THE MILITARY ALONG THE SECURITY-DEVELOPMENT FRONTIER: IMPLICATIONS FOR NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY IN THE PHILIPPINES AND THAILAND

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Abstract

The militaries of developing countries have often gone beyond the mission of external defence, to perform unconventional roles ranging from disaster relief and economic management to law enforcement and internal security. This paper focuses on development missions carried out by the armed forces of the Philippines and Thailand in and out of conflict zones, and provides an analysis of the causes behind the re-emergence of such missions in recent years. Based on a comparison of the two countries' experience, this paper argues that the military's renewed involvement in development work stems from two factors: their significant role in political succession; and the increasing salience of concepts linking security and development, in particular, the notion of non-traditional security. The effectiveness of such projects could, however, be hampered by the lack of a clear, well-implemented national development framework and by systemic weaknesses in security sector governance. This paper thus argues that, in order to address the various non-traditional security threats in the two countries, security sector reform would have to be implemented and civilian oversight over security institutions improved.

Biography

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Introduction

Although they are the primary security institution of the state, militaries across the developing world have performed functions beyond that of defence from external aggression, taking on tasks related to economic development, nation-building and even political stability – from managing public enterprises and providing disaster relief, to enforcing public order and engaging in efforts to conserve natural resources.[1]

Southeast Asia is a good place to examine this phenomenon as the region's armed forces have performed economic functions in past and present times. Moreover, lingering internal conflicts in the Philippines and Thailand reinforce the linkage between development and security, a connection evident long before scholars and policymakers paid attention to the existence of a 'security-development nexus'.[2] For decades, the communist movement and Moro secessionism in the Philippines have undermined political stability and prevented economic development. In Thailand, the country has been successful in defeating the communists but is now faced with a protracted insurgency in its southern provinces as well as political unrest in the north and northeastern parts of the country. The armed forces of the two countries have been front and centre of the campaign to tackle these domestic challenges, and as part of their pursuit of this goal, have embarked on 'non-traditional' missions, often called 'civic action', which involve carrying out projects aimed at contributing to the economic development of communities within conflict zones and even beyond.

The fusion of economic activities with combat operations has, to a certain extent, characterised the military's counter-insurgency campaign in the Philippines and Thailand. Involvement in economic functions has been justified on the grounds that it is critical to winning the hearts and minds of those living on the front lines and, tangentially, that it is in line with the military's nation-building role.[3] The implementation of development projects by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Royal Thai Armed Forces (RTARF) seems consistent with their other domestic tasks such as law enforcement, environmental protection and disaster relief. Also, in zones of insecurity and violence, the armed forces are the only ones with sufficient capabilities, particularly in terms of logistical capacity, to build roads, schools, health facilities and other basic infrastructure.

The consequences of relying on the military to carry out development projects have however been a matter of some debate. The scholarly literature on civil-military relations cautions that the divergence from the external-defence role could strain the military's professionalism, and weaken their competency in their core role, war fighting. Another concern is that the military's involvement in these unconventional tasks could increase their political autonomy, which could potentially undermine democratic civilian control.[4] Equally important, such

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[1] Muthiah Alagappa, ed., *Coercion and governance: The declining political role of the military in Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

[2] Ramses Amer, Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, eds, *The security-development nexus: Peace, conflict and development* (London: Anthem Press, 2012); Mely Caballero-Anthony, Ralf Emmers and Amitav Acharya, eds, *Non-traditional security in Asia: Dilemmas in securitization* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

[3] Kees Koonings and Dirk Kruijt, 'Military politics and the mission of nation building', in *Political armies: The military and nation building in the age of democracy*, ed. Kees Koonings and Dirk Kruijt (London: Zed Books, 2002).

[4] Jörn Brömmelhörster and Wolf-Christian Paes, 'Soldiers in business: An introduction', in *The military as an economic actor: Soldiers in business*, ed. Jörn Brömmelhörster and Wolf-Christian Paes (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Luigi R. Einaudi and Alfred C. Stepan III, *Latin American institutional development: Changing military perspectives in Peru and Brazil* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1971); David Pion-Berlin, 'Military autonomy and emerging democracies in South America', *Comparative Politics* 25, no. 1 (1992): 83–102.

engagement might lead to citizens being unable to differentiate between military and civilian-government roles with respect to security and development.[5]

This paper argues that the military's involvement in Philippine and Thai economic development programmes could be explained by two factors. First, the resolution of domestic political crises in the two countries through military intervention has provided the armed forces with the leverage to (re)engage in non-traditional tasks and security policymaking vis-à-vis civilian institutions. Second, the increasing salience of the concept of non-traditional security has provided the military with a framework to justify their continued involvement in development activities. These two factors are explored further in the next section.

Apart from, but related to, the causes underlying the military's engagement in development projects are the implications of such actions for addressing poverty as a non-traditional security threat. This paper argues that the military's involvement in the economy would generate benefits for the country only if they are in accordance with clear and well-implemented national development plans. Non-traditional missions such as economic development could have a positive impact on non-traditional security if good security sector governance and effective civilian oversight of security institutions exist. Reforms aimed at promoting military professionalism and norms related to transparency, accountability, respect for human rights and the rule of law, etc., could address the negative consequences stemming from the expansion of the military's functions along the security-development frontier. Thus, it is important for academics, policymakers and advocates of the concept of non-traditional security to incorporate ideas about security sector reform and the democratisation of civil-military relations into any attempt to involve the military in economic development.

This paper is a product of extensive research in the Philippines and Thailand using newspaper articles, primary data from government agencies as well as secondary sources. Several key informant interviews were also conducted with relevant military officials, civilian bureaucrats, and academics. The next section discusses the selection of the two cases. This is followed by an overview of the historical evolution of military's development role, specifically in the counter-insurgency campaigns during the Cold War. It then discusses the implementation of economic projects by the AFP and the RTARF in the period 2001–2010. By way of conclusion, this paper offers some thoughts on the possible implications (of the military's involvement in development projects) for non-traditional security thinking and practice in the two countries.

Selection of cases: The Philippines and Thailand

There is merit in comparing the experiences of the Philippines and Thailand as, in both countries, the military re-assumed socioeconomic development missions within a similar time period (2001–2010). Moreover, the two cases show significant parallels in historical and political contexts and limited contrast in strategy, which allows for a controlled comparison.

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[5] Marcus Mietzner, 'Conflict and leadership: The resurgent political role of the military in Southeast Asia', in *The political resurgence of the military in Southeast Asia: Conflict and leadership*, ed. Marcus Mietzner (London: Routledge, 2011).

Parallels in contexts

Role in political crises

There are noteworthy similarities in the two factors that arguably led to the re-emergence of military involvement in economic development functions between 2001 and 2010. The first is the pivotal role played by the military in the political crises that led to the ouster of democratically elected leaders in the two countries. The political intervention of the AFP in 2001 and that of the RTARF in 2006 were 'critical junctures' that tipped the civil-military balance of power.[6]

After being responsible for resolving the democratic crises in their respective countries, the two armed forces were emboldened to expand their political prerogatives, particularly in the areas of internal security. This was seen in the Philippines after the ouster of President Joseph Estrada through societal protests and the withdrawal of military support for his government – the subsequent administration (2001–2010) allowed the military a greater role in crafting and implementing its counter-insurgency strategy.[7] In Thailand, the military's development role has ebbed and flowed through the years, with a 2006 coup against Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and the resurgence of insurgency in its southern provinces allowing the military to reassert its domestic mission, through implementing civic action projects to neutralise insurgents and dissidents in rural areas.

Salience of new security concepts

Both militaries have also taken advantage of new ideas about security espoused by several scholars, policymakers and international institutions, using them to justify embarking on projects with an economic orientation in light of weak democratic civilian control and governance failures in conflict zones. One of these new discourses revolve around the notion of non-traditional security. This concept focuses on the capacity of the state to protect individual humans from any harm to their well-being, dignity and survival. It is less concerned with state sovereignty and territorial integrity and more with finding ways to address threats such as climate change, environmental degradation, gender-based violence, pandemics, poverty, natural disasters, transnational crime, etc. Most of these threats require a coordinated response as well as transnational cooperation among all stakeholders (such as states, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), local communities, regional organisations and other non-state actors).[8]

While the notion that security comprises military and non-military dimensions is not a new one for Asia,[9] the incorporation of non-traditional security ideas into actual national policy is a relatively recent development. In the Philippines and Thailand, it has not been difficult for the military to embrace non-traditional security ideas since their experience with development activities predates the integration of this concept into policy. The redeployment of the armed

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[6] James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, 'Comparative historical analysis: Achievements and agendas', in *Comparative historical analysis in the social sciences*, ed. James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[7] Aries A. Arugay, 'The Philippine military: Still politicized and increasingly autonomous', in *The political resurgence of the military in Southeast Asia: Conflict and leadership*, ed. Marcus Mietzner (London: Routledge, 2011).

[8] Mely Caballero-Anthony, 'Challenging change: Non-traditional security, democracy, and regionalism', in *Hard choices: Security, democracy, and regionalism in Southeast Asia*, ed. Donald K. Emmerson (Stanford, CA: Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center Books, 2008).

[9] David B. Dewitt and Carolina G. Hernandez, eds, *The environment*, Development and security in Southeast Asia Vol. 1 (London: Ashgate, 2003).

forces to provide social services indicates a conscious process of securitisation by the military as well as the politicians in the two countries. The non-traditional roles were assigned by the civilian governments of the two countries, funded by the national coffers, and accommodated by the local authorities.

Weaknesses in the security sector

The lack of strong democratic institutions, particularly those responsible for civilian oversight of the security sector, also influenced the selection of the two cases.[10] The two cases illustrate that the securitisation of certain threats might have unintended consequences, such as an 'expanded role of the military'.[11] The concerns highlighted by the increased involvement of the military in development work in the two countries demonstrate the need for effective institutions of civilian oversight and for reforms that could bring about good governance of the security sector.[12]

Differences in contexts

There are major differences in the historical evolution of the armed forces in the two cases – in the degree of their political involvement; and in the propensity for, and frequency of, military intervention. The AFP was formed under American colonial tutelage. The RTARF, on the other hand, has more indigenous roots. Intimately related to the monarchy, it was responsible for bringing democracy to Thailand after a coup in 1932.

The AFP had, prior to 2001, no experience of direct rule without civilian partners. That year, however, the AFP leadership was pressured to withdraw its allegiance to Estrada after an aborted impeachment trial on alleged corruption caused a massive mobilisation of voices demanding the President's resignation. This institutional decision to abandon their commander-in-chief was the first time the AFP assumed the role of a moderating power.[13] The RTARF, on the other hand, had launched 23 coups, a pattern repeated in 2006 when the military intervened to prevent further violence between opponents and supporters of the Thaksin government.

Similar strategy adopted

Given the above vast differences between the two armed forces in terms of the degree of political involvement as well as the propensity and frequency of military intervention, historical legacies alone cannot possibly account for the revitalisation of their development missions. The limitation of explanations that refer to a legacy of military intervention is their

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[10] Carolina G. Hernandez, 'The military in Philippine politics: Retrospect and prospects', in *Whither the Philippines in the 21st century?*, ed. Rodolfo C. Severino and Lorraine Carlos Salazar (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2007); Pavin Chachavalpongpun, 'Thaksin, the military, and Thailand's protracted political crisis', in *The political resurgence of the military in Southeast Asia: Conflict and leadership*, ed. Marcus Mietzner (London: Routledge, 2011).

[11] Amitav Acharya, 'Securitisation in Asia: Functional and normative implications', in *Non-traditional security in Asia: Dilemmas in securitisation*, ed. Mely Caballero-Anthony, Ralf Emmers and Amitav Acharya (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 249.

[12] Carolina G. Hernandez, 'Institutional responses to armed conflict: The Armed Forces of the Philippines' (Background paper for the *Philippine human development report 2005: Peace, human security, and human development in the Philippines*, Manila: Human Development Network, 2005).

[13] Aries A. Arugay and Nicole Curato, 'Militarized politics and a politicized military under Arroyo: Prospects and challenges for Philippine civil-military relations', in *Project 2010: Confronting the legacy of the GMA regime*, ed. Aya Fabros (Quezon City: Focus on the Global South, 2010).

inability to account for the ebb of the military's political influence.[14] In other words, the shadow of the past has not always exerted a consistent impact throughout time. During certain periods in the Philippines (1992–1998) and Thailand (1998–2006), politicians were able to control the military by downsizing its forces, taking the lead on security policy formulation and reducing defence expenditures.[15] The historical-legacy argument downplays the role of contingencies and the decisions made by critical actors, and thus proves insufficient when it comes to providing insight into the reason for the continued domestic orientation of these militaries.

It could also be argued that the military's previous record of success in dealing with insurgent groups will inform current strategies such as the implementation of civic action projects. This might be true for Thailand given its success in dealing with its communist insurgency. However, the AFP is still engaged in a protracted war against communists. Despite this difference, both military institutions have reassumed development responsibilities. This implies that past success is neither necessary nor sufficient to account for the revitalisation of the military's economic development role. The next section examines the evolution of military involvement in economic development efforts in greater detail.

The evolution of the militaries' development role

Despite their different historical trajectories, the AFP and the RTARF both ended up engaging in domestic missions related to internal security and, by extension, economic development. This happened because, in order to deal with insurgent movements in their respective countries, there was a need to adopt a multi-pronged strategy, one that combined combat operations with civic action projects. Also contributing to the deepening military involvement in development projects was the balance of power at the time of the implementation of the strategy, which favoured the military (over civilian actors). In addition, the general failure of governments to effectively deliver services in conflict-ridden communities created a gap, which the military stepped in to fill.

The AFP (Philippines): From an ex-colonial military to a partner in development

The AFP can trace its origins as far back as the struggle against Spanish colonial rule and the Philippine-American War.[16] Nevertheless, as an ex-colonial army,[17] the AFP's structure is patterned after the US, one that is composed of a small professional force divided into three major services (army, navy and air force) and augmented by a larger reserve contingent.

At the outset, the *de jure* mission was defending the country from foreign aggression. In practice, however, the AFP concentrated on internal security. The presence of US bases, acting as the country's defence shield, prevented the AFP from achieving competence in their original mission.[18] As training and equipment acquisition conducive to external security took

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[14] Brian Loveman, *For la patria: Politics and the armed forces in Latin America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999).

[15] Aries A. Arugay, *Spheres of military autonomy under democratic rule: Implications and prospects for security sector transformation (SST) in the Philippines* (New Voices Series no. 5, Santiago: Global Consortium for Security Transformation, 2010).

[16] Cesar P. Pobre, *History of the armed forces of the Filipino people* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 2000).

[17] Morris Janowitz, *The professional soldier: A social and political portrait* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1960).

[18] Rosalie Balandra Arcala-Hall, 'Re-imposing civilian supremacy over the military in the face of insurgent threat: A comparison of the Peruvian and Philippine experiences during democratic consolidation', *Danyag* 7, no. 1 (2002): 3–28.

a back seat, the AFP evolved into an entity made up of a disproportionately large army (engaged in guerrilla warfare) and an underdeveloped navy and air force, even though this is inconsistent with the country's geopolitical and strategic needs as an archipelago with a vast coastline. Further, US socialisation helped the AFP acquire a heavy anti-communist bias, and led them to treat future insurgents as enemies of the state that needed to be crushed.[19]

The orientation of the AFP towards internal matters was seen in full form at the height of the Hukbalahap[20] insurgency (1946–1954). Under the direction of Defense Secretary Ramon Magsaysay, the AFP employed a hybrid approach to this rebellion – performing combat operations but at the same time attempting to win the support and loyalty of affected communities[21] through socioeconomic projects that contribute to local development, such as roads, schools, water wells and medical missions.[22] Magsaysay had devised this strategy in close consultation with US military officials, through the Joint US Military Advisory Group.

The involvement of civilian institutions led by Magsaysay in devising and overseeing the programme of activities known as civil-military operations (CMOs) led to their success. The Department of National Defense was the agency directly responsible for the planning, coordination and implementation of the projects. Magsaysay's reorganisation efforts also led to the incorporation of the Philippine Constabulary, a supposedly civilian force in charge of internal peace and order, into the AFP. The centralisation of control over the security sector by oversight institutions enabled Magsaysay to impose discipline within the corps and ensured that violators of human rights were brought to justice.[23] However, the efficiency achieved by his reforms would have unintended consequences, especially for civil-military relations.

The precedent set by Magsaysay became significant during the Marcos dictatorship (1971–1986). The AFP utilised a similar strategy, but expanded its scope and assumed other non-traditional roles.[24] New internal conflicts – a new communist insurgency and Moro secessionism – enabled the AFP to justify their continued involvement in internal security functions and development projects. These responsibilities required increases in manpower and budgetary appropriations. Under the AFP's strategic Home Defense Program, the military's role in national development was solidified. Afraid of winning the battle but not the 'silent war',[25] the programme set its goal: to 'win the hearts and minds of the people, gain support for the military's cause, and persuade them to accept the military as partners in nation-building'.[26]

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[19] Eva-Lotta E. Hedman, 'The Philippines: Not so military, not so civil', in *Coercion and governance: The declining political role of the military in Asia*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001).

[20] The Army of National Liberation was originally a peasant movement. It was a group of guerrilla fighters that fought Japanese invaders but later raised arms against the government because of their exclusion from the postwar political order.

[21] Carolina G. Hernandez, 'The extent of civilian control of the military in the Philippines' (Unpublished PhD dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1979).

[22] Marilen J. Danguilan, 'Bullets and bandages: Public health as a tool of engagement in the Philippines' (Research paper no. 161, Boston, MA: Harvard School of Public Health, 1999).

[23] Danguilan, 'Bullets and bandages'; Hernandez, 'Institutional responses to armed conflict'.

[24] Marcos rewarded loyal military officials with appointments to defence-related enterprises and the civilian bureaucracy as well as positions such as ambassador. See: Hernandez, 'The extent of civilian control'. This trend would persist in the post-martial law era. See: Glenda M. Gloria, *We were soldiers: Military men in politics and the bureaucracy* (Makati City: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2003).

[25] Victor N. Corpus, *Silent war* (Quezon City: VNC Enterprises, 1989).

[26] Jose M. Crisol, *The armed forces and martial law* (Makati: Agro Publishing Inc., 1980).

The projects under the Home Defense Program were considered part of the military's psychological operations (psyops) and information about their implementation and impact (whether real or imagined) was widely disseminated. These projects benefited more than 246,000 people around the country. The Marcos administration declared that, in addition, these socioeconomic projects contributed to the reduction of the communists' mass base, from 65,000 in 1973, to 20,000 in 1978.[27] While laudable, these figures do not negate the adverse effects of the military's combat and surveillance activities and their repression of human rights as cases of torture, involuntary disappearances and other abuses surfaced. Civic action could not compensate for the extent of harm that these abuses generated during the period that martial law was imposed.[28] Some viewed these projects as 'palliatives' or 'stop-gap' measures, arguing that no amount of such initiatives could be effective in the long run without large-scale measures aimed at changing power imbalances between the social classes, such as land reform.[29] The AFP themselves admit that these projects have not made a significant and lasting contribution to the economic well-being of the country. The narrow scope of implementation as well as the lack of adequate resources led to marginal benefits – apart from their symbolic impact as 'advertising stunts' or expressions of the 'good intentions of the government'.[30]

Another crucial difference from the campaign initiated by Magsaysay was that Marcos destroyed democratic institutions of civilian oversight that could have supervised the military's implementation of these non-traditional functions. The inevitable result was a heavily politicised military immersed in a conflict with deep political and social roots. Soldiers acquired direct, personal knowledge of the poverty, social inequality, governance failures and political corruption fuelling the insurgency.[31] In the end, groups of junior officers would point to their experiences in the field as the bases for their grievances against civilian politicians and the AFP's top brass, launching (failed) coups in the 1980s.[32]

The general failure of the Marcos administration was due to policy incoherence and the dominant presence of the AFP in implementing the government's counter-insurgency strategy.[33] While the official policy was to pursue a campaign that combined right (combat) and left (developmental or institutional) approaches, the government gave the military free rein on which should be prioritised. For instance, in communities infested with insurgents, search-and-destroy tactics such as hamletting, zoning and the setting up of blockades were employed at the same time as some military units implementing development projects. Moreover, between the goals of improving the lot of a local community and achieving a military advantage over insurgents, the former has often been sacrificed.

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[27] Ronald E. Dolan, *Philippines: A country study* (Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1991).

[28] Richard J. Kessler, *Rebellion and repression in the Philippines* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Gareth Porter, 'The politics of counterinsurgency in the Philippines: Military and political options' (Philippine Studies occasional paper no. 9, Honolulu: University of Hawaii, Center for Philippine Studies, 1987).

[29] Corpus, *Silent war*, 109.

[30] Headquarters Philippine Constabulary, *Military civic action* (Manila: Allied Printing & Binding, 1979), 30.

[31] Carolina G. Hernandez., 'The role of the military in contemporary Philippine society', *Diliman Review* 32, no. 1 (1984): 16–18; Carolina G. Hernandez, 'The military and constitutional change: Problems and prospects in a redemocratized Philippines', *Public Policy* 1, no. 1 (1997): 42–61; Felipe B. Miranda, *The politicization of the military* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies, 1992).

[32] Fact-Finding Commission (to investigate the failed coup of December 1989*), The final report of the Fact-Finding Commission (pursuant to RA no. 6832)* (Makati City: Bookmark, 1990).

[33] Hernandez, 'Institutional responses to armed conflict'.

The restoration of democratic rule in 1986 did not lead to a drastic change in the counter-insurgency strategy. Given that the military played a significant role in Marcos' removal, President Corazon Aquino was not able to stop the AFP from continuing with this approach. Unable to pursue a peace policy that offers reconciliation with rebel movements, the government lost an opportunity to stifle the growth of the communist insurgency and the Moro secessionist movement. Civic action projects could not 'cosmetize' the continued human rights abuses allegedly committed by the AFP; and the civilian government was unable to exact accountability from offenders.[34]

However, certain reforms were put in place that diminished the military's dominance in counter-insurgency activities. A new civilian police force was established with the goal of gradually assuming internal security functions. The approach of the Ramos administration (1992–1998) was more sensitive to uneven development and economic exploitation as root causes of insurgency. It linked CMOs with the government's broader social development campaign involving national agencies and local government units. Modest gains were achieved during this period.[35] This policy was unfortunately discontinued under the short-lived Estrada administration (1998–2001). For example, after failing to secure a negotiated settlement, Estrada declared an 'all-out war' against Moro separatists in Mindanao.[36]

The RTARF (Thailand): Nation-builders and development workers

The RTARF is perceived as guardians against the external and internal enemies of the nation and its institutions. Unlike its counterparts in Southeast Asia, the Thai military was created without colonial tutelage and has evolved as an integral part of the country's national apparatus. Its origin and evolution is inextricably tied to the monarchy, state formation, and democratisation. The domestic orientation of the nation's military first manifested itself in 1932 when it overthrew the absolute monarchy and established a democracy.[37] The military's essential role in regime change and its assumption of state power explain its continued interlocking relationship with civilian politicians and the bureaucracy.[38] The Thai army would frequently depose civilian governments if they prove to be incompetent, corrupt or abusive, or if their actions were not in line with the military's idea of democracy and development.[39]

The RTARF had engaged in non-traditional missions even before the advent of communist insurgency in the country,[40] but the insurgency gave new impetus to military involvement in such missions. The Communist Party of Thailand was a serious threat to the nation and was

[34] Jennifer Morrison Taw, *Thailand and the Philippines: Case studies in U.S. IMET training and its role in internal defense and development* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1994).

[35] Hernandez, 'Institutional responses to armed conflict'.

[36] Institute for Strategic and Development Studies (ISDS), *Developing a security sector reform index (SSRI) in the Philippines: Towards conflict prevention and peace-building* (Manila: UN Development Programme and the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, 2010).

[37] Christopher John Baker and Pasuk Pongpaichit, *A history of Thailand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[38] David A. Wilson, 'The military in Thai politics', in *The role of the military in underdeveloped countries*, ed. John J. Johnson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962).

[39] James Ockey, 'Thailand: The struggle to redefine civil-military relations', in *Coercion and governance: The declining political role of the military in Asia*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 187–208.

[40] Chai-anan Samudavanija, Kusuma Snitwongse and Suchit Bunbongkarn, *From armed suppression to political offensive: Attitudinal changes of Thai military officers since 1976* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Institute of Security and International Studies, 1990).

the military's first domestic opponent.[41] Similar to the Philippines, the government crafted a counter-insurgency programme with assistance from the US. Combat operations were combined with a rural development programme. The military believed that in order to win the war against the communists, they would have to establish the conditions for economic development. The insurgency needed to be fought on three fronts: military, ideological (communism versus democracy) and economic. This would require not just sufficient firepower; they would have to take control of democratic and economic institutions. Thus, apart from holding strategic cabinet portfolios, the RTARF institutionally managed communications facilities.[42]

The military established the Central Security Command. As it believed that it was better able than civilian agencies to carry out development activities, it set up various mobile development units in target villages. These units provided assistance related to education, infrastructure, health, and agricultural development. However, their priority was to provide the military with a tactical advantage against the Communist Party of Thailand. In order to win the people's allegiance, the armed forces' campaigns centred on the evils of communism and how the insurgents were eroding national and religious (Buddhist) identity. The military also created community-based para-military organisations known as Volunteer Development and Self-Defence Villages. Volunteers drawn from the community implemented projects under the military's supervision.[43]

By 1984, the military had declared victory against the Communist Party of Thailand. However, this accomplishment did not result in a greater focus on external defence. On the contrary, it led to the institutionalisation of the military's development. The victory legitimised the military's continued involvement in rural development and even environmental conservation. The army, for example, established 'development divisions' under the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC). These were staffed by military officials trained in such tasks as flood and famine relief, engineering and forestry projects.[44] The idea of 'no final victory' paved the way for higher military budgets, easily justifiable until the 1990s. There is also evidence suggesting that military officials financially benefited from illicit border trade (smuggling, narcotics, etc.),[45] and this could be one of the reasons for the military's continued focus on the domestic arena.

Through its success against the communist insurgency, the Thai military developed a very strong army relative to the other major services (navy and air force). Control over the RTARF also did not reside with a civilian defence minister but was vested in a Supreme Commander. Further, it is an accepted reality in Thai civil-military relations that real power is held by the Army Commander given this service's manpower, resources and its vested domestic responsibilities.[46]

In the wake of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the budgetary appropriations for the RTARF were severely slashed, and as a result, development work became marginalised. Nevertheless, the Thai military's experience during the the communist insurgency was transformative: it gave the military the perception that they have a permanent domestic

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[41] Charupat Ruangsuwan, 'The use of military forces for national development in Thailand' (Unpublished PhD dissertation, Claremont Graduate School, 1977).

[42] Moshe Lissak, *Military roles in modernization: Civil-military relations in Thailand and Burma* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1976)

[43] Samudavanija et al., *From armed suppression to political offensive*.

[44] Taw, *Thailand and the Philippines: Case studies in U.S. IMET training*.

[45] Ockey, 'Thailand: The struggle to redefine civil-military relations'.

[46] Samudavanija et al., *From armed suppression to political offensive*.

mission and imbued in them a resolve to continue 'affecting socioeconomic changes and … promoting their brand of democracy'.[47] Thus, the conditions for the military to once again involve themselves in civic action remained, awaiting only oppportunities for revival. Such openings could emanate from 'dark influences' such as insurgency movements, business capitalists who exploit the poor, or even politicians who undermine democracy and development through greed, corruption and the abuse of power.[48]

To recapitulate, the preceding discussion reveals several points. One, a similar approach to fighting communist insurgency was implemented in both cases. Second, while this strategy did work, there is increasing recognition that these missions produced other effects. It is not a coincidence that these projects were broadly implemented during times when the military acted as rulers (Thailand) or partners (Philippines) in authoritarian regimes. In these instances, the military benefited from performing the tasks, as doing so helped them to secure a degree of popular legitimacy and improved their image and reputation. As soldiers trained for war fighting, civic action projects increased their interaction with the local populace, exposing them to the roots of the insurgency – injustice, social exclusion and economic exploitation. The mission of fighting a domestic security problem coupled with development work generated the unintended result of the armed forces becoming politicised, something that would manifest itself later, particularly during episodes of elite conflict and political crises in the two countries.

The success achieved in fighting insurgencies was, nevertheless, not sufficient to sustain continued military involvement in development work in the late 1990s; exogenous factors such as the 1997 Asian financial crisis had a tremendous impact on the budget of the Thai armed forces, making it difficult to justify higher spending for these projects. However, this proved to be only a temporary halt. The next section will discuss how military involvement in non-traditional activities was revived in the 2000s.

The reinvigoration of the military's development mission

The AFP and the RTARF resumed their development tasks during the Arroyo administration (2001–2010) and the post-Thaksin period (2006–2010) respectively. In both countries, this was occasioned, as discussed earlier, by the extra-constitutional means of political succession that resulted from the political intervention of the armed forces.

Civil-military relations scholars argue that a military's political prerogatives[49] tend to increase with the increase in the frequency of its involvement in political affairs.[50] This paper argues that, in the two cases, the prerogatives are manifestations of the increasing political autonomy of the military in peace and security policy as, given their past experience in economic missions, it was not difficult for the AFP and the RTARF to perform such missions again.

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[47] Ibid., 158.

[48] Suchit Bunbongkarn, *The military in Thai politics 1981–1986* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1987).

[49] A political prerogative is a military's 'acquired right or privilege, formal or informal, to exercise effective control over its internal governance, to play a role within extra-military areas within the state apparatus, or even to structure relationships between the state and political or civil society'. Alfred Stepan, *Rethinking military politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 9.

[50] Karen L. Remmer, *Military rule in Latin America* (Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

The Philippines (2001–2010): The AFP as development providers

When Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo assumed the presidency in 2001, the military launched a 'new' counter-insurgency programme called *Bantay Laya* (Freedom Watch). This whole-of-government approach increased the involvement of civilian agencies and other security institutions such as the police.[51] The military was put in charge of clearing and holding a community that was infiltrated by insurgents while national and local civilian agencies were tasked with providing the means to develop the area.

However, in reality, the military have often found themselves performing tasks related to the development phase of the campaign. Two factors have influenced this outcome. First, the aim of the projects was to foster goodwill with the populace in order to expedite combat and intelligence operations.[52] This led to the military taking the initative, directly implementing the projects themselves – even though they were supposed to only *assist and provide support*.

Second, efficient service delivery (health, education, etc.) has always been problematic in the far-flung areas of the country where governance failures are common.[53] In such areas, the military usually come to represent the face of the government; the slow response and apathy of the civilian government often compel the military to fulfil the socioeconomic responsibilities of other government agencies.

It is also worthwhile to examine the ramifications of civil-military relations at the local level. The relationship between local chief executives and military commanders, and their perceptions of each other on a wide range of issues (extent of communist threat, the loyalty of local leaders, the performance of the local government, etc.) affect the success of local counter-insurgency operations.[54] These factors influence whether the military would be solely responsible for performing civic action projects, or whether they would implement such projects with the assistance of civilian stakeholders. A critical coordinating institution is the local peace and order council, mandated by law as the venue where local security issues are to be discussed and plans to address threats drawn up. However, there has been a lack of due diligence when it comes to activating this mechanism.

The military has, in most instances, entered a community suspected of being under the insurgents' influence without consultation with local authorities, causing enmity between civilian and military authorities.[55] The lack of cooperation by local actors has also led to the unilateral assessment of a community's needs by the military. This has often resulted in projects that do not meet the needs of the people.

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[51] This campaign was based on the National Internal Security Plan formulated by the Department of National Defense as well as the National Military Strategy developed and adopted by the General Headquarters of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

[52] Rey C. Ardo, 'Military dimension of national security', in *Peace and development: Towards ending insurgency*, ed. Raymund Jose G. Quilop (Quezon City: Armed Forces of the Philippines, Office of Strategic and Special Studies, 2007).

[53] Human Development Network (HDN), *Philippine human development report: Peace, human security and human development in the Philippines* (Manila: HDN, 2005).

[54] Rosalie Arcala Hall, 'Living in the shadow of violence: Local civil-military engagement during anti-communist insurgency operations in the Philippines', *Asian Security* 3, no. 3 (2007): 228–50.

[55] Katherine Anne S. Tolosa, 'Towards a shared security: Fostering partnerships between the AFP and the local community', in *Peace and development: Towards ending insurgency*, ed. Raymund Jose G. Quilop (Quezon City: Armed Forces of the Philippines, Office of Strategic and Special Studies, 2007).

There are nonetheless exceptions to this trend. Effective civil-military coordination for local peace and development has occurred in certain parts of the country. In one province, for example, local officials took ownership of the counter-insurgency programme and the division of labour was well-respected. Leadership that engendered cordial relations between stakeholders delivered positive results, with human development dramatically improving within a short period of time.[56]

NADESCOM: The creation of a 'development' command

While still committed to the convergence of efforts by civilian agencies with those by the military, the government has assigned more development tasks to the military in recognition of their efficient implementation of civic action projects. Since 2001, key cabinet positions related to defence and security have been filled by retired military officials with memories of the success of military projects as well as past experience in field combat. In response to the government's appreciation of the military's capacity to undertake development missions while remaining engaged in internal security operations, the Department of National Defense and the AFP have made major institutional adjustments. They have streamlined CMO doctrine into the AFP, mobilising resources and training toward the employment of non-combat tactics. Infrastructure projects and socioeconomic activities comprise a major part of the CMOs.[57]

Related to this is the creation of the National Development Support Command (NADESCOM) in 2007. It was established as a *functional* command with a domain of operations spanning the entire archipelago. Under existing law, the AFP had been tasked with providing for the '[d]evelopment of the capability to participate in the infrastructure projects of the government',[58] and the NADESCOM invokes this as a rationale for its existence. A major part of the NADESCOM consists of the Army's Engineering Brigades. The NADESCOM's objective is to support and assist the efforts of the military as well as the civilian government to improve conditions related to security and development.[59] This would imply that it would not merely play a part in the internal security operations of the military but also the anti-poverty programmes of the civilian government.

What is notable is that the NADESCOM's scope is wider than previously given to any other command: it could conduct development projects in *conflict, underdeveloped* and *depressed* areas. From a legal point of view, this could be interpreted as going above and beyond the support-and-assist responsibility vested to the AFP by existing administrative regulations.[60] This could, however, also be seen as a proactive step, since reducing poverty could help prevent breakouts of violence and terrorism in the future. Interestingly, the military's perception of its potential contribution to economic welfare is not found in any of the national government's development plans.[61]

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[56] Aries A. Arugay, 'Linking security sector reform to peacebuilding and development in the Philippines: A best practice case', *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 4, no. 2 (2008): 100–5.

[57] Delilah Russell, 'Examining the Armed Forces of the Philippines' civil military operations: A small power securing military relevancy in nontraditional military roles', *Small Wars Journal* 6, no. 1 (2010): 15–23.

[58] Republic of the Philippines, 1987 Revised Administrative Code, Title VIII, section 39 (Organizational Principles), paragraph 5.

[59] National Development Support Command (NADESCOM), 'Frequently asked questions' (undated), http://www.nadescom.com

[60] The justification for the military's involvement in infrastructure projects comes from the fact that in conflict zones, it is unsafe for civilian contractors (whether public and private) to build them.

[61] Joseph Raymond S. Franco, 'Enhancing synergy within the defense establishment', in *Peace and development: Towards ending insurgency*, ed. Raymund Jose G. Quilop (Quezon City: Armed Forces of the Philippines, Office of Strategic and Special Studies, 2007); P. Ervin A. Mundo, 'The AFP in the socio-economic and political development of the Philippines' (Commentary series, Quezon City: Armed Forces of the

The NADESCOM represents a shift in the military's thinking, as it turns the AFP into a 'development' institution. Its officials believe that they are not simply building infrastructure but also improving the people's well-being. They have learned from their past experience, where structures that were built were often not utilised by the people, making counter-insurgency efforts unsustainable as localities 'cleared' from insurgency could potentially face security threats again. To address this, the NADESCOM has embarked on a comprehensive development programme with a package of infrastructure projects and socioeconomic activities. The latter includes outreach programmes, skills development, nutrition, sanitation, livelihood training, values education, disaster relief, environmental conservation, development of cooperatives, etc.[62]

Figure 1: Kalayaan Barangays Program of the National Development Support Command (NADESCOM) – Number of communities and projects.

Year	No. of Barangays	No. of projects	Completed	On-going	To be started
KBP 05-07	367	501	501	0	0
KBP 2008					
1st Batch	91	260	260	0	0
2nd Batch	84	216	216	0	0
3rd Batch	59	182	168	14	0
KBP 2009	204	585	561	23	1
TOTAL	805	1,745	1,706	37	1

Abbreviation: KBP – Kalayaan Barangays Program.
Source: Slides prepared by NADESCOM, 2011.

NADESCOM development programmes come in two forms. Their flagship programme is the *Kalayaan Barangays* (Free Communities) Program which focuses on conflict zones. The recipients of the set of development projects are determined by the civilian government based on the assessment of the AFP's Corps of Engineers. While the Department of National Defense and the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process[63] exercise some oversight, the information they receive comes from the military commanders assigned to conflict areas.

The other programme, called *Bayanihan sa Barangay* (Cooperation in the Community), allows the military to undertake development projects in communities anywhere in the country. National and local governments could enter into contracts with the NADESCOM for the

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Philippines, Office of Strategic and Special Studies, 2010).

[62] Raymund Jose G. Quilop, 'National security and human security: Searching for their nexus in the Philippine setting', in *Peace and development: Towards ending insurgency*, ed. Raymund Jose G. Quilop (Quezon City: Armed Forces of the Philippines, Office of Strategic and Special Studies, 2007).

[63] The Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process is an agency under the executive branch of government which is in charge of pursuing peace negotiations with rebel groups. They are also mandated to implement government programmes aimed at reducing conflict and promoting peace around the country.

delivery of services or the implementation of the government's poverty reduction programmes. Private companies, foundations, NGOs and even foreign donors could commission the NADESCOM to implement projects related to infrastructure, community outreach, livelihoods, para-education, etc.[64]

NADESCOM programmes seem to be a break from the past. The critical difference is in the balance of the military's role vis-à-vis civilian institutions. Previously, the AFP had been engaged in development work with minimal civilian input or contribution. Then, there was a shift to a clear demarcation of responsbilities between the two, with the military concentrating on combat operations. The NADESCOM programmes lie between those two poles. While it engages in development functions, there is an acknowledgment that other government agencies have to be involved and a certain modicum of civilian oversight provided. The military sees itself as merely providing assistance to these efforts and not leading them.

The military as a project contractor: Changing public perceptions

By encouraging inter-agency involvement and partnership with the private sector, there has been a gradual change in how the military is perceived. Cordial relations between the military and other stakeholders through frequent interaction have generated some trust in the AFP despite its poor human rights record.[65] While it is still debatable whether the projects would meaningfully contribute to development in the communities they are involved in, one tangible outcome has been the change in the mindset of civilian actors toward the AFP and in turn the increased openness of military officials to pursuing the peace process.

NADESCOM officials have stated that the projects are proof that they deliver high-quality services comparable to those provided by private infrastructure contractors. The evidence lies in the multiple projects that they have entered with private foundations.[66] They also claim that the AFP abides by good governance and implements cost-efficient projects. Further, the NADESCOM believes that this type of mission restores the faith of ordinary citizens in the military and the government in general. It has the potential of improving the standing of the military, especially at a time when they are held responsible for the extra-judicial killings of activists, left-leaning progressives, and media practitioners. [67] The AFP has also de-politicised development as they intervene in areas not necessarily populated by voters, that is, places where the reality of electoral politics disincentivises local politicians from using their 'pork barrel' funds for development programmes.

While the actual impact of NADESCOM's activities on economic development might be difficult to assess, the AFP has made a strong case that its operations could be linked to the overall decrease in the strength of the insurgency as measured by the number of affected communities or the number of guerrilla fronts (see Figure 2). NADESCOM officials have revealed that criticisms mostly come from their colleagues in the military. There is the opinion that these responsibilities stretch the AFP far too thinly along the operational continuum. The development projects veer them away from the 'true' mission of providing external defence and internal security. According to this viewpoint, resources devoted to these efforts are

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[64] This specific programme is also in line with the government's thrust to pursue projects that are undertaken through what are called public-private partnerships. Mundo, 'The AFP in the socio-economic and political development of the Philippines'.
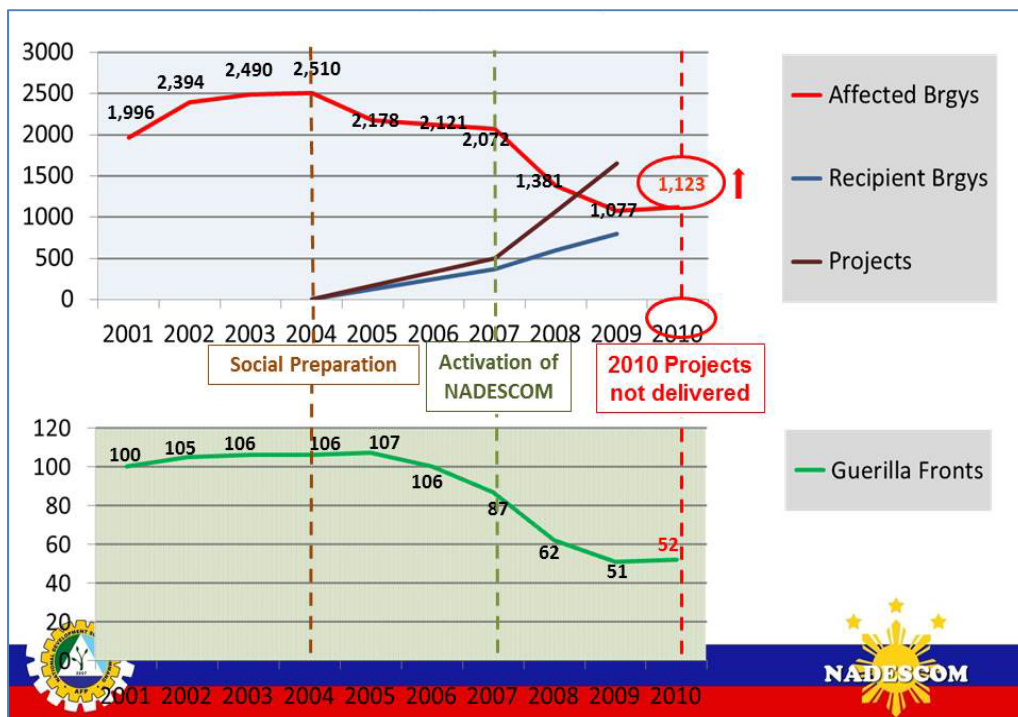
[65] Russell, 'Examining the Armed Forces of the Philippines' civil military operations'.

[66] Alexis Romero, 'AFP, private donors build school building for Mangyans', *The Philippine Star*, 20 July 2011.

[67] Al A. Parreño, *Report of the Philippine extrajudicial killings (2001–2010)* (Makati City: The Asia Foundation, 2011).

better channelled toward improving the military's external defence capabilities.[68] However, the funds given to the NADESCOM from the military budget are minimal as the bulk of its financial support comes from civilian agencies as well as from the private sector. This lack of commitment on the part of some military officials might suggest that pacification and victory approaches remain instilled in the AFP.[69] The fear that development work will jeopardise combat operations is prevalent and manifests in deep-seated disagreements on the appropriate function of the armed forces.

Figure 2: Impact of National Development Support Command (NADESCOM) development operations, 2001–2010.

Abbreviation: Brgys – Barangays.
Source: Slides prepared by NADESCOM, 2011.

Doubts regarding military engagement in non-traditional tasks are also shared by civilian institutions. They believe that the military does not have the training to fully appreciate the development needs of a particular community. While they may rely on the military's security assessment of a particular community, they are more sceptical about their policy recommendations for improving the community's economic conditions. For them, peacebuilding and development work require a process of going back and forth between providers and recipients as the needs of a locality change over time. A closer look at reports assessing NADESCOM projects reveals a mixed record. Successful endeavours seem to be associated with significant local ownership of, and involvement in, the development process while an uncooperative local government causes a lack of fit between needs and delivered infrastructure. Without local participation, projects are likely to be 'dole-outs', defeating an essential ingredient in the development process – replacing a culture of dependence with one of empowerment.[70]

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[68] Mundo, 'The AFP in the socio-economic and political development of the Philippines'.

[69] Paul Oquist, *Mindanao and beyond: Competing policies, protracted conflict, and human security*, Fifth Assessment Mission report (Manila: UN Development Programme, 2002).

[70] Ronald Jess S. Alcudia, 'Civil military operations or civil-military operations? What's in a hyphen', *Army*

Although the AFP's efforts to generate development in communities remain inconclusive, there has been an aggressive media campaign to disseminate their outputs to the public. There has also been significant national and local newspaper and broadcast media coverage about NADESCOM programmes. Further, it has utilised social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) to foster awareness and gather public support. Moreover, the AFP has started to prepare its future members to engage in CMOs by creating a separate educational and training institution solely for the conduct of such operations.

Thailand (2006–2010): The army as development soldiers

The Thai military's re-engagement with development work began after it launched a coup to remove Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra in 2006. Acting as the interim government, military officials sought to address the internal security threats confronting the nation – the lingering conflict in southern Thailand and the possible escalation of popular discontent in Thaksin's bailiwicks.

Reviving the ISOC

There was consensus that the heavy-handed policies implemented by the ousted leader violated human rights and worsened the violence in the south. However, the military was not able to re-apply its framework of combining right- and left-hand approaches since Thaksin had relied extensively on the police to carry out counter-insurgency operations. Furthermore, the RTARF wanted to reinvigorate its development mission beyond the conflict zones, carrying out the monarchy's philosophy of economic self-sufficiency through what are called 'royal projects'.[71]

The Army took the lead in assuming these development tasks by revamping the ISOC,[72] the main institution previously involved in carrying out CMOs against communist insurgents. Backed by a new internal security law, the ISOC was given sweeping powers not seen since 1992 to implement development projects in the southern provinces as well as handle any new threat to the country such as cybercrime, terrorism and transnational illicit activities.[73]

The ISOC was headed by the Army Commander, and its mandate stemmed from the military's belief that eradicating poverty was critical to rallying support for the military.[74] Development was seen as a tool against forces that sought to undermine Thai democracy and its institutions.[75] Thaksin's much-lauded anti-poverty programmes had generated

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Journal, April–June (2007): 1–5.

[71] Other ways of involving members of the military in the Thai economy came in the form of appointments to state enterprises. 'Fears over military's role in Thai economy', *The Straits Times*, 12 February 2007.

[72] Thailand's anti-communist law of 1952 justified the existence of the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC). It was used by Thaksin in the early part of his term, but was repealed in 2001. A new Internal Security Act was passed in 2007 after the coup became the legal basis for the revival of the ISOC. Paul Chambers, 'In the shadow of the soldier's boot: Assessing civil-military relations in Thailand', in *Legitimacy crisis in Thailand*, ed. Marc Askew (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2010). The ISOC was also highly feared because it was closely associated with allegations of human rights violations during the campaign against communist insurgency. Kavi Chongkittavorn, 'The securitization of the Thai state and beyond', *The Nation*, 17 December 2007.

[73] Also noteworthy is the power of the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC) to control and repress the collective mobilisation of different groups likely to pose a challenge to the government's legitimacy. Nick Nostitz, *Red vs. yellow – Volume 1: Thailand's crisis of identity* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2009).

[74] Chairat Charoensin-o-larn, 'Military coup and democracy in Thailand', in *Divided over Thaksin: Thailand's coup and problematic transition*, ed. John Funston (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009).

[75] Pimonpan Ukoskit, 'The internal culture of military units and its impact on the conflict resolution in Thailand's far south', in *Imagined land? The state and southern violence in Thailand*, ed. Chaiwat Satha-Anand

political loyalty from the lower classes,[76] and one way to regain the people's trust was for the military and anti-Thaksin forces to implement similar initiatives (while at the same time convincing the people of the threat that Thaksin posed to Thailand). A sudden and relatively large increase in the military's budget was deemed necessary to accomplish this task, as seen in Figure 3.[77] The upward trend in the amount allocated to the military continued even after the military handed power to a civilian government in 2008.[78]

Figure 3: Thai military budget as a percentage of gross domestic product, 1991–2011.

Source: Andrew Walker, 'Thailand's hungry military', New Mandala, 30 September 2010, http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2010/09/30/thailands-hungry-military-an-update/

The ISOC's legal framework allows little institutional oversight.[79] This validates the claim that the military has been able to once again expand its political autonomy over internal security, something that Thaksin had been somewhat successful at keeping at bay.[80] Furthermore, the coup leaders from the military had been field soldiers during the successful campaign against communism. Though faced with a totally different insurgent threat, they have re-applied the same doctrine of 'separating the fish from the water' through projects aimed at winning the people's hearts and minds. Just like before, the projects in Thailand's south have included coordinating self-defence activities and organising village defence volunteers which in 2009 numbered 10,700. They have also showcased development efforts ranging from anti-drug programmes directed at youths to teaching villagers organic herb farming.[81] Anti-drug law enforcement has been a critical

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(Tokyo: Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 2009).

[76] Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, 'Thaksin's populism', *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 38, no. 1 (2008): 62–83.

[77] It should be noted that it is difficult to obtain accurate information on the military's budget. Sources vary in their account of the actual increase in defence expenditures, with figures given ranging from 34 to 60 per cent in the year after the coup and 18 to 24 per cent in 2008. These are from newspapers such as the *Bangkok Post* and *The Nation*.

[78] Chambers, 'In the shadow of the soldier's boot'.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Chachavalpongpun, 'Thaksin, the military, and Thailand's protracted political crisis'.

[81] Marc Askew, 'The spectre of the south: Regional instability as national crisis', in *Legitimacy crisis in*

aspect of the CMOs since there is information that proceeds from the illegal drug trade has been providing the militant groups in the south with the resources for their insurgent activities.[82] Critics, however, believe that these projects would have limited impact, especially if the military continues to commit breaches of human rights and instigate violence.[83]

There are concerns that reviving the ISOC by simply giving it more legal muscle, and without including other government institutions, will not be enough if the military is to replicate the success it achieved in the past.[84] It also has not helped that there have been concerns about possible mismanagement of funds given to the ISOC as the military has not been transparent with its finances.[85] The lack of cooperation from local communities for fear of reprisals from communist insurgents is also a problem, as is the poor training that para-military organisations receive from the army.[86] These are important issues; as Martine van Es concludes, successful development initiatives is associated with the direct participation by the local populace, a synchronisation of the development plans of the military with the actual needs of the community and the ability of the government to deliver its commitments in a timely manner.[87]

There have been attempts to limit military influence in addressing the conflict in Thailand's southern provinces. In particular, the Abhisit government (2009–2010) pushed for a more defined delineation of responsibilities between the army and the civilian bureaucracy. However, the military has been able to resist such measures, which would include more effective civilian oversight by democratic institutions, by rationalising that its development mission is guided by the the idea of a self-sufficient economy that is endorsed by the royal family. Also, while the military's plan had been to end the conflict by 2011, there has been no significant improvement in the conditions in the country. It therefore looks likely that they will extend their mission, and continue with the implementation of development projects.[88]

Politics leading the military

The ISOC is not simply an organisation that implements development projects. It was conceived by the military to resemble the US Department for Homeland Security. Therefore, the bulk of its work is by nature political, and goes beyond counter-insurgency operations. During the Abhisit administration, the ISOC was involved in repressing protests from social formations called 'red shirts' and other pro-Thaksin groups. It also built an elaborate and complex system of surveillance for suspected opponents of the nation and the monarchy. The breadth of the ISOC's functions is complemented by the extensive powers given to it by the Internal Security Act. Specifically, military forces detailed to the ISOC could be mobilised in the event of an internal security threat. Under this situation, martial law could be put in place, with a curfew imposed and certain civil liberties suspended.[89]

Thailand, ed. Marc Askew (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2010), 241 & 249.

[82] 'ISOC launches anti-drug task force', *Bangkok Post*, 8 May 2011.

[83] International Crisis Group (ICG), *Thailand: Political turmoil and the southern insurgency* (Asia Briefing no. 80, Brussels: ICG, 2008)

[84] Don Pathan, 'Isoc must evolve to tackle rising security challenges', *The Nation*, 15 April 2008.

[85] Piyanart Srivalo, 'Budgetary flows and red tape undermining security in South', *The Nation*, 20 January 2011.

[86] 'Military needs dose of its own medicine', *The Nation*, 24 April 2007; 'ISOC asked to reveal spending', *Bangkok Post*, 9 September 2009.

[87] Martine van Es, 'Trust building through army development initiatives in conflict situation: The case of Yalannanbaru in southern border provinces of Thailand' (Unpublished MA thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 2009).

[88] Askew, 'The spectre of the south'; 'Bloated armed forces waste valuable resources', *The Nation*, 5 February 2010.

[89] Wassana Nanuam, 'Isoc promises leniency when probing lese majeste', *Bangkok Post*, 25 May 2011;

Furthermore, while, officially, the Prime Minister heads the ISOC, it is in fact managed by a board composed of cabinet ministers and military officials. It is widely accepted among political analysts that the military, particularly the Army Commander, is the *de facto* power behind the ISOC.[90] This not only makes asserting civilian supremacy very challenging, it also consolidates the military's control over a critical institution that could terminate any elected government through a military coup.[91]

Military dominance over internal security has led to policy incoherence and inconsistency. Development initiatives are pursued without local consultation as there is no overall framework that clearly delineates the specific responsibilities of civilian institutions and the military. In addition, the tensions between the military and the police, who are supposedly working in tandem with the military, have not helped the cause of peace and reconciliation. Extensively used during Thaksin's tenure, the police has employed heavy-handed tactics in the 'war on drugs' and has failed to act as a civilian buffer between the army and the people. Finally, the cultural dimension looms large in the southern conflict as the military as well as other civilian institutions do not share Muslim and Malay culture, making confidence-building a truly difficult process.[92]

Comparative Analysis

The increase in the military's political influence, after 2001 in the Philippines, and 2006 in Thailand, over internal security and economic development could be seen to have been sanctioned by the civilian governments of the two countries. While this cannot be solely interpreted as a reward to the armed forces for bringing about leadership change, there is little doubt that the AFP and the RTARF attained more favourable institutional positions in the aftermath of these coups. Aside from gaining influence, military officials (retired and active) have been placed in the civilian bureaucracy and have defended post-coup governments from legitimacy challenges. Their domestic orientation, drawn from historical experience, also helped the military, as a corporate institution, to reassert their development role.

Nevertheless, the increase in political power and the heightened insurgency in the two countries are insufficient to account for the revival of the military's development role. In order to re-enter the development domain, the military also needed to make their involvement more palatable to the government and the people; and their campaign for a bigger role in economic development have been helped by novel thinking about security captured by concepts such as non-traditional security.[93] Implicit in the non-traditional security concept is a shift in the understanding of security threats: first, the change in the object of security from the state (or government) to the individual; and second, the broadening of the scope of security from a predominantly defence or military perspective to one that embraces non-traditional threats to human well-being such as environmental degradation, pandemic diseases, economic crises, ethnic conflict, and energy depletion.[94] Thus, security institutions could find themselves in uncharted territory, complicating their functions.

'Keeping army out of politics', *Bangkok Post*, 21 September 2007.

[90] 'PM takes more active role in troubled South', *Bangkok Post*, 24 June 2009.

[91] Wassana Nanuam, 'Yingluck fights to control Isoc', *Bangkok Post*, 27 September 2011.

[92] Duncan McCargo, *Tearing apart the land: Islam and legitimacy in southern Thailand* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008).

[93] Ralf Emmers, *Non-traditional security in the Asia-Pacific: The dynamics of securitisation* (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2003).

[94] Commission on Human Security, *Human security now: Protecting and empowering people* (New York: UN, 2003).

It can be argued that the diffusion of these new discourses has muddled the concept of security[95] and challenged the existing division of labour between development and security actors. However, militaries around the world have performed non-traditional responsibilites before the emergence of these concepts.[96] For example, the armed forces have been asked to assist in times of natural disasters, a trend seen even in the developed world. Further, ideas about the intimate relationship between security and development are not novel in Southeast Asia where, it has been argued, security has been always conceived as comprehensive in nature and is tied with countries' process of nation-building.[97] The importance of the non-traditional security concept and related ideas lie in the fact that they could by themselves potentially provide the justification for the further involvement of the armed forces in domestic development missions. As already discussed, resistance or opposition to the military's development mission has been minimal, often coming from academics with traditional views, and from military officials who seek to confine the military's function to war fighting. However, generally speaking, the leadership of the armed forces does not see the possible contradiction between the new security ideas and their existing missions.

There is very little doubt that the military has the capacity to successfully complete development projects in local communities. In the two cases, the military's nature as a professional organisation is a factor behind the capacity of its forces to embark on the development mission. The logistical advantage held by the armed forces plus their capacity to quickly mobilise their resources make them attractive institutions for this line of work. Also, the military could conduct development work more efficiently as they are not subject to electoral politics, an advantage that civilian governments may not necessarily enjoy.

The military has also been able to derive significant benefits from performing these tasks. Apart from increases in budgetary appropriations, the military has been able to mitigate their negative reputation as abusers of power and violators of human rights. This explains the tremendous efforts expended on disseminating information about these development projects though the media, with the message that the military strives to be heroes not only in the war for security but also the larger war against poverty.

However, an examination of the bigger picture exposes the negative ramifications of these non-traditional missions, especially if certain institutional requisites are absent. Military involvement in development could prevent civilian governments from effectively fulfilling their responsibilities as they could always 'pass the buck' to the military. Also, in both cases, the armed forces have not hesitated to bypass national and local governments in implementing these projects. This has implications on public perception of what the appropriate functions of the military should be. Further engagement in development work, justified by the new security concepts, is potentially dangerous as it obscures the line between the responsibilities of the military and that of the civilian government. The two cases also demonstrate that the continued performance of these functions would mean the military remaining immersed in internal security operations, and thus unable to build capacity for war competence and external defence despite the changing security environment in Southeast Asia.

Finally, an unexplored factor that might be worthy of future research should be noted. There is information that the AFP and the RTARF, in performing development functions, are not

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[95] David Chandler, 'Human security: The dog that didn't bark', *Security Dialogue* 39, no. 4 (2008): 427–38.
[96] Willard F. Barber and C. Neale Ronning, *Internal security and military power: Counterinsurgency and civic action in Latin America* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University, 1966).
[97] Alice D. Ba, *(Re)negotiating East and Southeast Asia: Regions, regionalisms, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

acting in complete isolation from one another. The creation of the NADESCOM was to a large extent inspired by the model offered by the Thai armed forces. The idea of a separate command with a functional responsibility (i.e., development) was borrowed from the RTARF's organisational structure. This give-and-take process not only results in information on best practices being transferred or shared, but could also help both militaries improve the delivery of development projects, and thus potentially further solidify their hold on non-traditional missions. More research is necessary on how militaries – particularly those within the same region or with established linkages – exchange practices, doctrines and strategies.

Conclusion and implications for non-traditional security

This paper argues that the confluence of two factors underlie the revival of the development missions of the Philippine and Thai armed forces as part of their counter-insurgency strategy as well as their perceived role as nation-builders: first, the significant participation of the two militaries in the resolution of elite conflict; and second, the rise of new security concepts such as non-traditional security, which has enabled the two militaries to justify their involvement in tasks associated with generating economic development. While there are certain differences – such as the fact that the Thai military has been more engaged in development work than their Philippine counterpart, or the relatively higher degree of political autonomy enjoyed by the Thai military – the two factors seem to influence the general pattern of the military's participation in development work.

New developments, however, indicate that further expansion of the Philippine military's development functions may cease. President Benigno Aquino III's government plans to abolish the NADESCOM and return the responsibility of implementing civic action projects to the unified commands.[98] The repercussions of this move are still unknown but the Department of National Defense reiterates that this does not mean the the military will stop conducting civic action in conflict areas. However, it is obvious that any development mission carried out by the military would have to be circumscribed within the holistic framework the current government calls the Internal Peace and Security Plan. According to some officials from civilian agencies of the government, there is some debate over whether the continued use of the military to perform development tasks beyond conflict areas can be reconciled with their primary mission of fighting insurgents.

On the other hand, in Thailand, the military's autonomy over internal security, and therefore its performance of development missions, continues to grow under the government of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra. Civilian oversight over internal security as well as other policy areas remain weak and the RTARF continues to wield considerable political influence. With the continued violence in the south as well as the resilient red shirts, the military will likely continue to maintain its grip on internal security functions, using development projects to curb dissent and to gain a tactical advantage against the insurgent groups in the south.

With the military continuing to be involved in development roles, albeit perhaps with less autonomy in the case of the Philippines, it would be important for the two countries to examine more closely the implications of such engagement for non-traditional security:

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[98] Alexis Romero, 'DND confirms plan to streamline civil-military operations units', *The Philippine Star*, 7 December 2011.

- *Assessment of the impacts of the military's development projects*

The military has already recognised some of the tenets of non-traditional security and incorporated them into their doctrine and strategies. Thus, there is a need for an assessment of the actual impact of the projects on local development, and on communities. Without such an assessment, the opinion that these projects exist merely to give the military a tactical advantage by improving its image will remain strong.

- *Incorporation of the development activities of the military into national/local plans*

There is a need to incorporate these projects into existing development plans of national and local governments. While the Philippine and Thai militaries have found themselves a niche at the security-development nexus, this can only be temporarily justified in the face of threats to internal security, particularly from insurgency. If the AFP and the RTARF are able to declare victory over the insurgents in the future, it is unclear whether they can continue performing these domestic functions elsewhere as preemptive measures.

- *Strengthening of civilian institutions*

While non-traditional security may have expanded the framework by which the military and civilian government construe what counts as security threats, it does not inevitably follow that the military should hold the monopoly over the response to the wider range of threats. The military have often had to act to fill the gaps left by the weak and inefficient responses provided by the civilian government. For example, the AFP was compelled to assume internal security functions as a result of shortcomings in police capacity. The expansion of the military's domestic functions to include development tasks is a product of the governance failures of past administrations, both national and local, in the two countries. Thus, it is time that civilian institutions pick up the slack and effectively perform their functions of providing infrastructure and social services to their constituents. This would also address concerns over the (negative) implications of the military's focus on development work on its external defence function, an issue that has become more prominent with the changes in the regional security environment in the Asia-Pacific.

- *Implementation of security sector reform*

Non-traditional security also implies that there should be democratic civilian control over the military. Thus, while the AFP and the RTARF have historically always located themselves at the security-development frontier, any further engagement with development functions would have to be reconciled with ongoing efforts by both states to embrace norms and principles associated with the good governance of the security sector.[99] The civilian government can use principles of security sector reform as a way to delineate civilian and military responsibilities but also to reform other civilian institutions belonging to the 'expanded' security sector (police, intelligence agencies, civilian oversight institutions and groups).[100] It is important that academics, policymakers and advocates of new security discourses not forget that good governance of the security sector should be the operative environment for policy interventions related to addressing non-traditional security threats. Unfortunately, this is not the status quo among consolidating democracies and developing nations. Further

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[99] ISDS, *Developing a security sector reform index (SSRI) in the Philippines.*
[100] Heiner Hänggi, 'Making sense of security sector governance', in *Challenges of security sector governance*, ed. Heiner Hänggi and Theodor H. Winkler (Geneva: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2003).

theorising and research is needed to tease out the linkages and possible interface between non-traditional security and security sector reform, something that the experience from the Philippines and Thailand could considerably inform.

History is not necessarily destiny, at least not all the time. A lot of work must be done to carefully define the military's responsibilities along the security-development frontier as well as make sure that civilian agencies of the government are willing and able to share the burden of addressing non-traditional security threats. Passing the buck to the armed forces can no longer be an option, particularly given the importance of democratic civil-military relations and good security sector governance, a critical component of any country's process of democratisation and development. Without a reformed security sector, the Philippines and Thailand will find it difficult to provide coherent and coordinated responses to non-traditional security challenges, and the military will continue to find themselves assuming unwarranted responsibilities within the security-development frontier.