall below what is optimal for the resolution of the country's root problems, the traditional option still appears to offer the lesser evil. Dr. Selochan's findings on this score, which he has so eloquently described, provide convincing evidence of the futility and uncertainty of adopting the non-traditional option. Weighing all evidence, it appears that the traditional nation-building role is still best for the AFP but some adjustments may have to be made. First, the developmental activities of the AFP should be lessened, so it is able to devote its limited resources to its core competency of war-fighting and security. For instance, the AFP's developmental activities can be limited to extreme national emergencies only. Scarce involvement in development projects will also lessen the AFP's exposure to graft and corruption. It is high time that civilian agencies assume the bulk of development activities which have been theirs all along. Second, with the drastic reduction of its developmental competency, the AFP should be streamlined so that the bulk of its remaining force composes the combat arms. Third, the material capability of the AFP should sincerely be enhanced, at least to the level that it is able to implement government's strategic military goals and objectives other than disaster support. And fourth, every effort must be made to restore unity and the culture of excellence in the AFP, including the elimination of members whose values, character, and behavior do not reflect the ideals of soldiery.

Fittingly enough, Yabes wrote in 1991 (vii) that “what will become of the military in the future depends on the officers themselves, on the civilian leadership, on the politicians (who unfortunately continue to fan the flames of military discontent), but primarily on the people.”

Conclusion and Recommendations

That the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has played a vital role in nation-building through Philippine history is an understatement. The AFP has had more than its share of helping build the Filipino nation. It fought foreign invaders during the revolutionary periods and the two great wars so that a nation called the Republic of the Philippines could come into being. And after it had successfully done so, it performed more than its share of the tasks normally associated with developing a nation from the ashes.

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Today, due to the persistent actions of some of its members to assume more than their traditional role in nation-building, it is made to reassess its nation-building role once again – whether this should be curtailed so that there are no more such persistent actions, or whether this should even be expanded to address problems that the civilians cannot perform. In answer, this paper has argued that the expansion or limitation of the nation-building role of the AFP ultimately depends upon its anticipated impact not only on the organization and national development but the very survival of the state itself. It used as evidence the nation-building history of the AFP from the revolutionary period at the turn of the 20th century to the post-EDSA period until the present.

Based on the evidence presented, it is apparent that the traditional nation-building role is still best for the AFP, and for the good of the country, although certain modifications may need to be adopted. First, the AFP should focus on its core competency of war-fighting and drastically reduce its developmental activities, given its limited resources. Second, the AFP should be streamlined so that the bulk of its remaining force composes the combat arms. Third, the AFP's material capability should seriously be enhanced. And finally, the restoration of unity and the culture of excellence in the AFP, including the elimination of members whose values, character, and behavior do not reflect the best ideals of soldiery, should be made a priority.

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