

PLO fighters left Beirut on Aug. 21, Sharon met Bashir and Pierre Gemayel to demand a new strike against the Palestinian presence in Lebanon.” (Bashir Gemayel, Pierre’s son, was elected President of Lebanon, but was assassinated on Sept. 14, before taking office.)

The *Guardian* account continues: “Minutes of the meeting quote Sharon as saying: ‘A question was raised before, what could happen to the Palestinian camps once the terrorists withdraw. You’ve got to clean the camps.’ Pierre Gemayel prevaricated, ‘. . . We are in the midst of a political process of Presidential elections. . . . Bashir is the nominee. It is very important that calm is kept.’” According to the minutes, Sharon insisted: “What would you do about the camps?” To which Bashir responded: “We are planning a real zoo.”

In his testimony to the Kahan Commission, Sharon claimed that no one imagined the Phalange would carry out a massacre. But, according to the documents in Belgium, Sharon himself complained to Pierre Gemayel, ten weeks before the massacre, that “it is incumbent that we prevent several ugly things which have occurred—murders, rapes, and stealing by some of your men.” In the same month, the *Observer* reported, “in a meeting with American diplomats at the home of Johnny Abdo, Lebanon’s military intelligence chief, Sharon proposed that the PLO fighters in Beirut be given ‘refuge’ in Israel. Although we are at a friend’s house, he said, according to the report of the meeting, ‘rest assured that they would be more secure in our hands.’”

According to testimony before the Kahan Commission on Oct. 22, 1982, Mossad chief Yitzak Hofi said, “The Phalangists talk about solving the Palestinian problem with a hand gesture whose meaning is physical elimination. I don’t think anybody had any doubts about this. . . . They raised the issue of Lebanon being unable to survive as long as this size of [Palestinian] population existed there.” Similarly, Colonel Harnof, in testimony to the Kahan panel, said, “It was possible to surmise from contacts with the Phalange leaders what were their intentions toward the Palestinians: Sabra would become a zoo and Chatila Beirut’s parking place. . . . When they participated in actions East of Bahamdoun (when they operated against the Druze) they ran straight to the villages and committed massacres.”

Ha’aretz quoted unnamed experts vouching for the authenticity of the documents quoted by the *Guardian*. As one of the Belgian lawyers said, if Sharon is put on trial, he will have to respond to these documents, and there is no way “that he could escape justice.”

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Philippines President In Tightrope Diplomacy

by Gail G. Billington

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is known to be an accomplished ballroom dancer, a favorite pastime in the Philippines. She needs all the poise, balance, and deft moves possible in the political balancing act required to retain the office she now holds. In January, President Arroyo expects to observe the first anniversary of her inauguration as President of the Philippines, an archipelagic nation of more than 7,000 islands and 78 million people, which cuts a swathe between the South China Sea and the Pacific Ocean.

The Philippines has the closest ties to the United States of any of the Southeast Asian nations. President Arroyo’s state visit with U.S. President George W. Bush on Nov. 19-23 was chosen to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Republic of the Philippines-United States Mutual Defense Treaty, at a time when the Bush Administration is waging its international war on terrorism. The Arroyo government has pledged significant support to that campaign, with serious implications in regard to the several-million-strong indigenous Muslim minority in the southern island of Mindanao, which has been embroiled in a 25-year battle with the Philippines government, at enormous human cost. The various Islamic groups and factions in that struggle have made demands ranging from independence, to regional autonomy and more economic and political rights within the nation.

Hanging over President Arroyo is the questionable legitimacy of the process by which she became President in January 2001. At the time, Arroyo was Vice President to then-President Joseph “Erap” Estrada, who was elected President in 1998 to a one-time, six-year term. However, Estrada was driven from office in January 2001, on the basis of a corruption scandal involving alleged kickbacks from illegal gambling operations.

Estrada’s formal impeachment was aborted by a staged walkout in proceedings held by the Philippines Senate, while outside, mobs of citizens, mobilized with the backing of the country’s political elite, centered in the Makati Business Club and non-governmental organization (NGO) circles linked to former Presidents Corazon Aquino, Fidel Ramos, and others, reenacted the “People’s Power” putsch that drove President Ferdinand Marcos from power in 1986. That 1986 coup, run by the U.S. State Department, became known as “The Edsa Revolution,” in honor of the historical monument which served as the rallying point for the mass protests. For that reason, the 2001 replay which placed Macapagal-Arroyo in the Presidency has been called “Edsa II.” Within one month

of her swearing-in, the Presidential palace, Malacanang, was besieged by yet another revolt, now called “Edsa III,” which saw the streets of Manila filled with those who constitute Estrada’s enormous base of support among the poorest of Manila’s large number of poor.

Sources in Manila report that the vast majority of those who took to the streets in Edsa III were “street people,” enraged by the intolerable conditions of their existence and the self-absorption, indeed, narcissism, of the country’s political class. Nearly a year after his impeachment, Estrada still awaits trial on “plunder” charges, which could carry a death sentence in the Catholic Philippines. President Arroyo is serving out his term.

‘Edsa IV’ Planned

There is growing evidence today that various interests that participated in, or orchestrated, the previous revolts, for whatever reasons, are already planning “Edsa IV,” and, possibly, more. In recent weeks, President Arroyo’s husband, lawyer Miguel Arroyo, and the President herself, have been the subject of press reports and probes into illegal payoffs linked to sales of telecom licenses.

President Arroyo is certainly aware of this threat. On Nov. 26, the Philippines Consultative Assembly (PCA), the umbrella group of NGOs organized for the purpose of bringing down Estrada and putting Arroyo in power, issued a 60-day deadline for President Arroyo to resign! This is not to give undeserved credibility to the PCA—or any other of the swamp of NGOs, which have gained undue power in the Philippines, dictating, as “civil society,” to elected governments ever since the fall of Marcos—but these types of actions, including violence, have been repeatedly used to soften up the political environment before a new government is installed “Philippines style.”

Today, the Philippines is home to three of the five Southeast Asian organizations listed on the Bush Administration’s international terrorists list. Two are on the left: the New People’s Army, linked to founder Jomo Sison, who lives in exile in the Netherlands; and the related Alex Boncayo Brigades assassination squads. The third group, the kidnap-for-ransom Abu Sayyaf, which is holding two American missionaries and a Filipina nurse hostage, may be a split-off from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (which has recently signed a cease-fire with Arroyo’s government), but it is more committed to its drugs and profits than liberation.

Agreements Are Double-Edged

The Bush Administration must appreciate the domestic and international risks its allies in the “anti-terrorism coalition” face in negotiating their way through the policy minefield. The implications for President Arroyo of the agreements struck with the Bush Administration in Washington are double-edged, not least because of the factional division within the Bush Administration, with the “Clash of Civilization” faction, represented by Deputy Defense Secretary Paul



Philippines President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, during the inauguration of the Narciso Ramos Highway in August. Her government has pledged support to the war on terrorism, with serious implications in regard to the indigenous Muslim minority in the island of Mindanao.

Wolfowitz and Richard Perle, openly committed to starting wars across Eurasia.

Similar thinking is reflected within the Philippines by the rabid “free-trade, globalization” lobby, led by Carlyle Group member, former President Gen. Fidel Ramos (ret.), and President Arroyo’s National Security Adviser, Roilo Golez. As a Congressman, Golez indulged in mindless provocations against China over the contested Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, with the help of U.S. Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.) and some of his neo-conservative colleagues on the House International Relations Committee.

In exchange for “favors” to promote their anti-China propaganda, Rohrabacher has dangled sales of surplus U.S. military equipment to the hardware-deficient Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Rohrabacher was one of the earliest sponsors of the Afghanistan Foundation, which, with the help of the likes of Wall Street investment banker John Train, promoted the Samuel Huntington-Zbigniew Brzezinski “Clash of Civilizations” in the 1980s “Afghansi” war against the Soviet Union.

Many unanswered questions remain concerning the reported nearly \$2 billion in military-related assistance pledged, out of \$4.6 billion in total aid announced, by the Bush Administration after President Arroyo’s visit. Particularly controversial is the plan for a new Mutual Logistics Support Agreement, defining U.S. military access within the Philippines. In 1987, the Philippines Constitution was amended to ban permanent stationing of foreign troops in the country, as they had been for decades at Clark Field and Subic Bay, together with an absolute ban on the introduction of nuclear weapons. Of course, as the Philippines is fully aware, the United States neither confirms nor denies when it comes to nukes.

Up until President Arroyo's November meeting with President Bush, average annual U.S. military assistance had been about \$1.9 million. President Bush pledged to work with the U.S. Congress to obtain a 15-fold increase in U.S. foreign military financing for the Philippines until 2003, and said he wanted to provide an additional \$10 million in Defense Department goods and services for the AFP. He added that he expects security assistance offered to Manila to be worth \$100 million for 2001-02. Bush also gave a verbal pledge to resolve the bitter issue over granting veterans benefits to Filipinos who fought alongside Americans in World War II, which is decades overdue. But neither President Bush nor Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld have spelled out what wars they expect the Philippines to help fight.

This Economy Breeds Terrorism

On the eve of her official meeting with President Bush, President Arroyo spoke at her alma mater, Georgetown University, in Washington, D.C. She pledged that the Philippines would go "every step of the way" in a global war on terrorism, but also called on the developed nations to act to liberate poorer nations from poverty, which she said serves as the "spawning grounds" of terrorism.

Arroyo went to great lengths to detail what the Philippines had pledged to do in support of Bush's international war on terrorism, including offering Philippines' airspace, subject to Congressional approval, combat troops, and a pledge to put an end to the "sub-human behavior" of the criminal Abu Sayyaf gang. But Arroyo added that developing countries have already paid a stiff price. "In the face of recession, investors have been quick to yank out funds from emerging markets thousands of miles away from ground zero," she said.

Philippines media have reported that foreign investment in the Philippines collapsed by 50% in the last year. Manufacturing collapsed for the past six months, with a 7.3% collapse in September alone, compared to the previous year. Opposition Senator and former Agriculture Secretary Edgardo Angara warned on Nov. 23 that the 2002 budget is "a sub-maintenance budget. . . . Proposed budget cuts will be extremely counter-productive. The country's economy is not like a household or a business firm where you must always live within your means. Running a country is an entirely different thing because our national economy is more complex than a household budget. The economy is already in a recessionary mode. . . . Government should pick up the slack in such an emergency situation and increase government spending" in such job-creating areas as infrastructure, social services, and agricultural modernization.

The Philippines' most important export is its own citizens, the "overseas contract workers," who send home the nation's largest foreign exchange earnings, in the range of \$6-8 billion, or more, annually. The downturn at home means a rise in emigration, now averaging 2,300 per day, or 70-75,000 per month, the Labor Secretary reported in August—*before* the

terrorist attacks in the United States. Employment has not picked up at home.

The Man No One Wants To Claim

On Nov. 20, the day before Arroyo met with Bush, all hell seemed to break loose in the south. Nur Misuari, founder and former chairman of the oldest of the Muslim movements, the Moro National Liberation Movement, broke from 25 years of peace negotiations, and led 500-600 of his followers in attacks on military outposts on his home island of Jolo. When the fighting ceased, 113-160 people had been killed, Misuari was on the run, escaping with six of his associates to the Malay island of Jampiras, just offshore Sabah, a province once claimed by the Philippines.

What prompted Misuari's desperate, perhaps even suicidal revolt? Earlier this year he was replaced as chairman of the MNLF. On Nov. 26, elections were held in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao to replace him as Governor of that Muslim self-rule region. Both the MNLF leadership council of 15 and President Arroyo announced early on that Misuari was not to be supported any more. He is currently being held for illegal entry into Malaysia, while an investigation probes whether, in his revolt, he had allied with Abu Sayyaf, and had perhaps done so previously, in their kidnap-for-ransom criminal activities. Malaysia's Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad has expressed disappointment that Misuari did not do more to improve life for the Moros, while President Arroyo has shown no urgent desire to have Misuari returned to the Philippines. The Organization of Islamic Conference, which has overseen the Philippines-Moro talks since the 1976 Tripoli talks, is being consulted. Indonesia now heads the relevant committee.

Misuari was well rewarded in his leadership position, and was beholden to those who kept him there, including former President Ramos, who backed his rise to leadership among the Moros, politically and financially, and who has never been shy about his continuing political ambitions. Ramos led a bitter fight to amend the 1987 Constitution so that he could run for a second six-year Presidential term in 1998, but was defeated in that effort.

With Misuari's new revolt, even if short-lived, he has broken the status quo, and has opened the way to further spread of the problem. There are those in Manila who wonder if it might have been premeditated or provoked. In Malaysia, the president of the opposition Parti Islam SeMalaysia, Fadzil Nor, has called on the Malaysian government to grant Misuari political asylum, as a freedom fighter, whom Malaysia has supported in the past. However, the Malaysian government intends to send Misuari back to stand trial in the Philippines. The leader of the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia warned: "The alliance allegedly struck between Misuari and the Abu Sayyaf group may turn Muslim Mindanao into another target for an American-led, Afghan-like military operation."