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Barracks and barricades: how internal security threats affect foreign basing access in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a theory of foreign military basing as a function of the degree of internal threat facing a host nation. The theory is based on rational choice logic where politicians balance economic and security benefits against sovereignty and legitimacy costs. When internal threat is low a host nation's political actors value legitimacy and sovereignty and hence reduce base access. When internal threat is high economic and security benefits trump legitimacy and sovereignty costs, hence increasing base access. The theory is assessed through process-tracing the historical events around U.S. military basing in the Philippines. When internal threat was low from coups and revolutionary movements the Philippine government reduced U.S. basing access, but when a threat from these movements was high they either maintained or increased access. This study suggests more carefully considering the role of internal threats when assessing the dynamics of foreign basing.

Introduction

Foreign military bases are anomalies in a world of sovereign states. A state's military forces exist fundamentally for the purpose of protecting that state's territory and citizens. Yet, great powers regularly station military forces abroad with at least the partial mission of protecting another countries' territory and people. For a potential host-nation, the decision to allow a foreign country to station military troops in its sovereign territory is equally puzzling. It cedes partial control of its sovereign territory and gives the occupying state the opportunity and incentive to meddle in its domestic politics. Yet, these host nations allow great powers to have bases all over the world. The United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and, most recently, China all have established military bases in foreign countries.

Why do foreign military bases exist? The extant literature has identified a variety of different reasons. Basing states hope to extend their state's military power, serving to increase their autonomy, allow it to more quickly respond to crises, or serve as a credible commitment to go to war on an ally's behalf (Harkavy 1981, Morrow 1991, Pettyjohn 2011, Schelling 1966).¹ Host nations allow foreign military bases because they receive economic and security benefits through foreign aid, a stimulated economy, and protection from external threats (Calder 2007, Jones and Kane 2012, Schelling 1966).² Yet important questions remain unanswered. With the exception of Gresh (2016),³ the extant literature has failed to make a distinction between whether a threat is internal or external, focusing almost exclusively on external threats, even though internal threats activate domestic political dynamics in a way that external threats do not, and even when internal conflicts have plagued most host nations at one point or another. Moreover, even the little work that has been done on this issue has not accounted for the degree of internal threat. Coups at the capital differ in their political impacts from small insurgencies in the periphery. What then is the relationship between the severity of internal threat and foreign military base access?

This paper addresses this question by presenting a theory of internal threat and foreign military base access. Host nation politicians weigh the economic and security benefits of increased basing access against its sovereignty and legitimacy costs. When internal threats, for example separatist and revolutionary movements or coups, are high – the probability of overthrowing the government or causing massive political disruption is nontrivial – the benefits of increased basing outweigh the costs because politicians value the security benefits of bases for their political (and actual) survival. When internal threats are low – these aforementioned movements are not present or do not pose an existential threat to the established political order – then the legitimacy and sovereignty costs outweigh the benefits of basing. In this case, costs are borne out through domestic politics, for

example through anti-base movements, populist dissent, and public opinion. Sovereignty and legitimacy costs may lead to host nation politicians losing at the ballot box and thus losing political power. They, therefore, reduce basing access to gain legitimacy (and win elections) at the expense of extra-economic gains.

We test this theory by examining the presence of United States bases in the Philippines from 1965 to 1991. The Philippines is an ideal case to test our theory for several reasons: First, it has experienced significant within-case variation on both the independent and dependent variables. The Philippines has seen the rise and stagnation of a major Communist insurgency and concluded several basing agreements with the United States ejecting the US military entirely. Second, the Philippines represents a least-likely case for the theorized mechanisms to work. The United States is viewed favorably by most Filipinos and the Philippine economy was highly dependent on the United States. These factors made closing U.S. bases a risky proposition. The value of this least-likely case is if the theory we propose bears out under these conditions then it is likely to hold in many other contexts. Third, we had access to some of the key decision-makers during the historical period under study. This unique access provides our theory with insight that a purely archival or historical analysis would lack.

To test the theory, we employ a qualitative process-tracing methodology. While cross-national quantitative tests provide support for the generalizability of a theory, they do not necessarily illuminate the causal mechanisms that bring about the change in the dependent variable. It is in this regard that qualitative case studies can be especially useful. In addition to the expected change in the main dependent variable (access), we should observe other phenomena consistent with the theorized causal process. Well-done process-tracing further allows for the integration of complex and historically nuanced analysis into the empirical assessment of a theory, especially one that takes causal mechanisms seriously.

The results of our analysis support the theory. From 1965 to 1979, the nascent internal threat from the Communist Party of Philippines (CPP) and its militant wing, the New People's Army (NPA) was weak militarily but posed a political threat to the Marcos regime's legitimacy. To score political legitimacy points, Marcos reduced US basing access. From 1979 to 1983 the CPP-NPA grew to a significant military threat which shifted the Marcos regime's priorities from legitimacy to security, resulting in base negotiations that maintained US basing access. From 1986 to 1988, the overthrow of the Marcos dictatorship by an anti-basing Aquino created a most-likely case for the base closure. But the continued high level of Communist insurgent threat led the Aquino regime to maintain US basing access. From 1988 to 1991, the Communist threat declined while Aquino was personally threatened by a series of attempted military coups. This led to a divided principal problem. The executive branch pushed for continued American basing while the Philippine Senate capitalized on the broader security lull brought about by the end of the Cold War and decline of the CPP threat to finally terminate US permanent basing in the Philippines. Finally, we show that alternative explanations, such as the United States simply losing interest in the bases, or the Philippine government miscalculating, do not explain our results.

This paper contributes to the extant literature on foreign military bases. Most notably, it presents a novel theory of host nation strategic decision-making, with base access as the outcome that varies as a function of the degree of internal threat. Our focus on internal threat also serves to build up a literature that has thus far been sparse – the effects of domestic conflicts on foreign base access.

This paper also has implications for defense policymakers who must recognize and account for the real domestic political pressures of host-nation regimes more broadly (and not just in the Philippine context). A good illustration of this can be found in the early 2020 American strike against Iranian Major General Qasem Soleimani which resulted in the Iraqi parliament subsequently voting to expel US forces.⁴ The strike was a clear affront to Iraqi sovereignty and created real domestic legitimacy problems for the Iraqi government. While the Iraqis tolerated such heavy-handedness in 2014 when ISIS threatened the capital, by 2019 the internal threat had been reduced to a low-level. These changed security conditions meant that the Iraqi government had a reduced need for military assistance while it needed to increase its domestic legitimacy, as evidenced by the mass anti-corruption protests that took place across Iraq in fall 2019.⁵ When Iraq's former occupier, the United States, launched a unilateral attack on Iraqi soil it seems to have been the straw that broke the camel's back. It may be that the tactical victory of removing Soleimani from the battlefield would be worth the strategic cost of losing basing in Iraq, but the implication of our theory is that this loss of access was foreseeable in advance.

Theory: Internal Threats and Foreign Military Base Access

This section outlines a rational choice theory of foreign military base access that focuses on the costs and benefits of this access to host nations under varying degrees of internal conflict. The crux of the argument can be stated succinctly up front: Host nations will increase (or at least not decrease) foreign basing access when the economic and security benefits from a foreign military base outweigh its legitimacy and sovereignty costs. When internal threat is low the economic and security benefits outweigh the legitimacy and sovereignty costs, hence an increase in access. When internal threat is high we get the opposite effect—sovereignty and legitimacy costs are higher than economic and security benefits and thus basing access decreases (or at least does not increase). The theory is probabilistic; this implies that empirically we may not, for example, always see an increase in basing access when internal threats are high. Sometimes basing access increases, sometimes it remains the same.

We first define our main variables of interest – internal threat and access. By increasing internal threat, we simply mean an increase in the probability that the current government is overthrown or its capacities significantly damaged and reduced through conflict. In the context of basing this may imply the reduction of land granted to military bases. Thus, increasing internal threat is detrimental to the host nation as the economic and security benefits it accrues through basing are reduced. This definition presumes that holding political power is paramount to politicians. Without political control, their ability to influence policy is limited. Hence, they will be unable to benefit from potential economic benefits.

We also do not distinguish between types of internal threats. For example, communist threat and coups and insurgencies differ only in the degree of internal threat that they pose. We do this for analytical purposes. There are of course multiple ways in which communist threats and coups may differ, but a more simplified exposition highlights the role of internal threat across types of threat types. Moreover, evidence for such distinctions will require significant variation in both type of threat and level of threat beyond what our case can reasonably explore. To specify more fully on differences between, for example, military coups and communist insurgencies (although clearly there are differences), would also require evidence that these distinctions hold in other contexts beyond our case of the Philippines.

We define access along both the extensive and intensive margins. Most obviously, access is first defined as whether a base is operational or not. But our definition of access also encompasses a base's capacity to enact its preferred goals. Examples of reducing capacity include reducing the land access of the U.S. military base or limiting its scope of operations in the country. Note that by this definition the United States' capacity can decrease even if bases remain operational. By this definition, an increase in resources or greater support from the Philippine government both increase access, while a reduction in support or more legal constraints on the bases (even if they are still operational) means a decrease in access. Another way to say this is that access is increasing in the U.S.'s autonomy and its ability to pursue objectives relative to constraints.

The argument makes two key assumptions: First, we presume that the basing nation is choosing to establish a military base in the host nation. In reality, this is of course not always the case. Like host nations, basing nations also face costs and benefits and make trade-offs between them. Robert Harkavy (1981, 1989, 2007), in the foundational works on foreign basing, established that basing-states want foreign bases because they extend the reach and effect of that state's military power.⁶ Morrow (1991), in his "autonomy-security tradeoff" model of alliance bargaining, affirms this concept of basing as enhancing the stronger ally's power projection capability, which in turn increases its autonomy.⁷ These benefits need to be considered against the costs of basing, such as rent and aid to the host nation as well as potential and unwanted entanglements in the host nation's conflicts.⁸ For conceptual clarity, we assume that the basing nation wants to increase basing access.

Second, the argument implies that host nation governments face a trade-off between economic and security benefits and legitimacy and sovereignty costs. This assumption is non-trivial and contrasts with the current thinking on external threats. The extant literature presumes that the probability of basing access is monotonically increasing in the degree of external threat. That is to say, low levels of external threat lead to, on average, increased basing access. A high level of threat also leads to higher basing access. Although high external threat may lead to more bases than low external threat, regardless of the severity of the threat the major takeaway is that it always leads to increased access. Our argument implies that the dynamics of internal threats are different and therefore merit standalone analysis.

The major actor in the argument is the host nation. In particular, the primary decision-makers are the host nation politicians who have the final say on the degree of foreign base access. These politicians make strategic

calculations on the trade-offs to increasing or decreasing foreign military base access. Their primary concern is maintaining political power. Once political power is secured, politicians will reap the benefits of bases. The analysis, therefore, proceeds with an emphasis on host nation politicians' political survival as a primary objective. Once this objective has been met, economic, social, and political benefits to (increased or decreased) basing will accrue.

We can describe two major benefits to host nations (and their politicians) from increasing basing access: economic benefits and security benefits. Economic benefits can come directly through lease payments as foreign aid or loans. For example, Harkavy (1989) finds a link between US and Soviet economic assistance and the states where each superpower had their respective bases during the Cold War.⁹ Calder (2007) shows that economic assistance increases to countries that host new US bases and declines when countries reject US bases.¹⁰ Host nations not only derive economic benefit on the aggregate level, but local politicians can also siphon off rents from the government through corruption. Cooley (2012) documents extensive corruption of assistance projects by local officials in Kyrgyzstan associated with the US air base in Manas.¹¹ Increased foreign base access also yields indirect economic benefits. For example, the (now defunct) Kharkov agreement signed by Russia and Ukraine in 2010 extended Russia's lease of its Black Sea Fleet base in Crimea by 25 years in exchange for a 30% subsidy in the price of Russian natural gas.

The host nation (and its politicians) also accrues security benefits from increased basing access. Hosting a foreign military base is likely to improve the capacity of the host nation's military through security cooperation programs that include foreign military sales and loans, access to advanced military technology, joint training and exercises, donation of excess material, or shared intelligence. Harkavy (1989) finds a strong correlation for both the United States and the Soviet Union between the nations hosting their foreign basing and the recipients of their respective arms sales and security assistance programs.¹² Calder (2007) confirms that this trend has continued to hold true for the US into the contemporary era.¹³ Holmes (2014), in a study of social unrest around military bases in Germany and Turkey, sees the willingness of host nation populations to tolerate foreign basing as a function of the legitimacy of protection against external threats and the amount of collateral local harm (criminal, environmental, militarist, etc.).¹⁴ But the most important security benefit for host nation politicians is the military support and physical protection the bases provide against violent movements seeking to overthrow them.

On the other hand, host nations (and the politicians that comprise them) also face costs to allow greater base access. After all, if increased basing was purely beneficial, then every country would want to have as many bases as possible, which is clearly not the case. They face two types of cost: sovereignty costs and legitimacy costs. The *sovereignty* cost of hosting a foreign military base is that the host-nation regime is constrained in its strategic autonomy. The price of the credible commitment device of a foreign military base is that it cannot be easily overthrown. A country which hosts a large contingent of foreign troops, and thus an implicit threat of military force, is not free to do whatever it wants. The basing-state has leverage over the host-nation with regard to its foreign policies. For example, the presence of the military base makes it less likely that the host-nation will leave the alliance orbit of the basing-state and join a rival bloc.

In addition to this loss of sovereignty, host-nation regimes can pay audience costs in terms of *legitimacy* due to the presence of a foreign base. If the foreign base is perceived by the local population as not contributing to their national security (and to relate this to the point above, even view bases as an affront to the host nation's sovereignty), then they are likely to view the government that is allowing it as less legitimate. An initial loss of legitimacy may also have a snowball effect, as initial downturns in public opinion embolden opposition groups, such as anti-basing movements, to speak out against the bases, further increasing legitimacy costs. These legitimacy costs hurt local politicians because a loss of legitimacy may lead directly to a loss of votes at the ballot box and a loss of political power. Furthermore, a host nation politician may become so unpopular that he or she is no longer able to effectively implement policy in a democratic country.

Under what conditions then, do the economic and security benefits outweigh the sovereignty and legitimacy costs? We argue that under conditions of low internal threat the economic and security benefits outweigh the sovereignty and legitimacy costs, increasing access. Under conditions of high internal threat, sovereignty and legitimacy costs are greater than the aforementioned benefits, decreasing access. When internal threat is high, for example violent insurgent and separatist movements or coups that may have a reasonable chance of overthrowing the government, politicians value political survival over potential legitimacy and sovereignty costs. Survive today and fix your reputation tomorrow.

On the other hand, when internal threat is low – that is to say, when opposition movements and even separatist or revolutionary movements are present but too weak to credibly threaten an overthrow of government, basing access decreases. This is because politicians expect to still remain in power for the foreseeable future (no one will overthrow them), if they play the political game right. Political power, then, is not primarily a function of political survival but of public support and legitimacy. It is democratic politics as usual. In this case, politicians are more concerned with the sovereignty and legitimacy costs that sway public opinion, and thus dealing with domestic populist backlash and political narratives, than with the potential benefits of bases. Economic and security benefits matter, but if politicians face too much backlash and are voted out of office, they do not get to reap these benefits in the future.

The argument outlined above therefore leads to two testable hypotheses:

H1: When internal threat is low, sovereignty and legitimacy costs outweigh economic and security benefits, hence foreign military basing access decreases.

H2: When internal threat is high, economic and security benefits outweigh sovereignty and legitimacy costs, hence foreign military basing access increases.

Finally, we address an important scope condition of our theory. Our argument is primarily operational when the host nation faces a lax security environment. We believe that states prioritize external threats over internal ones, all else being equal. When facing an acute external threat states will seek foreign military assistance and basing access should increase, regardless of the internal threat environment. However, when a host-nation faces a relatively benign external security environment, as the Philippines did throughout most of the Cold War, we expect variation in internal threat to drive foreign basing outcomes.

Materials and Methods

In order to test these hypotheses, we conduct process tracing case studies of Philippine history from 1965 to 1991 to examine how changes in the intensity of internal threat related to changes in US basing access. We divide this period into four sub-cases:

- (1) **1965–79:** The rise of the Communist Party of Philippines (CPP) and its militant wing, the New People's Army (NPA), as a low-level internal threat coincided with President Marcos' demands for a renegotiated treaty and reduced US military access.
- (2) **1979–1983:** The CPP-NPA grew to a significant military threat which shifted the Marcos regime's priorities from legitimacy to security, resulting in base negotiations that maintained US basing access.
- (3) **1986–1988:** The overthrow of the Marcos dictatorship by an anti-basing Aquino created a most-likely case for the base closure. But the continued high level of Communist insurgent threat led the Aquino regime to maintain US basing access.
- (4) **1988–1991:** In this period, the Communist threat declined while Aquino was personally threatened by a series of attempted military coups. This led to a divided principal problem where the executive branch pushed for continued American basing while the Philippine Senate capitalized on the broader security lull brought about by the end of the Cold War and decline of the CPP threat to finally terminate US permanent basing in the Philippines.

Why Process-tracing?

While cross-national quantitative tests provide support for the generalizability of a theory, they do not necessarily illuminate the causal mechanisms that bring about the change in the dependent variable. It is in this regard that qualitative case studies can be especially useful. In addition to the expected change in the main dependent variable (access), we should observe other phenomena consistent with the theorized causal process. These observable implications provide credence that the theorized process is actually happening.

Our theory predicts that the occurrence of low-intensity internal conflict makes it likely that a state will reduce foreign access and the more the internal threat increases the more amenable the regime is to the foreign military presence. This raises the question of where best to test this theory. When internal conflict occurs in the absence

of preexisting foreign access it is difficult to know if the theory is operating since there is nothing to observe externally. Without detailed insider accounts from both the would-be basing-state and potential host-nation, there is no observable evidence that a request for foreign basing access was ever considered. Therefore, the best cases to observe the effects of internal conflict on basing are countries in which foreign military access predates the onset of civil conflict. Figures 1 and 2 below illustrate the processes and observable implications of internal threats in states with already existing foreign basing.

What Is a Military Base?

To begin an exploration of the politics of foreign military bases it is useful to have some basic shared understandings. What is foreign military basing? We define a foreign military base as a *foreign location* from which troops conduct *military operations* in the *basing-state interest*. This definition is more narrow than “foreign military access,” which in addition to bases and facilities includes “aircraft overflight rights, port visit privileges (often not involving any permanent military presence by the user), and the use of offshore anchorages within sovereign maritime limits.”¹⁵ These temporary accesses are too fleeting to constitute a base. Foreign military basing is also a more robust concept than mere foreign “deployments” which refer only to the movement of personnel and equipment, but not the status of the operating location.

Why the Philippines?

There are good reasons to choose the Philippines to test the relationship between civil conflict and foreign military access. It has experienced significant within-case variation on both the independent and dependent variables. In the last fifty years, the Philippines has seen the rise and stagnation of a major Communist insurgency and concluded several basing agreements with the United States ejecting the US military entirely.¹⁶ This variation in internal security conditions creates an opportunity for within-case comparison. By examining the same country at different time periods, we can hold constant the potentially confounding factors of culture, geography, and historical background.

A within-case analysis of the Philippines is also compelling because it represents a least-likely case for the theorized mechanisms to work. Philippine economic dependence on the US-made base closure a risky proposition. By 1988, “the bases employed seventy thousand Filipinos, more than the nation’s ten leading corporations combined, contributing more than a billion dollars a year in revenues, double the total amount of foreign investment in the country.”^[1] A declassified CIA estimate, however, put the US bases’ employment around 40,000 and overall economic impact closer to 500 USD million or 1.5% of the national income.^[2] Regardless of the exact figures, US military presence was incredibly important to the Philippine economy. Moreover, in domestic surveys, a majority of Filipinos held a favorable view of the United States and supported a continued US presence. These factors would have provided resistance to the closure of the US bases in 1992. Similarly, the legacy of US colonialism and the rift in the relationship caused by acrimonious basing negotiations made the return of US forces unlikely. The value of this least-likely case is if the theory we propose bears out under these conditions then it is likely to hold in many other contexts.

Another benefit of a Philippine case study and contribution of this article is the unique access we had to key figures in Philippine government decision making. We interviewed Teodoro “Teddy Boy” Locsin, Jr, the current Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs and former speechwriter and political advisor to President Corazon Aquino. To balance his pro-American, conservative view, we also interviewed Francisco Nemenzo, a Marxist political scientist and former president of the University of the Philippines-Diliman (UP). UP, the most elite university in the nation, was at the epicenter of the First Quarter Storm student protest that led to Marcos’ declaration of martial law in 1972 as well as Aquino’s People Power revolution and the anti-base movement. Nemenzo, a leading socialist thinker, also served as an informal political advisor to President Aquino; his interview represented the views of the Philippine Left. Because Aquino also faced a major political challenge and several coups from ultra-right officers who came out of the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM) within the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), we interviewed a former RAM officer who was a Philippine Military Academy classmate of several of the coup-plotters.

Finally, the scope of activities of the US bases in the Philippines is appropriate to test a theory of access and internal threat. These bases, such as Clark Field and Subic Naval Station, were primarily oriented toward external

threats to the United States and did not, of themselves, directly aid the Philippines in countering internal threats. However, by allowing these bases, the Philippine Armed Forces (PAF) gained access to advanced technology through military aid which enabled their fight against the Communist insurgents. A prime example of this technology transfer were the military helicopters and transport aircraft which the United States made available to the PAF which greatly increased their tactical flexibility and reach into the mountain and island rebel strongholds. Furthermore, US bases facilitated sharing of intelligence, regular exercises, and training of Philippine ground forces by elite US Special Forces trainers, as well as the regular maintenance and logistical upkeep of American-made war material.¹⁷

Results: Case Studies

Background

The US-Philippine relationship is one of the most complex and surprising bonds in international politics. The Philippines was one of the few true colonies of the United States, yet it is one of the most pro-American countries in the world today. From its initial acquisition during the Spanish-American War through the Japanese invasion in World War II, the United States kept a regular military presence in the Philippines. Philippine liberation from the Japanese in 1945 was followed by formal independence 1 year later, although it was still a dependent independence. The elected president of the newly sovereign nation, Manuel Roxas, was MacArthur's handpicked choice. This dependency would take its clearest form in the 1947 basing agreement in which Roxas, fearing a complete US withdrawal, granted the United States 99-year leases for Clark Field and Subic Bay as well as complete legal jurisdiction not only over American service-members, but even Filipinos working on the bases. The political tensions over these leases would define the US-Philippine security relationship for the next 40-plus years.

The Philippines: 1968–1979: Brewing Revolution and Reduced US Access

In this period from the late 1960s to late 1970s, the Philippine government faced a low intensity but growing revolutionary Communist insurgency. Our theory expects that the legitimacy pressures facing Marcos would make him more willing to put at risk the security benefits (joint training, shared technology, & defense guarantees) as well as direct economic rents that attend foreign military basing. This expected outcome is largely what came about as President Marcos reduced US basing access and used the military basing agreement (MBA) negotiations with the United States to champion Philippine sovereignty, rally elite support, and undermine the populist critiques of the Communist revolutionaries. Moreover, this period also demonstrates other observable implications of the suggested causal process: a critique of foreign military access by opposition groups, the regime's turn toward domestic populism and foreign policy independence, and the use of nationalism as a public justification for the access reduction.

The beginning of the end of the US military presence in the Philippines started, ironically, with the election of the vocally pro-American Ferdinand Marcos in 1965 who first rose to prominence by giving a speech calling for greater cooperation with the United States.¹⁸ America had its "man in Manila," but like many allies, Marcos would prove to be less controllable than Washington hoped. Unfortunately, while Marcos' dependence on American support created leverage for the United States, it also created domestic legitimacy problems for the Philippine president. Despite his erstwhile pro-American support, when Marcos began to question the value of the US bases in 1975, he was being buffeted by nationalistic cross-breezes and growing revolutionary threat.

Consistent with the global trend of decolonization and anti-imperialism, the winds of change had begun to blow in the Philippines. Although skepticism toward the role of the United States grew across the various left-wing and student groups, it took its most virulent form in the radical nationalism of the Communist Party of Philippines (CPP) and its militant wing, the New People's Army (NPA). Founded in 1968 with only 60 fighters and 35 rifles, the CPP-NPA was a Maoist-inspired movement that advocated a people's democratic revolution as the solution to the Philippine's three major problems, which it viewed as US imperialism, bureaucratic capitalism, and feudalism.¹⁹ In the spirit of the 1950s Huk rebellion, the CPP-NPA focused on mobilizing the rural peasantry in the countryside through the assassination of government officials, bourgeoisie land owners, and other "enemies of the people." Although the killings reached more than one hundred per year in several provinces, "the peasant uprising the CPP hoped for did not materialize."²⁰ In 1970, the CPP-NPA took advantage of the

student protests and leftist demonstrations known as the First Quarter Storm to gain members and momentum. A year later, the group carried out its most high-profile attack by lobbing grenades at a Liberal Party rally in Manila, killing nine, and wounding ninety-five people.²¹

In response, Marcos immediately suspended the writ of habeas corpus and, in 1972, imposed martial law. Although the US Central Intelligence Agency assessed that the CPP-NPA was “unlikely to become a serious threat to the Marcos government in the foreseeable future,”²² Marcos used the Communist threat as an excuse to stay in power and brutally stifle all political opposition while enriching himself and his family through blatant corruption. Martial law forced the CPP-NPA underground after a number of its leaders were arrested, including the group’s founder.²³ At the same time, these heavy-handed tactics kept the communist revolution at a simmer by alienating increasingly wider segments of the Philippine population and setting the stage for a revolutionary resurgence after martial law was lifted in 1981.

During this same period, Marcos was also reducing United States access to bases in the Philippines.²⁴ Spanning multiple US presidential administrations, Marcos dragged out basing negotiations until he finally signed a formal agreement in 1979. This agreement significantly decreased the level of US military access in the country. First, the agreement required the leasing period to be renegotiated every 5 years until the original treaty termination date of 1991. This provided further extortion opportunities for Marcos and introduced more uncertainty into the US strategic posture. Second, the agreement emphasized Philippine sovereignty. A Philippine base commander was appointed over each base and the Philippine-armed forces were made exclusively responsible for all perimeter security. These concessions significantly reduced the US military’s freedom of action on the bases. Finally, in terms of actual access, the United States ceded back to the Philippines 92% of the original 130,000 acres at Clark Air Base and 60% of the 62,000 acres at Subic Bay.²⁵ This change was significant given that the US military presence in the Philippines at the time was the fifth largest in the world and the third largest in Asia.²⁶ The details of this agreement show that foreign military access did decrease in line with our theory. Furthermore, there were several other observable implications consistent with our theory of foreign military access and civil conflict.

As indicated in Figure 1, we should observe anti-basing grievances as part of the opposition’s rhetoric and propaganda. That is certainly the case here. The NPA’s founding manifesto claimed, “the basic condition of the Philippines today is that of a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country, dominated by the US imperialists, the comprador bourgeoisie, the land-lords, and the bureaucrat capitalists. These vested interests mercilessly exploit the broad masses of the people.”²⁷ Although the anti-Americanism of the Communists was based on broader political and economic factors, US military bases were a tangible symbol of the unequal relationship between America and its former colony. The phrase “US-Marcos Dictatorship,” used by political dissidents and left-wing activists, even became accepted shorthand by Philippine conservatives for the illegitimate fusion of the Marcos regime and American military presence.

If Marcos had lost legitimacy through the opposition’s attacks on his dependence on US military support, did he recognize this loss and seek to mitigate it? Yes, although the situation was not so simple

Low Intensity Internal Conflict and Foreign Basing Access

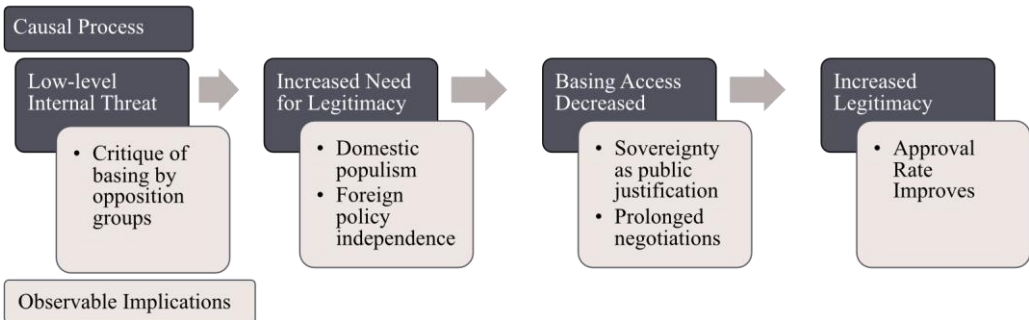


Figure 1. Process tracing of low-intensity conflict and foreign basing.

High Intensity Internal Conflict and Foreign Basing Access



Figure 2. Process tracing of high-intensity conflict and foreign basing.

that Marcos could prioritize “butter” over “guns” and shift government spending away from defense as might be expected with a democratic regime. For Marcos, the Armed Forces of Philippines was a vital part of his winning coalition and indispensable for maintaining the decade-long martial law. However, to address domestic legitimacy concerns, Marcos made a tepid effort at reform. He launched the New Society program in 1972, the most sweeping land reform program to date, which broke up the power of the landed elite in the provinces. He also pledged to streamline government and stamp out corruption, although that initiative amounted to little in the end.²⁸ As one CIA report opined during the initiation of martial law, “Marcos, however, must be careful to tread a careful line – accomplishing enough to prevent the reemergence of cynicism and serious disillusionment on the part of the populace as a whole without appearing to threaten the vested interests of the wealthy.”²⁹ Although he walked this line for more than a decade, Marcos became trapped in a vicious circle. To maintain political office, Marcos instituted martial law with the support of the military and right-wing oligarchs. This made him dependent on these groups and US military support at the same time that it undermined his popular support and attracted unwanted attention from the US regarding his administration’s violation of human rights.

In foreign policy, Marcos sought a balance between maintaining unwavering US support while projecting an image of standing up for Philippine sovereignty. He did this primarily by dragging out basing agreement negotiations and publicly highlighting base-related accidents.³⁰ Marcos also cozied up to Moscow, visited Beijing in 1975 to normalize relations, and encouraged members of his government to denounce US bases as symbols of neocolonialism. The epitome of Marcos’ impudence came in 1978 when he signed a nonaggression, non-subversion pact with Communist Vietnam.³¹ Marcos’ actions played to multiple audiences, simultaneously disheartening the Maoist cadres in the countryside, bolstering his reputation among Filipino nationalists, and demonstrating to Washington that he might be willing to walk away from their protection. In both his domestic and foreign policy, Marcos clearly sought to make up for the loss of legitimacy stemming from his dependence on America.

Consistent with the expectations of the hypothesized process depicted in Figure 1, there is clear evidence that Marcos publicly explained the 1979 basing agreement as an enhancement of Philippine sovereignty. In addition to substantive fights over operational access and military assistance amounts, the Marcos government fought hard during the negotiations for symbolic changes such as flying the Philippine flag in front of the bases and appointing Philippine base commanders, which Marcos pointed to as evidence of regained sovereignty.³² In an address to the national legislature just days after signing, Marcos trumpeted the sovereignty provisions of the agreement. Titled “The Final Liberation,” Marcos speech claimed that “Where in the past, we were in doubt as to who ruled these bases within our borders, today there is no question that our people and our country are sovereign. I know what it means when you see your flag flying over that base.”³³ Marcos justified the continued American presence in terms of the historic level of promised aid and proclaimed that the agreement “completes the liberation of the Philippines.”³⁴ These statements indicate that Marcos was cognizant of and motivated by the nationalist legitimacy problem presented by the American military presence.

An alternative story to the one we propose is that Marcos was playing a two-level strategy where his public posturing about national sovereignty simply intended to extract greater rents from the Americans. This contrary argument does not explain why Marcos rejected an unprecedentedly large offer in 1976 that would double what they eventually agreed upon in 1979.³⁵ It is also illogical that Marcos would have demanded a reduction in the US operating area or insisted on Philippine base commanders and guards if his only goal was to maximize base compensation.

Although martial law makes it more difficult to assess whether the change in foreign military access had the hypothesized effect of increasing the regime's legitimacy we can infer from Marcos's own actions that he thought the base concessions increased his legitimacy. Although he was not constitutionally required to submit the basing agreement to the national legislature, "he was motivated to make a major address before the legislature both to address the criticisms directed at the amendment . . . and to ensure that widespread coverage of his views on the amendment were presented in the local press."³⁶ Marcos also continued to brag publicly about his defense of Philippine sovereignty, even citing the negotiations as one of the regime's accomplishments in his 1981 speech lifting martial law.³⁷ Overall, the numerous observable implications documented above indicate that the Communist insurgency simmering beneath the placid surface of martial law contributed to the pressure on the Marcos regime to reduce American military access. Soon, though, this brewing revolution would boil over into full-fledged rebellion, with dramatic consequences for the Marcos regime.

The Philippines 1979–1983: Increasing Intensity & Continued US Access

The period from the 1979 basing agreement to the extension agreement in 1983 saw an increase in the intensity of Communist threat. The theoretical expectation then is that we should see an increase or at least continuity of foreign military access. An observable implication of this theoretical process is that the negotiations should be as quick and quiet as possible to maximize military assistance while reducing public scrutiny. Consistent with these expectations US military basing was maintained, and the basing negotiations were concluded much more swiftly and amicably than previous negotiations.

Though Marcos' heavy-handed tactics sought to quell the communist threat, they actually only increased it. As historian H.W. Brands writes, "From its founding in 1969 until the summer of 1972 the NPA had caused the government trouble, but not enough to genuinely threaten its overthrow. In outlawing dissent Marcos became the NPA's most effective recruiting officer."³⁸ The CPP-NPA membership was on a dramatic rise in the early 1980s to reach a peak of more than 25,000 fighters.³⁹

Whereas in 1972, the NPA only had a presence in a few provinces by the mid-1980s they had spread across the archipelago, had enough strength to form battalions in Samar and Northern Luzon and had even infiltrated the traditional Muslim province of Mindanao.⁴⁰ Most significantly, martial law had the perverse consequence of giving the CPP-NPA a foothold in the cities as antipathy toward Marcos united university students, labor unions, and even faithful Catholics.⁴¹ At the peak of the conflict in 1985, more than 1,200 Philippine military and police were being killed annually. While the Philippine government may not have been literally battling for the capital, clearly faced a high intensity, revolutionary conflict that would fall in the "Battle for the Capital" category. This impacted the Marcos government as it reentered basing renewal negotiations with the Reagan administration.

In stark contrast to the interminable basing negotiations of the 1970s that drug on for years, the 1983 talks were concluded in less than 2 months. This new agreement maintained the sovereignty provisions of the 1979 deal along with a "best effort" pledge by the Reagan administration to secure an increased aid package of almost 900 USD million.⁴² While this largesse undoubtedly sped up negotiations, Marcos had rejected an even larger offer from Kissinger almost a decade earlier. The more threatening internal security environment undoubtedly motivated both the beleaguered Marcos and virulently anti-Communist Reagan to prolong US military presence. In stark contrast to the self-congratulatory stance 1979, Marcos publicly downplayed the 1983 extension. We can find no mention of American bases in his 1984 State of the Nation address or in any other major presidential addresses from 1983 to 1984.⁴³ Consistent with our theoretical expectations, both administrations prioritized security over legitimacy and continued US military access. Also consistent with the expected observable implications, they did so with speed and little public fanfare. While this outcome may seem overdetermined by Marcos' long history as a US client, US-Philippine relations in the Aquino era provides a harder test of this theory.

The Philippines 1986–1988: Dual Threats and Aquino's "Open Options" Policy

The period from 1986 to 1988 provides a strong test for the theory we propose. The incoming president had a public anti-basing position and without considering the security threat one might conclude that US basing access was in danger. However, the Philippines continued to face a robust Communist revolutionary threat as well as

right-wing coup attempts. Consistent with our theory and in spite of counterpressure within her coalition the new president maintained American military basing.

The election of the liberal Corazon Aquino in 1986 marked a major turning point in Philippine democratic development and relations with the United States. Aquino, the widow of a popular senator assassinated after returning from exile in America in 1983, swept into office on a wave of “People Power” that had been building up during a decade of Marcos’ authoritarianism. Opposition to the US bases was one of the motivating factors uniting the dissident movement that brought Aquino into power. Ridding the Philippines of US military bases and charting an independent foreign policy was a central goal in the stated policy agenda of the National Democratic Front, the above-ground political organization of the CPP.⁴⁴ While the anti-basing movement had previously predominated only in the radical fringe of Philippine politics, by the time of Aquino’s election the brazen collusion between an unscrupulous US foreign policy and the venally brutal Marcos regime had moved the issue to the mainstream.⁴⁵ This placed great pressure on Aquino to distance herself from all aspects of the Marcos regime. Prior to her election, Aquino herself had signed an opposition statement calling for the withdrawal of US bases.⁴⁶ The CIA worried in the run-up to the election about how she would rule, as she had “adopted a foreign policy platform that leaves in doubt the future of US military facilities.”⁴⁷ Her popular movement united very disparate elements of Filipino politics. Her coalition included leftists, liberal bourgeoisie, conservative-landed elites, and even the reformist RAM officers within the Armed Forces of Philippines (AFP). These factions were united only around their opposition to Marcos. Aquino, a political novice with no legislative record, provided a conveniently blank slate upon which each group could project their own aspirations.

Though Aquino rode into office on a wave of popular legitimacy and international goodwill, she was soon forced to make real policy choices. The first major decision concerned drafting a new constitution in 1986. Despite the advice of some of her advisors that she should control the drafting process for her own political gain, Aquino appointed an independent Constitutional Commission representing a wide political spectrum.⁴⁸ A consequence of this high-minded decision was that anti-base activists were able to insert two poison-pill provisions for US military access – first, declaring the Philippines a nuclear-weapons-free-zone, and second, banning foreign military bases after 1991.⁴⁹

Despite her earlier base opposition and the structural constraints imposed by the new constitution, Aquino’s abandoning her clear anti-basing position for the 1988 “Open Options” policy that included a three-year access extension and left open the possibility of continued US access past the 1991 agreement termination date.⁵⁰ While this policy turnabout was likely influenced by pressure from *illustrado* elites who benefited from US presence, it also clearly aligned with our theoretical expectations of the security situation. In the face of continued high-level internal security threats from both CPP-NPA and right-wing radical coup-plotters, Aquino chose to continue foreign military access despite countervailing pressure from the left-wing of her coalition.

Communist fighting strength climaxed in the post-EDSA period. Popular frustration with the venality and incompetence of the Marcos regime combined with the reduced repression of the fledgling Aquino government allowed the Communist movement to reach the apex of its power.

Although Aquino embarked on a new strategy that addressed the underlying political and socio-economic causes of the conflict, these reforms took time to show an effect. In 1986, she offered a ceasefire, released a number of Marcos-era political prisoners, and began the first peace negotiations.⁵¹ While this policy would eventually undercut the Communists’ appeal, in the meantime, the CPP-NPA remained an acute threat for which the Philippines needed US military assistance.

In addition to the continued Communist threat, the Aquino regime faced another existential threat in the form of right-wing military coups. While a regime facing a traditional rebellion turns to the military to protect it, during coups the revolutionaries are the national army which threaten the unarmed civilian government. This makes the civilian regime’s need for external military assistance even more dire. In the case of the Philippines, Aquino’s attempts to accommodate and undermine the Communist revolutionaries made her vulnerable to charges of being soft on Communism and provoked a threat from the right. One former reform movement officer reported to me that there was widespread belief in the AFP that the Aquinos were in league with the Communists.⁵² Ninoy Aquino had acted as an emissary for the government to the original Huk leader, Luis Taruc, in 1954.⁵³ Equally galling for the conservative military establishment, Aquino was seen as bringing into the government many of the socialists who had supported her People Power revolution. According to Locsin, “Ms. Aquino’s closest advisors were nationalists, leftists, those are the ones who really fought Marcos.”⁵⁴

Prompted by this fear of socialist influence, former Reform of the Armed Forces Movement (RAM) officers, led by a charismatic Special Forces officer Gregorio “Gringo” Honasan, launched five armed coups against Aquino in her first 2 years in office.⁵⁵ Although these were quickly put down, the most serious with the assistance of the US military, they demonstrated how vulnerable Aquino would be if she radically changed the Philippines’ security relationships. Locsin explained that he advised Aquino to maintain close ties with the United States because “the army has an instinctive fear of the United States.” He claimed, “I’m wrapping her in the American flag because that’s the only way we can keep her safe from the Army.”⁵⁶ When the Bush administration responded to the December 1989 coup with a US F-4 Phantom flyover of rebel camps, this underscored the perception of Aquino as an American “creation” and was derided by opposition nationalists as “naked American coercive intervention in Philippine internal affairs.”⁵⁷

As predicted by our theory, both the Communist and right-wing threats pushed Aquino to maintain US military access. A rupture of the military relationship with the United States would not only have weakened Corazon Aquino’s negotiating position with the rebels and weakened the counterinsurgency fight but would have given even more ammunition to her critics on the right. However, as the threat environment began to change, so did the calculus of Philippine political actors.

The Philippines 1988–1991: Divided Principal and Asymmetry of Threat

The period leading up to the expulsion of US forces fits with the expectations of the theory we propose, although there was a preference divergence between the executive and legislative branches of the Philippine government. While the Philippine senate rejected an extension of the basing treaty and sought to reduce US access, President Aquino campaigned to keep US bases for at least 10 more years. This difference may be explained by the fact that while the Communist insurgent no longer posed a strong threat to the nation and its democratic *form* of government, the continued threat of military coups posed enough of a threat to Aquino as the *head* of government that she saw the necessity of maintaining US support.

The 1988 agreement did not make any final decisions on the long-term presence of US forces, but merely kicked the can down the road. By the time base negotiations resumed in 1990, the security situation had shifted. CPP-NPA strength was half what it had been at the height of the conflict. Aquino’s conciliatory approaches had undercut the legitimacy of CPP grievances and separated more moderate leftists from the group. The CPP founder, Jose Maria Sison, had fled into exile and CPP-backed parties had participated unsuccessfully in the 1987 elections. Aquino’s “gradual constriction” counterinsurgency campaign so severely depleted the CPP-NPA’s ranks that they scrapped the “strategic counter-offensive” program and retreated back into “protracted peoples’ war.”⁵⁸ Popular perceptions of the Communist threat were also on the decline. A public opinion survey in September 1989 found that the percentage of Filipinos who thought the Communist insurgency was a threat had dropped 12 points since February.⁵⁹ Although the CPP-NPA never had strong links with the Soviets, the end of the Cold War and collapse of the Soviet Union demoralized Communist subversives and called into question the long-term attractiveness of their political program.

The revolutionary threat from the ultra-right, however, had not gone away. After the last coup in 1990 had been put down, the coup leaders were forced underground. While the coups failed because they lacked broader political support, these elements still constituted a threat.⁶⁰ Although they disagreed on most everything else, both of her former advisors Locsin and Nemenzo agreed that President Aquino viewed the far-right as a bigger threat than the Communists. According to Nemenzo, “from the point of view of Mrs. Aquino, I think she was so scared of the RAM. The radical wing of the RAM. She was mortally scared of Honasan.”⁶¹

The declining intensity of the revolutionary threat exacerbated Aquino’s political legitimacy concerns while the continued fear of right-wing coups made her reliant on US military support. This tension led Aquino to sign in August 1991 the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Security with the United States. Seeking to balance legitimacy and military challenges, the treaty called for the gradual withdrawal of US forces from the Philippines over the next 10 years while maintaining US aid.⁶²

In a stunning assertion of nationalism, this compromise agreement was rejected by the Philippine Senate. Unlike Aquino, the Senators were not directly threatened by the military coups and so were more attuned to the legitimacy concerns tied to the Communist insurgency. Senator Wigberto “Bobby” Tanada was a key legislative figure in the defeat of the base agreement and was the main connection between the anti-base movement and

the Senate.⁶³ In 1990, Tanada had spearheaded a campaign for political negotiations with the CPP-NPA.⁶⁴ To accomplish this goal, he would need to unite left and center political organizations. The issue of US military bases represented just such a bridging issue that could increase his standing and undercut the Communist negotiating position.

In order for the anti-basing movement to be effective, it needed to move the basing issue from being an elite concern to one the mass populace cared about. Nemenzo credits Sen. Joseph “Erap” Estrada with mobilizing popular support against the bases.⁶⁵ Estrada was a former action movie star, a Philippine Chuck Norris, who used his ability to communicate theoretical ideas in common language to mobilize nationalistic sentiment. By March 1990, the percentage of Filipinos who supported extending the bases past 1991 had dropped to under 30%.⁶⁶ This popular mobilization was key in changing the Senate dynamics from the three senators who opposed the 1979 basing agreement to the 12 who voted down the 1991 agreement. Exploiting the window of opportunity created by lowered internal security threat, the anti-base movement was able to influence Philippine senators who had been newly empowered by Aquino’s constitutional reform.⁶⁷

Clearly, this case supports the theory of foreign military access and civil conflict that we propose. The variation in the dependent and independent variables corresponds with our theory, as US military access was reduced alongside a declining level of internal threat. We also observe other indications of the theorized process. Regaining sovereignty was a major rhetorical justification for the reduction of military access. Also, the opposition senators gained a legitimacy boost from the US withdrawal of forces.

In accordance with the observable implications of the process depicted in Figure 1, when the Philippine Senate rejected the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Security with the United States it did so for explicitly nationalistic reasons. Senate President Jovito Salonga proclaimed that this “may well be the day when we in this Senate found the soul, the true spirit of this nation because we mustered the courage and the will to declare the end of foreign military presence in the Philippines.”⁶⁸ Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, a former defense minister under Marcos, called the treaty “an insult to our race.” He added, “I cannot live with a treaty that assumes that without 8,000 servicemen and some passing warships, we shall fall flat on our faces. I cannot believe that the vitality of this country will be extinguished when the last bargirl in Olongapo turns off the light in the last cabaret.”⁶⁹ Even President Aquino’s brother-in-law, himself a senator, explained that the United States needed to understand “that the lack or absence of authentic sovereignty on our part translates into a very real incapacity to stand on our own feet, a palpable inability to grow up, a political adolescence perpetually tied to the purse strings of America, a crippling dependence, an anachronistic colonial and Cold War mentality.”⁷⁰

Another observable implication of our theorized process is that leaders facing low-intensity internal threats who reduce foreign military access should see an increase in legitimacy. Approval of the Senate as an institution increased by more than 35 percentage points after the treaty rejection, according to public opinion surveys.⁷¹ Furthermore, Wigberto Tanada, as the leader of the “Magnificent 12” senators who voted against the continuation of US military bases, rode his popularity among the Left to become Senate Minority Leader and president of the Liberal Party. Most tellingly, Joseph Estrada was able to translate his popular mobilization on the basing issue into election as Vice President in 1992 and President in 1998.

Overall, is there evidence that security conditions impact foreign military basing in the way that we describe? In addition to fitting the expected input and output variables of our model, this case study is in line with other observable implications that illuminate the causal processes at play. The story of US military presence in the Philippines provides support for the explanation we advance, as the negotiating behavior of both the Marcos and Aquino regimes shifted with changes in the strength of the Communist insurgency. Early in his rule Marcos reduced US access consistent with our expectations of a low-intensity internal threat scenario but maintained the access status quo as we expect of a higher-level internal threat scenario. When Corazon Aquino inherited this scenario, she also maintained the existing access level, despite campaign promises not to. Finally, in 1989–90 as the communist threat intensity level dropped an acute coup threat to the Aquino regime emerged. This threat scenario created a divided actor of the Philippine government. The Aquino presidential administration sought to maintain US basing as it continued to face a high-level threat from military coups, but the Senate, unthreatened by the coups, exploited the security lull to gain domestic legitimacy by rejecting the US basing treaty. Nonetheless, there are other potential factors that could have impacted the US base closure.

Alternative Explanations and Other Factors

The story we have laid out so far with regard to US bases in the Philippines focuses on how variation in security conditions affected Manila's calculation of the benefits and legitimacy costs of foreign bases. There are, however, alternative explanations for the loss of US military access; primarily that the United States lost interest in Philippine bases or that the Philippine government miscalculated and overreached. While these accounts are not completely at odds with the narrative that we advance, they do emphasize the importance of other causal factors. We explore each of these partial truths below and show how they are still compatible with the theory we advance.

The end of the Cold War and the development of range-extending technologies such as aerial refueling and intercontinental ballistic missiles caused American policymakers to reevaluate of the US basing posture. Furthermore, US defense officials certainly took into account the cost of clean-up after the 1991 eruption of Mount Pinatubo in 1991 blanketed with ash first Clark Field and then, less severely, Subic Bay.⁷² However, it would be wrong to conclude that the United States government did not want to continue to maintain bases in the Philippines.

Despite the end of the Cold War, the military bases in the Philippines retained significant grand strategic value for the United States. American planners were developing a post-Cold War grand strategy of unilateral internationalism. Explicated in the leaked 1992 Defense Planning Guidance, this strategic concept sought military preponderance through a combination of defense spending for technological superiority and maintaining peace and stability in regions of potential rivals.⁷³ Central to this strategy was forward military presence in key regions, such as Asia. The specific value of the Philippine bases was affirmed in congressional testimony by Acting Deputy Secretary of Defense for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, RADM (select) M.A. McDevitt who, commented "we do consider it absolutely essential that we maintain a presence in East Asia because we believe we are, and will remain, a Pacific and Asian power. The tyranny of time and distance imposed by the Pacific Ocean, require a forward deployed presence if we want to remain engaged in East Asia. And the mosaic of our base structure in Japan, Korea, and the Philippines contributes to that."⁷⁴

Furthermore, the damage to the bases caused by Mount Pinatubo, though severe, was recoverable. According to Locsin, despite estimates that it might take 20 years to recover, both Clark Field and Subic Bay "was cleaned up a year later."⁷⁵ A study by the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies found that, by 1998, the Clark Special Economic Zone been transformed into a successful industrial park.⁷⁶ It seems clear that the bases could certainly have been made operational again.

While it is true that geo-strategic and geological changes had reduced the value of bases in the Philippines to the United States, the US still desired to maintain those bases. The view from Washington, as expressed by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, was that the bases, while "not vital," were still "extremely desirable" and that learning to live without the bases would be "a difficult and costly undertaking."⁷⁷

Linked with decreased US desire is the second alternative explanation – that Manila simply over- reached. In this telling, the Filipinos misperceived the change in US valuation of the bases and demanded too much compensation.⁷⁸ When the final base agreement reached by US negotiator Richard Armitage and Philippine Foreign Secretary Raul Manglapus reduced US economic assistance down to 203 USD million per year from an initial request of 825 USD million, the Philippine Senate may have risked the gambit of rejecting the treaty in the hope of more favorable terms. Attempts to renegotiate were met by a cold shoulder from Washington, especially the grudge-holding US Defense Secretary Dick Cheney, where the view was that the ungrateful Filipinos were not interested in true security partnership, but only rent extraction. According to this explanation, it is not security conditions that are doing the causal work, but the greed of the Philippine government.

While it is likely true that both the US and Philippine sides misperceived each other's position, this does not negate the role of internal and external threats. Rent extraction and over asking for economic and military assistance has been a constant in basing negotiations between the United States and the Philippines. What changed between 1988 and 1991 was the level of threat. While volcanic explosions, economic assistance demands, and even conflicting personalities acted as proximate causes for the breakdown in the US-Philippine defense relationship, the underlying cause was the slack in the Philippine security situation. Just as Waltz theorized that "wars occur because there is nothing to prevent them," the Philippine Senate devalued the US defense relationship and caved to the voices of the anti-base movement because there was no security

imperative demanding them to act otherwise. As Locsin said of the Philippine mood regarding the bases, “it just went to hell. Nobody cared in the end.”⁷⁹ The benign external environment and low-intensity revolutionary threat meant that nationalistic legitimacy, not increasing security, became the most important value for Philippine decision-makers.

Finally, one may argue for international legitimation as an alternative argument. According to this line of thinking, dictators increase basing access (or form alliances more generally as a way of gaining legitimation from the international community). If this theory explains our findings, we should therefore see an increase in access during the Marcos dictatorship. This is not the case. Consider Marcos’s consolidation of power in the 1970s. Ferdinand Marcos established martial law in 1972 and lifted martial law in 1981. International legitimation would suggest that during that U.S. basing access should increase during period since the new authoritarian regime would want international legitimation. Yet the opposite occurred. In 1979, during martial law and at the height of Marcos’ authoritarian regime, the United States ceded back to the Philippines 92% of the original 130,000 acres at Clark Air Base and 60% of the 62,000 acres at Subic Bay. This was a decrease in access inconsistent with international legitimation theory.

Discussion

This paper has presented a theory of internal threat and foreign military base access. We have argued that when internal threat is low, the costs to legitimacy and sovereignty from foreign bases outweigh their economic and security benefits, leading to a decline in base access. However, when internal threat is high, political survival makes the aforementioned benefits more desirable than legitimacy and sovereignty. We test this theory with a historical analysis of U.S. military bases in the Philippines and show that the facts are consistent with our proposed argument.

The results of this study are relevant to both theory and practice. It advances our understanding of the dynamics of foreign base access by focusing on the variation in internal threats, serving to incorporate domestic politics into international decision-making. Second, the theory and results have clear policy implications. To understand the dynamics of basing, analysts need to move beyond considering external security and economic concerns and move toward incorporating domestic political pressures in their assessments on the determinants of basing and basing policy more broadly.

The arguments of this paper have relevance outside of Southeast Asia and could apply to any host-nation who is also facing internal military threats. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jordan, and Iraq all represent cases where regimes have had to balance the costs and benefits of US military bases in the context of internal threats. For example, in the Middle East, US military presence provides protection against primarily external threats (such as Iran) while potential inflaming jihadist revolutionaries within their borders. Our theory may help explain why US basing in the Kingdom has fluctuated as the Saudi royal family has had to weigh the relative dangers of their neighbors and their citizens.

Still, important questions remain. Our theory does not distinguish between types of internal threat. It is possible that, in the more general sense, coups are different from separatist movements and revolutions. Perhaps political actors care less about the de facto separation of already peripheral (and potentially poor) parts of their country than they do about their own physical safety and grip on power, which is more at-risk from a coup. Furthermore, our theory has not analyzed situations when host countries face internal and external threats simultaneously. Based on our discussion, we would assume that (given the positive relationship between external threat and the benefits of basing) external threats would lower the threshold for when security benefits outweigh legitimacy risks. Still, the theory has not yet been tested empirically. Both outstanding questions serve as potential starting points in a field that is ripe for further exploration.

Notes

- 1 Robert E. Harkavy, *Great Power Competition for Overseas Bases: The Geopolitics of Access Diplomacy* (Pergamon, 1982); James D. Morrow, "Alliances and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances," *American Journal of Political Science* 35, no. 4 (November 1991): 904.; Pettyjohn, Stacie L, *U.S. Global Defense Posture, 1783/2011* (Santa Monica, California: RAND, 2012), 105; Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (Yale University Press, 1966), 56.
- 2 Kent E. Calder, *Embattled Garrisons: Comparative Base Politics and American Globalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 202; Jones, G., and T. Kane, "U.S. Troops and Foreign Economic Growth," *Defense and Peace Economics* 23, no. 3 (June 1, 2012): 225–49; Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (Yale University Press, 1966), 56.
- 3 Geoffrey F. Gresh, *Gulf Security and the U.S. Military: Regime Survival and the Politics of Basing* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2016).
- 4 Lucey, Isabel Coles and Catherine, "Trump Pushes Iraq, Threatens Sanctions After Vote to Expel U.S. Troops," *Wall Street Journal*, January 6, 2020, sec. World. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/iraqi-parliament-votes-in-favor-of-expelling-u-s-troops-11578236473>.
- 5 Rubin, Alissa, "Iraq in Worst Political Crisis in Years as Death Toll Mounts From Protests – The New York Times," *The New York Times*, December 24, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/21/world/middleeast/iraq-protests-iran.html>.
- 6 Robert E. Harkavy, *Great Power Competition for Overseas Bases: The Geopolitics of Access Diplomacy* (Pergamon, 1982); Robert E. Harkavy, *Bases Abroad: The Global Foreign Military Presence* (Oxford University Press on Demand, 1989); Robert E. Harkavy, *Strategic Basing and the Great Powers, 1200–2000* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007).
- 7 James D. Morrow, "Alliances and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances," *American Journal of Political Science* 35, no. 4 (November 1991): 904.
- 8 Lostumbo, Michael J., Michael J. McNerney, Eric Peltz, Derek Eaton, David R. Frelinger, Victoria A. Greenfield, John Halliday, "Overseas Basing of U.S. Military Forces: An Assessment of Relative Costs and Strategic Benefits," Research Report. RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2013. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR201.html; Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics* 36, no. 4 (July 1984): 461–95.
- 9 Harkavy, *Bases Abroad* 349–364.
- 10 Kent E. Calder, *Embattled Garrisons: Comparative Base Politics and American Globalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 202.
- 11 Alexander Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules: The New Power Contest in Central Asia* (Oxford University Press, 2012).
- 12 Harkavy, *Bases Abroad*, ch. 10.
- 13 Calder, *Embattled Garrisons*, 201–206.
- 14 Amy Austin Holmes, *Social Unrest and American Military Bases in Turkey and Germany since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
- 15 Harkavy, Robert E., *Great Power Competition for Overseas Bases: The Geopolitics of Access Diplomacy* (Elsevier, 2013), 14.
- 16 A potential confounding variable is that coincident with the Communist insurgency, the Philippines also experienced an Islamist separatist insurgency from the Moro peoples in its southern islands. However, according to all the subjects we interviewed the Philippine government always viewed the Communists as the central threat. This was due partly to geography; the Moros were concentrated in provinces that are highly remote from the central government. The Moros are political marginalized as Filipino Muslims only constituted about 5% of the population. Finally, the international political context incentivized the Philippine government to prioritize the Communist threat in solidarity with its American ally. In all, this meant that during the Cold War, the Moro separatist movement remained peripheral and the internal

security conditions that mattered most concerned the Communist revolutionaries. It also makes conceptual sense to exclude the separatist movements from our analysis. The persistently very low levels of separatist threat do not provide us with the variation in internal threat necessary for our theory.

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- 18 Henry William Brands, *Bound to Empire: The United States and the Philippines* (Oxford University Press, 1992), 283.
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