

CHAPTER 5

National Defense and the Philippine Security Situation in 2013

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In 2013, the trend of the past few years that called attention to the weaknesses of the capacity of the Philippine defense establishment to address the external security concerns of the country fundamentally continued. Even more importantly, the inadequacy of those same capabilities was exposed when tested in extreme conditions in an area where the Philippines is supposed to be a strong proponent—humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. These contrast starkly with the defense establishment’s involvement in the domestic security situation of the country. Even as the communist insurgency continues to present a blot in the image being established of a government that is increasingly in control of the peace and order situation in the country, it has not really grown beyond the local threat that it has become reduced to over the years since the end of Marcos era in 1986. Even more so, the secessionist movement in Mindanao is moving farther along towards what is hoped would be a lasting political settlement. The shift over the last few years of the national security situation towards external defense has been evident since the accession of the administration of President Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III to power. The problems associated with this development, especially in terms of the country’s ability to adjust to it, is nonetheless a long-term project that cannot and will not be resolved overnight. Over the short term, the Aquino administration is seeking increasing assistance and support from close allies and neighbors, both material and diplomatic, to address these concerns. At present, however, the odds do not favor the Philippines being able to manage its external security affairs in a way that will allow it to develop the capacity to more ably defend its interests and deter perceived threats.

ITLOS and the South China Sea Imbroglio

The Philippines opened 2013 with a submission to the International Tribunal on the Law of the Seas (ITLOS) on 21 January requesting arbitration around issues

revolving around the legality of the “nine-dash line” basis of China’s claim to nearly the whole of the South China Sea as being part of China’s territory. This process entered its next phase on 21 June 2013 when the President of the ITLOS, Shunji Yanai, informed the Solicitor General of the Philippines, Francis Jardeleza, about the completion of the appointments to the five-person tribunal that would hear the Philippines’ complaint over China’s claims over the waters and land features in the South China Sea. The actions of the Philippine government was in response to what it felt was the narrowing of its options in relation to China’s increasing assertiveness in its maritime dispute with the Philippines (and other countries in Southeast Asia) over the South China Sea.

Not surprisingly, China did not take kindly to these actions and refused to participate in the arbitration process. The process will continue through a number of preliminary determinations, the most recent of which is the question of whether the Tribunal has jurisdiction over the case.¹ The most obvious problem of Chinese non-participation is whether a decision that does not favor China can be enforced in the face of Chinese intransigence.² China has in fact taken steps to further assert its claim, a number of which directly targets the Philippines.

It has accused the Philippines of being a “troublemaker” with a number of articles in Chinese newspapers asserting that China will take counter-measures against the Philippines, including preventing attempts to re-supply currently situated Philippine garrisons in the area and outright military action to take the islands and features occupied by these garrisons.³ It has specifically denounced the presence of a miniscule garrison in Second Thomas Shoal (*Ayungin Shoal* to the Philippines and *Ren’ai Reef* to China). The garrison is based on a rusting ship (*BRP Sierra Madre*)

¹ For these different steps and scenarios, see Jay Batongbacal, “The impossible dream and the West Philippine Sea,” *Rappler* (28 January 2013) available at <http://www.rappler.com/thought-leaders/20550-the-impossible-dream-and-the-west-philippine-sea> and downloaded on 30 January 2013.

² There is, however, the argument that should the ITLOS rule in favour of the Philippines, China might find international opprobrium too high a price for it to act against the ruling. See Greg Polling, “Manila Begins Legal Proceedings over South China Sea Claims,” *CSIS Critical Questions* (24 January 2013).

³ See Rafael M. Alunan III, “China’s cabbage strategy,” *Business World Online* (July 08, 2013) available at <http://www.bworldonline.com/content.php?section=Opinion&title=China’s+cabbage+strategy&id=73042> and downloaded on 25 July 2013. The most recent reports of Chinese intentions to use limited military action to seize Philippine-occupied islands in the area came out in January 2014. See Pia Lee-Brago, “China preparing to seize Pag-asa Island—report,” *The Philippine Star* (14 January 2014) available at <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2014/01/14/1278584/china-preparing-seize-pag-asa-island-report> and downloaded on 15 January 2014.

that had been grounded on the shoal since 1999.⁴ The Philippines also protested through diplomatic channels the continued movement of Chinese surveillance ships in waters near islands it currently occupies, and what it referred to as China's effective occupation of Scarborough Shoal, the scene of the months-long standoff between Philippine Coast Guard and Navy vessels, and Chinese marine surveillance vessels in 2012.⁵ China sent its first aircraft carrier, *Liaoning*, to the South China Sea for sea trials on 26 November 2013, accompanied by some of its most capable surface combatants. In the course of its operations it reportedly passed north of the Philippines at the Taiwan Straits on 28 November 2013.⁶ Intensified PLA aerial and naval activities also included a night-time amphibious landing drill staged in the Bohai Gulf and purported aerial demonstrations over the East China Sea.⁷

The declaration by the Chinese government of the establishment of an air defense identification zone (ADIZ) over the East China Sea in November 2013 led to the Philippines raising concerns over a similar zone being established in the South China Sea.⁸ Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert Del Rosario pointed out that there is a threat that China seeks to control the airspace over the South China Sea. He noted that the ADIZ over the East China Sea "transforms an entire air zone into China's domestic air space."⁹ While China has refrained from establishing a

⁴ See Zhang Yunbi and Zhao Yanrong, "Beijing condemns Manila over grounded warship," *China Daily* (31 May 2013) available at <http://ph.news.yahoo.com/beijing-condemns-manila-over-grounded-warship-035002029.html> and downloaded on 10 June 2013.

⁵ See Frances Mangosing, "China committed new violations over West PH Sea—defense chief," *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (3 September 2013) available at <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/84769/china-committed-new-violations-over-west-ph-sea-defense-chief#ixzz2dsN2NHjM> and downloaded on 4 September 2013.

⁶ See Matikas Santos, "China aircraft carrier passed north of PH—report," *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (28 November 2013) available at <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/92589/china-aircraft-carrier-passed-north-of-ph-report#ixzz2lzGm7BCY> and downloaded on 29 November 2013.

⁷ Koh Swee Lean Collin, "Chinese aircraft carrier's debut: Gunboat in the South China Sea?" *RSIS Commentaries No. 220/2013* (2 December 2013).

⁸ As an expression of China's right to self defense, the ADIZ requires airlines operating in the area to submit flight plans before entering airspace over the territory disputed by China with Japan. See Ken Blanchard and Tim Kelly, "Asian airlines to give flight plans to China after airspace zone created," *Reuters* (25 November 2013) available at <http://ph.news.yahoo.com/china-protests-u-japan-criticism-airspace-move-030632992.html> and downloaded on 26 November 2013. Japan, South Korea and the United States have advised air carriers from their respective countries not to comply with the Chinese requirement. In a dangerous example of a high-stakes game of strategic chicken, two US B-52 bombers overflew the area in a blatant challenge for China to enforce its declared ADIZ. China allowed the US planes to pass unmolested. Christopher Bodeen, "China says it monitored defiant US bomber flights," *Associated Press* (28 November 2013) available at <http://www.philstar.com/world/2013/11/28/1261872/china-says-it-monitored-defiant-us-bomber-flights> and downloaded on 28 November 2013.

⁹ AFP, "Philippines fears China wants West PH Sea air control," *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (28 November 2013) available at <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/92583/philippines-fears-china-wants-west-ph-sea-air-control#ixzz2lzHA2e5H> and downloaded on 29 November 2013.

similar zone in the South China Sea,¹⁰ the provincial government of Hainan passed a law requiring fisherfolk plying the South China Sea area to secure a fishing permit from them. The Philippine government has promised to escort Philippine fishermen operating in the South China Sea “if the need arises.”¹¹

Chinese rhetoric about the arrogance of the Philippines fundamentally stems from the ITLOS case.¹² Yet, Manila has defended its course of action by insisting that arbitration is “a peaceful and durable form of dispute settlement pursuant to international law.” In contrast, China has rejected efforts that would involve a third party in the resolution of the disputes, and instead argues that negotiations should be conducted one on one with other claimants. The Philippines has recognized its disadvantage in such talks given the advantage in sheer size of China, especially in terms of the naval and maritime forces it commands. Consequently, it has sought to balance China’s advantage by an appeal to international opinion by referring to the rule of law and international bodies that represent the rule of law. In doing so, however, it has contributed to the difficulty of normalizing official relations between the two countries. In the case of the Philippines, it has raised the importance of strengthening the external defense capability of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

Addressing the External Defense Situation of the Philippines

Among the most important developments that were initiated during the course of the Aquino Administration is the sustained pursuit of raising the capability of the AFP to defend the people, territory, and sovereignty of the Philippines. It is not an exaggeration, however, to note that these efforts would not have been given the

¹⁰ China’s ambassador to the Philippines, Ma Keqing, has said that while she does not know if there are any plans to do so, it is within China’s right to establish such a zone in the South China Sea. See Jim Gomez, “Envoy says China has right to set another air zone,” *Associated Press* (2 December 2013) available at <http://news.yahoo.com/envoy-says-china-set-another-155029935.html> and downloaded on 16 December 2013.

¹¹ Alexis Romero, “Troops ready to secure Pinoy fishermen amid China rules,” *The Philippine Star* (16 January 2014) available at <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2014/01/16/1279551/troops-ready-secure-pinoy-fishermen-amid-china-rules> and downloaded on 17 January 2014.

¹² President Aquino’s attendance in the China-ASEAN Expo in Nanning where the Philippines was the “country of honor” was cancelled with China noting that this should take place at a more conducive time in the future. It was reported, however, that China had set conditions for the Aquino visit including the withdrawal of the case in the ITLOS. See Pia Lee-Brago, “DFA: Conditions for Noy’s China visit inimical to the Philippines,” *The Philippine Star* (3 September 2013) available at <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2013/09/03/1165221/dfa-conditions-noys-china-visit-inimical-phl> and downloaded on 17 January 2014.

attention it has received had not relations with China deteriorated to the level they are now. The concern with the South China Sea has focused attention on defense matters to the largely ignored capacity of the AFP to assert Philippine claims to the Kalayaan Group of Islands and to Scarborough Shoal. These efforts, however, are expected to mature no earlier than 2016.¹³

AFP Modernization. The modernization of the AFP specifically targets those branches that are responsible for external defense. The Navy commissioned its second *Hamilton*-class high endurance cutter (although it is now classified as a frigate in Philippine service) in November 2013. The Philippines has committed itself to further strengthening its maritime patrolling capability as it seeks to purchase more patrol ships from different sources including Italy and South Korea. In fact there were reports that the Philippine Navy was looking into the acquisition of its first missile-armed warships.¹⁴ This is part of what President Aquino has announced as a plan that includes the acquisition of two new frigates, two helicopters capable of antisubmarine warfare, three fast vessels for coastal patrols and eight amphibious assault vehicles by 2017. Assuming that everything would be in place according to plan (and delays are highly likely to happen), these efforts to strengthen the capability of the Philippine Navy will take five years to come to fruition. Negotiations with South Korea over the acquisition of 12 FA-50 fighters and trainers were in their final stages by late 2013.¹⁵ When completed, the Philippines will then take delivery of their first jet fighters since the decommissioning of the last F5A fighters of the Philippine Air Force in 2005. The impact, however, of these measures on the immediate concerns of the Philippines over its maritime territory and the airspace above it is limited. The budget for such purchases is constrained. President Aquino has already promised to commit USD1.82 billion to the modernization of the armed forces. This is less than what has been committed by Singapore to its defense in 2013, and a little more than a tenth of what China has publicly claimed is its defense

¹³ President Aquino has specifically promised that the Philippines would have a modernized air force by 2016. See "Philippine president vows to rebuild air force by 2016," *Agence France Presse* (1 July 2013) available at <http://ph.news.yahoo.com/philippine-president-vows-rebuild-air-force-2016-071138524.html> and downloaded on 2 July 2013.

¹⁴ "New frigates on order, most heavily-armed ships of PH Navy," *The Manila Times* (12 October 2013) available at <http://manilatimes.net/new-frigates-on-order-most-heavily-armed-ships-of-ph-navy/44057/> and downloaded on 17 January 2014.

¹⁵ Alexis Romero, "Phil, S. Korea tackle sticking points in P18.9-B fighter jet deal," *The Philippine Star* (3 December 2013) available at <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2013/12/03/1263620/phil-s.-korea-tackle-sticking-points-p18.9-b-fighter-jet-deal> and downloaded on 4 December 2013.

budget for the same year. Considering the low level at which the process is starting from, these are major strides towards what the AFP has referred to as a minimum credible defense. Nonetheless, it still illustrates the importance to the Philippines of defense and security partners.

Philippines-US security relations. In a forum at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC held on 23 June 2011, Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert Del Rosario emphasized that “the United States remains the Philippines’ foremost strategic ally” and noted that resetting Philippine-U.S. ties “has become an imperative, to allow the alliance to continue to meet domestic goals, while contributing to global stability.”¹⁶ Even as official statements have taken great pains at denying that that it was directed at China,¹⁷ intensifying defense ties that have seen increased numbers of US warships visiting the Philippines in the last two years have clearly affected relations between the Philippines and China in an unhealthy way. Ships making port calls in the Philippines have included aircraft carriers and nuclear attack submarines. The Philippines has welcomed the announcement of the US “pivot” to Asia and is preparing for the regular rotational deployment of US forces to the Philippines. Talks between the two countries on a framework agreement that will provide general guidelines for the latter have been going on since August 2013. The United States has also been the principal source of naval and military equipment for the Philippines. The refurbished *Hamilton*-class high endurance cutters served in the US Coast Guard until they were decommissioned in 2011. More directly, the Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) 2013 exercise held by the US Navy with a number of allies and partners in the region was held near Scarborough Shoal with the Philippine Navy’s flagship the *BRP Gregorio Del Pilar* participating.¹⁸ Talks are also going on between the two countries on the rotational deployment of American forces in the Philippines.¹⁹ This is part of the US

¹⁶ “Secretary del Rosario heralds PHL-US strategic alliance in CSIS forum,” Press release by the Department of Foreign Affairs that was published on 26 June 2011 available at <http://www.gov.ph/2011/06/26/secretary-del-rosario-heralds-phl-us-strategic-alliance-in-csis-forum/> and downloaded on 17 January 2014.

¹⁷ See for example Frances Mangosing, “Defense chief Gazmin: US troops not aimed at China,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (3 September 2013) available at <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/84839/defense-chief-gazmin-us-troops-not-aimed-at-china#ixzz2dsMi0Epn> and downloaded on 4 September 2013.

¹⁸ Nikko Dizon, “US, PH forces off Panatag Shoal,” *The Philippine Daily Inquirer* (27 June 2013) available at <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/78757/us-ph-forces-off-panatag-shoal> and downloaded on 27 June 2013.

¹⁹ This has allowed nationalists to revive the issue of US forces being based in the Philippines and the constitutional issues that this creates. See Tonete Orejas, “UP Prof doubts Hagel’s no-bases line,” *The Philippine Daily Inquirer* (1 September 2013) available at <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/84699/up-prof-doubts-hagels-no-bases-line#ixzz2dsNWmk4u> and downloaded on 4 September 2014.

pivot to Asia (since then referred to as the US rebalancing strategy) announced by then Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton in 2011.²⁰

The relationship with the United States, however, is fully based on the hope that if push comes to shove in the South China Sea, the United States will support the Philippines in a situation where the latter's security is under threat. Nonetheless, there are lingering doubts over the tepidness of American support for the Philippines on the issue of the South China Sea.²¹ This is unlike the case with Japan where the United States is fully committed to supporting Japan should its control over the Senkaku Islands be threatened. Nonetheless, the increasing assertiveness of China over its claimed maritime domains in both the South China Sea and the East China Sea place the Philippines and Japan in very similar situations. This has made it logical for the two countries to look into the possibility of increasing defense cooperation.

*Philippines-Japan defense cooperation.*²² There have been suggestions that the Philippines and Japan should explore closer security cooperation. Both are allies of the United States and a trilateral security arrangement could be established even if informally. Certainly, there are enough common sources of concern to give fuel to exploring such an arrangement. In July 2012, the Philippines and Japan signed an agreement for greater defense cooperation that would cover the next five years. It would involve military exchanges between the two armed forces, naval visits, meetings related to internal and external security issues, defense technology and knowledge exchange, issues related to maritime security, and information exchange. The agreement also specified more cooperation between the Peacekeeping Operations Centre of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Japan Peacekeeping Training and Research Centre. When he was appointed to the cabinet of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the first overseas visit of Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida was to the Philippines in January 2013. He noted that it was necessary for the Philippines and Japan to strengthen their strategic partnership. In this context, Japan committed

²⁰ Hillary Clinton, "America's Pacific Century," *Foreign Policy* (1 October 2011).

²¹ The statement of US Pacific Command (USPACOM) commander Admiral Samuel Locklear III which pointed to the neutrality of the United States on the issue of the sovereignty in the South China Sea is illustrative of this position. See Rouchelle Dinglasan, "Visiting USPACOM chief expresses US neutrality in West PHL Sea issue," *GMA News Online* (7 June 2013) available at <http://ph.news.yahoo.com/visiting-uspacom-chief-expresses-us-neutrality-west-phl-130815343.html> and downloaded on 27 June 2013.

²² This section is extensively based on an article written by the author and published in Japanese in *Wedge Magazine*. See Herman Joseph S. Kraft, "Increasing Chinese maritime assertiveness: Is there an opening for closer Philippine-Japan security relations?" *Wedge Magazine* (September 2013): 20-22 (in Nihongo)

to helping the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) enhance the training of its human resources, improve its communications system, and upgrade its equipment. Ten multi-role response vessels that will be transferred to the PCG within the next two years have been funded by Japan. In recognition of the strategic situation facing both countries, the Philippines gave its support to ideas presented about the “rearming” of Japan—a development that was criticized by China.²³

The common strategic situation faced by the Philippines and Japan has been instrumental in the increased level of strategic and defense cooperation and coordination taking place between the two countries. The level of cooperation currently undertaken by the two governments is unparalleled in the history of their relationship. Is there space and are there grounds for further enhancing security ties beyond where they are now? Security ties between the Philippines and Japan should be sustained given their shared strategic appreciation of the situation in the East Asian region. Any further than where these ties stand now would be treading in very dangerous grounds as it would be difficult to deny that it is directed at China. Japanese maritime patrol boats in the South China Sea would not only be seen by China as more than just a provocation—the other Southeast Asian countries would probably see it as bringing the rivalry between Japan and China to the doorstep of Southeast Asia. The expansion of Philippine-Japan security cooperation should now be directed towards diplomatic efforts, especially in terms of pushing for a code of conduct for claimants over disputed territory. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations has been pushing for the adoption of such a code that would cover issues in the South China Sea. The successful completion of such a code with China signing on to it would go a long way in reducing the possibility of current tensions in the region escalating to more dangerous levels. At the same time, it would provide a template for a similar arrangement that would govern conditions in the East China Sea. Recognizing the different historical context and dynamic operating there in comparison with the South China Sea, there is nonetheless a need to think outside of long-established and—held positions in order to find a more sustainable path to peaceful relations. It is with this in mind that Philippine-Japan cooperation should

²³ Christine O. AVendaño, “Philippines supports rearming of Japan,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (11 December 2012) available at <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/59249/philippines-supports-rearming-of-japan> and downloaded on 17 January 2014. See also Pia Lee-Brago, “Phil’s support to rearm Japan surprises China,” *The Philippine Star* (15 January 2013) available at <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2013/01/15/897126/phils-support-rearm-japan-surprises-china> and downloaded on 17 January 2014.

now find new avenues where that cooperation should be directed.

Continuing Domestic Concerns

Even as the external defense issues facing the Philippines have forced an honest assessment of the AFP's capacity to defend the country's interests against external threats, domestic issues continue to keep the attention of the defense community. The most significant development here is the progress made on the negotiations between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP). The annex on power-sharing was signed by the two parties on 7 December 2013. The annexes on transitional arrangement and modalities, and revenue generation and wealth sharing were signed earlier in the year. Only the annex on normalization needs to be hashed out by the negotiators. This development pushed the peace process forward even as spoilers have taken actions that could have potentially dislocated the entire process.

Bomb blasts in Cagayan de Oro, Cotabato City and other parts of Maguindanao resulted in a number of fatalities. While some of these were believed to have been motivated by local political rivalries, some were thought to have been the responsibility of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF)—a breakaway group from the MILF.²⁴ The BIFF was also responsible for attacks in North Cotabato in September 2013, and again in January 2014.²⁵ Of more serious concern was the attack in Zamboanga City by forces associated with the faction of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) under Nur Misuari and the fighting that took place in the area of Lahad Datu in Sabah involving the Malaysian police and armed forces, and forces that claimed loyalty to the heirs of the Sultanate of Sulu.

On 8 September 2013, heavily armed members of the MNLF faction led by Nur

²⁴ See L.O. Pacardo, "Bombs rock South anew; 7 soldiers wounded," *Business World Online* (7 August 2013) available at <http://www.bworldonline.com/content.php?section=Nation&title=Bombs-rock-South-anew;-7-soldiers-wounded&id=74616> and downloaded on 8 August 2013; and "Five dead in Cotabato City bomb blast; motive still to be known," *Business World Online* (5 August 2013) available at <http://www.bworldonline.com/content.php?section=Nation&title=Five-dead-in-Cotabato-City-bomb-blast;-motive-still-to-be-known&id=74489> and downloaded on 8 August 2013.

²⁵ Philippine News Agency, "Govt troops repulse New Year attacks by BIFF in North Cotabato," *Interaksyon* (2 January 2014) available at <http://www.interaksyon.com/article/77910/govt-troops-repulse-new-year-attacks-by-biff-in-north-cotabato> and downloaded on 17 January 2014; and John Unson, "BIFF attacks Datu Piang town; residents flee," *The Philippine Daily Star* (30 September 2013) available at <http://www.philstar.com/nation/2013/09/30/1239876/biff-attacks-datu-piang-town-residents-flee> and downloaded on 17 January 2014.

Misuari entered Zamboanga City with the intention of raising the MNLF flag over the municipal hall. This followed on the reported declaration of independence of the Bangsamoro by Nur Misuari earlier in the month. By the end of the fighting nearly three weeks later, over 300 MNLF fighters had surrendered and over 200 hostages rescued. The entire episode, however, once again led to the displacement of 120,000 people, around 120 fatalities, and more than 200 injured.²⁶ The violence in Zamboanga indicated how overstretched the ground forces of the AFP were and how fragile the political balance was between the government and the armed groups it was supposed to have entered into a peace treaty with.

Of even greater concern to the peace process was the fighting that took place in March 2013 in the district of Lahad Datu in Sabah. On 9 February 2013, a group of armed fighters who claimed to be members of the “Royal Sulu Army” infiltrated into Sabah with the intention of asserting the historical claim of the Sulu Sultanate to the territory. The eventual reported number of fighters was around 200. Fighting between this group and the Malaysian police and armed forces started three weeks after they were first reported. More than sixty of the armed infiltrators (designated as terrorists by Malaysian authorities) were killed in the fighting together with at least eight police officers and two soldiers.²⁷ The episode raised concerns over how it would affect Malaysia’s willingness to continue to host the negotiations between the MILF and the GRP, and act as mediator on charges of violations of agreed rules. The fighting also threatened to spread when the MNLF faction under Nur Misuari sought to provide assistance to the Sulu forces. As noted above, the forces of Nur Misuari eventually went on their own to create havoc in Zamboanga City.

The case of the Zamboanga City attack and the Lahad Datu fighting indicates how necessary the establishment of peace in Mindanao is, and how fragile it will be in the aftermath of any peace treaty signed between the MILF and the GRP. The danger of violence breaking out is serious enough. The trouble is how easily it could spread to even beyond the borders of the Philippines. The developments in Lahad Datu did not make the Philippines a lot of friends in Malaysia.

²⁶ Rene Acosta and Harold Barretto, “Misuari’s nephew, 35 MNLF fighters surrender in Zamboanga,” *Business Mirror* (25 September 2013) available at <http://businessmirror.com.ph/index.php/en/news/nation/19920-misuari-s-nephew-35-mnlf-fighters-surrender-in-zamboanga> and downloaded on 17 January 2014.

²⁷ See “In the know: Sabah incursion,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (2 July 2013) available at <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/79367/in-the-know-sabah-incursion#ixzz2Xqgli0fF> and downloaded on 2 July 2013.

Observations for 2014

The frosty relationship between the Philippines and China has emphasized the importance of developing the capability of the AFP to defend the territory the Philippines claims to have jurisdiction and sovereignty over. The back and forth between the two countries, however, has shown a classic case of the security dilemma. The more the Philippines seeks to increase the capacity of its Navy and Air Force to provide a modicum of deterrent capability, the less it is in a position to try to open lines of communication with China. The hardening of official positions on both sides buttressed by increasing material acquisition of war-making capacity makes it more difficult for the two parties to agree to take a step back. At the same time, the situation is funneling the options of the Philippines into one where it has to take more steps to become more self-sufficient on defense matters even as it tries to strengthen its security partnerships with friendly countries around the region. Whether this will lead to a more peaceful resolution to the increasingly uncertain situation it faces is doubtful, but it seems like there is a growing sense that the Philippines does not have too many options that it can choose from. While nobody wants conflict to erupt, the danger lies in the consequences of the unexpected and the unintended.