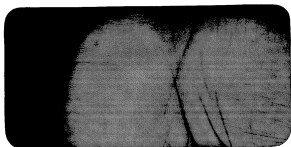

**THE POST-EDSA MILITARY
AND PHILIPPINE
DEMOCRATIZATION**

by Felipe B. Miranda





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January 1996



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THE POST-EDSA MILITARY AND PHILIPPINE DEMOCRATIZATION

Felipe B. Miranda*

Many Filipinos, civilians as well as soldiers, believe that in the last three decades the military has bared its best as well as its worst faces. The military had been a force used to crush democratic aspirations under Marcos, but it had also turned against the dictator at a critical historical juncture. Since 1986, it has harbored within itself both democratic and anti-democratic elements. At least six times in the last decade it reflected internal antagonisms which in two major occasions had to be resolved by the active application of military force. The military crushed coups led by some of its own officers whose much-publicized excuse is their desire to accelerate the coming of true democracy in this country. In the current quietus (there had been no dramatic “unauthorized military exercise” since 1989), the military’s challenge continues to be whether it can keep democratic faith with the citizenry or whether it will again heed strident, self-serving calls for new societies.

1. The Politicized Military

The 1987 Philippine Constitution (Article II, Section 3) may be unique in explicitly mentioning the Armed Forces of the Philippines ahead of any formal reference to the national government or any of the latter’s constituent agencies: the legislative, the executive and the judiciary. The military’s numerous democratic and guardian responsibilities are painstakingly specified in other parts of the fundamental law. Clearly, in 1987, the constitutional framers anticipated the critical role of the military in sustaining a democratic order in the country.

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This sensitiveness to the military's political function was not surprising. In the course of Marcos' long dictatorship, the military had been the authoritarian regime's main prop and had increasingly served as Marcos' junior partner in ruling the Philippines (Miranda, "The [Philippine] Military" in May and Nemenzo, 1985:95-103; Abinales, 1995:19-37). In 1987, there was evident need to explicitly articulate the democratic accountability and the political orientation of a New Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Still there is much more to military politicization than the corruptive effects of Marcos rule. It is a mistake to reduce this phenomenon to being a mere dysfunctionality induced primarily by one-man rule, as is often done in a major study on Philippine coups (The Fact-Finding Commission, 1990:49-69). The more comprehensive frame within which military politicization must be situated is the overall politicization of Third World societies soon after the Second World War and the subsequent involvement of their military establishments in political governance. Oversimplifying theories of democratic participation, the governments of these societies, put a premium on bringing the citizenry into the mainstream of participative though not necessarily democratic politics. In the particular case of the Philippines, as this author noted in an earlier study of military politicization (Miranda, 1992:10):

Political parties, business groups, labor unions, farmers' associations, student organizations, concerned citizens' clubs and other quasi-political societies and fellowships mushroomed in response to the trumpeted imperative for a politically involved and active citizenry. In this frenzy of organizational work, the fiction was that government employees and military men would be immune to the virus of political involvement. [They] were supposed to be constitutionally insulated against politically-interested parties and the pressures [these groups] were bound to exert on politically crucial resources such as the bureaucracy and the military.

Given a political environment of comprehensive and rapid mass politicization, the military could have maintained a depoliticized character only if heroic efforts had been made to indeed delink it from the rest of Philippine society. No such efforts were exerted. ... Given the authoritarian and modernizing orientation of the military, it was much too angelic a belief that it could remain consistently barracks-oriented even as incompetent and even treasonous politicians forged anarchy out of fragile political systems and willfully plundered their people. At the very least, plunder being a tradition of warriors too, the military would have eventually insisted on its share of the spoils. At best, however, the military might have been tempted to cross constitutional barriers and, driven by compulsions like "duty, honor, country," retrieve patriotism in this Pandora's box of general politicization.



By the time Marcos fell from power in 1986, the Philippine military had been politicized. Within the AFP, a significant proportion of military men already felt comfortable being involved in overall governance and in wielding political influence in matters relating to national security. More than any other variable (e.g. ethnicity, military academy origins, source of military commission, service command or rank) around which group or factional identification could and did evolve, this sense of politicization appears to be the most critical distinguishing characteristic among military men in the 70s and 80s. Traditional notions of military professionalism eschewed any deep sense of, or active involvement in, politics; politicization on the other hand involved military men in the political scanning of their functional environment, tactical operations to gain immediate advantage from it and strategic planning to ensure long term gains for those who aspiring for political controllership. (Miranda and Ciron, 1988:177-178; Miranda, 1992:7-12).

Politicization theoretically need not lead to military subservience to a civilian political patron. After all, as in Indonesia and Thailand, two alternative role models for many Filipino military leaders, military men themselves could assume primary controller status. In the Philippines, given Marcos' political preeminence and a military culture still greatly influenced by values of deference to the civilian authority, politicized military men indeed became mostly loyal minions of Marcos and, towards the end of his rule, a few other key political figures. For most of the Marcos years, national security had been understood primarily in the context of securing a dictatorial regime and protecting the vital interests of the dictator and his cohorts. After Marcos' fall, those who prepared the 1987 Constitution would compulsively anchor national security paradigms on a democratic rationale. Ultimately, the **demos**, the people themselves and not any specific anti-democratic regime or political notable must be secured against any threat. The Armed Forces of the Philippines and especially its politicized elements had to be constitutionally reminded of this **raison d'être** in the latter half of the 1980s.

Military politicization had its positive side. Those who openly deplored the idea of the AFP being a publicly-funded private army of the Marcoses and their cronies conceived of reforming the military and making it "an effective, efficient and fair-minded Armed Forces in the service of the people (Preliminary Statement of Aspirations [17 February 1985])." Their primary organization became the Reform the AFP Movement or RAM, which would increasingly reveal a politicized agenda in its repeated challenges to the national government (*vide* Coronel, 1990:51-85). Later, more nationalistic, ideologically-inclined younger military officers would develop a fraternal organization (the Young Officers Union) in their quest for a military in the service of a nation whose institutions would be worth dying for (Gloria, 1990:133-137; Tayag, 1992).



2. The Aquino Years: Challenges from the Politicized Military

By the time Corazon Aquino became Commander-in-Chief of the AFP in 1986, two largely incompatible orientations needed to be resolved within the military. One pulled back the military towards a tradition of minimal political involvement and maximum professional soldiering. The other not only assumed the legitimacy of the military's active participation in certain politicized functions (e.g. security policy formulation, implementation and review), but also presumed to judge under what conditions a government and its authorities deserved to continue ruling.

The series of military-led coups from November 1986 to December 1989 reflected the second, politicized orientation and had little to do with loyalty to Marcos. They had everything to do with government policies on the communist insurgency, alleged leftist and communist sympathizers in the Aquino administration, military leadership, promotions and pay, the appropriate relationship between civilian authorities and the military hierarchy and, above all, who would constitute the highest and controlling set of political authorities. Many military men were cynical about a chain of command which formally extended all the way to Aquino in Malacañang.

In working with civilian "people power" to successfully oust Marcos in 1986, the military redeemed itself in the eyes of the public. In a Social Weather Stations May 1986 national survey, a majority of the respondents (52%) thought there had been much improvement in the military since the overthrow of Marcos. A majority also believed that the AFP would be loyal and obedient to the new Aquino government, indicating a popular belief that the military indeed had enough constitutionalist soldiers in its hierarchy. Nevertheless, a plurality of respondents (36%) expressed fears that there were military men plotting to destabilize the Aquino government and take over political power. A plurality (38% nationwide, 46% in Metro Manila) saw much wisdom in the proposal to reduce the size and budget of the military at the time of the SWS survey (Miranda, 1986:27-28). (Table 1.)

Military officers partly validated the public's fears of military involvement in political affairs. In public, they readily concurred with civilian appraisals that military intrusion into civilian governmental functions had had inauspicious results for the nation. A seminar of joint civilian and military leaders on 31 May 1986 strongly recommended that

... [the] military should revert to its three-fold functions as provided in the 1935 Constitution, which limited its role to external defense; internal security



against rebellion, sedition and subversion; and the maintenance of law and order through the police and constabulary forces. It should not be saddled with functions which divert it from its principal function (Solidarity, 1987:17)

**Table 1. CIVILIAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE MILITARY
(Philippines, May 1986)**

<u>Test Statement</u>	<u>Responses (%)</u>		
	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Disagree</u>
<i>Greatly improved military in the last three months</i>	52	20	19
<i>High military officials probably thinking of overthrowing government</i>	36	31	29
<i>New AFP will be loyal and obedient to the Aquino government</i>	55	28	12
<i>Good idea to reduce the size and budget of the military now</i>	38	27	31

Source: Social Weather Stations Survey (May 1986)

Strictly back to the barracks and back to soldiering, as the traditionalist refrain goes. In the post-EDSA decade, this tune would be quite popular after every failed military-led coup. Military politicization nevertheless appears to carry a more dynamic and lasting note. Once struck, it is virtually impossible to squelch and, it hardly fades away.

Within the military itself, an April-May 1987 exploratory survey revealed rather complex sentiments relating to military politicization and constitutionalism (Miranda and Ciron, 1988:184-205). A big majority (84%) agreed with the view that the military's most important role in national development is to protect the government against those who would overthrow it. Yet, only half of the military respondents would punish soldiers who destabilize government. A sense of limited constitutionalism appeared to be at work precisely because of feelings that civilian government officials did not think highly of the military and were often leftists or communist sympathizers. Furthermore, there was much suspicion that the communist insurgency fed on the incompetence and corruption of many local government officials. So strong is the anti-communist sentiment that close to half (43%) agreed the military may itself temporarily take over government to prevent communist



rule. The sense of active politicization reflected itself further in the dangerously split opinion on whether an incompetent head of government might be deposed forcibly by a military group. (Table 2)

**Table 2. MILITARY'S PERCEPTIONS OF GOVERNMENT, 1987
in percentages**

Test Statement	Responses (%)		
	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
<i>Military's most important role in development is to protect government vs. those who would overthrow it</i>	84	8	6
<i>Military men who destabilize government must be punished</i>	50	24	15
<i>Many government officials do not think highly of the military and distrust their loyalty to the present government</i>	72	16	8
<i>Many government officials are leftists or communist sympathizers</i>	52	28	12
<i>The incompetence and corruption of many local government officials are behind the growth of insurgency in the Philippines</i>	77	12	7
<i>To prevent communists from overthrowing our government, the military itself may temporarily take over government in the Philippines</i>	43	21	21
<i>If the head of government is unable to perform his duties properly, any group in the military may try unseating him even if this means using force</i>	34	22	33

Source: Miranda and Ciron, "Development and the Military in the Philippines," in Djwandono and Yong, eds., 1988:194.

Filipino sentiments relating to the failed coups indicate a strong constitutionalist bias and a protective attitude by the public for the government and its legitimate authorities (Miranda, 1988:7-41). President Aquino's popularity actually momentarily picked up on account of coup challenges to her administration. Filipinos rejected coupmaking as a legitimate course of action by disaffected military men. Nevertheless, most of them considered justified many of the military rebels' complaints



about their poor material conditions, the poor communication channels to their Commander-in-Chief, the high level of graft and corruption in government and their lack of arms and other equipment for battle. (Table 3)

The public, however, did not find justifiable some of the other pointedly political grievances of the coupmakers. They found little basis in the criticism of government officials as having little regard for the military or being pro-communist and biased for non-military rebels. Neither did they accept the criticism that there was weak and indecisive leadership in the military as a whole.

Public sentiments on the December 1989 coup in a sense were basically the same as those expressed soon after the August 1987 coup. Among those polled in Metro Manila, constitutionalist feelings still dominated. However, despite a clear, continuing disapproval of coup-making, more consensus obtained regarding the legitimacy of the rebel soldiers' complaints (including this time practically all the more political ones) than in the August 1987 coup. Also, since the 1989 coup leaders more explicitly linked their cause with the sufferings of the general citizenry, most respondents could sympathize with the reasons behind a coup even as they opposed the actual resort to a coup. (See Table 3)

Although the December 1989 coup came closest to capturing political power for the military rebels (conventional wisdom suggesting that only American intervention saved Aquino's government from being successfully overthrown), analysis shows the earlier 1987 coup to have the greater political impact on the public. Public's confidence in the Aquino administration was badly shaken in 1987 and henceforth there would be no naive trust in the invincibility of the constitutional authorities and the inevitability of rapid economic development or political stability (Miranda, 1993:100).

Civilian assessments of grievances aired by rebel soldiers were shared by most people in the military, with predictably higher levels of agreement with rebel claims. In the latest dissertation on Philippine civil-military relations (Ciron, 1993), military justification for practically all of the military rebels' claims is firmly established. (Table 4)



**Table 3. CIVILIANS' ASSESSMENTS OF REBEL SOLDIERS' COMPLAINTS
(Greater Manila Area, September 1987 & December 1989)
(in percentages)**

<u>Complaints</u>	<u>SEPTEMBER 1987</u>		<u>DECEMBER 1989</u>	
	<u>Justified</u>	<u>Not Justified</u>	<u>Justified</u>	<u>Not Justified</u>
<i>Too much graft and corruption among government officials</i>	54	41	73	26
<i>Very low salaries, little livelihood benefits of soldiers</i>	71	26	73	25
<i>Can't forward complaints to President quickly and effectively</i>	64	32	67	31
<i>Weak/indecisive leadership within the military</i>	42	51	63	34
<i>Favoritism in granting promotions within the military</i>	48	45	59	38
<i>Low regard by government officials for the military</i>	44	52	58	40
<i>Lack of necessary arms and other equipment in fighting rebels</i>	54	41	50	47
<i>Too much coddling by the government of communist and Muslim rebels</i>	39	58	39	58
<i>Continuing neglect by the government of the basic needs of Filipinos*</i>			66	33
<i>Too much and continuing hardships for most Filipinos*</i>			69	29
<i>Weak/indecisive leadership in the Department of National Defense*</i>			54	43
<hr/>				
Are these complaints enough reason for undertaking a coup?		<u>1987</u>	<u>1989</u>	
Yes		32	30	
No		65	67	

Source: Social Weather Stations Surveys, 1987, 1989

*New items asked in December 1989



**Table 4. MILITARY'S ASSESSMENTS OF REBEL SOLDIERS' COMPLAINTS
(PMA Survey, September 1990 - January 1991)**

<u>Complaints</u>	<u>Respondents Saying Complaints Are Justified (%)</u>
Graft and corruption in government	86
Weak and indecisive civilian government leadership	75
Breakdown of basic services	67
Low salary	64
Inadequate military supplies and equipment	58
Lack of trust by government officials in the military	54
Presence of communists in government	52
Favoritism in military promotions	51
Weak and indecisive military leadership	44
Government favors communists	37

Source: Survey of 500 PMA active officers, Classes 1958-1990 (Ciron, 1993:201)

The Ciron study is most important in communicating the sense of demoralization which prevailed within a crucial (perhaps the crucial) segment of the military officer corps, the graduates of the PMA. After all, according to the Fact-Finding Commission, the body tasked by the national government to conduct an inquiry into the multiple coups of the late 1980s, the PMA had close to 10 percent of its officers involved in the 1989 coup whereas the group of non-PMA officers barely contributed 2%. (The Fact-Finding Commission, 1990:441).

With just about a year left in her term, the sentiments of the PMA officers clearly indicated Aquino's inability to manage the military well. About 80% of the PMA survey respondents acknowledged "quite a bit of demoralization now in the Philippine military." A majority (60%) decried the absence of firm and decisive leadership by civilian officials over the military. A plurality (37%) went further and accused military officials themselves of the same lack of leadership. Professional standards for promotions, assignments and career advancement, according to 40% of those surveyed, had been neglected by the current leadership. (Table 5)

**Table 5. MILITARY'S MORALE AND LEADERSHIP PERCEPTIONS
(PMA Survey, September 1990 - January 1991)**

<u>Test Statement</u>	<u>Responses (%)</u>		
	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Disagree</u>
<i>Quite a bit of demoralization in the military now</i>	79	13	6
<i>Military officials give the military firm and decisive leadership now</i>	24	32	37
<i>Current leadership has restored the military's professional standards for promotions, assignments and career advancement</i>	23	32	43
<i>Military now has firm and decisive leadership provided by civilian officials</i>	8	30	60

Source: Survey of 500 PMA active officers, Classes 1958-1990 (Ciron, 1993:166)

The perception of a feckless, unsympathetic, possibly overly liberal, if not quite leftist administration tempted many military men to mount armed challenges against the government. This perceived weakness, compounded by limp-wristed disciplinary actions initially imposed on coupmakers by officials tasked with regulating military affairs, conceivably emboldened some soldiers to view coups as a low-risk, high-returns activity. Indeed civilian and military authorities were always surprised by the number of troops and the impressive logistics each coup attempt could command.

The Aquino administration's responses to the military's sectoral and more broadly political concerns could be summed up as too little, too late and mostly when already under critical pressure, i.e. when management flexibility had been largely lost. They gave the dangerous impression particularly among the soldiers that concessions are gained from the civilian authorities only when the latter have been sufficiently thrown off-balance, when coups even when they fall short of capturing political power had unsettled the civilian government. Thus improvements in the material conditions of the military men, being truly insufficient, only whetted the appetite for more. (Up to 1988, after three much-publicized pay raises from 1985, the monthly base pay of a private was still P1000, a master sergeant P2,350, a second lieutenant P3000, a captain P4000, a major P5000 and a colonel P6000. (See Table 6.) These officers directly commanded troops and often yielded to the temptation of coup-making.)

Table 6. MONTHLY BASE PAY OF OFFICERS AND ENLISTED PERSONNEL
(in current pesos)

	<u>1979</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1995*</u>
OFFICERS									
010 GEN	4,404.00	4,844.40	5,328.84	5,861.72	6,447.89	7,415.07	12,000.00	12,700.00	16,600.00
09 LGEN	3,795.00	4,174.50	4,591.95	5,051.15	5,558.27	6,389.71	9,000.00	9,700.00	16,100.00
08 MGEN	3,270.00	3,611.00	3,972.10	4,369.31	4,806.24	5,527.17	8,000.00	8,700.00	15,300.00
07 BGEN	2,818.00	3,112.00	3,423.20	3,765.52	4,142.07	4,763.38	7,500.00	8,200.00	14,800.00
06 COL	2,199.00	2,429.00	2,671.90	2,964.00	3,274.00	3,765.10	6,000.00	6,700.00	14,000.00
05 LTC	1,894.00	2,093.00	2,302.30	2,553.00	2,820.00	3,246.00	5,500.00	6,200.00	13,400.00
04 MAJ	1,553.00	1,715.00	1,886.50	2,093.00	2,311.00	2,657.65	5,000.00	5,700.00	12,900.00
03 CPT	1,211.00	1,337.00	1,470.70	1,632.00	1,802.00	2,072.30	4,000.00	4,700.00	12,400.00
02 1LT	992.00	1,096.00	1,205.60	1,337.00	1,477.00	1,698.55	3,500.00	4,200.00	12,000.00
01 2LT	774.00	855.00	940.50	1,043.00	1,152.00	1,324.80	3,000.00	3,700.00	11,400.00
ENLISTED PERSONNEL									
E7 MSGT	448.00	520.00	572.00	634.00	700.00	805.00	2,350.00	3,200.00	8,500.00
E6 TSGT	405.00	470.00	517.00	568.70	625.57	719.40	2,000.00	2,800.00	7,700.00
E5 SSGT	367.00	426.00	468.00	515.46	567.01	652.06	1,800.00	2,600.00	6,800.00
E4 SGT	332.00	386.00	424.60	467.06	513.77	590.83	1,600.00	2,400.00	6,400.00
E3 CPL	301.00	349.00	383.90	422.29	464.52	534.19	1,300.00	2,100.00	5,600.00
E2 PFC	286.00	332.00	365.20	401.72	441.89	508.17	1,100.00	1,900.00	5,300.00
E1 PVT	272.00	316.00	347.60	382.36	420.60	483.69	1,000.00	1,800.00	5,000.00

Source: (1979-1994 data) Deputy Chief of Staff for Comptrollership (J6) AFP.
(1995 data) Per House Joint Resolution #1 Dtd 7 March 1994.





Political concessions (e.g. the replacement of Aquino cabinet members perceived to be sympathetic to the left) could be read as indicative of an appeasement policy which generated disrespect if not contempt among those used to the language of firmness and authority. It did not help the administration that indeed some of Aquino's cabinet members lacked much sensitiveness and tact in dealing with the military, a vital institution for any smooth transition to a functional democratic order (Miranda, 1992:15-17).

The Aquino administration, apparently lacking strategic vision in military and political management, suffering from indecision and disunity within its politically-rainbowed cabinet, confronted by restiveness within an increasingly politicized military and unable to replenish the fast-eroding public support for her administration, was not up to the challenge of resolving the conflicting orientations within the Philippine military.

3. The Ramos Administration: Politically Managing the Military

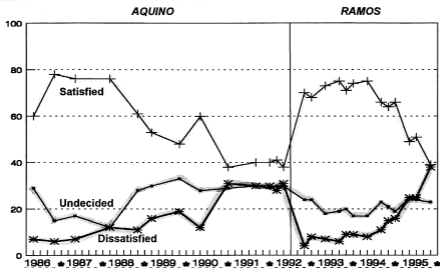
General Fidel V. Ramos is the first Filipino political leader since 1972 to have a clearly legitimate mandate to rule. Thus legitimacy issues which plagued Marcos from 1972 on and Aquino from 1986 to 1992 do not become a critical political consideration in his case.

He ascended to the presidency with a few more things going for him. In the first place he was succeeding President Aquino. Filipinos appreciated Aquino much as a focal figure in the crucial struggle against Marcos from 1983 to 1986, but by 1991 they were mostly relieved by the prospects of electing someone to succeed her.

According to Social Weather Stations surveys, net public satisfaction (percent of respondents satisfied minus percent dissatisfied) with Aquino had decreased from the October 1986 high of +72 to a low of +7 in April 1992, a month before Filipinos elected Ramos as her successor. (See Chart 1.) There was much public disillusionment with her on account of perceived graft and corruption in government. As a matter of fact, in April 1992, 32% of those polled nationwide said Aquino's administration had more graft and corruption than Marcos' while only 25% said there was less; the rest (39%) said it was about the same. Of the same respondents, 22% thought there would be less graft and corruption from the administration succeeding Aquino's while 17% expected more; 56% anticipated no change.



Chart 1. PERFORMANCE RATINGS OF PRES. AQUINO (1986-1992) AND PRES. RAMOS (1992-1995)



SURVEY DATE	SATISFIED	UNDECIDED	DISSATISFIED	MARGIN
AQUINO				
May 86	60	29	7	+ 53
Oct 86	78	15	6	+ 72
Mar 87	76	17	7	+ 69
Feb 88	76	12	12	+ 64
Sep 88	61	28	11	+ 50
Feb 89	53	30	16	+ 37
Sep 89	48	33	19	+ 29
Apr 90	60	28	12	+ 48
Nov 90	38	29	31	+ 7
Jul 91	40	30	30	+ 10
Nov 91	40	29	30	+ 10
Feb 92	41	30	28	+ 13
Apr 92	38	30	31	+ 7
RAMOS				
Sep 92	70	24	4	+ 66
Dec 92	68	24	8	+ 60
Apr 93	73	18	7	+ 66
Jul 93	75	19	6	+ 69
Sep 93	71	20	9	+ 62
Dec 93	74	17	9	+ 65
Apr 94	75	17	8	+ 67
Aug 94	66	23	11	+ 55
Nov 94	64	21	15	+ 49
Dec 94	66	19	16	+ 50
Mar 95	49	25	25	+ 24
Jun 95	51	24	25	+ 26
Oct 95	39	23	38	+ 1

Source: Social Weather Stations Nationwide Surveys, 1986-1995.



From September 1989 up to April 1992, much public apprehension regarding civil-military relations registered in SWS surveys, with less than 40% of the respondents being convinced about the loyalty of the AFP to the Aquino government. Furthermore, by April 1992, only 2 out of 10 respondents believed that Filipinos would keep faith with peaceful means of effecting democratic change; the other 8 would not or could not rule out the possibility of violence in the process of democratization. Together, these public sentiments reflected a growing sense that Aquino was increasingly unable to manage the country (and particularly the military) well.

In the second place, the military background of Ramos reassured people that he had intimate knowledge of the military and, while he had his military critics, he could rely on adequate military support and could not be as easily misled by politicized military men as Aquino and her other officials. His constitutionalist record also made people confident that he would actively pursue democratization instead of backsliding into authoritarianism.

Thirdly, despite having thwarted the coup challenges to the Aquino administration, Ramos consistently kept channels of communication open with the rebel military leaders. Peacetalks could be resumed with the RAM-SFP-YOU leaders with an eye towards finally neutralizing one of the three major armed threats to Philippine political stability.

Finally, in managing the military, Ramos was the beneficiary of a peace dividend gained from the dramatic termination of the Cold War. This development enabled the military to view local communism as a significantly reduced national security threat and thus made them less allergic to liberal or left-leaning government officials. It also permitted the military to entertain peacemaking with a weakened left with much less paranoia.

Logically, given its initial liberal policies towards the communist rebels, the Aquino administration could have benefited from this increased ability of the military to accommodate erstwhile cold war opponents. In bringing peacetalks to more successful resolutions, Aquino could have gained an opportunity to work more closely with the military and to gain the latter's trust and support. However, the strained relations between her and the military prevented this peace dividend from maturing during her term.

While Ramos' own relations with many military officers were far from perfect, he did not suffer from being suspected as a leftist coddler. As the cold war disintegrated and the armed left in the country



weakened in the late 80s and early 90s, military men looked up to Ramos as the focal character in the military's search for a post cold-war national security role. Although the AFP continued to have a counterinsurgency and even anti-crime roles to play, the establishment of a Philippine National Police in 1990 theoretically reserved the country's internal security function primarily to the Department of the Interior and Local Government, the mother agency of the PNP (Republic Act No. 6975, Chapter 1, Section 12). The military therefore had to reorient itself towards securing the Philippines primarily against external threats, a vital function which had been entrusted to the United States during the overly long period of "close and special relationship."

On account of these advantages, Ramos upon assumption of the presidency became the military's preeminent political leader and undisputed hands-on military manager.

Stabilizing a Politicized Military

President Ramos had been particularly successful in stabilizing the erstwhile restive elements in the military. The command structure had been tightened with the President as the overall political overseer of the military, the Chief of Staff as its operational manager and the Secretary of National Defense as the crucial supervisory link between the President and the Chief of Staff. Military collegiality, seniority and the formal authority structures complement each other in clarifying and strengthening the chain of command involving President Ramos, Defense Secretary De Villa and Chief of Staff General Enrile. The chain of command had never been as well secured by men with similar military backgrounds as at present. Not even in the time of Marcos when the defense minister and the AFP chief-of-staff plotted against each other in the 1980s. And certainly not during Aquino's term, when she appeared unable to break a vicious circle of military-led coups.

Ramos has facilitated the sense of military professionalism by committing resources for military modernization, thus satisfying a deeply felt need among military men who take pride in being part of an AFP with resources and force capabilities appropriate to its defense responsibilities. Republic Act No. 7898 (The AFP Modernization Act of 1995) underscores the urgent need to develop an AFP with multiple capabilities but which, above all, can "uphold the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic and to secure the national territory from all forms of intrusions and encroachments (Section 3, subsection a)." Section 4, subsection d, paragraph 2 reiterates this concern by tasking the human resource development component of the modernization program "to develop and transform the AFP into a primarily external security-oriented force."



The law envisages a leaner, better provisioned, multifunctional military. With national security, national development, regional and international obligations to meet, the AFP envisioned by the law will certainly take at least up to year 2010 to fully develop and will require much more resources than those presently contemplated by law to operate and maintain in optimal condition.

The AFP Modernization Act of 1995 may be considered a good part of an overall strategy to stabilize a politicized military. It refocuses military concern from national affairs and political governance to the more immediate and concrete needs of military institution-building. Especially for those with more traditional ideas of military professionalism, involvement with AFP modernization may serve as an effective substitute for political immersion which in the past often lead to unauthorized military exercises.

Furthermore, in refocusing the AFP towards its external security function, politicized military men get to be more interested with regional and international concerns which could work to dampen intensive and often divisive domestic political involvements.

Another strategy for military stabilization is to galvanize the peace and reconciliation process to defuse cleavage issues among military men. Although a general policy of reconciliation, peacetalks and national unification with all armed rebel groups had been publicly maintained by the Ramos administration, it was predictably the RAM-SFP-YOU which made the greatest progress in dialogues with government negotiators. Successful peacetalks with rebel military groups enabled most of their leaders to surface and, in the case of former Colonel Gregorio Honasan, to gain a Senate seat in the May 1995 elections.

The talks between the government and the RAM-SFP-YOU military rebel groups is a classic exercise in conciliatory negotiations. Despite much publicized grandstanding, misunderstanding and even some threat-mongering among the negotiating groups in the process of forging a reconciliation agreement, the success of the talks was quite predictable. Several factors worked in this direction. The RAM had access to high level political actors in the Ramos Cabinet and some presidential advisers which made for more confident negotiations between the military rebels and the government representatives. Also, on account of strong military presence in the government panel negotiating with the military rebel groups, both parties could invoke personal and professional ties with each other to facilitate dialogues and to reach agreements on many issues. (No such fraternal advantage was discernible in similar panel discussions between government spokesmen and the MNLF or NDF-CPP-



NPA representatives.) Finally, it also might be added that many of the public issues between the government and the military rebel groups were relatively tractable, as in the case of RAM good faith, RAM security and the question of permissible RAM firearms for security purposes (Miranda, 1993:105).

The military rebels' expectations from the peacetalks were quite pragmatic. They pressed for a limited re-integration of rank and file into either the military or the Philippine National Police, the retirement of their leaders without disgrace from the military and, at least for some of the RAM leaders, the possibility of political careers beckoned. Given the AFP's sentiments for accommodation at this juncture, these expectations could be and were met by the political leadership of the country.

The military actually had been ready for peacetalks and reconciliation with their coup-making colleagues. In a Social Weather Stations April 1993 survey conducted by this author for the National Unification Commission, the respondents (578 randomly selected officers and enlisted men from 14 military camps) indicated much trust for coup leaders and their groups in contrast with general distrust for communist and Muslim rebels and their organizations. (See Table 7) A sizeable majority (67%) believed that most military men who joined the coups have real grievances needing government attention. Almost everyone (95%) felt that different Filipino factions should unite for the country to prosper. When asked which groups ought to be given amnesty, 76% said all rebel groups must enjoy this privilege (Social Weather Stations Military Survey, April 1993). Clearly, the military was in a reconciliatory mood especially for their comrade in arms. To clean up the slate with military rebels, the military even appeared willing to extend its peacemaking gesture to other still distrusted armed groups, the communists and Muslim rebels.

Managing the military towards greater stability requires improving the poor living conditions and low salaries of military personnel. The Ramos administration exerted efforts to upgrade military pay. The monthly base pay of a private was raised from P1,000 in 1988 to P1,800 in 1994. By 1996, further proposed increases and adjustments would effectively make the private's monthly base pay about P5000. (See Table 6) In addition to pay increases, there were efforts to provide housing for military men and their families. In September 1995, plans were announced to build a housing complex for low ranking soldiers. About P400 millions were to be spent on the project, with funds coming from the AFP Retirement and Separation Benefits System (Philippine Daily Inquirer, September 19, 1995:8).



Table 7. COMPARATIVE TRUST MARGINS*: INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS (SWS April 1993 Civilian and Military Surveys)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Civilian**</u>	<u>Military***</u>
Gregorio Honasan	-35	+61
Alfredo Tadiar	-30	+42
Edgardo Abenina	-38	+31
Domingo Calajate	n.a.	+27
Jose M. Zumel	n.a.	+27
Danilo Lim	n.a.	+17
Dante Buscayno	n.a.	+ 3
Satur Ocampo	n.a.	- 2
Jose Ma. Sison	-57	- 4
Nur Misuari	-60	- 9
Luis Jalandoni	n.a.	-11
Rafael Baylosis	n.a.	-20
Rodolfo Salas	n.a.	-22
YOU	-27	+25
RAM	-34	+25
MNLF	-52	-14
CPP/NPA	-58	-15

Sources: SWS April 1993 National Survey and SWS April 1993 Military Survey

* Respondents saying "Much Trust" minus those "Little Trust"

** April 1993 SWS national (civilian) survey

*** April 1993 SWS military survey

Lastly, President Ramos had contributed to the stabilization of the politicized military by drafting quite a few military men into civilian service, giving the rest of the military a sense of direct participation in political administration. In the Cabinet and in other key offices of government, presidential appointments are enjoyed by men who within the last two decades had lived lives in uniform. (In late 1994, a journalist identified more than 35 of these retired officers and provoked unnecessary concern among some ranking military officers [Esplanada, 1994:1].) Their high visibility in top civilian positions sends a positive signal to military men who are critical of NPA-(non-performing-assets) type civilian officials and who might actually be entertaining ideas of active political involvement



themselves. As for those who are intimidated by direct involvement in public administration, there is the assurance that should they need for anything in the bureaucracy, there would be familiar and sympathetic contacts available.

4. The Military in Retrospect

Since 1986, the Philippine military has been concerned with the problem of making its undeniable politicization serve the cause of national democratization.

In the Aquino administration, the military's primary contribution to democratization had been to ensure that the constitutional order was preserved and that armed challenges to the government did not prosper. Thus the military-led coups were neutralized by constitutionalist military men even as they might have entertained reservations about the constitutional order* and perceived gross inadequacies in the performance of the civilian authorities.

The expansion of democratic space which started fairly auspiciously in 1986 and 1987 could not be sustained in the later years of the Aquino administration. Lacking clear and effective political direction from their Commander-in-Chief, the military simply fell back on its traditional biases. The military's anti-communism precluded its active support of civilian peace overtures and made suspect administration leaders' calls for political solutions to the insurgencies confronting the nation.

Furthermore, the military's human rights' record between 1986 and 1991 appear to have been deplorable. As part of the Aquino administration's forced concession to the restive military, laws against insurgency were strengthened and the military was given practically full autonomy in running its counterinsurgency program. During this period, military justice seemed incapable of dealing with any case of human rights violation brought to its attention. There was not a single conviction in all of the human rights violation cases filed before the military (Amnesty International, 1992: 14-24; 80-83).

*In the plebiscite to ratify the 1987 Philippine Constitution, areas with predominantly military residents (e.g. military camps and their immediate environs) showed a 58% vote against ratification. In the Ciron survey of active officers graduating from the PMA, 51% voted against and 35% voted for ratification (Ciron, 1993:67-68).



The Military as a Force for Democratization

The military has gone much further in sustaining a democratic thrust in the Ramos administration. The military's greater confidence in President Ramos and the latter's greater willingness to politically manage the military (see section 3, *supra*) combine to make possible policies contributory to democratization.

Political space, i.e. the area of flexible policy responses, has expanded on account of the greater rapport between the political leadership and the military. The marginalization of cold war mind sets, as noted earlier, has contributed to this welcome development. Peace initiatives have consequently been renewed and appear to have mitigated MNLF and military rebel threats to the Republic. MNLF leaders are no longer emphasizing secessionist demands and instead are talking of Muslim politico-administrative set-ups compatible with the political integrity of the Republic. The military rebels have consented to turn over their most powerful weapons to the government. Their most popular leader decided to actually run for public office and indeed gained a senatorial seat in the last election. Only the peacetalks with the communists remain problematic and even here the administration, with military support, is ready to resume negotiations any time the communist leaders say so.

Precisely by helping secure the constitutional and public order, the military has enabled some of the more regular processes of democratization to run. In both the 1992 and 1995 elections, the military discharged its functions as deputized by the Commission on Elections mostly with commendable fairness and effectiveness.

Even in the human rights area, the military also appears to have improved its record significantly as compiled in the statistical reports of agencies normally not reputed to be partial to the AFP. Relative to the Marcos and Aquino years, the data show a much more benign human rights situation in 1995 (See Table 8) While every single case of human rights violation (HRV) ought to be strongly denounced (and there are still quite a few HRV's in the latest reports), it is only proper that those who assiduously try to protect human rights also acknowledge improvements in this dimension of qualitative democratization.



Table 8. COMPARATIVE STATISTICS ON HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS FOR SELECTED YEARS (Number of Persons/Cases)

<u>Period</u>	<u>Arrested Persons</u>	<u>Salvaged Persons</u>	<u>Disappeared Persons</u>	<u>Massacre/Near Massacre Cases</u>
1980	962	218	19	3
1981	1,377	321	53	10
1982	1,911	210	42	13
1983	2,088	368	145	25
1984	4,168	538	158	25
1985	5,967	429	189	54
1986	1,712	197	90	101
Jan-Feb	478	74	28	27
Mar-Dec	1,234	123	62	74
1987	8,367	267	52	98
1988	3,082	88	142	74
1989	1,765	30	77	18
1990	5,789	122	70	48
1991	1,360	89	45	33
1992	1,097	83	28	25
1993	887	146	12	70
1994	614	30	3	18
1995	223	12	3	3

Source: Compiled data from Task Force Detainee (Philippines). Statistical Reports on Human Rights Violations (specified years) and from a revised table in Philippine Human Rights Update: The Human Rights Record of the Aquino Government in Its First 1000 Days of Office. November 15 - December 28, 1988, p. 13.

Public safety or security against criminality (as distinguished from public order, or security against coups, insurgencies and rebellions) is another area where a democratic citizenry might gain from military operations. In the last ten years, Social Weather Stations surveys reveal that about 40% of Filipinos feel unsafe whether they are at home or in the streets of their own neighborhood. Crime



victimization rates for survey respondents and their immediate family members suggest that official crime rate statistics might be understating the national crime situation by at least a factor of 10. Much of the underreporting probably is not due to deliberate statistical fudging by the police so much as lack of public motivation in reporting crimes to those they have little confidence in (Social Weather Stations Surveys, 1986 - 1995).

Normally the province of the police, the military has had to take an active role in anti-crime campaigns because of the probable involvement of as many as 1159 soldiers (just about 1% of the entire regular armed forces) in syndicated criminal activities from 1989 to 1992 alone (Libarnes, 1992:xi). The proliferation of private armed groups all over the country, most of them with criminal links, is another reason for the military being pulled into essentially police work (Manila Times, April 1, 1995:4; April 2, 1995:5).

The Philippine National Police and the Presidential Anti-Crime Commission appear unable to contain the criminal elements. Although the AFP's own Task force Hammerhead had been established as early as 1992 and, according to Vice Chief-of-Staff Lt. General Filler, had neutralized some 73 crime syndicates since then mostly in Mindanao (Philippine Star, September 21, 1995:4), another body was formed by the President in October 1995 specifically to hunt down military and police personnel involved in crime. The new anti-crime body, The Presidential Task Force on Intelligence and Counterintelligence, headed by Brig. General Benjamin Libarnes may still redeem some of the military's lost prestige before the eyes of the public. A military which is able to cope with criminality even as the police and other agencies falter will inspire much public confidence.

There are other activities through which the military had been able to impact positively on the people and thus gain points for national democratization: civic action programs which permit the military to directly serve the public in non-combatant roles of medics, dentists, teachers, etc.; socio-economic projects which expose the military man to the citizenry in literally constructive roles as builders of schools, roads, bridges and dikes; and, finally, disaster prevention and relief efforts which impact dramatically on the poor victims of typhoons, floods, volcanic eruptions, lahar flows and earthquakes (Armed Forces of the Philippines, 1994:12-16). In the last decade, these calamities have been windows of opportunity for the military as far as the challenge of democratization is concerned. They have enabled the military to reveal themselves in the best light to the people.



5. Military Modernization as an Investment in Democratization

The stabilizing effect on the military of a modernization program has been indicated earlier in this article (see section 3, *supra*). There are other gains to democratization that might be explored in an effort to justify the investment of manpower and financial resources in modernizing the military. Some of these gains have actually been anticipated by the public. They relate to the public perception that Philippine national interests like the integrity of its national territory and the rights of its citizens working abroad will be respected more by other countries if the AFP were a stronger military. The public sentiment is not really one of belligerency nor does it indicate a jingoistic expectation of armed international conflict in the region. Most Filipinos do not anticipate war with any ASEAN or Asian country and think it unlikely that military force would be employed by any country in the area in resolving any international dispute. Yet they believe in a stronger military and are willing to foot the bill for it (Social Weather Stations Survey, November 1994; Miranda, 1995).

Practically all official presentations, academic discussions and journalistic commentaries on the AFP Modernization Program focus on the usual security and budgetary implications of the program and, every now and then, on its stabilizing effect on a politicized military (as this author has done in a portion of this paper). What has been left out of the discussion is the sense of well-being and national pride that Filipinos appear to associate with a strong, modernized military. Most Filipinos actually point to the Armed Forces of the Philippines in 1995 as an institution they can be proud of (Social Weather Stations Survey, December 1995). This sentiment is actually understandable especially in the case of Filipino overseas contract workers who may have less than pleasant memories of their experiences in foreign countries. In these places, given their sense of powerlessness during trying times, it could have occurred to them that nationals from countries with strong, modern armed forces are not as easily harassed as Filipinos.

Part of this desire to strengthen the AFP also comes from the realization that, relative to other ASEAN militaries, the AFP happens to be significantly weaker in capabilities. The public perception of AFP capabilities relative to those of other countries' happen to be objectively correct. After all, the Philippine military's manpower, appropriations as a share of the national budget and appropriations as a proportion of the GNP, already low in comparison with those of other ASEAN countries to start with, decreased practically every year from 1990 to 1995. (Table 9)



Table 9. THE PHILIPPINE MILITARY: Manpower Strength, Appropriations, and Appropriations as a percentage of the National Budget and GNP, 1972-1995

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>Manpower</u>	<u>Appropriations (Billion pesos)</u>	<u>% of National Budget</u>	<u>% of GNP</u>
1972	62,715	0.9	21	1.6
1973	73,500	1.1	23	1.7
1974	101,105	2.1	24	2.1
1975	120,139	2.7	20	2.4
1976	142,450	5.5	24	4.1
1977	146,587	5.1	22	3.3
1978	152,561	5.1	20	2.9
1979	146,068	5.0	17	2.3
1980	146,400	4.7	15	1.8
1981	149,065	5.1	14	1.8
1982	149,107	6.0	15	1.9
1983	154,773	7.1	14	2.0
1984	151,051	7.1	15	1.4
1985	159,466	6.2	10	1.1
1986	n.a.	8.6	12	1.4
1987	n.a.	9.3	11	1.4
1988	165,800	11.0	12	1.4
1989	165,800	16.4	14	1.8
1990	171,000	17.7	11	1.6
1991	169,900	14.2	8	1.1
1992	127,850	17.5	8	1.3
1993	127,850	18.8	6	1.2
1994	123,560	20.3	6	1.2
1995	118,245	22.5	5	--

Source: General Appropriations Act (Respective Years)

Whatever dimension of analysis is used, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the Philippine military has not kept pace with the military establishments of the other ASEAN countries. From 1985 to 1994, relative to population size, only Indonesia appears to be spending for defense and maintaining military manpower at basically the same low level as the Philippines. In absolute figures, however,



Indonesia in 1994 was spending 3.1 times for defense than the Philippines and had 2.6 times more soldiers in its armed forces and 1.4 times more reservists. (See Table 10 and Table 11) ASEAN national military hardware comparison also reveals much disadvantage for the Philippines whether it be the army, navy or air force that is being compared across countries (International Institute for Strategic Studies [IISS], 1995:168 -198).

Military modernization is indicated for other reasons too. Given Philippine claims to territories that are contested by other countries as in the case of some parts of the Spratleys Islands in the South China Sea and Sabah in the Southern Philippines, it becomes natural to develop a military with some basic capability to at least temporarily discourage aggressively-minded parties. Although realistically the best alternative for the Philippines is persistent diplomatic efforts at peaceful resolution of these territorial disputes, a small, modern and patriotic armed forces can help incline other, parties to desist from using forceful and highly provocative measures.

Table 10. COMPARATIVE ASEAN DEFENSE EXPENDITURES

COUNTRY	\$M (1993 constant prices)			\$ per capita (1993 constant prices)			% of GDP		
	1985	1993	1994	1985	1993	1994	1985	1993	1994
Brunei	269	212	233	1,203	756	806	6.0	4.3	4.5
Indonesia	3,076	2,031	2,256	19	11	11	2.8	1.4	1.4
Malaysia	2,318	2,642	2,652	149	137	135	5.6	4.1	3.9
Philippines	623	749	855	11	11	13	1.4	1.4	1.4
Singapore	1,561	2,442	2,982	610	780	1,043	6.7	4.4	4.8
Thailand	2,462	3,118	3,313	48	54	56	5.0	2.6	2.6

Source: The International Institute for Strategic Studies. The Military Balance 1995-1996. London: Oxford University Press, 1995.



Table 11. COMPARATIVE ASEAN ARMED FORCES

COUNTRY	Numbers in armed forces (000)		Armed forces per 1000 population		Estimated reservists (000)	Paramilitary
	1985	1994	1985	1994	1994	1994
Brunei	4.1	4.4	18.0	15.0	0.7	4.1
Indonesia	278.1	276.0	1.7	1.3	400.0	174.0
Malaysia	110.0	114.5	7.1	5.8	58.3	25.8
Philippines	114.8	106.5	2.0	1.6	131.0	40.5
Singapore	55.0	54.0	21.5	18.9	262.0	11.6
Thailand	235.3	256.0	4.6	3.4	200.0	161.5

Source: The International Institute for Strategic Studies. The Military Balance 1995-1996. London: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Philippine military modernization cannot realistically be seen by other countries in the region as other than defensive in character. The Philippine economic base on which a military modernization program must build is quite limited and nowhere as dynamic as those of the other ASEAN countries. It certainly cannot afford to finance a military establishment at the same level as say Malaysia, Singapore, or even Thailand.

Also, with the departure of the Americans from military bases in the Philippines and the termination of a colonial security arrangement, Filipinos have to develop and modernize their own national military fast, this time without umbilical cords imprudently linking Philippine security to the national interests of Mother America.



6. The Politicized Military at the Crossroads: Towards Democracy or Authoritarianism?

As discussed in the previous sections of this article, despite its being a politicized institution, the Philippine military has somehow sustained a constitutionalist, democratizing trend in the last ten years. Even when military leaders expressed serious grievances against the Aquino administration, they mostly kept faith with the constitutionalist order and, when the crucial test came, fought their own colleagues who would depose the duly constituted authorities by force.

While not averse to wielding political power, these constitutionalist military officers expressed their democratic faith by insisting on the legitimate manner of assuming political offices. Some of them successfully ran for office in national or local elections. Others were appointed by the legitimate authorities to their political positions. In the process one of them became a President, others became lawmakers and yet others became influential executive and judicial officials. A great many more became powerful public and quasi-public agency administrators.

So numerous are the retired military men in civilian governmental positions and so comprehensive apparently is their network that some people are beginning to ask whether a "silent coup" had not overtaken civilian government, whether the military indeed had taken over political controllership in the Philippines and, finally, whether this means the country is headed back to authoritarianism (Esplanada, 1994).

There is a small chance that the line of thought (the breakdown of constitutionalism in the military and among retired military men) inspired by these questions might be correct but the higher probability is that it is wrong. The historical evidence of the last ten and particularly the last three years points to the strengthening rather than the breakdown of constitutionalism in the military. The absence of destabilizing coups since 1989, the greater ability to undertake negotiated political solutions to armed challenges posed by leftist, Muslim and military rebels, the improved human rights' record of the military since 1992 and the positive impression most people have of the military in their own place -- these are all indicators of consolidating democratic rather than intensifying authoritarian development within the military and beyond.

The higher probability then is for the military to move towards national democratization and help consolidate its gains and, ultimately, to secure such gains against those who would destroy them.

Still, in politics, the wisest have learned that there is no such thing as a surprise-free scenario.



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