

AN ANALYSIS OF THE COMMUNIST INSURGENCY
IN THE PHILIPPINES

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General Studies

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF THE COMMUNIST INSURGENCY IN THE PHILIPPINES, by
LTC Antonio G. Parlade Jr., 120 pages.

The Maoist-inspired Communist Party of the Philippines celebrated its 37th anniversary on December 2005. It marks a long history of violence, terror, and instability in the archipelagic country of 87 million people, causing thousands of casualties among government troops, insurgents, and including civilians. This study seeks to find a lasting solution that will finally bring to a close the final chapter to insurgency in the country. It was approached from a historical point of view by studying the events that lead to the birth of the movement in 1932 until its defeat in 1954. A new chapter of the Maoist insurgency started in 1969 and this movement emerged into a formidable guerrilla force that became the primary threat to the nation's security. This paper tries to analyze how that insurgency persisted to challenge the government this far and what went wrong with the government's response. It will attempt to answer the primary question: How to defeat the communist insurgency?

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ACRONYMS

AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
AOM	Arouse, organize, mobilize
ASG	Abu Sayaff Group
AWOL	Absent without official leave
BCT	Battalion Combat Team
BLG	Barrio Liaison Group
BRC	Barrio Revolutionary Committee
CAA	Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Unit Active Auxiliary
CAFGU	Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit
CENTCOM	Central Command
C-H-C-D	Clear-Hold-Consolidate-Develop
C-H-S	Clear-Hold-Support
CMO	Civil Military Operations
COG	Center of gravity
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CPP-NPA	Communist Party of the Philippines-New Peoples Army
CTM	Communist Terrorist Movement (Also CPP; refers to all factions)
DA	Democratic Alliance
DA	Department of Agriculture
DAR	Department of Agrarian Reform
DILG	Department of Interior and Local Government
DIME	Diplomatic, Informational, Military, Economic

DND	Department of National Defense
DOH	Department of Health
DOJ	Department of Justice
DP	Decisive Point
DPA	Deep Penetration Agents
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
EDCOR	Economic Development Corporation
FGU	Front Guerrilla Unit
FMS	Foreign Military Sales
FTO	Foreign Terrorist Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GF	Guerrilla Front
GFC	Guerrilla Front Committee
GHQ	General Headquarters
GNP	Gross National Product
HMB	Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan (People's Liberation Army)
HUKBALAHAP	Hukbong Bayan Laban sa Hapon (People's Army vs Japanese)
ID	Infantry Divisions
IMET	International Military Education and Training
IO	Information Operation
ISO	Internal Security Operation
ITDS	Integrated Territorial Defense System

JUSMAG	Joint United States Military Advisory Group
KALAHI-CIDSS	Kapit Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan – Comprehensive Delivery of Social Services
LGE	Local Government Executives
LGU	Local Government Unit
MB	Mass Base
MCP	Malayan Communist Party
MDAP	Mutual Defense Assistance Program
MDMP	Military Decision Making Process
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MRGU	Main Regional Guerrilla Unit
NAPC	National Anti-Poverty Commission
NC	National Congress
NCO	Noncommissioned Officer
NDF	National Democratic Front
NGO	Nongovernment Organization
NISP	National Internal Security Plan
NMS	National Military Strategy
NOLCOM	Northern Luzon Command
OM	Organized Masses
OP	Office of the President (Malacanang)
PA	Philippine Army
PAF	Philippine Air Force

PLAGER	Platun Gerilya; Platoon Guerrilla
PMG	Police Mobile Groups
PMP	Partido Manggagawang Pilipino
PN	Philippine Navy
PNP	Philippine National Police
PPC	Provincial Party Committee
PSYOP	Psychological Operations
PTC	Permit-to-campaign
ROE	Rules of Engagement
RPC	Revolutionary Party Committee
RRPC	Regional Revolutionary Party Committee
SDG	Sentro de Gravidad; enemy center of gravity
SHA	Strategy of Holistic Approach
SICA	Social Investigation and Class Analysis
SND	Secretary of National Defense
SOCOM	Special Operations Command
SOLCOM	Southern Luzon Command
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SOT	Special Operations Team
SOUTHCOM	Southern Command
SPSG	Southern Philippine Secessionist Group
SYP	Sandatahang Yunit Pangpropaganda
TTPs	Tactics, techniques, and procedures

UF	United Front
USAFFE	United States Army Forces in the Far East
VFA	Visiting Forces Agreement
WESCOM	Western Command
W-H-W	Win-Hold-Win

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Background

Thirty-seven years after the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) was founded, it is still believed to be the primary armed threat to the government of the Republic of the Philippines. Its strength has gone from a peak of 25,000 guerrilla fighters, after which it dropped to a low of 7,000, but is now slowly rising again as it withstands government efforts to erode it away. Recently, the CPP-NPA leadership claims to have increased its mass base, controlled territory, and guerrilla fronts by a significant number. With these developments, many are still amazed why insurgency in the Philippines has survived this long despite the collapse of the communist ideologies in Eastern Europe.

The purpose of this study is to assess the current insurgency situation in the Philippines. I will assess by phase how the insurgency has evolved over the years starting with post war insurgency in 1946 up to 1987 when the insurgency reached its peak in strength. Then I will look at how insurgent influence tapered off from 1988 to 1994 when it reached rock bottom. Finally, I will study the events from 1995 to 2005 when it slowly, but steadily began to rise. Certain events outside the Philippines unfolded during this term that may have had a substantial effect on the cycle and these will also be part of the assessment. This study will seek to determine what factors have shaped the insurgency situation and caused it to rise again. The purpose is to review the current strategy, recommend changes if necessary, or determine what new strategy may be implemented to

fast track solutions and finally push for a secure and stable Philippine economy, government, and society.

In the course of this study I hope to answer the thesis question: How can this insurgency in the Philippines be defeated? The following secondary questions will also help lead to this study's conclusions:

1. What is the current counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine of the government?
2. Is the doctrine being followed in the current counterinsurgency strategy?
3. Is there an end in the Philippine insurgency conflict in the near future?
4. What will it take to win?

The following tertiary questions may help in the analysis of the situation:

1. What is the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army (CPP/NPA's) endstate in the fight for control of the masses?
2. What has the enemy learned in the fight for popular support of the masses? Is winning the hearts and minds of the people still a valid strategy in the insurgency warfare?
3. What did past campaigns do wrong that allowed the insurgency to drag on?
4. Is there a cultural characteristic in the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) leadership and organizational ethics that has affected the way it handles insurgency?
5. Has the CPP/NPA changed the Maoist doctrine previously being followed by the communist movement? Is there a new doctrine the insurgents are using following the emergence of the Reformist Faction?
6. Is the political battle being waged by the National Democratic Front (NDF) through leftist sectoral groups in the House of Representatives gaining ground?

The following assumptions shall help facilitate the conduct of this study: 1) that government programs to alleviate poverty shall remain a priority over defense; 2) that the Armed Forces of the Philippines will not effect a major reduction in current strength and resource allocation; 3) the Filipino society in general will remain pro-democracy.

Current Situation

The Philippine political environment of today is fragile. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's administration is experiencing strong opposition from various sectors. Although the last national election of 2004 was generally peaceful, opposition parties who lost questioned the result of the canvassing at the provincial level of allegations of massive election fraud. Street protests on the issue have lingered, but have not produced a ground swell of people comparable to the People Power III revolution that toppled the former actor President Joseph Estrada in 2002.

Despite the political grandstanding and squabbling, the Philippine economy has remained resilient but very volatile. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased steadily since 2002. It survived the Asian financial crisis of 1998, aided in part by annual remittances of seven to eight billion US dollars from overseas contract workers. As the year 2005 closed, the Philippine peso emerged as Asia's best performing currency, surpassing even the Chinese Yuan. Nonetheless, it will take a higher level of sustained growth path to make significant improvement in poverty alleviation given the Philippines' high annual population growth rate. Compounding its problem is the unequal distribution of income. Fiscal constraints limit the government's infrastructure and social spending. The nation's consistently huge budget deficit has resulted in a high debt level

and has forced Malacanang to spend a big portion of the national government budget on debt service.¹

About 40 percent of the Philippine population or some thirty-four million people live below the poverty line and this is a big issue for any sitting president. This is aggravated by other related problems such as unemployment (11.7 percent), high inflation rate (5.5 percent) and a public debt of 74.2 percent of the GDP.² Many of the current socioeconomic problems in the Philippines are blamed on the prevalence of corruption in the government and in the private sector. Tax and revenue collection is very inefficient largely due to the same corrupt practices. Annually, it is estimated that the government loses about US\$4 billion in much-needed revenues from graft and corruption. According to World Bank, a study conducted in 2002 claimed that the Philippines lost roughly US\$48 billion to graft and corruption in the last 20 years. In 2005, data show that the government's revenue collection efficiency is only around 14.1 percent of the GDP for 2004, one of the lowest in Asia and the world.³ Some US\$1.6 billion was collected from individual income taxes in 2003 but 91 percent of this came from government workers and the private sector. This is because income taxes are automatically withheld from them. This means that only 9 percent came from professionals like engineers, pilots, doctors, lawyers, accountants, and businessmen. According to Guillermo de Joya, spokesman for Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry as he told the Senate on 12 October 2004, there are at least 50 billionaires and 42,500 millionaires who do not pay taxes accurately.⁴

Customs taxes lost from smuggling is another issue. According to the 2004 study of Center for Research and Communications every year US\$ 2.7 billion of customs taxes

is lost. This is equivalent to 15.5 percent of the national budget for 2005.⁵ A corollary to these losses in revenues is the attendant shortage of government housing facilities, poor health services, inadequate budget for education and defense, inadequate farm to market roads and insufficient support to sustain basic services for the poor. The same rampant corruption in the government since the early 1920's, coupled with unchanging socio-economic climate, exists today. Although great strides have been made by President Macapagal-Arroyo's administration to address and prosecute corrupt practices much still needs to be done. In fact, data gathered in a survey conducted by the Hong Kong-based Political and Economic Risk Consultancy Limited indicates that corruption in the Philippines continues to deteriorate. It is also becoming an increasing deterrent to foreign investment as the country's regional neighbors are trying their best to clean up their acts.⁶

The Philippine government faces three primary threat groups today and these are the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the Abu Sayaf Group (ASG) and the CPP/NPA. Of the three, the communist threat is considered the most potent because it is well-structured, nation wide in scope and enjoys some support from the masses. AFP estimates as of 1st semester 2003 place the number of CPP/NPA guerrilla fronts at 106. The majority are located in Luzon Island with 49, followed by Mindanao Island with 34 and the Visayas Islands with 23.⁷ Each of these fronts covers at least one congressional district composed of three to five municipalities. The total strength of the communist guerrilla fighters is placed at 12,000. On an average, 12 villages or *barangays* of each of the municipalities in the guerrilla front are part of the front territory. The guerrilla fighters are being supported by Mass Base (MB) elements, Organized Masses (OM), and contacts, in terms of food, shelter, and other logistical requirements. With this current set

up the communist terrorists are able to launch an average of five offensive actions a month directed at poorly defended AFP detachments, vital installations, and other significant targets.⁸

The communist movement has managed to bring the fight to the halls of Congress since its legalization in 1992. Starting with five sectoral parties getting elected in the 1992 national elections, representation in congress has gained ground with the election of ten other leftist front organizations making the legal battle more challenging. Currently the 15 sectoral representatives of farmers, women, urban poor, and union members have made their presence in Congress felt, not only by their nemesis, the Department of National Defense, but also by the Arroyo administration as a whole.

Research Methodology

Several counterinsurgency analysis frameworks are available today. This study will follow Bard O'Neill's insurgency framework which he described in his book *Insurgency and Terrorism, Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare*. The framework provides a method of analysis by bringing together the factors that bear on the progress and outcome of insurgencies. The framework itself was a product abstracted from exhaustive review of theoretical and historical writings by scholars.⁹ Following O'Neill's framework, this study will identify the goals the Philippine communist insurgents pursue, the type of insurgency they are adopting, and the form or forms of warfare that they have opted to use to advance their goals. It will attempt to identify the strategic approach the Communist Party of the Philippines adopts and its relative importance vis-à-vis the six general variables of environment, popular support, organization, unity, external support, and government response.¹⁰

Chapter 3 of this study will provide the strategic and historical setting of the insurgency from 1946 to 1987. This period marked the transition of the defeated Huk insurgency to the Maoist revolution lead by Jose Maria Sison that saw its peak in 1987. David Galula in his book *Counterinsurgency Warfare Theory and Practice* identified some prerequisites for a successful insurgency. These prerequisites, a cause, weakness of the counterinsurgent, geographic conditions, and outside support, are incorporated to provide an in-depth analysis of the situation prior to the current insurgency period.¹¹

Chapter 4 will deal with the conduct of insurgency by the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army (CPP/NPA), analyzing their leadership, goals, and the type of insurgency they fall within. It will determine how they organize, communicate, and make decisions. It will identify their ideology, objectives, messages, strategy, patterns and use of violence and terror, their organizational centers of gravity (COG), decisive points, and vulnerabilities.¹²

Chapter 5 deals with the last variable of government response to counter the insurgency. This response is to determine if the current approach of the government in dealing with the problem matches the communist threat. It includes the civil-military organization, the COIN plan, information and influence operations, key tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs), population resource control measures, and operational analysis.¹³

Definition of Terms

Cadres. Advanced full-fledged members who are leaders or included in the lines of leadership of Party organizations or who are occupying important positions and assigned certain responsibilities in the Party.¹⁴

Campaign. A series of related military operations aimed at accomplishing a strategic or operational objective within a given time and space.¹⁵

Centers of Gravity. Those characteristics, capabilities or localities from which a military force derives its freedom of action, physical strength, or will to fight.¹⁶

Contacts. Members of the Barrio Liaison Group (BLG) in the *barrios* or *barangay* (villages), factories and communities.¹⁷

Counterinsurgency. Those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency. Also called COIN.¹⁸

Insurgency. An organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict¹⁹; a struggle between a non-ruling group and the ruling authorities in which the non-ruling group consciously uses political resources (e.g., organizational expertise, propaganda, and demonstrations) and violence to destroy, reformulate or sustain the basis of legitimacy of one or more aspects of politics²⁰

Mass Base. Refers to the populace or the residents of a locality or *barangay* (village) who are wittingly or unwittingly supporting the Communist Party in terms of political, social and logistical needs.²¹

Special Operations. Operations conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to achieve military, diplomatic, informational, and/or economic objectives employing military capabilities for which there is no broad conventional force requirement. These operations often require covert, clandestine, or low visibility capabilities. Special operations are applicable across the range of military operations.

They can be conducted independently or in conjunction with operations of conventional forces or other government agencies and may include operations through, with, or by indigenous or surrogate forces. Special operations differ from conventional operations in degree of physical and political risk, operational techniques, mode of employment, independence from friendly support, and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets. Also called SO.²²

Unconventional Warfare. A broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominantly conducted through, with, or by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and directed in varying degrees by an external source. It includes, but is not limited to, guerrilla warfare, subversion, sabotage, intelligence activities, and unconventional assisted recovery. Also called UW.²³

Ordinary terms that are used differently in military parlance than in standard writing include the following:

Abstract terms used with specific meanings or with applications to specific contexts include the following:

Affected area. An area which the insurgents have started to infiltrate.²⁴

Destruction. Rendering half of the enemy front dismantled, or half of the enemy strength neutralized.²⁵

Engagement. A tactical conflict, usually between opposing lower echelons maneuver forces.²⁶

Guerrilla Base Area. Established in a relatively stable area within a guerrilla front and is normally situated in a favorable terrain composed of seven to ten adjacent barrios.²⁷

Guerrilla Front or Front. A politico-military geographical unit of the CPP/NPA which consists of a political organization, a military organization and a front territory or AOR.²⁸

Guerrilla Zone. Less consolidated part of the guerrilla front. It is an area where government control or influence on the population is relatively weak. Also includes the enemy Expansion Area.²⁹

Hamlet. System of clustering people to live in a cantonment area near a military detachment for security.

Indoctrination. The process of influencing the way of thinking of people or mass base by a series of continuous lectures.

Infiltrated area. A condition in a village where a minority of the people (10 percent) sympathizes with the insurgents.³⁰

Influenced area. A condition in a community where a big portion of the people (25 percent) sympathize with the insurgents.³¹

Mass activists. The advanced elements of the organizing groups of the CPP who have undergone Party courses and undertake revolutionary works.³²

Masses. The common people.³³

Neutralize. To render enemy personnel or material incapable of interfering with a particular operation.³⁴

Partisan or partisan units. NPA units usually composed of at least three members which operate in the cities and some areas in the plains where the regular NPA forces can hardly operate. Includes the sparrow unit (see below).³⁵

Sparrow or SPARU. Often referred to as the hard hitting hit squad of the CPP/NPA. Sometimes interchanged with the term “Partisano.”³⁶

United Front. The legal front of the CPP composed of the National Democratic Front and its allied organizations.³⁷

Limitations

Because of time constraints, this study will be made within a ten-month time frame from August 2005 to May 2006. The study will gather as much current data as possible to make it more relevant. Most of the data will be coming from overseas or through the electronic media due to the limited data and references available in continental US. The author’s 18 years of field and combat experience in counterinsurgency will be used to complement what limited information is available. There is a possibility that the author will have a strong bias on his perception about the ongoing insurgency in the Philippines because of his long experience combating insurgents. From the standpoint of a new lieutenant to a more mature major who has commanded two Special Forces battalions in Luzon, the author may have developed strong ideas on what the situation is all about but will exercise caution to be guided by facts obtained in the research. Finally, this study will focus only on communist insurgency considering that the Muslim secessionist and the Abu Sayaff Group may fall in a totally different category.

Scope and Delimitations

The study will assess the feasibility and suitability of the current campaign strategy in effect now compared against possible alternative approaches to the problem. It will focus on strategic and operational concepts which may be applicable to particular regions owing to the cultural diversity of the nation. The study will not include the National Capital Region (NCR) because of its distinctively metropolitan culture.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study will help shape the succeeding campaigns and programs of the Armed Forces toward eliminating the root causes of the problem. It should give military strategic planners an idea where they may want to improve with their campaign plan in the local environment. The study will attempt to connect and continue with previous studies on the matter and should generate further thought on the same subject with the end in view of perfecting a win-win formula for resolving similar cases. Having an idea what might come out of the study will also help as far as providing impetus and direction to approach the problem from the right perspective.

¹CIA, Philippines, *The World Fact Book* [database on-line]; available from <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/rp.html#Econ>; Internet; accessed on August 2005.

²Ibid.

³Alexander L Lacson, *12 Little Things Every Filipino Can Do to Help Our Country* (Quezon City: Alay Pinoy Publishing House, 2005), 79.

⁴Ibid., 80.

⁵Ibid., 18.

⁶*Philippines Times* 2, no. 495 (December 2005) [newspaper on-line]; available from <http://www.PhilippineTimes.com>; Internet; accessed on 5 December 2005.

⁷AFP, *Bantay Laya Supplemental Handbook* (Quezon City: VJ Graphic Arts, Inc, 2004), 28.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Bard O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare* (U.S.: Brassey's, Inc., 1990), 10.

¹⁰Ibid., 53-154.

¹¹David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare Theory and Practice* (Florida, US: Hailer Publishing, 2005), 17.

¹²O'Neill, 13-50.

¹³Ibid., 125.

¹⁴AFP, 246.

¹⁵Department of Defense, Joint Pub 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2001).

¹⁶AFP, 160.

¹⁷Ibid., 244.

¹⁸Joint Pub 1-02.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰O'Neill, 13.

²¹AFP, 245.

²²Joint Pub 1-02.

²³Ibid.

²⁴AFP, 28.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Joint Pub 1-02.

²⁷AFP, 131.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid., 27.

³⁰Ibid., 28.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., 248.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., 28.

³⁵Ibid., 243.

³⁶Ibid., 135.

³⁷Ibid., 248.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Richard D. Kessler, in his book *Rebellion and Repression in the Philippines*, made some interesting observations on the insurgency situation in the Philippines from the Martial Law years until President Corazon Aquino took over. He believes that while Martial Law certainly aided the insurgency's rise, the rebellion would have taken place for two good reasons. First, elite factions of the oligarchy were continually engaged in a severe struggle for political power using the peasants as pawns. "The democratic political process was weak and the political elite had little interest in legitimizing a political process that would have provided other avenues for political change. Second, the root causes of the Huk rebellion remained--economic deprivation, social injustice, and a need for a national identity."¹ The administration of Aquino realized the need for a comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy but did not really want to implement or did not have the wherewithal to develop and pursue one.²

He further cites that the Army's manual, *The Infantry Battalion*, stresses that insurgency is political warfare and the AFP's response should be both military and economic. However, the AFP strategy in practice was only a military one. The military had very poor relations with the people they were supposed to defend. Both had little sympathy for each other. The military, in effect, was viewed by the peasants as their enemy. It is hard not to agree with Kessler when he said that understanding how to counter an insurgency is not simply a matter of identifying and addressing peasant grievances. Equally imperative is recognizing how the masses perceive the government and the insurgents, both of whom are competing for their allegiance.³

Another author, Gregg R. Jones, also wrote a firsthand account of the insurgents in his book *Red Revolution, Inside the Philippine Guerilla Movement*. He took note of insurgents indigenizing the people's war as an effective strategy to win the revolution in the Philippines. CPP Chairman, Jose Maria Sison, believed in and adopted Mao Zedong's concept of people's war. He said that the key to a successful revolution was a measured, stage-by-stage war led by a peasant army operating from "stable base areas" in the countryside.⁴ Sison's strategy called for the formation of several semi-independent guerrilla fronts on each major island. It needed centralized leadership but decentralized operations to force the AFP to be scattered thinly in the countryside. Decentralization also solved the problem of supplying the guerrilla fronts. Central control and movement of personnel and weapons from one front to the other was difficult and risky. The policy also enabled the NPA to adapt to the Philippines' complex matrix of ethnic and linguistic diversity.⁵ The revelations in Jones' interviews clearly stated that the insurgents understood the environment where they fought. The terrain, the people and the different cultural diversities of the Filipinos were important factors the CPP-NPA considered in the development of their operational zones. In contrast, the government and AFP strategy were not particularly sensitive to these factors when campaign plans were drafted to defeat insurgency in the 1970s and the 1980s.

Jones identifies one of the major achievements of the revolutionary movement. It was the success in transforming the Left into a major force in national politics. "Although the National Democratic Front may never seize power, the movement from then on has played a leading role in shaping the national agenda and framing debate on virtually every major issue affecting the Philippines during the past 20 years: agrarian reform,

poverty, relations with the United States, the future of US military bases, women's rights, education, the role of the Catholic Church in Philippine society, the plight of cultural minorities, and the rights of workers, among others.”⁶

Benedict J. Kerkvliet, in his book *The Huk Rebellion, A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*, believed that what changed the peasant movement direction from protest to revolt was government and agrarian elites repression. The landlords and government officials' oppressive and violent actions pushed peasants to resort to organized violence.⁷ Colonialism also contributed significantly to the growth of agrarian unrest. Local elites cooperated with colonial regimes in suppressing the peasants' protests and rebellion rather than providing acceptable solutions to their problems. Even during the American or Japanese regime, neither disturbed the economic and political status of the Filipino elite. An American policy, in fact, involved the titling of all lands which only served to strengthen the legal rights of landowners but weakened the traditional rights of land users.⁸

Noel Barber in his historical novel *The War of the Running Dogs* explains how Malaya defeated the communist guerrillas from 1948 to 1960. The book narrates in detail the brutality of the communist guerrillas who were espousing Mao Tse-Tung's agrarian-based theory of revolution against colonialism. Although the Malayan campaign had many similarities with Philippine insurgency, there were several issues about the Malayan front that is far different and unique in its own. Nevertheless, the lessons learned in that “emergency” can be applicable to the Philippine setting. In the case of Malaya, the British clearly had plans to give the confederacy its independence even before the Communists launched their revolution. It was therefore harder for them to sell the idea to

the patriotic Malayans, since the latter would have their much revered independence just the same. In the Philippines case, the nation had its independence and a democratic government but was badly run and the current state of affairs was pathetic. The communists saw in it an opportunity to convince the patriotic masses to take action through violent means if need be. To exacerbate matters, the CPP-NPA labeled the Americans as imperialists who took undue advantage of the Philippines and its resources to serve the interests of Uncle Sam.

Barber reviews some salient aspects of the Malayan campaign which may be helpful in the current Philippine COIN campaign. Aside from the fact that the CPP-NPA was not as advanced as the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), the CPP knew how to execute the revolution exactly as Mao's theory designed it--protracted war. They were not as impatient as the Chinese Red Army which swooped down on the villages and terrorized the people, only to flee as they could not hold the ground against counterattacking British and Malay military. In fact, the MCP later admitted that their "deliberate terror campaign, with which they hoped to win the support of the population and force the British out, had been a dismal failure. Terrorism alienated communism's most valuable asset--the very people they were trying to liberate."⁹ Barber did not fail to emphasize that even in the beginning important leaders like Lt Gen Sir Harold Briggs, the new Director for Operations, understood that that was "a war to win people more than a war to kill them." It was a war of ideologies.¹⁰

Retired AFP Brigadier General Felix Brawner Jr. wrote "*A Field Commander's Perception and Random Thoughts on Philippine Communist Insurgency*" in 1988. His vast experience in counterinsurgency at a time when the CPP-NPA was considered

strongest provides a senior commander's perspective on how the current insurgency can be beaten. GEN Brawner asserts that winning the conflict will be determined by the factor of popular support which is expressed in terms of mass base. Failure of intelligence to detect, locate, and determine insurgent tactical movements have caused AFP losses in raids and ambushes including his son, 1Lt Felix Brawner II. He said that these can all be traced back to the absence of popular support as a foundation for all types of operations. Also, an effective intelligence is only possible in areas where popular support is on the side of the government and AFP. "On the other hand, popular support can only be attained in areas where there is government/AFP credibility, credibility being the perception of the people of the absence of corruption and abuses on the part of the personnel in the government/AFP."¹¹

GEN Brawner identifies some key techniques to achieve the political and military objectives of the government. He believes that only through an effective Civil Military Operations (CMO) can popular support be attained and the communist insurgents are negated of their mass bases which will then bring about a strong intelligence net.¹² Successful tactical operations are but a natural consequence of good rapport with the people. But GEN Brawner emphasized that military operations should be totally interlinked and mutually supportive with CMO and intelligence operations in order to complete the operational triad.¹³ This triad will effectively address insurgency and lack of capability on one will cripple the process. Finally, GEN Brawner identifies the most important factor in a successful counterinsurgency operation as the "human factor, that is, the sincerity, professionalism, integrity, dedication, effectiveness, and responsiveness of all government personnel involved."¹⁴

GEN Brawner's suggestions are quite clear and simple. In fact, the triad has been the approach of military planners. It can be deduced from his line of reasoning, however, that he has difficulty detaching the AFP from the government. He treats AFP action as the sole government action, as if the AFP should provide all the instrumentalities of government, including solving the social and economic hardships of the people in order to gain popular support. Within this context, the civil government will have the tendency to keep its hands off the situation rather than dipping them into it. It must be remembered that giving the military the sole hand in solving this issue will result in the use of the barrel of the gun to exact the will of the government it represents. Allowing this will only alienate the populace further. Putting the military on a secondary role to the other agencies of the government who can build wells, roads, bridges, schools, and health centers will draw support from the people.

There is a differing view from David G. Timberman in his book *Changeless Land*. He focused on the paradox of the Philippines' restored democracy which has not produced tangible solutions to the country's problems. He cites journalist Sheila Coronel who points out that national consensus concerning national interests and goals continues to evade Filipinos. Philippine society's diversity and the ambiguity as to what it means to be Filipino have contributed to this lack of consensus.¹⁵ Aggravating the lack of consensus is the great social disparity in power and wealth. "Because the political power of the elite has been based on local and highly particularistic politics, the elite have been disinterested in developing genuinely national organizations or promoting national programs."¹⁶ The Philippines today is indeed more divided than it was decades ago. No

wonder it cannot get its act together. No wonder there is so much politicking and fragmentation that good programs cannot take off.

Timberman takes his perspective of solving the social and economic problems of the nation a step forward by suggesting that a new style of democratic government and politics must emerge, one that emphasizes greater participation and pluralism.¹⁷ His suggestion of a transformation of Philippine politics is based on the premise that traditional elite democracy cannot effectively address the growing challenges of today. However, elite democracy is so deeply rooted in traditional political culture and firmly in control that reform may almost be impossible. Timberman then proposed the creation of a large class of self-sufficient peasant farmers to spur economic development and reduce the traditional clientelistic nature of politics. Eventually, the growth of the middle-class might create a significant force to check on the elite and compel the modernization and liberalization of politics.¹⁸ This appeared a more sound approach to the issues bothering the government. Incidentally, it is the leftists who are trying to initiate on this now, though with violence, and this bothers the military. The rightists, on the other hand, are a little impatient and have been trying to launch coups precisely because the elite are perceived to be beyond reform. Once again this emphasizes that a political solution to the problem of insurgency is most appropriate.

There are many counterinsurgency models that can be used in insurgency warfare. LTC Eric P. Wendt recently submitted a “Strategic Counterinsurgency Modeling” article in the September 2005 issue of *Special Warfare*. In the “Area-of-influence Model” designed by Dr. Gordon McCormick, he stressed that like the moving bubble on a level, the behavior of the bulk of the populace will shift to assist either the government or the

insurgents, depending on the carrots and sticks used by each side. According to LTC Wendt, the challenge for the government in COIN is in moving the bubble so that people will expose the insurgent structure and this could be done with the right combination of carrot and sticks. Co-opting people and organizations in the able-to-influence zone by offering them amnesty in exchange for actionable information about insurgent members is another implication for this model. This prevents them from actively supporting or becoming insurgents themselves.¹⁹ This model may have worked in a relatively small Muslim insurgency affected area where a small armed group like the Abu Sayaff Group is based and holed up. Basilan being an island province would be easier to saturate with seven infantry battalions and still achieve the desired results. But speaking of other larger islands, like the whole of Mindanao, insurgent groups can easily sidestep to and disappear in neighboring provinces not covered by the operation and avoid neutralization.

In the “Insurgent Origin and Flow of Support Model” by Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf Jr., it is necessary that the force must live and operate with the population. Troops work through, by and with the local internal supporters, using the correct carrots and sticks so that the population will identify and expose members of the local insurgent infrastructure.²⁰ It requires the risk of embedding unconventional troops for constabulary-force mission for longer periods. This could be a tedious process, but may work well in communist insurgency areas. A drawback could be spreading thinly a large number of forces dedicated to a certain region for that time frame, thus allowing some degree of risk by units assigned to non-priority areas.

The book *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* by David Galula probably offers one of the most comprehensive theories on fighting an insurgency. Galula

identifies the population as the insurgent objective and that dissociating the population from the government, controlling it physically, and gaining its active support wins the war.²¹ So far this has remained a very valid argument. For a campaign to rid a nation of insurgents all available tools of governance must be focused first and foremost on gaining the population's support. This give credence to the theory that, more than anything else, an insurgency is a political war. "Politics becomes an active instrument of operation."²² More specifically a strong political will is necessary for every counterinsurgency action, whether it is to provide social and economic benefits to the people or, the use of the military to physically destroy the insurgent groups.

Galula identified the prerequisites for a successful insurgency. These are: a cause, counterinsurgent weakness, geographic conditions, and outside support.²³ A cause for Philippine insurgency was the liberation of the masses from poverty, which is, in its strictest sense, a valid one. In fact, it is also the cause that the government is trying to achieve for its people, except that it is not working hard and sincere enough to attain this end. Meanwhile, the government's administrative weakness is being exploited by the insurgents to expand their influence. The country's location, size and configuration also offer a perfect haven for insurgent mass and guerrilla bases, in the same manner that guerrilla resistance during World War II was prolonged due to the same factors. The last prerequisite of outside support, particularly in the later stages of the insurgency, is debatable. Even without it, if the popular support and the cause have increased in favor of the insurgent to a level that has greatly weakened the government, insurgency may still succeed.

The *Bantay Laya Supplemental Handbook* of the AFP written in 2004 is perhaps the best and most current literature available today that specifically relates to the precarious Philippine insurgency situation. It is a product of a seminar workshop attended and extensively participated in by this author, being a commander of a Special Forces battalion directly involved in COIN operation in the entire Luzon Island. In this book no less than the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations (J3) of the AFP recognized that the enemy has gained headway with increased attacks on detachments and stations and strengthened ideological and political works.²⁴ Hence, the workshop was designed to develop operational and implementing concepts for the Win-Hold-Win and the “Lambat Bitag” strategies and the operational principles of Clear-Hold-Support Methodology, Special Operations Team (SOT), and Integrated Territorial Defense System (ITDS). The former AFP Chief of Staff, GEN Narciso L. Abaya, acknowledges that our enemies have become innovative with their strategies by taking advantage of material, political and psychological resources available to them. He said that battles are fought not only in the field, but most importantly in venues where the public opinion is shaped. Moreover, success can no longer be measured by body count, because to endure it should entail winning the hearts and minds of the people.²⁵

The AFP ISO Plan “Bantay Laya” lays the groundwork for the different Area Command campaigns. It is based on the National Internal Security Plan (NISP) formulated by the Department of National Defense (DND) and the National Military Strategy crafted and issued by the AFP. The strategic goal of Bantay Laya is to decisively defeat the insurgent’s armed groups in order to attain and maintain peace for national development.²⁶ This is a glaring departure from what GEN Abaya and MGEN Esperon,

now the Commanding General PA, understood of the Philippine insurgency situation. They talk about “hearts and minds” and “political and ideological works” of the enemy, but the strategy calls for the defeat of the insurgent’s armed groups. While this author submit to the logic of defeating the armed component at the tactical level, it must be remembered that to decisively achieve it, the enemy must first be prevented from attaining their first objective which is the population. Bantay Laya, therefore, appears to be a short cut to the race to the finish, bypassing other objectives. Bantay Laya discounts the possibility that the enemy may have evolved into a more potent force while going through the protracted process unchecked. It will come as no surprise if the insurgents, though beaten in a few skirmishes with dismal results, will emerge stronger with the full might of a popular mass base when they rush to the final strategic offensive.

Bantay Laya discussed measures towards the intensification and enhancement of the SOT concept, including the conversion of all light infantry battalions into SOT battalions.²⁷ This should be a welcome move since this will directly address the population rather than the armed groups. If implemented properly, this will effectively tone down the warrior attitude of soldiers and officers and possibly direct much of their energy to winning peace and establishing goodwill with the people. It will consequently lead to the transformation of units into more disciplined, civilized, and people-oriented representatives of government.

Bantay Laya clearly identifies the role of the AFP in the NISP during the Consolidate and Develop Phases. It is simply to support and assist the civilian agencies.²⁸ NISP also identifies the other government agencies as lead roles, however, these agencies have little knowledge of what these roles are about. They devote very little effort on the

program citing, among others, the lack of personnel, funds, or technical capability. When this happens, the least the AFP can do is coordinate, encourage, and catalyze added efforts on the part of the lead agencies to bring forth development and delivery of basic services to the *barangays*.²⁹ But, in the absence of these programs the AFP should not be content with doing nothing and face the possibility of losing military action gains. Other contingencies can be put in place to mitigate the lack of civilian support and these could be in the form of large scale CMO actions. This calls for the immersion of more troops, disciplined, trained, properly led and well motivated to increase contact with the people. With reduced tactical operations unit operational funds maybe realigned for this purpose and greatly enhance the capability of platoons to deliver much-needed projects such as deep-wells, cooperative centers, small-scale livelihood projects, road improvement, or health centers.

Bard O'Neill's book *Insurgency and Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare* has offered the counterinsurgency framework which provided an outline for this paper. O'Neill provides a more detailed explanation on how insurgents thrive on the populace and, therefore, offers a system of neutralizing them. It is a product of intensive research of several insurgencies around the world, including that of the Philippines. His view of the insurgency and how governments across continents responded to it has aided this author in looking at the Philippines' situation in a broader perspective, rather than focusing mainly on the protagonists' armed components.

O'Neill emphasized the critical role of the population support in offsetting government strengths. This is also important in maintaining freedom of action which Mao believed to be the very life of an army. Once this is lost, an army may face defeat.³⁰

This is akin to a school of fish that needs to have a sufficient amount of water to swim in a pond or an aquarium. If the water, represented by the environment which is supported by the people, is removed then the school dies. The smaller the environment, the easier it is to see the insurgents thriving on it.

¹Richard J. Kessler, *Revolution and Repression in the Philippines* (CT: Yale University, 1989), 147.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 149.

⁴Gregg R. Jones, *Red Revolution: Inside the Philippine Guerilla Movement* (Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1989), 95.

⁵Ibid., 96.

⁶Ibid., 313.

⁷Benedict J. Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines* (California: University of California Press, 1977), 260.

⁸Ibid., 266.

⁹Noel Barber, *The War of the Running Dogs: How Malaya Defeated the Communist Guerillas, 1948-1960* (London: Casell, 2004), 159.

¹⁰Ibid., 115.

¹¹Felix A. Brawner Jr., *A Field Commander's Perception and Random Thoughts on Philippine Communist Insurgency* (Quezon City, Philippines: People's Independent Media, Inc., 1988), 4.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., 4.

¹⁴Ibid., 5.

¹⁵David G. Timberman, *A Changeless Land: Continuity and Change in Philippine Politics* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1991), 396.

¹⁶Ibid., 396.

- ¹⁷Ibid., 397.
- ¹⁸Ibid., 398.
- ¹⁹LTC Eric P. Wendt, "Strategic Counterinsurgency Modeling," *Special Warfare* 18, no. 2 (September 2005): 3. PB 80-05-2.
- ²⁰Ibid., 4.
- ²¹David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Florida: Hailer Publishing, 2005), 7.
- ²²Ibid., 9.
- ²³Ibid., 17-43.
- ²⁴MGEN Hermogenes C. Esperon Jr., "Foreword," *Bantay Laya Supplemental Handbook* (Quezon City: VJ Graphic Arts, 2004).
- ²⁵GEN Narciso L. Abaya, "Message," *Bantay Laya Supplemental Handbook* (Quezon City: VJ Graphic Arts, 2004).
- ²⁶Ibid., 3.
- ²⁷AFP, 77.
- ²⁸Ibid., 89.
- ²⁹Ibid., 90.
- ³⁰Bard O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare* (Virginia: Brassey's, Inc., 1990), 83.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL SETTING (1946--1987)

Background

After World War II, the Philippines was devastated. Transportation and communication systems were barely operational, food production was at a standstill, the health system was overtaxed, the economy in shambles, and unemployment widespread. Corruption flourished as bribes were made in order to get goods from the government. Assistance was given to those with connections, not to those with the greatest need.¹ In 1946 the US passed the Philippine Trade Act or Bell Act which was ratified by the Philippine legislature. It granted a twenty-eight-year extension for duty-free trade between the two nations and mandated free access to Philippine markets by American businessmen and companies.² It was ratified by the Philippine legislature through the efforts of lobbying local businessmen and politicians who would likely benefit from the act. It was seen by the peasants as another move of the United States through the Philippine government to maintain a neo-colonial relationship for the benefit of Filipino landlords and rich businessmen. As a result, the law perpetuated corruption among government officials. Quick in sensing the brewing climate of hostility, the CPP base of operations was moved into the Manila *barangays* and started alliances with labor unions, calling themselves the Democratic Alliance (DA).³

The Democratic Alliance sought to challenge the ruling Partido Nacionalista in the upcoming November 1946 general elections. Their timetable started with the first phase, from 1946 to 1949, focusing on organization of workers, peasant classes and intellectuals. This is to prevent the capitalist classes from expanding their control over the

nation.⁴ The second stage, between 1949 and 1951, would focus on a political offensive that called for merger of the mass political base with the military wing. DA expected a peak strength of 172,800 members. The final stage of the communist strategy was to takeover the government in 1952. This called for a grand mass uprising that the existing capitalist government is not expected to survive.⁵

During the 1946 national elections, Manuel Roxas, an army brigadier general during the war, won over President Osmena. Immediately, he made good his campaign promise of eliminating the Hukbong Bayan laban sa Hapon (HUKBALAHAP) or Huk resistance. After preventing Huk *Supremo* Luis Taruc and three other Alliance congressmen-elect to take their seats in Congress, Taruc went back to the hills. President Roxas then declared a nationwide “open season” on the Huks enlisting the help of the Civil Guards of the provincial governors. These indiscriminate “Huk hunts” sanctioned by the government scoured the countryside and spread terror throughout the local populace. Preying on the people for supplies, food, and information, often obtained through coercion and torture, they proved the best recruiters for the Huks.⁶

The Huks persisted and succeeded almost entirely due to the active support of the locals. Taruc clearly understood their desires and aspirations and capitalized on this intimacy to his advantage. When interviewed why people allied with him, Taruc responded that “people in the *barrios* . . . joined because they had causes--like agrarian reform, government reform, anti-repression, recognition of the Hukbalahap--and frequently, because they simply had to defend themselves, their lives against repression.”⁷ Others joined him to avenge the death or abuse of relatives. But one central factor common to Huks and their supporters was the issue of land tenure. People wanted

ownership of the farms they had worked for decades. Because Luzon had the highest rate of land-tenancy, it became the center of insurrection and provided an ideal ground for the movement. A study later conducted among 400 captured Huks revealed that 95 percent of them have joined the movement as a means to pursue land reform.⁸

In 1948, the Political Bureau (Politburo), now under the leadership of Jose Lava, wanted to pursue the Russian model of class struggle. Lava and cohorts wanted to concentrate on urban centers, disrupt government functions, and bring about the communist overthrow. The Huks under Taruc, on the other hand, were more Maoist in outlook and wanted their peasant mass base broadened to pursue the fight in the countryside. In November 1948, the military arm of the movement was renamed Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan (HMB) or People's Liberation Army.⁹ In April 1949, the HMB made a costly mistake of ambushing Senora Aurora Quezon, widow of the former Philippine president, and her daughter. The HMB underestimated their target's popularity and outraged many people throughout the islands. Taruc lost a great deal of popular support and confidence over the incident and never fully regained from it.¹⁰

Taruc's HMB forces increased their tactical offensive on the government while Lava increased the tempo of their activism in the urban areas to set the stage for the armed revolution. The Politburo estimated that the Philippine government will be ousted by 1951. This grand strategy which called for a total Huk force of some 36 divisions with 56,000 cadre, 172,000 party members, and a mass base of 2.5 million supporters failed almost instantly with the neutralization of the entire Politburo by government troops in October 1950.¹¹

Ramon Magsaysay Era

In September 1950, Ramon Magsaysay was appointed Secretary of National Defense by President Elpidio Quirino. He was a former Major in the USAFFE guerrilla unit who was appointed military governor of Zambales by Gen MacArthur due to his honesty, integrity and exceptional ability. As governor he became an advocate of veteran's rights and impressed the people with his devotion to improving their life. He later ran and won a congressional seat with the largest popular margin in Zambales history. He rose to become a member and later the Chairman of the House Committee on National Defense which got him involved more with military and national security affairs.¹²

After his appointment as Secretary of National Defense Magsaysay had a clear-cut plan to shake the Philippine military from top to bottom, cleansing its ranks of corrupt and incompetent officers. He wanted to change the role of the military from an oppressive army that preyed heavily on the local populace to being a major participant in social reforms and public service. He wanted the military to become a major part of a large coordinated development plan for the country. He started it with the relief of the Chief of Staff and the Chief of the Constabulary and ordered other "armchair strategists" to the field. He demanded that his forces abandon corrupt practices and set the example himself. During his extensive travel and talks with troops and civilians, he was convinced that the AFP was indeed suffering from low morale, ineffectiveness, poor leadership, and riddled with corruption. Under his superb leadership, these conditions quickly improved.¹³

Soon after becoming Secretary of National Defense, Magsaysay was convinced that AFP tactics also needed drastic changes. Though originally he favored large-scale conventional operations, he directed a shift to small unit operations. He was very much aware that large sweeping operations hurt the local populace more than it did the enemy. In a speech delivered before the AFP General Staff, Magsaysay summarized his new tactics: “Gentlemen, I know you all graduated from military establishments here and in the United States. Now I am telling you to forget everything you were taught at Ft. Leavenworth, Ft. Benning, and the Academy. The Huks are fighting an unorthodox war. We are going to combat them in an unorthodox way. Whatever it was that hurt me most as a guerilla is what we are going to do now to the Huk.”¹⁴

Magsaysay also knew that government terror tactics had to end. As a former guerrilla leader, he understood that the campaign relied heavily on gaining the people’s allegiance. A few successes to provide relief for the people can be destroyed by just one barbaric act against the villagers. Now the soldiers were given two duties: to act as an ambassador of goodwill toward the people and to kill Huks. In a few months, children no longer run to the forest to hide when they see Army trucks. Now they would meet to greet soldiers with smiling faces when they visited the villages.¹⁵ With the officers and soldiers being *educated* on the art of diplomacy, rather than simply getting *trained* on the use of their guns, they have developed some degree of ease and comfort on the civilians, which was necessary to finally win them.

Part of Magsaysay’s overall strategy to defeat the insurgents was to incorporate civil resettlement projects with military action. He knew that as long as the peasants believed they had no obligation to the government, the guerrillas could continue to thrive

in the countryside. He introduced the formation of Economic Development Corps (EDCOR) for the purpose of providing captured or surrendered guerrillas opportunities to improve their lives. The project resettled former insurgents on government land away from Luzon, in Mindanao. Beneficiaries received short re-education and indoctrination about the benefits of belonging to a peaceful society. The Army and the Navy transported those selected for the program, with their families, to the project sites and gave them additional education on how to care for and farm the land. Some retired soldiers provided control by participating in the program as well. Each family was given 6-10 hectares (15-25 acres) of titled farmland, free transportation, schools, medical care, electricity, and clean water. Other basic farm implements, farm animals, seed, and an initial supply of food was sold to them on credit by the EDCOR administrators. The program undercut the foundation upon which the Huk campaign was based-- "Land for the landless"--and this resulted in the surrender of thousands of guerrillas.¹⁶

Magsaysay's honesty, simplicity, and genuine concern with the misery of his countrymen established a bond with the common man that was unprecedented in Philippine history. He lived in an unguarded home, drove his own car, and spoke in a manner easily understood by all. The people praised the Secretary as a new national hero, an impression that would soon make him a President of the Philippines.¹⁷ Apparently this credibility and general perception of trustworthiness, at the highest level of the department encouraged many key players to do their part in contributing to the success of the campaign. No less than the people themselves believed in the sincerity of their leader and the hope that he represented.

During the summer of 1950, officials of the Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP) conducted a survey of conditions in the Philippines and found the primary problem to be political-economic instability and concluded that progress would be difficult to achieve without broad-based American assistance. They were proved correct because the insurgents were suppressed only after Luzon's peasant class began to feel the progressive social and economic changes resulting from this assistance. "This allowed them to shift allegiance back to the central government and away from the guerrillas. Without this basic change, military operations alone could not have defeated the guerrillas."¹⁸

The Joint United States Military Advisory Group (JUSMAG)-Philippines began to support Philippine requests for additional monetary assistance in 1951. This was used to pay the existing government troops and to allow the government to increase the number of battalion combat teams (BCT) in the Army from ten to twenty-six. As a direct result, corruption declined and the officers and soldiers became more professional and effective. They now purchase rations from the local villagers and were able provide for their families. The soldier felt a sense of nationalism as he fought the Huks to protect his country and his fellow countrymen. The peasant, on the other hand, felt relieved as the military and police finally began to protect him. Soon the Huks found their popular support eroded.¹⁹ At a time that the government was cash strapped resulting from WWII, external support greatly aided the Department of Defense in addressing one of the factors that prevented the government from succeeding in its efforts: lack of sufficient troops. In an insurgency war which calls for the preponderance of government forces over the threat

to a ratio of at least 10:1 or 20:1, the twenty-six battalions were hardly enough, but was a substantial improvement.

During the tenure of Secretary Magsaysay the Philippine military matured and refined its role and function. The 1,100-man battalion combat teams changed tactics from conventional to a more unconventional mode that was based on small unit operations, mobility and firepower at the unit level. Additional rifle and reconnaissance companies replaced the artillery and heavy mortar batteries which were returned to higher headquarters.²⁰ Military actions were complemented with psychological warfare, which caused dissension within guerrilla ranks and influenced the people to favor the government. Emphasis was put on intelligence which greatly enhanced Army operations. With good intelligence, AFP units surprised the Huks in their strongholds and demonstrated that the government would no longer simply respond to guerilla attacks but would initiate operations when and where it desired.²¹

During the 1953 national elections Secretary Magsaysay was elected President with the largest popular margin in Philippine history. After winning he continued his programs for the peasants and particularly paid attention to issues close to the hearts of his countrymen--corruption, neglect, poverty, and land reform. His EDCOR projects flourished. The Army launched major anti-Huk operations throughout 1954 when the number of guerillas remaining at large continued to diminish, eventually reaching a level of only 1,000. Their organization was destroyed and the former Huks were reduced to nothing more than roving bandits begging for food simply to survive. The Huk supporters suffered a similar fate. Finally, in 17 May 1954, Luis Taruc surrendered to a young

presidential assistant, Ninoy Aquino. Taruc's decision was followed by a mass surrender of Huk leaders and guerillas throughout central Luzon.²²

President Magsaysay continued his programs, traveling and speaking with the people in the farthest *barangays* and provinces of the Philippines in order to hear about their problems and how the government may be able to alleviate their conditions. Who will know what more Magsaysay could have possibly done to help his people? Nobody can tell if the Philippines would have been a developed and peaceful nation now if not for that fatal incident in Cebu on 17 March 1957, when during one of his travels his C-47, The Mt Pinatubo, crashed and killed him at the early age of 41.²³

Post Magsaysay and the Martial Law Years

President Diosdado Macapagal was elected in the 1961 election and inspired enthusiasm from both Filipinos and foreign observers. However, his promised "New Era" did not materialize. It was to have been characterized by strong national leadership that addressed corruption and introduced socioeconomic programs to improve the living conditions of the "Common Man."²⁴ Macapagal managed to push an agrarian reform bill through the Philippine Congress but it proved too expensive to implement. He abolished the controls from foreign exchange and devalued the peso, thus eradicating a major source of corruption and facilitating exports but it hurt businesses protected by the earlier emphasis on import substitution, thus resulting in inflation. Prices of staple products such as rice increased tremendously, as did the prices of pork, fish, and poultry. To avoid tariffs, smuggling proliferated which only replaced graft associated with foreign exchange controls.²⁵

The election of President Ferdinand Marcos in 1965 promised a new beginning. Marcos designed a four-year development plan through a team of technocrats that he commissioned. He concentrated on curbing smuggling and improving tax collections in order to raise revenues. He started by appointing a dynamic and honest customs commissioner who almost immediately caused the increase in revenues. He then disciplined corrupt Constabulary and Navy officers who were in collusion with smugglers. Because of the notoriety of the police who were then under the authority of elected mayors, Marcos justified its centralized administration. He then implemented the 1963 Land Reform Act starting in the province of Pampanga, where a resurgence of the Huks was evident. The military budget for 1967 was double the 1962 defense budget and this was matched by a four-year budget for land distribution.²⁶

Marcos initiatives continued--programs to increase rice production and to build roads, schoolhouses, and airports, for example--and progress occurred. For the first time, the Philippines temporarily achieved rice self-sufficiency in 1968. But the overall economic situation of the Philippines remained precarious. The balance of payments was stabilized actually by US financial assistance and purchases related to the war in Vietnam, and not by an increase in exports or foreign direct investments.²⁷ Because of Marcos' visible accomplishments like highways, farm-to-market roads, schoolhouses, airports, electrification projects, he won a second term in the presidency, making him the first president of the Philippines to be reelected to office.²⁸

The reelection of Marcos in 1969 made him more aggressive and bolder on programs that essentially served the interests of his cronies. Crony capitalism was so massive that the economy of the country suffered severely. The people became poorer

and the gap between them and the rich became wider. The CPP-NPA took the opportunity to foment more activism and radicalism among students and workers, triggering harsher actions on the part of the military and police. As incidence of riots increased and became more violent in the cities, the countryside was also reported to be busy in the buildup of new NPA units. In mid-1972 a ship *MV Karagatan* was discovered by the military off the coast of Isabela in northern Luzon with 3,500 firearms from the People's Republic of China and was intended for the NPA.²⁹ Citing the growing violence in Manila as evidence of an impending communist uprising aggravated by the ambush or fake ambush of Defense Secretary Juan Ponce Enrile, Marcos finally declared Martial Law on 21 September 1972. In the following days fifty three opposition leaders were detained, Congress was padlocked, and the media shut down, thus ending abruptly democracy in the Philippines.³⁰

Martial Law drove the student radicals and labor leaders to the hills to join the NPA for fear of incarceration. Because freedom of speech and of the press was suppressed, strong opinions were expressed covertly. With this development the United Front became more active in the underground movement. At the initial stage of the martial rule, political chaos was solved and the streets became quiet. There was some progress on the economy as the government had a full hand in instituting reforms on tax collection and other revenue earning measures. This improvement was short lived as the nation suffered from internal and external inflationary factors. Martial rule also elevated the military's sense of authority and power which eventually were abused. Human rights abuses by the military reached staggering heights which sent more peasants and students to the hills, contributing to the surge in the strength of the CPP-NPA.

On 21 August 1983, Senator Benigno Aquino, Jr was assassinated as he stepped out of the China Airlines plane that brought him from three-year exile in the US. People were outraged as the news of the killing spread and the assassination marked a turning point in the dictatorship of President Ferdinand Marcos. A civilian-backed military launched a coup which culminated in Marcos' fleeing the country in 25 February 1986, and entering exile in Hawaii.³¹ It must be noted though that the insurgency never went away even with the overthrow of the dictator. The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) after the Magsaysay years was a new kind of communist movement. It was a combination of the urban socialists with peasant movements but was also marked by nationalism. Although the communist insurgency saw its quick rise again during the Martial Law years starting 1972 there was already a steady increase in its support in the late 1960s when the CPP was founded.

Post-Magsaysay Philippine revolution was "shaped by a convergence of forces at work in the 1960's: the war in Vietnam, humiliating inequities in the relationship between the Philippines and the United States, the political radicalism that was sweeping college campuses from Michigan to Manila, and the Cultural Revolution in the People's Republic of China."³² In early 1960s, Jose Maria Sison, a professor from the University of the Philippines, began by organizing groups of students and workers around nationalist political and economic issues. Mao's teachings and the Cultural Revolution inspired these groups of Filipino radicals which provided the ideological foundation for the fledgling movement. By early 1969 thousands of radical students had come to recognize Sison's argument that an armed revolution was indispensable to "liberate" the nation from the forces of imperialism and feudalism. By the time Martial Law was declared, Sison's

Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) had grown to nearly 2,000, and the ill-equipped New People's Army (NPA) squads were conducting hit-and-run ambushes in Central Luzon and other islands.³³

The Physical Environment

The growth of insurgency can be traced to some environmental factors. The Philippines is very diverse and complex geographically, linguistically, ethnically, culturally and socioeconomically. Its complexity is due to its historical experiences with the Arabs, Chinese, Portuguese, Spanish, Americans, and Japanese. This has created a unique culture and society of the east and the west, which oftentimes have contradictory characteristics. Its being an archipelago consisting of 7,100 or more islands stretching over 1,100 miles from north to south makes it geographically fragmented. Some 1,000 of the islands are inhabited and the largest populations are concentrated on the islands of Luzon, Mindanao, Cebu, Leyte, Negros and Mindoro. Its volcanic origin has caused many islands to have rugged and mountainous centers with arable areas on hilly slopes, coastal plains, and central valleys. Central Luzon, north of Manila, is the nation's premier rice-growing area.³⁴

Under the administration of President Marcos and President Fidel Ramos the government has embarked on massive construction of infrastructure to include roads and bridges, farm to market roads, irrigation dams and communication systems. However, because of the vast rugged terrain, there are not enough highways to connect villages or smaller towns. A corollary to this that the government's electrification programs are not able to penetrate all the remote villages due to the lack of road networks to facilitate flow of electricity. In remote areas, the number of school buildings and health centers are also

limited due to budget shortages and the difficulty in gaining access to construction materials.

Being in the tropics, the Philippines is hit by a typhoon an average of 23 times a year. Three or four of these are classified as category 3, which can destroy poorly-built structures, damage electrical power grids and poles and generally cause economic disruption in a province or two affected by it. The weaker typhoon can destroy crops, flood rice fields and cause dams and irrigation systems to swell, thus contributing to the misery of rural people. In some coastal areas, the harsh weather makes travel by smaller boats difficult for the people, isolating residents for weeks or sometimes months, especially if the mountains are not easily accessible by foot or land transportation.

Also, the Philippines has vast rain forests whose canopy can encompass hundreds of square miles. Some 60 per cent of the Philippine land mass is covered by forests which provide good ground for guerilla forces to hide in while they train, reorganize, or conduct mass works with nearby villages. The Sierra Madre mountain range, for instance, stretches for some 1,200 kilometers of forests which is broken only by a few kilometers of roads to connect the coastal towns to the Central Plains and the cities. The same is true with the Islands of Mindoro, Samar, Palawan, and a huge portion of the island of Northern Mindanao. These places are historically known as bailiwicks of the Filipino guerilla forces and USAFFE during the Japanese occupation. The rugged terrain hinders movement of government troops and is perfect breeding grounds for insurgents.

The Human Environment

The nation's diversity is largely due to its ethnic mix, which includes Malay, Chinese, Spanish, and numerous indigenous tribal groups. Dominant on most of them are

Muslim, Spanish and American influences. Religion is another important influence on Philippine society which is about 85 percent Roman Catholics. This makes the Filipinos one of the largest Catholic populations of the world. Finally, the considerable difference between urban and rural life is another important source of diversity, especially when about 45 per cent of all Filipinos live in urban areas, including towns, while the rest live in the rural areas.³⁵

The archipelagic nature of the Philippines has caused considerable fragmentation among Filipinos, such that Tagalogs, Warays, Bikolanos, Bisaya, or Ilongos would often tend to stick together during social occasions. The relative ease of water transportation, however, has facilitated inter-island commerce, migration, and inter-marriages particularly in the Visayas. In contrast, the rugged nature of much of the Philippines mountains makes intra-island interaction more difficult, resulting in the emergence of some eighty dialects spoken throughout the country.³⁶ In effect, a region can have people belonging to different tribes and speak different dialects. Sometimes even adjacent towns only a few miles apart speak differently thus making the family the basic foundation for support and sustenance in the villages.

The Filipino believes in the necessity for a closely knit family, and a large one at that. The family, which includes relatives by affinity, is considered the mirror of society and not the other way around. "The Filipino family, large and functionally extended as it is, provides social security, old age pensions, jobs, scholarships, unemployment benefits, nursery services, credit, land, labor, capital, income redistribution, work sharing, companionship to the unmarried, care for the sick, home for the aged, counsel for the troubled, and most of all, love, affection, emotional maintenance, and social stability

without which the Filipino's life is meaningless. On the debit side, the Filipino family has often been accused of harbouring nepotism, encouraging dependency, supporting social parasitism and promoting prolific child bearing, which are all inhibitors to the Filipino's integration into the community and larger society, and hence dysfunctional to national development efforts."³⁷

Philippine society can be divided into two distinguishable sectors--advantaged and disadvantaged. The "haves" is a relatively small sector but powerful enough to control much of the nation's resources. They are the owners of private corporations, leaders of the government, and other affluent "influentials." Managing their surplus resources are their executives and a host of functionaries including white collar workers in various public and private institutions. This oligarchy lives largely in urban areas with Western lifestyle.³⁸

On the other hand, majority of the population is relatively disadvantaged and mostly rural. They are the "have nots" which include the farmers, loggers, fishermen, drivers, and workers in sweat shops and similar occupations that demand physical toil. They include the squatters and slum dwellers in the urban areas that live in hand-to-mouth existence. They earn their living as peddlers, scavengers, domestics, or marginal workers in factories. This sector may even include white-collar workers such as the poorly paid teachers, soldiers, and policemen. Abject poverty is one important characteristic that they share. They are poor because they are unemployed, underemployed, or because the material gains they command is not enough for even two meals a day. This is the picture of a "dual society" or "sociological dualism" suggested by the Dutch economist JH Boeke, which continuously clash with each other.³⁹

The institutionalized economic disparities that create a perception of virtual deprivation are a major cause of the insurgency in the Philippines. Where the “have nots” are denied a fair share of the wealth by small ruling elite and capitalist classes, economic considerations are the primary motive for rebellion.⁴⁰ Other economic factors that have direct bearing on the grievances of the people are inflation, employment, productivity, income distribution, housing, and health services. The less the government is able to provide for these services, the greater the grievance and the more prone the people become to invitations to revolt.

Economic growth, therefore, is linked to the prevailing security conditions in the country. The Philippines’ agricultural resources have the potential to enable the country to compete with Malaysia and Thailand in agribusiness development.⁴¹ However, the unstable security in the country, brought in part by the insurgency, has driven away foreign investments. If the national leaders are able to restore peace and order, it is possible for the country to attain a growth rate of 20 to 30 percent per annum in nontraditional exports. Such growth rates would enable the country’s GNP to expand faster. With improved investment climate and greater investor confidence, Filipinos themselves will be the first to invest part of their estimated \$10 billion assets abroad.⁴²

Because economics is basically a function of politics, it is noteworthy to consider the political culture that is prevailing in the Philippines. A large majority of the Filipinos are categorized as *participants*, in contrast to being mere *subjects* and *parochials*, in that most of the people are aware of the national political institutions, issues, and policies.⁴³ In fact, the Filipinos are probably the most politically-conscious people in Asia, if not the most politicized. People talk about their political leaders most of the time, in coffee

shops, workplace, and at home. This is one result of political patronage, where most of the people, particularly the poor, owe something to the mayor, governor, or congressman, in terms of a favor for employment, a government project, medical and health services, or even burial services. In return for all the dole outs the electorates get from the politician, they assure him of the votes come election time, including the votes of the members of their extended family. In effect, the more moneyed the politician is, the more that he is able to share his wealth, the more that his people lean on him for support, and the more popular he becomes, no matter how poorer the people get.

The declaration of martial law certainly contributed to the growth of insurgency. It drove new recruits to the hills and aggravated existing social tensions. But even without martial law insurgency would have taken place just the same because of two reasons. First, the elite were continually in an intense struggle for political dominance using the peasants as pawns. Political exercises are marred by violence and fraud that even after the elections losers do not concede defeat and continue to struggle in some other ways. These wealthy clans can use trade and commerce to get back at the opponent, or even physically eliminate each other. Often these elites had little interest in legitimizing the weak political process that would have provided other avenues for political change.⁴⁴ Second, insurgency was a delayed response to the struggle between the common tao and the landed elite which date back to the Spanish times. “The Huks as an organization expired, but their appeal did not, because the root causes of rebellion remained--economic deprivation, social injustice and a need for a national identity.”⁴⁵ On this residual base the CPP grew and carefully built its mass base which included the middle class, the working class, and the peasants.

The Catholic Church is considered as the most important nongovernmental linkage between the oligarchy and the masses in the country. Because of the separation of the church and state, the church generally shied away from political issues until the 1960s when it began to display its social activism. It supported the Federation of Free Workers, a moderate labor organization, and the Federation of Free Farmers, a peasant organization founded by Jesuit-trained clergy in 1953. In 1965, the Second Vatican Council and the celebration of the quadricentennial of Christianity in the Philippines marked the start church involvement in the socioeconomic problems of its people. By 1970, the Bishops were openly opposing the exploitation of the peasants and the oppression of the farmers.⁴⁶

When Marcos declared Martial Law, liberation theology which started in Latin America was already widespread in the church. It tried to explain the causes of poverty and oppression using Marxist class analysis and advocated that priests actively get involved in efforts to improve the life of their followers. Liberation theology conferred on the priest the right and the duty to engage in social revolution, when nothing else can be done.⁴⁷ Because martial law curtailed people's rights for redress of grievances through normal channels, the parish priest found himself ministering not only to the spiritual needs of his community but also his temporal needs.⁴⁸ The church took a more social activist role, consoling the poor, and pushing some priests to actually go to the hills to join the rebel NPAs, and even become NPA Commanders.

Analysis

Historically, it can be said that land reform was a primary cause for insurgency in the Philippines. Although President Magsaysay was initially successful in effectively

containing insurgency during his time with the distribution of land, it was not sufficient to benefit everyone, particularly those in the Visayas and Mindanao. It was able to address only the grievance of insurgents mostly in the Central Plain of Luzon where the Huks were strongest. But during that period when the country was experiencing economic difficulties, it was the right thing to do. The government had to prioritize the threat and those in Luzon had to be given priority to diffuse tension near and around the capital. It was able to address land emancipation issues which were the cause for that particular revolution in the Luzon. What the government failed to do was to continue with the effort in Visayas and Mindanao while they were still in the inception stage. Using the formula in Luzon would have worked in the other islands if the campaign was fast enough to catch up with the propaganda of the enemy.

The overhaul of the AFP leadership to get rid of corrupt generals was a good start for Magsaysay to change the environment of distrust among the ranks. With external support, the increase in the number of government troops and the improvement of pay and benefits, and therefore the morale, of troops was realized making them effective tools of the government. This improvement allowed them to face the people and the insurgents with self-esteem and vigor. There was dignity in soldiery and the people saw in their AFP a partner for development and economic prosperity. The people's general perception of trust at the highest level was exemplified by Magsaysay's popularity. His simplicity and honesty was so contagious that more people who worked with him tried to be models themselves, earning the respect of the people.

Magsaysay's sudden demise was a tragic loss to the Filipinos. Eventually through the years many of those who were not Huks or those not benefited by Magsaysay's

programs realized the abject neglect with which their government after Magsaysay was subjecting them. This awareness was mostly due to the social activism of professors, students and the clergy, who were very open in exposing the weaknesses of the government in addressing other issues not directly related to land ownership, including poor educational system, lack of health service, corruption, unemployment and poverty.

When Marcos began his reign of terror, he had to expand the military organization and patronize the generals to buy their loyalty. The pay of the ordinary soldiers and officers were despicably low for an honest living. Further dampening their morale was the lack of combat equipment and essential organizational requirements to perform their job. Corruption became rampant in the ranks and improving the state of discipline of the troops was hardly a priority. As a result, human rights abuses by the troops became rampant, which further alienated the disadvantaged poor who were caught in the fight between the NPA and government forces. As life being experienced by peasants in the hills was getting harder, they saw the communist party as an option to realize their simple dreams. Uneducated as they were, they became easy prey to the propaganda campaign of the insurgents. Land and better living conditions were promised. When they became suspects for harboring the insurgents in their homes and were beaten by an abusive constabulary on patrol, it was only a matter of time for them to run to the hills and join the NPA. Meanwhile, there abounds rugged terrain and lush vegetation where the guerillas hid to train, launch their attacks on government forces, and then disappear under the canopy of trees.

At the United Front the party's overseas revolutionary work has enabled it to generate funds and support from fraternal parties, other revolutionary movements, and

NGOs with whom it has established solidarity ties.⁴⁹ Cooperative development is the most common front activity. Training and indoctrination was also sometimes provided by these leftist NGOs in the guise of providing technical support to farmers or fisher folks. What hurt the AFP campaign most was the bad propaganda which these NGOs have caused in shaping unfavorable public opinion. Legal and media pressure were resorted to by these international organizations to expose abuses of the military and reverse the views of unsympathetic masses. This was especially true during massive government operations to flush out guerillas in the hills, or when the communist rebels were cornered or suffered big casualties. Information Operations of the AFP was simply not a match for the massive propaganda war that Human Rights Internationale and the National Democratic Front (NDF) launched to solicit public outrage.

In conclusion, there were evidently causes for the insurgency to sprout, thrive, and grow from the period 1946 to 1987. These causes were inadequately addressed by the government which only served to further aggravate them. Government weakness with respect to solving these grievances was wrongly compensated by a heavy-handed response by the military organization. As if to suppress the grievance, much of the action was focused on putting down the rebellion, rather than eliminating the cause of the rebellion itself. The dualism that deteriorated with the widening gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged was never really addressed. On the contrary, its preservation in the society perpetuated the social stagnation and injustice that continuously fueled discontent. Indeed, the time was ripe all the time for the insurgents to exploit the whole situation that led to their peak in 1987.

¹MAJ Lawrence M. Greenberg, *The HUKBALAHAP Insurrection: A Case Study of a Successful Anti-Insurgency Operation in the Philippines* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987), 29.

²Ibid., 37.

³Ibid., 38.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 39.

⁶Ibid., 45.

⁷Benedict Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines* (CA: University of California Press, 1977), 170, quoted in MAJ Lawrence Greenberg, *The HUKBALAHAP Insurrection: A Case Study of a Successful Anti-Insurgency Operation in the Philippines* (Washington, D. C.: US Government Printing Office, 1987), 46.

⁸Rodney Azama, *The HUKS and the new People's Army: Comparing Two Post-War Filipino Insurgencies* (Virginia: Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 1985), 79, quoted in MAJ Lawrence Greenburg, *The HUKBALAHAP Insurrection: A Case Study of a Successful Anti-Insurgency Operation in the Philippines* (Washington, D. C.: US Government Printing Office, 1987), 29.

⁹Greenberg, 62.

¹⁰Ibid., 63.

¹¹Ibid., 67.

¹²Ibid., 80.

¹³Ibid., 84.

¹⁴Ibid., 87.

¹⁵Ibid., 88.

¹⁶Ibid., 92.

¹⁷Ibid., 94.

¹⁸Ibid., 101.

¹⁹Ibid., 108.

²⁰Ibid., 112.

²¹Ibid., 130.

²²Ibid., 140.

²³Ibid., 139.

²⁴John Bressnan, *Crisis in the Philippines, The Marcos Era and Beyond* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), 72.

²⁵Ibid., 73.

²⁶Ibid., 75.

²⁷The Philippines sent some 2,000 troops to Vietnam which was later confirmed to be part of Marcos deal with Washington, in order for the latter to provide funds for engineering battalions to be used for road infrastructure and other community development projects in the Philippines.

²⁸Ibid., 77.

²⁹Greg R. Jones, *Red Revolution: Inside the Philippine Guerrilla Movement* (Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1989), 62, quoted in David Timberman, *A Changeless Land: Continuity and Change in Philippine Politics* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1991), 66.

³⁰David Timberman, *A Changeless Land: Continuity and Change in Philippine Politics* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1991), 66.

³¹Richard J. Kessler, *Rebellion and Repression in the Philippines* (U.S.: Yale University, 189), 1.

³²Jones, *Red Revolution*, 5.

³³Ibid., 6.

³⁴Timberman, 4.

³⁵Ibid., 6.

³⁶Ibid., 4.

³⁷Gelia T Castillo, *Beyond Manila: Philippine Rural Problems in Perspective* (Ottawa: International Development Research Center, 1979), 40, quoted in John Bressnan, *Crisis in the Philippines: The Marcos Era and Beyond* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), 62.

³⁸Bressnan, 57.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Bard O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism* (Virginia: Brassey's, Inc., 1990), 62.

⁴¹Bressnan, 175.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³O' Neill, 64.

⁴⁴Kessler, 147.

⁴⁵Ibid., 148.

⁴⁶Timberman, 56.

⁴⁷Ibid., 102.

⁴⁸Statement of Benigno Aquino before the Subcommittee on Asian and Public Affairs, in *US-RP Relations and the New Base and Aid Agreements* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), 82, quoted in David Timberman, *A Changeless Land: Continuity and Change in Philippine Politics* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1991), 101.

⁴⁹ISG PA, *Knowing The Enemy* (Makati City: Intelligence School, 2001), I-7.

CHAPTER 4

THE INSURGENCY (1987–DATE)

A year after President Corazon Aquino assumed office in 1986 the CPP-NPA reached its peak. By early 1989 the NPA had about 24,000 guerrillas, with an arsenal of more than 10,000 high-powered rifles, grenade launchers, and a few mortars and controlled more than a fifth of the country's 41,000 villages. In Manila and other cities the communists had succeeded in gaining control over hundreds of labor unions and in establishing guerrilla bases in the urban slums. The NDF had succeeded in recruiting a significant number of Catholic priests, nuns, lay workers and even one or two bishops. From the start the CPP had concentrated on political organizing rather than military action until 1989.¹

The Insurgent Leadership, Goals, and Type of Insurgency

Under the leadership of Chairman Jose Maria “Joma” Sison, who is in exile today in the Netherlands, the CPP-NPA's domestic affairs continue to be run by elected leaders of the Central Committee who come from senior leaders in the national and regional organs. The regular election of senior members of the party makes it very difficult to follow the lineage of leadership, sometimes even by deep penetration agents (DPA) of the government. By and large, it can be said that the leadership of the Reaffirmist group of Sison has proven to be effective as far as dispensing of party programs is concerned. The Central Committee, Political Bureau (Politburo), Executive Committee (Execom), and other national organs also had a deep bench of senior and experienced leaders to choose from. The same is true with leadership in the armed wing, the New People's Army.

Senior commanders often have evolved into seasoned guerilla fighters in the decades of conflict in the Philippines.

In 1999, the party had to split when a faction disagreed with the Reaffirmist CPP-NPA's strict adherence to the Maoist concept of protracted people's war and instead advocated the Nicaraguan model of insurrectionary insurgency and tactics. This group called themselves the Rejectionists, aims to create a revolutionary situation by staging crippling strikes and conducting urban terrorism. It adheres to the teaching of Lenin and advocates insurrectionary struggle that calls for a combination of political and military efforts to create a revolutionary situation. Due to personal and policy differences it has since been polarized into nine subgroups.² Comprising a very small minority of the resistance movement, the AFP considers it a negligible force in the counterinsurgency fight. The Rejectionist faction is spearheaded by the *Partido ng Manggagawang Pilipino* (PMP) or Workers Party of the Philippines. Both of these factions aim to seize political power and supplant the democratic form of government with a communist rule.

Looking at the goals of the two communist party opposing factions, we can see that they both seek to impose on the people a new system based on the ultimate value of distributional equality and centrally-controlled structures designed to mobilize the people and radically transform the social structure within an existing political community. This type of insurgency can be considered egalitarian, and historically, despite their populist rhetoric, egalitarian rebels who succeed normally establish political systems that are authoritarian, repressive, and elitist.³

The Organization

The party utilizes three main weapons in its revolutionary struggle, namely: the Party (CPP), the Army (NPA) and the United Front (UF) or National Democratic Front (NDF) that shields the activities and carries out the propaganda of the communist movement. The CPP is the brain of the people's revolution, provides political leadership to the movement, and determines the general line and direction of the revolution. It controls the activities of the army and the united front. The Party's military arm, the NPA, is tasked with the advancement of the protracted people's war through armed struggle. Under the tutelage of Sison, the Central Committee regularly convenes the National Congress (NC) to discuss, ratify, review or amend the party constitution and program of action. The NC also decides the party line and elects the members of the Central Committee, who in turn elect the Politburo and the Execom.⁴ At the regional level one will find the Regional Party Committees (RPC) with an average of four or five Provincial Party Committees (PPC) each. Each of these PPCs is further composed of two or three District Committees (Discoms). In all of these party organs are attached the armed component, starting with the Main Regional Guerrilla Unit (MRGU) or Sub-Regional Guerilla Unit (SRGU) for the regions and Platoon Guerilla (Plager) for the PPCs and Guerilla Front Committees (GFCs). Intelligence estimates as of 3rd Qtr 2005 have placed the NPA strength at 7,445, with mobilizable combat support elements (militias and self-defense units) of 6,700, for a total estimate of 14,140 elements in the different guerilla fronts across the country.⁵

While the CPP and the NPA remain underground, the NDF stays above ground as the legal front of the organization. It wages the legal battle and advances propaganda

themes through the different organizations it has formed among workers, laborers, farmers, fishermen, students, women, youth, clergy, and virtually every sector of the community that it can lay its hands into. As the shield of the movement, it is at the forefront of the battle being waged in the halls of Congress and the streets.

Since the early 1990's, the decision-making process at the tactical level has been delegated to the RPCs and eventually the GFCs, due in part to the difficulty of controlling the different organs from a single, central command based in Luzon to the different island-based RPCs. Centralized control made it difficult for members to travel from island to island, so localizing decisions made sense. Through the years insurgent communications have improved due to the proliferation of cell phone towers all over the country.

Ideology and Objectives

The rift between the Rejectionist and Reaffirmist faction started in the early 1980s when a group of party members started criticizing the Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong (MLMZD) ideology advocated by Sison. The second rectification campaign or back-to-basics program of Sison forced the insurgents to the *barangays* to man the armed propaganda units or *Sandatahang Yunit Pangpropaganda* (SYP). This caused demoralization among the remaining cadres, some of whom contemplated surrendering or deserting.⁶ Mao's protracted war was getting some of the other insurgents impatient as many of them eventually die in battles, from disease, and other causes without seeing the fruits of their sacrifices. Majority of those who were impatient, however, were from the labor and urban sectors. Thus, on the other front, was formed the Rejectionist faction who wants to establish the proletariat as a political and revolutionary party, which shall lead

the revolutionary movement in the country, based on the Marxist-Leninist ideology. The Rejectionist laments that an armed revolution is a necessary element of the working class struggle for emancipation. However, such armed revolution would not succeed if the working class did not possess a socialist consciousness. With a socialist consciousness, the proletariat shall lead the democratic battle toward socialism.⁷

The 3-Staged Strategy and Use of Violence and Terror

The communists view revolution as a stage-by-stage social process. Mao's strategy of a protracted people's war is looked upon by the CPP as revealed truth and has been carried out meticulously. Moving from stage to stage is allowed as the continuous shift in the balance of forces permit. The continuous shift marks the progressive narrowing down of the resources and manpower bases of the counterinsurgent forces.⁸ It is therefore a race for control of these bases between the insurgents and the counterstate. Unlike the government, the insurgent is willing to trade space for time, until shifting to the next stage will logically tip the balance of forces to their favor.

The three stages are strategic defensive, strategic stalemate and the strategic offensive. At the strategic defensive stage, the party, the guerillas, and the united front grow from small and weak to large and strong. It has two sub-stages which are the early sub-stage and the advanced sub-stage. The CPP-NPA today is believed to be near the advance sub-stage after the political apparatus developed and the NPA forces deployed and spread out to every region. In the advance sub-stage, guerilla warfare is well-established, political support is developed, the legal battle intensified for this purpose, and a sympathetic environment is fully developed in the countryside. At the strategic stalemate stage, the balance of forces is more or less even and the guerilla war becomes a

conspicuous tug of war over strategic towns, cities and large urban areas. Physical paralysis is reflected in the local and national decision makers. Finally, the strategic offensive stage is characterized by a government that has been profoundly weakened and completely isolated and forced to go on strategic defensive. This means the balance of forces has tilted in favor of the insurgents who have gained moral supremacy.⁹

To develop the fundamental change in the balance of forces entails not merely a contest of arms but also a contest of maximizing sympathizers. To the CPP, agitation-propaganda is the central activity, while fighting (at least during the early stage) is of secondary importance. Agitation-propaganda entails the twin effort of conducting ideological indoctrination and unifying the recipients around that ideology. It starts by poisoning the peoples' minds against the government and elite, agitating them, and organizing them for confrontation. This arouse, organize, and mobilize (AOM) strategy compensates for the CPP's inferiority of weapons, both in quality and quantity.¹⁰

The use of violence and terror is always associated with insurgency in varying degrees. To validate the primacy of the armed struggle, in early 1987 the NPA increased its attacks in Manila. The Alex Boncayao Brigade (ABB), a 200-member CPP assassination unit based in Metro Manila, claimed credit for most of the murders of policemen, soldiers, and local officials, including COL James Rowe of the Joint United States Military Advisory Group (JUSMAG)-Philippines.¹¹ The ABB warned of more attacks on abusive members of the military and police. As propaganda, the communists claim that they are meting out "revolutionary justice" for crimes and abuses that had not been redressed.¹² In the countryside, the CPP-NPA was also responsible for the liquidation of Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU) Active Auxiliaries

(CAAs) and government informants, which accounted for 64 percent of CPP-NPA terrorist activities in 2005 alone.¹³ Another form of terror the NPA used is the execution of cattle rustlers, rapists, arsonists, bandits and murderers. The local party would convene a people's court in plain view and with the participation of civilians. The local folks would point the accusing finger and the accused will defend himself. The party then dispenses justice swiftly. Punishment can vary from village arrest, exile, or payment for damages, to, in the case of grave crimes or "blood debts," the death penalty.

The CPP uses terror also to exact a revolutionary tax from individuals and businesses. Logging companies, bus companies, construction companies, haciendas, fish farms, shipping companies, and communication companies are favorite targets. Political candidates are also threatened if they do not pay campaign fees during elections. The NPA resorts to sabotage, arson, and execution if only to force uncooperative companies into giving in to their demands. From January to October 2005, the monitored amount extorted from business establishments increased by 374.8 per cent, but there was a notable decrease in the number of atrocities against business establishments. This may indicate a relative success in the terror tactic of the CPP-NPA to raise funds.¹⁴

Operational Analysis

Endstate. As was mentioned previously, the ultimate objective of the insurgents at the strategic level is the seizure of political power. But the seizure of power cannot be done overnight and should be done in stages to set the politico-military conditions for success. At the tactical level, the endstate is the simultaneous establishment of as many guerilla fronts as possible to surround the cities. This is to prevent the mobile guerilla forces from being encircled and provide them room to hop from zone to zone. This

enables the insurgents to shift, disperse, or concentrate their forces, depending on the level of response they get from the tactical units of the government.

Operational and Strategic Centers of Gravity (COG). At the onset of any insurgency, the forces of the government will always be superior militarily. In order to offset these superior resources of the government, many insurgent leaders stress the critical strategic role of popular support. In the words of Mao Tse-tung, “The richest source of power to wage war lies in the masses of the people.” Author Bernard Fall suggested that the evidence consolidated on insurgencies on three continents over three decades show that popular support is the essential element of successful guerilla operations. “It is acknowledged explicitly in government campaigns ‘to win the hearts and minds of the people’ and implicitly in the rule of thumb that governments need a favorable ten-to-one ratio of military forces to insurgents to subdue guerillas.”¹⁵

Conventionally, at the tactical level it is very difficult to pinpoint the enemy’s center of gravity, as it is also debatable if one exists at this level. But in a Maoist-inspired insurgency war, which calls for the encirclement of the cities from the countryside, there cannot be only one center of gravity. As the CPP-NPA establish their stable guerilla zones and guerilla bases around the cities, they would need the following conditions in order to survive: a sound mass base, a sound party organization, a fairly strong army, terrain favorable to military operations, and economic resources sufficient for sustenance.¹⁶ Within these conditions has emerged the Guerilla Front (GF), which is the politicomilitary geographical unit of the CPP-NPA. The GF’s political component is the Guerilla Front Committee (GFC or FC) headed by the Front Secretary. The military components vary in size and could be the Front Guerrilla Unit (FGU) or the Platoon

Guerilla (Plager). Within the military component is their “Sentro de Gravidad” (SDG) or, literally, center of gravity. The SDG serves as the rallying point of all other NPA units engaged in military and mass works in the guerilla front. The SDG is composed of a platoon-size or undersized platoon formation concentrated in a specific radius or area in the guerilla base conducting mass work.¹⁷ By experience, if the SDG is defeated, the Guerilla Front is dissolved; hence, it is the tactical center of gravity of a GF.

Lines of Operation. Political warfare is the CPP-NPA’s primary line of operation. This is expected because the ultimate goal of the movement is to wrestle political control from the state. This was made evident with its increased participation in the political exercise and the CPP-NPA has since managed to send fifteen sectoral representatives to Congress. Even at the Guerilla Front political officers run the show. Political warfare has to be the visible line of operation in order to preserve legitimacy in the eyes of the diplomatic and international community. But in order to advance their political effort it uses the United Front which is another line of operation. The UF orchestrates the arousal of the masses by opening their eyes wide to the negligence of the government with respect to basic services, addressing poverty, and other social issues. Arousal is systematically followed by the organization of these marginalized sectors into labor unions, leagues of students, alliances of government workers, drivers associations, farmers and fisher folk organizations, and activist clergy. The UF is, in fact, the dominant approach which can only become visible when mass mobilization is undertaken in the streets. Such is undertaken often in alliance with other civic and non-government organizations and could cause paralysis in the transportation, manufacturing, and other industries.

Violence as another line of operation is the only approach that involves tactical action. They undertake this in the countryside through the Guerilla Front. Although these are generally violent actions against weakly defended military and police outposts, poorly secured military convoys, or ill-conceived military tactical actions, the aim is still political. The idea is to project an image of dominance in the front territory. Often these actions are coupled with assassination of political leaders, government militia, intelligence agents, or businessmen who refuse to contribute to their revolutionary taxation. Terror is thus used to project a position of strength and force local leaders, politicians, and businessmen to negotiate. Locals would then perceive this violence as indicators of insurgent victory in the countryside, hence, victory for the movement in the psychological battle for the human terrain.

Culminating Point. As the government becomes more receptive to the people's grievances, more government services are provided to the masses. Projects that directly bear on poverty alleviation would be well received. As more roads and bridges are constructed, basic services are brought rapidly to the people who need them most. These translate to more income and more food on the table. When the populace feels these tangible improvements, they slowly cure the apathy and hatred the populace has for the government. They will again recognize the government as the legitimate authority in their villages and isolate themselves from the subversive advances of the CPP-NPA. Without popular support, the CPP-NPA will no longer serve as an alternative of the people to attain their basic needs for survival. If the CPP-NPA is unable to advance to the next sub stage of strategic defensive, the armed struggle will become less and less appealing to the masses. Protracted war will lose its appeal.

Operational reach, approach, and pauses in insurgency warfare are necessarily limited. This is because of insurgency's asymmetric nature. The NPA can be very cautious in its effort to gain tactical victories. As always, the requirement for a tactical offensive to be launched against a targeted government force should be an overwhelming number of insurgents. This makes tactical action difficult to execute as the larger the force, the easier it is seen by government intelligence agents. In the same fashion, not making any tactical move against government installations and targets will be perceived as weakness in the local insurgent front. A long lull in insurgent activity can also be interpreted as dissolution of the front in the area and will translate to reduced contribution to the party or no more revolutionary taxation.

Because of the NPA's inferiority to the AFP, tempo is everything to the insurgents. A climate conducive to an attack on a government installation or post will be determined by the amount of local popular support the NPA has, the influence the local military enjoys in an area, the efficiency of the local military in sanitizing an area through combat patrols and CMO, the effective control and coordination that exists among police and local military units, and possibly weather factors. If the insurgents misinterpret one of these factors, a tactical offensive may prove to be disastrous to them.

Decisive Points and Vulnerabilities

A decisive point in the Maoist-inspired insurgency is the shift in the forces that will tip the balance from strategic stalemate, if they attain it, to strategic offensive. At this stage, government forces take the strategic defensive stance as the CPP-NPA gains relative superiority over government forces. The NPA at this stage has reached the capability to launch large-scale offensive operations against government forces in the

cities and big camp fortifications. The NPA regular mobile forces have achieved the capability to strike and win decisive victories in urban centers, attack major military installations at will, and destroy the vestiges of the government.¹⁸

What proved to be a major vulnerability of the party after 1987 was its arbitrary recruitment in an effort to increase membership. During the regime of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos, as the party was heading to its peak, the CPP began a cleansing under a plan called “Cadena de Amor” which was prompted by fears that the CPP-NPA was infiltrated by government agents. Some of the movements best peasant leaders, youth, and community organizers were summarily executed in the self-purgation. By mid-1980’s, they called it “Operation Ahos” and it intensified until by 1988 it almost destroyed the party. Thousands were secretly buried in mass graves by the party and as a result hundreds more left the party. Those who chose to remain had to rectify the error and face the rage of families who had lost their loved ones.¹⁹

“Operation Ahos” and other “mistakes” of the CPP, such as the boycotting of the 1986 snap elections, as well as differences over strategies, contributed to the split of the communist movement and the birth of the Rejectionist faction in the early 1990s.²⁰ In that split, many were so demoralized that they quit and became military agents. This meant that one faction added to the vulnerability of the other. The fragmentation and disunity also resulted in one faction trying to discredit the others. In several occasions, especially in Central Luzon and Northern Quezon, factions actually fought to physically eliminate the others, as government troops made score and conducted pursuit operations. This had a tremendous negative effect on the recruitment of new guerrillas.

The availability of arms and ammunition has always been the problem of the NPA since ties with China and other foreign organizations was severed. Weapons and ammunition had to be sourced locally through gun runners and unscrupulous government soldiers who sold arms to augment their meager salary. Most of the arms, however, come from the loot during raids and attacks on weakly-defended police and military outposts. Some others come from politicians and rich businessmen who traded the arms for safety or security in the conduct of their businesses.

Money and funds, on the other hand, are easier to obtain. With extortion and revolutionary taxation, the insurgents are able to collect millions of pesos in funds. In some government projects being undertaken in insurgent areas, the amount of tax is normally a percentage of the total cost of the project. Come election time, politicians in critical areas are coerced to pay permit-to-campaign (PTC) taxes in order to allow them to campaign unhampered. With the recent declaration by the US of the CPP-NPA as a foreign terrorist organization (FTO), accounts of suspected front organizations channeling money to the party have been frozen, effectively minimizing and restraining foreign funds from further flowing to the movement.

Responses of Population and Society

The population's response to the insurgency in the Philippines can be varied depending on the sector of the society responding. The ruling elite and the oligarchy see insurgency as a menace to society and good order and a threat to their political and business interests. They want to maintain the status quo or better conditions under a democratic system. However, if the rural peace and order situation is so acute that open opposition to the CPP-NPA will have a disastrous impact on the business, politics, and

way of life of this elite, secret support becomes inevitable. This is especially true with elected politicians who choose to liaise with the insurgents to provide support to the underground rather than risk losing votes or their life for being openly unsupportive of the underground movement. The same is true with businessmen who would rather contribute to the revolutionary taxation than run the risk of getting their equipment and facilities burned down or their family's safety jeopardized.

The middle class response will depend on where they sit. When they are accessible to the agitation-propaganda schemes of the CPP in their work, school, church or business and they don't hear about the side of the government, the middle class tend to lean toward the support of movement. When they get too engrossed with the brainwashing and indoctrination of the left, they often become susceptible to advanced lectures as potential cadre. Because intellectuals comprise the middle class, they either jump to the cause of the movement or stay on course and become passive sympathizers of the democratic process. Today the majority of the Philippine middle class is generally unaffected by the insurgency, but are openly expressing disgust for the slow development and progress that the government has shown.

The peasants and the urban poor have a different situation. Insurgency thrives on the social and economic issues of the people that a government fails to address. Strong popular support is often seen in the countryside where government presence is least felt. The poorest sector of society often feels some hope with the presence of sweet-talking propagandists of the CPP-NPA. After so much government neglect, they see the movement as an alternative which may eventually provide them relief from the hardships they are experiencing. The failure of the government to improve their economic

conditions to a livable level is a perfect example of a democratic failure. On the other hand, the swift but unorthodox justice that the movement dispenses to redress grievances becomes very appealing to the poor, as the democratic justice system is normally slow and tedious, and is perceived to be biased toward the rich and moneyed.

At the United Front, the labor and workers sector usually find an ally in pushing for demands from employers through the union leadership, which is often infiltrated by the left. The same is true with the women, youth and student sectors, market vendors, drivers, and other marginalized sectors which have been infiltrated and possibly organized by the leftists on the pretext of advancing their cause. The church, although not totally sympathetic to the CPP-NPA, finds it easier to sympathize with the actions of the underground movement, as the government is slow in reacting and responding to the needs of their poor flock.

The split of the CPP-NPA into factions was seen as a major blow to the party in general. Although it may have contributed to the maturity of party leadership and possibly caused it to emerge stronger, factions can deteriorate and potentially lead to further fragmentation of the party. The split of the Reformist group from mainstream CPP also had the effect of polarizing senior party leadership as they went with the leaders they were more loyal to rather than the principles that these parties are advocating. Objectives may have also changed between these factions, but the ends it wants to achieve would be the same, to seize political power after subverting the government. Sharing of power between these factions may eventually be the only option, if and when the overthrow of democratic government is accomplished.

A critical perception about the CPP-NPA would be their ability to shift the balance of forces to a strategic stalemate and eventually strategic offensive given the pace of their revolutionary mass works. Many become impatient at the slow pace of a protracted war. Their popular support often wanes when the government makes substantive improvement in alleviating the living conditions in a selected priority area. Such is the case in former insurgent-controlled municipalities in Luzon and Visayas, where government action was widely accepted by the poor as a good step to economic recovery. These programs include rural electrification, health services, livelihood, farm-to-market roads and education. An effective information operation may also reverse attitudes of the former mass base, when people begin to understand that one of the major reasons for government inaction in their locality is the insurgency, which is blocking all kinds of improvement that is on its way.

The Rejectionist group, on the other hand, is seen as more active in the organization of cells among the urban poor and the working class in the cities. Response of their target audiences can be limited to rhetoric, as they are often believed to participate in rallies and mass actions. Recently, this audience is seen in political rallies organized by the opposition party to denounce the administration of President Arroyo as illegitimate. Interviews with these participants indicate, however, that most of them were just paid to attend these rallies and shout scripted chants.

Analysis

From 1987 to date, the CPP-NPA has managed to stick to their strategy of protracted warfare. Their number, however, has dwindled from 27,000 regulars to around 7,400. This decline can be traced to aggressive military actions and the mass executions

that they have done to their own kind in the hope of cleansing their ranks of suspected government agents who have infiltrated the organization. The executions caused extreme demoralization to the masses who could have been regulars already, and to most of the regular members themselves who found all kinds of alibis to come down from the hills and stay on lie-low status. Those massacres were well exploited by the government which triggered mass surrenders that, until now, still haunt the CPP every time their anniversary celebration is forthcoming.

Given the current strength of the NPA, the AFP has not abided by the doctrinally acceptable force ratio of at least 1:10,000 in favor of the government, if the ideal 1:20,000 is not attainable.²¹ This discounts the fact that most of the Army troops are concentrated in Mindanao, where the Muslim insurgency is being addressed. This effectively leaves a small portion of the Army to address the NPA. It follows that to dismantle the Plager is a remote possibility. It will take an extraordinary unit under officers of superb leadership, tactical prowess, and imagination to dismantle a front. To address the mass base, the Army needs even a bigger force.

Addressing the mass base will be a totally different approach. With limited troops available, there is still a great chance that the masses may be won. With the right approach, motivation, and systematic phasing of actions, popular support can be won to effectively isolate the NPA and render them irrelevant in this campaign. Winning the mass base will eventually result in actionable intelligence, which is extremely necessary to defeat the elusive armed group. Personal experience indicates that sustained interaction with the mass base by disciplined soldiers with good interpersonal and public relations skills will effectively isolate insurgents. Such action will force guerilla units to either

transfer to other areas for support, surrender to authorities, become inactive, or go on absence without official leave (AWOL), even before troops are able to launch offensive actions.

Aggressive government military campaigns have also contributed to the capture, surrender, and killing of regulars and the destruction of most of their once formidable bases deep in the jungles. These victories proved to be temporary since the NPA was able to reconstitute new units from new recruits and establish alternate bases. Most of these operations were led by former regulars who have rejoined mainstream society. The government can claim that most of these surrenders were precipitated by an effective AFP campaign plan which immersed Army and Air Force PSYOP units or Special Operations Teams in “influenced” villages for weeks, effectively eroding the trust of the people toward the insurgents. During the term of President Aquino, the presence of some left-leaning members in her cabinet encouraged some cadres to go down the hills to test the waters under the new administration. Eventually, these cadres who surfaced were integrated into the mainstream.

Popular support is hard to quantify, but CPP-NPA documents claim they have gained additional mass base support from the countryside. The slight rise in the insurgent strength from 1995 to date can be attributed to their massive recruitment, propaganda works, and their rectification program which enabled them to correct lessons learned in the past. Representation in Congress also bolstered their hope of gaining leverage over government right hand efforts. The improved economy in 1994 during the term of President Fidel V. Ramos contributed to the decrease in the number of recruits for the CPP-NPA. But as the social conditions of the people deteriorated during the Asian

financial crisis in 1998 many cadres and active supporters in the urban centers who found themselves jobless after plants and factories closed found relief in the hills. Some student activists, especially the poor whose parents can no longer sustain their education, decided to be more active in the armed confrontation rather than simply being campus activists and street parliamentarians. Most of these educated youth ended up as Political Officers or members of finance committees responsible for revolutionary taxation in the provinces.

The economic hardships were forcing the CPP-NPA to be steadfast on their dying ideology, even in places where they are already unwelcome. The large sums of easy money they are collecting from the farms, manufacturing plants, commercial establishments, businessmen, and politicians have become an indispensable reason for them to carry on despite the odds, resulting in many of them getting tipped off by the civilian populace. In short, the CPP-NPA has been reduced into being roving bandits in some areas where popular support for the movement is weak. Exposing their nefarious means to the public through an aggressive counterpropaganda and IO campaign will educate the people on the real motives of the insurgency, at least in some parts of the country.

Given these developments, it is noteworthy to review the position of the government in dealing with Joma Sison while in exile. So far, he is the sole provider of guidance, direction, and policies, without which the Party will severely weaken. The drive, authority, and resilience of the Central Committee emanates from him. Not one member of the central committee or Politburo is known to have a stronger clout than Sison. He can therefore be perceived as a strategic COG that if effectively neutralized or

isolated will help in the fast decay of the party. He is the tail rotor of a helicopter, the destruction of which will cause the Party to crash.

In conclusion, the CPP-NPA has generally followed the Maoist doctrine except for a minority faction who chose to follow the Marxist-Leninist model. They are considered to have maintained the early sub-stage of strategic defensive. In some parts of the country, they have attained the advance sub-stage but are far from attaining strategic stalemate. As the CPP-NPA reports an increase in the number of Guerilla Fronts in the countryside, the AFP refutes this by claiming some of these identified fronts as shell organizations. Overall, the guerrilla bases have remained relatively open and unsecured from government incursion although they have managed to maintain a significant, but vulnerable mass base. With a consistent pro-poor policy and extensive CMO, these mass bases will soon crumble and expose the political structure of the party in the grass roots and pave the way for effective combat operations.

Meanwhile, the Rejectionist factions have been further divided into nine other groups due to policy differences. It is hard to tell how they have fared in the urban campaign but their activities were non-violent. They have managed to orchestrate strikes which were not as crippling as they intended them to be. As far as their strategy of urban terrorism is concerned, they have so far kept silent after the killing of a former Central Committee member. There is a strong potential for this faction because of the growing population of the urban poor and the unhampered migration of urban squatters in Metro Manila. These marginalized sectors of the community are perfect sources for street mobilization and possibly armed confrontation if left unchecked. In fact, the NDF appears to be gaining in the political battle that they are waging in Congress, with a

growing number of sectoral representations among workers and unions, women, youth, and other marginalized sectors mostly concentrated in urban centers.

¹Gregg R Jones, *Red Revolution: Inside the Philippine Guerilla Movement* (Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1989), 8.

²ISG PA, *Knowing the Enemy* (Makati City: Intelligence School, 2001), I-8.

³Bard O'Neill, *Insurgency and Warfare, Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare* (Virginia: Brassey's, Inc., 1990), 18.

⁴ISG PA, I-39.

⁵AFP, *Assessment for 3rd Qtr 2005* (Quezon City: AFP, 17 October 2005).

⁶ISG PA, I-5.

⁷Ibid., I-11.

⁸Ibid., I-51.

⁹Ibid., I-53.

¹⁰Ibid., I-65.

¹¹Jones, 247.

¹²David G. Timberman, *Changeless Land, Continuity and Change in Philippine Politics* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1991), 297.

¹³AFP, 5.

¹⁴Ibid., 6.

¹⁵O'Neill, 70.

¹⁶Mao Zedong, "The Struggle in the Chingkang Mountains," in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967).

¹⁷AFP, *Bantay Laya Supplemental Handbook* (Quezon City: VJ Graphic Arts, Inc., 2004), 25.

¹⁸Ibid., 12.

¹⁹Luige A. Del Puerto, "Memories of Purges Haunt Reds," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 26 December 2005, sec. A1.

²⁰Ibid., A16.

²¹Department of the Army, FMI 3-07.22, *Counterinsurgency Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2004), 1-3.

CHAPTER 5

COUNTERINSURGENCY

Governments can control their destiny because they are normally in an advantageous position during the initial stages of insurgency and due to their control of the instruments of coercion (i.e., the police and the military).¹ The Philippine government's response to the prevailing insurgency can be summed up in the National Internal Security Plan, although in principle this plan encompasses all matters that pertain to the overall security of the country. This chapter will focus only on those matters that concern the Maoist-inspired revolution of the CPP-NPA.

The Environment

Understanding the implications of the physical and human environment is a requisite for sound government response to the insurgency problem it is facing. In order to uncover the causes of insurgency and identify the obstacles to the implementation of government strategies, a meticulous and unbiased assessment of demography, social structure and values, economic trends, political culture, and the structure and performance of the political system is crucial.² On the physical side, the government must realize the vast expanse of rugged island terrain is often inaccessible to land vehicles due to the absence of road networks or the existence of roads of poor condition. These topographical and road conditions isolate remote areas from mainstream society and are potentially ideal for guerilla warfare. Poor lines of communications often are advantageous to insurgents because it prevents fast access of intelligence information to AFP units. Today, there is limited improvement that the government has introduced to

solve this problem on roads and communication, partly because limited budget is appropriated to the improvement of more important infrastructure in the developed urban areas. Often, the maintenance of these rural roads, particularly logging roads that cross rugged mountains, is left to the logging concession.

The human dimension is much harder to analyze and is often prone to biases. A quick look at the demographics of the Philippines reveals that it faces the serious problem of overpopulation. There are now 87 million Filipinos and it is growing at a rate of 2.36 percent a year,³ a growth that the government has not abated primarily because of conflict with the Church. While the government wants to curb overpopulation by artificial and natural means, the Roman Catholic Church opposes it by proposing only the natural method of family planning. The significant influence of the church on its flock has prevented national leadership from pursuing a stronger stance on the population issue.

The social stratum of the Filipino is another concern. The gap between the rich and the poor is growing each day, primarily because of the government's flawed socio-economic policies. The rich comprise only about 10 per cent of the population and these are the same people who run the government from Malacanang to the provincial and municipal level. The landed are often the elected members of Congress who would not initiate laws that might conflict with their business interests. It is, therefore, not a surprise that the Land Reform Program of the government cannot take off because the first to be affected are the landed elite in Congress who have to approve it.

To understand further the human milieu, we should examine the values of the Filipino people as a whole and how the government has responded to the social issues

taking these values into consideration. While acknowledging the inevitability of some change in culture and values, it is important to recognize and understand the enduring aspects as well. In the Philippines, these include the primacy of kinship, the influence of particularism and personalism, the importance of reciprocity and patron-client relations, the emphasis on smooth and interpersonal relations, and the effects of pervasive poverty on values and behavior. These values system in many ways affect national unity, government, and politics.⁴

The exclusiveness of the Filipino family, the importance of patron-client ties, and the strength of regional and linguistic affinities all contribute to a unique Filipino politics. Governance is highly personalistic and particularistic such that different rules may apply to different people, thus often undermining the concept of equality under the law. Most Filipinos believe that the decisions and events that shape their lives including voting, applying for permit or license, or entering into a business contract are determined more by particular individuals than by impersonal systems and institutions that are in place.⁵ Consequently, the smooth personal relations with people in power are critical, even within the military and police organization.

Personalization also tend to obscure the distinction between public and private resources, such that vehicles marked “for official use only” are normally used for personal errands. Political scientist Carl Lande has observed: “Often the distinction between government funds and private funds is not very clear. When a congressman proudly ‘gives’ a town a new chapel or bridge, few may know or care whether the money came from his own pocket or the government.”⁶ The intended effect is to make the people indebted to the particular congressman, the mayor who asked for the project, and

never the government where the funds came from. Particularism also reinforces the expectation that a friend or relative should be given preferential treatment. If one knows somebody in an office, he can interrupt a line waiting to be served, even without an appointment. All these have prevented the formation of national consensus on most issues affecting the lives of Filipinos and have hindered the development of a sense of national unity.⁷

According to Filipino historian Resil Mojares the Philippine political culture is a “culture of poverty.” He believes that “pervasive poverty causes a culture that occasions an immediate--instead of future--orientation, an interest in short term gains and benefits for oneself or one’s family or group, rather than one’s class or nation.”⁸ Poverty promotes a temporary, practical, and often conservative approach to life, just to make both ends meet. The poor must make a living however they can, even if it means infringement of laws or damaging the environment. They are also forced to seek shelter wherever they can find it, even if it means squatting on someone else’s property. Finally, in exchange for all the small personal favors they asked from the politicians, poverty has also forced the poor to relinquish their one source of collective leverage--their votes.”⁹

Civil Military Organization

Specifically tasked to address the communist insurgent threat is the Armed Forces of the Philippines which is a bureau of the Department of National Defense (DND) headed by the Secretary of National Defense (SND). The Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces is the President, who runs the military organization through the Chief of Staff, AFP. The SND oversees the implementation of the defense and security strategy by the Armed Forces in accordance with the National Internal Security Plan (NISP). The

NISP prescribes the general framework for National Security and provides policy guidelines for coordinating, integrating and accelerating the overall government response to overcome insurgency using the Strategy of Holistic Approach (SHA).¹⁰ In principle, the President holds all the power and resources necessary to maintain national sovereignty, including the defeat of an internal armed threat. This power is exercised through the DND, and complemented by such other agencies as the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Justice (DOJ), Health (DOH), Education (DepEd), Agriculture (DA), and Agrarian Reform (DAR), to deal with the socio-economic, psychosocial, informational and political aspect of the strategy.

Among others, the NISP provides for the coordinating structure at the local levels chaired by the local government executives (LGE) to serve as the nerve center for the collaborative planning, direction, supervision and implementation of government operations.¹¹ The civil military organization seems well structured to face the challenge but an assessment at the local level shows evident apprehension to support the plan due to political, economic, social and security concerns. The farther away the LGEs are from Malacanang, the more reluctant they become in the implementation of these programs. Politically, the local leaders do not think they will get anything from this program unless the President shows up to personally give favors. Such visits to a local leader also project an image of close ties to Malacanang, hence a better image to his constituents. The economic and social benefits of a program may not be felt immediately by the locals, hence the indifference. Finally, there is the threat of repercussions from the local

insurgents if too much cooperation by the LGE with the military is seen in the countryside.

Often there is also a conflict in the decision-making process between the senior military leader in the area, the lead convenor in the program, and the LGE, especially when dealing with program priorities. Integrated as they are, resolving differences in priorities would often depend on whose perspectives prevail. The LGE may be thinking of his political bailiwicks, the military of the enemy center of gravity, and the lead convenor where it will be more comfortable. Each will have its own agenda when they think of what or where to put up a project, often overriding the recommendation of the military in charge in the area.

The military organization, on the other hand, is not well-equipped and organized to carry out the task entirely. It has a robust General Headquarters (GHQ) which oversees the Philippine Army (PA), Philippine Navy (PN) and the Philippine Air Force (PAF). Under the GHQ are the tactical Area Commands namely: Northern Luzon Command (NOLCOM), Southern Luzon Command (SOLCOM), Central Command (CENTCOM), Western Command (WESTCOM), and the Southern Command (SOUTHCAM). Because the country is an archipelago of 7,104 islands, PA combat forces are spread thinly across the land in nine Infantry Divisions (ID), one Light Armor Brigade, and the Special Operations Command (SOCOM). The Philippine Navy's WWII vintage ships and a dozen new frigates and fast crafts are distributed to the different Area Commands to support operations. The PAF assets, or what is left of them, are also distributed to the different Area Commands to support the ground operations of the Army.

Counterinsurgency Plan

A careful analysis of Jose Maria Sison's statements during recent CPP anniversaries indicates that the strength of the NPA tactical units is still the Plager or guerrilla platoon. Joma Sison said that in every GF, the center of gravity is not more than 30 per cent of the regular fighters while the remaining 70 per cent or so are the squads dispersed to cover entire municipalities subdividing into armed propaganda teams.¹² The COG is a guerilla platoon within a guerilla front that carries a total force of around a company.¹³ While he identifies the Plager as the COG, he is also quite emphatic about the majority of his forces doing propaganda and mass work. The military tasks of defeating the insurgents at the tactical level, therefore, rely on the ability of the Armed Forces to locate, fix, and finish the Plager. If the Plager is destroyed, the Guerilla Front (GF) will collapse as the mass base will be rendered irrelevant or vice versa. The reverse can also be done by isolating the mass base and cutting the umbilical cord that nourishes the Plager. With a weakened Plager, it will be easier to neutralize it, one way or the other.

It is in the isolation of the mass base that the other components of the government are much needed. As was previously discussed, the social issues that continuously fuel the apathy and indifference of the people toward their government can only be addressed by showing a sincere effort in alleviating their sufferings. Goods need to flow to the villages, food is needed on the table, the sick need to be treated, electricity and clean water made available, and other basic necessities will have to be provided to answer the clamor of the impoverished. These are not military tasks and they can only be answered by the civil government, with the AFP's support. It will take a lot of political will to mobilize agencies concerned and to provide required funds. Such political action is the

only means to counter the enemy strategy of mass works to build more guerilla fronts. Such actions will be the only acceptable option to counter the insurgent strategy of expansion, capitalizing on government neglect on the needs of the people.

Decisions and Policies

The bureaucracy provides for a tedious process before any government program will be approved for implementation. This is because programs have corresponding fund requirements which, if not met, will only result in waste of time, money, and effort. Bureaucratic red tape is the usual cause in the delay of various services. Most of the time, even if the funding is already available, a litany of signatures will cause unnecessary delay causing undue burden to the implementing agencies. Efforts have been made to devolve some of the decision making process to make the agencies more responsive, but new problems occur. Often, this is related to the flow of funds, that one way or the other will have to pass through unscrupulous hands. Corruption affects the opportunists and manages to filter the actual amount of funds flowing down to the intended recipient.

In the military organization the decision making process is smooth, aided by the availability of staff officers who provide the commander a completed staff action before an issue is decided. The military decision making process (MDMP) is thorough enough to scrutinize the minute details of a plan before it is executed. After assessment, the commander makes the decision and executes it through his line units. At the lowest tactical level, the team is often led by a noncommissioned officer (NCO) who implements the commander's intent. But a commander of an area, division, or brigade often tends to make decisions based on what he thinks is necessary to improve his reputation with those above him. Subordination is very strong that some commanders will think twice before

implementing something effective and peculiar to his turf if this will run counter to what the boss wants. Even if he understands that winning the popular support is what it takes to cripple the enemy, chances are he will go for using military forces because substantial and tangible output is what the leadership wants to hear. Because commanders come and go, he can hardly wait for tangible results of an effective PSYOPS or IO campaign, which necessarily takes time.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) lay down the policies of a unit. This may vary according to the desires of the commander but often it is equalized when mission accomplishment becomes the end state. Rules of engagement (ROE) are standard for all units and are expected to be followed and imposed by combatant commands. The civilian government organization is also guided by its own set of rules that may differ in some way, but eventually set the foundation for action. In the Army, there are detrimental policies which tend to disrupt the accomplishment of tasks rather than help it to fruition. Commanders, for instance, can be relieved from position after a major debacle involving a subordinate unit two levels down regardless of whether he is just a few months in the position, especially if he has not exerted sufficient effort to manage the situation. Yet, he is not given ample time to learn and orient his area prior to assumption of command. Generally, a commander's term is fixed to a two-year period, unless there are sufficient reasons to extend his tour. Given that limited time frame and the extent of his area of responsibility, he is replaced just as he is about to become comfortable dealing with his enemy and mission relative to the terrain and the people.

Information Operations

The war to win the hearts and minds entail an intensive public information campaign using Information Operations (IO) strategies and approaches to create awareness and win the trust, confidence, and respect of the people. This includes PSYOP and other left-hand efforts (deeds) to isolate the insurgents from the population, thereby denying them the resources and intelligence.¹⁴ These efforts must be complemented with an integrated approach of counter-organizing to be more effective and lasting. Despite being an important tool to defeat insurgency, very few officers and commanders appreciate its utility. This goes back to the culture of officers preferring kinetic operations to non-kinetic means to defeat the enemy. The “body count syndrome” is so pervasive in the AFP that officers believe that if no enemy is captured or killed “good performance” will not be popular with their senior commanders. The leadership wants to see tangible parameters to mission success such that even if an area is cleared of insurgents, the populace won back, and development spurred these will likely be unappreciated. As it is, IO gets the least support logistically and in terms of personnel, which explains the apparent mismatch in the fight for the hearts and minds of the people.

Current Military Strategy

The current National Military Strategy (NMS) focuses on emerging external and internal national security concerns and adjusts the AFP strategy based on more realistic capability projections. It outlines the national military objectives, elements of strategy and strategic concepts, and the force requirements. Embodied in the strategy are the elements which are proactive posture, focus and contain, leverage alliances, and retool the force. Among the strategic concepts are strategic flexibility, asymmetric warfare,

comprehensive approach, and total force. To fulfill the requirements of and execute the Military Strategy, AFP forces must be multi-mission capable, interoperable, joint, and sustainable.¹⁵

The cornerstone of the AFP strategy can be summed up in the phrase “Focus and Contain,” which means concentrating AFP’s limited resources on a particular objective rather than spreading resources thinly without significant impact. Other threats shall be held to manageable levels until the AFP is able to redirect its resources toward other objectives or threats. Under the NMS, the focus of Internal Security Operations (ISO) is directed toward the Abu Sayaff Group (ASG), while the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the New Peoples Army (NPA) threats are contained. This is due to the tremendous impact of the terrorist activities perpetrated by the ASG on the country in general.¹⁶

NISP further prescribes the operational methodology of Clear-Hold-Consolidate-Develop (C-H-C-D) which defines the functions of different government agencies in addressing insurgency. The Clearing and Holding Stages are the responsibility of the DND-AFP and the Department of Interior and Local Government--Philippine National Police (DILG-PNP) while the latter stages are where civil government agencies step in.¹⁷

AFP ISO Plan “Bantay-Laya.” The current AFP ISO Plan “Bantay-Laya” is a five-year plan that will guide the actions of the AFP from CY 2002 until the end of CY 2006. Among “Bantay-Laya’s” guiding strategic principles are the Strategy of Holistic Approach, Strategy of Win-Hold-Win, and the Strategy of Sustained Operations. Also integral to the plan are strategic precepts of the “Lambat-Bitag” series such as Rapid Conclusion, Gradual Constriction, One-on-One, and Keyhole Approach, among others.

These strategic principles would be implemented through the operational concepts of Clear-Hold-Support (CHS), the Special Operations Team (SOT) Doctrine and the Integrated Territorial Defense System (ITDS).¹⁸

The Strategic Principle of Win-Hold-Win (WHW) focuses combat power on WIN against the identified principal threat group while employing an economy of force to HOLD and contain the lower priority threats. After fighting to win against a targeted priority threat, forces will be shifted to concentrate combat power on the next targeted priority threat. Adoption of this campaign strategy involves the acceptance of risks in lower priority threat areas.¹⁹ The concept of WHW takes into consideration the limited capability and resources of the military. Despite this, the concept accepts that the AFP must confront all the threat groups in the operational area, but cannot effectively address the three threat groups simultaneously at same levels of intensity; hence, there is a need to prioritize where the resources and effort will be focused to produce the most desirable result.²⁰

The WHW concept states that the military should focus on one threat or, at the operational level, one priority target at a time. Since there are many targets, there must be a sequence of priorities. The change from WIN posture to HOLD posture must be planned and synchronized. WHW can be rendered useless by unnecessary shifts in priority focus. This will happen when a shift in priority is done before the units on the ground are able to finish the enemy at the WIN posture areas.²¹

Under the HOLD posture, the following operational conditions must be considered:

- 1) The objectives must be to deter and contain the CTM and other threats in designated Hold areas, prevent their expansion, and prevent or reduce their atrocities in the areas.
- 2) The ISO Plan provides that the AFP through the Area Commands shall focus combat power in designated WIN areas against the identified principal threat group.²²

The operational concept in HOLD posture calls for an aggressive area defense which shall be conducted through the application of the combination of the CHS and MAT (Maneuver and Territorial forces utilization) concepts. In the conduct of MAT, it is expected for a task unit to reorganize its unit, rationalize its deployment, strike when it warrants and continuously review/ assess the security situation and operational capability. With further employment of the principle of economy of force, the commander must retain his tactical reserve units as striking forces, delineate unit(s) for territorial purposes and intensify and strengthen its intelligence and CMO operations and capabilities.²³

In the CHS methodology the AFP employs mobile forces to CLEAR insurgency – affected areas of the armed groups and dismantle the insurgent politico-military structures. The HOLD stage involves the utilization of territorial forces to secure cleared areas to allow the other agencies of the government to pursue consolidation and development activities. The AFP shall SUPPORT these efforts of the civil government agencies to address the root causes of the conflict.²⁴

Key Groups. The identification of the major parties to the solution of the problem is as important as the plan itself. Missing one of the key links to the completion of the strategy may lead to an incomplete formula or temporary victory. The importance of the Local Government Unit (LGU) cannot be disregarded in the campaign strategy. After all, its constituents will be affected. For the most part, its active participation in the

counterinsurgency effort will be the unifying signal to rally the people behind the government action. The success of the COIN will, in the long run, spur development of the municipality or province.

The Church is a nongovernment player but it is considered key. The role of the church in the growth of radicalism cannot be denied. Their influence in the mindset of the local parishioners will greatly shape the attitude of the people toward government programs, whether related or not to the eradication of insurgency. While it is true that the church believes it has an obligation to be concerned with the plight of the poor, the enlightenment of the soul is far more helpful to the common tao than engaging them to turn against the government for its negligence. The church, if ever, can only provide so much if they will be involved in the nourishment of the physical being of its flock. The government, in the end, is the one responsible for and capable of taking care of the needs of the poor. That being the case, the church, if handled appropriately, can be a catalyst for change, particularly on the aspect of birth control and radicalism. This has not been the case in the Philippines.

Managing the local media, although another nongovernment entity, is as important as handling the clergy. Because of their power to shape public opinion, a good rapport with the fourth estate will be crucial to the total effort. Although sometimes they become a security risk, in general they are a big plus. Providing the media constant feedback on what is going on in the campaign to win the hearts and minds of the people will keep them from guessing and possibly destroying the plan. It encourages them to think they are a vital part of the campaign, thus begin to feel responsible for their actions.

Unfortunately, the Public Affairs component of the AFP has not fully taken advantage of this significant role of the media.

The nongovernment organizations (NGOs) also play a big role in connecting with the people. Most of the NGOs have established linkages with the local people already and they can provide the impetus in providing neutral machinery to connect with the populace. Although there could be unsympathetic NGOs who are often used as front of the CPP, most of the NGOs can be relied upon as partners in their advocacy. The AFP has maximized coordination with available NGOs, but in some instances front organizations manage to provide the enemy intelligence and needed logistics in the process. NGO support to these insurgents can be as varied as providing medical attention to wounded rebels, transportation, or sometimes diversionary activities to ease pressure from government forces. This down side is mitigated by a strong collaborative effort with a lead agency, especially during natural calamities and disasters. They fill the gaps where government agencies have shortfalls.

Population and Resource Control Measures. Population and resource control operations deny support and assistance to the CTM by controlling the movement of people, information, and goods. Though an important method in counterinsurgency, it has a very high potential for harm if used excessively or incorrectly. Normally, the Philippine National Police (PNP) conduct PRC operations with the AFP providing support. In remote areas, however, it is the military which enforces PRC measures. PRC measures may include: curfews, travel restrictions, excluded or limited access areas, declaration of selected items or quantities of items (weapons or fuel) as contraband, and checkpoints, searches and surveillance.²⁵

Resource control, including hamleting, was widely used in Vietnam by US troops. In the Philippines it was also used intensively during Martial Law years and it hurt the insurgents. However, abuses were committed by the government troops which became an issue for Human Rights Internationale and other left-leaning human rights advocates who fought for the return of the peasants to their farms without restrictions where they can be of use to the insurgents.

Key Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures. Protracted warfare envisions that the longer the war is allowed to drag on, the stronger the insurgents will be, and the more difficult it will be for the AFP to strategically defeat the enemy. If the AFP is to win the war, it must strive to do so in the shortest possible time. The concept of Rapid Conclusion, which is the opposite concept of protracted warfare, aims for the quick termination of the insurgency war using major AFP resources in a concerted and deliberate effort to deprive the CT of more time to further expand and strengthen its forces and guerilla fronts. It is through successive decisive engagements that the military can effectively defeat the enemy center of gravity.²⁶ This Rapid Conclusion concept, however, is prone to misinterpretation because tactical leaders fail to recognize it as a strategic and operational concept. Government forces and tactical leaders interpret it as massive combat operations given a particular period of time, rather than a systematic intelligence gathering effort, followed by combat operations when actionable intelligence is obtained. Time is relative and the “shortest possible time” referred here is not supposed to mean during a commander’s term of two years or even less. It can be four or more years, as long the effect desired is attained permanently the defeat of the enemy once and for all.

The Gradual Constriction Strategy, as the name implies, gradually constricts the targeted guerilla fronts by progressively organizing the enemy-affected *barangays* “in reverse” starting from the outskirts of the guerilla front and moving slowly toward the central district of the given front. This is coupled with a conscious effort to seek decisive engagements at every opportune moment by concentration of forces and encircling tactics (area ambush) whenever and wherever the main enemy force in a given front is located.²⁷ Because it is gradual, moves are calculated to avoid enemy ambushes and harassment. This asserts the value of an appropriate time line at the tactical level, which is not in contrast to the Rapid Conclusion concept at the operational and strategic level.

The Key Hole Approach is used when the task unit has enough forces, and the task unit commander, based on his assessment, may station one of his mobile battalions to sit right in the central district of the enemy front to serve as the unit strike force and disrupt enemy activities in the central district and threaten his rear. This has been tried and found effective by some AFP units. In doing so, however, the commander must insure the lines of communication of this force sitting in the central district are secured by liberating the affected *barangay* along the route and that the force remains relatively intact to avoid being defeated piecemeal.²⁸ This technique is most applicable if the unit has systematically gathered enough intelligence and support from the mass base at the MSR and LOCs which enable him to follow the enemy wherever it goes. Otherwise, the battalion sits on terrain and achieves nothing because the enemy has side-stepped and is just waiting for him to get bored and leave.

Based on the AFP ISO Plan Bantay-Laya, the main weapon system of the ISO against the threat groups, particularly the CPP-NPA, shall be the Special Operations

Team (SOT) doctrine involving the triad application of combat, intelligence, and psychological operations. The SOT frees the affected *barangays* that constitute the CT guerilla base and the whole guerilla zone from CTM influence. The SOT does this by dismantling the mass base political structure developed by the Plager at the *barangay* level by immersing for a month or more in the village, that is, eating, sleeping, and living with the people. While immersed the team conducts social investigation and class analysis (SICA), area study, face-to-face dialogue, offensive PSYOPS and extensive public information seminars with the people. It targets contiguous and related affected *barangays* of one GF. If there are immediate concerns and low-cost-high-impact projects that the team can perform they are undertaken.²⁹

In 2002, when the AFP aggressively pursued the clearing of affected *barangays* in priority areas through the massive conduct of SOT, it was able to dismantle a guerilla front as direct result. During the 1st and 2nd semester of same year, the CTM strength declined by 16 percent and 7 percent respectively. This was in contrast to the steady growth of the movement for seven years starting 1995. This data and the reversal of trends confirm the fact that the key to the victory against the CTM is the clearing of affected *barangays* which are the CPP-NPA structure basic building block.³⁰

One downside of this strategy is that the SOT team is often not organic to a unit that has jurisdiction over the area. Therefore, the people have reservations because they know the team will eventually leave. The host unit has limited interaction with the people because the SOT team is the main actor here, the latter being merely its security and left-behind force. Understanding the culture of the Filipino, it takes an individual to trust an individual or, conversely, the community to trust that same unit. That trust has to be

earned by him and this cannot be transferred to the left-behind forces unless they are actively involved in the effort. When the SOT leaves and moves to another area, the connection is disrupted and possibly lost. The effort is thus wasted.

Efforts in Security, Balanced Development, Mobilization, Neutralization. To enhance the security posture of the Armed Forces, the Philippine Army recently created an additional Infantry Division to attend to the security concerns of the Bicol Region in Southern Luzon. This freed the 2nd Infantry Division in the area to concentrate on Southern Tagalog, which is the more critical region owing to its proximity with the seat of government. The AFP has recently converted some elements of the Philippine Air Force manning bases and less important facilities into Special Operations Wings (Infantry) to complement the Army forces in less critical areas around Manila. This has freed some Army Infantry Brigades around Manila to concentrate on more active guerilla zones. Overall, the Army is still small to confront the threat, even if all of them concentrate just on the CPP-NPA.

The strength of the CAFGU has also been reduced since 1993 and this has contributed to the increase in the strength of the CPP-NPA. The CAFGU acts as territorial forces and is composed of paramilitary forces trained and equipped by the AFP. They are part-time soldiers controlled and commanded by cadre battalions, and are placed OPCON to the brigades in the area. The reduction in their strength also reduced the number of detachments providing security to recovered *barangays* and has eased the pressure on the NPA in the area.

The Philippine National Police, while being mandated to secure the urban areas, has also maintained Provincial Mobile Groups (PMG) to assist local PNP in securing its

stations or pursuing smaller bands of insurgents. In most instances, the PNP mobile groups are also utilized to complement government operations by providing intelligence, establishing check points and road blocks, or some form of population resource control. The PNP maintains the peace and order in the towns, but is always undermanned to perform their job to the remotest communities. They rely on the local Army forces in the area if the villages are too critical for them to handle during crime investigations and similar functions. As a result, not all crimes reported by the people are acted on with dispatch. In some areas, the proliferation of illegal numbers game (popularly called *jueteng*) become the bread and butter of local PNP and LGEs and solving crimes becomes secondary. This is often the cause of the people's gripes which lead some to try other avenues to resolve issues, like the party's kangaroo court. In many instances, the corruption and involvement of the PNP and the Mayors in the illegal gambling become the best propaganda technique of the CPP-NPA in using terror and assassination against these errant officials.

In its effort to bring more goods to the insurgency-affected *barangays*, the Office of the President, through the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), has mobilized the *Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan-Comprehensive Delivery of Social Services* (KALAHI-CIDSS) Caravan to get the acts of government agencies together. The KALAHI, through a CORE team, identifies the priority areas depending on the degree of affectation as assessed by the military area command. After a series of coordination meetings, they decide what projects are supportable and which of the priority areas will be addressed first. KALAHI has gained acceptance in target communities because it provides opportunities for people's participation in the identification, development,

implementation, operation, and maintenance of projects.³¹ By far this is the most effective high impact program that the civilian government is able to provide to assist the AFP's CHS methodology. Although the AFP simply has the support role here, their presence in the community identifies these projects as government initiated and is viewed positively as government in action. It lends credibility to the Army's promise of support after their Clear-Hold efforts in the hills. High impact projects brought by KALAHAI to the community include socialized housing, road improvement, bridge construction, school buildings, irrigation, electrification, or water system. Because the Office of the President provides the support through the Presidential Social Funds supplemented by resources from the World Bank, fund release and availability is fast. The problem is that it is limited and may frustrate some who are not immediately benefited.

Operational Analysis

Organizational COG. A key component of the national military strategy is the national leadership itself, the Office of the President (OP) through National Anti-Poverty Commission. NAPC is responsible for orchestrating and integrating the activities of all the other agencies to make sure they are congruent with the political objective of eliminating the cause of the threat to a stable environment for progress--poverty. Most importantly, it is responsible for making sure that these concerns are given priority for funding from the OP, without waiting for the cumbersome process of legislation. A political solution, therefore, is appropriate to back up the right hand effort of the military, without which any search and destroy operation by the AFP will be an exercise in futility. As the strategic COG, the Commission cannot fail in supporting the programs of the AFP and its collaborators in the other agencies.

It is almost impossible to eradicate the insurgents and erode the support of its popular base in a lump sum. The destruction of the party can only be done piecemeal through a systematic neutralization of its Guerilla Fronts (GF). The strength of the AFP strategy, therefore, relies on the ability of the tactical brigades to array its forces to meet the challenge of locating, fixing and destroying the Plager. The brigade is necessary to address a priority guerilla front because of the extremely fluid insurgent formations, relative to the terrain that it thrives in. The typical guerilla zone is normally so wide that a battalion will not be sufficient to accomplish the task. The tactical brigade can orchestrate the activities in its area, utilizing all his battalions to complement each other. This makes the brigades central to this effort. It is therefore logical to push majority of the support from the Division down to this level.

Lines of Operation. In terms of purpose, political lines of operation can be defined with the close collaboration of the Commission and the tactical brigade in the area in pushing for the necessary implements to progress as the Army moves to constrict the guerillas in a given front. It will be a critical capability that needs to be established if only to destroy an entire GF once and for all, within a given time frame. With the involvement of the Local Government Units (LGUs) in the priority area, legitimacy of the political institution will be reestablished. It will fill the vacuum that may have been created with the absence of the government in a locality. The Barangay Council must once again exist to challenge the Barrio Revolutionary Committee (BRC) created by the communist party.

As for security, the local police and the territorial forces represented by the Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Units (CAFGU) must be able to establish the necessary police-military stations and outposts to keep the lines of communications

secured and unhampered. An atmosphere of peace will lead to the regular flow of trade to and from the countryside. As disciplined territorial forces become more acceptable vanguards of the community, trust and confidence buildup. Their legitimacy is confirmed as the community ensures that irregular activities are reported and acted upon by the authorities. In terms of space, the insurgent's freedom of maneuver will be greatly hampered, and their guerilla bases will be very vulnerable.

While government activities can be seen by the people as they go on, Information Operations need to complement the effort by letting them hear and know more about it. This is important to open the minds of the brainwashed mass base and enable them to look forward to the brighter side of life. People need to understand the problems of the government with regard the limited resources it has at its disposal to address all their woes at once. Reassuring the locals that a temporary setback can only be achieved with their total and absolute cooperation will be a good starting point. The government's sincere efforts have to be communicated to the most needy and impatient, in order for them to hang on. In this effort, it is necessary to reach out to the clergy, who are equally important in convincing the people of the government's commitment to serve. An effective propaganda war will be able to connect the political objectives with the military objectives and achieve unity of effort among the players.

Decisive Points (DPs). There could be numerous DPs in an irregular campaign against the CPP-NPA but the most important is fixing the Plager. This elusive entity knows the space and terrain by heart, but is vulnerable when the popular support is taken away from them. This leaves them the option to engage or transfer to another GF if the situation warrants. Just the same, transferring to an unfamiliar terrain leaves them

vulnerable to government attacks. Figures indicate that in 2001, even when the AFP has managed to finally arrest the increase of the CTM strength, it has managed to engage the enemy 818 times after 371,773 operations of various unit sizes. This translates to a Tactical Engagement Ratio of 1:453. During the next year the ratio was 1:596 compared to 2005 which was 1:549.³² This reflects a clear failure of intelligence and non appreciation of the mass base and popular support as an important tool to locate and destroy the Plager and other units of the NPA.

The return of the people's confidence on their legitimate government will be critical in the location of the Plager and their isolation from the mass base. Key to attaining this is the ability of the mobile units to touch base with the community. It involves an honest effort of establishing a regular link with the common tao, when he wakes up, while he is having coffee, just before he goes to the farm, and when he returns from work. A sustained effort to dialogue with the people becomes a habit for both participants, until the soldier becomes an extension of the family, which is in keeping with the Filipino culture. Extending their stay for weeks and months binds these relationships until the unit becomes an integral part of the *barangay*. The trust built in the process reinforces the gains achieved in information operations and concretized by the flow of low-cost if not immediately the big high-impact projects available through KALAHI or local government. This will result in the collapse of the politico-military structure of the party in the villages. Once accomplished, locating the armed groups in the villages, including possibly the Plager will be the easier task.

The availability of projects that will greatly impact on the lives of the poor people in the villages or *barangays* will make moral recovery easier, that is to say convincing the

people of the government's commitment to help will take more than lip service.

Substantial and tangible works need to be laid down to the table initially. Whether the effects of these programs will be felt by the people in the short or long term will only serve to strengthen further the resolve of the government to address legitimate grievances. In the end, solving these social and economic issues will render the Plager, specifically, and the party in general, irrelevant.

Culmination Point. To the insurgents, the destruction of the Plager will lead to their culmination. This almost happened in 1995 when the government neutralized a substantial number of the CPP-NPA guerilla fronts. But after 1995, the enemy strength slowly began to rise again indicating that the government was not able to sustain its COIN strategy. Will this indicate that the AFP campaign has come to its culmination instead? An analysis of the situation will show that the government response to the insurgency will culminate only when the civil authority has been subverted by the CPP and the national leaders have ceased to effectively dispense with their powers and authority. This translates to reduced funds for defense, lack of support to keep the military machinery running, by the non-replacement of government personnel and equipment lost in combat, or possibly reduction of AFP strength to a negligible number. In the balance of forces, this means that the enemy has attained the strategic offensive.

At the operational and tactical level, their culmination will be indicated by a series of defeats in CPP-NPA-initiated attacks against government and military posts. This happens when there is total breakdown and demoralization in the military hierarchy, aggravated by the top leadership's inaction on the security problem. This gives the signal to the populace that the government has given up the fight. This is also an indication that

popular support has been regained by the insurgents that harassing or attacking government installations becomes an easy task, leaving the AFP with no option but to shift to defensive mode.

External Support

It must be recalled that with the pull-out of the US bases in Subic Bay and Clark Airfield in 1990, a significant amount of support from Washington to the Philippine government has been lost. Support then included Foreign Military Sales (FMS), including International Military Education and Training (IMET) and other critical projects worth about US\$ 200 million annually, which the AFP heavily depended on.³³ This resulted to the deterioration of AFP equipment and facilities which the AFP Modernization Fund has not fully compensated with. Even with the signing of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) in 1998, the absence of or limited external support has been detrimental to the AFP. After the September 11 (9-11) incident, however, things have improved a little. Substantial financial aid has been released to the AFP to refurbish and retool its forces. While the majority of the US support was focused on the elimination of the Abu Sayaff Group and Jemah Islamiya cells in the country, much was gained in the form of training conventional and unconventional forces in unconventional methods.

The VFA also afforded the US government some degree of influence on government policy makers as to the manner the latter was handling the COIN campaign. This has resulted to a significant change in the attitude of agencies involved in the effort. Along with the willingness and cooperation of local leaders to host bilateral exercises in their turf came projects, such as construction of highways, airports, seaports, school buildings, and hospitals. These projects have been so successful that cooperation of locals

has been manifested with the voluntary and continuous flow of intelligence relative to the threat groups in the area. Subsequent military actions eventually resulted to the neutralization of some of these insurgents, while the rest of those who survived tried to find new havens.

The availability of technical support is another aspect provided by the US government. While most of these are highly confidential, it can be said that without the technology provided by the US government, much of the tactical and strategic gains of the AFP may not have been achieved. One manifestation of the positive impact to the threat group of support from Washington is the increased rallies of the CPP-NDF denouncing the militarization of the Arroyo government and its alleged pro-US imperialist stance.

Analysis

While it can be said that the government response to the insurgency from 1986 to present showed significant progress in dismantling a number of guerilla fronts, capture or killing of thousands of Red fighters, neutralization of many of its national leaders, and recovery of many of its mass bases, indicators were consistent in showing the reversal of the trend. The recent raid on a provincial jail by the NPA to free captured comrades,³⁴ for instance, is just but one indication that they have become bolder in their offensive action, even in the suburban areas. An increase in the amount of funds collected from revolutionary taxation,³⁵ also indicate that although there were less enemy armed formations sighted in many areas, their party machinery has been active and effective in harassing and coercing businessmen, commercial establishments, or even government contractors in giving portion of their income to the movement. It reflects the inefficiency

of the government and AFP to establish an environment that is safe and conducive for development and progress. It demonstrates the capability of the CPP-NPA for tactical offensive in some areas if measures are taken by local police and military units are inadequate to pre-empt such moves.

While progress has been made to change this perception of the people in most areas, some other areas suffer with the absence of forces, thus forcing people to co-exist peacefully with the CPP-NPA. With no one to turn to for help or protection, people are forced to feed the insurgents visiting them, hoping that the day will not come when they will be caught in the crossfire when government operations has shifted to their locality. This means that the strategy to HOLD in some localities, must be calculated properly so as not to unduly put the people in these areas at risk and prone to the dangerous advances of the CPP-NPA. Enemy influence must be mitigated by a decent force to assess carefully the situation of these areas, and if need be, shift some forces to disrupt insurgent plan, even on a temporary basis.

The KALAHI-CIDSS Caravan is an effective means to fast track government action to areas the military believes to be a priority. This puts on the side the political interests of local government leaders who tend to give priority to areas they believe they are weak politically. This strategy of convergence of the different agencies of the government is a good propaganda tool in itself to project the unity, solidarity, and team work of the government in their effort to deliver services where it is needed most. Some fine tuning will have to be done, though, to further reduce bureaucratic time necessary for release of funds to sequence projects. The AFP must focus its effort to complement KALAHI-CIDSS program by optimizing its SOT potential, rather than devoting much of

its resources on tactical actions. In keeping with what its strategy says, it should convert more of its battalions into SOT-capable units and make SOT truly its primary tool to defeat insurgency.

Making the CPP-NPA the secondary priority to the Abu Sayaff Group is faulty considering the extent of influence the latter group is causing. The CPP-NPA is nationwide in scope and poses a serious threat to the security and stability of the nation as against the Abu Sayaff which is localized and may not have the capacity to inflict permanent damage to the nation's security. Although the Abu Sayaff is a dangerous group because of its connection with the Jemaah Islamiya and the internationally networked Al Qaeda, the economic impact of its activities can be considered short term. Addressing the CPP-NPA should take precedence over the ASG even if the US government's interest on it is only secondary. After all, espousing hatred and radical anti-imperialist thought has been in the CPP's agenda even before 9-11.

This chapter discussed how culture has played a dominant factor in the stagnation of economic growth of the country. To answer one of the tertiary questions in Chapter 1 if there is a cultural characteristic in the AFP leadership and organizational ethics that has affected the way it handles insurgency, there is. Personalistic and particularistic tendencies which very much govern the Filipino work ethic have transcended to the military organization. The "entourage syndrome" prevalent in the AFP is an indication. It is customary to find junior officers working as personal staff of senior commanders for extended period like ten years, sometimes even until the boss retires. They become beholden to the boss and are often reciprocated by opportunities like schooling abroad, assignment of quarters, and other perks not available to "outsiders." In fund allocations, it

has also been a practice for commanders to give away funds personally to subordinate commanders during visits, as troop enhancement support, rather than making those funds readily available directly to the units after a Program Planning and Budget System. The same personal favor is shown when individual solicitation for financial assistance or golf tournament donations are preferred to mission-essential requests like unit transport or medical kits. Even in the investigation of cases personal gratitude and patron-client relations often stymies the process and leniency is afforded the accused. Over all, cultural and value orientations has allowed policies, rules, and regulations to be circumvented to the detriment of good order and discipline.

Finally, analyzing the government lines of operation reveals the fact that it is not congruent with that of the CPP-NPA. The national security strategy devotes much of its effort on military operations as they are guided by strategic principles of holistic approach, win-hold-win, and sustained operations. With limited troops, the effort is doomed and would naturally be aimed at managing the insurgency, rather than defeating it. The strategy speaks of SOT as the main weapon to address the insurgent politico-military structure but in reality this teams comprise only 6 percent of the total strength of an Infantry Division. It means 94 percent of combat troops are addressing the violent line of operation of the enemy while only 6 percent deals with political warfare, the United Front and mass mobilization. Even by factoring in portions of troops involved in KALAHI-CIDSS and those involved in IO line of operation, it is still a measly percentage for the over all political war effort. So, to answer the question whether the COIN strategy of the AFP is being followed, it is not

¹Bard O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare* (Virginia: Brassey's, Inc., 1990), 125.

²*Ibid.*, 133.

³Population Commission, Demographic and Socio-Economic Indicator System, [documents on-line] available from <http://www.popcom.gov.ph/dseis.html>; Internet; accessed on 7 Mar 2006.

⁴David G Timberman, *A Changeless Land, Continuity and Change in Philippine Politics* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1991), 16-23.

⁵*Ibid.*, 22.

⁶Carl Lande, *Leaders, Factions, and Parties: The Structure of Philippine Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies Program, 1965), 80, quoted in David G Timberman, *A Changeless Land, Continuity and Change in Philippine Politics* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1991), 22.

⁷Timberman, 23.

⁸Resil Mojares, *The Man Who Would be President: Sergio Osmena and Philippine Politics* (Cebu: Maria Cacao Publishers, 1986), 159, quoted in David G Timberman, *A Changeless Land, Continuity and Change in Philippine Politics* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1991), 20.

⁹Timberman, 21.

¹⁰AFP, *Bantay Laya Supplemental Handbook* (Quezon City: VJ Graphic Arts, 2004), 55.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 56.

¹²Message of Jose Ma. Sison, 27th CPP Anniversary 26 December 1995 entitled "Celebrate 27 Years of Revolutionary Struggle, Strive All-out to Fulfill the Tasks Set for 1996," 5.

¹³Jose Ma. Sison, "The Revolution Surges Forward," 29th CPP Anniversary, 26 December 1996 [article on-line]; available from <http://www.philippinerevolution.org/cgi-bin/cpp/pdocs>; Internet; accessed on 4 October 2005.

¹⁴AFP, 102.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁷Ibid., 56.

¹⁸Ibid., 58.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., 59.

²¹Ibid., 60.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., 61.

²⁴Ibid., 63.

²⁵Ibid., 102.

²⁶Ibid., 68.

²⁷Ibid., 69.

²⁸Ibid., 79.

²⁹Ibid., 64.

³⁰AFP ISO Operational Assessment for CY 2002, 6.

³¹Adopting KALAHY-CIDSS Makes Better Politics [article on-line]; available from <http://www.gov.ph/news>; Internet; accessed on 13 September 2005.

³²AFP ISO Operational Assessment for CY 2002, 11.

³³Anthony Spaeth and Sally B. Donnelly, "Under the Gun the Philippine military is fighting low morale, poor equipment and stubborn militants. That's a problem not just for the nation but for the entire region," *Time International* 165, no. 18 (9 May 2005): 16 [article on-line]; available from <http://www.proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=840616131&sid=2&Fmt=3&clientId=5094&RQT=309&VName=PQD>; Internet; accessed on 10 May 2006.

³⁴*Philippine Times* 2, no 11 (January 2006) [newspaper on-line] available from <http://www.PhilippineTimes.com>; Internet; accessed on 15 January 2006.

³⁵OJ2, ISG report.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

DImE with a Small m

Several lessons can be learned from studying the history of the Philippine communist insurgency and how past administrations dealt with it. Much of the solution to the insurgency problem can be deduced from the national strategy that has evolved through the years. Insurgency is very dynamic and it is hard to tell if insurgent trends can be accurate indicators for the success or failure of government response. Even then they offer logical approaches to the threat which may vary in intensity. How the government uses or combines the diplomatic, informational, military, and economic (DIME) instruments of national power to deal with the hungry stomach and violent mind can be generally effective if made with the right mix as expressed in its national strategy. Going back to the thesis question, this study reveals that the counterinsurgency doctrine and strategy of the AFP is sound but its implementation is not according to the plan. This final chapter provides some insight on how the problem may be approached otherwise.

Dominating Human Terrain. President Magsaysay's formula was a perfect model for COIN but the present government strategy is not capitalizing on it. Magsaysay used the economic instrument of national power heavily and won popular support. He did increase the size and strength of the military but only because it was the necessary government to enemy force ratio in an insurgency. Distribution of land for the landless may not be as viable now but it can still be made available to provide the poor with a means to improve their living conditions. KALAHI-CIDSS is an innovation that has gained considerable success in winning the hearts and minds of the people. It is limited

for now but can be escalated to create greater impact, as socio-economic programs are realigned to achieve results. The program is empowering the people in the countryside which is the way to make the people feel important. The AFP has its SOT but devotes a measly 6 percent of its manpower and resources to the effort. Ironically, the remaining 94 percent are focused on performing traditional war fighting and security operations. The AFP leadership is still very much engrossed in the body count syndrome as the parameter for success. Magsaysay's idea of an honestly-led leadership, disciplined, highly motivated, well-trained and equipped soldiery during his time is actually the foundation of today's SOT. One difference is that it is applied to only a few units that are directly involved in actual SOT operation. The standard of discipline and training to non-SOT soldiers is not as demanding, as if one is not required to have discipline in dealing with the locals if he is not an SOT operator. To be more relevant, the AFP needs to immerse its forces where the affected communities are. They need not fight unless necessary. They just need to be sincere and professional public servants.

Back to Basics. Discipline does not cost anything but can deliver many things. In an insurgency, modern weapons may not be as important as a proud and dignified soldier. That is to say, if the government or the AFP seriously wants to defeat insurgency it can, even in the most old-fashioned way. But to sustain a high level of discipline the government has to show some goodwill. The soldier is part of the human terrain that it needs to dominate. It has to feed them well and provide them basic necessities to take care of their families. It has to impose sanctions on its leaders who will fail to keep the discipline, morale, and welfare of its troops. Before it can effectively use the military as an instrument of national power, it has to address the same corruption Magsaysay dealt

within the AFP early on. Going back to basic ethical standards should prevent Filipino culture to seep in the organization and undermine existing rules. Then when the AFP's morale is high, they can be equipped without having to worry about troops turning against the government in a coup or mutiny. They can be sent to the most difficult mission and come out victorious and in high spirits. Naturally, they can be entrusted to perform simpler tasks of conducting SOT or CMO-type operations with zeal and vigor.

Better Law Enforcement. At the outset it must be agreed that insurgency is a political problem which calls for a political solution. The military organization must come to grips with the fact that its role is less relevant in this setting. Insurgency is an internal matter which can in fact be addressed by the Department of Interior and Local Government using the Philippine National Police (PNP). Given enough personnel, even without AFP hardware, the PNP will be able to deal with most of the issues fueling insurgency by doing the basic role of policing. Basic policing is another way of dominating the human terrain as this involves the relationship with the community, the vendors, farmers, businessmen, and the local executive and judiciary. It is about enforcement of laws, prosecution of criminals, deterring crimes, and preventing injustice. By doing their job professionally in coordination with the other agencies of the government a lot of the issues raised by the insurgents are eradicated. If police personnel strength is too low, police auxiliaries and deputies can be hired and appointed. There will be peace and good order. There will be good actionable intelligence from which the AFP can work on. And there will be no chance for the Plager to go near the people.

National Identification System. Policing can be a lot easier with a reliable database to work with. A national ID system can partially solve a lot of the bureaucratic

problems, particularly those related to crime. With a secure national database, corruption can be checked almost instantly. Tax evasion can be reduced. Elections can be fast and honest enough to provide legitimacy to elected officials of the land. It can solve much of the crimes and deter most of it. It can address illegal activities like gambling and prostitution. Other issues such as over-population, squatting, unemployment, traffic violations, and juvenile delinquency can be addressed properly because data for government programs is available and accurate. With a required ID, insurgents will have a hard time moving around in the villages *in cognito*, particularly political officers whose role involves interacting with the people. Neutralization of key personalities will therefore be much easier.

Neutralizing Enemy Key Leadership. At the national and strategic level popular support does not become a center of gravity and cannot be felt until the mobilization phase. Even organized masses are merely “packets of discontent” waiting to be consolidated at the right time, which is not in the near term. There may be smaller representations of this popular support in the urban poor and labor sector but the absence of the Plager in the urban setting make them merely nuisance groups, as far as the national leadership is concerned. The more important COG at this level is the leadership of the CPP, including Sison in exile. Dismantling the CPP national leadership through the neutralization of key personalities will hasten the collapse of the insurgent structure and possibly lead to the disintegration of fronts. Although the leadership can easily be replaced, a disorganized enemy structure exposes its critical vulnerabilities which the AFP can exploit. When IDs are required, the leadership of the underground movement

will have a hard time in the cities with the risk of arrest. Some may be forced to surface, expose themselves, and join the legal front instead.

Parliamentary Struggle. The national government needs to exploit the parliamentary struggle that the United Front is advocating. This will bring more of the CPP-NPA's key leadership to the open and make the insurgent fight a truly political battle for the hearts and minds. The more the people's voice is represented in the halls of Congress, the less the need for underground movement, and possibly the less significance the armed component will have. This exposes the real motives of the party directly to the prying eyes of the people. This gives the other representatives of Congress the challenge and responds to the shortcomings of government to the people. This requires the national leadership to answer for the neglect that the communist party is trying to expose, which is what democracy is all about. This levels the playing field between the poor and oligarchy, at least in terms of parliamentary debate, if it is truly the poor and the marginalized that the United Front is representing. This will also make them active participants in debates that address the ever pressing issue of cultural diversification that has contributed to our being a very fractious society.

Federal System. Because of the centralized control of the government, many of the requirements at the lower level emanate from the national level. This is not an issue when systems are in place and run efficiently, but they are not. This makes centrally controlled government machinery less effective. Cultural and geographical factors make it all the more difficult. A very diverse society can hardly have a common national interest and consensus, which is why a national agenda may not work nationally. A federal system of government is therefore more likely to solve the natural disconnect

between regional tribes and ethnicity. This system will encourage the *Bisaya, Bikolano, Ilokano, Tagalog*, or Muslim, to cooperate and work hard to improve their respective territories. With progress distributed to the different parts of the country and opportunities sprouting elsewhere, overpopulation, squatting and concomitant problems in Metro Manila will be significantly reduced. A progressive countryside would soon usher in a nationalistic sense of pride and identity rather than a regionalistic and particularistic attitude. But even with a federal system, the national government needs to take care of its national workforce in order for it to be effective.

Welfare, Corruption, and Revenue Collection. There are important issues the national leadership needs to consider if it truly desires to address the social neglect of the people. These are government employee benefits, corruption, and tax/revenue collection, in this order. Although this is clearly a chicken-and-egg situation, the cause of one must be properly identified and mitigated to prevent the other two from happening. First, it must accept the fact that government pay is simply pathetic and unable to afford employees and executives a decent living without resorting to graft and corrupt practices. A decent income to feed, house, clothe and educate their families will deter corruption, which brings us to the second issue. The government has to face squarely endemic corruption that exists at all levels of government. The budget of the government may be limited but if properly spent and accounted for it will be able to accomplish many of its programs. Properly motivated government employees will unlikely fall prey to corruption existing in his work. Most importantly, those authorities tasked to implement laws will be shielded from temptations if given sufficient benefits. This brings us to the next issue of better job performance. A well-motivated, and now incorruptible individual, will most

likely deliver more revenues in customs and tax collection, better than the despicable tax collection efficiency at present of only 15 percent. This will translate to more money in government coffers to boost the economy, increase wages of other government workers, generate more employment, produce food, and provide social services to the people.

Congressional Action. Key to jumpstarting the fight for popular support is therefore the Congress who holds the purse and is responsible for enacting laws to adopt a national ID system, enact change, and most importantly increase the benefits of government workers. This can be triggered by the initiative and will of the Executive branch. Once national government employees are taken cared of, they will be empowered to support government action at the local level. National authorities and agencies will be functioning to enforce laws and regulations at the lowest level, particularly the police, without being improperly influenced by local leaders. A functioning local government will be able to generate more national revenues, which goes back to them in the form of Internal Revenue Allocations, infrastructure and services. Hence, the cycle goes on for a smooth and progressive development in the countryside.

Reengineered Information Operations. People all over the archipelago have to be made aware of improvements in the living conditions in other regions that are due to the cooperation, peace and good order existing in these areas. Mass media and the church have to be utilized to spread the word and create a multiplier effect, especially among the unsympathetic. Disinformation and propaganda by the anti-government movement has to be matched with a systematic IO campaign. IO units have to be created to deliver the message that democratic processes are strongly in place and working.

Among the ten recommendations raised, only the first two and the last have military implications and they are not even tactical solutions. They may lead to tactical actions eventually, but initially it is all about gaining legitimacy. It is now clear that military alone does not solve the problem of insurgency nor will socio-economic actions to alleviate poverty and other social problems eliminate it. A utopian society devoid of social defects is unachievable and is certainly not the objective of the Philippine government. For so long as the insurgents can make a big issue out of a mole hill, there will be unrest. The solution, therefore, calls for the systematic eradication of the causes through good governance, sound economic policies, effective legislation, aggressive policing, and a little bit of calculated military presence to make the people feel secure. The savvy and dynamic application of the ends, ways, and means which the government at the national and local levels can bring to bear against the insurgent cause will finally render communism in the Philippines irrelevant in the near future.

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