CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

1. In Southeast Asia, the military occupy fairly major positions in the state apparatus. The military establishments of Southeast Asian countries are united in the view that, ultimately, theirs is the responsibility of protecting the existing social structures adopted by the ruling elites. The ruling class use the military as an instrument to protect their interests and to continue in power. The survival of the capitalist oriented states of Southeast Asia is greatly dependent on their respective armed forces continually exercising their coercive power over society. In this process, the military become more and more integrated into the political process and exercise major decision-making power. At the same time, the strength of the military also continues to increase substantially.

2. Militarization is encouraged or nurtured by almost all the regimes in Southeast Asia in one way or another. The militarization of Southeast Asian politics has different dimensions. It has been proved that in Southeast Asian countries, militarization has expressed itself not only in
increased defence spending but also in the greater role assumed by the military in civilian affairs. The military has been used as an instrument to control the dissenters and critics of the ruling system. Repression of people's movements, the working class, peasants and students, for silencing the intellectuals, etc., have been quite common in most Southeast Asian countries. Gross violation of human rights occurs most frequently in countries that have shifted to authoritarian styles of government. It has become a common phenomenon in Southeast Asia that militarization destroys the dignity of people. From these experiences or trends one can understand that in Southeast Asia militarization is the product of fear of the people or fear of the ousted elites and colonial powers for the ruling class. Philippines is the most typical example of this.

3. In the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos had been in power for almost twenty years till he fled into exile in the United States in February 1986. For all but seven of those years, he had exercised dictatorial powers in a system he called "Constitutional Authoritarianism". Marcos assumed full control of the executive and legislative branches of government as also direct personal command of the military after his proclamation of martial law in September 1972.
President Marcos justified the imposition of martial law saying that he had imposed it "to save the nation" from the Maoist threat, the Muslim rebellion and to "institute reforms". These two justifications given for martial law hardly accorded with reality. Although the Maoists rebels became a major nuisance, they were not strong enough to create an imminent danger, threatening the government. At the same time the Muslim rebellion was confined to the southern part of the country and their aim was not to topple the government in Manila but to preserve their land and culture. Marcos' personal security and the maintenance of his hold on power clearly emerged as the immediate considerations for the imposition of martial law. Under martial law, President Marcos vastly expanded the size and resources of the armed forces. Martial law declaration became the beginning of intensified militarization. Marcos used the militarization process as an instrument to stamp out political opposition through speedy military measures.

4. The main effect of this rapid intensification of militarization was the growing deterioration of the human rights situation in the country. There was a growing tendency to victimise all who opposed or criticized the authoritarian rule of President Marcos. Countless counter-
insurgency operations in the name of "national security" had resulted in innumerable cases of political arrests, kidnappings and disappearances, salvagings, torture, massacres, bombings and strafings, hamletting and forced evacuations. These violations of human rights had become very common after 1972.

During the fourteen years of martial law, it was estimated that the rights of nearly a million Filipinos had been violated directly. Said to be the most extensive form of violation of the human rights of peasants, forced evacuations had displaced 1,040,000 families till the first half of 1985, according to an unpublished report of the Philippine National Red Cross. Most victims of human rights violations, an estimated 70 to 80 percent, were peasants.

Martial law brought untold sufferings to different sectors of the Filipinos. General economic conditions worsened considerably. The value of the peso came down. Prices of basic commodities spiralled without any check. The economy favoured the wealthy elite, encouraged the limited growth of a subservient middle class, but sorely deprived the lower social classes in society. The industrial and agricultural labourer's wages were sub-human. Trade unions that fought militantly for the workers' rights...
were looked upon with suspicion. Strikes in industries were banned and the military used to break strikes and protest marches.

Under these conditions, those who came forward to oppose or resist the actions of the rulers were held suspect or were crushed outright. Those who expressed different views, other than the official government views, were put in prison and labelled as political prisoners. For the most part, those under detention were 'suspected activists', union organisers, 'suspected subversives', suspected members of Communist Party of Philippines (CPP) or New People's Army (NPA), those suspected of giving food or other assistance to NPA, particularly farmers in the rural areas or those said to be involved in alleged assassination plots against officials.

5. The Military became more powerful and carried out a variety of operations. Atrocities, harassment, torture, massacre, 'salvagings', etc., became more and more regular. There were several instances where whole barrios were declared 'no man's land', where anyone seen could be shot at sight.

People were evacuated from their homes, and barrio schools were closed down. There was widespread
unemployment, illness and lack of decent living conditions. Systematic documentations on militarization and its effects on society by several reputed human rights organisations reveal the fact that the failure to produce a residence certificate was enough basis for the military to detain and even torture a civilian. On mere suspicion, those without certificates were considered as NPA fighters or supporters.

While in the hands of military personnel, captives were ill-treated. Even the dead were mutilated and displayed in public places or town centres. Through actions ranging from the burning and looting of villages, the extermination and torture of NPA suspects right within the barrio, to demanding 'donations' while armed with, military personnel had sowed tension and fear among villagers.

Killings had become rampant under heavy militarization. The majority of the killings were attributed to police and military men or their agents in the abuse of their authority. Indiscriminate firings by the military and paramilitary forces had resulted in the killing and wounding of several people. Another grim evidence of the increasing deterioration of the human rights situation was massacres,
wherein human life was of little value in the government's counter-insurgency campaign.

Continued military operations in different parts of the Philippines had shattered the villagers' peaceful life. Their normal life was disrupted and their sources of livelihood destroyed. Atrocities were inevitably committed during military operations. The government, its military and police, were guilty of gross and systematic violations of human rights.

6. Since 1972, the military in the Philippines had become a strong partner in Marcos' administration and all its policies. As a consequence of martial law, the military assumed what Harold Ward Maynard identified as a "stewardship role". This kind of a development in the role of Philippine military over the years has been described as change from military influence to military participation. But this change created irreparable damage to the Philippine society. Military operations had reached unprecedented proportions. Larger military formations were deployed in sweeping operations to annihilate the numerically inferior rebel forces, and the supporters or sympathisers of rebels in the rural areas.
7. According to the Humanitarian law concepts, which have been analysed in chapter VI, those who belong to an organisation involved in a legitimate struggle for the self determination of people have the right to struggle against an oppressive regime. In the Philippines, New People’s Army (NPA) and Bangsa Moro Army (BMA) were fighting against the armed forces of a government which had delegitimized itself of the people and against their fundamental rights. In view of these facts and in the light of humanitarian law N.P.A or B.M.A members cannot be treated as terrorists. But Marcos' regime treated the rebels as terrorists and counter-insurgency operations carried out against the rebels. Thus Marcos government had violated the international humanitarian law which the Philippine government had accepted through the ratification of Geneva Code in 1950.

All these findings and observations indicate the fact that President Marcos wanted to perpetuate himself in power, and that he used martial law as an instrument for this. He used it to justify his assumption of legislative power and the other measures taken by him under it. After the imposition of martial law, the AFP was left free to act unlawfully and harshly against the dissenters of the authoritarianism of Marcos. As a result of this
intensification of the role of the military in national affairs, violations of human rights escalated, wreaking great havoc upon the lives of people. U.S also played a vital role in the imposition of martial law in order to safeguard its own economic and strategic interests.