Secure in insecurity: The case of threat perception/acceptance in the Philippines[i]

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Abstract: Current theoretical and policy-based explanations of security in the Philippines have portrayed "politics" and "security" as distinct and separate fields. However, the recent "2011–2016 National Security Policy: Securing the Gains of Democracy", has conflated "security" and "politics", as may be observed in its two national security goals "to promote internal socio-political stability" and "to exercise full sovereignty over its territory". Although likely derived from administrative expediency, the composite policy definition is also likely to result in the conceptualisation of political goals that are only partially attainable and of a security environment that will remain "unsecured". As this appears to be a norm of governance in the Philippines, this paper examines the possibility that national security policy-making is likely more concerned with the survival of the regime during which the policy was created rather than with the long-term stabilisation of the entire state. Several theories may be useful in accounting for this behaviour; namely, small states conflict theory, securitisation theory and threat normalisation theory. This paper is intended to show that the definition of threat corresponds to threat-acceptance and may likely lead to threat-toleration than to threat-resolution.

Subjects: Emergency Response; Foreign Policy; International Relations Theory; International Security; Political Ideologies; South East Asian Studies; Terrorism & Political Violence

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This paper examines the conceptual and practical problems associated with the use of an imprecise "security" term by Philippine state officials in their policies and other administrative documents. These problems, which have included violent conflicts within and across Philippine borders, have persisted notwithstanding the international security-related assistance given to the Philippine government, particularly in the form of military and economic aid. The paper concludes with three conceptual tools that may help clarify the practice of security in a politically turbulent and economically limited state such as the Philippines.

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1. Introduction

This paper concerns the issue of security threat-perception, and uses national security practice in the Philippines as the primary case. The research problem is the loose use of the term "security" by the politically influential to bestow a sense of urgency upon certain issues regardless of whether or not these concern an existential threat to crucial aspects of the state. Current theoretical and policy-based explanations of security in the Philippines have portrayed "politics" and "security" as distinct and separate fields. The theoretical convention is to regard the "political" as concerning the democratisation, professionalisation, maturation or otherwise the development of a managerial "governing" class as well as the optimisation or rationalisation of bureaucratic processes. "Security" is conventionally about the preservation of a condition of "well-being", ostensibly from dangers within and beyond the borders of the Philippine state. However, the recent "2011–2016 National Security Policy: Securing the Gains of Democracy", has conflated "security" and "politics", as may be observed in its two national security goals "to promote internal socio-political stability" and "to exercise full sovereignty over its territory". Although likely derived from administrative expediency, the composite policy definition is also likely to result in the conceptualisation of political goals that are only partially attainable and of a security environment that will remain defined as "unsecured". This paper examines national security policy-making as a means for the survival of the regime during which the policy was created rather than for the long-term stabilisation of the state as a whole. Several theories may be useful in accounting for this behaviour, and the application of these to the case show possibilities of extending their explanatory scope. The "small states conflict" theory of Kal Holsti attributes the tendency of some states towards violent conflict to structural aspects that have persisted from the original conceptualisation of statehood in those societies. In the Philippine case, this principle may translate into the opportunism of a small but disjointed group of wealthy and influential political "elites", the composition of which has remained relatively unchanged since the independence of the country after the Second World War. The "securitisation theory" of Barry Buzan and the Copenhagen School defines true security issues as those which have undergone a process of securitisation; that is, a recognition that certain issues, on account of their severity, may be resolved only by a recourse to drastic, but not unlimited, emergency measures. Because most of the problems covered, the broad range of security issues raised by the Philippine government, may not correspond to conditions of "existential threat" for the population, doubts may be raised concerning the validity of engaging in the "security" polemic, or even the motives of the policy-makers themselves. Finally, the "threat normalisation theory" of Greg Bankoff identifies the term "disaster" not with the severe environmental or natural conditions of a society's existence but rather with the inability or refusal of a state to either recognise these severe conditions, or, in some cases, alter the natural and social environment, to avert the danger. The theory is immediately applicable to crises of coping with damage caused by typhoons, earthquakes and other severe phenomena that occur naturally in the Philippines. But it may also help account for cases where fraud, depredation and armed violence become somehow accepted as "normal security problems" despite, or perhaps even because of, a recurring failure of officials to enforce or abide by official regulations, if any are present at all.

2. The non-issue of Philippine insecurity

The claim that the Philippine state persists under conditions of unresolved security-related problems has been made previously and in various forms. Problems such as bureaucratic weakness, political patronage, internecine conflict and economic inequality have been attributed by David Wurfel (1990) to the continuing influence of the USA on Philippine politics or, more specifically, to the loyalty of Philippine officials to governance arrangements introduced by US officials from the early- to mid-twentieth century. Scott (1972) has defined the patron–client dyadic relation as a singularly defining feature of the Philippine state, where bureaucratic and other formal processes operate parallel to the occasionally highly visible purchases of loyalty by government officials and their financial backers (pp. 6–8). Hedman and Sidel (2000) have described the conversion of the patron–client relation inherent to agricultural communities to the practice of bossism in urban environments, and of warlordism in places where gun-related crime has become prevalent (pp. 88–89). The Philippine military, as described by Hernandez

(2008a), has been co-opted by government officials to be a reinforcement of the national police against criminal activities that have distinct political or ideological characteristics, and has, as a result, become inconsequential as a territorial defence force (pp. 40–43). Even religious belief may contribute to societal instability: Ileto (2003) has argued that Catholic religious instruction, which has continued in the Philippines after the end of the Spanish colonisation in the late nineteenth century, has reinforced values conducive to rebellion within Philippine society (p. 9).

These and the numerous other contributions to the varied body of work on Philippine political and security culture have helped what may be defined as the pragmatic project of "expanding the scope and quality of communication among all concerned with a given problem" (Katzenstein & Sil, 2008, p. 124). But because the communicated message of indeterminacy has remained essentially unchanged, the problem may no longer be a lack of information or even a shortage of operable policy recommendations. Rather, the problem may now be a lack of an account of how "insecurity," or at least aspects of an unsecured condition, in the Philippines had ceased to be regarded as "intolerable" and instead became "normal" or even "definitive" of a unique security environment.

The Philippine state has tended to be legalistic rather than confrontational in its treatment of security-related issues (Acharya, 2009, p. 94; De Castro & Lohman, 2010; Heiduk, 2014a, p. 228; Magkamit, 2014, p. 37; Thayer, 2003, p. 101), even if such concern for the fine details had not produced the outcomes that Philippine officials or society had expected. Notable examples of these include: the trial *in absentia* of persons accused of being communist insurgents, particularly those who were able to obtain foreign support (Presidential Decree No. 1835, 1981); the decision of the Supreme Court of the Philippines to deny legal support for Filipino sex slaves of the Second World War who planned to take their case against the government of Japan to the International Court of Justice (Kyodo News Agency, 2013); the absence of any formal proceedings against the Malaysian government to settle the Philippine territorial claim over North Borneo despite the purported presence of legal bases that support the claim (Santiago, 2013); the acquittal of Imelda Marcos, widow of former Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, of plunder charges filed by the Philippine government in a US court (Wolff, 1990); and, most recently, the case filed by the Philippines against China in the Permanent Court of Arbitration regarding a territorial claim in the South China Sea that the Chinese government has rejected on account of the "political pressure" advantage that the Philippine government hopes to gain through the process (The Republic of the Philippines v. The People's Republic of China, 2013; Rose & Blanchard, 2014). This inconclusiveness may be explained, in part, by the ambiguity of the foundational legal definitions of the "security" concept that, despite shifts in emphasis made by the Philippine government relative to varying circumstantial pressures, have nonetheless remained broadly categorical rather than narrowly operational. After the February 1987 ratification of the current Philippine constitution, President Corazon Aquino promulgated Executive Order (E.O.) No. 292 that instituted the Administrative Code of 1997, which lists "the the major structural, functional and procedural principles and rules of governance" for the Philippine state. The list included a description of the National Security Council (NSC), the mandate of which is to "serve as the lead agency of the government for coordinating the formulation of policies, relating to or with implications on the national security". The NSC is expected to formulate "integrated and rationalized national, foreign, military, political, economic, social and educational policies, programs, and procedures vital to the security of the state". E.O. No. 292, however, does not contain a qualifier for the "security" interest of the NSC in the comprehensive range of policy issues (Executive Order No. 292, 1987), and does not prevent an overlap of information access and operational control with the various bureaus and other government agencies subsequently described in the document. The beneficence of ability of the NSC to collect information and coordinate government functions under conditions of operational crisis is only implied in the E.O. No. 292. In practice, any invocation of "national security" is hampered by the inevitable logistics and communications complexities that emerge during crisis conditions. This is because the bureaus and other agencies of the Philippine government are not legally obliged or enabled either to defer to the NSC or any other security-related agency to maintain operational viability during conditions of crisis or to create emergency operational protocols for the NSC to monitor and coordinate. Furthermore, this condition allows the magnification and re-definition of operational irregularities;

however, these have occurred, as "security" issues by agency directors and heads of bureaus, but especially by executives of the national government who are able to convert the publicity generated by security-justified responses into affirmations of political consolidation.

The operational oversights were not remedied even with the promulgation of Administrative Order (A.O.) No. 218, series 2008, which was intended to be a further operationalisation of E.O. No. 292. The primary function of the Department of National Defense (DND) and the associated Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) was redefined in A.O. No. 218 as "to adequately respond to current exigencies of national security." Although the narrow combat roles of the DND and AFP were identified, A.O. No. 298 still identified "security" broadly with operations to "establish a physically and psychologically secure environment conducive to national development" (Administrative Order No. 218, series 2008, 2008). From the perspective of criminality and delinquency in the Philippines, where force-of-arms would be most readily seen as relevant to a national development agenda, the emphasis of A.O. No. 298 would appear as having been misplaced, as there was a significant decrease in net criminality from 2005 (76,758 total reported crimes, 25,128 total crimes against persons) to 2007 (28,481 total reported crimes, 16,078 total crimes against persons) just before it was promulgated (*The Philippines in Figures,* 2008, pp. 21–22). Even the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) secessionist movement appeared amenable to a peaceful settlement of its long conflict with the Philippine government in the first six months of 2008. However, the decision of the Philippine government to suspend and eventually cancel the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) with the MILF in August 2008 and the subsequent dissolution in September 2008 of the panel that negotiated for a peaceful settlement led to a resumption of armed combat (Amnesty International, 2008, pp. 1–14). The notable exception to the generally downward trend in criminal activity prior to the promulgation of the A.O. 218 was the rise to prominence of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) that gained notoriety for conducting high profile bomb attacks in major Philippine cities and for the abduction-for-ransom of several Americans, Europeans and wealthy Filipinos. The US government assisted the anti-insurgency operations of the AFP against the ASG, on account of the alleged links that the ASG had with the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and Al Qaeda terrorist groups (Vaughn et al., 2009, pp. 16–20). Because the ASG planned for the assassination or destruction of American targets, the AFP received US$ 13 million in Foreign Military Funding (FMF) of the United States Department of Defence in 2007 intended specifically for multi-programme counter-terrorism operations (Chalk, 2008). Although this amount would appear small when compared to the 47,420,840,000 Philippine peso (US$ 1.05 billion approx.) budget of the AFP in 2007, (Republic of the Philippines General Appropriations Act Financial Year, 2007), it nonetheless indicates an opportunity for security-related funding that is determined mainly by political alignment with foreign donors. This practice, specifically done through liaison of the DND with the Joint US Military Assistance Group (JUSMAG), has a legal basis in the Department Order (D.O.) No. 40 of the Office of the Secretary of the DND. More importantly, D.O. No. 40, which activated the Office of Defence Reform (ODR), is an operationalisation of E.O. No. 292, A.O. No. 298, and other items of legislation associated with Republic Act No. 7898, which is also known as the AFP Modernisation Act of 1995 (Department Order No. 40, 2008). This implicit obligation to seek US security-related assistance in particular not only adds an aspect of diplomatic manoeuvring to the broad range of security issues of the Philippine state, but also diminishes the ability of Philippine officials to independently determine the nature of, and responses to, security issues, or whether certain problems are security issues at all. Conversely, if the Philippine state would stand to receive security-related assistance from the USA or any other great-power state, the broadly defined "security" legislation would be more likely used as a means to justify conceptual and operational alignment rather than as a means to decline on grounds of self-determination.

The case of Philippine security indeterminacy case also occurs within a broader environment characterised generally as having a historical tendency towards inconclusiveness in security-related decision-making. This tendency has recurred specifically within organisations of Southeast Asian states to which the Philippines have belonged. The dissolution in 1977 of the US-led Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO)—described as an alliance "whose incompatible views and interests resulted in paralysis"—was recommended in 1975 by officials from the Philippines and Thailand who also, paradoxically, argued for the retention of the 1954 South-east Asia Collective Defence Treaty, which was

the legal basis for the creation of SEATO (Buszynski, 1981; p. 288, 295). The 1976 non-interference Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, which is regarded as the core diplomatic principle of the 1967 Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its meetings (Goh, 2003, p. 114), was formed when the ASEAN membership was constituted mainly by "weak states" (Collins, 2000, p. 31). More importantly, current conditions are very likely to change when great political, economic and military pressure becomes concentrated in Southeast Asia (most immediately from the USA and China (Buszynski, 2012, p. 148), but also from the ASEAN member states (Acharya, 2001, p. 141). Nonetheless, the commitment to expand the "ASEAN Way", most immediately in the form of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) of 2015, is not likely to bring the intended results and leaves crucial development issues unresolved (Chia, 2013, pp. 4–5). The "ASEAN Way" of inter-governmental interactions—an "evolutionary approach" of "patient consensus-building to arrive at informal understandings or loose agreements"—is no longer regarded as a pragmatic political technique in a conflict-prone environment during the cold war. Rather, it has become formally defined as a "matter of culture," in deference to which ASEAN-member states are expected to harmonise their respective domestic laws short of binding each other and the ASEAN secretariat in a system of legal sanctions to enforce compliance (Severino, 2001). This operational subtext does not invalidate the numerous developmental goals listed in the Economic, Political-Security and Socio-Cultural Community Blueprints of the ASEAN. It does, however, allow for the possibility that delays in fulfilment of any specific item in the Blueprints may be acceptable to ASEAN member and partner governments if justified officially by a desire to avoid conflicts, broadly defined.

The fluidity of the East- and Southeast Asian security environment, and the indeterminate legal framing of its own security-related practice, accounts for the quick acceptance by the Philippine state of programmes associated with the Security Sector Reform (SSR) agenda of the United Nations. The quick and effective transformation of the narrowly militarised Department of National Defence into a broadly practical "Comprehensive Security Department" to match the comprehensive security agenda of the ASEAN is neither logistically nor politically feasible in the present day. Nor does it appear to be absolutely necessary, since both the Philippine and ASEAN security environments permit even extremely gradual compliance with security-related priorities, especially if the initial compliance measures are predominantly legal, bureaucratic, and documentary in nature. In brief, SSR is defined broadly as an official examination of security-related agencies and processes for the improvement of these, particularly in regard to their compatibility with values associated with democratisation such as transparency and the rule of law (The United Nations Secretary-General, 2013, pp. 3–4). The SSR was conceptually unified by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2004, and by the United Nations in 2007, and was based on examples from Central and West Africa, the Balkans, South America and Post-Soviet European states, where the involvement in criminal activities and other organisational irregularities by members of the police and military made good governance problematic (Wulf, 2004, pp. 6–7). In the Philippines, however, the adoption of the SSR appears to have retained the indeterminacy of the Philippine security concept. The "security sector" in Philippine SSR is defined as effectively comprised of every single department, bureau, agency and branch of the government (Arugay, 2007, pp. 2–5), and thereby invalidates the notion of "sector" as a functional category. In contrast, however, the blame for problems associated with the broad range of projects under the Human Development Agenda, particularly in areas where armed insurgents operate, invariably falls on "violations of human rights and international humanitarian law" by "misbehaving members of the armed forces" (Arugay, 2007, pp. 6–7). This version of the SSR agenda was initially evaluated from 2005 as a measure to prevent members of the police and the military from turning renegade against the government that they perceived was undemocratic, corrupt and unsupportive of their fight against armed insurgents and other criminal groups (Executive Order No. 255, 2003; Feliciano Fact Finding Commission Report, 2003; Hernandez, 2011, pp. 15, 27–28). A corollary to this was the portrayal of the Philippine security sector as part of a wider "retarded" Philippine democracy that has only recently started to reform (Hernandez, 2008b, p. 1). This concept was essential to the attempt to placate the Moro secessionist insurgents with the message that the military and police have developmental functions other than war fighting (Ferrer, 2010, p. 129; Salvador, 2014; Yabes, 2010, pp. 119–120). Nonetheless, the re-branding of the Philippine police and military as humanitarian and developmental agencies does not conceal the obvious fact that

government employees may be prosecuted for illegality without the invocation of the "security" polemic. More significantly, the inoperably broad definition of security in the Philippines and the ASEAN environment implies that the same discredited police and military will be expected to fulfil the comprehensive security goal, but will nonetheless meet with limited success because of their narrow law enforcement and war-fighting training. Conversely, the persistence of the belief that the Philippine public may yet be completely satisfied by the performance of the "uniformed services" of the Philippine state (Hernandez, 2007, pp. 94–97, 2014a, pp. 50–53, 2014b, pp. 28–30) occurs in an environment where the Philippine state is already structurally defined to meet with suspicion, hostility and open conflict. Examples of these include: the mutual distrust between the military and NGO-led civil society since the martial law regime of the Marcos presidency in 1972 (delos Reyes & Layador, 2014); the continuing "turf war" concerning overlapping areas of geostrategic control between and amongst insurgent factions and government forces (Cupin, 2015a, 2015b); the significant presence of international aid-funded projects in the Philippines that appear to support the claim that the country may become aid-dependent for disaster response and recovery (International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies, 2013); and the inability of the Philippine government to condition the international discourse particularly on the matter of its territorial integrity and geostrategic worth (Patranobis, 2015; Xinhua News Agency, 2015). Even a narrower reading of Philippine SSR as a bureaucratic exercise does not cause the "security" concept to be similarly focused: the inconsequential results of the programme likely indicate that the true intent of Philippine government officials was the purchase of the political loyalty of the AFP (Heiduk, 2014b). Thus, although the Filipinos make much of the legal and conceptual bases for their commitment to international norms such as comprehensive security or human security, there seems to be a tacit resignation that very few of their avowed comprehensive threats will be actually resolved (Paris, 2001, p. 89).

3. Security by any means: agitation, confrontation and resignation

Conventionally, the combination of securitisation inconclusiveness and security sector self-censure would allow the Philippine state to be described as either a "weak state" or a "small country". Weakness in this case refers to the persistence of internal security threats attributable to an inadequate infrastructural capacity and to poor social cohesion. Despite being readily associated with the governments of Third World states, the tendency for state officials to equate security with the improvement of economic or military—that is, coercive—capacities when confronted with weakening societal solidarity (that cannot be remedied by the imposition of more centralised coercion) continues to recur globally (Collins, 2000, pp. 32–33). Conversely, smallness in international security relations is most readily defined by the "penetrated political system" concept of James Rosenau; that is, "one in which nonmembers of a national society participate directly and authoritatively, through actions taken jointly with the society's members, in either the allocation of its values or the mobilization of support on behalf of its goals" (Rosenau, 2006, p. 183). Assurances of security by the USA, made in conjunction with the Mutual Defence Treaty between the USA and Phillipines, and a belief in the stability of the East Asian diplomatic environment have primacy over the development of local security-related capabilities for the assertion of Philippine sovereignty (2011–2016 National Security Policy: Securing the Gains of Democracy, 2011, pp. 29–30). The Revised Armed forces of the Philippines (AFP) Modernisation Act of 11 December 2012, to which 75 billion Philippine Pesos (US$ 1.7 billion approx.) was initially allocated (Republic Act No. 10349, 2012), has been promoted as essential to the Philippine government's fight against "hunger and poverty" (Aquino, 2012). It has, however, divided Philippine public opinion. On the one hand, there is an expectation that the project will be mismanaged in ways similar to other government projects not immediately related to national security (Fonbuena, 2013). On the other, there is the belief that the Philippine government should be given credit for any benefit derived from the project, regardless of the managerial complexities (Depasupil, 2014; Mangosing, 2014a, 2014b), if only because these results compel China and Japan in particular to include Philippine issues in their security-related calculi (Esmaquel, 2014; Sabillo & Dizon, 2014).

Alternatively, and in conjunction with the categorisation of weak- and small-state security, the case of the Philippines may be assessed in terms of cases, and their corresponding theoretical frameworks, that indicate an acceptance, and even justification, of "smallness" as a viable condition under which international relations are conducted. This is because of a fundamental dilemma that a state with

avowed limits to its security-related capabilities confronts when responding to, or even defining, security-related problems. One the one hand, the resolution of security-related problems may not necessarily improve the capability of the state to respond to, or survive, future crises. This would appear to make a case for the expansion of security-related capabilities, which co-occurs with a re-definition of the state's priorities, particularly concerning those that alter the condition of the state relative to prevailing opportunities and threats. On the other hand, a state that has prevailed against security-related threats with only incremental and non-systemic changes to its security-related capabilities may not necessarily seek an expansion of these capabilities, particularly if the problems and responses are recurrent, containable, or otherwise manageable. This would appear to make a case for the maintenance, or at least acceptance, of the status quo environment where, notwithstanding relational asymmetries with more powerful states, security-related problems are presumed unlikely to become more severe. The inclination of the Philippine state towards the latter rather than the former in the recent past likely indicates that Philippine government officials will find their security environment unmanageable unless the Philippine security sector is limited to fulfil only a reactive and particularistic damage-control function.

4. Securitisation and the limits of damage control

The choice to either resolve or contain problems identified as "security" is a key feature of the securitisation concept of the Copenhagen School. Securitisation refers to the processes associated with the presentation of issues as existential threats by government officials and other influential and authoritative persons and groups to societies for which they are accountable (Buzan & Hansen, 2009, p. 214). The essential rationale of the securitisation concept has two distinct but closely linked aspects. On the one hand, the operational capability of a state to withstand crises determines the stability needed for a state to relate to other states, and for a government to relate to its constituency. On the other hand, the ability or inability to maintain this operational capability can also be a focal point for the inter-relations amongst states and amongst influential persons and groups within states. The underlying reasoning for the distinction of "security and the process of securitisation from that which is merely political" (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998, p. 4) is that the emergency measures taken to resolve crises and disasters should not disrupt the attempts to manage other issues through negotiation and compromise. In practice, however, conflation rather than distinction occurs; that is, "at the risk of societal disruption, officials may still resort to emergency powers to fulfil self-serving political ends, and make these largely unilateral actions appear as instances of legitimate securitisation" (Buzan et al., 1998, pp. 25–26).

Although not directly formulated to account for security-related problems in Asia (Acharya & Buzan, 2010, pp. 13–14), this theory nonetheless finds immediate application in cases in the Philippines where the security agenda had been subverted by political manoeuvring. At the Peace and Security Forum held at the Mandarin Oriental Manila hotel on 22 April 2010, the Senator Benigno S. Aquino III read a speech that condemned the government of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo for having failed to "implement a comprehensive National Security Policy that focuses on the root causes of war and conflict" (Aquino, 2010a). As Aquino was a candidate for the 10 May 2010 presidential election under the Liberal Party against the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats of which Macapagal Arroyo was a member (Sisante, 2009), attempts at gaining political mileage by criticising the incumbent was to be expected. Crucially, Aquino chose to focus on what came to be known as the "Maguindanao Massacre" as a key failure of national security under the Arroyo government. On 23 November 2009, a convoy of family members and supporters of Esmael Mangudadatu, the vice-mayor of Buluan, Maguindanao, and a group of journalists were ambushed by a force presumably authorised by Andal Ampatuan, Jr., who was Mangudadatu's rival and Macapagal Arroyo's key political ally in Mindanao, resulting in 57 deaths (Perez & Dimacali, 2009).

After his victory at the polls, President Aquino appeared to retain security in Mindanao, and security sector reform in general, as key objectives, specifically through the attempt to draw public attention to the national security related "item 14" of his campaign platform "Social Contract with the Filipino People" that he redefined as the policy framework of his government (Aquino, 2010b). But the Aquino government became increasingly criticised for what seemed to be a bureaucratisation of the Maguindanao Massacre, particularly since a quick and conclusive resolution of the case did not appear to

be forthcoming. The judicial processes of the case against eight members of the Ampatuan family is expected to take from 8 to 20 years to complete from the time the case was filed in December 2009 (Burgonio, 2013b; Inquirer Archives, 2013); that is, longer than the presidential term of Aquino which ends on June 2016. Furthermore, the Maguindanao Massacre has since been described as the single worst case of election-related violence in the Philippines, perhaps in the world, to date (Lingao, Corrales, & Cabigao, 2013). Much of the public's focus has been on aspects of the Philippine government's inefficiency that the massacre has exposed (Lingao, 2013), on accusations that Aquino may never fulfil his election campaign promises (Avendaño, 2013; Bacani, 2013; Tacadena, Moya, & Ranad, 2013), and even on the culpability of Macapagal-Arroyo, her party and her regime (Romero, 2013; Salaverria, 2013; Security Matters, 2011; Tiglao, 2013). Public opinion on the issue has likewise been formed around claims that even unprecedented and unpredicted security problems may be resolved if only familiar "rule of law" processes are perfectly observed (Bacani, 2013; Cruz, 2011; Merueñas, 2013; Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2013), or that an outstanding security problem becomes moot when the terms for the compensation of survivors and victims are defined and implemented (Burgonio, 2013a; Calonzo & Merueñas, 2013; Lopez, 2013). An incident such as the Maguindanao Massacre may not be repeated in the next national elections. But the underlying practice by the politically influential of raising alarm over a security–survival issue and of subsequently allowing the issue to devolve to a process of politicised deal-making is likely to continue, regardless of whether or not the ostensible danger has actually passed.

5. Insecurity and smallness: cope or compensate?

A problem related to the demarcation of politics and security in politically volatile environments is the emergence of a distinct "political security" agenda; that is, the imperative to maintain processes and institutions necessary for a state's self-governance (Buzan et al., 1998, pp. 141–142). As with other "penetrated" states, the Philippines has sought to portray its "domestic" political security issues as relevant to the interests of other states, particularly in reference to the operations of armed insurgent groups. Conversely, international endorsement for the "status quo", even if not explicitly for the improvement of governmental operations, is often portrayed by the recipient government as an endorsement of its legitimacy and, in some cases, permission to intensify attacks against political opponents. Kal Holsti in his examination of "role theory" as a framework for analysis of foreign policy and international relations argued that governments would give precedence to internally defined role-conceptions over externally derived role prescriptions (Holsti, 1970, pp. 243, 245–246). By implication, governments would seek out external relations that would buttress their "national role conceptions" and would assess the compatibility of various sources of international role prescriptions with their own interests (Holsti, 1970, p. 246). An indication of the inhospitableness of the "global international system" is the perceived need of "lesser" countries to organise external relations to be consistent with the expectations of "larger" partners; specifically, "powerful" states in rivalry for control of the system, and non-state actors that have attempted to subvert the system altogether (Holsti, 1975, p. 838). And because these adjustments factor into the conflicts between the recipient regime and its opponents (Holsti, 1975, p. 838), the net result is the creation of "persistent" (Jones, 2002, p. 628) states that are only capable of waging, but not winning, conflicts.

As with securitisation theory, small-state conflict theory finds immediate applicability in Philippine cases that involve military intervention by the USA. After having been suspended in 1995, the "Balikatan" joint military exercises between the American and Philippine armed forces were resumed in 1999 (GlobalSecurity.org Website, Exercise Balikatan "Shouldering the Load Together", http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/balikatan.htm). This was made possible by the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) between the Philippines and the USA on 10 February 1998, which exempted vehicles, equipment and other goods for the use of the American military from taxes and other official fees. This unrestricted access by American military forces to the Philippines made the VFA, and its accessorial Mutual Logistics and Support Agreement, resemble a "virtual basing" system that obviated the need to rehabilitate the actual military bases abandoned by the Americans in 1991 (United States of America Department of State Website, 1998). Crucially, the Balikatan and VFA served as means by which the government of the USA accumulated military resources and influence on behalf of the Philippine government, which,

although presumably in aid of the anti-Al Qaeda "War on Terror" of 2001, were actually used to suppress Philippine communist and Moro-nationalist insurgent movements (Lum, 2007, pp. 22–23; Sheppard & Neumann, 2007). US Secretary of State Colin Powell announced the designation of the Communist Party of the Philippines—New People's Army (CPP-NPA) as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation under US laws on 11 August 2002 (United States of America Department of State Website, 2003, p. v). On 28 October 2002, a Council Resolution of the EU listed the CPP-NPA as an "overseas terrorist organisation" (Jacinto, 2005). The secessionist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) appeared to have been affected by the prospect of its inclusion in American and European lists of terrorist organisations, and attempted to disassociate itself from the Al Qaeda-linked persons and groups that the Philippine and American governments intended to eradicate (Pablo, 2002). However, the US Ambassador to the Philippines Francis Ricciardone countered that the MILF could not be conclusively disassociated from Islamic terrorist groups (Bordadora & Pablo, 2003). And in February 2003, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) attacked and overran the MILF stronghold in Buliok, South Cotabato, notwithstanding a previous claim made by the Philippine government that it was "committed to achieving a peace settlement with the MILF" (Marfil, 2003; Pazzibugan, 2003).

The persistent refusal of the governments of the Philippines and China to alter their respective proposals for the settlement of territorial disputes in the South China Sea (BBC News, 2014; Burgonio, 2014; Xinhua News Agency, 2014), itself a long-standing security-related issue, allowed the replacement of counter-insurgency with archipelagic territorial defence as the focal point of US–Philippines security relations. The Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) (Philippine Information Agency, 2014) signed by Philippine and American officials on 28 April 2014 was intended to be an expression of an "interest to strengthen international and regional security" that was not altogether clear in the previous counter-insurgency commitments between both states. The EDCA was premised on a provision of the 30 August 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) between the Philippines and the USA that both countries would "settle any international disputes in which they may be involved". The American assistance to the development of an external defence capability that the MDT implied was described in the document as operationalised by subsequent Philippine–American security-related agreements, such as the 1958 Mutual Defense Board, the 1999 VFA, the 2006 Security Engagement Board, and the 2007 Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Government of the United States of America on enhance defense cooperation, 2014, pp. 1–2; Bacani, 2014). Three of the six goals of the EDCA—strengthening the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) for external defence, maritime security and maritime domain awareness—clearly imply an outward security outlook, whereas the rest—interoperability (between the Philippine and American militaries), capacity-building towards AFP modernisation and humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR)—may be helped by the development of an external defence capability (*Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement,* 2014). Moreover, the summary of Philippine–American security relations released by the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) in conjunction with the signing of the EDCA included at least seven terms referring to maritime borders and external security, whilst terrorism was referred to only once, and counterinsurgency not at all (*Philippine-United States Bilateral Relations Fact Sheet,* 2014). The manoeuvres that received the most media coverage during the Balikatan held from 5 to 16 May 2014 were simulations of amphibious attacks on military targets entrenched in a beach environment (Dizon, 2014; Lozada, 2014a, 2014b) despite denials from Philippine and American officials that the exercises were preparations for a confrontation with China (Galang, 2014; Lozada, 2014b). On 26 June 2014, the US government announced the phase-out of the Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines (JSOTF-P), a group of American counter-terrorism specialists deployed in the southern Philippines that had as many as 600 troops. This phase-out was justified as part of a greater plan to allow for potential increases in US military presence elsewhere in the Philippines, particularly in regard to the territorial dispute between the Philippines and China (Associated Press, 2014; Whaley & Schmitt, 2014).

6. The burden only we can bear

The threat normalisation theory of Greg Bankoff was formulated in reference to insecurity in the Philippines, and the adequacy of the social and technological mechanisms intended to help cope with

these perceived threats. The occurrence or recurrence of particular natural phenomena under specific conditions, and the effects these have had on communities, "are agents of cultural formation as much as they are physical events" (Bankoff, 2003, p. 3). Insecurity, like natural phenomena defined as disasters, is a social convention. "What makes a hazard into a disaster depends primarily on the way a society is ordered. Human systems place some people more at risk than others... (and) vulnerable people are at risk not simply because they are exposed to hazards but also because they have been made marginal in some way" (Bankoff, 2010). The expectation in the Philippines that community-generated self-help networks will emerge in areas most exposed to "personal misfortune" and "community danger" co-occurs with the acceptance that the entire Philippine population exists on one of the world's most hazardous landmasses, and that the need to cope with complex natural and human processes occurs on a daily basis (Bankoff, 2007a, pp. 328–330). From historical records made during the Spanish colonial period from the fifteenth to the late nineteenth century on the behaviour associated with dangerous natural phenomena, Bankoff identifies three categories of threat-related behaviour that are still observable in the present day. These are (1) the creation and use of infrastructure in ways that emphasise practicality and durability under extreme conditions as primary values, (2) the creation and maintenance of production systems that were designed to minimise loss rather than to maximise output and (3) the recourse to mass evacuations as a response to crises of different types (Bankoff, 2007b, pp. 26–28). The identification, therefore, of the threat-responses and the social constructions concerning hazards upon which these responses are based (Bankoff, 2004, p. 106) implies that politics and security in the Philippines may be assessed as consolidative behaviour that derives from particular notions of survival and endurance.

Cases of disaster-related evacuation of Philippine nationals, particularly those incidents that entailed the repatriations of Filipinos or entailed international funding or other assistance, provide interesting references for analysis with threat normalisation theory because these appear to be attempts by the Philippine state to provide simple solutions to complex security-related problems. The attempts to evacuate Philippine migrant workers from Libya and Syria in 2011 and 2012 revealed severe problems that Philippine officials likely assumed would be manageable because of the "non-combatant" status of virtually all Philippine migrant workers. On 22 April 2011, six months after the start of the Libyan civil war in February 2011, despite an order for the mandatory evacuation of Philippine nationals (Beltran, 2011), officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) in the Philippines claimed to have evacuated only half of the estimated 26,000 Filipino workers employed in Libya. The evacuation excluded 1700 Filipino medical staff who were rescued by the Geneva-based International Organisation for Migration (IOM) (Esplanada, 2011). The remnant were assumed to have opted to stay in Libya or made their own travel arrangements (Sevilla, 2013). A final attempt by the Philippine government to assure the safety of these Filipinos was the diplomatic recognition on 25 August 2011 of the insurgent-supported National Transitional Council (NTC) that replaced the government of Muammar Gaddafi. This was because the NTC promised safe passage for Filipinos who wanted to be repatriated (Carvajal, 2011). The evacuation of Filipinos from Syria was far more difficult: on 23 August 2011, former Philippine Labour Undersecretary Susan Ople reported that "90 percent of the estimated 17,000 Filipino workers in Syria were domestic workers and only around 800 of them are documented or members of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration" (Tubeza, 2011). By 2 June 2014, only 5,361 Filipinos had been repatriated from Syria, notwithstanding travel assistance grants by the IOM in Damascus and the Mandatory Repatriation Programme (MRP) of the DFA (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2014).

Similarities may be observed in cases of evacuations closer to Manila. On 5 March, the Malaysian military began its Ops Daulat (Operation Sovereignty) in areas surrounding Kampung Tanduo in the Lahad Datu district of Sabahin Borneo against an armed group that came from Simunol Island of the Sulu archipelago in the southern Philippines (Borneo Insider, 2013a, 2013b). The "Sabah Standoff", the term by which the conflict had become popularly known, between Malaysian security forces and the Royal Security Forces of the Sultanate of Sulu and North Borneo, has been referred to by military analysts as "bizarre," "strange" and "unusual". This was not only because the Sulu fighters who claimed to represent the true ruler of North Borneo and Sulu, the Philippine-based Jamalul Kiram III, had no chance of winning. It was also because neither the Malaysian nor the Philippine government attempted to use the incident to gain political advantage in their unresolved territorial dispute over

North Borneo (Cheney-Peters, 2013a, 2013b; Gosh, 2013; Mullen, 2013). A further complication was the discovery by the Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) sent by the Philippine DFA to assist Philippine nationals affected by the conflict in the area that, other than the Philippine refugees in Lahad Datu, there were about 30,000 undocumented workers in the adjacent Tawau who also needed diplomatic assistance (Republic of the Philippines Department of Social Welfare & Development Website, 2013). By May 2013, the number of Filipinos who fled Sabah exceeded 100,000 (Dugenia, 2013). Significantly, amongst the refugees were Suluk and Tausug ethnics who fled the fighting between the Philippine military and Moro secessionists in Southern Philippines in the 1970s only to be resettled in the UNHCR-designated offshore refugee community of Kampung Simunul in Sabah, North Borneo (Chen, 2013).

7. Conclusion

The problems in the management of security-related issues described here need not be taken to mean either that the Philippine state is approaching an inevitable collapse or that these or any other security-related problems become immediately resolvable with the application or formulation of novel theoretical approaches. Rather, the examination of security-related issues as these developed, the policy responses created relative to these issues, and the conceptual bases of these responses, reveals that the notion of security itself, although fundamentally about existential survival, is most clearly understood in terms of the particular persons and systems kept are safe through these concepts and practices. This allows for the recognition that security-related systems, and the problems these systems are intended to resolve, occur within very specific conditions.

If the 2011–2016 National Security Policy is regarded not as the definitive statement of security goals but as a resource from which to derive insights on how security in the Philippines is understood, the following points may be help contextualise the policy, and may yet help in its practical improvement. First, conspicuously absent from the conclusion of the National Security Policy is an operable definition of a successful outcome other than the enhancement of "the environment conducive in (*sic*) achieving peace, security and prosperity for the welfare and well-being of the Filipinos" (p. 31). This implies an unwillingness or inability of Philippine officials to admit that the official security concept is more akin to a template to which all Filipinos must conform rather than a composite that indicates the geographic, historical, sociocultural, economic and political diversity of the country. It further implies that Philippine security officials prefer to view Philippine society as inhabiting a predominantly normative unitary category rather than a more pragmatic diverse, or even fragmented, composite of sub-groupings. These would constitute a falsification of the concept inherent to both comprehensive security and human security; that is, security-related problems have different origins and have various effects on a diverse society. The persistence of this oversight on the environment- and context-specific origin, nature, and impact of security-related threats would result in a "centre-periphery" outlook whereby the well-being of the politically, economically and socially marginalised would be secondary to the safety of persons, systems and values at the state centre. It is also unlikely to remedy the general ignorance amongst the Philippine population of the nature of the systemic and practical aspects of comprehensive and human security, even as Filipinos tend to be emotive when confronted with instances of human suffering. A less generic/nationalist and a more particularistic/pluralist regard for the Philippines, as reflected in a more detailed description of the Philippine (comprehensive/human) security environment (either in the main body of the text or in the annexes) would indicate a more authentic awareness and acceptance by Philippine officials of the comprehensive/human security concepts to which they have committed their state. it would also be a step towards remedying the "at the least" mindset that motivates current security responses by compelling the creation of problem- and context-specific responses. Ironically, the most immediate obstacles to this measure are likely to be the archaic English language of Philippine law which limits legal language as a form of effective communication, and the legal-legislative profession whose members collectively hold an elite status and broad influence notwithstanding their narrow training (Simbulan, 2005, pp. 118–126). Nonetheless, a more particularistic/pluralist description of the Philippine environment in Philippine security policy would be a signal admission that, despite its comparative smallness and weakness, the Philippines is managed with a realistic and comprehensive, rather than normative and narrow, awareness of its definitive hazards and capabilities.

Second, the National Security Policy presents the security-related priorities in sequence, thereby giving the impression that the attainment of "internal security" goals is necessary for the attainment of "external security" goals. More specifically, the concept of "poverty" is the single most emphasised problem, and the illegal use of firearms for partisan resistance or personal gainterrorism, criminality and Partisan Armed Groups (PAG)—collectively receive more emphasis than any other security-related goal. However, there does not appear to be any distinction in the document between (1) the notion of "problematic" that entails drastic and large-scale intervention to prevent the unravelling of the social fabric and (2) the notion of "problematic" as irksome but otherwise manageable with current capabilities. That is, there is no definitive indication on whether these problems are to be "securitised" because of their inherent severity or merely "politicised" to reflect the adaptability of the Philippine government. Consequently, uncertainty remains about whether the measures in National Security Policy are ultimately intended to promote broad systemic change to resolve the structural bases of inequality or merely intended to prevent the worsening of the particular problems listed in the document. The recurrence of the term "fight" in reference to "criminality" and "poverty" (p. 17, 18, 20), and the use of the "ang daang matuwid" (the way that is straight) "tuwid na landas" (straight path) slogan of President Benigno S. Aquino III as the conclusion of the policy paper (p. 32), may indicate that the official security outlook is closer to "politicisation" rather than "securitisation". The explicit operationalisation of the term "security" as "regime defence" in the National Security Plan may not be entirely acceptable in the politically-conflictual Philippine society. An alternate approach would be to include in the document a list of projects that correlates to the policy objectives as well as to the specific government agencies responsible for the implementation of these projects. The effect of this would be the "bureaucratisation" of the security concept; that is, a government would be regarded as secure if it fulfils is its formal, legal and self-avowed functions. It would also imply that security would be measured in terms of operational capacity rather than in terms of perceived safety or satisfaction of the citizenry. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the numerous conceptual and operational implications of this policy outlook, particularly in regard to the ability of the Philippine state to meet its external security goals. Nonetheless, most of these may be summarised as being concerned with the consolidation in the Philippines of a "statist" security paradigm as the basis for the interaction of Filipinos with other states, societies and security concepts.

Third, the National Security Plan appears to be implicitly based on a Philippine context-specific concept of resilience that is not yet articulated formally in policy or promoted through nationalist discourse. The key to this is the severe destruction attributed to natural phenomena that is emphasised as a key area of concern in the National Security Plan (pp. 19–22, 25). The recurrent and quantifiable nature of these natural phenomena, as well as the "man made" (p. 4, 22) disasters associated with these phenomena, is not the problem that the policy is intended to resolve. That is, the harshness of the environment may not be the subject of security policy, but the vulnerability of Philippine society in its native environment is a matter of security policy to resolve. Moreover, the governmental and societal systems that have emerged in this environment have tended to be "persistent", albeit not necessarily in forms that are efficient, progressive or otherwise desirable from a non-Philippine perspective. This claim may appear to be counter-intuitive, as the Philippines continues to receive international aid, including funding for disaster recovery programmes. There is, however, proof to the possibility that even this form of aid-patronage is an extrapolation of traditional Philippine patronal behaviour onto asymmetric relations of international power and influence where the assumption of an "inferior" status by the Philippine government accrues benefits that would otherwise be unattainable. Through the behaviour definitive of Philippine institutions that Rupert Hodder describes as "emotional bureaucracy", Filipinos manage the moral pressure from dispensations made for their inadequacies by assuming that their institutional partners are motivated not by impersonal rules but by personal virtues, chiefly compassion, amiability and magnanimity (Hodder, 2014, pp. 148–151). The work of Hodder, Bankoff and others on Philippine political culture examine the ongoing adaptation by Filipinos of their socially-constitutive beliefs and practices to unfamiliar environments whilst retaining patterns and other features that are recognisable to other Filipinos. Beneath the mandate of the 2011–2016 National Security Plan "to serve the national interests of the Philippines" is a political security imperative to assure the continuation of the socially constitutive and values that place primary emphasis on the ability to

withstand the disasters that are definitive of the Philippine state. To revise the National Security Plan to reflect this aspect of Philippine identity would be to include more explicit statements on the alliances and other relations that the Philippine government depends for material assistance, ideological approval, sovereign recognition and even civilisational affiliation. This would constitute an abandonment of the generic "national security" approach for the adoption of a contextualised "Philippine security", as well as an opportunity to assess the effects of the strategic commitments of the Philippines with other states beyond the immediate exchanges of military, political and economic information, funds and materiel.

In sum, the importance of contextual clarity in the use of the "security" concept in national policy is in the recognition that security-related problems are just as likely to be directly resolved as redefined to allow other approaches to be considered, made the responsibility of other states or collectives, minimised in terms of its negative effects, or even tolerated with the hope that solutions may yet be devised. Security policies of a government are iterations of the security culture of the society upon which that government is based. Consequently, definitions of security are not only the results of particular values, habits and histories that are rigid and deterministic, even if the imperative of "state survival" appears to reinforce this rigidity. Rather, these definitions are inevitably contributions to a much broader international system that is itself a construct influenced by, amongst other things, the desire of persons to attain forms of existence motivated not only by insecurity and mere survival.

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