

US – PHILIPPINES RELATIONSHIP AS INFLUENCED BY EXTERNAL THREATS FROM
1946 TO 2014

by
Sarah E. Luetz

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Abstract

This research study asserts that perceived external threats affected the relationship between the US and the Philippines between 1946 and 2014. For the purpose of this research, an external threat is defined more broadly including all threats to the official government structure of the country.

This research study used case studies to examine key points in US-Philippine history. The selected time periods were chosen due to their significant change in the relationship between the US and the Philippines. These time periods include when the Philippines achieved independence in 1945 to the establishment of the “Mutual Defense Treaty” in 1952, the 1988 “Military Basing Negotiations”, in 2001 when the Exercise Balikatan was expanded, and 2014 when the “Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement” was signed.

This analysis of the relationship between the US and the Philippines concluded that during the periods examined perceived external threats impacted the relationship between the US and the Philippines. It also gives light to areas lacking scholarship that would enable this assertion to be extended to the complete history of the US and the Philippines. The perceived threats to the US are well documented in both scholarship and policy. However, during much of the history the Philippines is portrayed by US scholars to be internally focused. This illuminated the lack of US scholarship incorporating the well documented the Philippine perception of external threats. Even though the two countries share a history of bilateral military exercises, there is no body of scholarship that documents the history or evolution of military cooperation since 1945. While the position of the Philippines on certain issues including nationalism and post-colonial remnants is captured, the literature documenting the history of the relationship

between the US and the Philippines, as a whole, does not pay adequate attention to the Filipino perspective.

Advisor: Sarah Clark

Reviewer: Kevin Woods

Reviewer: Elena Mastors

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Introduction	1
Historiography	2
Methods	12
Data	13
Discussion	23
Conclusion	27
References	29
Curriculum Vita	34

Introduction

International Relations realists like Hans Morgenthau argue the international system is anarchic with the states in constant pursuit of power. A “balance of power” between states is desired to bring order to the international system. “The historically most important manifestation of the balance of power, however, is to be found not in the equilibrium of two isolated nations but in the relations between one nation or alliance of nations and another alliance.”¹ Alliances are a significant aspect of the international system. The US and Philippines share an enduring relationship that has evolved to represent the priorities of each country.

This research study examines how perceived external threats affected the relationship between the US and the Philippines between 1946 and 2014. External threat is defined more broadly including all threats that exist outside the official government structure of the country. The Philippines is strategically located in the South China Sea and has one of the highest capacity shipping lanes in the world with over \$3.4 trillion in trade transiting its waterways annually.² “Unhindered navigation in the South China Sea is essential for the peace and prosperity of the entire Asia-Pacific region, including the United States.”³ Recently, China has challenged this position by shadowing US Navy patrols through international waters and increasing its geographic presence by undertaking dredging operations to create over 3,200 acres of new artificial islands in the Spratly Islands, an area claimed by multiple countries including Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Brunei.⁴ These actions have tested the

¹ Hans J. Morgenthau and Kenneth W. Thompson, *Politics among Nations: the Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York, NY: Knopf, 1985), pg. 201.

² Dolven, B, Lawrence, S. V., and O’Rourke, R. (2021). *South China Sea Disputes: Background and U.S. Policy* (IF10607) Retrieved from <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/IF10607.pdf>

³ M. McDevitt. (2014). *The South China Sea: Assessing U.S. Policy and Options for the Future* (IOP-2014-U-009109)

⁴ “China Island Tracker,” Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, 2021, <https://amti.csis.org/island-tracker/china/>.

commitment of the US to its foreign policy concerning the South China Sea and its commitment to the strategic allies in the region.

The evolution of the relationship between the US and the Philippines will be surveyed through case studies examining the historical circumstances, focusing on perceived threats during the following significant changes in the relationship: 1946 when the “Treaty of General Relations and Protocol” with the Republic of the Philippines was signed; 1988 when the military base negotiations occurred; 2001 when the exercise Balikatan was reestablished; and 2014 when the “Cooperation Agreement Between the United States of America and the Philippines” was signed. Analyzing these key events will illuminate the how significant perceived threats are in the evolution of the US-Philippines relationship.

Historiography

The Philippines spent over four centuries under colonial rule, beginning with the Spanish, followed by the US, including Japanese occupation during WWII. The Philippines is regarded as the “longest colonial subjugation,” after which it became the longest standing democracy in the region.⁵ As a result, the relationship between the US and the Philippines is considered a key alliance. Currently, the Philippines receives the largest amount of foreign military financing from the US in the region. Due to the strategic significance of this relationship, there is in-depth scholarship on this topic from the US and Filipino perspectives. This analysis examined three areas of focus: US bases in the Philippines, Military Cooperation, and the codified alliance.

US Bases in the Philippines

During the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s scholars and policy makers produced a comprehensive body of work focused on the US bases in the Philippines which peaked leading

⁵ Wilfrido V. Villacorta, “Philippines: Nationalism and Regionalism,” in *Strategic Cultured in the Asia-Pacific Region*, ed. Ken Booth and Russell Trood (New York: St. Martin’s Press Inc., 1999), pg. 183

up to the base negotiations with the Philippines in the late 1980s and early 1990s. These works centered around key focus areas. The bases themselves represented the US commitment not only to the Philippines, but also to the region as a whole and they were of strategic importance. During the 1990s, when scholarly coverage on this subject declined, Filipino nationalism became a key focus area that affected the concern over sovereignty of the bases and the compensation the US provided to the Philippines. Scholarship during this period argues after WWII the bases were viewed by both the US and Philippine administrations as “a deterrent against future aggression in the Pacific to prevent a repetition of World War II” and in the eyes of the Filipinos, a way to lock the US into supporting the redevelopment of their war-torn country.⁶ The views over the significance of the bases fluctuated during the 1970s to 1990s among policy makers in both countries. The surge of Filipino nationalism in the 1980s that opposed the US presence on the bases in the 1980s demonstrated a change in perspective towards the bases. In response, US focus shifted to the significance of Clark Air Force Base and Subic Bay Naval Station in the US counter Soviet strategy.⁷ While the bases maintained strategic significance, less political capital was spent retaining their functionality. Due to their significance in the US Pacific strategy, scholarship agreed “[i]n the event of eviction or voluntary departure from the Philippine bases, PACOM would most likely look to redeploy forces rather than withdraw from the Southeast Asian theater.”⁸ Even though alternative basing locations were suggested in Micronesia, Guam, the North Marianas Islands, and other locations in the Pacific with theorized strategic impacts, there was no consensus on the preferred path the US should take.

⁶ William E. Berry, *U.S. Bases in the Philippines: The Evolution of the Special Relationship*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989. 13

⁷ Berry, *U.S. Bases in the Philippines: The Evolution of the Special Relationship*, 296

⁸ Gregory P. Corning, “The Philippine Bases and U. S. Pacific Strategy,” *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (Spring, 1990), 20.

Scholarship during the 1980s argued that “US facilities are valuable as a symbol of the US commitment to the region.”⁹ The physical presence of the bases along with the military personnel and assets that inhabited them demonstrated the pledge the US made to support and protect the Philippines and other regional allies. Throughout the studied period neither the Philippines nor the region faced an imminent threat that the US would respond to from the Philippine bases, policy makers argued that “...the US military presence in the Philippines continues to be important to these countries as an assurance of continued US interest and of American readiness to deal with some possibly threatening future contingency.”¹⁰

During the 1970s and 1980s, scholars and policy makers maintained that the bases in the Philippines were strategically important. “These facilities provide the United States with capabilities to respond militarily to a wide range of contingencies.”¹¹ In the March 1987 article titled *The US Military Facilities in the Philippines* F.A. Mediansky details the utility of the bases both in terms of tactical importance to the services and strategic implications from the combatant command perspective. Alternative basing locations are discussed, concluding that “while no single alternative to the Philippine bases can be identified, it is possible to envisage multiple basing combinations elsewhere in the region that can replicate the military assets on Luzon island – though at greater cost and reduced convenience.”¹² During base negotiations the Filipino government saw the bases as an indicator for how the Philippines was viewed in the global strategy of the US.¹³ However, it was also understood from the Filipino perspective that

⁹ Donald Putnam Henry, Keith Crane, and Katharine Watkins Webb, *The Philippine Bases: Background for Negotiations: Executive Summary* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1989), 2.

¹⁰ Evelyn S. Colbert, *The United States and the Philippine Bases* (Washington, DC: The Johns Hopkins Foreign Policy Institute, 1988), 11.

¹¹ Henry, Crane, and Webb, *The Philippine Bases: Background for Negotiations: Executive Summary* 4.

¹² F. A. Mediansky. “The U.S. Military Facilities in the Philippines.” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 8, no. 4 (1987): 308–19. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25797917>. 314

¹³ Nick Cullather, *Illusions of Influence: The Political Economy of United States-Philippines Relations, 1942-1960* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 137.

“[a]ny pretense of maintaining bases in the Philippines or anywhere in the world solely on the account of other countries’ interests should be abandoned.”¹⁴

In the 1990s scholars argued that like other previously colonized countries, nationalism in the Philippines surfaced after independence. “In the Philippines nationalism was an instrument the politically dominant landed elite used to extend control over dynamic sectors of the economy. The elite’s objectives were to obtain control of economic levers still in the hands of the United States government and to exclude the Philippine-Chinese middle class from the enterprises.”¹⁵ This impacted the lens with which the Philippines viewed sovereignty over the bases as well as their views on compensation.

In the 1980s scholars argued that “foreign bases are seldom popular in a country... They are likely to be critical and unappreciative of American efforts to take account of local sensitivities. Attitudes in the Philippines are no exception.”¹⁶ The original agreement stipulated limits for US oversight as well as private interests of the Service Members.¹⁷ However, the US was granted “virtual sovereignty over its facilities” maintaining physical and legal control over the operation, and upkeep of the bases.¹⁸ The Philippines was afforded jurisdiction over all incidents off base unless all involved parties were Americans.¹⁹

During the 1970s and 1980s, scholars argued that views concerning compensation for the bases were impacted by nationalist sentiments. During the 1980s it was a popular belief that the

¹⁴ Serapio P Taccad, “Philippine American Relations and the U.S. Bases: A Filipino Perspective,” *Naval War College Review* 30, no. 4 (1978): pp. 67-74, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44643117>, 72.

¹⁵ Cullather, *Illusions of Influence: The Political Economy of United States-Philippines Relations, 1942-1960* 124.

¹⁶ Fred Greene, *The Philippine Bases: Negotiating for the Future: American and Philippine Perspectives*. (New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations, 1988), 6

¹⁷ Alvin J. Cottrell and Thomas H. Moorer, *U.S. Overseas Bases: Problems of Projecting American Military Power Abroad* (Beverly Hills, CA: Published for the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University by, 1977), 48.

¹⁸ Cottrell and Moorer, *U.S. Overseas Bases: Problems of Projecting American Military Power Abroad*, 48.

¹⁹ Gary R. Hess, *The United States Emergence as a Southeast Asian Power, 1940-1950* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1987), 248

“bases serve the interests of the United States, and the Philippines must therefore be compensated...the compensation should be distinct from aid.”²⁰ Yet, during the 1980s scholars argued that the Philippines benefitted from the bases in other ways. In 1966 and 1967 approximately 9.5 percent of the Gross National Product of the Philippines could be attributed to the bases.²¹ The surrounding communities benefitted by supporting the bases for the opportunities to provide specialized labor training, reuse of items from the base, and for the introduction to modern industry practices.²²

During the 1980s the Filipino perspective is well-captured in the scholarship. However, US scholars put significantly more effort into portraying the US perspective without incorporating the ample accounts of the Filipino viewpoint. William Berry demonstrates how the status of US military bases in the Philippines illustrates the evolution of the US-Philippines relationship in arguably the most complete account, encompassing both sides of this complex issue. He asserts “there are few issues that better illustrate this conflict between the two countries than the retention of the US military bases.”²³ Other authors include fragments of the Filipino perspective. For instance, Greene covers a conference that occurred 16-17 February 1988 in Bodega Bay, California that was designed to “allow a frank exchange of perceptions and ideas among Filipino and American scholars concerned with the objective and rational treatment of a subject of critical importance to Philippine-American relations.”²⁴ The Filipino perspective needs to be expanded upon and holistically integrated into the US scholarship to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the issues surrounding the US bases in the Philippines.

²⁰ Greene, *The Philippine Bases: Negotiating for the Future: American and Philippine Perspectives*, 81

²¹ Douglas F. Loveday, *The Role of U.S. Military Bases in the Philippine Economy* (Ft. Belvoir, VA: Defense Technical Information Center, 1971), iii.

²² Loveday, *The Role of U.S. Military Bases in the Philippine Economy*, 33.

²³ Berry, *U.S. Bases in the Philippines: The Evolution of the Special Relationship*. ix.

²⁴ Fred Greene, *The Philippine Bases: Negotiating for the Future: American and Philippine Perspectives*. 79.

While the study of the US bases in the Philippines is thorough, it reaches its peak in terms of both quantity and quality leading up to and during the negotiations of the late 1980s.²⁵ It lacks substantial coverage of the period between the negotiations and after 1992 when the US vacated the bases. Additionally, while possible alternatives for the Philippine bases are offered, there is little examination of how their use affected the US strategic footprint in the region. This could be explained by the attitude the US had as the global hegemon after the end of the Cold War even with indications China was showing indications as a rising power.

Military Cooperation

The US maintains military alliances with and provides foreign military financing to countries around the world.²⁶ In 2013 the US provided the Philippines with \$25,483,000 in foreign military financing.²⁷ This accounted for 48% of the foreign military financing given to East Asia and the Pacific that year. Bilateral exercises and foreign internal defense missions, where the US provides training for the military of the Philippines, are significant interactions that demonstrate the relationship between the two countries. “Public opinion in the Philippines has been generally supportive of American military presence in the country.”²⁸ There is an increase in focus on the US-Philippines security relations during the early 2000s with an emphasis on the resurgence of the annual bilateral exercise Balikatan.

²⁵ Significant works examined during the course of this study are: *US Bases in the Philippines: The Evolution of the Special Relationship* by William Berry; *The United States and the Philippine Bases* by Evelyn S. Colbert; *The Philippine Bases: Negotiating for the Future: American and Philippine Perspectives* by Fred Greene; and *The Role of U.S. Military Bases in the Philippine Economy* by Douglas F. Loveday

²⁶ “Foreign Military Financing (FMF) is the assistance-funded arm of the Foreign Military Sales program, through which the U.S. government procures defense articles for foreign partners.” Marian L Lawson and Emily M Morgenstern, “Foreign Assistance: An Introduction to U.S. Programs and Policy,” Congressional Research Service, April 30, 2020, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R40213>. 9.

²⁷ “Foreign Military Financing Account Summary,” U.S. Department of State (U.S. Department of State, 2017), <https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/pm/ppa/sat/c14560.htm>.

²⁸ Noel M. Morada. “Philippine–American Security Relations After 11 September: Exploring the Mutuality of Interests in the Fight Against International Terrorism.” *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 2003, 228–38. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27913236>. 229.

Established in 1991, Balikatan, Tagalog for shoulder-to-shoulder, is “an annual event aimed at improving Republic of the Philippines-United States combined planning, combat readiness, and interoperability while enhancing security relations and demonstrating US resolve to support the Republic of the Philippines against external aggression.”²⁹ There is a body of scholarly evidence that documents the history and geopolitical significance of the exercise. However, it is focused on 2002 when Balikatan was oriented towards counterterrorism efforts in support of the Global War on Terrorism. There is no compilation covering the twenty-year history of the exercise. While this gap is partially expected due to the operational nature of the exercises and subsequent restriction of certain details from public release, the work that does exist focuses almost exclusively on the exercise in the early 2000s, when the US used the Global War on Terrorism campaign to bolster presence in the Philippines. This was a significant transition in the US-Philippines relationship that “caused the re-awakening of anti-American sentiments among Filipino nationalist legislators and civil society groups...”³⁰

A subset of these scholars argue that the US exploited its preexisting relationship with the Philippines to pressure the terrorist factions in Mindanao. They assert the annual Balikatan exercise was used as “camouflage” for operations in the southern Philippines “...engaged in a secret war in support of counterinsurgency warfare.”³¹ Scholars go onto argue that under no other circumstances could the US have successfully extended its “war on terrorism” into the Philippines specifically targeting Al Qaeda and the Aby Sayyaf Group. There was sufficient legal backing by the “Military Logistical Support Agreement” and the “Visiting Forces

²⁹ John Pike, “Exercise Balikatan,” Exercise Balikatan, 2000, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/balikatan.htm>.

³⁰ Morada. “Philippine–American Security Relations After 11 September: Exploring the Mutuality of Interests in the Fight Against International Terrorism.” 229

³¹ Roland G. Simbulan. “The Pentagon’s Secret War and Facilities in the Philippines.” Peace review 22 no. 2 (April 2010) .151.

Agreement” that enabled Balikatan to develop into the “largest US military deployment engaged in actual combat against ‘real actual targets; on Philippine soil since the Philippine-American war of 1899-1901.”³² Scholars conclude that the US-Philippines “neo-colonial relationship facilitated US interest” over building a stronger treaty partner in the Philippines by the “blatant circumvention of the Philippine constitutional policy against foreign military bases, facilities, and foreign troops.”^{33 34}

During the early 2000s scholars present China’s position on increased US presence in the region. While China welcomed the stability, it was critical of the adverse impacts the US would have on Chinese autonomy in the South China Sea.³⁵ This perspective allows the audience to understand the impacts to not only to the US and the Philippines, but also the region as well. Scholars show that as China grew more assertive with its military developments in the South China Sea, the “Philippine government realized the importance of an American military presence in maintaining the balance of power in the Southeast Asian region” and sought to reinvigorate its alliance with the US.³⁶

Alliance

There is a wealth of scholarship on the tumultuous relationship between the US and the Philippines that is bifurcated between the late 1980s and late 2000s to early 2010s. Both groups

³² George Baylon Radics. “Terrorism in Southeast Asia: Balikatan Exercises in the Philippines as the US ‘War against Terrorism.’” *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs* 4, no. 2 (2004): 115–27. <https://profile.nus.edu.sg/fass/socrgb/seasia1.pdf>. 117

³³ Radics. “Terrorism in Southeast Asia: Balikatan Exercises in the Philippines as the US ‘War against Terrorism.’” 117

³⁴ Simbulan. “The Pentagon’s Secret War and Facilities in the Philippines.” 157.

³⁵ Rommel C. Banlaoi. 2002. “The Role of Philippine--American Relations in the Global Campaign Against Terrorism: Implications for Regional Security.” *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International & Strategic Affairs* 24 (2): 294. doi:10.1355/CS24-2E.

³⁶ Renato Cruz Castro, “The Revitalized Philippine-U.S. Security Relations: A Ghost from the Cold War or an Alliance for the 21st Century?,” *Asian Survey* 43, no. 6 (January 2003): pp. 971-988, <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2003.43.6.971>, 977.

of scholarship contain comprehensive histories of the relationship including the influences of China, the Soviet Union, and terrorists. The prevalent attitudes during both time periods have roots during the colonial period. However, the late 2000s to early 2010s, has a more critical attitude towards the actions of the US with respect to the Philippines.

Stanly Karnow dominated US scholarship in the 1980s. He wrote what is touted by scholars as the most engaging and complete analysis, taking both the US and Philippine perspectives into account. *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines*, describes the relationship as “an enormously complicated subject.”³⁷ Gary Hess echoes Karnow’s assertions describing that the “American objectives and tactics in the Philippines seemed contradictory. Maintaining a close economic and political relationship became dependent upon trade and rehabilitation policies that undermined the confidence of the elite, to which the American interests were closely tied.”³⁸

Scholars appreciate the relationship between the US and the Philippines as difficult to navigate. “...Washington could hardly sit back and watch [the Philippines] disintegrate. Yet it could not seriously contemplate a reassertion of direct, colonial rule.”³⁹ Scholars portray the success of the Philippines was a no fail mission in the eyes of the US. As such, they used this unique position along with its strategic significance to justify the heavy US involvement which contradicted US policy emphasizing multilateral trade.⁴⁰ Even though the US is frequently

³⁷ Stanley Karnow, *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines* (New York, NY: Random House, 1989), i.

³⁸ Gary R. Hess, *The United States Emergence as a Southeast Asian Power, 1940-1950* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1987), 249-250.

³⁹ Dennis Merrill, “Shaping Third World Development: U.S. Foreign Aid and Supervision in the Philippines, 1948-1953,” *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 2, no. 2 (1993): pp. 137-159, <https://doi.org/10.1163/187656193x00022>, 138.

⁴⁰ Cullather. “The Limits of Multilateralism: Making Policy for the Philippines, 1945-1950.” 75

portrayed as being overbearing, scholars present the Filipino people as remaining pro-American.⁴¹

In the late 2000s to early 2010s scholarship and policy became more critical of the actions of the US towards the Philippines, asserting the US was more focused on maintaining global hegemony than honoring codified agreements. Demonstrating this, Renato Cruz De Castro “examines recent trends that have gradually transformed the US-Philippine alliance from a product of the Cold War to a hedge against changes in the regional strategic equation generated by China’s economic and political emergence.”⁴² Focusing on the resurgence of the relationship in the mid to late 1990s, in response to regional pressure from China, De Castro argues that this resurgence was less about the treaty codified obligations and more about “China’s expansive territorial claims and growing assertiveness in the South China Sea that could threaten US maritime and strategic interests in the region.”⁴³ Superficially portraying commitment to the Philippines while using the relationship to posture against the growing threat of China are the goals of the US’s efforts bolstering this alliance.

Scholars during this period also develop another motive for expanded US involvement in the Philippines, democracy. Within the region, the US sought to present the Philippines as an example of a prosperous liberal democratic country.⁴⁴ US policy emphasized “helping the Philippines to develop stable and responsive democratic institutions.”⁴⁵ However, during this period the Philippines were preoccupied with sheer survival in the face of “40 active fighting

⁴¹ Taccad. “Philippine American Relations and the US Bases: A Filipino Perspective.” 74

⁴² Renato Cruz De Castro. “The US-Philippine Alliance: An Evolving Hedge against an Emerging China Challenge.” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 31, no. 3 (2009): 399–423. <https://doi.org/10.1355/es31-3b>. 400

⁴³ De Castro. “The US-Philippine Alliance: An Evolving Hedge against an Emerging China Challenge.” 405

⁴⁴ Jae Jeok Park, “The Persistence of the US-Led Alliances in the Asia-Pacific: An Order Insurance Explanation,” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 13, no. 3 (2013): pp. 337-368, <https://doi.org/10.1093/irap/lct010>, 360.

⁴⁵ Margaret R. Voigt, Thomas Lum, and Larry A. Niksch, “The Republic of the Philippines: Background and U.S. Relations,” in *Republic of the Philippines and U.S. Relations* (New York, NY: Nova Science Publishers, 2010), 3.

fronts containing about 19,000 insurgents.”⁴⁶ Ultimately during this period scholars displayed the mismatch in priorities between the US and Philippine governments.

Methods

This research study uses case studies to analyze primary and secondary sources. It examines the impacts of perceived external threats on the relationship between the US and the Philippines during key points in history as codified by formal treaties. The US and the Philippines have maintained a relationship since the Philippines gained independence from the US in 1942. Therefore, the relationship between the two is the dependent variable. The independent variable is the perceived external threat. An external threat is defined as threat that exists outside the official government structure of the country.

Examining the intricate details of the relationship between the US and the Philippines during the period between 1946 and 2014 is beyond the scope of this paper. Furthermore, it is outside the purview of this paper to examine how every instance of change in perceived external threat has impacted the alliance. Additionally, internal political factors of the two countries, while discussed to give context are not the focus of this study.

Four key periods will be examined using the findings to generalize the evolution of the US-Philippines relationship with respect to external threats. The first time period extends from when the Philippines achieved independence by the signing of the “Treaty of General Relations” on July 4, 1946, until the signing of the “Mutual Defense Treaty” on August 30, 1951. During this time the US and the Philippines signed the “Agreement Concerning Military Bases” on March 14, 1947. The second time period surrounds the military base negotiations in 1988 as a result of mandatory five-year reviews. The third time period is in 2001 when the exercise

⁴⁶ Park, “The Persistence of the US-Led Alliances in the Asia-Pacific: An Order Insurance Explanation,” 360.

Balikatan was expanded. The fourth time period occurs in 2014 during the adoption of the when the “Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement.”

Data

Independence and Establishment of Treaty 1945-1951

The Philippines experienced the “longest colonial subjugation and one of the most oppressive dictatorships,” after which it became the longest standing democracy in the region.⁴⁷ In 1521 Ferdinand Magellan claimed the land we now know as the Philippines for Spain and named it after King Philip II.⁴⁸ The Philippines spent over four centuries under colonial rule, first Spanish then in 1898 American, including Japanese occupation during WWII, before achieving independence in 1946. Colonies achieving independence from their colonizers was not a unique phenomenon. However, the Philippines was the first colonized nation to voluntarily be relinquished from the imperial nation that colonized it. “The United States kept its pledge to emancipate the Philippines a half-century after its original conquest.”⁴⁹ On July 4, 1946, the two countries signed the “Treaty of General Relations” granting the Philippines independence while the two countries “cement[ed] the relations of a close and long friendship” and established procedures for the turnover of the land and the conduct of diplomatic relations.⁵⁰

After independence the Philippines did not prioritize the improvement of its armed forces. Focused on building an economy that could support the needs of the people and generate internal stability and economy generation, in a 1945 resolution “the Philippine state considered

⁴⁷ Villacorta, “Philippines: Nationalism and Regionalism,” 183

⁴⁸ Margaret Malixi, “The Philippines,” accessed November 8, 2020, <https://www.csub.edu/pacificrim/countryprospectus/history.htm>.

⁴⁹ Stanley Karnow, *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines*, 323.

⁵⁰ “Treaty of General Relations and Protocol with the Republic of the Philippines” Signed at Manila on July 4, 1946. <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2162&context=ils>

developing an autonomous defense capability too expensive.”⁵¹ ⁵² Also, the Philippines believed this would ensure continued US investment in the country. In a similar act of the Philippines dependency on the US, in 1946 the two countries codified the “Philippine Trade Act” which drastically favored the US business person at the expense of the Filipino economy.⁵³ Its founder, US Representative Bell, as well as other supporters sought to use the Philippines dependence on the US to “control the islands ‘economically even though we lost them politically.’”⁵⁴

In the aftermath of World War II, concerns developed about Soviet aggression and the spread of Communism. As a result, the US adopted a doctrine of containment. In 1946, four key incidents led to the US taking actions to posture against the expansion of the Soviet Union and Communist ideals. The Soviet Union did not remove forces from Iran, pressured the Iranian government to provide oil concessions, pressured the government of Turkey into providing passage and basing, and rejected international oversight over nuclear weapons and energy.⁵⁵ The US began implementing responsive actions before President Truman enacted the doctrine on March 12, 1947, arguing that “the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.”⁵⁶

US strategic doctrine saw the Philippines as a piece of key terrain in both a physical defensive perimeter around the Pacific and ideologically, fearing “Communist subversion more

⁵¹ Renato Cruz De Castro, “Congressional Intervention in the Philippine Post-Cold War,” *Philippine Political Science Journal* 25, no. 48 (December 2004), 84.

⁵² Gary R. Hess, *The United States Emergence as a Southeast Asian Power, 1940-1950* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1987), 248

⁵³ Karnow, *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines* 333.

⁵⁴ Karnow, *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines*, 334.

⁵⁵ U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, Foreign Service Institute (U.S. Department of State), accessed October 2, 2021, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/truman-doctrine>.

⁵⁶ Harry S. Truman. Speech before 80th Congress (Washington, D.C. 1947)

than direct attack.”⁵⁷ Only two days after the containment doctrine was officially enacted, on March 14, 1947, the US and Philippines codified the “Agreement Concerning Military Bases” which enabled the “Governments of the two countries [to] take the necessary measures to promote their mutual security and to defend their territories...”⁵⁸ The US gained rights to twenty-three military installations across the Philippines for ninety-nine years and that could be extended upon agreement by the two countries. Subsequently, on August 30, 1951, the two countries signed the “Mutual Defense Treaty” formally declaring their “sense of unity and their common determination to defend themselves against external armed attack, so that no potential aggressor could be under the illusion that either of them stands alone in the Pacific Area.”⁵⁹

During this time period Communist expansion was the perceived external threat of the US. The Philippines were focused on building internal stability, coincidentally battling an internal underground Communist movement.⁶⁰ As a result, the Philippines made the deliberate decision to tie external defense to extended US presence in the country. US scholarship however overlooks the Communist movement within the Philippines and does not link it to their perceived external threat. The “Treaty of General Relations,” the “Agreement Concerning Military Bases,” and the “Mutual Defense Treaty” were a result of the US perceiving Communist expansion and the Soviet Union as the key external threats as well as the Philippines using prolonged US presence and financing to bring stability to their new country.

1988 Military Base Negotiations

⁵⁷ Cullather. “The Limits of Multilateralism: Making Policy for the Philippines, 1945-1950.” 74.

⁵⁸ “Agreement Concerning Military Bases” Signed at Manilla on March 14, 1947. <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2158&context=ils>

⁵⁹ “Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of the Philippines” Signed at Washington, DC on August 20, 1951. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/phil001.asp#1

⁶⁰ Jose M. Crisol, “Communist Propaganda in the Philippines - 1950-1953,” *Philippine Studies* 1, no. 3/4 (December 1953): pp. 207-222, <https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/42719032>, 209.

The 1947 “Military Basing Agreement” was revised in 1979 to include “five-year periodic reviews”, establishing a review in 1988, as well as an update to the agreement terminating the original 99-year lease in 1991.⁶¹ Perceptions of external threats along with political priorities evolved in the US and Philippines. Conditions were significantly different for both countries during this review and were impactful on its outcome.

Ronald Regan’s second term of presidency saw a drastic change in US-Soviet relations. After Mikhail Gorbachev was appointed as the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, President Regan initiated discussions between the two countries concerning arms control that resulted in the December 8, 1987 signing of the “Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles,” reaffirming “their obligations under Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.”⁶²⁶³ The US and the Soviet Union, the two countries who spent years at odds during the Cold War, had now established a diplomatic relationship. This treaty demonstrated their ability to work together to bring peace and stability to the world.

During the same period, the Philippines were recovering from a revolution that transitioned power from President Ferdinand Marcos to President Corazon Aquino. President Marcos who was publicly supported by the US during his over 20 years of corrupt dictatorial rule drove the country into poverty and martial law. President Corazon Aquino symbolized stability with the legacy she represented. As a result of the influence the US had during the Marcos’

⁶¹ Fred Greene, *The Philippine Bases: Negotiating for the Future: American and Philippine Perspectives*. (New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations, 1988) 6

⁶² U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, Foreign Service Institute. “U.S.-Soviet Relations, 1981-1991.” U.S. Department of State. Accessed October 2, 2021. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1981-188/u.s.-soviet-relations>.

⁶³ “Treaty Between the United States of America and The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles.” Signed at Washington, D.C. on December 8, 1987. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/avc/trty/102360.htm>

presidency, “many Filipinos believe[d] that the US intervenes in Philippine affairs and exercises too much control over the country’s political process.”⁶⁴

In the late 1980s nationalist sentiments and concerns over sovereignty were popular in the Philippines. To many, the bases were lasting representations of the colonial history between the two countries and the lasting physical presence of the US was an impediment to the Philippines truly achieving freedom and independence.⁶⁵ The fact that the US had enjoyed virtual sovereignty over its facilities with few constraints imposed by the Philippine government” added fuel to the sovereignty issue.⁶⁶ Moreover, Philippine Senator Raul Manglapus, the appointed chair of the Philippine review panel, was vocal in the belief that there was no external threat that that justified the US retention of the bases.⁶⁷ The minimal Philippine support for the bases was from the Secretary of National Defense, General Fidel Ramos, who linked the bases to the military bonds between the two countries and a mechanism for modernizing the equipment and training of the military.⁶⁸ Surveys conducted during 1987-1991 revealed that that support for the bases was due to economic factors rather than security.⁶⁹

The US eased tensions with the Soviet Union, while the Philippines was internally focused to regain stability and economic growth. There were concerns in the Philippines that the bases would undermine their attempts for neutrality and inclusion in the Southeast Asian community.⁷⁰ In the US a new belief had emerged that rather than halt Soviet expansion and aggression, the US bases in the Philippines “do not prevent, but rather encourage, the expansion

⁶⁴ Greene, *The Philippine Bases: Negotiating for the Future: American and Philippine Perspectives*. 7

⁶⁵ Berry, *U.S. Bases in the Philippines: The Evolution of the Special Relationship*. 293.

⁶⁶ Alvin J. Cottrell and Thomas H. Moorer, *U.S. Overseas Bases: Problems of Projecting American Military Power Abroad* 48.

⁶⁷ Berry, *U.S. Bases in the Philippines: The Evolution of the Special Relationship*. 293.

⁶⁸ Berry, *U.S. Bases in the Philippines: The Evolution of the Special Relationship* 297.

⁶⁹ Mahar Mangahas. “The Philippine Social Climate.” *Philippine Studies* 44, no. 2 (1996): 270–79.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/42634989>. 274-275

⁷⁰ Cottrell and Moorer, *U.S. Overseas Bases: Problems of Projecting American Military Power Abroad* 48

of Soviet influence in the region.”⁷¹ On the other hand, “many in Manilla minimize the prospects of an outside threat and argue that the US presence in the Philippines’ risk the entanglement in foreign conflicts, especially the risk of a possible nuclear attack against the facilities.”⁷²

During this time the US and the Philippines perceived that the tensions with the Soviet Union, were subsiding. In the Philippines, the nationalist movement was gaining momentum, calling for the removal of the remaining physical remnants of colonialism, the US military bases. Many felt the bases increased the threat from both external and internal forces. This resulted in the US withdrawal from the bases in 1991 and demonstrating political and military distancing between the two countries.

2001 Balikatan Expansion

The Balikatan is an annual exercise between the US and the Philippines. Beginning in 1981, it was suspended in 1996 over legal concerns and the nationalist sentiments within the Philippines. In 1998 the signing of the “Status of Forces Agreement,” demonstrated that the two countries were “reaffirming their obligations under the Mutual Defense Treaty of August 30, 1951.”⁷³ The “Status of Forces Agreement” laid the legal foundation for the exercise to resume. As a result, the Balikatan exercise was reestablished providing enhanced opportunities for the militaries of the two countries to train together.

In the days following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the US embarked upon a “Global War on Terrorism.” In a press conference, President Bush stated that even though “the attack took place on American soil, but it was an attack on the heart and soul of the civilized

⁷¹ Greene, *The Philippine Bases: Negotiating for the Future: American and Philippine Perspectives*. 29

⁷² Greene, *The Philippine Bases: Negotiating for the Future: American and Philippine Perspectives*. 28

⁷³ “Status of Forces Agreement Between the United States of America and the Philippines.” Signed at Manila October 9, 1998. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/107852.pdf>

world. And the world has come together to fight a new and different war, the first, and we hope the only one, of the 21st century; a war against all those who seek to export terror and a war against those governments that support or shelter them.”⁷⁴ This set international terrorist organizations as the primary perceived threat to not only the US, but also its allies around the world, including the Philippines.

To show support the government of the Philippines established an Inter-Agency Task Force against International Terrorism with the mission to “co-ordinate intelligence operations and to facilitate the identification and neutralization of suspected terrorist cells in the Philippines.”⁷⁵ The Philippines offered both Clark Air Base and Subic Naval base to aide in the coalition’s efforts.⁷⁶ Aware of “Manilla’s sensitivity to the specific constitutional provision that prohibits permanent foreign military bases in the Philippine territory” the US was more deliberate in arranging access for military assets in the Philippines.⁷⁷

In 2001 US and Philippine Presidents met to discuss US involvement in a train, advise, assist, and accompany mission in support of the Philippines campaign against the Abu Sayyaf Group, an al Qaeda linked terrorist organization with ties to the September 11, 2001, attacks.⁷⁸ The two countries signed the “Mutual Logistics and Support Agreement” that “facilitates the transfer of materials and services from the United States to the Philippines and vice-versa in the cases of joint military exercises, international tension or national emergency, and under the

⁷⁴ George W. Bush., "War Against Terrorism" (speech, Washington, DC, October 11, 2001), CNN, <http://www.cnn.com/2001/US/10/11/gen.bush.transcript/>

⁷⁵ Rommel C. Banlaoi, “The Role of Philippine--American Relations in the Global Campaign Against Terrorism: Implications for Regional Security.” 302.

⁷⁶ Banlaoi, Rommel C. “The Role of Philippine--American Relations in the Global Campaign Against Terrorism: Implications for Regional Security.” 302

⁷⁷ Renato Cruz De Castro. “Special Relations and Alliance Politics in Philippine-U.S. Security Relations, 1990-2002.” *Asian Perspective* 27, no. 1 (2003): 137–64. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42704400>. 161-162

⁷⁸ De Castro. “Special Relations and Alliance Politics in Philippine-U.S. Security Relations, 1990-2002.” 162

United Nations.”⁷⁹ These agreements provided the legal foundation to increase participation in the Balikatan exercise with the focus on combating terrorism. In 2001, along with a military training and equipment package, 200 US military personnel and an additional 190 US Special Forces personnel were sent to the Philippines during the Balikatan exercise to “accompany, train, advise, and assist Filipino units in combat zones as military advisors.”⁸⁰

Filipino support for the exercises and associated US military presence was bolstered by the 2002 failed rescue of hostages taken by the Abu Sayyaf Group.⁸¹ It demonstrated the need for a more significant US troop presence in the Philippines to assist in the fight against the Abu Sayyaf Group. The perpetrators served as the targets for the exercise with the goal of denying the Abu Sayyaf Group and other terrorist organizations a strong hold in the Philippines.⁸²

Both sides lauded the 2002 exercise as a success. “The Philippine Daily Inquirer reported that the ‘US forces in Basilan have brought local people an added sense of security and are also helping improve the area.’”⁸³ Likewise, the US said the counterterrorism efforts in the Philippines, including the 2002 iteration of Balikatan were its priority in Southeast Asia and set the standard for the conduct of bilateral exercises in the region.⁸⁴

In the aftermath of the attacks on September 11, 2001, the perceived external threat of international terrorist organizations had ties to groups internal to the Philippines. This gave cause for increased US military presence in the Philippines by way of bilateral exercises.

⁷⁹ George Baylon Radics. “Terrorism in Southeast Asia: Balikatan Exercises in the Philippines as the US ‘War against Terrorism!’” 121.

⁸⁰ De Castro. “Special Relations and Alliance Politics in Philippine-U.S. Security Relations, 1990-2002.” 161-162

⁸¹ Radics, “Terrorism in Southeast Asia: Balikatan Exercises in the Philippines as the US ‘War against Terrorism!’” 120

⁸² Radics, “Terrorism in Southeast Asia: Balikatan Exercises in the Philippines as the US ‘War against Terrorism!’” 121

⁸³ Radics, “Terrorism in Southeast Asia: Balikatan Exercises in the Philippines as the US ‘War against Terrorism!’” 123

⁸⁴ De Castro. “Special Relations and Alliance Politics in Philippine-U.S. Security Relations, 1990-2002.” 162

Actions taken during this period, such as the US using rotational forces instead of permanently established bases was in alignment with the Philippines desire to not have a permanent US military presence in the country and demonstrated how the US learned from the historical impacts of colonialism in its relationship with the Philippines.

2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement

The US was occupied on multiple fronts in 2014. Forces were engaged in The Global War on Terrorism primarily in Afghanistan and just began operations against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. Russia began aggressions towards Ukraine, including the annexation of Crimea and China was growing more confrontational, especially in the South China Sea. Definitively, the US faced several perceived threats simultaneously.

In March 2014 Russian forces invaded Ukraine's Crimea, demonstrated Russia's aggressive tendencies and pitting itself against the US. This was in direct violation of the Budapest Agreement where the signatories, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the US agreed to "refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine."⁸⁵ As a result, the G-7 leaders issued a statement "to condemn the Russian Federation's clear violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, in contravention of Russia's obligations under the UN Charter and its 1997 basing agreement with Ukraine."⁸⁶ "US secretary of state, John Kerry, went a step further, saying that Russia 'may not even remain in the G8 if this continues'" and in an official statement made on March 25, 2014

⁸⁵ "Ukraine, Russian Federation, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America Memorandum on security assurances in connection with Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons." Signed at Budapest on December 5, 1994.
<https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%203007/Part/volume-3007-I-52241.pdf>

⁸⁶ "G-7 Leaders Statement." National Archives and Records Administration, March 2, 2014.
<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/02/g-7-leaders-statement>.

condemned “Russia's illegal attempt to annex Crimea” and pledged support for Ukraine.^{87 88} The US sought closer ties with its allies in the face of Russia reasserting itself as an international threat.

During this time, China’s assertions in the South China Sea challenged the freedom of the seas and tested the commitment of the US to its foreign policy concerning the South China Sea and its commitment to the strategic allies in the region, namely the Philippines. To further its quest to become a regional hegemon, China asserted claim of sovereignty over the territory within the nine-dash line by harassing ships and aircraft of other countries, interfering with the economic rights of other countries, and by developing manmade islands in the South China Sea. In 2013, the Philippines, under President Benigno Aquino III, disputed China’s behavior in the South China Sea and sought arbitrations from the United Nations under the “United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea” treaty.⁸⁹ China was taking direct actions that threatened the sovereignty of the Philippines. The US took actions in line with “The 2008 National Defense Strategy [that] emphasizes the need for the US to hedge against China’s growing power and influence.”⁹⁰

In a display of renewed commitment in the face of Russia, China, and multiple perceived aggressors, the US and the Philippines signed the “Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement” on April 28, 2014.⁹¹ “This agreement deepens defense cooperation between the parties and

⁸⁷ Stephanie Lee, Alexandria Silver, and Zachary Laub, “The Group of Eight (G8) Industrialized Nations,” Council on Foreign Relations (Council on Foreign Relations, March 3, 2014), <https://www.cfr.org/backgroundunder/group-eight-g8-industrialized-nations>.

⁸⁸ “The White House President Barak Obama,” The White House President Barak Obama, March 25, 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/25/joint-statement-united-states-and-ukraine>.

⁸⁹ “The South China Sea Arbitration (the Republic of Philippines V. the People's Republic of China),” Permanent Court of Arbitration, accessed October 26, 2021, <https://pca-cpa.org/en/cases/7/>.

⁹⁰ Cruz De Castro, Renato. “The US-Philippine Alliance: An Evolving Hedge against an Emerging China Challenge.” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 31, no. 3 (2009): 399–423. <https://doi.org/10.1355/cs31-3b>. pg. 403

⁹¹ “Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Government of the United States of America on Enhanced Defense Cooperation.” Signed at Quezon City on April 28, 2014.

maintains and develops their individual and collective capacities...”⁹² The treaty addressed the historically tenuous topic of US use of Philippine military bases by “establishing a framework for an increased rotational presence rather than permanent bases.”⁹³ While the increase in US forces in the region had the potential to challenge China’s assertions over the South China Sea, the emphasis was on enabling US prepositioned forces in the region as an enduring presence, but not on permanently established bases.⁹⁴ This decision was reflective of how both the US and Philippine administrations learned from the past and maintained cognizance of how the optic of permanent US forces would impact public support. It also expanded military cooperation to include information sharing and coordinated maritime security patrols focused on increasing the capability and capacity of the Philippine Military.

Discussion

Despite their shared colonial past, the US and the Philippines maintain healthy diplomatic relations that have evolved over time. This paper sought to examine how perceived external threats affected this relationship between 1946 and 2014. For the purposes of this paper, an external threat is defined as threat that exists outside the official government structure of the country. Scholarship focuses on the US bases in the Philippines, military cooperation, and the codified alliance. The four time periods analyzed covered the independence of the Philippines and the establishment of the “Mutual Defense Treaty” between 1946 and 1951, the 1988

⁹² “Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Government of the United States of America on Enhanced Defense Cooperation.” Signed at Quezon City on April 28, 2014.

⁹³ Sheena Chestnut Greitens, “The U.S. Alliance with the Philippines: Opportunities and Challenges,” in *U.S. Alliances and Partnerships at the Center of Global War*, ed. Ashley J. Tellis, Abraham M. Denmark, and Creg Chaffin (Seattle, WA: National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR), 2014), pp. 118-146, 134.

⁹⁴ Renato Cruz De Castro. “Abstract of the Geopolitics of the Philippine-US 2014 EDCA (Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement): Projecting American Airpower into the Dragon's Lair.” *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 28, no. 4 (December 2016): 485–508.

“Military Basing Agreement” negotiations, the establishment of the exercise Balikatan in 2001, and the 2014 “Enhanced Cooperation Agreement.”

When the Philippines achieved independence and the establishment of the “Mutual Defense Treaty” between 1946 and 1951, the primary perceived threat from the aspect of the US was Soviet aggression. In response, the US enacted a policy of containment to inhibit the spread of Soviet power and Communist ideals.⁹⁵ Maintaining close ties with the Philippines that allowed for military basing was a priority of the US. The US viewed the Philippines as key terrain due to its proximity to major shipping lanes and geographic location. The Philippines, on the other hand, was focusing internally and was “almost entirely dependent on US bases and forces for external defense.”⁹⁶

In 1988 there was a periodic review of the “Military Basing Agreement” between the US and the Philippines. The “Military Basing Agreement” was signed between the Philippines and the US in 1947, revised in 1979 mandating a review in 1988. Leading up to this review, scholars and policy writers focused heavily on this subject due to the potential strategic impacts of the negotiations. One key takeaway from the scholarship is the impact the nationalist movement had on the bases including their perception as lingering symbols of colonialism. However, during the negotiations through when the US vacated the bases in 1992 is not well documented. Ultimately, the negotiations resulted in the closure of all remaining military bases that the US occupied in the Philippines. A substantial portion of the scholarship discusses possible alternatives for Philippine bases, but it does not reach any substantive consensus on an alternative option, nor does it state where the military assets and personnel were transitioned to after the closure.

⁹⁵ US Department of State, Office of the Historian, Foreign Service Institute. “Truman Doctrine.” US Department of State. Accessed October 2, 2021. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/truman-doctrine>.

⁹⁶ Greitens, “The U.S. Alliance with the Philippines: Opportunities and Challenges,” 121.

During this time both countries were internally focused and had minimal perceived threats. Additionally, diplomatic relations between the US and the Soviet Union were fruitful due to increased dialogue that resulted in the signing of the treaty on the “Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles.” Therefore, the distancing between the US and the Philippines appears appropriate.

In 1981 the US and the Philippines began an annual exercise named Balikatan, an enduring and significant symbol of their alliance and relationship. The exercise was halted in 1995, but resumed in 1998 when several agreements were codified that enabled the US military to increase its presence in the country. Bolstering of the exercise came after of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade center and subsequent establishment of the “War on Terrorism.” Terrorist organizations became the primary perceived threat. Now the threat was internal to the Philippines. The southern Philippines island of Mindanao was a safe haven for the Abu Sayyaf Group, an al Qaeda linked terrorist organization with ties to the World Trade Center attack. Balikatan focused on bilateral operations targeting the Abu Sayyaf Group. The 2002 iteration of the exercise received the preponderance of scholarly focus. The perception was that the US was exploiting the relationship with the Philippines in order to pursue its own agenda when, in fact, the US was assisting the Philippines in handling a mutual threat that was geographically located within the Philippines.

Scholars and policy makers became critical of US involvement in the Philippines in the late 2000s to early 2010s, arguing the US was prone to strong arm its weaker allied partner into agreements that were more beneficial to the US including the perpetuation of democracy in the region even at the expense of the Philippines. These actions were portrayed as having benefit the

Philippines when they were in response to increased aggression from China with the ultimate goal to hedge against China.

In 2014 the US and the Philippines signed the “Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement” during a time of multiple perceived threats. The Global War on Terrorism was still active, while Russia and China were growing more aggressive. Reaffirming alliances in key strategic points around the world was a major priority of the US.

When the US and Philippines grew closer during the signing of the “Mutual Defense Treaty” in 1951, as well as during the reestablishment of the Balikatan exercise, and when the “Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement” was signed in 2014, the two countries were encountering significant threats. When the 1988 review of the “Military Basing Agreement” resulted in the closure of remaining US inhabited bases, perceived threats of the two countries were low.

This study uncovered a trend that was consistent throughout four distinct periods that were examined of the shared US-Philippine history. The relationship between the US and the Philippines has historically been impacted by perceived threats. During the course of this study there were no changes in the perception of external threats that did not result in a change of the alliance. This is an indication that the US-Philippines relationship is healthy and able to withstand changes in global posture over time. The Filipino perspective needs to be expanded upon and thoroughly integrated into the US scholarship to achieve a more holistic understanding of the issues surrounding the US bases in the Philippines.

Further examination of this topic is necessary in order to carry these findings over to the greater US-Philippines history and make a broader assumption covering the span of the US-Philippines alliance. In order to assess if this trend is pervasive throughout the history of the

relationship, a wider study examining the circumstances and perceived threats that preceded all codified agreements is necessary. Each change in alliance posture between the US and the Philippines should be examined to determine if it benefited one party more than the other along with any potential motivations for the change that were not in direct response to a perceived threat. Furthermore, changes in perceived threat that did not result in a change in alliance posture could be telling of the relationship. Finally, this trend can be studied in relation to other alliances involving the US and other countries.

Conclusion

Alliances are a key aspect of the international system that help bring about stability. They are a staple of the “balance of power” theory that dominates International Relations realist debate. The US and the Philippines share a turbulent history. The alliance has survived multiple changes and remains an example of how shared perceived threats can be countered collectively.

This research study embarked to discern how perceived external threats affected the relationship between the US and the Philippines between 1946 and 2014. Over the course of this study the perceived external threat changed. In the time period immediately after the Philippines achieved independence in the aftermath of WWII, the Soviet Union and socialist ideals were the perceived threat encountered by both countries drawing the two into a jointly beneficial “Mutual Defense Treaty.” Nevertheless, several years later when the “Military Basing Agreement” was to be renewed in 1988 US-Soviet relations were improving, decreasing the Soviet Union as a threat causing the cession of the “Military Basing Agreement.” After the 2001 attacks in New York and Washington, transnational terrorists became the primary perceived threat to both countries. This resulted in bolstered relations as demonstrated by the emphasis on the Balikatan exercise. In 2014 when multiple perceived threats including China, Russia, and transnational

terrorists were evident, the US and the Philippines codified the “Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement” drawing the two nations together in mutual defense.

Scholars have put forth significant effort documenting the history of the US-Philippines relationship. Yet, there remain areas for further expansion. Systematically the Filipino perspective is underrepresented within the US scholarship. This is especially evident when examining what US scholars account for as perceived the external threats to the Philippines. During the negotiations leading up to policy changes the two areas that dominated the presented Filipino perspective are legacy colonist perceptions and nationalism. US scholars portray the Philippines as being solely internally focused which warrants further exploration. Even though the militaries of the US and the Philippines share a close relationship, the documentation of bilateral exercises, particularly including the annual exercise Balikatan, lacks a comprehensive history. If these areas were explored more exhaustively, the assertions this research study made of the impacts of the perceived external threats on the US-Philippines relationship between 1946 and 2014 could be applied to the total history of the affiliation between the two countries.

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Curriculum Vita

Sarah Luetz was born in San Jose, CA on 25 October 1983. She enlisted in The United States Marine Corps on March 15, 2004 and underwent training to become a Ground Support Equipment Diesel Hydraulic Pneumatic Mechanic. She was stationed in Chery Point, NC and in July 2005 she was deployed to Al Asad Air Base, Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, returning in February 2006. In July 2008 Sarah Luetz was deployed to Okinawa in support of the Unit Deployment Program and traveled to the Clark Air Base in the Philippines where she participated in the exercise PHIBLEX with the Armed Forces of the Philippines. In June 2010 Sarah Luetz was selected into the Marine Enlisted Continuing Education Program and attended University of Sothern California where she obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Middle East Studies with a minor in Religion and was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in May 2013. After completing initial Air Intelligence Officer training, in September 2015 Sarah Luetz reported to 1st Marine Regiment, and deployed as part of the Command Element of the Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Taskforce Crisis Response Central Command to Al Jaber Air Base, Kuwait where she served as the Intelligence Production and Analysis Officer in Charge and Senior Target Developer in support of Operation Inherent Resolve. Upon return she attended Weapons and Tactics Instructors Course in the Spring of 2017 and in November 2017 deployed to Okinawa, Japan, participating in exercises in Thailand, the Philippines, and the Republic of South Korea. Upon return from deployment in June 2018, Sarah Luetz reported to the Office of the Secretary of the Navy where she served as the Director of the White House and Congressional Liaison Office. In August 2020 she attended Marine Air Ground Taskforce Intelligence Officers Course and currently serves in the Operations Directorate at Marine Corps Intelligence Activity.