



Living with a Culture of Conflict: Insurgency and the Philippines

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This paper will examine the political security dilemma in the Philippines associated with the continuing conflict of the government with armed communist and Islamic insurgent groups. It will show that the apparently 'domestic' insurgent conflict actually indicates a wider 'culture' of politically-motivated violence developed through colonial occupation from the 16th to late 19th century and through security alignment with the United States in the 20th century. It will also show that shifts in this 'insurgent culture' have corresponded to the changes in value placed by big-power states on strategic control over the Philippines. The Philippine case demonstrates two long-term implications of long-term securitisation for the political culture of a state. First, continued government-insurgent fighting, and even threats of force against insurgents, may needlessly reify the outstanding political, economic, and even socio-ideological grievances motivating the insurgent conflict. Second, international attention given to the conflict may not significantly reduce tensions, and may even be 'used' by the combatants to further their own ends, if government and insurgents are not already inclined to resolve their differences locally.

Introduction

This paper is about the inability of the Philippine government to end the decades-long armed conflict it has waged with small, but resolute and well-organized insurgent groups. It examines the possibility that at the seeming willingness of the government to 'endure' the conflict with the insurgents indicates systemic weaknesses in how the government defines and responds to security issues. Specifically, the government, by attempting to internationally denounce the insurgents as 'terrorists', contradicts ongoing attempts to resolve the conflict peacefully. It also continues the historical practice of soliciting foreign, particularly American, aid to address local political concerns. The Philippine case demonstrates the problem of equating national security, and international relations based on security issues, with 'state survival' against ostensible 'threats', without first appreciating the local contexts that sustain such 'security threats'. It also shows that where a government 'creates' the bases for its own insecurity, the international relations developed around the defence of the government are only likely to defer, but not prevent, the resurgence of the same security problem.

The ongoing struggle of the Philippine state with the communist and Muslim guerrillas has the appearance of a limited internal conflict (Brown, 1996: 1) that may yet be solved through negotiation and stricter law enforcement. But the formal 'peace talks' between government and insurgent representatives that began in the 1970s and continue until the present have yet to bring a final end to the armed conflict. This conflict pervades all aspects of Philippine governance

and security (Agence France-Presse, 2004), and both the government and the insurgents have denounced each other as the cause of the country's slow development. Moreover, the government and the insurgents have, since at least the 1970s, sought to increase international involvement in what is in some respects is a 'domestic' political conflict. The international recognition, support, and both financial and material aid obtained by the government and by the communist and Muslim insurgencies do not appear to have significantly diminished the hostility between government and insurgents. Rather, the promise of external aid appears to both the government and the insurgents as a means to gain military advantage and coercive political leverage.

The Dilemma of the Securitising State

The object of this paper is to discuss a possible link between the 'state-building' influences of 'big-power' states on a 'small state' and the conduct of insurgent resistance within the same 'small state'. Philippine insurgents have been motivated by the supposition that foreign governments have, and continue to, directly influence domestic governance. Decisions to begin, intensify, reduce, or cease armed resistance have been motivated by insurgents' perceptions of international support for the anti-insurgent efforts of the national government.

Throughout history, the governments of the Philippines have always deferred to the decisions of foreign states on a wide range of political, economic, and social issues. Much of the Philippines' political culture can be attributed to foreign influences. The Philippines was a colony of Spain from the 16th century to the

late 19th century, was subsequently 'redeveloped' as a commonwealth by the United States until 1935, was occupied by the Japanese during the Second World War, and after its liberation was aligned with the United States until the end of the Cold War. Filipino insurgent groups had been active throughout these periods, and had opposed not only foreign occupation but also the Filipinos who were perceived as having gained government office through foreign endorsement. More recently, the United States and the European Union have alleged that the local Philippine insurgent groups have expanded their capabilities and are to be regarded as 'foreign terrorist organisations' (Baker, 2005: 1-4). These allegations, made in the context of the global 'war on terror', imply that Philippine insurgents constitute a security threat not only for the Philippine government but also, as far as the US and the EU are concerned, for governments around the world. This renewed international interest in the Philippine insurgent conflict testifies to the durability of the insurgents as well as to the continuing appeal of the idea of resistance to a 'collaborationist' government. But the 'foreign terrorist organisation' label imposed on the insurgents also indicates that the Philippine government has succeeded in diverting international attention away from its own political and security shortcomings. By branding its domestic political opponents as 'international terrorists', the Philippine government appears justified in favouring military operations against the insurgents over the peaceful negotiation of domestic political differences. The net result is the continuation of the conflict and the

continued dependency of the Philippine government on international support for its own domestic security.

Securitisation: Theory, Practice and Paradox

The Philippine counterinsurgency dilemma may be described as a securitisation paradox. The problem of insurgent resistance pre-dates the formation of the current government, and has persisted notwithstanding the government's efforts to defeat the insurgents. Moreover, the current form of national government traces its origins to a body of political elites who came from wealthy land-owning and industrialist backgrounds, whose 'legitimacy' was conferred by the Philippines' American colonisers during the early 20th century (Karnow, 1990: 230ff.). These political elites have opposed both militant and non-militant organisations of labourers and of ethnic minorities. They have also actively sought American endorsement of their regimes and support against mass-based resistance groups (LeRoy, 1906: 296-7; Bankoff, 2002). Attempts at resolving the problem of insurgent resistance have been strongly linked to the vindication of a state that benefits a wealthy minority at the expense of a disenfranchised population. International support for the government against the insurgents continues to be inadvertently included in this dilemma.

The definition of securitisation used here is derived from a recent Copenhagen School definition of security (Williams, 2003: 511ff.), which is 'a kind of stabilisation of conflictual or threatening relations, often through emergency mobilisation of the state'. The term 'security' refers to a set of actions rather than

a static condition. This idea of security in the performative sense – and the term securitisation – is itself derived from the idea of security as a static crisis-free condition. But extended periods of peace and stability within a state, and among the countries that surround it, do not imply that a particular state is ready to respond to crises when they occur. For a state to totally lack crisis-response capability is highly unlikely. This is because a functional government should be able to respond to foreseeable problems through its various line agencies and departments. ‘Securitisation’ clearly refers to measures taken by a state during situations where policy-based options are inadequate or are totally absent. Hence, although a period of static peace and stability is not necessarily an absolutely ‘secure’ condition, there is the warning that, ‘Security should not be thought of too easily as always a good thing’ (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, 1998: 4). That is, government administrators should try to solve problems with their existing capabilities before resorting to the ‘emergency measures’ that the security term implies. Frequent securitisation, rather than indicating government responsiveness or the nature of ‘security threats,’ indicates the fragility of an existing situation of peace and stability as well as the weaknesses of a government’s bureaucracy.

Where security refers to, ‘the ability of states and societies to maintain their independent identity and functional integrity against forces of change which they see as hostile,’ (Buzan, 1991: 432) the securitisation concept continues the definition by emphasising ‘survival’ as the bottom line. State security, or securitisation in and by a state, implies the preservation of the individuals,

societies and institutionalised 'ways of life' within the boundaries of the state (Buzan and Wæver, 1997: 242-3). Any public issue can be located in the spectrum ranging from non-politicised (meaning the state does not deal with it and it is not in any other way made an issue of public debate and decision) through politicised (meaning the issue is part of public policy, requiring government decision and resource allocations or, more rarely, some other form of communal governance) to securitized (meaning the issue is presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure). The securitisation of an issue follows a linear path first across initial attempts to solve the issue within existing, hence non-politicised, government procedure. After this is the area of politicisation where the issue is subjected to public discussion and debate, and thereby to the pressures of accommodating sectoral interests. The goal of politicisation is to formulate new legislation that enables government to deal with the issue. Only when both areas are unable to contain the issue will securitisation be resorted to, with the goal of recovering the stable milieu and maintaining an orderly system of issue-identification and response (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, 1998: 23-24).

The Philippine insurgent 'securitisation paradox' is a variation on the theme of the securitisation theory. On the one hand, there are features of the conflict that demonstrate the linear pattern of a securitisation attempt. These features are, chiefly, the declaration by the government that the presence of insurgent groups constitutes a 'security threat', and the international support sought and received by the government for its anti-insurgent effort. There also are indicators that the

problem is in the process of being de-securitised. The Philippine government has admitted that the insurgents justify their resistance by linking various social problems such as widespread socio-economic inequality and political corruption to bad national governance (National Peace and Development Plan, 2000). The government should, in principle, be able to decisively de-securitise the insurgent problem, chiefly by de-escalating the armed conflict. To this end, the government has instituted a formal 'peace process' with the intent of replacing armed conflict with mediated negotiations (Villacorta, 1999; Sidel, 1995; Dacalos, 1995, et. al.).

On the other hand, there are several indications that the Philippine case exceeds the framework of securitisation, as broadly outlined above. The usefulness of the securitisation framework as a conceptual tool here is limited by the seeming contradictions that result from its application on the Philippine case. These results seem to imply that the Philippine government may actually be maintaining the insurgency issue at a securitised level while only appearing to reduce the issue to the level of politicisation. The first of these indications concerns the length of time that an issue has been securitised relative to the presence of government resources for desecuritisng the issue. The ability of a state to securitise both depends on, and supports, a socio-political order where the securitisation of issues is the exception rather than the norm in public life. A viable structure of governance, a body of formal legislation and of informal societal norms, and an ability to survive occasional crises, all support the idea of a form of existence where security is a non-issue for most of the population of a

state for most of the time. By implication, no issue can remain securitised for so long as the government has the means to desecuritize the issue. Where an issue such as the Philippine insurgency problem has been labelled a 'security concern' for decades across several presidential administrations, there may be grounds to question whether the issue is being securitised at all. Or, prolonged securitisation may indicate that the issue has in fact been 'accepted' as part of the 'norm' by the securitising government. Still another possibility is that government' securitisation attempts have sustained or actually worsened the problem. These and other possible permutations of the issue indicate that although a securitisation framework may be helpful in categorising threats and responses, it may not adequately explain how, why, or to what extent security threats and government threat-perceptions and responses are mutually affective.

A second indication is that, despite its appearance as an 'internal' problem, the case is a conflict that has historically involved other states, which have given support to either the government or the insurgents. International support, particularly American military support, has given the Philippine government a tactical advantage in the conflict. American endorsement of the Philippine government dates back to the institution of the Philippine Commonwealth in 1935 by an act of the American Congress that 'gave' freedom to its former colony (Karnow, 1990: 248-250). The international support received by communist and Islamic insurgencies also dates back to several decades and, despite being less than that received by the government, has been adequate to sustain their resistance. An internationally endorsed securitised conflict, which is essentially a

conflict intensified through international support for the combatants, is beyond the scope of a government to desecuritize on its own. This is because none of the domestic combatants has complete control over the circumstances under which the support is given or the conditions imposed by supporting countries. The support-giving countries may influence the conflict to suit their own ends, as had been the case with American support for the Philippine government's campaign against communist insurgents during the Cold War, and against Islamic insurgents during the recent 'War on Terror'. The Philippine case shows that a securitized issue that had been linked to international and domestic political interests may be impossible for a government to de-securitize unilaterally, owing to the complex implications that would result from such a de-securitization.

Desecuritisation as De-militarisation: A History of Violence

Nonetheless, the benefit of using the idea of security in the 'performative' sense is that it allows for the possibility that a government may be inadvertently contributing to the problems that it securitises against. Although a government intends securitisation attempts for the survival of the state, securitisation may not significantly alter the context of political, economic, and social relations of a state and its security problems. The formation and conduct of a government affects the society it governs, the international relations with which it is involved, as well as the problems it securitises. Although a government securitises only when necessary, issues that may have securitisation potential are to some extent predictable in as much as a government and the security problems it faces are

found in the same context. The assessment of political insecurity entails approaching government not only as a securitising agency but also as a social grouping that exercises authority over other groups within a state. The vulnerability of a government facing an insurgent conflict lies in its inability to disassociate political differences among factions from violence, particularly when the government has failed to convince rival groups of its legitimacy (Holsti, 1998: 124). In an insurgent conflict, government and insurgents appear to be 'competing' for the control of a state, or territories within a state, in order to advance their own interests at the expense of the interests of their opponents (Hardin as cited in Holsti, 1998: 114). In the Philippine case, the 'template' for the insurgency was set by the first 'all-Filipino' government formed by the Americans, who supported the political ambitions of wealthy Filipino collaborators while suppressing anti-foreign Filipino nationalists. Such a government was 'born weak' in a context without a clear and cohesive national community, and in its weakness had relied on foreign support and recognition (Holsti, 1985: 690) while suppressing its rivals for power.

To date, the securitisation response of the government to the insurgents has been mainly a militarisation of the conflict. The necessity of securitising a political threat does not necessarily determine the form of the response in order that a state may continue to be self-governing. If the Philippine insurgent conflict is to be desecuritized, an altogether different approach to the one currently in use may be needed. The Philippine political environment would have to be developed to the point that the government and the insurgents would be able to

disassociate armed conflict from political interaction and rivalry. The Philippine government may have to find some means distance itself from its post-colonial image as a political 'dependency' on big power states such as the United States. Politically stable and wealthy countries may help the desecuritisation by abstaining from giving partisan support, particularly military aid. Unless the Filipino state is able to determine for itself what constitutes legitimate government, the securitisation paradox of the insurgency is likely to continue as it has for previous generations.

A Profile of the Current Insurgency Problem

Since the start of the communist insurgency in the late 1960s, the government has continually fought with the advantage of superior equipment, training, and communications. In 1995, the government suspended the anti-communist military offensive, called Campaign Plan *Lambat Bitag* (literally, net trap). This coincided with an amnesty programme that allowed the insurgents to surrender without fear of arrest or reprisal from the government. However, the military, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), regarded the suspension as a mistake. The AFP attributes the drastic reduction of the communists' peak strength of 25,000 guerrillas armed with 15,000 firearms in 1988 to 6,025 members with 5,290 firearms in 1995 to the sustained military offensives. Present military estimates put the current strength of the communist insurgents at 9,460 guerrillas armed with 6,040 firearms, attesting to what in the official position is termed as a 'strategic blunder' (National Peace and Development Plan, 2000: Items a.(1)-a.(4)). Ironically, the official military position is that, 'the LCM (Local

Communist Movement) recovery is due mainly to our (i.e., government) failure to address the root causes of the insurgency'. These include 'the inequitable distribution of wealth brought about by lopsided sharing of the fruits of the land, social injustice, and imperfect democratic process and inconsistent delivery of services'. Moreover, and despite the seeming justification for continued combat, the report nonetheless concludes that the communist insurgency problem is beyond the ability of the AFP to solve by force alone. 'Unless the government acts decisively on the problem, the present trend of ever growing strength of the LCM will continue, exacerbated as it is by the series of oil price increases and other destabilising factors, economic or otherwise' (National Peace and Development Plan, 2000: Items a.(3)-a.(4)).

The Muslim insurgency is regarded in a similarly ambiguous way. Unlike the communist insurgency, this movement had not intended to supplant the national government by revolution. At present, the insurgency of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), has taken a secessionist form with the intent to establish a Muslim state in the southern Philippine island of Mindanao. It is an attempt to undermine political homogeneity in the country, and therefore qualifies for securitisation. But there may be political or socio-economic remedies as well. The official government position identifies grounds the insurgency on the political opportunism of the secessionism's leadership, who in turn manipulated an impressionable Muslim population. However, the recommendation response is almost entirely militaristic in orientation. The insurgency conflict can be ended if

superior military force can be mustered by the government to weaken and intimidate the insurgents, and to compel them to opt for negotiation.

The MILF... has a current estimated strength of 15,000 with 11,000 high-powered firearms. MILF strength rose at an average of 21% annually since 1992. ...This dramatic increase is due to their aggressive recruitment efforts which is bolstered by foreign support. They give special attention to disgruntled MNLF (Moro National Liberation Front) fighters and highly impressionable minors. They control the religious sector (*ulamas* and *ustadzes*) leading to great influence over of (sic.) the hearts and minds of the people in the areas they dominate. The danger posed by MILF is aggravated by its strong links with the network of global Islamic extremism. At present, the MILF suffers from an acute shortage of ammunition and other logistics. It is largely confined to central Mindanao, particularly in the provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur and Western Mindanao (National Peace and Development Plan, 2000: Items b.(1)-b.(3)).

Part of the reason for the securitisation, even militarisation, of the insurgency situation is that insurgents attempt to compete with the government for the loyalty of the people. Both government and the insurgents blame the other for many socio-political and economic problems, and neither recognise the need to collaborate to overcome these problems. This results in the utilisation of the population as the means to justify the conflict and, particularly since insurgent cadres are recruited directly from the population, the means to actually fight. The

government has even adopted the acronym-principle MASS, 'the battle for Motivated Adherent Sustained Support of the people, without which no government can continue to exist. Insurgency is an intellectual battle between the government and the insurgents with social cohesion and social organisation as core issues' (Carolina, 1995: 50).

This adversarial outlook motivating the insurgent conflict is an important consideration when assessing Philippine securitisation. The AFP in particular appears keen on both the military and political extermination of the insurgent movements. The organisational superstructures of the insurgent movements, which have proven resilient and durable throughout years of fighting, coordinated both armed offensives against, and peace negotiations with, the government. Through their organisational network, the insurgents have proven capable of mobilising popular protests against government, and of influencing political platforms of left-leaning, but less militant, political parties. Because the government and the insurgents interact on both the political and security levels, the adversarial mindset and the allied issue of 'tactical advantage' pervade all government-insurgent interactions. The police function that the AFP fulfils is due both to the inadequacy of the national police as well as to the perceived need of the government to have an option for coercive force against the insurgents. Even temporary armistices earned through negotiations are regarded by the government as 'recuperative periods' before the fighting eventually resumes. The ubiquity of this 'political warfare' has made the insurgent conflict appear as

being part of 'normal' adversarial Philippine politics, and as thereby being 'unsolvable'.

Local Insurgencies, International Insecurities

Jose Maria Sison formed the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) in 1969. Initially a small group of radical student activists, the CPP grew in membership to about several thousand and even managed to diversify into a non-combatant propaganda group, the National Democratic Front (NDF) (Lande, 1986: 129-130) and into an armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA) (Jones, 1989: 5-7). In 1989, the NPA numbered about 24,000 guerrillas with 10,000 high-powered rifles, grenade launchers, and mortars, although currently its strength is placed between 6000-9000 guerrillas (New People's Army, Terrorist Group Profiles, 2005). Its urban assassination squad, the Alex Boncayao Brigade, formed in 1984 (Jones, 1989: pp. 248-249) and with a strength of about 500 members, has been held responsible for more than 100 murders in Metro Manila, including that of US Army Col. James Rowe of the Joint US Military Advisory Group (JUSMAG) (Alex Boncayao Brigade, Terrorist Group Profiles, 2005). Its ideological core is that any government other than the one sanctioned by the communist movement will be characterized by 'imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat capitalism' (Morada and Collier, 1998: 553).

The communist insurgency has engaged in propagandist and mercenary activities to gain grassroots support for its 'people's war.' These include giving occasional instruction in reading, writing, and math to supportive and

impoverished peasants (Jones, 1989: p. 230), providing armed retribution for dispossessed tribal peoples and peasants against 'land-grabbing' large-scale concessionaires and business developers, providing an organisational framework and a sense of security to urban squatters and labour unions, and, especially during the presidential incumbency of Ferdinand Marcos (1965-1986), armed retribution to a loudly-proclaimed abusive military (Lande, 1986: pp. 133-134). The Philippines in 2002 had succeeded in obtaining 'a designation of the Communist Party of the Philippines and its military wing the New People's Army (CPP-NPA) as a foreign terrorist organisation (FTO)' from the US. At that time, US Secretary of State Colin Powell called the CPP, 'a Maoist group... aimed at overthrowing the Philippine government through guerrilla warfare,' and that 'the NPA... strongly opposes any US presence in the Philippines and has killed US citizens there.' This last remark was apparently made in reference to the assassination of Col. Rowe' (Herrera and Pablo 2002). This had subsequently led to a search for, and freezing of, the organisation's funds based in Europe (Dalangin, Pazzibugan and Marfil, 2002), and eventually to a "terrorist" label by the European Union (Dalangin, 2002).

The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) is the 'original' Muslim insurgent movement. This has become militarily defunct and has been superseded by the more radical Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Both the MNLF and the MILF had been able to consolidate isolated groups of armed Muslims through the call for an independent Muslim homeland that began as a reaction to the various

social pressures in Mindanao in the early 1970s (Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), FAS Intelligence Resource Program, 2002).

The MNLF is alleged to have received logistical support from Malaysia and Libya in the 1970s. Malaysia, responding to the Philippines' planned invasion of Sabah in the late 1960s, apparently 'allowed the MNLF sanctuary for training, supply and communications purposes.' Libya, on the other hand, contributed \$35 US million to the MNLF from 1972 to 1975 to the training effort, apparently to sympathize with Philippine members of the oppressed *ummah* (Islamic community) (Morada and Collier, 1998: 557-8). To the credit of the Marcos regime, and due to the mediation of both Saudi Arabia and Libya, the government and the MNLF in 1976 successfully drew up the Tripoli Agreement. This was a framework for an autonomous government for 14 provinces in the south of the country (INCORE Conflict Data Service, 2007). But the declaration of 'total war' (i.e., a political expression rather than a formal declaration of war) against the insurgency in 1987 by the government during the presidency of Corazon Aquino (1986-1992) resulted in the collapse of the peaceful negotiations with the MNLF. Subsequently, the 1989 referendum conducted in the areas to be included in the proposed autonomous region to be created was characterized by low voter turnout. This had been attributed to the boycott and lobbying against the referendum by the MNLF, and to the overwhelming rejection of the proposed region by the Christian population in the area. Subsequently, only four provinces opted for inclusion in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) (Bertrand, 2000: 39-40; Morada and Collier, 1998: 564-565).

Only during the presidency of Fidel Ramos (1992-1998) did the process of implementing the Tripoli agreement, and thereby moving the ARMM to full autonomy, move forward. A peace agreement secured in September 1996 created a transitional body, the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD), to supervise the implementation of the administrative details in the 1976 Tripoli agreement. Moreover, 7,500 MNLF fighters were to be integrated into the Philippine military and the national police. Eventually, a governorship would have supplanted the ARMM and SPCPD subsequent to yet another plebiscite to be held in the original 14 provinces on the matter of their inclusion in the new region. This regional government would have seen to the creation of security forces, the integration of Islamic schools into the education system, and even the establishment of Shari'a courts (INCORE Conflict Data Service, 1990; Bertand 2000: 41-2).

The successful de-militarisation and assimilation of the MNLF could also be due to the infighting within the previously unified Islamic secessionist movement. This is indicated by the necessity seen by the Ramos administration to conduct a separate set of peace negotiations (INCORE Conflict Data Service, 2007) with the MILF that had continued to hold out against the 'Filipinisation' – that is, the subjection to 'rule by former enemies' – of peaceful assimilation. The breaking away of the MILF from the MNLF in 1977 had been argued to be due in part to the weakness of 'Moro nationalism' based on territorial location and ideals of Marxist struggle compared to a more 'mobilise-able' common Islamic identity. Also, the MNLF and the MILF are presumed to have held influence over different

ethnic groups, thus helping to explain the lack of a uniform 'assent' to peace by the Muslim insurgency (Bertrand, 2000: 41). Misuari was himself ejected from the leadership of the MNLF in August 2001, presumably on account of alleged mismanagement and corruption during his incumbency as ARMM governor and head of the SPCPD. He was subsequently arrested in Malaysia after having attempted to escape Philippine authorities on account of his MNLF sub-faction's involvement in the violent attempt to interfere with the November 2001 ARMM elections as well as on account of his links with the new Muslim-based bandit group called Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) (Zamora, 2003; Doronilla, 2003; Bordadora, Marfil and Lim, 2003; Agence France-Presse, 2003; Mustafa, Gomez and Pazzibugan, 2003; David, 2003). With their numbers ranging anywhere from 200 to 2000, the ASG, using the rhetoric for a separate Islamic state in western Mindanao, have engaged in daring and violent raids since 1991. These include the razing of a public market complex in Ipil town in Mindanao in 1995 and the kidnapping of more than 30 foreigners in 2000 and 2001 (the latter are assumed to have resulted in the payment of large but indeterminate ransoms) (Abu Sayyaf Group, Terrorist Group Profiles, 2005). The extensive use by the ASG of media mileage for their activities and anti-government propaganda raise suspicions about the authenticity of its religious-political grievances.

Old Problem, New Threat?

The continuation of the Islamic insurgency demonstrates that, quite literally, successive governments have fought to survive against armed unrest that

dramatically condemn the system of governance that they perceive as corrupt and inefficient. The derivation of the Abu Sayyaf from the main Muslim insurgent body and the continuing conflict with the MILF could be argued as the complication of the domestic security milieu, thus putting more pressure on government and its security approaches. But a far more worrisome complication of the issue comes from the possibility that an 'Islamic terrorist network' would link the Philippine Muslim insurgencies with those in Malaysia and in Indonesia. Malaysia contends with the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and its affiliate Kumpulan Mujahideen Malaysia (KMM). Both assent to the goal of establishing a Daulah Islamiyah – an independent Islamic state encompassing Indonesia, Malaysia, and several islands of the southern Philippines. JI has been held responsible for various bombings, bank robberies, and hijackings, including a bombing in Manila in December 2000 that had 22 fatalities (CDI Terrorism Project, 2007). Among the Islamic militant groups in Indonesia, the Laskar Jihad (LJ) gains prominence due to its size, organisation, and subsequent political clout. The 10,000-strong militia purportedly sent half its strength to the Moluccas region in 2000 to counter what it perceived as a growing Christian separatist movement. This group is also purported to have strong links with the Indonesian military. While arms and protection are purportedly supplied by the military, by far the most significant 'take' was the supposed \$9.3 US billion of accrued embezzlements from the army since the founding of the LJ in 2000 (CDI Terrorism Project, 2007).

JI operatives have been arrested in Singapore and in the Philippines, all with firearms, explosives and plans for attacks on embassies, airlines, and other high-

profile installations. Regarding personnel inter-operability, Abubakar Baasir and Riduan Islamuddin are founders and top leaders of both JI and KMM while several arrested JI members admitted to have received training in MILF camps. And all groups alleged to have had some contact, or even have received funding, weapons, and training from Osama Bin Laden's Al Qaeda organisation (CDI Terrorism Project, 2004, 2007).

Conclusion

The case of the Philippine insurgent conflict shows that the government of a small state that has traditionally requested 'big power' state intervention in its national security issues and capabilities is not likely to disengage from such security relations if only to 'localise' a domestic political security problem. More likely, the government will attempt to link its own attempts to defeat its local political opponents with 'big power' security interests, as has been done by the 'terrorist' label put on the insurgents by the United States and the EU at the behest of the Philippine government. The attempt to desecuritize the insurgency primarily through military force and political exclusion compounded with international pressure only encourages the resistance to continue. This is because the insurgents, who themselves have obtained limited international support, include the government's security 'dependency' as part of the motives for their resistance. The resulting decades-old guerrilla conflict indicates the securitisation paradox wherein the conflict is maintained despite government's efforts meant to desecuritize the conflict.

One solution to the Philippine case may be for government to admit to the systemic weaknesses within the governing regime that motivate insurgents to resist. A government may need to 'give up' its privileged position as the 'victim' of the insurgent 'security threat', for it to be able to acknowledge the legitimacy of insurgents' grievances. The course of action implied by this decision carries high political risks, particularly for the government of a small state that depends on a big-power state for its security. Nonetheless, this confidence-building measure may ultimately convince both government and insurgents that their best interest is served by excluding armed conflict from political interaction, and by excluding foreign influences on matters of national governance and security.

Ultimately, a securitisation paradox, being a complication of national governance by international relations, indicates a conceptual impasse caused by an incomplete contextualisation of security policy and practice. While it owes much to the conduct of international security relations, a securitisation paradox also implies severe consequences that impact on the national level before the international level. As such, it remains to be seen whether the 'culture of conflict' that the securitisation paradox indicates, can be transformed into something a bit less difficult to conceptualise, or to live through.

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