CLU POLICY STUDIES SERIES - 2

A QUESTION OF NATIONAL SECURITY

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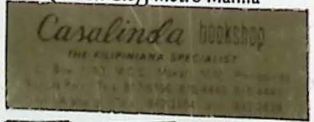

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I – INTRODUCTION

From the time we assumed the status of a politically independent state, each succeeding administration has invariably invoked national security as a justification for continuing our relations of dependence on the United States. This is a reflection of the fact that our independence is still nominal and that the U.S. is still a central factor in our national life.

National security is also invoked to suppress internal dissent against policies and programs meant to perpetuate the country's neocolonial status. Indeed, national security is often used as an over-all excuse for anti-democratic policies.

The question of national security is indissolubly linked with the question of national independence. When a state allows the intervention of an external power in matters of security, then its sovereignty is impugned and its lack of independence is exposed.

In the Philippines, even internal policy is delimited by the global security goals of the U.S. which demand the preservation of the status quo.

This paper is an attempt to clarify the different aspects of national security. It examines the conceptual aspects of national security within the present framework of Philippine-American relations.

II – ASPECTS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

National security fundamentally involves the maintenance and protection of a nation's sovereignty, the crucial attribute of which is the right to self-determination – the freedom of a nation to pursue its own political, economic, and social goals.

There are two aspects of national security. In its internal aspect, national security relates to the defense of the nation's government against hostile local elements seeking its replacement with their own government. In this sense, national security refers to measures aimed at countering domestic or internal challenges to the existing political and socio-economic order. A government enjoying popular support would use repressive measures against a minority seeking to install an authoritarian order while a reactionary government would use its coercive apparatus against popular forces.

In its external aspects, national security is concerned with safeguarding the state against outside or foreign forces, pressures or influence designed to conquer it or undermine its sovereignty, for the purpose of placing it under the domination or control of some foreign state or states. In this sense, national security embraces the defense arrangements directed at insuring the safety of the state against foreign intervention or domination.

III – NATIONAL SECURITY AND THE NATIONAL INTEREST

Both the internal and external aspects of national security should be part of a system of safeguards designed to protect the national interest. The national interest has never been clearly defined. It has always been invoked, but the question that should be asked is: whose interest?

Governments declare that the people are the main object of national programs. Most often, however, national interest is equated with the interests of a small sector that commands the levers of economic and political power. Because it had identified its goals with those of international corporate giants, this sector has been mainly responsible for propagating the idea that our national security is best protected if we maintain the present special relations with the United States.

For this sector, the myth that our interests and those of the U.S. are identical or at least mutual is an unquestioned assumption. This results in policies which serve American interests and their own, while the living standard of the majority deteriorates.

IV – NATIONAL SECURITY AND WORLD POLITICS

Viewed against the backdrop of current world politics, it is clear that the independence of Third World countries like the Philippines is impaired by pressures brought to bear on them by the powerful states interested in maintaining the present international economic order.

These powers have shown little regard for the sovereign rights of the weak nations upon whom they have forced economic and military arrangements and policies in the pursuit of their goals of world domination. They have succeeded in making it appear that the national interests of the states over which they wield influence, domination or control are identical with their global aims.

U.S. Global Policies

The U.S., for instance, has defined the scope of her national interest as embracing the whole range of nations that make up the "Free World." To protect this American national interest, a network of U.S. military bases has been set up in strategic places all over the world, under alliances or mutual-defense agreements with allied and client states.

Hand in hand with substantial economic presence, these American military bases, whose primary aim is the advancement of U.S. economic objectives rather than the protection of the host country's national interest, have placed the client states virtually under American political and military control.

This is specially true with respect to weak and small countries like the Philippines.

That the presence of American bases in the country is for purposes other than the much-ballyhooed protection of the Philippines against foreign aggression was recently admitted, albeit unwittingly, when in a press conference he called on 29 March 1983 to "allay fears" of our involvement in any armed confrontation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, the American ambassador to the Philippines, Michael H. Armacost, warned that the removal of the U.S. military bases at Clark and Subic "would alter the strategic equation of power in Asia, Western Pacific and the Indian Ocean."

Mr. Armacost's conclusion is clearly based on U.S. perceptions and requirements to which the Philippines adheres without taking into consideration her own needs and interests.

V – THE MYTH OF MUTUALITY OF INTERESTS

The National security of the Philippines is totally tied up with American policy not only in the military but in all other fields of endeavor – economic, political, and cultural. This tie-up would appear to rest on two assumptions or beliefs, namely:

(1) That the U.S. is a friendly power with a clean record of sympathetic dealings with peoples who had been victims of colonialism and are fighting for their liberation; and

(2) That the U.S. is a special friend of the Filipino people, not only

because of past association as that between a guardian and its ward but also because of common or mutual interests.

Record of Interventions

In reality, the U.S. has had a long, consistent record of interventionism in the affairs of Third World countries. It is a matter of historical record that American marines helped suppress the nationalist uprising in China (1911-12); intervened in Siberia (1918-24); in Korea (1952-53); in Guatemala (1954); in Laos (1954 and years thereafter); in the Congo, jointly with other imperialist powers (1960-62); in Cuba (since 1961); in the Dominical Republic (1965); in Vietnam (1963-1973).

The U.S. intervened in and subverted the governments in Iran, where the CIA engineered the downfall of Prime Minister Mossadegh; in Guatemala, where she ousted the government of President Jacobo Arbenz; in the Congo, where CIA forces murdered the nationalist leader Patrice Lumumba; in Chile, which resulted in the murder of President Salvador Allende; in Indonesia, where she succeeded in causing President Sukarno's fall from power.

Right here in the Philippines, the story of how the U.S. manipulated the events and people to bring about the defeat of President Quirino and the election of President Magsaysay in 1953 and of how she intervened in the Presidential campaign of 1957 to make sure that nationalist Claro M. Recto was decisively defeated are too recent to be forgotten.;

At present, the U.S. is actively intervening in Kampuchea, Central America, the Middle East and Africa.

U.S. Colonial Record in the Philippines

The belief that the U.S. is a friend of the Filipino people stems from an uncritical acceptance of what is generally held to be on the credit side of the American colonial administration in the Philippines. Unknown to many people are the harsh realities of American colonial rule.

The Philippine revolution of 1896-1898, waged by our people, of their own free will and with their own arms and resources, ended more than three centuries of Spanish rule. However, the gains of this national liberation struggle were aborted by the U.S. in pursuit of her "Manifest Destiny." Our people were overpowered by superior arms in the Philippine-American war. American forces inflicted mass brutalities on a population zealously defending their newly-won independence. Reconcentration, water cure, and other forms of cruelty were employed by the military with enticements of political autonomy and eventual independence, at the same time that the structure for the long-range domination and control of our economy was being built.

The disastrous results of the economic relations imposed by the U.S. are well known to us. As the colonizing process moved on, the U.S. acquired vast economic interests, enabling her nationals to control trade, business and industry in major areas of the economy. When the Commonwealth was established, these interests became vested by constitutional fiat, as an exception to the clause reserving to the Filipinos the development and exploitation of their country's natural resources. Thus, when war came in 1941, the U.S. had already amassed enormous economic interests in the Philippines.

Totally unprepared because of the neglect of our colonizers, we became pawns in World War II – a war not of our making and in which our only concern was to survive the brutality of the Japanese invader. Yet after the war, contrary to glowing promises of reward for our sacrifices in the war effort, the U.S. Congress enacted self-serving legislation that enabled Americans to acquire more political, economic and military concessions at our expense.

Neocolonial Process

The Bell Trade Act, the Parity Amendment, and the military and related arrangements paved the way for the control of our economy by foreign investors under the aegis of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

This neocolonization process has resulted in: a largely agricultural, therefore poor, economy dominated by alien agri-business interests; the decapitalization of the economy; the removal of exchange controls and tariffs on imports, resulting in a debauched currency and the collapse of local industries; the emasculation of labor; unprecedented unemployment and underemployment; chronic balance of payments and trade balance deficits; an external debt close to $18 billion; and a widening of the gap between the rich and the poor – in short, the denationalization of the local economy.

Continued Dependence

One of the chief arguments advanced for depending on the U.S. for our security is the oft-repeated "mutuality of interests" of the two countries. In truth, the interests of the Philippines and the U.S. are perhaps as far apart as the geographical distance between them. The very nature of their societies precludes such mutuality of interests.

As the leading capitalist country in the world, the U.S. has global interests to promote and protect; we have none. The U.S. is expansionist; we are not. The U.S. must have bases all over the world, as indeed she has more than 2,000 bases spread world-wide; we need no bases anywhere, least of all the U.S. military bases at Clark and Subic.

When the Philippines was still a colony of the U.S., the relations between the two countries were never on an effective reciprocal basis. This re-

lation of dependence and consequent disparity of rights has been perpetuated to the present. Strict protectionist policies of the U.S. have been disastrous to our export products – tuna, textile, sugar, hemp, coconut oil and oil derivatives. On the other hand, under IMF-WB strictures, we have been forced to liberalize our tariffs in order to allow imports of non-essential items and other goods that compete with locally produced ones.

The American goal has been to expand and solidify her dominance and control over the Philippines. We have yet to free ourselves from this dominance.

VI – THE PHILIPPINES AS A NEOCOLONY

An interpretation of national interest based on mythical assumptions has bred the current and popular concept that our national security requirements are identical with the national security requirements of the U.S.

This false concept has impelled us to accept without question the package of security arrangements with the U.S. and to adopt economic policies that benefit and insure the ascendancy of transnational corporations in our country, not realizing that the interrelationship between the security arrangements and the economic policies favoring the TNCs undermines our independence.

The security arrangements which consist of the Military Bases Agreement, the Military Assistance Agreement, and the Mutual Defense Treaty, entered into by the Philippines just after the end of the last World War have been adhered to by us all these years, notwithstanding the absence of any conceivable foreign enemy and – what is worse – despite the obviousness of the fact that such arrangements were intended only to enhance U.S. interests in the Pacific area, and not, as American propaganda would have it, to provide security for the Philippines against external aggression.

When the Bases Agreement was signed, Japan had just been defeated and humbled. China was in the throes of a civil war and was in no position to threaten us. No other country in Asia and the Pacific even remotely posed any danger to the territorial integrity of the Philippines.

Real Use of Bases

In 1969, Admiral Kaufman testified in committee hearings in the U.S. Senate that "today there is no threat to the Philippines except an internal threat." In August 1975, our Department of Foreign Affairs issued a primer on our security arrangements with the United States pointing out that the Philippines is not in danger of external aggression. In the last few years, President Marcos himself has declared repeatedly that the Philippines faces no danger or threat from external forces.

The unvarnished truth is that the U.S. needed the military bases for the protection of her vast American interests in the region.

The record of the Senate hearings on this subject attests to this:

> Sen. Fulbright: We are not really there to protect the Philippines. We are there to serve our own purposes, to maintain a base for what we believe to be our forward position against China or anybody else. That is our purpose.
>
> Admiral Kaufman: Oh, yes, Sir.

Ambassador Armacost said that the military bases at Clark and Subic are "deterrents" to Soviet plans of aggression in this area of the world. They are, in fact, major bases in the U.S. global military apparatus geared to advance and protect her stepped-up drive toward world capitalist hegemony.

In line with this setup, the countries in which this string of bases are located have no say whatsoever about what the U.S. does with them or whether or not they contain war material that might prove injurious or fatal to the people around them.

There is little doubt that nuclear weapons are stored in those bases and when Mr. Armacost, or any other U.S. spokesman, says it is U.S. policy neither to confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear arms in overseas U.S. bases, he merely implies that the matter is nobody's concern but America's, and the host country has no say whatsoever in that respect.

Pentagon's Strategic Thrusts

The Mutual Defense Treaty presupposed the existence of danger from external attack on the parties. There existed no danger then, nor does any exist now.

Under the Military Assistance Agreement, the U.S. furnished guns, arms, ammunition, equipment and advice to the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The Joint US Military Advisory Group (JUSMAG) was created "to assist and advise the Philippine Government on Army, Navy and Air Force matters." As it turned out, however, this system of military assistance has made our armed forces a component of U.S. interests bent on preserving a particular politico-economic setup that is profitable to U.S. financial and economic groups.

This is clear under the U.S. Public Safety Program, later renamed the USAID Philippine International Security Program, which complemented the Military Assistance Agreement. The program aimed "to strengthen and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of civil police and other Philippine government organizations." In effect, the program was meant to improve the capacity of the local police apparatus to quell civil disburbances, riots and other forms of popular expressions of discontent with the neocolonial setup.

All this fitted in perfectly with what later on came to be known as the

Nixon Doctrine, which calls for the reduction of direct military presence of U.S. armed forces abroad, particularly in Asia, and complementarily, the increased involvement of native Asian troops to do the fighting in the service of U.S. interest.

This strategy became one of the major thrusts of U.S. foreign policy in the 1970s. At present, it has remained a strategic framework for the Pentagon in the worldwide disposition of U.S. military forces. In accordance with this policy, wherever possible, American troops are to be withdrawn to give way to the native armies that would engage in ground war operations.

Military Assistance and U.S. Objectives

The role of military assistance in this strategy was elaborated on by former U.S. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird in these words:

> The basic policy of decreasing U.S. military involvement cannot be successful unless we provide our friends and allies . . . . with the material assistance to insure the most effective possible contribution by the manpower they are willing and able to commit to their own defense and the common defense . . . In the majority of cases, this means *indigenous manpower organized into properly equipped and well-trained armed forces with the help of material, training, technology and specialized military skills furnished by the United States.* (underscoring supplied.)

Laird's statement was, in fact, a re-statement of the policy earlier emphasized in 1970 by Gen. Robert H. Warren, then U.S. deputy assistant secretary of defense, in a Senate foreign relations sub-committee, to wit:

> All these items (equipment, training and related supplies as grant [military] aid for FY 1969 and FY 1970) are carefully designed to strengthen the Philippine Armed Forces in consonance with U.S. objectives and interests . . . Our military assistance helps Philippine military forces promote the security and foreign policy objectives of the United States in the Philippines.

In this light, U.S. military assistance to the Philippines is integral to the national security of the United States. Implementation of this assistance program by the Philippines armed forces inescapably transforms them into a military cog of the Pentagon's worldwide distribution of forces.

Consequently, the Filipino people are forced to identify their interests with the aggressive designs of the U.S. industrial-military complex. On the part of the ruling interests in the U.S., it becomes thus a matter of necessity that, by cultural, educational and other devices, the Filipinos have to be made to see the world in terms of the images painted by the Pentagon and the U.S. State Department.

It is obvious then that U.S. military assistance is destructive of our independence. Our own military apparatus – the very instrument of our national security – is being converted into a tool to undermine our sovereignty.

VII – NATIONAL SECURITY IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

The foregoing discussion has underscored all too clearly the danger that arises from an interpretation of national security based on false assumptions. That danger lies in the fact that, when the external aspect of national security is translated into its internal aspect, it is the interests of the foreign country and their local partners, and not those of our people, which are protected and enchanced.

The very independence of the state is jeopardized, for even internal policies are then adapted to the requirements of an external power. The internal aspect becomes part and parcel of the dependent external aspect of national security.

National security in the existing context must take into account the global relations of forces. A survey of the global landscape would show that there is no military threat to the Philippines from any external source as conjured by American propaganda. What is real is the presence of foreign troops within our shores and the domination of our economy by the country these troops represent.

The security arrangements we are confronted with are part and parcel of the world order which the U.S. is trying to maintain and consolidate. This is the reality beneath the myth of national security which involves military dependence on and occupation by forces of the United States.

This form of "national security" is the military underpinning of neo-colonial relations.

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