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The Philippine Defence, Development and Disaster Security Paradigm

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Abstract

The Philippines suffers from three threats to its national security. Firstly, unlike advanced states, it faces both external and internal assaults on its political and territorial sovereignty. Secondly, self-sustaining economic security remains elusive, with the country failing to emulate the economic successes of its ASEAN neighbours, Singapore and Malaysia. Thirdly, the archipelago must constantly contend with the destabilising effects of natural disasters, including volcanic eruptions, typhoons, and earthquakes. Manila's policy responses to these three disparate but interlinked threats, have been conditioned by four centuries of Spanish, American, and Japanese occupation. The Philippine government remains a work in progress as diverse efforts to build institutional capacity have produced uneven results. Nevertheless, recent innovative policy approaches are instructive, framed around what might be termed a D^3 (Defence-Development-Disaster) security paradigm. Policy implementation is crystallised through the following legislation: Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Modernisation Act, 2012, emphasising territorial and domestic defence through credible armed forces capability; AFP Development Support and Security Plan 2017-2022, bolstering internal security through a 'whole-of-nation' approach; and National Security Policy 2017-2022, promoting internal socio-political stability and non-traditional security, including the Duterte administration's 'drug war', as an element of national security alongside counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism.

Introduction

Until independence in July 1946, the history of the Philippines was characterised by foreign occupation. It began with Spain's conquest of littoral islands in the 1520s, as a first step to claiming the entire country as a colony of the Spanish Empire.[1] Over the next three hundred years, Spain enjoyed uninterrupted colonial power, punctuated briefly by British rule between 1762 and 1764. Spanish domination ended in 1898 when the United States (US) emerged victorious from the Spanish-American war and the Philippines was once again colonised. However, the US proved to be a benign occupying force, and almost immediately established an 'Insular' Government, possessing semi-independent status. In 1907, an elected Philippine Assembly was established, with Washington promising this was the first step towards eventual self-rule. Indeed, in 1935, the US approved the creation of the Philippines Commonwealth, signalling the final step towards full independence after a 10-year interim period. It never happened, though, thwarted by the 1942 Japanese invasion that initiated a bloody conflict and the loss of over one million military and civilian lives.[2] Japan's defeat, in 1946, meant that the Philippines finally achieved sovereignty after 400 years of continuous foreign power subjugation.

Independence was achieved, but from a military perspective it was far from full independence. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) had been created at the same time as the Commonwealth, and had fought under US command in WWII, but, post-independence, the

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country lacked sovereign capability to defend itself against external aggression. To remedy the country's strategic vulnerability, Manila signed defence pacts with the US in the immediate post-WWII period. As such, Washington essentially assumed responsibility for Philippine external security throughout the ensuing Cold War era. This long period of quasi-dependence on US forces finally ceased in September 1991, when the Philippine Senate decided not to ratify a new base treaty. At the same time, the Government announced a plan to modernise the AFP through the purchase of modern fighter and reconnaissance aircraft, fast-attack naval vessels and corvettes. The AFP Modernisation Act of 1995 emphasised the Government's determination to create legislation aimed at developing an autonomous defence posture. However, a series of enduring and seemingly insurmountable budgetary constraints ensured that military modernisation was stillborn. As the AFP was barely able to support basic manpower and logistics requirements, Manila was obliged to sign a 1998 Visiting Forces Agreement with Washington, authorising the resumption of large-scale cooperative military activities between the two countries.

Yet, external security represents just one element of Philippine national security. In addition to the AFP's responsibility to protect the country's territorial integrity, including maritime sovereignty, it holds a mandate to address internal security threats. This is a broad canvass, covering human rights, economic development, insurgency, secessionism, and foreign and local-based terrorism from such groups as Daesh, Jemaah Islamiyah, and the Abu Sayyaf Group. Moreover, the avowed aim of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) is 'to overthrow the government and install a different socio-political-economic order in accordance with its political beliefs and ideology.'[3] Indeed, in the rural areas, issues of poverty and injustice represent the common rallying cry driving internal conflict.

The concept of security permeates all levels of Philippine social, economic, political, and military governance, but its achievement has proved elusive. At the end of the 19th Century, the Philippines enjoyed Asia's highest GDP per capita, after Japan. Fifty years later following independence, the Philippines was one of the region's most democratic states. It was an English-speaking, ex-American colony, that was uniquely placed to take advantage of the economic transformation gathering pace throughout East Asia. Yet, paradoxically, given this impressive historical context and potentially positive development trajectory, the country is one of the poorest in Southeast Asia, with growth rates falling spectacularly short of Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, and even Indonesia. Where did it all go wrong? Firstly, the Philippines, has become a byword for ineffective governance, leading to the corrosive impact of institutional corruption. Secondly, instead of acting as a stabilising force for national security, the AFP was more interested in pursuing political opportunism. Thirdly, political ineptitude reflected by conspicuously weak government policies have fostered a momentum of economic under-achievement. Fourthly, on top of the above malign influences, the economic dead-hand of colonisation has acted to sap indigenous entrepreneurial dynamism, suppress creativity and innovation, distort international trading flows and perpetuate a culture of external dependence. Yet, colonisation need not always represent negative outcomes. For instance, near-neighbour Singapore was also colonised, gaining independence some 20 years after the Philippines. Thereafter, in a shorter timeframe, Singapore not only became the richest nation in Southeast Asia but in 2020 possessed a GDP per capita at US$ 59,798 that was higher than its former colonial master, Great Britain at US$40,285.[4]

The Philippines' flaccid economy has certainly hindered the achievement of economic security, but macroeconomic performance has also been undermined by the devastating impacts effects of perennial natural disasters. The country not only suffers some of the world's most violent

typhoons but is located within the so-called Ring of Fire, the home of several active volcanoes. Exacerbating the situation, the country lies amid intersecting geological fault lines, causing destructive earthquakes and tsunamis. In confronting these natural disasters, the government quickly exhausts its limited financial and material resources, which, in turn, threatens delivery of critical basic services. Therefore, in addition to the AFP's traditional military role, it is required to assist civilian agencies in protecting the state's infrastructure and its people from natural and man-made disasters and calamities. In addressing the broad array of non-traditional security threats, the AFP's internal security strategy is anchored to two strategic policy thrusts: a 'Whole-of-Nation Approach' and a 'People-Centred Human Security Approach'. The former requires the AFP to 'win the peace' rather than to simply defeat the enemy, and the latter represents a shift from a predominantly militaristic solution to a people-centred strategy, based on strong partnerships and broad-based consultation with key stakeholders.

Consecutive post-war governments have sought to bridge the Philippine external and internal security divide by viewing national security through the prism of what might be termed comprehensive security. There are three policy perspectives that have been enacted to address each of these separate but overlapping security domains, impacting on the country's overall national security. Firstly, there are the AFP Modernisation Acts of 1995 and 2010, encapsulating territorial defence, AFP modernisation, and defence industrial capability, to develop a self-reliant defence posture; secondly, there is the AFP Security Plan, which calls for multi-stakeholder responses to security and the protection of civil liberties that encompasses both the whole-of-nation and people-centred human security approaches through strengthened intelligence capabilities, use of force against armed threat groups, integration of rebels into mainstream society and the effective delivery of basic services; and thirdly, is the requirement to engage in economic reconstruction and sustainable development to achieve a range of goals, including enhancing effective responses to calamities, such as typhoons, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, reducing the risks of slow and rapid onset disasters, improving capabilities to address piracy, smuggling, drug and human trafficking, and creating the capacity to transport and control toxic and other ecologically harmful substances. However, the Philippine version of comprehensive security is a flexible concept that can be applied differently based on the prerogatives of political and military leadership as it seeks to confront an evolving security environment.

Evaluating the interplay of these overlapping dynamics is the concern of this paper, especially the process of assessing the nature and performance of recent Philippine security policies designed to strengthen the country's unique comprehensive security paradigm. The paper is framed around the country's Defence, Development and Disaster - D^3 paradigm, with the policies of each of these elements analysed in turn. An assessment of overall policy performance is then offered to throw light on the extent to which the D^3 model has proved effective in securing comprehensive security. A conclusions section brings the study to a close, offering lessons to other nations facing similar security threat configurations

Philippine Defence: Pivot Between Military and Development Security

The primary responsibility of the AFP is the "protection of the people and State",[5] and conventionally, this has regard to external security. The process began in October 1947, when Manila sought to establish an autonomous defence capability through the formation of tri-service armed forces, but the threat posed by communist insurgents forced the AFP to deploy 26 combat battalion teams for domestic counter-insurgency operations.[6] This divergence of

scarce military forces left the country exposed to territorial threats. As a result, the Philippines was obliged to sign two military agreements with the US (the 1947 Military Bases Agreement and Military Assistance Programme, and the subsequent 1951 Mutual Defence Treaty) to bolster its stretched military capability and provide deterrence against external forces. This military division of labour meant that the AFP evolved into a largely army-centric organisation focused on internal security concerns. Overseas threats were downplayed or even ignored, relying almost completely on the Philippine-US Mutual Defence Agreement to deter external aggression. This unusual military division of labour was reinforced by a reluctance on the part of Washington to supply the necessary hardware for internal defence.[7] During the Marcos administration, the Philippine government took its first major step towards pursuing autonomous defence capability, with the AFP, and especially the army, acquiring various non-American-made weapon systems and equipment.[8] The push for greater self-sufficiency was strengthened by the 1991 Philippine Senate vote, blocking renewal of the Joint US-Philippine Military Bases Agreement, with the AFP assuming responsibility, for the first time, of external defence. Although the Mutual Defence Treaty of 1951 survived these far-reaching changes in Philippine-US security relations, it was (and continues to be) solely focused on threats to either party stemming from an external armed attack in the Pacific, precluding overt US assistance in the internal Mindanao conflict and the external Spratly Islands dispute.

Unending internal conflicts since independence from, for instance, the armed wing of the CPP, and a separatist movement led by the Moro National Liberation Front have acted to destabilise Philippine domestic regional economies and society in general. Eventually, in September 1972, President Marcos declared Martial Law, providing him with the opportunity to emasculate government institutions across the executive, legislature, and judiciary. The clampdown on civil liberties, such as elections and freedom of expression, was maintained through subsequent administrations, including that of Duterte, albeit there were attempts (often through radical and unorthodox means) to reinstitute democracy by seeking reconciliation with adversarial groups, removing rampant corruption, responding aggressively to kidnapping and drug-related crimes, to stabilise the country's internal security situation. The AFP supported the civil authorities in maintaining law and order, and contributed to development projects, such as environmental protection, disaster response and community engagement. Similarly, in zones of insecurity and violence, the military continued to provide logistical capability to build roads, schools, health facilities and other basic infrastructure. This defence-development mixture of domestic combat operations 'and' nation-building reflects an effort to 'win-the-hearts and minds' of Filipinos in line with the constitutional mandate of protecting them.[9]

Manila viewed the AFP as a critical pivot in exploiting wider development benefits through policies aimed at forging domestic defence industrialisation. A principal policy mechanism was the Self-Reliant Defence Posture (SRDP) that became law through the 1974 Presidential Decree 415, with the purpose of fostering an indigenous Philippine defence industry. Investment into weapons production capacity was held to offer not only security of supply benefits but also the potential for accelerating economic growth.[10] Defence industrialisation would be expedited by piggy-backing military output onto existing civil production capacity to source 70 percent of the AFP's arms requirements.[11] At the heart of Philippine defence-industrial capacity was the Government Arsenal (GA). Launched in 1957, it was mandated to achieve self-sufficiency within a reasonable timeframe, and under the SRDP proved successful in meeting targets for basic materiel requirements, including the manufacture of 81mm mortar tubes (1974), 60mm tubes (1977) and MKII hand grenades (1978). In April 1998, the Philippine National Police (PNP) Firearms and Explosives Division recorded 45 legal manufacturers of small arms, 533 authorised dealers and 133 gun repair shops in the country.[12]

Among the private players, one of the biggest is the Arms Corporation of the Philippine (Armscor), which claims to be the "largest arms and ammunition manufacturer in Southeast Asia and is present in over 60 countries."[13] In ASEAN, Armscor is the biggest supplier of ammunition for the Royal Thai Army, Royal Thai Navy, and Royal Thai Police.[14]

Another important policy prioritising autonomous defence was the 1995 AFP Modernisation Programme or Republic Act 7898 (RA 7898) and its subsequent revision, the 2010 Republic Act 10349. These Acts encompass AFP doctrinal approaches to development, education, training, equipment and force structuring that were specifically designed to raise military capability to the same level as neighbouring countries, thus allowing the armed forces to "fully and effectively perform their constitutional mandate of upholding and preserving the sovereignty and patrimony of the Republic."[15] The modernisation programme was allocated PhP331.62 bn (around US$7.51bn) for procurement of appropriate weapons systems and their upgrade and maintenance, representing 89 percent of the modernisation budget.[16] In defence terms, this was big money, and the government was keen to limit the negative effects of hefty military spending on basic socio-economic services. Thus, a novel feature of the modernisation programme to ensure financial sustainability was the creation of an AFP Modernisation Act Trust Fund. This would be sourced through proceeds from Department of National Defence (DND) activities, including the sale, lease or usage of military bases and reservations, shares from the sales proceeds of military camps, income from the GA, disposal of excess AFP assets, budgetary surpluses, revenue from the *Malampaya* Natural AFP Gas field, and all interest payments earned from the Trust fund.[17] In parallel, there was a guarantee that AFP acquisitions would furnish economic and technological benefits for the country. This was to be achieved through local production leading to reduced foreign exchange outflows, with attendant economic multiplier effects from expanding inward technology transfers spurring investment and job creation. Facilitating this economic, industrial and technological infusion process, the DND planned to incorporate offset provisions into each acquisition contract.[18] For example, there was the 1974 contract awarded to local company, Elisco Tool Manufacturing, to produce 150,000 M16s under licence from Colt.[19] A 'turnkey' plant was constructed, with production commencing in 1982 that incorporated an additional contract for 60,000 rifles along with the 1983 local production of associated 5.56mm ammunition.[20] In the 1990s, there was the licensed production of 150 Simba Armoured Fighting Vehicles, representing a joint venture between the UK company, GKN Defence and the Philippine-based Asian Armoured Technologies Corporation.[21]

The AFP's reoriented thrust towards enhanced civil-military security was coordinated under the auspices of the 2007 National Development Support Command (NADESCOM). It was primarily staffed by Army Engineering Brigades, which had an operational focus spanning the entire archipelago.[22] The AFP's role focused on internal military security operations and the provision of support to civilian governments in parallel anti-poverty programmes;[23] the latter extending the military's development role beyond that of simply support-and-assist responsibility to undertaking development projects in both conflict zones and underdeveloped areas.[24] Indeed, the NADESCOM model characterised a shift in military thinking that focused just as much on construction as on destruction. The AFP development push came via two policy pathways. Firstly, there was the *Kalayaan Barangays* (Free Communities) programme within the conflict zones, with development projects aimed at ameliorating local tensions through their incorporation into peace negotiations with rebel groups.[25] Secondly, there was the concept of *Bayanihan sa Barangay* (Cooperation in the Community), encouraging the military to embark on development projects in communities anywhere in the country.[26] Private companies, foundations, non-government organisations and even foreign donors could commission socio-

economic initiatives, including outreach programmes, skills development, nutrition, sanitation, livelihood training, values education, disaster relief, environmental conservation and the development of cooperatives.[27]

Defence and Development

The Philippine security environment is challenged by two of the world's longest running armed conflicts - the Moro secessionist movement in Mindanao in the south, and the communist insurgency in several other provinces. Insurgency affects about 90 percent of the country's provinces, causing mortalities, social disruption, economic degeneration and chronic poverty.[28] Insurgency has not gone away and is attributed to social injustice, political marginalisation, lack of education, limited livelihood opportunities, and the non-implementation of land reforms.[29] Ranked 107 out of 189 on the Human Development Index Report 2020,[30] the Philippines has a population of 110 million, of which 16.7 percent live on less than $2 a day.[31] Poverty incidence in the Philippines registered 23.7 percent in early 2021,[32] suggesting that the phenomenon of "jobless economic growth" has failed to trickle down benefits to the poor. Thus, insurgency-affected areas with high poverty rates and insufficient delivery of basic services, such as health and education, are the breeding grounds for insurgent recruitment campaigns. To address these issues, the Philippine government has launched several counterinsurgency strategies.

Between 2002 and 2020, several AFP campaigns adopting "holistic," "whole-of-nation," or "people-centred" approaches were launched to defeat communist insurgents. The 2002 *Bantay Laya* (Freedom Watch) policy was designed to increase involvement of civilian agencies and other security institutions, such as the police, to foster goodwill with the populace and expedite combat and intelligence operations. This was followed by the 2011-2016 Internal Peace and Security Plan (IPSP) and the 2017-2022 Development Support and Security Plan (DSSP) *Kapayapaan* (Peace). Both the IPSP and DSSP call for a multistakeholder approach in the pursuit of security and the protection of civil liberties and also adopt a Development-Governance-Security Framework to ensure that all military operations and activities align with and support the government's reform programmes.[33] The framework emphasises sustainable development, human security, and good governance as a means of fostering inclusive economic growth and human development.[34] The DSSP defines military development support efforts broadly as "AFP operations and activities conducted in support of civil authorities and other stakeholders."[35] It emphasises the AFP's support role as opposed to its leadership role in development initiatives but the military remains the lead in terms of security. The plan involves four strategic concepts, comprising sustained military operations, the promotion of peace, active support for law enforcement and nation-building.[36] Under the plan, sustained military operations will focus on the deployment of forces and capabilities to defeat all armed groups.[37] In contributing to the promotion of peace, the AFP is to actively participate in peace negotiation efforts.[38] Active support of law enforcement means the AFP supports police campaigns against illegal drugs and organised crime groups.[39] Finally, the AFP's role in nation-building is to perform tasks in collaboration with the civil authorities to help address socio-economic challenges.[40]

To support DSSP policy implementation, three supplementary programmes were introduced. Firstly, there is the Community Support Program (CSP), which forms part of the AFP's counterinsurgency operations to suppress insurgent recruitment efforts.[41] A Community Support Team, composed of an infantry rifle squad, is trained to engage in dialogue with *barangay* (village) residents. The Philippine Army Training and Doctrine encourages troops to

adopt best practices, including demonstrating respect for human rights and indigenous structures when engaging with communities.[42] However, while CSP operations have been successful, the Department of Interior and Local Government has identified that a lack of resources and low or non-existent participation by national government agencies have constrained the positive effects and sustainability of AFP operations.[43] The second DSSP support programme has regard to enhancing AFP collaboration with government agencies and civil society through the establishment of a Multi-Sectoral Governance Council (MSGC). Composed of various organisations, including academic and religious sectors, the MSGC guides the AFP in its professionalisation and modernisation agenda. The Council has worked on issues such as human rights violation, community engagement, and strategic communications with other stakeholders.[44] The third programme is the December 2018 creation of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC), which is composed of representatives from various government agencies and the private sector.[45] As one of Duterte's flagship programmes, the NTF-ELCAC is not without controversy. In 2021, it received a budget of PhP19.2 bn (US$383mn), representing a tenfold increase on the previous year's budget;[46] however, state auditors discovered multiple accounting deficiencies on how the funds were disbursed and utilised.[47] Moreover, there are ongoing investigations into whether these funds have been used to incriminate critics of the Duterte administration, including allegations of belonging to the communist movement.[48]

Defence, and disaster mitigation

The Philippines' geographical location makes it susceptible to natural disasters. Each year, the country experiences earthquakes, typhoons, volcanic eruptions and a myriad of emergencies due to armed conflict, making it the ninth-highest disaster risk country in the world.[49] One indicator of the important role the defence sector plays in disaster response is its humanitarian affairs and disaster response (HADR) budget. As lead agency on disaster response and management, the Office of Civil Defence, within the DND, has a revolving fund of PhP1bn (US$19.5mn).[50] The AFP faces a daunting task in responding to HADR emergencies because often they are located in conflict-affected areas, with the military engaged in internal security and disaster responses, simultaneously. AFP involvement in disaster response operations derives from the legal and normative principles documented in policies such as the National Security Policy (NSP) 2017-22. The NSP outlines the 12 strategic priorities of the Duterte administration, covering human and political, health, economic and financial, food, military and border, socio-cultural, environmental and disaster, energy, maritime, international, informational and cyber, and transportation and ports.[51] The NSP underscores the leadership role played by the DND in leading the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), which is responsible for coordinating operations during disasters and emergencies.[52] The regular occurrence of natural disasters has encouraged high levels of civil-military engagement, whereby the armed forces take directives from the civilian authority (whether the NDRRMC chief, the local governor or the mayor) on deployment, engagement, reporting procedures and timetables (including operational withdrawal). Although disaster response is a secondary military mission, addressing such threats is a strategically important goal in areas affected by insurgency.

The AFP adopts the doctrinal concept of 'force provider and force employer' in the conduct of disaster response operations. The major force providers are the Philippine Army, Air Force and Navy. Each of these Armed Force branches organises, trains, and equips their respective disaster response units in HADR operations through a unified command. The unified structure provides command, control, and direction of all disaster response operations at the operational and tactical levels, with assets deployed from different infantry divisions to disaster response

units nationwide. The military's role in HADR operations includes proactive initiatives, such as prevention and mitigation tasks. Here, engineering battalions construct dikes and other flood control structures, conduct preparedness planning, including prepositioning of food and non-food items in disaster prone areas, and disseminate early warnings and advisories to citizens in isolated areas. During rehabilitation and recovery, AFP engineering units are trained and equipped to rebuild communities and infrastructure, such as houses, roads and bridges. As mandated in the Constitution, the AFP is the protector of the people, and the local community therefore expects the military to exercise civil-military cooperative responsibilities when disaster strikes.

Philippine D[3] Performance

The Philippines has evolved a comprehensive security paradigm appropriate to the unique environmental landscape it faces. The policy question, though, is how effective the AFP been in addressing the three separate but interrelated defence, development, and disaster threats. On investigation, a mixed picture emerges. From the 'Defence' perspective, capability has fallen far short of what is required to deter aggression and protect territorial sovereignty, as demonstrated by the enfeebled military responses to China's occupation of Philippine islands in the South China Sea. All AFP branches lack sophisticated weapons systems, particularly the air force and navy. Philippine 2020 military spending per capita (1.0 percent) was substantially less than it was in 1960 (1.8 percent); and with raised Sino-Philippine tensions in the contested South China Sea, this is not the time for the DND to be returning 10 percent of its 2020 fiscal budget to the Government to fund anti-Covid pandemic measures rather than supporting military modernisation. Moreover, as Table 1 demonstrates, the Philippines suffers the lowest military expenditure, the second lowest defence burden and arms import value, relative to other major Asian players.

Table 1: Comparative Defence Data for Selected Asian Countries

Country	*MILEX (US$ Bn)*	*GDP (US$ Bn)*	*Popn. (Mn)*	*MILEX/GDP*	*GDP per capita (US$)*	*Armed Forces*	*Arms Imports (US$ Mn)*	*Defence Firms in Global Top 100*
China	252.3	14,722.7	1,402.1	1.7%	10,500.4	2,695,000	811	5
Indonesia	9.4	1,058.4	273.5	0.9%	3,869.6	675,500	270	
Japan	49.2	4,975.4	125.8	1.0%	39,538.9	261,150	724	5
Malaysia	3.8	366.7	32.4	1.1%	10,401.8	136,000	55	
Philippines	3.7	361.5	109.6	1.0%	3,298.8	153,350	349	
Singapore	10.9	340	5.7	3.2%	59,797.8	59,000	74	1
Vietnam	5.5	271.2	97.3	2.0%	2,785.7	522,000	41	

Source:
SIPRI Military Database, 2021
SIPRI Top 100 Arms-Producing and Military Services Companies, 2020
The World Bank Data

Defence spending has yo-yo'd between external and internal security objectives, as dictated by evolving destabilisation crises. Overall, due to unrelenting internal civil conflicts, the preponderance of defence funding has been allocated to internal security needs. Yet, this has not led to the end of terrorism and secessionist activities, though they are reduced. AFP-linked development programmes, like NADESCOM, have made significant contributions to reducing the level of conflict, fostering the reintegration of guerrillas into the formal economy, and

generally winning the battle for 'hearts and minds.' AFP development work through the DSSP campaign continues, but there has been a recognition that NADESCOM programmes require the active engagement of other government agencies as well as civilian oversight. These weaknesses were the principal reasons behind NADESCOM's arguably premature demise in 2012,[53] given that on termination the programme had completed 1,800 projects, including health centres, schools and farm-to-market roads.[54]

Manila's push for defence industrialisation experienced similarly early dynamics, but over time the growth momentum weakened, and development performance became anaemic. The AFP's modernisation mandate was enthusiastically endorsed by all stakeholders, but the 1997 Asian financial crisis caused funding shortfalls that inevitably stalled progress. When RA 7898 ended in 2010, reportedly only 317 of the planned 534 projects (59 percent) had been completed.[55] Nevertheless, the government's commitment to the modernisation programme was unwavering, not least because of China's growing threat. Accordingly, a revised Act, known as RA10349, amended the 1995 AFP Modernisation Act, and extended it for another 15 years with an allocation of P75 bn ($1.4bn) for its first five years of implementation (2013 to 2017), allowing the acquisition of naval cutters, combat utility helicopters, and armoured vehicles.[56] In 2018, President Duterte agreed to bankroll the second phase of the modernisation programme (2018 to 2022),[57] with its aim reoriented towards developing Philippine minimum deterrence capability as well as domain awareness in the contested waters of the country's exclusive economic zone.[58] The SRDP was initially successful, comprising 15 local defence companies supplying military hardware, but more than four decades later, the growth momentum has dissipated, and the programme is failing to achieve any of its objectives.[59] Most of the defence companies, including the Simba fabrication facility, have ceased production, principally because of insufficient acquisition budgets, graft, corruption, inflation and a lack of support from national leadership.[60]

With 153,000 personnel, the AFP has often been regarded as a small and underfunded force compared to those of its Asian neighbours. Its efforts at modernisation have been obstructed by changing political priorities and limited funding. Despite logistical limitations, the AFP has extensive experience in responding to typhoons, earthquakes, and landslides.[61] It has unique capabilities and resources, including a national command and control network, with personnel, including reserves that can be mobilised to supplement civilian frontline services. The AFP can provide a rapid response with its C-130s, utility helicopters, trucks, landing and logistical vessels for relief operations, especially in areas that are more difficult to access. AFP units are often first to deliver food and medicine to people afflicted by calamities. In recent years, the AFP has consistently been rated as one of the most trusted public institutions in the Philippines. Since 2015, public satisfaction with the AFP has been in the ascendancy.[62] In a Social Weather Stations poll, conducted in December 2019, 79 percent of respondents expressed "satisfaction" with the performance of the AFP.[63]

Notwithstanding the diversion of DND funds to support civilian efforts to tackle the Covid pandemic, the AFP has demonstrated military resilience in managing the COVID-19 threat. For instance, infantry units assisted by the PNP and Coast Guard, have enforced curfews and quarantine orders in Metro Manila and its adjacent areas. Air and naval assets of the Philippine Air Force and Navy have been deployed to transport food packs, stranded passengers[64] and vaccines[65]. The AFP has also transferred thousands of doctors, nurses and military medical auxiliary to civil treatment and quarantine facilities nationwide.[66] Additionally, at least 10,000 AFP personnel have been sent to community quarantine assistance areas nationwide to support Sub-Task Group Peace and Order.[67] Yet, the military continues to fulfil its primary

responsibility of combatting internal threats including the New People's Army and the Abu Sayyaf Group, notwithstanding the recent government decision to delay major acquisitions due to budgetary reallocations caused by the pandemic.[68]

Conclusions

This paper has applied a comprehensive security model to the unique and under-researched contextual security conditions of the Philippines. The analysis has been framed by categorising the country's multiplicity of threats under a novel D^3 (Defence-Development-Disaster) paradigm. The defence component possesses internal and external security agendas, both of which have been shaped by centuries of politico-economic-strategic turbulence, including colonisation, regional conflicts, poverty, corruption, domestic insurgency, and terrorism. However, policy outcomes have been less than positive. On the external front, Philippine territorial sovereignty has been threatened, though not endangered, partially because threats have been contained to island skirmishes, with an emboldened China constrained by the omnipresence of the Philippine-US Defence Treaty. Yet, military capability, both in absolute and relative terms, continues to suffer from limited 'modernisation' due to the emasculation of defence funding and the diversion of limited resources to address unresolved internal security threats. By contrast, the AFP's contribution to development goals has proved more impressive, but its implementation is not without tension, especially in rural areas. Over the last two decades, the three 'whole-of-nation' policies have acted to support the civil authorities in the pursuit of peace, law enforcement, and nation-building, but revealed deficiencies in the management and disbursement of funds have impeded progress towards development goals. The AFP's approach to the third 'D' - Disaster - has also been laudatory, with AFP disaster operations focused on both pre-event preparedness/prevention as well as post-event relief and mitigation. As in the development field, the AFP responds to civil directives by offering leadership, resources and proven expertise. Irrespective of whether the disaster is slow or rapid onset, the AFP exploits its extensive experience in dealing with typhoons, earthquakes, flooding and typhoons. As a final statement, then, the Philippine D^3 paradigm, for all its warts, reflects a degree of military resilience and flexibility that acts to reduce the social cost of defence to Philippine citizens through stabilising if not enhancing broader-based security objectives.

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