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**INSURGENCY: THE PHILIPPINE EXPERIENCE  
A WAY OF LIFE**

**BY**

**COLONEL ORLANDO A. AMBROCIO  
Philippine Army**

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

INSURGENCY:

THE PHILIPPINE EXPERIENCE

A Way of Life

by

Colonel Orlando A. Ambrocio(PA)

Colonel Walt Wood (USMC)  
Project Advisor

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U.S. Army War College  
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ABSTRACT

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Insurgency and the Philippines have been together ever since the country was introduced to the rest of the world by Portuguese sailor, Ferdinand Magellan, who sailed for Spain. The idea that the Europeans brought insurgency to the islands is an idea that this part of the country's history proves. Magellan and his intrepid sailors are part of this proof. From 1521 up to the present, the Philippines and insurgency are a married couple who are having more than their fair share of domestic problems in their married lives. The Philippines have endured centuries of insurgency and has managed to survive as a free and independent democracy. We must learn the root causes of insurgency and then effectively deal with both the insurgents and the root causes that fostered or nurtured the insurgency. And most importantly understand that complacency is an attitude that must be guarded against.



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## INSURGENCY: THE PHILIPPINE EXPERIENCE

### A WAY OF LIFE.

The purpose of this paper is to chronicle the history of insurgency in the Philippines. The concept is to have a complete picture of the insurgencies in order to have a better understanding of the situation. This paper reviews and analyzes the history of insurgency in the Philippines by examining the different insurgencies as led by their respective charismatic leaders of the time.

This following definition of insurgency will be used throughout this paper. Insurgency is rising in revolt against a civil authority or a government in power.<sup>1</sup> It is a form of unconventional warfare engaged in by groups designed to overthrow the existing system through political and military struggles to achieve a political objective. In insurgency, the primary focus is on people, the center of gravity in this type of conflict. Defined in another way, insurgency is a battle for the hearts and minds of the people by the contending parties. And this takes time--a long time.



Any student of warfare will readily see that the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has the substance, form, and structure of an internal security force and is geared towards addressing domestic turmoil and insurgency.<sup>2</sup> However, external defense is not totally forgotten as the AFP's mission is still to defend the country from external aggression and towards this end a modest modernization program to increase the capability of the AFP is in full swing.

#### THE ISLANDS

The Philippines is an archipelago of over 7100 islands. No one knows how many islands there are. The exact number is almost impossible to determine for they rise or sink depending on the tide. The islands stretch from north to south for more than 1,200 miles-- the distance from Seattle, Washington to Los Angeles, California, or from Stockholm to Belgrade in Europe. The 116,500 sq.mile area of the Philippines equals that of Arizona or Italy. Geographers usually divide the Philippines into three island groups. Luzon in the north, Visayas in the middle, and Mindanao in the south. Luzon, largest of these islands, is about the

size of Kentucky.<sup>3</sup> With warm and damp climate, the islands produce rice, hemp, coconuts, and sugar cane. Mindanao, the southern end of the archipelago is a turkey shaped island of 95,000 square km. Mindanao, just like the other islands, is brimming with economic potential as it is blessed with fertile lands.<sup>4</sup> Visayas, the third largest grouping of the islands, are economically self sustaining islands peopled by industrious and well to do individuals. Leyte, the province where the late General Douglas MacArthur landed to liberate the country from the Japanese in WW II is in this island group. Luzon, being the biggest, has more resources. It has also the seat of government, Quezon City.

The islands have only two major seasons, dry and wet. The nights are pleasant and bearable while days are hot and humid. December to late February are cool by Filipino standards. Monsoon forecasts have been called the most important predictions in the world, and yet they are the most predictably unpredictable in the Philippines. For example, while a newscaster is predicting fair weather, a monsoon has crept in probably just while the newscaster is predicting his fair weather news. And then it rains for

days, even weeks. For another week, the skies clear up until the rains come again in torrents.

The country is basically agricultural with more than her fair share of mountains and rivers, as well as volcanoes, really active ones. The land area can be classified into 37% arable, 4% meadows and pastures, 40% forest and woodlands and 19% others. Its maritime claims extend up to 100nm from the coastline, an exclusive economic zone of 300nm that includes the continental shelf to the depth of possible exploitation.<sup>5</sup> About 15M hectares, almost half the nation's land area is classed as timberland. The coastline, which is twice that of the United States, includes two of the finest seaports in the world, Manila and Subic Bays.

Agriculture has provided the Filipinos with their livelihood and wealth for centuries and does so today. Forestry and fishing are also well established industries. The manufacturing sector is growing with textiles, electronics, and fabricated metal products as among the country's main products.

The Philippines is a democracy. The political system is one which provides equal rights for women and a social

ladder on which even a slave could rise to become "royalty". It has a constitution that separates the executive, legislative and judicial powers into three co -equal parts. The executive is headed by a President elected nationwide for a single term of six years and a legislative branch made up of two houses, the Senate or upper house with 24 Senators and a lower body or House of Representatives with 200 members elected by congressional district. The judicial system is made up of a Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, Regional Trial Courts and City and Municipal courts nationwide which are independent from the executive.

#### THE FILIPINOS

Today almost everybody has heard of the Filipinos. It has not always been so. It took some time for the outside world to know who and where they were. In 1898 Admiral Dewey's rout of the Spanish fleet caused a scurry for maps, atlases, and old travel books among Americans to find where on earth their new colony was. As to the kind of people who lived in the islands, Americans at the St. Louis Exposition of 1901 saw a group of loin-clad Igorots from the mountain province presented to the public.<sup>6</sup> Americans at the exposition mistook the Igorots as typical of all Filipinos.

Americans felt quite kindly toward these "representatives" of the Philippines and were quite unaware of Filipino culture or the fact that Filipinos had been a free people since 12 June 1898.<sup>7</sup>

Gradually, more and more people began to hear about the Filipinos. The first Asian to be elected as United Nations President was a Filipino. In the Second World War and the Korean war, the Filipino soldiers were one of the best if not the best in the world, according to General Douglas MacArthur. In the 60s and the 70s, it meant a smart place to go. Filipinas were being crowned as the most beautiful girls in the world and together with images of coconut trees and white sand beaches, romantic notions began to shape a paradise on earth.

But the Filipinos suffered from an unfortunate central weakness: the absence of any sense of national unity. They were divided into countless tribes and dialects: the Tagalogs, the Ilocanos, the Kapampangans, the Bicolanos of Luzon; the Warays, Boholanos, Cebuanos, Ilongos, and Negrenses of the Visayas; and in Mindanao, at least a hundred other forms, to include Muslims. To maintain control over these natives, the Spaniards sought to minimize any

sense of national pride or peoplehood. Filipinos were taught to think of their own culture and of themselves as inferior. The silks and other brightly colored costumes of the Tagalogs, Visayans, and other Filipinos were discarded for European garb. The Spanish language, on the other hand, was not taught to the majority of the natives. With ruthless logic, the Conquistadores argued that if one language replaced the hundred different dialects, it might help the Filipinos to unite against colonial rule.<sup>8</sup>

There were more than 68M Filipinos in the 1995 census and the forecast for 1997 is about 71.2 million with a growth rate of about 2%. About 91% of the people are Roman Catholics, making the country the only Catholic nation in the region. The Muslims amount to some 5% and the rest of the denominations, 4%.<sup>9</sup> The Filipinos are multi-lingual. The national language is Pilipino which is actually the dialect of the Tagalogs, the biggest and the best educated regional groupings of the Filipinos. The official language is English and Spanish is spoken as well. However there are more or less 80 local dialects that are being used nationwide depending on which island you are in. Moreover, the literacy rate is high, running more than 90%.

The Filipino is a mixture of races that have met and mingled over the centuries. The main component is the Malay. But the Malay is a mixture also of the Persian, Indian, Thai, Arab, and Chinese among others. To this were further added Germans, British, Spanish, Americans and Japanese. The intermingling of all these bloodlines in his veins has produced a unique race, unlike any other in the world and the culture that evolved created new strains in the Filipino over thousands of years, including a social system that is flexible.<sup>10</sup> And so we now have a Filipino that thinks like an American, feels like a Spaniard and acts like a Malay. It is from the Malay that the Filipinos got his myths, customs and traditions.

#### INSURGENCY: A WAY OF LIFE

Insurgency came to the islands together with Ferdinand Magellan, a Portuguese sailor who sailed for Spain in the 16th century. In search for spices and gold, Magellan sailed west and on March 17, 1521 Magellan and his crew landed in what is now known as Homonhon island, one of the islands comprising the Visayas group. Magellan made friends with the people and quickly established dominion over the natives. Pigaffeta, the fleet historian, described the event

as fruitful and most rewarding for both groups, natives and foreigners. The fleet stayed for a number of days to allow the scurvy ridden sailors to regain their strength and to take on provisions. Friendly natives came in their boats with coconuts and bunches of bananas which one sailor called figs a foot long. Magellan reciprocated with gifts of red caps, mirrors and the like. In this approach, Magellan was successful. However, the numerous islands being under different rulers or Rajahs or Datus during this time still remained to be visited. And so after Homonhon, Magellan came to know the island of Cebu, far richer and more populated than Homonhon. After farewell feasting, Magellan and his sailors left for Cebu on April 3, 1521.<sup>11</sup>

Cebu, at that time, was already a prosperous trading center. Cebu was included in a kingdom ruled by powerful Rajah Humabon. Under Humabon were a number of subordinate Datus and several islands. Magellan and Humabon became friends and the foreigners were welcomed in his Kingdom. However a few of the Datus in other neighboring islands refused to accept Magellan as a friend and equal to Rajah Humabon. And so the first insurgency was born in the recorded history of the Philippines.



This insurgency proceeded and ended this way.

The 16th century Spaniards who landed in Cebu were armed and armored, a people fitted for an empire. Like any truly imperial people, the Spaniards did not bargain with alien civilizations and cultures they found; they struck them down. They were not merchants nor refugees; they came to claim what they felt was theirs. The natives were, to say the least, not likely to submit to roughshod suppression.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, even during this period, negotiation was already widely used. So with the help of Rajah Colambu of Limasawa and the slave Enriquez, a day of negotiation made Rajah Humabon and Magellan friends. Their friendship was so deep that Humabon and his constituents embraced the foreigners faith after only a short time. The mass baptism to Christianize the country started in Cebu this way. This first baptism was a very touching ceremony. In the Holy Mass, the new Christians were requested to destroy their idols and in their place, replicas of the cross were used. Everyone willingly obliged. Thus the conquest of the Philippines was made using the strategy of friendship, alliance and religion.

LAPU-LAPU

Well, the arrangement was already perfect and peace could have reigned with the kingdom intact were it not for a minor problem. When Magellan and Humabon announced the new found alliance and set up making Rajah Humabon the King of the federation of islands with all the other subordinate Datus swearing allegiance to him, the nearby island of Mactan ruled by Datu Lapu-Lapu, refused. King Charles, the Christian name of Humabon, was angry. On the other hand Magellan saw this as the perfect opportunity to show to Humabon his meaning of friendship and at the same time the awesome power of his Spanish troops and equipment with their booming cannons. At first Magellan sent a unit to punish the stubborn Lapu-Lapu by burning his capital. Lapu-Lapu was not swayed. Another warning was made. The effect was still the same. If at all, the warnings made Lapu-Lapu more steadfast in his resolve to resist. What happened next was best described by Pigaffeta in his writing

Pigaffeta wrote, "when Magellan was appraised by one of the Datus of the Mactan situation", the Datu begged that on the following night, under cover of darkness, "he (Magellan) would send but one boat with some of his men to fight"<sup>13</sup>. Magellan decided to send three boats of his soldiers instead

to destroy the rebellion as soon as possible. Rajah Humabon volunteered to send his warriors also to fight side by side with the Spaniards. An offer by another Datu to attack from the rear while Magellan was attacking from the front was also made. However, Magellan refused both offers of help. Magellan had not heard of coalition warfare. Anyway, it was made clear that a Spanish soldier in full armor and with his superior and highly advanced technology and arms was the equivalent of and could defeat more than a hundred natives.

This decision was the worst decision Magellan made in his entire life. Refusing the support of his new allies, Magellan led the fight against Lapu-Lapu and invaded Mactan. His invasion failed miserably and he was also killed in the process. He died in the hands of Datu Lapu-Lapu on the beaches of Mactan. Magellan's body was never found; not even a trace. The last known information was that Lapu-Lapu kept the dead body of Magellan as a prize for his victory. This was how the first recorded insurgency in the Philippines ended-- victory for the insurgents.

#### THE MOROS

After the disastrous battle of Mactan, other Spaniards came in due time and in greater force and in the middle of

the sixteenth century, had completed the military and religious conquest of the islands.<sup>14</sup> For the next three and a half centuries, the Philippines was a colony of Spain, at least most of it anyway. Most of it only because the Spaniards never completely subjugated the southern portion of the Philippines, Mindanao. The most successful of the Spaniard's expeditions was the one led by Miguel Lopez de Legaspi. Within some 20 years, Legaspi managed to plant the cross on much Philippine soil and enabled the Spaniards to control the thickly inhabited lowland regions except for the Moros tribe, with whom they carried on sustained conflict until the end of their regime.<sup>15</sup> The Mindanao problem of today can only be appreciated and fully understood by looking at the history of the Muslim struggle against the Spaniards, then the Americans and now their Filipino Christian brothers. The sense of mutual suspicion and distrust between Christians and Moros today is a result of more than three centuries of unpleasant experiences between the Spanish conquistadors and the Moros. History books reveal that the "Christians of the North" did allow themselves to be used by the Spaniards in the fight against the Moros in the south. This perception of betrayal is still

felt by the Muslim masses today as they remain conscious of the past.<sup>16</sup> The Muslims do have a reason to feel betrayed as much of Philippine history being taught today in schools is about heroes from Luzon and Visayas who fought the Spaniards, Americans and the Japanese--with no mention of the Muslims. Even the Philippine flag is a reason for distrust in that it has only eight rays of the sun signifying the first eight provinces who revolted against Spain when in truth and in fact the Muslims in the South fought and were never conquered by the Spaniards for more than 300 years. Even the name Filipinos does not sit well with the Moslems because their ancestors were never vassals of King Philip of Spain.<sup>17</sup> Many of the laws being implemented in Muslim areas today especially about land ownership traces its roots to sovereignty of Spain over the Philippines. Another factor is religion. Had it not been for the coming of the Spaniards, the Philippines could have been a Moslem nation instead of a Christian one. Before the arrival of Magellan, the Moslem religion was spreading and the arrival of Christianity abruptly stopped its spread. Islam is the most powerful influence in the life of a Moslem. It is not merely a religion, it is a way of life.

Gen. John J Pershing, US Army, once said when he fought the Moros in the Southern Philippines to use a language that they understand. And it seems he was right. For when he fought them in the field, warrior to warrior, battle to battle, man to man and defeated them using his superior firepower and arms to the hilt, the Moros understood. To Pershing, the insurgency was to be prosecuted and waged in a manner of a warrior. There must be no room for the enemy to receive the wrong message. It must be clear and concise. And so Pershing's battles against the Moros were characterized by heavy casualties on the enemy side. In fact a number of them can be called massacres. Yet the desired end was achieved. The American message was well understood and the Moros laid down their arms and kris and respected Pershing and his troops.

General Pershing showed the Moros who were the masters of the game. But it was the Civil Governor of the Moros, Frank Carpenter, who brought to pass what the Spanish and American armies could not do in hundreds of years. Carpenter used patience, persuasion, will, imagination, and more importantly a deep understanding of Muslim customs.<sup>18</sup> Carpenter showed firmness and a strong will in his

management of the affairs of the Muslims and he was respected for it. Of course the army was always there, on call, on guard. By using an iron hand on the one hand and a velvet glove on the other, the Americans were able to integrate the Muslim areas into the national state process.

#### ANDRES BONIFACIO

The act of putting up and organizing the first group of Filipinos who rose in revolt against Spain was done by a commoner by the name of Andres Bonifacio. An ordinary warehouse employee, Bonifacio's patriotism and nationalism were awakened after reading Jose Rizal's El Filibusterismo and Noli Me Tangere. Originally from Tondo, a district in Manila known for people of tough hides and brawn, Bonifacio organized the Katipunan or KKK, a secret society of Filipinos who worked to raise an army of Filipinos to fight the Spaniards when the proper time came.. He managed to enlist thousands of his countrymen secretly under the very noses of the Spaniards. Not only did he possess an undeniable genius for organization but also great courage and patriotism. To be caught in the underground work in which he engaged meant certain death.<sup>19</sup>

However, the secret society was drawn prematurely into launching the revolution when the Spaniards got wind of the organization's existence. There was no other choice except to fight since the only other alternative was death if caught. Soon, members and suspected members of the Katipunan upon whom the Spaniards could lay their hands met death at the garrotes or the firing squads. A reign of terror by the Spanish government ensued. A grave error on the part of Spain. For instead of terrorizing the members of the Katipunan into submission, the opposite happened. The executions further strengthened the resolve of the Katipuneros to fight and drive the foreigners from their homeland. The insurgents, in no time at all grew in numbers. Chapters were organized in the provinces. At the start of hostilities, the Katipuneros were ready spiritually and morally but not technologically. After suffering too long under Spanish rule, the Filipinos were very much willing to fight but had few guns and lacked training. Mostly armed with bolos and daggers against the best arms Europe could offer in this period, the Katipuneros suffered defeats one after another. These initial losses by the Katipuneros were logically blamed on the leadership of Andres Bonifacio, or



rather the lack of it. His capability to lead the Katipuneros against the Spaniards was seriously doubted by his subordinates. His skill and knack for warfare and government were questioned by the rank and file. This situation resulted into what is now known in Philippine history as the Tejeros Convention.

With Bonifacio presiding, the delegates to the convention decided to dissolve the Katipunan and instead organized the Revolutionary Government. In the election that immediately followed, Bonifacio was not chosen as President. Instead, Emilio Aguinaldo was elected President and Generalissimo. Being the founder of the original organization, the Katipunan, the nucleus of the newly formed Revolutionary Government, Bonifacio felt strongly that he should be the President. This resulted in Bonifacio not respecting the decision of the Tejeros Convention over which he was the Presiding Officer. He put up his own unit with his followers and then claimed that his organization was the real and true government. The President realizing the danger to the country of having two organizations representing the islands sought to remedy the problem by having Bonifacio and his followers arrested and court martialed for the crime of

being counter- revolutionaries. The court martial found Bonifacio and his followers guilty as charged and they were sentenced to death by firing squad.

Bonifacio's execution was for a considerable period the subject of extensive research and study. Scholars who have studied the documents and other evidence pertaining to Bonifacio's trial and death have found the procedure leading to his execution quite logical and legal under the circumstances. Dean Maximo M. Kalaw, an authority on Philippine politics, has stated the following:

"The revolutionists could not afford to be divided. One of two courses had to be taken; either the continuation of the Katipunan government under Bonifacio or the maintenance of the new government under Aguinaldo which had the support of the majority... the Revolutionary Government was forced to eliminate him".<sup>20</sup>

The Bonifacio episode of this Filipino revolt against Spain was short lived. Yet, it showed again the Filipino's talent and skill when it comes to insurgency movements. Insurgency and Filipinos are inseparable.

#### DR. JOSE P RIZAL

Jose Rizal is the Philippine's national hero. A native of Calamba, Laguna, Rizal was an intellectual who abhorred violence. A brilliant doctor, writer, artist and athlete,

Rizal had studied and worked in Europe. But his patriotism and love of country were unequalled in his time. And so Rizal went home to seek reforms rather than to seek independence from Spain.

As was stated the Spanish rule was challenged in every way possible. It was subverted no end. The mountain tribes of Luzon and the Muslim tribes of Mindanao resisted Spanish attempts of conquest for almost four hundred years, and Christianized lowlanders in Luzon and the Visayas started at least three hundred sporadic revolts. By the end of the 19th century, open yearnings for Philippine national expression had developed and could no longer be suppressed, especially among the western educated generation of young Filipinos known as ilustrados- the enlightened ones. Their strongest voice belonged to Dr. Jose Rizal.<sup>21</sup>

It was in the late 1880s when Jose Rizal wrote his two novels ,El Filibusterismo and Noli Me Tangere abroad, describing in great detail the tyranny of Spain and the "rape" of the Philippines. This galvanized and solidified the resistance of the Filipinos against the Spaniards. By painting vivid scenes of Filipino suffering, the two books caused an awakening among the Filipinos of their nationalism

and patriotism that eventually caused them to organize and plan to eject the foreign colonizers from their motherland. Bonifacio after reading these books felt the urgency to move and act. And act he did. The Katipunan was born.

The colonizers banned and confiscated the books. Possession and reading the books were made crimes against Spain. The outlawed books in this way became more famous and all the more aroused the curiosity of the Filipinos. Copies smuggled into the country from Germany were read and then passed from one to another until the lettering were too hazy to read. Their contents were spread also by word of mouth. Anger against the colonizers was now at its highest. It was more or less about this time when the Katipunan was prematurely discovered and the revolution launched.

Rizal, upon his arrival from abroad, was arrested and exiled to Mindanao. When the existence of the Katipunan was discovered by the Spaniards, Rizal was brought back to Intramuros, Manila and tried for rebellion. He was shot in full public view at the Luneta by an Spanish firing squad to serve as a warning to the revolutionaries that the colonizers meant business. However, the Filipinos were all

the more emboldened to act and the execution of Rizal all the more united them against Spain.

GEN. EMILIO AGUINALDO

The Katipunan gave way to the Revolutionary government led by General Emilio Aguinaldo that waged fierce guerrilla war against the Spaniards and inflicted heavy losses on them. Aguinaldo and his Revolutionary Army continued from where Bonifacio left off. This period in the Philippine history had the greatest impact on the development of the Philippines as a nation and to her citizens, the Filipinos.

The insurgency war being waged by Aguinaldo and his nation of "insurgents" was having its heavy toll on Spanish people and resources. The end of the Spanish rule in the Philippines was almost in sight. It was on 12 June 1898, when General Emilio Aguinaldo, the first President of the Philippines declared independence from the Spanish rule. The events and battles that are now known as the Philippine revolution of 1896 ended with the Spanish General de Rivera, suing for peace. This was sealed when the Spaniards agreed to introduce liberal reforms in the running of the Philippines. In return, the Filipinos agreed to stop fighting and with a 400,000 peso reimbursement fund for

expenses incurred by the Filipino leaders in the pursuit of the revolution, Aguinaldo and his officers agreed to live in HongKong. However, Aguinaldo made sure that the money was not spent by his group. This money was used later on to procure arms used in the Philippine-American war. This peace agreement was known as the Pact of Biak na Bato, after the place where the agreement was signed.

The Republic which Aguinaldo headed was a short lived one. America and Spain had gone to war over Cuba. Aguinaldo and his Revolutionary Army struck an alliance with the Americans to defeat the Spaniards in the Philippines. The Americans under Commodore George Dewey destroyed the entire Spanish armada in Manila Bay. The Filipino insurgents, on the other hand, fought the land battle. By virtue of the Treaty of Paris in 1898 and over the objections of General Aguinaldo and his revolutionaries, Spain "ceded" the Philippines to the United States for twenty million dollars. Outraged, the Filipinos took up arms again to fight against their erstwhile American allies. Finally, after four years, the remnants of Aguinaldo's army surrendered. The Philippines had a new master.<sup>22</sup>

To Aguinaldo, the Philippine-American war was a great tragedy. Aguinaldo himself stated this. Arrayed against the insurgents was a fully armed and well equipped United States Army supported by the U.S. Navy that was the best in the area at the time. And these troops were armed with modern weapons and well trained. The Filipino army elected to fight a guerrilla war as they were of no match in a conventional one. They were defeated after fighting honorably for four years against a much superior force. But victory did not come easy for the Americans. They were perplexed no end by the tactics of the insurgents. The Americans could not understand how Aguinaldo commanded and controlled his troops scattered all over the islands without any visible means of communications. This was classic guerrilla warfare; farmers by day, soldiers by night. And victory came to the Americans only after they captured General Aguinaldo in Palanan, Isabela. And this came only after much loss of life on both sides, not to mention the tremendous amount of money spent by the Americans in winning this war. The Philippine-American war eventually cost the United States some \$600,000,000.00 not to mention subsequent benefits to the War's veterans, together with about 10,000

casualties among the 126,467 men eventually sent to the Philippines.<sup>23</sup>

But the most important lesson as far as Aguinaldo was concerned was that he was able to convey to the Americans that the Filipinos were ready for self government. They were willing to fight and die for her, against all odds.

#### THE HUKS.

Being agricultural, Filipinos are mostly farmers. The question that nags the newcomer is how come, with all the riches of the land and the bounty of nature, the life of the Filipino farmer remains one of poverty and penury?

The chain that binds the farmer to poverty is long and heavy. The farmers till lands they do not own. Usurped by the absentee landlords, lack of agricultural tools, low prices for produce, absence of farm to market roads. All these factors ensured the farmer's poverty.

In the 1920s, the farmers banded together in their search for solutions to their situation and gave birth to the Agrarian Socialist Party, a party led by the followers of Karl Marx and Lenin, whose teachings by this time, reached the islands. The Agrarian Socialist Party merged officially with the followers of Marx and Lenin in 1932 and



formed the Communist Party of the Philippines.<sup>24</sup> In 1941, this group was enlisted to fight the Japanese and was known as the Hukbo ng Bayan Laban sa Hapon (HUKBALAHAP) or People's Army against the Japanese, more popularly known locally as HUKS. The group served and fought well and distinguished themselves like any other Filipino and American soldier in the area. After liberation, with their services no longer needed, the Huks were not recognized. They also were not given their Army pay but instead, their leaders were arrested for being members of the communist party. And in the first election after the United States granted the Philippines her independence, members of the Huks who won in the election were refused their seats in congress.<sup>25</sup>

As a result, the Huks became more militant, and were convinced this time that the solution was to overthrow the existing government through armed rebellion. By 1949 the Huks had grown into an armed force of 30,000 with sympathizers of more than a million peasants. By 1950, at the same time as the Korean war, the Huks felt strong enough to overthrow the government and her armed advisers.

The government was not caught flatfooted and with all her resources fought back. The government won with sincere

and honest government and leaders, well trained and highly disciplined army, good intelligence, and a no nonsense social justice reform agenda for the farmers that had as centerpiece a land for the landless program. Being an archipelago helped also, for the Huks had a difficult time receiving foreign support.

In the early 50's large scale operations were launched against the Huks but all proved ineffective. The Huk was too elusive. The Army, in order to cope with the Huk movement developed a compact, battle wise, hard hitting, highly mobile unit, the Scout Ranger. A Scout Ranger Training Center was established on 25 November 1950 with the mission of training selected personnel in jungle fighting and commando warfare. This unit conducted not only training but also special combat operations and intelligence/commando missions. The tremendous success of this unit against the Huk movement can not be over emphasized. For together with the social reforms made by the government, the Huk movement disintegrated.

The holding of an honest election in 1951 put an end to the Huk rebellion, only to resurface in 1969, when the

conditions that breed insurgency were again the norms of the day.

THE COMMUNISTS AND THE NPA.

In 1969, a new group, led by a former professor from the State University, Jose Maria Sison, with only 10 others, re-established the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) with the New People's Army (NPA) as its re-invigorated military arm. This new group followed the principles developed by Mao Tse Tung to differentiate it from the Huks which were Lenin oriented. Aptly called the people's war by Mao, its strategy was to encircle cities, where national government is situated, from the countryside. This was done with the NPA establishing bases around cities, in effect surrounding the cities with base areas controlled by the Communists. This strategy was significant considering the fact that these areas are the depressed and the undeveloped areas where the poor peasants and farmers live, making them easy recruits to the CPP/NPA cause. This 10 armed men grew to a high of 26,000 in 1988. From less than 15 firearms in 1969, they had 19,000 in 1988. And from a few barangays in Central Luzon, it scattered practically in all regions of

the country putting up major guerrilla fronts in virtually all parts of the archipelago.<sup>26</sup>

Again the government fought back. Its counter insurgency efforts, with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in the lead, used practically the same tools successfully employed against the Huks in 1950. In addition, the Army implemented a new strategy called the Triad Concept in 1988. This concept included the launching of a Special Operations Team(SOT) to destroy the communist political structure in the barangay/barrio. The effective coordination of combat operations, intelligence and civil military operations have significantly diminished communist influence in the barangays since then.

A major innovation in this SOT concept is the Barangay immersion program. This is a team of soldiers made to live and stay in the barangay with the mission of providing stability in the area as well as help in solving all the barangay's problems--economical, social and others. The idea is to live like them and think like them and look like them but with an objective, destroy the hold of the communists in the barangay as well as the communist infrastructure in the area. In due time, this denies the communist a haven in the

barangay. In this manner the military, supported by the government recovered most of the barangays or barrios from communist hold.

By 1994, the government and the AFP reduced the guerrillas and their weapons so much so that its capability to threaten seriously the security of the state is no longer existent. The problem has become more one of law enforcement and the prime responsibility now of fighting the remnants of the NPA rests with the police.

#### MUSLIM SECESSIONISTS

The Muslim insurgency is more complex. Now land was added to the prickly over-all problem. There was plenty of land in Mindanao that begged for tillers. So, in 1950, resettlement was extensively done in the area. The migrants upset the Muslims who viewed the Christians as intruders into the lands that belonged to them by ancestral right. Payments were made to the Muslims for ownership of the lands but when the lands began to yield returns, the Sultans and the Datus wanted the lands back. Naturally the settlers refused, and bloody conflict has been occurring ever since.

A picture of the Mindanao problem would not be complete without looking at the three Muslim groups which collectively embody the Muslim issue in Mindanao.

1. Moro National Liberation Front. (MNLF). The MNLF is essentially a secular organization which follows the Maoist model of organization and warfare. Its base of support is more ethnic than religious. Its control is limited to the Sulu archipelago where it draws support from some 1.2 million Tausugs. The MNLF claim of a majority of Muslims in Mindanao, Sulu, Palawan and Basilan is easily rebutted by official census which places the Christians as the overwhelming majority at 86% of the population. Despite this handicap, the MNLF continues to be the most visible of the Muslim groups because of the peace talks. The MNLF claims to represent all Muslims in Mindanao. This is rather confusing because the demands of the MNLF do not really reflect the demands of the Muslim majority. The 1989 referendum for the creation of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) wherein only four of 13 provinces were in favor says much of the secessionist fever among Muslims. Many are not really in favor of secession.

2. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Unlike the secular MNLF, the MILF claims a religious objective and the religious undertones of the jihad and mujahideen makes this group a more significant threat than the MNLF. Moreover, the MILF claims to control a large portion of the Mindanao mainland. Its units and shadow government are deployed in seven provinces and the organization appears to have gained the support of two large Muslim ethnic groups, the Maranaos and the Maguindanaoans. An issue of the Far Eastern Economic Review profiled the hidden strength of the MILF showing a Bangsa Moro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF) armed with high caliber weapons: RPG2, rocket launchers, 50 caliber and M60 machine-guns and mortars. The MILF is headquartered in Camp Abubakar located near the border of North Cotabato and Lanao del Sur, at the center of Mindanao, about two hours drive from Cotabato city.<sup>27</sup> The BIAF is in reality a full blown rebel army capable not only of terroristic activities but wholesale destruction.

3. Abu Sayaff. At present the most radical of the Muslim groups, the Abu Sayaff, meaning Sword Bearer, could not have come at a better time. The rise of Muslim fundamentalism all over the world gave credence to its timely emergence.

However, their heinous activities quickly dispelled speculation that the group is only a temporary group riding with the popularity of a militant Islam phenomenon. In Muslim communities, the news is that the MNLF and the Abu Sayaff are brother organizations.

Islam serves as the common denominator or unifying element among these three Muslim groups under the principle of universal brotherhood of all Muslims.

The solution to the Mindanao problem is long range. An important component of any solution is the recognition of Islamic laws, customs and traditions. The problem is fundamentally a political one, so a political solution is needed. Nevertheless, the military can be called upon to be a part of that political solution.

#### CURRENT INSURGENCY SITUATION

Today, the Armed Forces of the Philippines continue to do battle against the remaining elements of the communist insurgency. At the same time, Army units are also deployed to maintain peace and order in Mindanao as the government undertakes the tedious and sensitive task of discussing peace with the various Muslim secessionist movements. With peace talks ongoing, the government suspended the military



operations against the communists as a confidence building measure to demonstrate the government's sincerity in talking peace with the communists for the sake of the country.

Government and CPP/NPA negotiators are now in the Netherlands working out a possible peace agreement to end this long running communist rebellion.

As for the Muslims, the government signed a peace agreement with the MNLF on 2 September 1996 and it is as of now holding. At the same time, the government is also negotiating a peace agreement with the other Muslim groups, especially the MILF. The talks seem to be progressing, though at a slow pace.

#### AN ANALYSIS

It is true that the AFP's counter insurgency efforts have reduced the CPP/NPA's capabilities to a level whereby the NPAs now can be effectively handled by the police. But a precise level of success is hard to ascertain in any insurgency situation. At the most, the AFP can claim that the downtrend continues and is about to reach an irreversible point. (Where?-subject to debate) I say, the government has only succeeded in keeping the insurgency at

bay. The insurgents were forced to splinter into smaller groups and have gone back into basic organizational work of recruiting, training, and rejuvenating its forces to fight another day, when the situation is again favorable to their cause.

It will really take some time for the military to determine if they have totally defeated the insurgents in the country. The insurgency is like a living organism that multiplies and grows depending on the environment that breeds it. Just like a virus that is dormant, it gives the host body a feeling that it is gone when in fact it is there waiting for the time when the host body weakens , for its resistance to go down, and then strikes.<sup>28</sup>

Now is the time for us to look at the role of the armed forces in countering insurgency. It is changing. In fact I say it must. Of course, the basic mission which is the statutory mission is paramount. Defense and preparedness for war. But in insurgency, there is an added function. This we can see clearly from the Barangay Immersion Program of the SOT, the developmental function of the armed forces: The role of the armed forces in nation building; Protector, provider, securing natural resources like army men acting as

forest rangers at the same time in the forest, disaster, rescue and relief work, infrastructure builder in the countryside (engineer units constructing roads, bridges, and school buildings among others) preservation of the environment. This is merely Barangay Immersion part of the SOT at the national level. It was successful at the barrio level and it should also succeed at the national level.

To put an end to this organism called insurgency, the government and the military together with civilian sector must control the environment that bred it in the first place. The environment I refer to encompasses mass poverty, injustice, lack of basic services such as health services, and many other needs of a growing society. The military will be the driving force that must protect the environment to allow developmental projects of the government to proceed unobstructed.

The relationship of economic disadvantage and poverty, resulting in social injustice in a society, will in turn invite insurgency to come in. This point is quite clear even to the not so jaded observer. The review of the Philippine experiences in insurgency and successes, though limited or should I say temporary, attest to this. The causes of

insurgencies from the 16th century to the present is directly proportional to the level of poverty and social injustice that a country and people have to face and endure. The cycle is not a good one. The more a country is impoverished, the more there will be social injustice, and so the threat of the people rising up against the authorities due to discontent, actual and perceived, also rises. Disaffection is a factor. And the question is how long can a society endure before taking action?

And so finally, it's clear. It's a question of economics. And in today's world of global trade and global investments and global wealth, for economic progress to occur, peace and order is requisite. And to have peace and stability in a society or country, political stability must be present.

Now, how do we proceed solving a problem like insurgency in ,naturally, a poor country? Put all your country's money in military and police budgets to deal with insurgency first and the infrastructure for economic progress and social reforms later? Or is the reverse true? Which comes first? The chicken or the egg?

The temptation to deal with all the situations at the same time is natural. But for a country with limited resources this is just not possible. She may have to "steal, beg, or borrow" capital to do all these. With an insurgency problem, I think that a country has limited choices. The only other alternative is to make the best of what you have. Sacrifice, is required. And in this approach, much is required of the people, culture, unity, resiliency, humor-- name it and it is needed.

But this is clear. The ultimate solution lies in economic and social progress and development, not in military victories. Military units may win numerous battles but lose the war ultimately if government is unsuccessful in solving the problems of the economy and required social reforms.

This strategy will be more appreciated when one views insurgency over and above the numbers and statistics of the combat scoreboard. There is always the possibility that the insurgency movement just like 1950 and 1969 will eventually rise again following a cyclical pattern. Like a virus, insurgency can grow and multiply under the right conditions. Should it follow this pattern, government resources will be

wasted and its energy drawn away from its vision of an industrialized and modern Philippines due to a costly counter insurgency effort.

#### CONCLUSION

Following these considerations, it is quite clear that insurgency does not only require military attention, but the whole of government and the country's citizenry as well. Insurgency can not be won by bullets alone.

The military's role should be to maintain or even increase the present military pressure and continue counter insurgency operations in order to preserve the gains attained and thereby allow the developmental programs of the government to proceed. The AFP's counter insurgency effort should address the organism itself and the government and the civil sector must focus their attention on the environment that breeds it. The AFP should physically decimate the virus and at the same time see to it that the environment is secured and protected to prevent the recovery and growth of the virus named insurgency.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

It is therefore incumbent upon the AFP and the government to pursue the following recommendations:

a. Vigorously continue the current military counter insurgency efforts to locate and destroy the armed component of the insurgency movement.

b. The AFP to expand its participation in the socio-economic and developmental programs of the government particularly in the countryside to ensure that the conditions favorable to the insurgency will not recur.

c. Hold in abeyance the planned troop reduction program until such time as the security situation stabilizes and the effects of development and social reforms made by government filter to the countryside.

Again, just to emphasize, continuous military pressure against the insurgents and governments intensification of political and social reforms and the pursuit of the country's economic growth are the antibiotics and cure to the virus of insurgency as well as the immunization against the disease so that it will not return.

#### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Peter Davies, The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, (New York, NY: Dell Publishing 1970), 370
- <sup>2</sup> Dante F Bernabe, "Towards an Army For the 21st Century," Army Journal, (Manila: PA.4th Qtr.1994,):6.
- <sup>3</sup> Anthony J Joes, Modern Guerrilla Insurgency, (London: Praeger 1992,):53.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.,67.
- <sup>5</sup> Sinnathambu A, "The Philippines and its Armed Forces" Asian Defense Journal, ( KL, Malaysia: Feb. 1997):6.
- <sup>6</sup> Manuel D Duldulao, The Filipinos ( Philippines: Oro Books, Inc. 1987):10.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> Richard Z Chesnoff, Philippines, ( New York: Abrams Inc.1980):14.
- <sup>9</sup> Duldulao,6.
- <sup>10</sup> Duldulao, 16.
- <sup>11</sup> Duldulao, 75.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> Duldulao, 77.
- <sup>14</sup> Emilio Aguinaldo and Albano Pacis, A Second Look at America, ( New York: R. Speller and Sons,1957):19
- <sup>15</sup> Duldulao,91.
- <sup>16</sup> Alunan C Glang, Muslim Integration or Secesion?(Manila: Cardinal Bookstore), 7.
- <sup>17</sup> Rene N Jarque, "The Mindanao Problem", The Army Journal, (1st Qtr. 1995):10
- <sup>18</sup> Duldulao,168.
- <sup>19</sup> Aguinaldo and Pacis, 21.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid.,27.
- <sup>21</sup> Chesnoff, 14.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Duldulao, 115.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid.,168.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid.,67.
- <sup>26</sup> Bernabe,7.
- <sup>27</sup> Rigoberto Tiglao."Hidden Strength: Muslim Insurgents." Far eastern Economic Review (Feb 23, 1995):22
- <sup>28</sup> Ernesto G.Carolina,"The Insurgency as a Living Organism" The Army Journal, (4th Qtr. 1994):21.





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