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Instability in the Philippines
A Case Study for U.S. Disengagement

by Doug Bandow

Executive Summary

As the world becomes a less dangerous place for America, U.S. officials work more desperately to preserve America's pervasive international military presence. This policy is evident in the Philippines, with which Washington recently concluded a Visiting Forces Agreement.

The VFA reflects a resurgence of military ties in the aftermath of America's departure from the Philippines in 1992. The United States has begun port visits, joint military exercises, and subsidized weapons transfers. Manila is hoping for much more, most important U.S. support in its ongoing territorial dispute with China over the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea.

However, Manila's claims are no better than those of Beijing, China has so far been only cautiously assertive, and the United States has no vital interests at stake in any islands clash. Rather than take sides, Washington should encourage not only the Philippines but also the other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to strengthen their militaries and build cooperative relationships with larger powers, including Japan and India. Then those countries would be capable of defending their own interests.

Some U.S. officials advocate that Washington build up its military presence to maintain regional stability. However, the gravest problems result from internal causes, which Washington is incapable of remedying. For instance, the Philippines suffers from a weak economy, pervasive poverty, domestic insurrection, and political chaos. None of those can be solved by America.

In the coming years, Washington should promote greater economic integration and sell weapons to Manila and neighboring states seeking to augment their militaries. It should be loosening rather than tightening its military relationships in the region, updating its policy to reflect today's world.

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Introduction

The less dangerous the world becomes for America, the more desperate U.S. officials become to preserve American military commitments around the globe. Despite the collapse of the Soviet Union, dramatic reforms in China, the friendlier attitude of Cambodia and Vietnam, and the weakening of North Korea, in 1995 the U.S. Department of Defense reaffirmed Washington's "commitment to maintain a stable forward presence" of 100,000 personnel in East Asia.[1] The report went on to explain that a host of bilateral ties, including those with the Philippines, "remain inviolable, and the end of the Cold War has not diminished their importance."[2] In its follow-up report three years later, the Pentagon announced a number of goals for Southeast Asia, including "continued enhancement of our alliance relationships with . . . the Philippines" and "broadening of cooperation with the nations of Southeast Asia on security and confidence building."[3]

Indeed, at a time when the DoD was developing alternative military facilities after America's 1992 departure from the Philippines, it was also inking a Visiting Forces Agreement with Manila to "permit routine combined exercises and training, and ship visits."[4] The VFA was widely perceived by Filipinos as a new U.S. security guarantee, particularly in the event of a territorial conflict between the Philippines and China.

Washington's attempt to expand outmoded security ties with East Asia is emblematic of a foreign policy locked in a Cold War time warp. America's allies face no external threats that they cannot cooperatively contain. The greatest dangers to those countries are internal—economic and political instability. Such problems may be troubling to incumbent regimes, but they pose little risk to the United States. Moreover, such domestic turmoil is the sort of problem that America is incapable of solving.

Why the Philippines?

Washington's relationship with the Philippines has long been complex. Seized by the United States during the Spanish-American War and retained only after a bitter, costly guerrilla war, the Philippines marked America's emergence as a saltwater empire. The Philippines was granted independence after World War II, and Manila provided bases to the U.S. military through 1992; even today Washington maintains the 1951 misnamed Mutual Defense Treaty guaranteeing Manila's security. Rising Filipino nationalism and unrealistic Filipino financial demands, combined with the destructive effects of the explosion of Mt. Pinatubo, caused Washington to yield 23 military facilities, including Clark Field and Subic Bay Naval Base in 1992.

Since then, explains DOD, the two nations have been "gradually establishing a post-bases relationship that is consistent with our activities elsewhere in the region—exercises, ship visits, exchanges, and policy dialogues."[5] The new VFA, ratified in 1999 by the Philippine senate, was to "facilitate expanded military cooperation," including training exercises.[6] An unnamed Pentagon official told *Defense News* that the VFA "really signaled to us a real commitment to reinvigorating the bilateral alliance."[7] Then–secretary of defense William Cohen also suggested combined training and ship visits, arguing that "we are embarking on a new phase in our security relationship as partners, friends and allies."[8] Beyond that, the Clinton administration hoped "to develop our partnership in ways that will promote our respective security interests."[9]

Where that may lead is not clear. Port visits, discontinued in December 1996, have resumed. In early 2000 the two nations held their first joint military exercise, including an amphibious landing, in more than three years. Exulted Richard Fisher of the Jamestown Foundation, "Since the visit to Manila of U.S. Defense Secretary Cohen last August, the U.S.-Philippine alliance has been on a path to revival."[10] Philippine officials seem to have the same belief: "We want to tell the rest of the world that the U.S. and Philippines still remain allies," explained then–defense minister Orlando Mercado.[11]

Manila expects increased arms transfers. Then–Philippine president Joseph Estrada argued on behalf of the VFA, "We should be able to use our alliance to assist the urgent task of modernizing our armed forces."[12] Mercado contended that ratification would lead to further arms assistance.[13] In October 1999 Secretary Cohen agreed to launch a modernization program while signing an agreement to resume joint military exercises. When Estrada visited the United States, he lobbied for a $10 million military assistance deal involving a wide variety of surplus equipment. Washington has begun transferring equipment to Manila, and the United States and the Philippines have undertaken a joint defense assessment to review Philippine military needs. Some American analysts would go much further. Since Manila lacks a capable air force or navy, Fisher has suggested subsidized sales of F-16s, F-18s, and naval frigates. David Wiencek of the International Security Group proposed making available "quickly and at low, or no, cost to Manila" surplus weapons stocks.[14]

Abandon U.S. Neutrality on the Spratly Islands?

There's more, however. Relative Philippine weakness caused Fisher to complain that Washington had allowed its "alliance with the Philippines to languish." He wants far more robust defense ties: "Increased U.S.-Philippine military cooperation is important in deterring China from militarily enforcing its claims in the South China Sea, and also may lead to more base access options for U.S. forces in times of crisis. The Clinton Administration's weak response to China's 1995 occupation of a reef near the Philippines undermined confidence in U.S. leadership in that region."[15] Indeed, he advocated that Washington "modify its neutral stand toward the contending claims in the Spratly group."[16]

Numerous officials in Manila believed that ratifying the VFA would have such an impact. In the late 1970s Manila attempted to expand the Mutual Defense Treaty to cover the Spratlys, but Washington demurred. In 1999, however, President Estrada cited Manila's dispute with China over the Spratlys in lobbying for the VFA. He told his countrymen that the accord would help block Chinese expansion in the South China Sea.[17]

Several Philippine senators also cited the VFA as a means of strengthening security links to America.[18] There were obligatory denials from U.S. and Philippine officials: Adm. Dennis Blair, commander in chief of the U.S. Pacific Command, stated that the VFA was "not a security guarantee."[19] However, U.S. ambassador Thomas Hubbard and Philippine defense minister Mercado emphasized that the United States already had an obligation to defend the Philippines under the Mutual Defense Treaty. Francisco Tatad, vice chairman of the Philippine senate's Foreign Relations Committee, said that the "VFA is simply there to strengthen the MDT."[20] Sen. Blas Ople, chairman of that committee, argued, "I think the framework has been achieved for the long-term security of the country."[21] Perhaps not coincidentally, the second joint military exercise by the United States and the Philippines, conducted in 2000, occurred near the Spratlys.

The recent change in government may intensify Manila's pressure for security subsidies and guarantees. President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo is perhaps even more committed than was President Estrada to gaining U.S. support against China.[22] Less than two weeks after she took power, the Philippine navy boarded four Chinese fishing ships in disputed territory. Newly appointed Vice President Teofisto Guingano, who also serves as foreign affairs secretary, opposed the VFA while in the senate—because the VFA did not explicitly guarantee American military support for Philippine claims to the Spratlys.

Whether or not the VFA creates expanded defense obligations, it seems likely to entangle America in irrelevant but potentially dangerous conflicts. The rebel National Democratic Front has threatened to "pun-

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ish" U.S. soldiers who commit "crimes" while on maneuvers in the Philippines.[23] Islamic insurgents evinced particular hostility toward American hostage Jeffrey Schilling, despite his being a Muslim convert. In demanding that Washington send a negotiator, his kidnappers warned that, otherwise, "Jeffrey is just the start."[24] More ominous, there is evidence that President Estrada stoked tensions with Beijing to encourage legislative approval of the VFA.[25]

The Absence of a Serious External Threat

The Philippines is of only limited value for U.S. security. The archipelagic nation played an important logistic role during the Vietnam War, but that conflict has been over for a quarter century. Today, no external enemy threatens Philippine independence. The Russian fleet is rusting in port; Japan has neither the will nor the ability to conquer its neighbors; China is incapable of invading Taiwan, let alone the Philippines. Countries such as Indonesia and Vietnam are poor substitutes for a regional hegemonic threat.

Conflict seems plausible only in the South China Sea, where several countries have been asserting themselves, although China is the most obvious potential antagonist. Beijing claims a variety of islands, ownership of which would give access to nearby natural gas and oil deposits and control of sea-lanes near the Strait of Malacca. In January 2000 the Philippines and China continued a string of confrontations, and Philippine military forces boarded two Chinese fishing vessels on Scarborough Shoal, within the Spratlys. However, the dispute is limited: China has no designs on Luzon or any other part of undisputed Philippine territory. Bothersome though the Spratlys quarrel might be, it threatens no nation's survival, independence, or even fundamental well-being.

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The U.S. Army didn't consider the Philippines worth defending when it was a U.S. possession. Before World War II the Army observed, "Even in peace the defense of the Philippines is not worth the risk to the Fleet in that exposed position, and not worth the risk of provoking retaliation by Japan."[26] Yet the Philippine claim to the Spratly Islands is obviously not as important as Manila's independence—especially since Beijing's legal claim to the Spratlys appears to be as good as that of Manila.[27]

Moreover, the controversy illustrates the limits of U.S military power—a Marine Expeditionary Force based in Okinawa will not influence events in the Spratlys. Fisher claims that "China very likely decided to build those structures [on Mischief Reef] in part to take advantage of the regional power vacuum created by the breakdown in U.S.-Philippine military cooperation and the parlous state of the Philippine air force and navy."[28] But the latter is almost certainly more important than the former, since even an ongoing American presence in Subic Bay would not indicate a willingness to intervene in a territorial dispute in which Philippine interests were neither internationally recognized nor strategically critical. As *The Economist* observes, "Of the major claimants, the Philippines is the military weakling," forcing it "to cower as China, Vietnam and Malaysia have asserted their claims."[29]

Sinister Chinese Plans?

Does Beijing have broader, more sinister designs? Wiencek warns that Chinese encroachments in the South China Sea "could compromise freedom of navigation and pose a threat to the substantial flow of goods and resources to Japan, Korea, Australia, and other friends and allies."[30] Similarly, Fisher worries that "about 70 percent of Japan's and South Korea's oil resources flow through this key sea lane. The economies of these countries, in turn, support regional commerce that helps sustain U.S. exports to Asia, which support about 4 million jobs in the United States."[31]

Yet China remains poor and underdevel-

oped and lacks a navy capable of dominating East Asian trade. Beijing's military buildup has so far been measured. Even as it attempts to strengthen its navy, the People's Republic of China remains focused on Taiwan. No amount of mischief-making on Mischief Reef will position China to militarily challenge the United States in the foreseeable future. And Beijing has not demonstrated any interest in shutting down regional commerce.

Circumstances could change, of course, but so far the PRC has been only cautiously assertive.[32] In 1999 it improved relations with Vietnam by negotiating over border conflicts and indicated its openness to ASEAN's participation in settling the South China Sea disputes. Still, in the future, we are warned, Beijing might exercise a will that it doesn't presently have to use a navy capability that it doesn't presently possess.

A worrisome prospect to be sure, but the basic question is, Who should do the worrying? America, or countries such as the Philippines?

After all, American security is not coincident with unfettered allied shipping. Trade between, say, Australia and the Philippines hardly constitutes a vital or even an important interest of the United States. Oil shipments from the Middle East to Japan are important primarily to Japan. Those countries most concerned with regional commerce should develop both the military assets and the cooperative relationships necessary to maintain freedom of navigation.

The Spratlys offer a good example of the perverse impact of U.S. intervention. Longtime U.S. defense ties caused Manila to develop a military designed almost solely for domestic duties. Sheldon Simon of Arizona State University observes, "Philippine defense capabilities perennially have been a standing joke within ASEAN."[33] Similarly, Fisher writes: "The Philippine Air Force and Navy are almost non-existent. The Air Force consists of 10 F-5A jets, a type that first entered Philippine service in 1965. The Navy has only three small but modern gunships—with no missiles."[34] One report more bluntly complains that "Philippine military hardware rates little better than a well-equipped Third World warlord."[35] Adm. Dennis Blair warned Congress in early 2000 that the "current operational readiness [of Philippine forces] is reduced to a point where their Armed Forces may be unable to adequately defend their country."[36] Officials in Manila admit as much: in pressing his modernization program, Defense Minister Mercado declared that his nation had "a navy that can't go out to sea and an air force that cannot fly."[37]

Philippine Military Efforts

Even some advocates of *Pax Americana* want America's clients to do more. Fisher advocates that Washington help the Philippines enhance its defense "in a way that avoids creating new dependencies" and "stress to the Philippines that it should increase defense spending to support new air and naval forces."[38] He warns, "Washington can't simply rearm the Philippines as that would create dependencies that led to [the] painful end of the U.S. bases." Therefore, Manila must "spend real money on a modernization program."[39]

However, only necessity will provide Manila with a sufficient incentive to sacrifice to rebuild its military. Chinese construction on Mischief Reef sparked passage of the (unrealized) 1995 military modernization program.[40] In May 2000 President Estrada approved $108 million in military spending as part of a new modernization program. But if Manila can now rely on the United States, it will continue to do nothing, even as it complains about U.S. pressure. "What the United States should not forget is that it is not in its interests to dictate to us," explains Carlita Carlos, president of the National Defense College of the Philippines.[41]

Philippine senator and former Philippine defense secretary Juan Ponce Enrile argued during the VFA debate, "Our defense alliance with the United States is probably the only

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viable option and umbrella and certainly the only one we can count on today in the event of need."[42] Senator Ople seemed to be thinking of the money Manila could save, observing after the VFA's passage that "we can now focus on the really urgent task of helping the Filipino poor improve their lives."[43] Secretary Mercado was even more explicit, declaring, "If we go it alone without the United States, then we will have to spend money."[44]

Since it believes that Washington will counter foreign threats, Manila is looking primarily at internal problems. In discussing the planned $10 million military assistance package, then–foreign affairs secretary Domingo Siazon observed that the U.S. aid was needed for the military's "more immediate modernization needs—which are primarily directed towards strengthening its internal security capabilities."[45] That orientation has intensified with increased fighting against Islamic guerrillas.

Manila's belief that the United States supports its territorial claims reduces the incentive to develop forces to support those claims, and America's implicit backing is likely to make the Philippines more willing to risk confrontation with China. The Estrada administration pushed military ties with Washington as an alternative to negotiations with Beijing over the status of the islands.[46] Beijing has accused Manila of "whipping up" tensions.[47] Although this may have been self-serving propaganda, the Philippines, as well as the PRC, has been aggressively asserting its claims in the South China Sea.

Pushing Back against Beijing

Of course, Manila is not the only player in the South China Sea. The acquisition of more robust military capabilities by other nations would be the best response to a Chinese strategy that Andrew Scobell of the U.S. Army War College calls "slow-intensity conflict."[48] When Beijing pushes, other countries should push back. But they can do so only if they possess the capability to do so.

Before the 1997 Asian economic crisis, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand all began acquiring weapons capable of regulating air and naval spaces and undertaking power projection exercises. Thailand even planned a two-ocean navy. Several nations were animated by increasing doubts about the U.S. commitment. Observes Sheldon Simon: "This belief in the limited utility of the American presence was reinforced by Washington's policy of impartiality in the dispute over the Spratly Islands. America's agnosticism on the Spratlys made it all the more essential that the ASEAN claimants—Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Brunei—develop their own capabilities to defend the islets they occupied."[49]

Although Asia's economic crisis has hindered further developments in this direction, with the return of economic growth, the Southeast Asian states can again work to build potent if small militaries. But it is not enough for the Philippines and its neighbors to act. They should also cooperate with more powerful states, particularly Japan, South Korea, and India. Tokyo's importance is obvious. Although South Korea remains most concerned about North Korea, Seoul has begun casting its eye more broadly. India is also taking a more active regional role.

Internal Problems

Another argument made for U.S. involvement in the Philippines appears to be the belief that only an American military presence can stop Southeast Asia from sliding into war. At his press conference introducing the November 1998 DOD report, Defense Secretary Cohen stated, "We are committed to maintain stability."[50] Heritage Foundation president Ed Feulner contends that America's alliances, including those with "Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand are essential to advancing" the goals of "democracy, freedom, and American security."[51]

But the greatest challenges to countries

such as the Philippines are internal and not susceptible to outside resolution. Although the International Monetary Fund was sanguine enough about Manila's performance to release additional credit in August 2000, and some economic indicators were up, economists were worrying even then that domestic demand and production continued to lag.[52] International confidence has since plummeted. In October 2000 the IMF refused to release an additional $300 million because of Manila's failure to meet its budget targets.

The Philippine government maintains a rhetorical commitment to reform and runs ads in U.S. newspapers extolling passage of reform legislation to encourage foreign investment, but real change has come only slowly. The policies of former president Estrada, reported *The Economist*, "usually sound good and start off in the right direction, but sometimes little comes of them. Many economic reforms have since stalled, and some decisions have been rescinded almost as soon as they were made."[53] High-tech exports were once one of the country's few successes, but even they have suffered recently.[54] High energy prices have led to legislative proposals to effectively nationalize the oil industry.

Arroyo may do even worse. Nationalist forces hindered Estrada's attempts at reform, and those forces remain as strong as ever. Moreover, Arroyo, too, has been attacked for being too willing to accommodate Manila's powerful economic interests. Indeed, shortly after taking power she criticized legislation to privatize the nation's power-generation industry because it was "considered by civil society," her quaint term for the interests that backed her assumption of power, "as being fraught with danger."[55] She called for guaranteeing employment levels at the bloated public enterprise.

Foreign aid is no answer. Manila has received some $10.3 billion in credit, but in 1999 it spent barely 6 of every 10 dollars borrowed, and no better results would have been likely had it disbursed every dollar. "The Philippines has a problem in getting things done," observes journalist Deidre Sheehan.

> Corruption plays its part in delays. But more frequently, plans are snarled up in bureaucratic red tape, bogged down in litigation or hampered by inexperienced government appointed managers. The government estimates that a third of all projects drag on for an average two years longer than scheduled.[56]

Poverty afflicts the entire nation; one-third of the nation's 74 million people are below the poverty line, earning less than $1 a day. Economic stagnation fuels political dissension and separatist violence.[57]

The latter remains a significant problem. After decades of fighting that killed an estimated 120,000 people, the Islamic Moro National Liberation Front abandoned its demand for independence and agreed to autonomy in 1996. However, some former guerrillas are dissatisfied with Manila's compliance with the accord and have threatened to return to arms.[58]

In October 1999 the government opened formal talks with another rebel force, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. Negotiations collapsed in March 2000, after which the government launched an offensive that overran most of the group's bases. Although weakened, the rebels vow to continue fighting for an independent Mindanao island. The smaller communist National Democracy Front cooperates with the MILF and engages in terrorism. In February Arroyo announced a ceasefire with the MILF but not the Abu Sayyaf splinter group.

In the spring of 2000 the Abu Sayyaf, as much a criminal gang as a political movement, kidnapped a variety of Filipinos, Malaysians, and Westerners.[59] After the payment of ransoms was followed by additional kidnappings, Manila responded with an offensive on the island of Jolo that dispersed many of the rebels and freed most of the hostages. However, some Abu Sayyaf mem-

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bers escaped, presumably ready to do more mischief in the future.

The political situation in the Philippines is chaotic. Rising political dissatisfaction with President Estrada—an erratic decisionmaker with poor judgment in friends, expensive tastes, and a celebrated fondness for mistresses but little aptitude for administration—exploded after a provincial governor charged that he had delivered $8.6 million in kickbacks from illegal gambling operations to Estrada. Estrada was impeached, but his allies in the senate seemed certain to acquit him. As street demonstrations built and even his own cabinet members deserted him, the police and military announced that they no longer recognized his authority. In the face of mob threats Estrada fled the presidential palace.

He later claimed that he had not resigned but only temporarily stepped aside. He filed suit asserting presidential immunity from corruption investigations launched against him by the new administration. (Justice Secretary Hernando Perez had barred Estrada from traveling to America for planned glaucoma surgery.) The Philippine supreme court was unsympathetic, having ruled in January that Estrada was no longer president.

Estrada's critics naturally rejoiced. Exulted Alex Magno, a university professor and spokesman for the "command post" created to coordinate anti-Estrada protests, "We had hoped from the beginning that this would be a model for democratic, popular action and direct citizen decision-making, 21st century style."[60] But these efforts are more likely to create old-style, 20th century-style, political instability. Philippine democracy has lost credibility.

Although Arroyo enjoys wide support among business, civic, and intellectual elites, her standing among the impoverished masses who provided Estrada with his overwhelming electoral victory remains problematic. Leading Filipinos chose street action over the rule of law and elections. Moreover, the military again became the ultimate political arbiter: In the supreme court hearing on Estrada's suit, Secretary Perez claimed that the extraconstitutional maneuvering by then–vice president Arroyo narrowly averted a coup. New coup rumors circulated after she took over as president; she responded by promising to "crush" her adversaries, whom she refused to name.[61] The almost casual acceptance of the military's most recent foray into politics has reduced the barriers to additional intervention should another political crisis arise.

Beyond America's Reach

The fact that this sort of instability characterizes the Philippines (and other countries in the region) is presumably why the Pentagon has attempted to also justify its military presence as a means of dealing with humanitarian operations, drug trafficking, terrorism, and environmental degradation.[62] All of those affect Manila and its neighbors. But there's little the U.S. military can or should do to address any of them. None justifies the maintenance of U.S. defense guarantees and military deployments.

Curiously, some supporters of Washington's hegemony worry that a reduced American presence would cause nations to strengthen their militaries. As a result, warn Army officers Robert Scales and Larry Wortzel, who is now at the Heritage Foundation, "The Asia-Pacific region would be a far more dangerous, less stable and secure place."[63]

Although Southeast Asia suffers its share of disputes, none seems likely to lead to a major war. Dangers may exist, but not to the United States. To the contrary, an environment in which Washington was not expected to impose stability by intervening in every local squabble would be less dangerous to America. The question is not about just the chance of conflict but also about the likelihood of U.S. involvement. Devolving responsibility to America's allies would significantly cut Washington's risks, especially since the region's problems, as exemplified by the Philippines, are overwhelmingly internal.

Conclusion

The world has changed. So, too, should U.S. military commitments. The traditional justification for a forward American presence in Southeast Asia, fear of Soviet or revived Japanese aggression, is no longer credible. Worries about China offer little better justification.

The last refuge of proponents of maintaining America's Cold War military presence is fear of instability. But the chief destabilizing forces in countries such as the Philippines are internal. Now, during a time of international peace and relative stability, is the time to begin placing responsibility for maintaining order on the countries in the region.

Washington should pursue greater economic, not military, integration. Washington should clearly puncture Manila's expectation that the VFA represents a new security guarantee.[64] The United States should explain that it has no intention of intervening in a Chinese-Philippine shootout over Mischief Reef. Washington should, however, offer to sell any weapons Manila desires to buy—at current retail prices—and encourage the Philippines to promote ASEAN's capabilities and cooperate with friendly powers in Asia, most notably Japan, South Korea, and India.

Security commitments and deployments should be based on present, not past, threat environments. World War II and the Cold War are over. Washington should update its relationship with the Philippines and its neighbors to reflect today's world.

Notes

1. U.S. Department of Defense, *United States Security Strategy for the East Asia–Pacific Region* (Washington: U.S. Department of Defense, 1995), p. i.

2. Ibid., p. 6.

3. U.S. Department of Defense, *United States Security Strategy for the East Asia–Pacific Region: 1998* (Washington: U.S. Department of Defense, 1998), p. 1. Cited hereinafter as *Security Strategy, 1998*.

4. Ibid., pp. 12–13.

5. Ibid., p. 29.

6. Ibid., p. 63.

7. Quoted in Jason Sherman, "Philippines, U.S. Bolster Ties," *Defense News,* December 12, 2000, p. 51.

8. Quoted in Douglas Gillert, "Cohen Announces New U.S.-Philippine Agreement," American Forces Press Service, DefenseLINK Web site, January 15, 1998, p. 1.

9. *Security Strategy, 1998,* p. 63.

10.. Richard Fisher, "Erap Comes to Town," *Washington Times,* July 24, 2000, p. A16.

11. Quoted in "U.S., Philippine Forces Team Up," *Nikkei Weekly,* July 10, 2000, p. 21.

12. Quoted in "Tensions between the Philippines and China Continue to Simmer," Stratfor Asia Intelligence Update, December 4, 1998, www. stratfor.com.

13. Tony Tassell, "Spratly Nerves Force Manila Army Rethink," *Financial Times,* January 26, 1999, p. 6.

14. David Wiencek, "Reviving an Asian Alliance," *Washington Times,* May 27, 1999, p. A18.

15. Richard Fisher, "Albright's Trip to Southeast Asia: An Opportunity to Correct Past Mistakes," Heritage Foundation Executive Memorandum no. 489, July 22, 1997, p. 2.

16. Richard Fisher, "Rebuilding the U.S.-Philippine Alliance," Heritage Foundation Backgrounder no. 1255, February 22, 1999, p. 2. Fisher seemingly wants to tilt toward the Philippines without formally recognizing its claim to the Spratlys, a difficult tightrope to walk (p. 11).

17. "Old Conflicts Die Hard," Editorial, *Far Eastern Economic Review,* August 13, 1998, p. 14; and Rigoberto Tiglao, "Growing Up," *Far Eastern Economic Review,* June 3, 1999, p. 27. In contrast to Estrada and National Defense Secretary Orlando Mercado, Foreign Secretary Domingo Siazon worried about turning an otherwise small dispute into a potential nuclear confrontation. "U.S. Draws Back from Potential Asian Conflicts," Stratfor Global Intelligence Report, January 14, 1999, www.stratfor.com.

18. See, for example, Tony Tassell, "Manila Agrees to US Defence Deal," *Financial Times,* May 28, 1999, p. 6.

19. Quoted in Cathy Canares Yamsuan et al., "Filipino Senator Reacts against US Admiral's VFA Remark," *Manila Philippine Daily Inquirer,* May 25, 1999, electronic version.

20. Quoted in ibid.

21. Quoted in Jim Gomez, "Senate OKs Troops Deal with U.S. Amid Protests," *Washington Times,* May 28, 1999, p. A13.

22. See, for example, "Impeachment May Spark U.S.-Philippine Alliance," Stratfor Global Intelligence Update, October 17, 2000, www.Stratfor.com.

23. James Morrison, "Communist Threat," *Washington Times,* June 2, 1999, p. A10; and "Philippine Rebel Threats Fail to Deter U.S.," *Washington Post,* June 2, 1999, p. A16. Leftists have already protested outside bars that serve Americans and the U.S. embassy in response to U.S. visits and joint U.S.–Philippine exercises.

24. Quoted in "Hostage in Philippines Losing Hope," Associated Press, November 14, 2000.

25. "Tensions between the Philippines and China Continue to Simmer."

26. Quoted in Jonathan Utley, *Going to War with Japan: 1937–1941* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), p. 41.

27. At least there is historical evidence of much earlier Chinese presence, though current territorial claims obviously depend on much more. See, for example, Frank Ching, "Manila Foiled in Spratly Row," *Far Eastern Economic Review,* April 8, 1999, p. 33. The issues involved in the Spratlys are quite complex, touching as they do on navigation, resources, and sovereignty. Mark Valencia, "Mischief at the Reef," *Far Eastern Economic Review,* May 20, 1999, p. 31.

28. Fisher, "Rebuilding the U.S.-Philippine Alliance," pp. 4–5.

29. "Calming the Sea of Troubles," *The Economist,* November 6, 1999, p. 46.

30. Wiencek.

31. Fisher, "Rebuilding the U.S.-Philippine Alliance," p. 1.

32. Andrew Scobell of the U.S. Army War College argues that Beijing is engaged in "slow-intensity conflict" in the South China Sea, ever pushing for advantage. Andrew Scobell, "Slow-Intensity Conflict in the South China Sea," Foreign Policy Research Institute E-Notes, August 16, 2000. So long as China is pushing on what amounts to an open door, it will do so. But even Scobell admits that Beijing doesn't want a real war, which suggests that it would respond positively to a more effective and assertive approach from ASEAN members.

33. Sheldon Simon, "The Economic Crisis and Southeast Asian Security: Changing Priorities," *National Bureau of Economic Research* 9, no. 5 (1998): 8.

34. Fisher, "Erap Comes to Town."

35. Michael Satchell, "Back to the Philippines," *U.S. News & World Report,* January 24, 2000, p. 31.

36. Quoted in "Washington Rekindles Its Relationship with the Philippines," Stratfor Global Intelligence Update, March 14, 2000, www.stratfor.com.

37. Quoted in "GIs Come Back?" *The Economist,* April 24, 1999, p. 39.

38. Fisher, "Rebuilding the U.S.-Philippine Alliance," pp. 10, 11.

39. Fisher, "Erap Comes to Town."

40. Renato Cruz De Castro, "Adjusting to the Post–U.S. Bases Era: The Ordeal of the Philippine Military's Modernization Program," *Armed Forces & Society* 26, no. 1 (Fall 1999): 130. Unfortunately, inadequate funding led to few practical results.

41. Quoted in Sherman.

42. Quoted in "Philippine Senate Ratifies Military Accord with US," Agence France-Presse, Hong Kong service, May 27, 1999.

43. Quoted in Gomez.

44. Quoted in James Hookway, "Philippines Agrees to Allow U.S. Military Exercises," *Asian Wall Street Journal,* weekly edition, May 31–June 6, 1999, p. 4. "Are we ready to do that, are we ready to take money away from social services," he asked, as if it made sense for the United States to divert money from social services to defend the Philippines.

45. Deidre Sheehan, "Erap's Rebound," *Far Eastern Economic Review,* August 3, 2000, p. 23.

46.. "Old Conflicts Die Hard."

47. Quoted in "Beijing Blames Manila for Spratlys Tension," *Washington Times,* April 13, 1999, p. A14.

48. Scobell.

49. Simon, p. 8.

50. "Transcript: Cohen Says U.S. Commitment to Asia Unchanged," U.S. Department of Defense, November 23, 1998, p. 1.

51. Edwin Feulner, "Challenges in U.S.-Asia Policy,"

Testimony before the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific of the House Committee on International Relations, 106th Cong., 1st sess. February 10, 1999, p. 2. Copy in author's possession.

52. Deidre Sheehan, "Good on the Outside," *Far Eastern Economic Review,* August 17, 2000, p. 51. For generally positive assessments, see Dan Lefkovitz, "Malaysia and the Philippines, Unmasked," *Asian Wall Street Journal,* weekly edition, July 3–9, 2000, p. 16; and G. Pierre Goad, "The Manila Paradox," *Far Eastern Economic Review,* April 20, 2000, p. 24. Yet the latter publication ran a much more critical analysis less than two months later. Deidre Sheehan, "Fading Faith," *Far Eastern Economic Review,* June 8, 2000, p. 24. See also Tom Holland, "Manila's Recession Risk," *Far Eastern Economic Review,* November 2, 2000, p. 24.

53. "The Tigers That Changed Their Spots," South-East Asia Survey, *The Economist,* February 12, 2000, p. 8.

54. Deidre Sheehan, "Advantage in Jeopardy," *Far Eastern Economic Review,* October 19, 2000, pp. 43–44.

55. Quoted in James Hookway, "Arroyo Says She Has Support," *Asian Wall Street Journal,* weekly edition, February 5–11, 2001, p. 6.

56. Deidre Sheehan, "Aid-in-Waiting," *Far Eastern Economic Review,* September 7, 2000, p. 68.

57. See, for example, Deidre Sheehan, "Held to Ransom," *Far Eastern Economic Review,* May 25, 2000, pp. 20–21.

58. "Acting Up," *The Economist,* March 25, 2000, pp. 42–43; "Warning: Civil War Could Resume throughout Philippines," Stratfor Global Intelligence Update, March 16, 2000, www.stratfor.com; "Philippines Faces Threat of Rebel Re-Unification," Stratfor Asia Intelligence Update, March 18, 1999, www.stratfor.com; and "A Lack of Focus on Strategic Issues Jeopardizes Future Peace in the Southern Philippines," Stratfor Asia Intelligence Update, January 20, 1999, www.stratfor.com.

59. See, for example, Seth Mydans, "Innocents in Web of Philippine Terror," *New York Times,* May 6, 2000, p. A3. The Abu Sayyaf were long a small splinter group, which conducted bombings and murdered civilians. Muslims were among its enemies. In early 2000 local Islamic antagonists kidnapped family members, several of whom are still being held, of one Abu Sayyaf leader. The group initially made a number of political demands, including an independent Islamic state; removal of crosses from public places; a ban on foreign fishing vessels near the island of Basilan; and the release of American prisoner Ramzi Yousef, convicted of bombing the World Trade Center. But the kidnappers eventually settled for cash. The gang leader thought to be responsible for demanding Yousef's release, Randulan Sahiron, died during the government's September attack, which may cause Abu Sayyaf to slide even further toward common crime.

60. Alex Magno, "... But Charged Phone-Toting Revolution," *Asian Wall Street Journal,* weekly edition, February 5–11, 2001, p. 17.

61. Quoted in Richard Ehrlich, "Macapagal-Arroyo Refuses to Identify Her Foes," *Washington Times,* February 3, 2001, p. A5.

62. *Security Strategy, 1998,* pp. 57, 63.

63. Robert Scales and Larry Wortzel, "The Future U.S. Military Presence in Asia: Landpower and the Geostrategy of American Commitment," Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, April 6, 1999, pp. 5–6.

64. The issue is not a matter of personalities. Vice President Arroyo may have been even more committed than President Estrada to gaining U.S. support against China. See, for example, "Impeachment May Spark U.S.-Philippine Alliance," Stratfor Global Intelligence Update, October 17, 2000, www.Stratfor.com.

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