*The Dynamics of the Opposition to the US Bases in the Philippines**

Miriam Coronel Ferrer

ON DECEMBER 31,1991, THE AQUINO GOVERNMENT issued a one-year notice of termination to the US naval facilities in Subic Bay in the Philippines. The notice sealed the fate of the remaining US base in the Southeast Asian region. It ended almost a century of direct US military presence in the Philippines.

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It is hoped that the closure of the bases would mean a redefinition of the country's largely US-oriented foreign policy. Such a policy has launched mass protests, inspired a communist revolution, and caused heated conflicts among the populace. The US military facilities in the Philippines, in particular, have been the most contentious issue surrounding Philippine national sovereignty, security, and neutrality. Since the end of World War II and the institutionalization of an American-style presidential form of government and a two-party electoral system, the bases issue divided political lines between those in favor of fully cutting off neocolonial ties and those who look up to the United States as the Philippines' protector and benefactor.

Filipino nationalists, including leading legislators, intellectuals, and mass-based organizations, have opposed US military presence for decades. They finally achieved victory in September 1991 when the Philippine Senate voted to reject a new treaty extending the lease of the American bases in the Philippines.

Contrary to the expectations of many observers of the Philippine anti-bases movement, the removal of the US bases was achieved through a basically peaceful and constitutional process. For years, American analysts had feared that the bases would be booted out by the ascendance to power of either a communist leadership or a left-leaning bourgeois politician. The fact that the bases lease was terminated by a conservative, pro-US government reflects the evolving dynamics of political change in the post-Cold War, post-Marcos Philippines.

The Filipino nation is still waging an unfinished struggle for sovereignty and independence. At the center of this struggle is the unique teamwork or united front between the nationalist elite and a mass-based opposition led by the Philippine left. This teamwork battled with the pro-US majority of the Philippine elite whose efforts were geared at preserving the US's dominant presence in the country.

This paper will review this process of collaboration and resistance to the US bases leading to the 1991 juncture.

The first section discusses how the US was able to maintain its bases for almost a century with the connivance of the Philippine elite.

The second section deals with the opposition to the US bases: the arguments raised, the role of nationalism in the country's political discourse, and the interplay between the nationalist elite and the left-led mass opposition.

The third part identifies other factors that led to the non-renewal of a new bases treaty. For while the nationalist opposition played a role in the dramatic outcome, equally significant factors like the unexpected volcanic eruptions that destroyed US facilities in Clark Air Base (CAB) and the

changing priorities of the US following the end of the Cold War were instrumental in changing the course of Philippine-American relations.

Finally, the paper will discuss briefly the prospects and implications of a bases-free Philippines on national and regional movements.

U.S.-Philippine Elite Collaboration

American global politics during the Cold War period largely focused US-RP bilateral relations on securing unrestricted American use of its base facilities in the country. Since the US invaded the Philippines in 1898, the country has become its strategic military outpost in the Asia-Pacific. The Philippines' usefulness to the US has been mainly military and only secondarily economic.

The Philippine elite has always been dependent on US patronage. The powerful landed classes, in particular, relied on preferential terms of trade with the US, namely in sugar and coconut. The US has, in turn, made its economic assistance contingent on the bases' stay.

When the Philippines was granted independence on July 4, 1946, the disposition of US air and naval reservations naturally became a sticky issue in view of the country's new status as a sovereign republican state. However, the Tydings-McDuffie Independence Act, passed by the US Congress in 1934 governing the conduct of a ten-year Commonwealth period in the Philippines, provided the US continued use of naval reservations and fueling stations. It also authorized the US president to enter into negotiations with the Philippine government within two years of formal independence to settle the issue of US military presence.

After World War II, the US sought to immediately secure the bases by threatening to withhold war rehabilitation funds from the new Philippine government if it did not pass a treaty. In response, Manuel Roxas, first president of the post-war republic, entered into a treaty of general relations with the US where the US was to withdraw all rights to control or sovereignty over the Philippines, except over such bases which the US would need purportedly for the protection of the two countries.

Roxas also pushed for the passage of a bill giving parity rights to the Americans in the exploitation of the country's natural resources. The Philippine Constitution, which confined this right to Filipinos, was amended and the amendment was ratified in a plebiscite. To erode the remaining resistance to pro-US legislation, elected congressmen from the Democratic Alliance, a coalition of peasant leaders and nationalist politicians and intellectuals most of whom were identified with the strong peasant guerilla movement in

Central Luzon, were expelled from their posts on the grounds of election fraud.

Assured of its parity rights and bases, the US authorized a budget outlay of $600 million for war damage claims, an amount the country needed badly in order to rehabilitate its damaged economy. It released, over the next five years, about $2 billion in grants to the government and payments to individuals.

US basing rights were further expanded and defined in the Military Bases Agreement (MBA) signed on March 4, 1947. The MBA gave the US a ninety-nine-year rent-free use of twenty-three bases all over the country and full exercise of rights, power, and authority within these bases.

The MBA was followed by the Military Assistance Agreement on March 21, 1947. The agreement granted various defense-related aid which aimed to enhance the Philippine military's fighting capacity and at the same time legitimized the US's role in counter-insurgency operations.

The US thus secured its bases in the Philippines through the collaboration of the economic-political elite, especially of the executive branch, and the manipulation of legislative decision-making processes which the oligarchy dominated. These machinations were accepted by a public that welcomed Americans as allies and liberators. Emerging victorious after the war, the US was viewed as the nation's savior from the hands of the Japanese. US military might, moreover, was deemed crucial to protecting the region from the Soviet threat.

Martial Law

When a new Philippine constitution was being drafted in 1971, the US ambassador collaborated with Marcos in preventing the inclusion of anti-bases provisions in the draft charter. But the constitutional review was eventually aborted with the declaration of martial law one year after.

The US lauded the Marcos-initiated coup d'etat. It increased its military assistance to the Philippine government several fold. Of the total $1 billion military aid given by the US to the Philippines from 1950-86, three-fourths were granted during the Marcos dictatorship (1972-1986).

The martial law regime came up with a six-point foreign policy thrust which included establishing relations with socialist states and closer ties and identification with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Third World countries. But it was evident that Philippine foreign policy remained oriented towards the US. Not surprisingly, in 1975, the Non-

Aligned Movement rejected the Philippine government's application for membership.

To enhance its nationalist credentials locally and abroad, the Marcos government demanded sovereignty over the US military facilities. An exchange of notes between the two governments in 1979 put the bases under the command of a Philippine base commander. The Philippine flag was flown singly in, and US military assistance became "compensation" for, the bases.

Nonetheless, the US was assured of use and effective command over base facilities and of "unhampered military operations" involving its forces in the Philippines.

The obvious importance of the bases to the US was used by Marcos to squeeze more military assistance and higher compensation for the bases. The post-1975 build up of Soviet air and naval presence in Vietnam following the American withdrawal made the bases' location doubly crucial. The US also felt that duplicating its air and naval facilities in Clark and Subic in another location would be too expensive. The US, moreover, could count on Marcos's enforcement of a counter-insurgency program to prevent the ascent of another communist leadership in the region. Because of these needs, the US was often hostage and accomplice to Marcos's own gambits.

Since the 1979 agreement also called for a review every five years, Marcos had an opportunity each time to haggle for more concessions.

Noting the growing strength of the communist insurgency and considering the possibility that it may have to abandon its bases unexpectedly, a US Senate-sponsored report suggested undertaking modest preparations for contingency facilities in other locations and declining from significant facilities improvement. Such a move, the report averred, would also serve as a leverage against demands for rent hikes. ("US Military Construction Activities in the Pacific Region," 1985) Another confidential report claimed that the Defense Department had in fact been quietly purchasing large tracts of land for this purpose in the Western Pacific. (Report on the Philippines, 1985).

Despite the Marcos dictatorship's growing unpopularity in the international community coupled with Philippine political instability, the US continued to bank on Marcos to keep US interests safe. In June 1983, US President Ronald Reagan made a best effort pledge to the Marcos government to obtain an appropriation of $900 million worth of military assistance from the US Congress for the next five years beginning 1984. The amount represented an eighty percent increase over previous levels.

Amid charges of electoral fraud and violence in the 1986 snap election, President Reagan, reportedly against advise from the State Department,

downplayed the charges and indicated he will continue supporting Marcos. At the same time, he called on Marcos and then presidential contender Corazon Aquino to work together "to form a viable government." (Komisar, 1988:97)

The statement angered Aquino and her supporters, who rejected the power-sharing proposal of US officials. At the same time, Aquino desisted from more radical steps and from linking up with the well-organized groups of the national democratic left. Civil disobedience became the preferred option.

The massive outpouring of support prompted Reagan to rephrase his statement. He acknowledged the fraud and violence "perpetrated largely by the ruling party" that had put the credibility of the election in question. But Reagan did not completely break with Marcos for fear of jeopardizing the US bases. Indeed, in hurried talks with US officials who tried to convince him to share power with the opposition, Marcos threatened to abrogate the bases treaty. (Komisar, 1988:101,103)

But the mass upheaval made the complete transfer of power from Marcos to the Aquino-led opposition inevitable. The US shifted tack, forced Marcos to fly off to exile, and immediately built its reserve of goodwill with the new government.

The Aquino Government

Under the Aquino government, the US continued to exercise its influence directly through the presidency. Aquino, naturally, needed to keep the US on her side. Besieged by rebellious military officers who felt cheated in the resultant power equation, she had to make sure no support would be given to any of them. US goodwill in preventing Marcos's return was also essential to stabilizing the situation. Finally, she needed all possible financial assistance to be able to cope with the Marcos legacy of $28 billion in foreign debts.

The US was equally eager to show support for the new government despite its own financial difficulties. During Aquino's state visit to the US in 1986, the US Senate approved a supplemental $200 million economic aid which it had rejected previously.

Unlike in Marcos's monolithic, authoritarian rule, the coalition nature of the Aquino government heightened the factiousness of the elite in the post-Marcos society. Moreover, the democratic space and pluralism that opened up gave rise to vibrant contradictions that made possible some progressive programs and legislation, and resistance to outright subservience to foreign interests from within the state leadership. The dynamics evolved was that while conservative, pro-American forces dominated the political arena,

there were several variables and independent initiatives that precluded the full control of any one powerful force -- like the US -- of the outcome of the tug-and-pull of Philippine politics, including the bases issue.

The coalition nature of Aquino's government which included human rights advocates, business leaders, and military officials, however, made her rule tenuous. Increasingly, Aquino adopted more conservative policies and decisions that upheld US, landed, and business interests. Aquino thus manifested a continuity of elite collaborationism with the US.

The subsequent removal of progressive Cabinet officials in the early months of the Aquino government and the election of several of them to the Congress further weakened the anti-bases flank in the executive branch. The original Aquino Cabinet had at least 10 anti-bases proponents. In 1991, when Aquino rallied her government against the Senate's decision to reject a new treaty, only three Cabinet secretaries expressed disagreement; the three withdrew their objections after a reprimand from Aquino.

Pleased with Aquino's policy directions, the US whipped up support for the Philippines through the Multilateral Aid Initiative (also known as the Philippine Aid Plan). But as in past economic assistance, aid was linked to the future of the US bases. The economic blackmail was exposed in 1989 in a white paper written by a group in the government's National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) which disagreed with the negotiating positions assumed by the Cabinet's technocrats. The accusation was bolstered by a statement made by US Congressman Stephen Solarz stating that the US's contribution to the Plan will convince Manila to extend the bases' stay.

Aquino's second and incumbent foreign affairs secretary, Raul Manglapus, initially struck a tough negotiating stance in the 1988 MBA review when he called on the need to "slay the American father image." All the time, however, Manglapus only wanted to seal a higher compensation package for the bases. On this count, the Americans proved tougher. The 1991 treaty submitted to the Senate for approval pledged a scaled down annual compensation of $203 million for Subic Naval Base starting 1993 for the next ten years. The Philippine panel wanted an annual compensation of $825 million for the Clark and Subic bases.

Evidently, the Aquino government had hoped for a new treaty that will allow the bases to stay for as long as ten years. When the Philippine Senate, in accordance with the 1987 Constitution, mustered a clear majority opposing the treaty, Aquino tried to skirt the constitutional dead-end by proposing a referendum.

Faced with criticism for trying to violate its own Constitution, the Aquino government shifted tack by lobbying for a three-year withdrawal

period. But as it turned out, the US was less interested in securing the lease, for reasons that will be discussed later.

With the US unwilling to consent to any of the Philippine panel's requisites, the latter had to backtrack to a minimum face-saving position of a one-year withdrawal period that compels the US to completely vacate its Philippine base facilities by the end of 1992.

Opposition to the Bases

Opposition to the US bases has been based on several sets of arguments.

The first set of arguments deals with the bases' geopolitical role and their implications to the country's security, survival, and neutrality.

US bases in the Philippines have been used as take-off points for direct US military intervention and as logistics supply port for the US's Cold War-inspired aggressions in Asia. In the 1950s-60s, the bases serviced American troops engaged in war in Korea and provided support to right-wing rebel forces in Indonesia. Planes taking off from CAB conducted saturation bombing raids over Cambodia and Vietnam. In the 1980s and again in the Gulf War in early 1990, supplies were ferried from Subic to US naval groups fighting in the Persian Gulf.

As jump-off points for US military adventures in other nations' affairs, it is argued that the bases are offensive rather than defensive in posture. Rather than keep the country safe, the bases in fact create insecurity and put the nation's survival at risk by inviting retaliatory acts. They therefore serve as magnet for nuclear attacks by an enemy of the United States, which may not even be an enemy of the Philippines.

A second set of arguments pertains to how the bases have become an instrument and cause for US interference in Philippine politics. As the 1964 Cairo summit of the Non-Aligned Movement observed: "Foreign military bases are in practice a means of bringing pressure on nations and retarding their emancipation and development."

In the earlier section, we saw how the US's perceived need to protect its bases in the Philippines has led to overt and covert manipulations at the highest offices. While the rent issue has been used as leverage by the Philippine government in negotiations, for most part it was the other way around: financial assistance and political support in exchange for securing the bases on American terms.

Because the US is rich and powerful in relation to its former colony, it can seat and unseat Philippine presidents. It does this by extending financial

and propaganda support to a favored presidential contender. The CIA had been reported to have had financed the political careers of former Philippine presidents Manuel Roxas and Ramon Magsaysay, Aquino's slain husband Benigno Jr., and her foreign affairs secretary Raul Manglapus. (Sison 1979:34, 40; Coronel 1991:177)

US interference motivated by its military interests does not stop at political wheeling-and-dealing. It is also significantly felt in the country's internal defense policy. US military assistance provides the Philippine military with training, weapons, ammunition, intelligence, communications services, staff training, and logistical support in its fight against the communist insurgents. The American commander of CAB had stated officially that among the "potential missions" of the 13th Air Force which was based in CAB was to "assist friendly nations against insurgencies." ("Statement Against the US Military Bases," December 25, 1978, Manila, signed by 41 anti-Marcos politicians, 7 former Senators, 1 former Philippine president, several lawyers and justices, religious and student leaders.)

Marcos himself had said that if subversion or infiltration reached such a "massive degree [that] it gets to be beyond the control of the government," he would have had called upon the US government for assistance. (*Business Day*, April 15, 1983, quoted in "The Bases Talks: Form or Substance," Anti-Bases Coalition, April 26, 1983.)

Indeed, the bases had served as interference points in internal affairs many times over. Marcos was flown out to Hawaii from CAB. Clark planes saved Aquino's government at a crucial moment in the worst coup attempt of December 1989. US counter-insurgency experts, CIA agents, and special operation forces went in and out of these bases. US forces stationed in the bases conducted "civic action" programs as part of sophisticated counter-insurgency tactics. US jets had been reported in pursuit of NPA (New People's Army) units in nearby mountains. In retaliation, the NPA had staged ambushes and kidnappings of American base personnel.

The bases' involvement in the repressive war to quash dissent has tightly linked the democratic struggle with nationalism, particularly under Marcos's iron hand. US support for Marcos had made it equally culpable for the human rights violations and profligacy associated with Marcos's rule. It was thus seen as supportive of the undemocratic and inequitable status quo.

Opposition to the bases has also been anchored on their social cost. In 1990, there were an estimated 50,000 to 55,000 licensed and unlicensed "hospitality girls" around the Clark and Subic bases. The figures exclude the child prostitutes. (Santos 1991) In 1989, registered R&R (rest and recreation) establishments catering to US servicemen in the two cities hosting the bases numbered 2,182. (Santos 1991)

The bases flesh trade has given rise to pervasive social ills. Women and child exploitation, the rise of sexually transmitted diseases and an undetected number of AIDS cases, drug addiction, alcoholism, vagrancy, and crime syndicates involved in trafficking drugs, women, and babies are the grossest bane of the bases permeating the social fabric. The cities of Olongapo and Angeles have often been depicted as a modern-day Sodom and Gomorrah. Thus, to deeply Catholic Filipinos, the wrath wrought by Mt. Pinatubo on the two host provinces was, like the fate that befell the biblical cities, a punishment from God.

Campaigns on the social cost of the bases were carried mainly by women's and religious organizations. They progressed with the growth of the women's movement in the Philippines. A feminist critique of the US bases and the flesh trade deals with US militarism as a form of patriarchy. (Santos 1991) Programs for the welfare and rehabilitation of prostituted women and children have been set up by non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Another set of arguments against the bases deals with the legality of the 1947 MBA. Legal luminaries point to the fact that the MBA was never formally recognized by the US Senate and its effectivity was merely based on best effort pledges of the US executive branch.

Critical legal experts also stress that Philippine military relations with the US do not provide for genuine mutual defense even if US officials have repeatedly proclaimed their commitment to protect the Philippines. Unlike the NATO Mutual Defense Treaty, US-RP military agreements are unclear about the US's obligation to repel an attack on the Philippines.

For the most part, government rationale for the American bases has been anchored on Cold War politics. Since the terms of the bases' stay have been transformed into a "lease" agreement in 1979, however, the economic angle increasingly became dominant. Moreover, Marcos's nationalist posturing prevented the full play-up of US geopolitics although the communist bogey was always a handy rationale, especially when linked to the local communist insurgency.

The thawing of the Cold War in the late 80s onto the 90s left the Aquino government with the bases' economic contributions as the only convincing argument to maintain them. In 1990, Subic and Clark employed almost 100,000 Filipino workers whose annual earnings were estimated at $75 million. Estimated domestic purchases from both bases were estimated at $200 million annually. Needless to say, the economies of surrounding communities were largely oriented to servicing the needs of about 100,000 base personnel and their dependents.

The Aquino government further touted the economic benefits accruing from the bases' presence when, faced with an intransigent Philippine Senate majority, US President George Bush wrote Aquino a letter pledging his best efforts in getting better deals for the Philippines within the Multilateral Aid Initiatives and the Regional Fund for Reconstruction and Development. Assistance to the modernization of the Armed Forces of the Philippines was also promised in the form of excess defense articles. Assistance in the form of excess medical equipment, continued purchases of Philippine goods and materials by US forces (a sort of "Buy Philippines" Program), high priority listing in the US government's food aid program, extension of the bilateral textile and apparel agreement, and expanded housing investment guarantees were also thrown in. (Letter of US President George Bush to President Corazon Aquino dated August 23,1991.)

Fears of losing preferential trade agreements and promised economic and military assistance were also raised in the event of the draft treaty's rejection.

On the other hand, bases conversion proponents argued that converting the base facilities to civilian use would in the long run redound to greater benefits for the country while at the same time eradicate the social ills and environmental risks associated with a base-dependent economy. Fears of losing the country's export garments quota to the US was dispelled by trade experts, including some trade officials.

Anti-bases groups also branded Bush's letter as empty promises, given the current difficulties faced by the US government. Bush's promise calls to mind former US President Franklin Roosevelt's war-time promise to the Filipinos that the US would pay for every carabao killed during the war. In September 1966, a US embassy spokesman admitted that Roosevelt's promise was not binding on the American Congress. (Agoncillo 1990:524)

The Nationalist Elite

While collaboration was the rule among the Philippine elite when it came to negotiating the terms of the bases' stay, the matter nonetheless created the most friction in post-war US-RP relations. This tension has been a running thread since the US annexed the Philippines in 1898, at a time when Filipino revolutionaries have practically won the war of independence against Spain. It is best understood in connection with the importance of nationalism as a political platform in the country's politics.

When the US came, nationalism was already a major component of political discourse in the country. The Filipinos were the first Asian people to fight established European colonialism. (Kahin 1964) The ideas that fueled

bourgeois liberation movements in Europe found their way to these islands as early as the 19th century. These ideas, in turn, helped form the philosophical orientation of the Philippine resistance to Spanish colonialism. By the second half of the 19th century, resistance to Spanish colonial rule had grown from protest against abuses to the concept of a sovereign Filipino nation and attempts at establishing an independent Filipino government. The resistance leadership would later be fooled and coopted by the new colonizers.

Resistance to American colonialism and imperialism persisted among the intelligentsia and the socialist and communist groups formed among the formative working class and the peasantry. The war of resistance against Spain was, in addition, still fresh in memory and continued to inspire nationalist resolve.

Filipino leaders also resented the powers which the US retained under American colonial tutelage. Thus, although both collaborated to rule over what they considered as the illiterate masses, they disagreed on the terms of power-sharing. Nationalist populism thus became the major platform carried by aspiring Filipino leaders. The first Filipino political party, the Nacionalista Party (NP, 1907), developed its constituency on its advocacy of full independence.

In the 50s-60s, anti-US revolutionary ferment in Vietnam and Indonesia further put Philippine leaders on the defensive among their Asian colleagues and spurred renewed nationalist posturing.

Time and again the MBA would be put on the chopping block by nationalist stirrings in the legislature. This resulted in several amendments which returned some of the smaller installations to Philippine control, mandated prior consultation with the Philippine government for operations involving other than those conducted under the Mutual Defense Treaty and the now defunct Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO), and removed exclusive jurisdiction of the US on certain on-base offenses. In 1966, the Ramos-Rusk Agreement significantly reduced US basing rights to only twenty five more years.

The ruling political and economic elite's avowed nationalism, however, most often gave way to pragmatism and their overriding desire for self-aggrandizement and self-perpetuation. Throughout these years, the US directly and indirectly intervened in presidential and congressional elections. It supported candidates and incumbents who pledged adherence to the MBA as well as advocated a policy to neutralize the communist-led peasant insurgency. That the CIA managed the electoral victory of President Ramon Magsaysay (1953-57) is a well documented case. US endorsement and recognition, moreover, were crucial to stabilizing or prolonging the stay in power of an incumbent regime, especially if the regime is beset by factional strife and a broad-based opposition. The vacillating, collaborationist Philippine

elite thus succumbed to US pressure in exchange for economic assistance to the Philippines, and guaranteed political careers and private fortunes for its members.

We can classify anti-US sentiments among the Filipino political elite into two distinct types. One is grounded on firmer and more comprehensive nationalist commitments. The other type springs mainly from resentment over spurned support and is mainly dictated by the demands of realpolitik. The mixture of opportunism, pragmatism, and gratitude to the Americans prevalent in the attitudes of the latter hardly equipped them to consistently carry the fight against American domination. Subsequent events exposed easily enough this elite's opportunistic nationalism.

The first type of anti-US elite sentiments is exemplified by former Senators Claro M. Recto, Lorenzo Tanada, and Jose "Ka Pepe" W. Diokno.

Recto stands out as the leading nationalist politician who used the halls of Congress in expounding his opposition to the bases and US domination in general. He sat in the Commission of Independence created in 1918 to lobby for full Philippine independence.

Recto launched the Nationalist Citizens' Party (NCP) together with Tanada, then a younger senator and a prodigy of Recto and who much later chaired the Nuclear Free Philippines Coalition (NFPC) during martial law. In 1957, Recto ran for president. But his party's nationalist platform proved to be too advanced for the Philippine electorate. It garnered less than nine percent of the votes.

Diokno belongs to the third generation of nationalist senators. He successfully brought together anti-Marcos organizations and individuals from diverse political and ideological backgrounds to form the Anti-Bases Coalition (ABC) in 1983. He was also a prominent human rights lawyer and served the Aquino government as the chairperson of the Presidential Commission on Human Rights until his death in 1987.

Certain incidents were instrumental in provoking a nationalist response from Filipino political leaders. In February 1956, House Speaker Jose Laurel took steps to review Fil-American relations in response to the shooting of alleged Filipino pilferers inside the bases. American officials had refused to hand over the killers to the Philippine courts for trial. Those responsible for the shooting incidents were flown out of the country.

The House called for revisions to the MBA, including reducing the number and area of the bases and limiting US military criminal jurisdiction. The Philippine panel headed by Senator Emmanuel Pelaez upheld this position in the negotiations with their American counterparts. Their tough stance led to the first breakdown in talks between the two parties.

The entry of middle-class professionals and military men in the political leadership is a recent development. The nationalist segment in the present Philippine legislature was a product of the anti-dictatorship struggle which saw stalwarts of political parties and mass organizations crisscrossing each other's ranks. The stint with political activism and the growing realization of the ills of dependency and of US imperial designs and arrogance have genuinely transformed some of the elite's inherent class biases.

The US's continued support to Marcos's faltering regime perhaps engendered the most anti-US sentiments among the traditional political elite who were disenfranchised by Marcos's monopolistic control of the state and its machineries. They realized that US assistance was one major pillar propping up Marcos's authoritarian rule. Consequently, the arguments and campaigns against the bases increasingly assumed a democratic aspect. Human rights violations and repression were equated with Marcos and, in turn, with the US and the bases.

Resentment from a significant section of the disenfranchised elite, many of whom were imprisoned by Marcos or suffered one form of harassment or another, later gelled into a firm anti-bases stance. This stance was concretized in positions taken by their political organizations or parties.

In 1983, the Partido Demokratiko ng Pilipinas - Lakas ng Bayan (Democratic Party of the Philippines - Strength of the Nation, PDP-Laban [fight]), then a joint opposition party which won several seats in Marcos's parliament, adopted an anti-bases position.

The process leading to such a stand almost split the party. Considerable pressure was exerted on then PDP-Laban Chairman Lorenzo Tanada by other PDP-Laban members, notably present House Speaker Ramon Mitra and Aquino's brother Congressman Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, to play down the demand for the bases' removal.

Former Philippine President Diosdado Macapagal, a Liberal Party stalwart and Marcos oppositionist, also declared his position for the non-renewal of the bases treaty upon its expiration in 1991. The AMA, a group of professionals headed by Senator "Butz" Aquino, Ninoy's brother who was catapulted to a leadership role in the street opposition following Ninoy's assassination in August 1983, demanded a negotiated withdrawal as soon as possible.

In November 1984, a "convenor group" composed of businessman Jaime Ongpin, Lorenzo Tanada, and Cory Aquino met to discuss a common program of action that would unite the opposition and lead the burgeoning mass opposition against the dictatorship. The outcome was a declaration that included the call for the removal of the US bases.

Two of the eleven leading opposition politicians invited to sign the declaration refused. The objection stemmed principally from fear of losing their stellar role in the anti-Marcos struggle but one of the two, Salvador "Doy" Laurel, specifically objected to the provision dealing with the bases.

Aquino herself backtracked on her position when she declared her candidacy in December 1985 to the snap elections scheduled two months later. The election campaign fervor drew her farther from her anti-bases position. Her brother, Peping Cojuangco, returning from a trip to Washington, reportedly told Aquino that the people in the US wanted her to call for an extension of the bases' stay.

In post-Marcos politics, the dominant logic of the "friend of my enemy is my enemy" holds through, this time in the case of those newly disenfranchised by the changing of the guards. The early years of Aquino's rule witnessed a strong anti-Americanism in the ranks of the pro-Marcos groups because of the US's role in transporting Marcos to Hawaii and in propping up Aquino. From 1986-87, several Marcos loyalist organizations staged rallies in front of the US embassy denouncing "American imperialism."

These sentiments surfaced again during coup attempts, in which the US stayed on the side of the Aquino government, notably during the December 1989 coup which almost succeeded had not the US air force command in CAB mobilized planes to counter the rebels at a crucial hour.

Concrete experiences in American interventionism such as these have helped develop a more nationalistic perspective somehow. The Young Officers Union (YOU, an underground organization of young military rebels), for instance, came out with a nationalist platform in 1990, including a demand to remove the bases. Col. "Gringo" Honasan's Rebolusyonaryong Alyansang Makabayan (Revolutionary Nationalist Alliance, RAM, formerly the Reform the Armed Forces Movement) issued a similar call in 1991.

Former Marcos and Aquino defense minister and now oppositionist Juan Ponce Enrile as early as 1989 registered his opposition to the bases. He even attended the launching of a left-initiated anti-bases coalition -- an act that created a dilemma within the organization.

But how thoroughgoing their newly acquired anti-Americanism is remains to be seen. Is their being anti-US merely part of their being anti-Aquino who is very pro-US? Note the similar equation of being anti-Marcos equals being anti-US in previous years.

It is thus a sad note on the Philippine elite to say that those among them who have a consistent track record of nationalism can be counted with the fingers of the hand.

But given the operative rules in the political processes, general cultural proclivities, and the stage of development of the social forces in the country today, the elite will continue to play a major role in retarding or advancing national development and genuine independence. It is therefore important to keep track of the changing alignments among them.

Anti-Bases Mass Opposition

The Philippine left stands out as the most consistent oppositionist to the bases. The anti-bases militants were a definite minority. But they were a vocal, articulate segment of society which provided an organized counterpoint to the elite leadership's pro-bases advocacy. In contrast, there was no such organized pro-bases mass, with the exception of the bases workers' union. The union's interest naturally lay in maintaining the bases. But as a mainly economic entity whose legitimate interests were often used by the government in playing politics with the US, they lacked the militance and commitment of the anti-bases activists in advancing their cause.

It is argued that since the bases issue transcends immediate sectoral interests, it can go beyond class lines and thus has the potential of forging a broad opposition that cuts across classes. On the other hand, as a very political issue, the anti-bases opposition has failed to get the active involvement of the unorganized segments of the working classes whose immediate concern is their economic survival. The anti-bases movement is thus characterized as one led by the intelligentsia. The concentration of the remaining base facilities in Central Luzon also makes the issue less urgent for the people in other regions, with the exception of Metro Manila where national politics are played out.

The 60s marked the transformation of the bases debate from a conflict played dominantly among the elite to one played out on the streets of mass concern. Street demonstrations against the bases and the McCarthyist witchhunt going on in universities took place. On March 14, 1961, students and teachers broke into the halls of Congress and disrupted the hearings being conducted by its Committee on Anti-Filipino Activities (CAFA). Teach-ins and study groups proliferated among activist circles in campuses.

On October 2, 1964, students and workers demonstrated against parity rights and the US military bases in front of the US embassy. The protest ended in a confrontation with presidential guards in front of Malacanang Palace where the rallyists proceeded.

The 60s also witnessed the formation of nationalist student organizations like the Kabataang Makabayan (Nationalist Youth, KM), the Samahan ng Demokratikong Kabataan (Association of Democratic Youth, SDK), and the

Lakas Diwa (Power of the Spirit). Martial law forced many of these organizations underground. The KM became the underground student cadre organization affiliated with the National Democratic Front (NDF).

More cases of killings of Filipino scavengers by American base personnel spurred a series of big meetings in Angeles City and adjoining towns. The indignation culminated in a 20,000 strong rally on January 25, 1965.

Philippine involvement in the Vietnam War became the focus of subsequent mass actions in 1966. A high point was a big rally attended by workers, peasants, and students directed against the on-going summit of US President Lyndon Johnson and Asian leaders in October.

The following years were attended by more rallies, often dispersed violently. Addressed were the moves to extend economic privileges to US monopolies and the use of the American bases, and other issues such as educational policies affecting the University of the Philippines, Anglo-American support for the formation of Malaysia, and the oil price hikes. (Sison 1979:58) US President Richard Nixon's and Vice-President Spiro Agnew's state visits were also met with fierce demonstrations.

The 60s also saw the rewriting of Philippine history with a nationalist perspective. Philippine history books by Teodoro A. Agoncillo and by Renato Constantino became standard readings in campus teach-ins. A political platform was articulated in the document "Struggle for National Democracy" written by Jose Maria Sison. The SND, as it was called, easily became standard fare in campus teach-ins, especially in the University of the Philippines where Sison was teaching. Sison eventually led a breakaway group from the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (old Communist Party of the Philippines) and reestablished a new communist party in 1968.

On February 8, 1967, nationalists from all sectors -- professionals, students, workers, farmers, and businessmen -- banded together to form the Movement for the Advancement of Nationalism (MAN). The MAN, like the Democratic Alliance of 1945-46, brought together the different sectors of society in one political umbrella.

The nationalist ferment reached its peak in the first quarter of 1970, a period labelled in student movement history as the "First Quarter Storm." Mammoth protests of students, workers, intellectuals, and peasants on the streets of Manila on January 26 and 29-31 were met with state brutality and threats to declare martial law. True enough, the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus was suspended in August 1971 and martial rule imposed in 1972.

Open dissent was almost totally suppressed for the first five years of martial rule. It was only in the last years of the 1970s did mass organizations

again surface to assert their various opposition agenda. Anti-US and anti-dictatorship statements, such as those by the Civil Liberties Union of the Philippines, were issued and daringly published in the student newspaper of the University of the Philippines. Student organizations sponsored fora and lightning rallies tackling comprehensive issues, the bases included.

While most of the protests in the late 70s and early 80s centered on sectoral concerns -- against tuition fee increases and curtailment of students rights for students; low wages and the right to form organizations and to strike for workers and teachers; against human rights violations in the rural communities for the rural poor backed up by the nuns and priests working with them -- small but articulate anti-US organizations and institutions were put up by professionals and student intellectuals. There were, for instance, the KAAKBAY composed mostly of middle-class university professors brought together by former Senator Diokno, the Center for Nationalist Studies initiated by university students, and the Nuclear-Free Philippines Coalition (NFPC). The NFPC's broader unity revolved around opposition to the construction of the Bataan Nuclear Plant (which had strong anti-Marcos overtones) but it included staunchly anti-imperialist members notably its chairman, former Senator Lorenzo Tanada, and founding members from the protestant churches.

On February 12, 1983, the first base-specific, multisectoral formation named the Anti-Bases Coalition (ABC) was launched with 1,500 people in attendance. Signatories to its declaration included former Senators Diokno (elected chairman) and Tanada, retired Supreme Court Justice J.B.L. Reyes, former foreign secretary, ambassador to the US, and university president Salvador P. Lopez, eleven Roman Catholic bishops and four other Christian prelates. This impressive array of influential individuals coming from influential institutions (the Church, the academe, and the government) was joined by the activist national democratic groups of students, workers, peasants, and professionals -- undisputedly the biggest and most organized political force of the Philippine left -- the social democrats, and the so-called independent socialists and legal communists.

Aside from forging the anti-bases front, the ABC was also a significant precursor of the multi-ideological, broad left formations that characterize current coalition initiatives of the Philippine left. It also signified a broad unanimity against the bases that cuts across classes and political lines -- a unanimity that would find more adherents as the years leading to the 1991 battle unfolded.

The ABC successfully held an international conference of anti-bases activists. Also, it won a favorable decision from the Supreme Court on the right to demonstrate in front of the US embassy.

Soon, however, the bases issue was relegated to the background as the anti-dictatorship struggle, sparked by the assassination of Ninoy Aquino, surged forward. In the sweep of events leading to Marcos's ouster, ABC's life as a functional organization faded away.

The first half of Aquino's rule saw several endeavors among Philippine left groups to form one broad coalition after another focussing on the removal of the bases. However, a general perception that a new treaty was in all likelihood going to be forged blunted efforts to undertake a sustained battle that expectedly would culminate with the September 1991 expiration of the 1947 US-RP MBA. Diverse organizational priorities and the pull of other issues further dispersed initiatives and resources. Historical differences and disagreements on the reading of the political situation -- specifically, on the capacity of the parliamentary arena to pave the way for the foreign bases' final and effective removal given the executive branch's pro-bases maneuverings -- and, correspondingly, on the appropriate modes of intervention also stalled united front efforts and campaign initiatives.

Nonetheless, at the key junctures when organized response, pressure or lobbying were needed, the left groups mustered their resources in order to influence people's perceptions and affect the policy directions of the government.

The drafting of a new constitution turned out to be the most consequential development that put the bases at risk. Amid the simmering political issues -- two aborted coups in a span of five months; peace talks with the communist insurgents, the merit of which divided the new government, the military, and US agencies -- the constitutional commission passed two significant provisions:

1) "The Philippines, consistent with the national interest, adopts and pursues a policy of freedom from nuclear weapons in its territory." (Article II, Sec.8, 1987 Constitution)

2) "All existing treaties or international agreements which have not been ratified shall not be renewed or extended without the concurrence of at least two-thirds of all the Members of the Senate." (Article VIII, Transitory Provisions, Sec. 4, 1987 Constitution)

The first provision, if implemented, would have effectively curtailed the unhampered operations of the US in the bases. While the US's policy was neither to confirm nor to deny, it was generally believed that nuclear weapons were present in the bases. Nuclear-capable ships docked regularly at the Subic Naval Base. According to reports, nuclear weapons accident response teams were stationed at CAB.

The second provision transferred the final decision on the fate of the bases in the hands of the Senate. It limited the extent to which the presidency

can collaborate with the US in extending the bases' stay. Note that previous agreements have been merely executive agreements.

The successful inclusion of these two important provisions can be credited to a large extent to the nationalist members of the pluralist Constitutional Commission. But the pressure on the streets strengthened arguments in the provisions' favor inside the halls of power where the decisions were being made.

This "teamwork" between the street parliamentarians influencing or backing up supportive legislators and legislators counting on mass advocacy to popularize their position and to serve as leverage in the battle of wills inside the legislative chambers became the modus vivendi as soon as the Congress was reinstated, and especially when the executive branch became, more evidently, a lost cause.

Certainly, this informal teamwork had its ups and downs. At one point in 1989, stalwarts of the Liberal Party vacillated on their anti-bases stance. This was corrected, however, in a subsequent party caucus where they affirmed their opposition to the bases.

Among the positive outcomes was the passage of the anti-nuclear bill (Senate Bill 413) in June 1988 by a majority vote of 19 (out of 23). The passage sent jitters to the US commander of Subic Naval Base. The bill's passage, he said, would "make it exceptionally difficult for the US Navy and Air Force to operate."

Before the end of 1989, three senators have lent their signatures to an anti-bases coalition put up by left groups and individuals. They were Senator Wigberto Tanada, son of Lorenzo who has been the street parliamentarians' main link to the official parliament; Senator Joseph Estrada, who brought along his former colleagues in the film industry thereby promoting the cause tenfold; and, to the biggest surprise of most, martial law implementor Enrile.

The left groups kept the issue alive in the streets. Prior to the scheduled review of the MBA in October 1988, the Campaign for a Sovereign Philippines staged an alternative people's review and forged the "Official People's Position on the US Bases." To their credit, student and community youth groups, predominantly the League of Filipino Students and the Kabataan para sa Demokrasya at Nasyonalismo (Youth for Democracy and Nationalism, KADENA [chain]), burned the American flag in rallies and held other agitational campaigns despite particularly strong state repression directed against anti-bases protesters. Several rallies ended up violently dispersed. Two KADENA members were arrested while posting anti-US bases posters. Heavily tortured, only one survived.

The communist underground, on the other hand, staged ambushes of American base personnel to protest US involvement in counter-insurgency operations and the government's alleged subservience to US diktat. The offensives were also designed to intensify the level of resistance and counter-resistance which the underground movement had hoped to transform into an insurrectionary situation.

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the NDF, however, shifted tack in August 1989. They offered to declare a unilateral ceasefire if the Senate would reject the passage of a new treaty, and to temporarily desist from attacking American base personnel. But Aquino downplayed the offer and refused to come up with a categorical position on neither the bases nor the peace talks.

When, on August 1991, the US and RP panels signed a new treaty, the bases struggle reached its last, decisive lap.

The final battle of wills led to a flurry of lobbying efforts in the Senate by the left mass organizations. Their efforts proved lilliputian, however, to Aquino's attempt to dissuade senators from voting against the treaty. Aquino met with the senators individually and in groups, offering promises or threatening sanctions if they vote against her stand.

Government might was also pitted against the left's sparse resources in demonstrations that saw the street fronting the Senate building halved: on one side, the pro-bases contingent led by Aquino and government officials; on the other, the anti-bases militants and their Senate allies. The scene was a very literal display of a nation divided on how to chart its future in relation to the United States.

The Rejection of the Bases Treaty

Several factors operated and led to the treaty's rejection.

First was the 1986 constitutional development that transferred the locus of decision-making on the bases to the Senate. The move was most providential especially since the composition of the post-Marcos Senate from the beginning included more than the minimum one-third needed to vote against a treaty. The gross terms of the treaty to which the Philippine government agreed to such as the dismal rate of compensation won over, at the last minute, a few more adherents. Arrogance displayed by US representatives further alienated some of the vacillating senators.

The provision requiring the concurrence of the Senate significantly limited the extent to which the presidency can collaborate with the US on the project. Under past executives, the buck, so to speak, stopped at the

president. The constitutional provision prevented a mere executive agreement to guide the future of the bases.

The transfer of the arena also made it extremely difficult for the US to exert pressure on as many as twenty-three senators whose collaboration cannot be counted on with certainty. Thus, as in past tussles with the legislature, the US counted on the presidency to tow in line her senators.

The second factor was the teamwork between the anti-bases senators and street protesters.

The senators looked up to their anti-bases counterparts in the streets to buttress their position, and vice-versa. In this tandem, the natural leadership fell on the former. By virtue of their office, the senators' statements found greater media space than any of the manifestos of the latter. Moreover, as elected officials, they commanded their own mass base.

The combined constituencies of the nationalist elite and the organized left opposition pale in comparison to the vast majority of the populace who feel neither strongly for or against the bases and even with those who continue to look up to America as the nation's patron. The former's articulation of nationalist aspirations, however, linked them to a history of nationalist struggles that went beyond rosters of memberships or supporters. They represented a cumulative consciousness that remains a minority but which consistently strives to achieve cultural and political dominance.

Also crucial to the broadening of the anti-bases discourse were the roles played by the mass media and the intelligentsia in schools and various professions. Many major newspapers exposed the onerous provisions of the treaty, the deplorable negotiating positions taken by the incompetent Philippine panel, and the real worth of America's commitment to the Philippines.

The combination of parliamentary proceedings, street actions, and open debate increasingly characterized the dynamics of political decision-making in the country. Under martial rule where parliament was monolithic and the press suppressed, this was hardly possible. The formal democratic processes that were restored by the anti-dictatorship struggle along with the growing pressure for nationalism and reforms have made possible more unexpected outcomes despite the continued dominance of the collaborationist elite in positions of governance.

The restored legal processes as arena for achieving social and political reforms have created strategic implications on the conduct of the Philippine left, notably the CPP which is recognized as the only communist party in Asia today with the capacity to eventually seize power.

The formal state processes and general mass preference for non-violent modes of conflict resolution have pushed the CPP, long steeped in armed, underground resistance, to increasingly shift priorities to the open, legal struggle. The same is true for all other left groups who share a common disdain for national elections. The May 1992 national elections has become the major arena for resolving the most disputed question of governance.

Aside from the internal dynamics in Philippine politics, the changed world context and the US's current economic situation have stripped the US of will, reason, and capacity to ram through a new treaty extending its lease on the Philippine bases.

The prolonged economic recession in the US has made it difficult for the US to continue maintaining many of its foreign bases. To help arrest its accumulated deficits and foreign debts, the US has been abandoning or converting to civilian use many of its military facilities both inside and outside its national territories. The US is also reducing its forces assigned in foreign soil. There has been at least ten percent cuts in American forces in Korea and Japan.

In addition, the pullout of Soviet troops in Afghanistan and Vietnam followed by the breakup of the USSR have eroded the strategic military importance of maintaining US bases in the Philippines. This was probably unthinkable a few years ago. But as early as last year, the US appeared ready to give up CAB with its unrenovated facilities. The volcanic eruptions only catalyzed the process and made the evacuation disorderly. While the US, especially the Pentagon, may have wanted to keep its first-class facilities in Subic Bay, it was not inclined to pay nor was its government capable of paying a good price for it. For this reason, it could not meet eye to eye even with the Philippine executive branch on the terms of the bases' lease.

Many Filipino and American anti-bases analysts may have failed to foresee this erosion of the Philippine bases' strategic significance vis-a-vis the US's reduced capacity to maintain such facilities in recent years, especially since both Clark and Subic bases were again involved in the Gulf War of 1991.

Nonetheless, the factors above converged and led to this unexpected watershed in Philippine history.

Towards a Nuclear- and Bases-Free Philippines and Southeast Asia

The implications of the bases withdrawal in the Philippines for the Southeast Asian region are many. The region has been the battleground for the proxy wars between the US and the USSR that dominated the Cold War period.

The final withdrawal of US troops from the Philippines will smoothen out the kinks in the transformation of the region into a zone of peace, freedom, and neutrality (ZOPFAN). The prospects are more exciting with the ongoing political and economic reforms in Indochina and the phasing out of Soviet troops in Vietnam. The regional ZOPFAN could eventually extend to other parts of Southeast Asia not included in the present membership of the ASEAN.

A nuclear- and bases-free Philippines augurs well for the development of an independent foreign policy both in the country and in the region. The ASEAN, like the defunct SEATO, had been intended by the US as a regional military alliance. But independent push- and-shoves by ASEAN leaders led ASEAN into a more economic and cultural basis of unity. Nonetheless, the US has successfully influenced the alliance in adopting its positions on foreign affairs, notably in condemning Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia. The ASEAN states have also been used to pressure the Philippine government to secure the US bases on its soil.

The decreased interest of the US in the Philippines and in the region in general, relative to its concern over the Middle East and Eastern Europe, will leave the region with a freer hand to chart its own course with less US interference. The US has been pushing Japan to assume leadership in the region. Japan, however, continues to be constrained by its Peace Constitution that prohibits building up its military presence and by its yet hesitant attitude to play a greater role in regional politics over and beyond its economic exposure in the area. This hesitancy may change over time, of course. It is thus important that the Philippines and the rest of the countries of Southeast Asia build up their independence and regional solidarity as soon as possible.

For this reason, the nationalist struggle in the Philippines should broaden into a Southeast Asia-wide movement for peace, independence, and cooperation. Geographical and cultural proximities have intertwined the fates of these states and provided a basis for promoting mutual interests. Similarities in economic development, though uneven, and complementary trade potentials serve as further impetus for developing closer ties. The existence of ASEAN provides the facilitative structures. The ASEAN network, however, should be developed to encompass more inter-country and non-government ties.

In the Philippines, converting the base facilities into productive enterprises would be the only way to offset the lost economic benefits from the bases and the decrease in US economic assistance that can be expected. Unfortunately, this is something the government has not pushed to its logical conclusion. While it set up a joint legislative-executive committee to plan the bases' economic conversion as early as 1989, it sat on the passage of the bill that would create the appropriate body that would handle the project.

Obviously, Aquino's pro-bases stance was anachronistic to the spirit of the conversion plan.

As it is, precious time is being lost in seeing through a smooth conversion and in getting a fair deal with the US government in the disposition of base properties. Clark Air Base has been stripped bare of its facilities by looters, among them military men. Illegal loggers are also reportedly poised to cut down the forests in reservations covered by the Subic base.

The complete removal of the bases would also make the atmosphere for political negotiations with the communist insurgents more favorable. For one, there would be less cause for the US to intervene in the progress or non-progress of the negotiations, unlike in the 1986-87 peace talks between the government and the NDF when sections of the US government disagreed and connived with saboteurs from the military to scuttle the talks.

With the bases out, one major divisive item in the peace talks agenda has effectively been settled. This would allow the negotiations to focus on other substantial points where compromises could possibly be achieved.

It is said that history repeats itself and that the future reveals itself in history. But there are key moments in time when the odds manifest themselves in a rare display of convergence which may be hard to predict or repeat. As in the February 1986 upheaval that sent the Marcos family packing, the September 1991 conjuncture which decisively put an end to the bases' stay is one of those moments. It is hoped that the unprecedented opportunities offered by this development will not be squandered.

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