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EDCA as the Geopolitics of Imperialist Crises and its Threat to Peace in the Philippines

Abstract

The authors, through the theory of capitalist crisis and the theory of imperialism, aim to make an exposé and critique of the Enhanced Defense Cooperative Agreement or EDCA. We employ a methodological framework of historical-geographical materialism and critique of internal relations, entwined with the crisis theory of capitalism manifesting in its late phase of imperialism. We apply such theories to the problem of EDCA as evidenced by various points and experiences of people living in an area near EDCA sites based on the peace mission conducted by the nationalist-democratic alliance organization of Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (New Patriotic Alliance) or BAYAN and Pilipinong Nagkakaisa para sa Soberanya (Filipinos United for Sovereignty) or P1NAS. Moreover, we argue that the United States of America is enjoying proven-and-tested political and military impunity, from its imperial sovereignty to meddle in affairs of other sovereignties, based on the political concept of a global *state of exception* through American exceptionalism. From the US genocidal spree against the Filipinos during the Filipino-American war at the outset of the 20th century killed revolutionaries and innocent ones altogether; to its nuclear bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima; the massacre of Vietnamese during the Vietnam War and Laotian people during Operation Barrel Roll; and to its support of dictatorial states in South America and in Asia to buffer popular anti-imperialist politics. We investigate how EDCA poses hurdles for peace since

it is a geopolitical agenda of continued US hegemony in the world, particularly extending its rotting power and political paranoia in the Asia-Pacific Region, which brings spatial and economic logic for a solution to continuing crises of American and Western capitalist domination. Such historical backdrops provide empirical and historized aspects of why EDCA should be seen as a threat to peace and therefore must be continually exposed and resisted.

Keywords: *EDCA, global capitalist crisis, imperialist war, military intervention, Philippine sovereignty, US state of exception*

Ang mga may-akda ay lubusan ang pasasalamat sa mga organisasyong P1NAS, BAYAN, Taripnong Cagayan Valley, at iba pang mga samahang nagtataguyod ng pambasang interes ng Pilipinas. Kinikilala namin ang kanilang napakaraming inisyatiba gaya ng mga anti-imperyalistang porum at kumperensyang bayan upang itampok ang susing usaping panlipunan katulad ng EDCA na inspirasyon sa paggawa ng papel na ito.

PART I: INTRODUCTION OVERVIEW OF AIMS

Last April 2023, the Philippine Government announced the opening of an additional four sites of Enhanced Defense Cooperative Agreement or EDCA—two in the province of Cagayan, one in Isabela, and another one in Palawan. The first five locations are in Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija, Basa Air Base in Pampanga, Antonio Bautista Air Base in Palawan, Mactan-Benito Ebuen Air Base in Cebu, and Lumbia Air Base in Cagayan de Oro City. The agreement between the Philippines and the United States of America commenced in April 2014, aiming to hold a renewed military concord over matters of alliance. Looking back on our history, the USA, being a previous colonial master, and now a neocolonial supervisor has coagulated hegemonic ties with the Philippines in terms of politics, economics, culture, and military. The once 44-year US military base set in Subic which ran from 1947 to 1991, was the largest military location of the US outside its country but was ousted by local patriotic movements of Filipinos, preventing it from further extension.¹ Despite the corresponding offshoot of previous agreements (Mutual Defense Treaty, Mutual Logistics Support Agreement, and Visiting Forces Agreement), the EDCA declares

1 Philip Shenon, “Philippine Senate Votes Reject US Base Renewal,” in *The New York Times* <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/09/16/world/philippine-senate-votes-to-reject-us-base-renewal.html>

that its purpose is to help the Philippines develop not only in military aspects but also during disasters and other related crises. All the one-sided interests juxtapose the neocolonial architectonics that secures the rule of the US in the Philippines and the former's struggle for hegemony in Asia. Here, we go beyond the mere issue of whether the EDCA is legal-constitutional or not (exemplified by the Supreme Court ruling on the supposed constitutional legitimacy of EDCA) since critiquing EDCA from a legalistic framework is such is discursively lacking. The language of dominant law is enmeshed in the trap of hegemony of legalized imperialism; hence we attempt to theorize from a critical historical-spatial framework revealing the imperialist relations that trap and throw into reducing the EDCA to questions of legalism.

The new installment of EDCA sites received mixed reactions, with some local protests in the NCR and Cagayan province, and even statements of disagreements from Filipino politicians.² The main problem posed in this paper is that the EDCA, coming from the neocolonial hegemony of the US over the Philippines and in the global capitalist-imperialist network, poses an ongoing threat to peace due to this continuing military interruption in the Philippines. Such is a consequence especially the recent issue of EDCA, along with other military treatises that primarily benefit the US War Machine and local elites of the Philippines. This military-industrial complex and parasitic intervention will be further explained in the backdrop of discourses on geopolitical conflicts, such as war, as a solution to the political economy of crises of global capitalism and imperialism. Moreover, the main argument we propose in this paper is that EDCA comes from the war as a necessary byproduct of ever-decaying imperialist powers that configure that globe; hence, with intense crises of global capitalism that showcase waning and increasingly insecure superpowers, wars become a destructive-creative tool to reconfigure the present power relations. Since the US hegemony is continually being challenged, it needs to enact this resort of militarism, critically vis-a-vis the rising imperial trajectory of China that the US has long wanted to subjugate as part of its war against powers who pose a threat to its hegemonic status. We will discuss the gist of political economy that operates on the flexibilization of spatial territories through war-mongering which is essential to the agenda of monopoly capital accumulation.

2 Mong Palatino, "Local Leaders Question Expanded US Military Presence in the Philippines," *The Diplomat* <https://thediplomat.com/2023/04/local-leaders-question-expanded-us-military-presence-in-the-philippines/>

We utilize the methodological framework of historical-geographical materialism, entwined with the crisis theory of capitalism and imperialism from a number of theoreticians such as Vladimir Lenin, David Kotz, Samir Amin, and David Harvey. Moreover, we argue that the US enjoying proven and tested political impunity, from its imperial sovereignty to meddle in affairs of other autonomies, based on the political concept of a *state of exception*.³ In other terms, it is commonly known as American exceptionalism—that whatever the US almost does (as well as in the past as hegemonic in the pre-multipolar global order) in the world is justified since it is the land of free, bringing and teaching democracies in the savage civilizations, even at the expense of outright violence, because this Empire is so great that it is excused to do even illegal and unjust, all for the sake peace, harmony, and freedom. For a lengthy historical record, the US has often got away from its crimes. From its genocidal spree against the Filipinos during the Filipino-American war at the outset of the 20th century killed revolutionaries and innocent ones altogether; to its nuclear bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima; the massacre of Vietnamese during the Vietnam War and Laotian people during Operation Barrel Roll; and to its support of dictatorial states in South America and in Asia to buffer popular anti-imperialist politics.⁴ We investigate how EDCA poses hurdles for peace since it is a geopolitical agenda of continued US hegemony in the world, particularly extending its rotting power and political paranoia in the Asia-Pacific Region, which brings spatial and economic logic for a solution to continuing crises of American and Western capitalist domination. Such historical backdrops provide empirical and historized aspects of why EDCA should be seen as a threat to peace and therefore must be continually exposed and resisted.

3 See Giorgio Agamben *State of Exception* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005). The concept was first introduced by the Nazi theorist Carl Schmitt, who proposed politics as a power play of friend-enemy distinction and government power is essentially the one who decides who is at exemption.

4 Almost all of these despicable tactics of the US Empire are rigorously documented in the work of Vincent Bevins, *The Jakarta Method: Washington's Anticommunist Crusade and the Mass Murder Program that Shaped Our World* (New York: Public Affairs, 2020).

We bring forth a stance that EDCA, dismantling the pretext that it will be beneficial to the Philippine position in the issue of our national sovereignty with China and the rest of the region, showing how EDCA is an economic solution to the decaying imperial domination of the USA in the stage of late monopoly capitalism, down to its ceasing frontiers to struggle for its hegemony.⁵

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

We employ herein the methodological framework of dialectical historical-geographical materialism which is primarily borrowed from the theoretical engagements of Marxist geographer David Harvey laid out in his work *Justice, Nature and Geography of Difference*. He defines its theoretical basis as:

a dialectical, historical-geographical and materialist theory, because it deals with totalities, particularities, motion, and fixity in a certain way, holds out the prospect of embracing many other forms of theorizing within its frame...⁶

Such dialectical historical-geographical materialism pursues theorizing based on the framework of the totality of things and processes to fully grasp the understanding of social reality, including the emergence of wars. The engine of change, from a dialectical point-of-view, is the configuration of internal forces in a phenomenon manifested in changes in space and time. Following Bertell Ollman's elaboration of a possible dialectical method that focuses on systemic wholeness, interconnection, and contradiction of internal relations⁷, we elaborate the problematique of EDCA as another totality which is an elementary object as well foregrounded

5 Our use of *hegemony* in this paper comes from Antonio Gramsci: "the ensemble of organisms commonly called "private", and that of "political society" or "the State"... correspond...to the function of "hegemony" which the dominant group exercises throughout society..." through the spontaneous consent given by the masses and coercive apparatus of the state. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 2022), 12.

6 Harvey, *Justice, Nature & the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 10.

7 Bertell Ollman, "Why Dialectics? Why Now?" in *Dialectics for the New Century* ed. Bertell Ollman and Tony Smith (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 8-16.

in *another* totality, of expressing the tragic interrelations and contradictions of imperial forces that shape, maintain, and configure wars. Inspired by the *philosophy of internal relations* posed by Andres Bieler and Adam Morton,⁸ we shall integrate the ontology of spatiality, historicity, and social-material practices that are intertwined in relations contradictions in exposing and critiquing the essential totality that composes the problem of EDCA and our working hypothesis in this study. This totality that is the foreground of our study is the capitalist mode of production, its law of value and accumulation tending to crises, which seeks spatial and military solutions. There will also be short historical notes to render the actual material efforts of the US in its persisting imperial subjugation.

PART II. Crises Formation in Imperialism – Territorial Expansion and Militarism

The capitalist mode of production has worked globally since it developed as a system founded on colonization, neocolonization, economic and political interventions, and international trade and transactions. Samir Amin argues that historical capitalism is always global in nature: “Capitalism is not the United States and Germany, with India and Ethiopia only “halfway” capitalist. Capitalism is the United States and India, Germany and Ethiopia, taken together,”⁹—and so to speak has already been possible within the backdrop of imperialism. Capitalism is not one country but a set of nation-states assembling the flow of production of economic value in an asymmetric fashion.¹⁰ It is always a flow of values (wages and profits) on an uneven scale.¹¹ Capitalism cannot sustain its system dominant on earth without the wider context of the imperialist system, as a necessity of colonization has laid out the preconditions of the capitalist mode of production.¹²

8 See Andres Bieler and Adam David Morton, *Global Capitalism, Global War, Global Crisis* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

9 Samir Amin, *Modern Imperialism: Monopoly Finance, Capital and Marx’s Law of Value* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2018), 84.

10

Ibid.

11

See Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space* (Georgia: The University of Georgia Press).

12 Marx, even dying before the completion of his magnum opus *Capital* with the topic on international trade and capitalism, already posited the globalist and colonialist basis of capitalism to sustain itself: “The different moments of primitive accumulation can

Recounting the Theory of Imperialism: Lenin to Present

How nations grow and develop has always been an object of discourse, from colonial to postcolonial, and other critical studies.¹³ With the capitalist law of value extremely gone international, the necessity of subjugating a territory, i.e. colonialism, persists and has certainly been sustained in new forms. The authors argue that the political ontology of the contemporary world is still on the strong vestige of lopsided colonial and neocolonial power relations. John Smith explains in his work *Imperialism in the Twenty-First Century* that poorer nations in the Global South are productive in terms of raw materials and resources extracted in their geographies but higher wages are being enjoyed by their corresponding workers in the highly industrialized countries.¹⁴ Capitalism cannot do away with colonialism as it developed the system through it, and solidified through neocolonies. Various conflicts between powerhouse economies and nations are at untidy play, exemplified by the thug-of-war game, articulated by the Chinese aggression in the West Philippine Sea. Up to this date, the hostility of Chinese armed forces persists in the territories of the Philippines. Meanwhile, from such, the US postures itself, and through persisting hegemon among lawmakers, that we need the sharp talons of the US. As we are not beyond the era of war lest the era of imperialism, we have not gone through the era of Americanized ideology.¹⁵

be assigned in particular to Spain, Portugal, Holland, France and England, in more or less chronological order. These different moments are systematically combined together at the end of the seventeenth century in England; the combination embraces the colonies, the national debt, the modern tax system, and the system of protection. These methods depend in part on brute force, for instance the colonial system. But they all employ the power of the state, the concentrated and organized force of society, to hasten, as in a hothouse, the process of transformation of the feudal mode of production into the capitalist mode, and to shorten the transition.” Marx, *Capital Volume I*, 915-16.

13 See E. San Juan, Jr. “Nationalism, the Postcolonial State, and Violence” in *Pingkian: Journal for Emancipatory and Anti-Imperialist Education*. Volume 4 No. 1 (February 2017). Retrieved from <https://pingkianjournal.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/2017-41.pdf>; Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Groove Press, 1963).

14 John Smith, *Imperialism in the Twenty-First Century: Globalization, Super-Exploitation, and Capitalism’s Final Crisis* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2016), 14.

15 According to “The State of Southeast Asia 2024 Survey Report”, in a section of the perception survey conducted among Southeast Asian people, 28% of Filipinos perceive that economic influences in Southeast Asia come from the USA. The number of Filipinos greatly outnumber in such belief in comparison to neighbors in the Southeast. Singapore: ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute April 2, 2024 Retrieved from <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp->

Albeit such, there are growing pro-China sentiments that were embodied by the previous Duterte regime and emboldened by its own pundits.¹⁶

Vladimir Lenin's classical work *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* opens in its preface that the First World War which lasted from 1914-1918 was indeed a war of imperialism, a war that was a struggle over the division of the world, partition, and subdivision of neo/colonies/potential colonies and spheres of influences with ruthlessly competing big finance capital.¹⁷ Being the highest stage of capitalism and epitomizing morbid parasitism, imperialism is an era where the intense business competition of big transnational corporations rattled on getting their market shares, with various aggressive developments and advancements in industrial construction.¹⁸ Updating imperialism, the scholar David Kotz sums up four types of imperialism in history to the present: (1) commercial imperialism (late 15th century to the mid-18th century) – saw the heightened and expanded merchant trading.¹⁹ Due to the successful conquest of European colonizers, raw materials from Asian and American territories such as metals, gems, and labor power through the slave system laid out the grounds of the network within Europe for the coming of more advanced production. This is significant in establishing the later competitive stage of the capitalist economy. Then, from 1750 to 1870, there was competitive capitalist imperialism. This era which was also the context of the Industrial Revolution, peaked the modern technology in that time to be tied with a considerable growth of large-scale machinery. Next is modern colonialism which spanned from 1870 to 1945. Since the end of the 19th century, advanced industrial and capitalist nations provided an era of monopoly and finance capitalism. In a financial oligarchy, the concentration of money capital condensed to the hands of a few, fused with the centralization of industries to oligarchs. To administer the dependency of colonies, the exportation of surplus capital became an integral economic necessity at this stage. Imperialism as conceptualized

<content/uploads/2024/03/The-State-of-SEA-2024.pdf>

16 See Magcamit, Michael. 2021. "To Feel Is to Believe: China, United States, and the Emotional Beliefs of Philippines' Rodrigo Duterte." *Political Science* 73 (1): 6–30. doi :10.1080/00323187.2021.1967764 (accessed: May 21, 2024)

17 Vladimir Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2010), 4.

18 Ibid., 5.

19 David Kotz "Imperialism and Marxist Theory," in *World Marxist Review*, 2024 Vol. 1, No. 1, 99-114 <https://dx.doi.org/10.62834/9x85qz55> (Accessed: April 9, 2024) 105-109.

by Lenin was inferred in these years. Inter-imperialist rivalry over resources and colonies was so intense, logically resulting in catastrophic world wars. Thence came the post-colonial Cold War imperialism, which ran from 1945 to 1990. In a post-war globe, most territories of allied as well as Axis forces, from imperial centers to colonial peripheries, all who participated in the war, were ravaged. Except for the US. With its exemption from almost war damages, using nuclear weapons to make Japan surrender, the US rose as the Pax Americana.²⁰

As a parasitic and decaying form of capitalism of its monopolistic character, capitalism tends to stagnate. Since the onset of the post-World War boom, the imperialist directives in the world have always plunged into episodes of stagflation and crises; an example is the US stock market crash in 1929 followed by the Great Depression in the 1930s, going to World War 2.²¹ During the Vietnam War and in support of the installment of dictators in the middle of the 20th century, the US spent and lost tremendously. This, in consequence, commenced neoliberal doctrine in the economy and the ideological frontier of the global expansion of big capital.²² Thenceforward, the 1997 Southeast Asian Crisis stemmed from failed structural adjustment policies, financial speculation, piling debts, and further currency devaluation.²³ Fast-forward to the Great Financial Crisis of 2007-9 due to housing crises, financial speculations, and unpayable debts.²⁴ Today, it is unlikely that the world is gaining any long-term momentum of genuine post-pandemic recovery²⁵ and we are again witnessing wars. Hence, it is not accidental that the capitalist mode of production has an episodic propensity to crisis.²⁶

20 Ibid.

21 See Andres Solimano, *A History of Big Recessions in the Long Twentieth Century* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

22 See David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

23 Jose Maria Sison, "Analysis of Southeast Asian Crisis," in *Crisis of Imperialism and People's Resistance* (Philippines: Aklat ng Bayan, 2009), 63-66.

24 See John Bellamy Foster and Fred Magdoff, *The Great Financial Crisis: Cause and Consequence* (New York: Monthly Review Press).

25 Kateryna Karunska and Spencer Feingold, "What does 2024 have in store for the economy? Leading chief economists give their views" *World Economic Forum*, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2024/01/economic-outlook-2024-recession-inflation/> (accessed: April 1, 2024)

26 See Andres Solimano, *A History of Big Recessions in the Long Twentieth Century* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

An Absorption of Surplus: Military Expenditure and Imperialist War Machine

The nature of capitalist imperialism is aggression towards control of spaces amidst harsh competition. The imperialists have attained the status of being rentier as they monopolize – usurer state or rentier state and debtor state on the other. Imperialist rent entails accumulation controlled by the global rentier class. Extending Amir’s conception of *imperialist rent*,²⁷ such phenomenon of renting is not exclusive to straightforward economic profit and transaction, but a privileged scenario of exceptionalism that can exercise imperialist renting in the military.

Establishing EDCA and US military bases alike, situated in a world where economic inequalities soar higher and higher[^], is a manifestation of imperialist rent in the war machine. Inequalities rise and poverty soars, but the superpowers have more than enough money to buy weapons to kill other people. As imperialism is domination finalized with war—it should always strive for war, and it cannot do without it.²⁹ Because economic power cannot be protected without the use of violence in the milieu of harsh capitalist competition, the age of monopoly capital is also the age of monopoly violence, since the imperialists have special exemption to command arms, either in foreign territories or in their country of origin. US records of intervention in other states as well as violence against its citizens have been bloody narratives.³⁰ The institutional-legal thugs and syndicates of imperialists in the police and military power are extensions of their class interests. With the decadent and worsening economic conditions, in the context of imperialist power dynamics, the imperialist monopoly capitalists will strive to solve them via spatial solutions and military solutions. This thesis is primarily supported by the classical and modern theory of imperialism, as well as Harvey’s theory of the spatial expansion of capitalism that when it encounters crises at its present location, it makes ways to transport it to other parts of the globe

27 Ibid., 95-99.

28 Oxfam, “Survival of the Richest: How we must tax the super-rich now to fight inequality,” *Oxfam*, January 2023, Retrieved from <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621477/bp-survival-of-the-richest-160123-en.pdf>

29 Lenin, *Imperialism*, 4.

30 This will be provided further in the succeeding parts and sections.

which is not always a peaceful process.³¹ This resonates well with Samir Amin's theory of capital as a globalized value, where it needs to create uneven growth and development across the zones of geopolitical interests.³² With unequal access to natural resources, even countries that are rich in raw materials do not get to benefit from such a reality because even natural resources work within the asymmetric globalized system of imperialism.³³

The economist John Maynard Keynes proposes that expenditure for public consumption is a way to entice effective demand.³⁴ One public funding that the government has always lavishly allocated money to is through military expenditure which is later called *Military Keynesianism*.³⁵ Since capitalism necessitates an international-parasitic character, it establishes vulnerable networks to easily open up other resources and territories. Baran and Sweezy posit that militarism and imperialism have a vibrant economic rationale—they stimulate government spending through the selling of weapons and equipment, and even employment.³⁶ This military is not only armed forces in nature but interwoven with ideological and communicative apparatuses of the state.³⁷ In the 1950s, military expenditure stabilized the US economy by creating jobs and enhancing the purchasing capacities.

31 David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capital: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographic Development* (London: Verso, 2019, 43, 78-81.

32 Amin, *Modern Imperialism*, 83.

33 *Ibid.*, 91.

34 See John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (London: Macmillan, 1967). Keynesianism has an important basis for the economic policies of the US after the World War, seeing the boom and golden age of capitalism. Nonetheless, by the 1970s, inflation and unemployment soared high. This peaked in the 1970s, opening the doctrine of neoliberalism where private ownership became more valued.

35 John Bellamy Foster, Hannah Holleman and Robert W. McChesney, "The U.S. Imperial Triangle and Military Spending" *Monthly Review* October 1 2008 <https://monthlyreview.org/2008/10/01/the-u-s-imperial-triangle-and-military-spending/> (accessed: May 25, 2024)

36 Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968), 186-189.

37 Foster, Holleman and McChesney, "The U.S. Imperial Triangle."

This militarism also makes workers more docile and compliant, preempting chances of building unions.³⁸ Amin sees militarism as part of the capitalist solution including expenditure.³⁹ Accordingly, the US economy, expanded 70% in just six years after the Second World War. As observed also by Seymour Melman: “War brings prosperity. This was the conclusion drawn by Americans who watched the war economy of World War II bring an end to the Great Depression.”⁴⁰ Indeed, as concluded by Melman and other writers, an economy that rose from war and sustained its economic prosperity (an event with contradictions) has been intended to be a permanent one.⁴¹ The economic powerhouse of the US has been maintained through its great military sovereignty. Even though the US was at the foothold of the Great Financial Crises in 2007-2009, it still had the thick cheek to spend an outstanding \$1 billion.⁴² Keynesianism in military spending is also a kind of economic short-term fix since it triggers economic motions by including non-productive and fascistic professions of the military workforce.

Isaac Christiansen, in seeking the concrete links between imperialism and militarism, defines imperialism itself as “nationalistic geopolitical expression of capital... is a *process* by which capital from core countries appropriates the land, labor, and resources necessary to produce commodities and subjugates the interests of peripheral client states to those of capitalists in the metropolis.”⁴³ There are therefore four possibilities of sustained militarism of the Empire and its client-states: resource covetous/extraction, enterprise-specific, system protective, empire share, and military-industrialist.⁴⁴ Furthermore, how do weapons contractors benefit from the

38 Ibid.

39 Amin, *Modern Imperialism*, 27.

40 Seymour Melman *The Permanent War Economy: American Capitalism In Decline* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1985), 15.

41 The thesis that the USA would enter a permanent war economy was said to be first expressed by Eduard Sard in his pen-named Walter J. Oakes article “Toward a Permanent War Economy?” February 1944 <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/writers/vance/1944/02/pwe.htm>

42 Foster, Holleman, and McChesney, “The U.S. Imperial Triangle.”

43 Isaac Christiansen, “Linkages between Economic and Military Imperialism,” Pluto Journals, *World Review of Political Economy*, Fall 2020, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Fall 2020), pp. 337- 356: 339. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.13169/worldrevpoliecon.11.3.0337>

44 Ibid., 342.

war involved primarily by the USA? According to the war policy critique of William Hartung, the ways war contractors benefit are: logistics and reconstruction, private security contracting, and supplying weapons. Also, some firms even do overcharging costs.⁴⁵ Pentagon spending has exceeded \$14 trillion since the beginning of the American war in Afghanistan, with approximately 33% to 50% of this amount benefiting defense contractors.⁴⁶ Of the total spending, \$4.4 trillion has gone toward weapons procurement and research and development (R&D), which primarily advantages corporate contractors. The remaining funds have been allocated to pay and benefits for military and civilian personnel, as well as the supporting expenditures necessary to operate and maintain the U.S. military. The \$4.4 trillion figure is considered a conservative estimate of the funding that Pentagon contractors have accessed over the two decades following 9/11. Notably, the top five private defense companies—Lockheed Martin, Boeing, General Dynamics, Raytheon, and Northrop Grumman—accounted for nearly one-third of U.S. military expenditures, collectively receiving over \$2.1 trillion from 2001 to 2021.⁴⁷

PART III: THE IMPERIALISM AND EDCA'S THREAT TO PEACE

After showing the theoretical bases of this essay, we go now here in the third part will elaborate further the position of the authors and critique of EDCA based on the laid out theoretical landscape and succeeding historical examples as stated as part of the aims of this paper. We show the experiences, based on an international humanitarian mission led by BAYAN and P1NAS which gathered narratives from various EDCA and militarized sites.

45 William Hartung, "Profits of War: Corporate Beneficiaries of the Post-9/11 Pentagon Spending Surge," in *Center for International Policy*, September 13, 2021, 5, retrieved from https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2021/Profits%20of%20War_Hartung_Costs%20of%20War_Sept%2013%2C%202021.pdf

46 Ibid., 4.

47 Ibid.

The Philippines and US War Machine and Excesses

The Philippines, as once graphically narrated by the historian Luzviminda Francisco, was the first Vietnam in terms of the US-led massacre of natives of various countries.⁴⁸ The racist Nazi-esque massacre maniac would do a murderous extravagance against the Filipinos, leaving 250,000 casualties, including the young and innocents.⁴⁹ The country of Laos received hundreds of millions of bombs during the military intervention during the US genocidal spree in Southeast Asia. Laos has been regarded as the most bombed place in the world but this fact is almost forgotten. It received more or less 2 million tons of bombs from white genocidal maniac Uncle Sam, killing more than 200,000 Laotians.⁵⁰ And the USA has almost got away from its bloody memorial of itself.⁵¹ No case filed, no arrests, just a bloody history recovered only if the CIA declassifies its documents containing its crimes done in secrecy. At the recent records, the military-industrial complex of the Empire profits lavishly from war. With wars between various nation-states such as Israel terrorizing Palestine, and India against Pakistan, the US sold arms to both parties and lavishly made revenues from it.⁵² The United States of America remains at the top of the highest expenditure in the military, sharing 39% of the world's total money for armed forces. The US spent \$ 877 billion alone in 2022, and for the past administrations, no country has beaten the record of the American Empire's military spending.⁵³

48 Luzviminda Francisco, "The First Vietnam: The U.S.-Philippine War of 1899" *The First Vietnam: The U.S.-Philippine War of 1899.* *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 5, no. 4 (1973): 2-16. doi:10.1080/14672715.1973.10406345.

49 Ibid.

50 Jessica Pearce Rotondi, "Why Laos Has Been Bombed More Than Any Other Country," *History Channel* August 11, 2023 <https://www.history.com/news/laos-most-bombed-country-vietnam-war> (accessed: May 22, 2024)

51 In the context of the Philippines, one way to explain this is due to Americanized education that did not totally wither away. See Renato Constantino, *The Miseducation of the Filipinos* (Quezon City: Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1982).

52 Rolando M. Covero Jr, "May Pera sa Gera," in *Social Sciences and Development Review*, 70. Retrieved from <https://apps.pup.edu.ph/ojs/assets/issue/attachment/7330e352302cb684b419a7a6a8508ea51f0f5355.pdf>

53 Nan Tian, Diego Lopes Da Silva, Xiao Liang, Lorenzo Scarazzato, Lucie Béraud-sudreau, and Ana Carolina De Oliveira Assis, "Trends in World Military Expenditure,

Imperialist Geopolitics of EDCA

The 1991 demonstration against the RP-US Military Bases Agreement and its rejection of its extension from the Philippine Senate was a triumphant moment for the country. Nonetheless, the claws of the US military dominance prevailed and continued their control and influence on the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) through MDT, VFA, MLSA, and EDCA. As an imperialist superpower, it will not relinquish its domination over the Philippines because of the strategic political resources that it acquires and takes possession of. In addition, as a monopoly capitalist, the US makes a grand profit through the wars it provokes and just this 2023, their arms exports hit a record high of \$238 billion, 16% higher than the previous year, and most earnings were gained from the conflict in Ukraine.⁵⁴ The US even signed into law a \$94 billion foreign funding bill that includes military aid to Israel, Ukraine, and Taiwan last April amidst calls and campaigns on defunding military aids that only attract wars and perpetuate genocide.⁵⁵ After all the wars that the US evoked in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, they are now pivoting to the Indo-Pacific region where most natural resources can be found and cheap labor is abundant – the perfect formula for their economic market for surplus and capital.

China is an important target for the US, as exposed in their Indo-Pacific Strategy in 2022. The US, in 2012, had to settle agreements with the Philippines and other neighboring countries such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore to rebuild and strengthen their military forces in the Asia-Pacific region. The US will retain and reinforce its military presence around the Indo-Pacific, which the Philippines is included, solely to protect and advance its economic interests by interfering with the internal affairs of each country and opening these markets as a source of natural resources, cheap labor, and territory for trading and importing weapons for war. With the fast-growing influence of China, another imperialist power on the rise, the US is forced to limit China's domination and control as it seemed to them that they are their competitor and rival not just in Asia but even around the world amidst its amassing debt to China that amounts to \$1.3 trillion.

2022” in Sipri Fact Sheet April 2023; Rolando M. Covero Jr, “May Pera sa Gera.”

54 Mike Stone, “US arms exports hit record high in fiscal 2023,” Reuters, January 30, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/us-arms-exports-hit-record-high-fiscal-2023-2024-01-29/> (accessed: May 14, 2024)

55 Al Jazeera Staff, “Biden signs law securing billions in US aid for Ukraine, Israel,” Al Jazeera, April 24, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/4/24/biden-signs-law-securing-billions-in-us-aid-for-ukraine-israel>. (accessed: May 14, 2024)

The US National Defense Strategy under the administration of Joe Biden released that the most comprehensive and serious threat to the national security of the US is China – further declaring to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) that China is the most serious threat to world security. The US formed and strengthened the military alliances of Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) and the US, UK, India, and Japan (QUAD) to consolidate its armed presence in the region to contain China from any aggression it may pose – be it economically or militarily.⁵⁶

Recent events in the Philippines progressively show how the US drags it as a probable war arena against China. The ongoing conflict between China and the Philippines over the West Philippine Sea (including how to equitably manage the Scarborough Shoal, Spratly Islands, etc.), is also intensifying. On the northeastern part of our country, the US positions itself as an ally of Taiwan in its call for independence from the One China Policy. Thus, having EDCA sites in Northern Luzon (i.e., Sta. Ana and Lallo, Cagayan) is aptly strategic for the US, especially in their surveillance, installation of military weapons, and presence of military forces. This gives them time to prepare until the war in the Taiwan Strait sparks against China. In April 2024, the Trilateral Summit between the US, Philippines, and Japan commenced in Washington, D.C., to further agitate the Asia Pacific region.⁵⁷ While the Summit claims to work on regional security, economic cooperation, and diplomatic relations, the US continues to milk on war provocations and blamelessly inflict genocide and/or apartheid amongst countries. What is currently happening between Israel and Palestine or Ukraine and Russia, is not going to be far from what can happen to China and its neighboring countries – that is, Taiwan or the Philippines.

With all these military tensions brewing in the Asia Pacific, the US maintains its propaganda on being “neutral”, yet also preparing to side with the country they have their best interest in. The US will stick to its strategic alliance and instead bring forth US troops to the countries involved that have conflicts with China.

56 The White House Washington, “Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States February 2022,” retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>.

57 The White House, “Joint Vision Statement from the Leaders of Japan, the Philippines, and the United States,” April 11, 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/04/11/joint-vision-statement-from-the-leaders-of-japan-the-philippines-and-the-united-states/> (accessed: May 24, 2024)

Questionable Legitimacy of EDCA Beyond Legalism

After so many petitions against the EDCA since 2014, the Supreme Court (SC) of the Philippines finally published in 2016 summarizing its position against the deemed unconstitutionality of the agreement. It argues that the legitimacy of EDCA follows the authoritative logic that it is still legal since no permanent bases were established.⁵⁸ The law signed in 1999 – Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) — was also cited, as well as the Mutual Defense Treaty signed in 1951 between the Philippines and the US government. These all supposedly “legitimize” the agreement of impermanent but flexible presence of foreign military—which was thought as inviolable of the Supreme Law of the land.⁵⁹ The SC decision claims to answer the questions of whether the agreement went through essential judicial review, that it was legal to have not undergone legislative deliberation since it is not technically a military base, that the President may enter a foreign military agreement, and whether the EDCA is constitutional and legal or not.

Since we follow a critique of internal relations foregrounding EDCA, we discuss it beyond legality which is still in the frame of imperialist hegemony. The SC’s opinion is that EDCA does not violate any law and most of the petitions against this agreement rest on conjectural and anticipatory positions, and EDCA does not allow military bases, thus not violating any Constitutional provision.⁶⁰ But EDCA bears the weight coming from matters of social, historical, and political affairs—its being as a social contract rests on legitimized class and ideological interests — which in reality a flexibilization of foreign military intervention. Questioning the unconstitutionality of EDCA pushes into the narrow trap of legalistic discussion. From a purely legalistic point-of-view, EDCA easily grips foothold on legality, as questioning it will bounce back to the treaty with the Empire – Mutual Defense Treaty. It has become the legal hegemonic basis of USA authority over the Philippines, validating the EDCA as a rightful treaty. From that unquestioned point-of-view of why the Philippines has such kind of tie with its previous colonial master for more than 70 years, we can now have an ease of going beyond

58 Rene A.V. Saguisag, et al. v. Executive Secretary Paquito N. Ochoa, Jr., et al., G.R. No. 212426, January 12, 2016, https://lawphil.net/judjuris/juri2016/jan2016/gr_212426_2016.html (accessed: October 15, 2024)

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

the restricted legalist thinking that mystifies the unequal relations between the Empire US and its client state of the Philippines. As we have noted in the methodological framework of this paper, we aim our critical analysis to see the totality of an event—how EDCA is tied with its internal relation with the bigger phenomenon of imperialist rent and war.

From an ultra-legalist point-of-view, EDCA would be easily justified since its legitimacy is based on the untouched MDT, an expression of the supposed care of Uncle Sam to its brown brother if an attack happens.⁶¹ Remember that the MDT has been compacted during a century when the USA committed its legacy of numerous war and military crimes. The ousting and preventing of the American Subic military bases was paradoxically nullified with the ratification of the entry of white Joes through the VFA, blaspheming the democratic decisions of Filipinos to banish the American bases.⁶² We must recall Louis Althusser's thesis on ideology—it does not need to be a 24/7 interpellation of the subjects since the legal apparatuses have the function of justifying ideological practices.⁶³ Colonialism has not gone beyond but has been let devastate the country in slow burn fashion, by weaponizing our own laws against our own sovereignty. Therefore, abolishing EDCA would entail abolishing MDT and VFA altogether.

Philippines as a rentier-client state of the US

Section 3 under Article 3 of EDCA states:

Given the mutuality of benefits, the Parties agree that the Philippines shall make Agreed Locations available to United States forces without rental or similar costs. United States forces shall cover their necessary operational expenses with respect to their activities at the Agreed Locations.⁶⁴

61 See Supreme Court E-Library, "Mutual Defense Treaty Between The Republic Of The Philippines And The United States Of America. Signed At Washington, August 30, 1951." Retrieved from <https://elibrary.judiciary.gov.ph/thebookshelf/showdocs/35/11842> (accessed: October 5, 2024)

62 The Lawphil Project. "Visiting Forces Agreement," February 10, 1998, retrieved from https://lawphil.net/international/treaties/vfa_1998.html (accessed: October 5, 2024)

63 Louis Althusser, *On Ideology* (UK: Verso, 2020), 8-32; 44-51.

64 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement between the Philippines and the United States, April 29, 2014, retrieved from <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2014/04/29/document-enhanced-defense-cooperation-agreement/> (accessed: April 16, 2024)

Capitalist nation-states need military rent of spaces around the world. However, the abovementioned section in EDCA waives any rentier role in the agreement, but a charity, a free gift of the Philippines for its imperialist master—which is way worse!

The Philippines' role as military rent of the US is clear in the National Security Strategy 2022 by the Washington White House. The Biden-Harris administration prioritizes the containment of China (as well as Russia) and Biden's regime admits that "the only competitor with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to advance that objective..." and that China is the most pressing competitor of the Empire in technological, economic, intelligence, and international governance.⁶⁵

According to the Bilateral Defense Guidelines released by the Philippines and the US in May 2024, any disturbance or unrest that will be triggered in the South China Sea is included in the Mutual Defense Treaty. Among these circumstances is why the EDCA sites are strategically located where they are – taking into account the four new sites in Luzon: Cagayan, Isabela, and Palawan. Based on the official website of the US Department of Defense in 2023, they released that the US has allocated over \$82 million for projects in the first five existing EDCA sites.⁶⁶ This year, the Biden administration is seeking a \$128 million budget for the EDCA projects – executing 36 projects that will double the amount that was already invested through its infrastructures.⁶⁷

Under the EDCA, the agreed locations will be used for: "training; transit; support and other related activities; refueling of aircraft; bunkering of vessels; temporary maintenance of vehicles, vessels, and aircraft;

65 National Security Strategy 2022, 8-24. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>. (accessed: April 16, 2024)

66 U.S. Department of Defense, "Philippines, U.S. Announce Four New EDCA Sites," February 1, 2023, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3285566/philippines-us-announce-four-new-edca-sites/> (accessed: May 18, 2024)

67 Philippine Communications Office, "Biden seeks \$128-M budget for EDCA projects," April 12, 2024, https://pco.gov.ph/news_releases/biden-seeks-128-m-budget-for-edca-projects/ (accessed: May 18, 2024)

temporary accommodation of personnel, communications, prepositioning of equipment, supplies, and materials; deploying forces and material, and such other activities as the Parties may agree”.⁶⁸ It is also noteworthy that such an agreement seems like a contract with the devil as the US has the upper hand compared to the Philippines. The US troops and military contractors can even construct “non-relocatable structures and permanent buildings” on the sites. The exclusive rights that the US holds are formidable in EDCA. They have exclusive use of the materials in the Philippine military bases (including public utilities such as electricity, water, etc.), and “operational control” in the sites including unimpeded access that is “consistent with operational safety and security requirements.” At a surface level, it seems like EDCA is an investment of the US from which the Philippines is earning. Still, as it is overtly stated in the agreement, the sites (or any portion of it) will only be returned by the US to the Philippines “once [it is] no longer required by the US forces for activities under the agreement”. Even the US can use the private areas around the agreed locations as they wish, and the Philippines is obliged to give way to the US whenever they need our ports, roads, and local public and private facilities.⁶⁹

The American utilization of the EDCA sites is technically free of charge, but the Filipino people are expected to pay for their utilities. Our taxes are being used to support them in our country, but the US under EDCA is exempted from paying the taxes in exchange for this “alliance and military support” to our armed forces. They are even allowed to operate their own telecommunications system to use the radio spectrum for *free* – when our policies state that approval for frequencies in the country must go through the Congressional franchising first. On top of all these, after 10 years from its passage, EDCA will *automatically* be renewed unless one party subjects it to termination. As a safety net, if any disputes arise in the future, neither the US nor the Philippines can contest it to any local or international courts or tribunals unless permitted by the other party.

68 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement between the Philippines and the United States.

69 Ibid.

Without a doubt, EDCA constitutes an executive agreement that is against the Philippine constitution as it bypassed the approval of the Senate, thrown by our own Supreme Court into a mere agreement issue, decontextualized from our brutal colonial experience. The US directly assaulted our national sovereignty just to save its imperialist agenda. Its grand scheme of “benevolence” unfalteringly chains us to continually serve them even at the expense of a bloody war.

Notes from the Peace Mission – sustained imperialist military intervention is a threat to peace

The US, through its military agreements with the Philippines like that of EDCA, impedes our path to an independent foreign policy that truly stands for our national sovereignty. It is transpicuous that the US intends to maintain its influence, authority, and domination over the Asia-Pacific region and to protect its interests. It will not allow any other expanding China to have control in Asia. EDCA is a strategic way for the US to stay in the Philippines – leaving military forces to integrate with our Armed Forces and conduct military exercises and activities nationwide while penetrating even the farthest barrios they can reach.

It is not unknown to the Filipino people the effects of militarization in Clark Air Base, Pampanga, and Subic Naval Base in Zambales. Numerous past articles, case studies, artworks, documentaries, films, fiction, and non-fiction write-ups have reflected the immense lived experiences of the Filipinos found in those military areas. The spectrum of struggles, challenges, poverty, trauma, harassment, death, and resistance was swinging in full gear. The military bases and the EDCA sites are indicative of a threat to peace and the consequences it brings forth to the people, long-term or short-term, are detrimental to our overall being and the economic, political, cultural, and environmental status of the country.

The authors use the data gathered exposed in the press conference published on June 12, 2024, by Bayan and P1NAS based on the humanitarian missions in EDCA sites in the Cagayan Region, Central Luzon, and the Ilocos Region.⁷⁰ The sharers in the prescon were able to gather first-

70 Bayan-USA, “[PRESS CONFERENCE] Threat to Philippine Independence: International Delegation Exposes Impacts of U.S. Militarism,” Facebook, June 12, 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/bayanusa/posts/1234567890>. The humanitarian mission was organized by BAYAN, a progressive alliance that seeks national democracy in the Philippines and PINAS, an alliance campaigning for the Philippine sovereignty against

hand information on the community members who were able to work at the EDCA sites as well as areas where the American troops were joining Balikatan Exercises. The prescon highlighted gathered narratives in the said peace mission raised the effects of EDCA, the militarization in the provinces where EDCA sites are built and Balikatan Exercises are conducted, and the imperialist looting of resources, such as black sand mining and special economic zones.

It was also reported that some US troops casually invite women to the naval base to eat or they also invite them to go to the casinos. In the hotel where some delegates stayed, the US military men were seen drinking alcohol and singing karaoke with local women. Recalling the history of detestable crimes of American soldiers against our women, most notably on what happened to the victim Suzette Nicolas (more known as “Nicole”) and Jeniffer Laude, among the reported cases of sexual violence. Nicole was assaulted by four American Marines based in the Subic during a station under Visiting Forces Agreement – Keith Silkwood, Dominic Duplantis, Chad Carpentier, and Daniel Smith (who was the only one found guilty). Smith being the only one found guilty in 2006, was eventually dismissed because of Nicole’s recantation, causing the acquittal decision of the Court of Appeals on Smith’s crime.⁷¹ Jennifer Laude was murdered by the US Lance Corporal Joseph Scott Pemberton during the Balikatan Exercises in 2014. Pemberton was convicted in 2015 after pressure from various groups. But in 2020, he was granted a pardon by former President Rodrigo Duterte, who was thought to be anti-US but proved later to be only lip service. The violence against women and children lingers as a disturbing opportunity during military activities.

In the Cagayan Valley, there were reported experiences in the Cagayan Valley homing to two EDCA sites at Naval Vase Camilo Osias

the aggression of China and US Imperialism. This mission was composed of various people, from various sectors such as women’s groups, activists, labor unionists, artists, and students, together with activists abroad, who participated in a peace mission among seven regions in the Philippines.

71 GMA News, “Smith leaves RP after women justices absolve him of rape,” April 24, 2009, <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/158402/smith-leaves-rp-after-women-justices-absolve-him-of-rape/story/> (Accessed: October 1, 2024); Jomar Canlas, “Draft ruling acquits Smith CA justice wrote ponencia before retiring in 2008,” Manila Times, March 23, 2009. Retrieved from https://web.archive.org/web/20090326062804/http://www.manilatimes.net/national/2009/march/23/yehey/top_stories/20090323top1.html

in Sta. Ana and Lal-lo Airport in Lal-lo. have been newly agreed locations since 2023, which also cater to the Cagayan Economic Zone Authority or CEZA. CEZA was established in 1995 and has been operational for 29 years. This government-owned and controlled corporation is assigned to approve the businesses allowed in Cagayan. Based on the report, most of the businesses in Cagayan are foreign-owned. Interestingly, most big mining companies, casinos, and even Philippine Offshore Gaming Organizations (POGOs) are owned by the Chinese in the area. As highlighted also in the prescon, the supposed context of Cagayan Valley where there are abundant natural resources and skillful workers makes you wonder why the presence of US troops and alarming militarization are taking place in the area. The communities seemed unaware of why the US troops have become more visible in the last couple of years. In the past weeks, there have been aerial bombings around the area, but lately, in May 2024 when the mission was conducted, it was becoming more frequent. People were hearing loud noises and bangs. All of these circumstances are caused by the continuing military exercises via Balikatan and EDCA. They also shared that the last military exercise was late last year and described the military exercises as them making scenarios and making movements with war equipment. It was confirmed by one of our interviewees that the military, during unilateral exercises, even uses live fire even though it has already been disallowed by the provincial government. There were also comments that the reason why the US chose the agreed EDCA sites is because they are located on strategic terrain. The agreed location in La-lo Airport, Cagayan, is used mainly for storage of their aircraft and Balikatan exercises. Formerly, it was for commercial use where the flight was from and to Macau. The most Balikatan exercises conducted in April to May 2024, a hundred US troops arrived. Only the officials leave the airport but the regular troops are not allowed to leave. Every military exercise, their activities involve parachuting and practicing their shooting sometimes with live fire. The planes that they test are usually low-flying, stealth planes. The local people shared that they were scared of the noise.

The communities near EDCA sites in Cagayan were not informed. Some locals were requested to provide spaces to store weapons outside EDCA sites and agreed locations which is even against EDCA itself. EDCA sites were also projected to be built in Special Economic Zones, which also cover control over economic and natural resources. Teachers, church people, and navy reservists were interviewed and the common sentiment among them was to renounce war in their communities.

Helicopters passing over Palau island were also observed which caused panic. Some organizations were also terror-tagged upon organizing or expressing concerns over the military exercises that people saw as indications of an impending war. Meanwhile, in the Ilocos, one fisher said that he was paid PHP 25,000,00 to craft 400 fishing boats for Balikatan Exercises. There was also parachuting done by Americans from fighter jets which may be thought of as a way of provoking China since Ilocos's area fronts directly facing China. US troops also use live fire, resulting to loud noises scaring them and their children. This was all to normalize foreign military occupation in that area in Ilocos. Since that Balikatan, fisherfolks are seasonally deprived of livelihood, due to "No Sail Policy" since they are prohibited from going to the sea where bullets are fired by soldiers of Uncle Sam. With over 1000 fisherfolks in the Barangay integrated by the peace mission, only less than a hundred were given 1000 pesos in cash and 500 pesos worth of groceries during that time they were not allowed to fish.

PART IV: Conclusion: EDCA—From Right to Power and Resistance

Poetry is impossible after Auschwitz said the philosopher Theodor Adorno, but the theorist Slavoj Zizek asserts correctly that rather, what is impossible post-Auschwitz was prose and not poetry.⁷² Meanwhile, somewhere else, the political philosopher Antonio Negri asserts that poetry is impossible after Auschwitz and Hiroshima as well. We emphasize that Negri's inclusion of Hiroshima to take in also the US crimes⁷³—from such, we can reframe their inter-referenced assertions that aesthetically pleasing poetry or prose are all impossible since the genocidal neocolonial monopoly capital of the USA globalist regime. This has a strong rhetorical point. But nonetheless, of course, prose and poetry will flood even in these precarious times terrorized by historical imperialism. Through the revolutionary artist Bertolt Brecht, we must remember the power of poetry or prose or any use of language in times of darkness and terror:

72 Slavoj Zizek, *Violence* (New York: Picador, 2008) 4-5.

73

Antonio Negri, "The Discreet Taste of Dialectic" in *Giorgio Agamben: Sovereignty and Life* ed. Matthew Calarco and Steven Decaroli (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 100.

*When the times darken will there be singing even then?
There will be singing even then.
Of how the times darken.*⁷⁴

The Filipinos have the rights but this freedom to exercise those rights cannot be done in passivity, especially in the trying dark times. They should be fought in various forms of struggle. As the great philosopher Baruch Spinoza asserts: “The natural right of the individual man is thus determined, not by sound reason but by desire and power.”⁷⁵ But this power cannot be purely an exercise of power for the sake of it, as it should be in the resonance of reason, otherwise, it will fall into tyranny.⁷⁶ Favoring democratic sovereignty where power resides in the multitudes to govern rationalities, Spinoza says that it “is almost impossible that the majority of a people... should agree in an irrational design; and moreover, the basis and aim of a democracy is to avoid the desires as irrational, and to bring men as far as possible under the control of reason, so that they may live in peace and harmony: if this the basis be removed the whole fabric falls to ruin.”⁷⁷ Hence, from this, the irrational EDCA that is anti-people, and the capitalist and imperialist reason that designs the world, are all proven to be anti-thetical to peace and harmony as the logic of capitalist accumulation, the tale of it all, is monstrous madness.

Moreover, people will always find ways of resistance. We believe that people will always learn, will always organize, mobilize, and engage in transformative politics of such resistance. From the ousting of military bases to sustained educational campaigns, to protests and demonstrations all in the negation of the EDCA and imperialist hegemony, may it be USA or China, the people in the last instance possess the power and reason, greater than the Leviathan of tyrannic and irrational agreements.

74 Bertolt Brecht, “When the Times Darken,” *Scottish Poetry Library* <https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poem/when-times-darken/> (accessed May 29, 2024).

75 Baruch Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise* (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc.), 186.

76

Ibid., 190.

77

Ibid., 191.

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