

Putting the Crime Back into Terrorism: The Philippines Perspective

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Abstract This paper addresses the multiplicity of terrorism currently experienced within the Philippines. Highlighting the inter-relationship between criminal motivations and acts of terrorism, the Philippines experience emphasizes the notion that underlying much of terrorism is corruption and social equality issues. As a result, relying on traditional responses to address the prevalence of terrorism can have the potential to exacerbate the situation. Rather, in some instances, there are advantages of changing the label of terrorism to crime, to emphasise the criminal motivations, and thus assist in identifying and ultimately addressing the underlying issues.

Since the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks, the international community has shifted its security focus onto terrorism (Osbourne 2004; Donnelly 2004; Mansurnoor 2005; Zakis 2002). As a result, all terrorist activities have begun to be reviewed in order to pre-empt any international repercussions or threats. One such target for attention is the Philippines whose prevalence of terrorism over the last 35 years has been unrivalled by any other Southeast Asian nation (Manyin et al. 2004; Abuza 2003; Banlaoi 2006; Mansurnoor 2005; Collier and Cook 2006). Referred to as the 'second wave' in the war on terrorism, the Philippines has been linked to international insurgent groups including al-Qaeda, Jemaah Islamiyah, and is seen to be a safe-haven for other groups to easily take refuge, train and embark on other transnational terrorist threats (Banlaoi 2006; Hoddie and Harzell 2005; International Crisis Group 2005; Wahlrab 2003). However, likening the

Postscript

Since this paper was written, President Arroyo has ordered military restraint in dealing with the MILF, which has included limiting the use of artillery and ariel bombings during military operations (Reuters Foundation 2007b). This latest attempt by the government, to limit the violence being experienced in the Philippines, is aimed at strengthening the peace process between the government and MILF operatives. However, as this paper has already demonstrated, only once the socio-economic and political disparities are addressed will the Philippines be able to move towards long-standing peace.

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acts of terrorism experienced within the Philippines to those of other international terrorist organisations can seriously distort the motivations of many of the offences carried out within the Philippines. Rather, the numerous kidnappings, extortion and other criminal activities, including the illicit narcotics trade, utilised by these domestic groups for monetary gain highlights the financial motivations for these organisations rather than necessarily their ideological or political agendas (Wilson 2005).

Indeed, whilst terrorism is often viewed as distinct from crime, the Philippines demonstrates the increasing interrelationship between these two activities in that some acts labelled terrorist are in reality traditional forms of crime (Wilson 2005). As a result, the use of military actions within the Philippines cannot attempt to adequately address the acts or perpetrators of these offences without the potential of exacerbating the conflict. Rather, an alternate approach, addressing the socio-economic disparities encompassed with traditional law enforcement practices would be better suited to tackling the threat of terrorism within the Philippines, by limiting support to these organisations, both domestically and internationally. In addition even amongst those acts traditionally defined as terrorism, (free from criminal motivations) most cannot be understood without addressing the socio-economic disparities and “political corruption” that has become almost endemic across all levels of society (Wilson 2005, p.63; Transparency International 2007).

What is Terrorism?

To date a universal consensus for a globally accepted definition for terrorism is still lacking (Deflem 2004; Makdisi 2002; Institute of Security Studies (ISS) 1998; UNODC 2006). Rather, there are numerous definitions available, both at the international and domestic levels, causing conflict in the ability to analyse and address the actual prevalence of terrorism being experienced. However, for the most part, the majority of definitions for terrorism are based around the following four main principles. The first acknowledges that terrorism is a criminal offence, as demonstrated by its inclusion in both domestic and international law (Makdisi 2002; Brzezinski and Myers 2004; Deflem 2004; O’Day 2004). Thus, the recognition of the criminal element to terrorism plays a crucial role in addressing how the offence should firstly be recognised and subsequently addressed. By distinguishing an act of terrorism as a criminal offence, one identifies the need to adhere to specific legislation. For example, the requirement for proof of intent, how the law is enforced, what the penalties are, rather than simply being used as an avenue of sending in a military force. The second generally accepted principle contends that the act of terrorism itself is aimed at instilling fear in the general population either at an individual or a group level (Deflem 2004; O’Day 2004). Hence, the propensity for terrorist acts to be more likely to be committed in a public setting is demonstrative of the need for the maximum exposure possible to gain the best impact (Brzezinski and Myers 2004; Deflem 2004; O’Day 2004). Thus, it is acknowledged that terrorism usually occurs during times of peace rather than war to elicit the most effect from their intended targets. The third proposition for terrorism, in comparison to other offences, is that terrorists are most often non-state actors (Deflem 2004; O’Day 2004). This supposition aims to address the concern that the action of a terrorist should not be mistaken for actions of states and vice versa. To this end, states actions against another state, rather than being considered to be acts of terrorism, should be both identified and labelled very differently. Finally, the act of terrorism needs to be politically and not criminally motivated (Deflem 2004; O’Day

2004). For example, an act of terrorism could not be seen as such if it were for personal gain, revenge or even profit. The differentiation of terrorism from other criminal offences acts as a way of being able to identify and apply the appropriate measures to effectively address the offence category for what it is, rather than becoming too broad and thus losing its true meaning.

The Philippines Experience - A History of Insurgency

The Philippines is situated off the south-eastern coast of Asia, straddled between the South China Sea and the Pacific Ocean. The Philippine archipelago, the second largest in the world, comprises of over 7,100 islands with a total population of around 89,468,677 (Central Intelligence Agency 2007). Due to its location and sheer quantity of islands, it is near impossible to maintain complete border security. Colonised by Spain and later ceded to American rule, the Philippines only gained independence in 1946 (Osbourne 2004). The first insurgency group within the Philippines most recent history can be traced back to the Second World War when it became a battleground between the United States and Japanese forces. In retaliation to Japanese occupation, a Filipino resistance movement emerged. Known as the *Kukbalahaps* or *Huks* “which means ...“People’s Anti-Japanese Army”, they became a highly organised and formidable resistance force (Martin 2003; Wilson 2005, p.63). In addition to attacking their Japanese invaders, the *Huks* after gaining widespread support from the peasant population, were also responsible for harassing numerous Filipino elitist groups who they considered to be collaborators or political rivals for control of the nation after the Japanese had been defeated (Osbourne 2004, p.236). When the war ended the *Huks* sought to create a communist State and gained some initial support. However, once elected into the Philippines Congress, their ability to take up their seats was denied by their elitist opponents (Osbourne 2004, p.236). The *Huks* remained a challenge to the Philippines government up until the 1960s (Osbourne 2004).

In 1969, the rise of Marxism ideologies in the region amalgamated with the inception of an organisation known as the New Peoples Army (NPA), the military wing of the Communist People’s Party (CPP), replacing the *Huks* as the primary challenge to elitist state power (Osbourne 2004; Wilson 2005; Tadem 2006). From 1969, the NPA has been involved in guerrilla warfare against the government and has remained dedicated to its “essentially Maoist philosophy over the years” and, although not as active in the cities as they once were, still remain powerful within the countryside (Wilson 2004; Wilson 2005, p.71). In addition to assassinations of both police officers and government officials in rural areas, the NPA also engages in urban terrorism such as “bombings, shootings, and extortion” (Wilson 2005, p.71). The NPA membership has been roughly estimated at around 10,000 fighters, and is funded primarily through donations, obtained from both domestic and international supporters, and is further supplemented by extracting “revolutionary taxes extorted from local businesses” (American Foreign Policy Council (AFPC) 2007, p.1; Mansurnoor 2005; Wilson 2005). However, despite the above actions, the NPA is seen by some as a positive force, especially within some rural areas where the NPA “often resolves conflicts in small villages” (Wilson 2005, p.71). Thus far, the Philippine government has attempted to push forward peace settlements with the NPA through the CPP, however, to date this has been largely ineffective as the NPA continues to target political figures within the Philippines (Mogato 2007).

In addition to the problems being experienced with the NPA, there is also a long history of unrest experienced in the southern island of Mindanao, located 700 kilometres from

Manila. Several Muslim separatist groups have emerged over the years with the intent of gaining independence from the national Manila-based government. However, despite the Islamic overtures, these groups appear to have little in common with international extremist organisations like al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah (Harrison 2003; Mansurnoor 2005). It is important to note that whilst the Philippines have experienced several political upheavals, these have not been caused by Islamic separatist groups or their ideologies (Wilson 2005). Rather, the majority of these upheavals have been the result of the “people’s power” movements which were initially aimed at the removal of the former dictatorship of President Ferdinand Marcos (Harrison 2003; Wilson 2005). More recently, Joseph Estrada was removed from the presidency due to accusations of widespread corruption, however, contrary to the previous upheavals this was instigated primarily by politicians with the full support of the middle-class (Wilson 2005; Osbourne 2004). Consequently, a history of political turmoil has assisted in the inception of insurgency groups in the region.

As well as the above clashes creating instability within the Philippines archipelago, the government has also faced for over 35 years increasing conflict with a number of other insurgent groups. The first, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) was formed in 1972, with the aims of fighting against oppression and creating an independent Muslim state situated in the southern region (Agustin 2005; Chalk 1997; Chalk 2006). In the early stages of its formation, the MNLF had attracted both internal and foreign support including countries like Libya, Saudi Arabia, and nearby Malaysia (Solidum 1982). Conflict between the MNLF and the Philippine government ensued when President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law. However, during this time, the MNLF’s increasing levels of support enabled them to take control of large portions of Mindanao and neighbouring Sulu (Reuters Foundation 2007). In 1976, the MNLF agreed to a peace accord with the Philippine government. However, the referendum on political autonomy in the southern islands failed, forcing the conflict to resume (Agustin 2005). At this time, cracks began to appear in MNLF membership. Some members were resentful of their group’s intention to engage into negotiations with the Philippines government, whilst others became disillusioned over ethnic and strategic differences (Chalk 1997; Chalk 2006). As a result some members left the MNLF and formed what was to become known as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which will be discussed further below (Chalk 1997; Chalk 2006; Wilson 2005).

Twenty years later, President Fidel Ramos formed a comprehensive peace agreement with the MNLF which led to the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) being formed (Reuters Foundation 2007). The new ARMM included Magundanao, Lanao del Sur as well as the island provinces of Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Basilan (Agustin 2005; Reuters Foundation 2007). Misuari was consequently elected as the governor of the ARMM. However, criticism quickly followed over “incompetence and corruption” leading to loss of faith in the political system (Transparency International 2007). In 2001, the ceasefire finally collapsed when MNLF guerrillas attacked an army base in Jolo, Sulu, killing 100 people (Reuters Foundation 2007; Agustin 2005). As a result, Misuari fled to Malaysia, but was subsequently captured and jailed. After his capture, Misuari publicly condoned the actions of the MNLF claiming the Manila government had failed to uphold the peace deal and had thus appeared to abandon the southern regions to poverty (Reuters Foundation 2007; Agustin 2005). This accusation arose from the fact that, whilst MNLF had originated in one of the richest agricultural provinces in the Philippines, the economy was severely damaged after “years of neglect by the Manila government” (Wilson 2005, p.67; Liow 2006). In addition to the economic disparities at play, Muslims in Mindanao also suffered from political marginalisation with some of their communities “enduring some of the highest rates of infant mortality, illiteracy, and unemployment in the country”

(Wilson 2005, p.67; Bonner 2003). However, one of the main motivations for the formation of the MNLF was the resentment that arose from the government's resettlement programs which has created an influx of Christian settlers from Luzon into Mindanao and its surrounding region¹ (Chalk 1997).

In order to address the conflict, President Ramos finally signed a peace agreement with MNLF leader Nur Misuari, in what was known as the Davao consensus in 1996 (Wilson 2005). This consensus allowed some degree of self-determination and, most importantly, the promise of economic investment aimed at reducing the socio-economic disparities that were currently at play (Liow 2006). As a result, for a while it looked as though cultural, social, and religious autonomy for Muslims living in Mindanao was at last about to become a reality, thus finally ending the conflict in the Philippines. Unfortunately the civil war in Mindanao did not end here. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front rejected the 1996 peace plan on the grounds that the concessions offered by the Philippines government did not go far enough towards their aims (Liow 2006). In addition, much of the economic assistance, promised within the Davao consensus failed to materialise. Consequently, altercations between the MILF and some parts of the MNLF continued to occur against the Philippines government (Wilson 2004, 2005).

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), formed by ex-MNLF members as described above, is one of the largest Islamic extremist groups currently operating within the Philippines (International Crisis Group 2005; Liow 2006). Headed by Islamic cleric Salamat Hashim, the aims of the MILF are not too different to those of the MNLF as their main aim is to have a fully independent Islamic state. However, unlike the MNLF, the MILF has placed greater emphasis on the more traditional and scholarly interpretations of Islam (Liow 2006; International Crisis Group 2005). In 1996, when the peace accord was signed with the MNLF, the MILF had already established more than 12,000 fighters across camps in Mindanao (Reuters Foundation 2007; Liow 2006). Between 1997 and 2000 a ceasefire had been agreed to between the Philippine government and MILF, however this collapsed when President Estrada declared war on the MILF and over-ran around 47 of their Mindanao camps leading to the displacement of more than 1 million people in the process (Liow 2006). The ceasefire was re-established again in 2001 when President Gloria Macapagat-Arroyo came into power (Reuters Foundation 2007). However, this was short lived. Government troops took over the MILF headquarters in Bulisk leading to a further 500,000 people being displaced (Liow 2006; International Crisis Group 2005). Finally, a new ceasefire was agreed in 2003 after the MILF leadership issued a statement renouncing the use of terrorism (International Crisis Group 2005). Negotiations between the Manila-based government and MILF stalled again in 2006 over failing to agree to proposed land rights (International Crisis Group 2005). MILF has laid claim to more than 1,000 villages, far outside of the scope of Mindanao, to be included into the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), despite being surrounded by large Christian populations (Reuters Foundation 2007).

Thus, it could be argued that the majority of the conflict that has ensued over the years in the Philippines because Muslim Mindanao never received the economic

¹ It is important to note that under both the Spanish and American colonisations of the Philippines, extensive resettlement programs were used to encourage Christian internal migration (Liow 2006). Furthermore, successive Philippines Governments continued this policy so that by 1983 it was estimated that 80 percent of the 10 million people living in Mindanao were non-Muslims (Chalk 1997). Christian agricultural communities were created deep in the heart of indigenous Muslim territories and the bitterness that these settlements generated led to a civil war that began in 1971 and over the next 25 years led to the loss of 120,000 lives (Chalk 1997).

packages promised in the Davao consensus, that were to be used towards redressing many of the disparities experienced. Furthermore, successive leaderships have still been unable to stem the corruption that “infiltrated Manila-appointed bureaucrats and politicians based in Mindanao” (Chalk 1997 in Wilson 2005, p.68). Rather than dealing with corruption and providing economic and social packages for the region, successive presidents have relied on military responses to address the challenges posed by these organisations (Liow 2006). This strategy is best exemplified by President Estrada who attempted to combat the insurgency and civil war with military force (Liow 2006). As a result, social and economic reforms or development were ignored under the Estrada regime and the deaths of hundreds of MILF supporters occurred. Despite attempts to eradicate this group, the MILF membership is still estimated to being around 12,500 armed fighters (Wilson 2005; International Crisis Group 2005; Reuters Foundation 2007).

In regards to the threat of international security, a recent concern relating to the MILF organisation is that they have allowed their training camps to be used by both al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah, an Indonesian terrorist organisation that has been closely linked to al-Qaeda (Wilson 2005; Harrison 2003; Abuza 2003; International Crisis Group 2005; Huang 2002; Bonner 2003). While some have attempted to link the MILF group with Al Qaeda and Jemmah Islamiyah, most acts of terrorism perpetrated by the MILF are not designed to promulgate the global agendas of these groups but instead are directed towards gaining autonomy, as well as economic and land packages for Mindanao (Liow 2006). Thus, whilst there have been some suggested links between these organisations, their interactions appear to be on the individual level, rather than being part of a larger global organised terrorist network.

Apart from the main insurgency groups mention above, there are two other groups that need to be discussed. The first is the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), a radical Islamic group with aims of pursuing a wider pan-Islamic ideology. The second is a smaller extremist group, known as the Rajah Solaiman Revolutionary Movement (RSRM). The ASG is perhaps the most widely acknowledged and radical of all Philippine Islamic groups (Wilson 2005). The ASG was formed around 1993 by members of the Filipino Islamic Brigade who had previously fought in Afghanistan (Chalk 1997; Wilson 2005). In 1995, roughly 200 of its members attacked a majority Christian town situated on the western coast of Mindanao, killing 53 people and wounding a further 44 (Wilson 2005). It is suggested that the massacre was also a warning to other Muslim groups not to cooperate with the government due to a statement later released by an ASG spokesperson who “criticised the mainstream MNLF leadership for betraying the Muslim cause” because they had entered into peace talks with the Manila government (Chalk 1997, p.90 cited in Wilson 2005, p.70).

Currently, it is estimated that the ASG consists of between “200 and 400 hard core members”, yet unlike the MNLF and MILF, both the United States and the Philippines government have made it their major terrorist group target for the Philippines region (Wilson 2005, p.70). However, unlike the two previous groups, the ASG has been linked to hundreds of kidnappings and deaths within the Philippines, and advocates a philosophy that “rejects autonomy or even co-existence with any other religions in Mindanao” (Chalk 1997; Wilson 2005, p.70). With regards to funding and financial support for the group, ASG appears to engage in a range of criminal activities to meet these needs, including kidnappings, extortion and involvement in the illicit narcotics trade (Turner 1995; Gunaratna 2002; Wilson 2005). For example, in 2002 the Libyan government paid the ASG between \$15 and \$20 million for the release of some hostages captured by the ASG (Abuza 2003). There is also substantial

evidence that the Abu Sayyaf Group has engaged in extortion through the collection of taxes (Turner 1995; Gunaratna 2002; Wilson 2005). Due to these criminal enterprises, many experts in the Southeast Asian region view the ASG as more of a dangerous criminal organisation, rather than as a formidable international terrorist threat (Wilson 2005).

Interestingly, aside from the activities engaged in by the ASG based in Basilin, the majority of political turmoil and terrorist acts committed within the Philippines have not been directed against foreigners (Wilson 2005). Indeed, the majority of both criminal and terrorist acts are committed “by poor Filipinos against other poor Filipinos” (Harrison 2003 p.2, cited in Wilson 2005). Thus, whilst the Philippines, and in particular the capital Manila, has one of the highest crime rates in the southeast Asian region, for the most part, tourists are not usually subjected to violent attacks (Harrison 2003). Instead, the violent kidnappings for which the Philippines have become infamous are aimed at the “wealthier indigenous Chinese businessmen” and have, for the most part, been organised and carried out by both corrupt police officers and non-Chinese Filipino gangs (Wilson 2005, p.66). Many of these Chinese gangs have now also moved into the illicit narcotics trade as well, a business that is strongly connected with triad gangs in southern China (Wilson 2005). In addition, there are now some indications that this drug trade is also financing political interests and terrorist groups within the Philippines (Abuza 2003; Sheridan 2004). Consequently, whilst there is clearly an association between certain terrorist groups and drug trafficking within the Philippines, clearly the main driving force for many of these terrorist organisations can be linked to the socio-economic and political disparities that have plagued the region.

It is important to note that whilst early funding and support for the ASG was provided by Osama Bin Laden’s associate Muhammad Jamal Khalifa, there is little evidence to suggest that the ASG is currently engaged in the wider al-Qaeda network (Abuza 2003; Harrison 2003; Wilson 2005). Other links between Jemaah Islamiyah and Abu Sayyaf have been alluded to, but again there is very little evidence to support the notion that Abu Sayyaf is in fact linked into their wider operations. Rather, instead of being part of an international terrorism network, it appears more likely that there are some linkages between individuals from these different groups. Whilst it is acknowledged that there may, of course, be lingering cells of Al Qaeda operatives who are networking with colleagues in other parts of Asia, this is more likely due to the Philippines high levels of corruption and political instability and its easy access to other parts of Southeast Asia. Therefore, the Philippines appears to remain a country of convenience for terrorists (Bonner 2003). As a result, the military alone cannot possibly deal with these groups or with the established Moro forces and the NPA (Abuza 2003; Dudley Knox Library 2003). As Abuza (2003) suggests, “-There are fundamental institution-building needs that can only be addressed over the long term” (p.114, cited in Wilson 2005).

Finally, the Rajah Solaiman Revolutionary Movement (RSRM) is a very small number of extremely radical Christian converts that have increasingly been carrying out terrorist attacks within the region (Chalk 2006; International Crisis Group 2005). Little is known of this group, but it appears that they are a “highly fanatical fringe element of Balik Islam (BI)” (Chalk 2006, p.1; International Crisis Group 2005). Established around 2002, their main aim is to create a “theocratic Islamic state across the Philippines” and is suspected of being Saudi financed (Chalk 2006; International Crisis Group 2005). However, the chance of this ideological goal occurring is extremely slim due to the fact that around 90 percent of the Filipino population is Roman Catholic (Wilson 2005). Little else is known about the RSRM, although it is important to not overlook their potential for terrorist acts in the future.

As demonstrated above, the Philippines has a number of different insurgent groups, each with their own political and ideological agenda. Moreover, their involvement in a variety of criminal ventures demonstrates the multiplicity of these actors. Whilst terrorism for financial gain is not seen as terrorism by definition, with regards to the Philippines it is clear that both the MNLF and MILF have resorted to these actions either out of greed or to continue to finance their insurgent activities.

Socio-Economic Concerns

In order to adequately address the prevalence of terrorism, one must first attempt to identify the root causes that led to the individuals or organisations grievance in the first instance. De la Roche states that terrorism “typically expresses a “chronic” grievance - one with a long history ...rather than a grievance about a single incident at a single time” (de la Roche in Deflem 2004, p.13; Abuza 2003b). Consequently, the implementation of terrorist acts to resolve grievances usually occurs at the point when the disparity between two groups of people has become so wide that they become disassociated from each-other. With regards to the Philippines, the statistics that support this statement are undeniable. As demonstrated above, minority groups within the Philippines, which in this case is centered on the Muslim populations of the southern regions, has experienced a long history of socio-economic and political disparities. These have led to on-going conflicts between various insurgency groups and the Filipino government.

Roughly 40% of the population live on less than \$1 a day, whilst the population levels are still increasing exponentially (Central Intelligence Agency 2007). The Filipino economy, due to poor performance in both the currency and equity markets is heavily dependent on the remittance of roughly US \$10 billion from Filipino’s abroad (Wilson 2005). Whilst the Philippines exports both electronic and farm produce to Japan and the United States, they are “vulnerable to market conditions” and fluctuations in the demand structure (Wilson 2005, p.72). Whilst the unemployment rates for this region are viewed as low (roughly 12.7 percent), this figure masks the fact that many are in menial jobs with appallingly low wages (Wilson 2005). To further exacerbate the conditions, there is no social security system in place which has led to widespread prostitution and vagrancy (Wilson 2005). In addition to the above economic situation, the Philippines also has another concern - widespread corruption. The Philippines is regularly rated as one of the most corrupt countries in the region (Newman 1999; Transparency International 2007). It is estimated that roughly 15 percent of the total government budget is lost through corruption at various levels, although it is suggested that this figure is probably conservative (Wilson 2005). A further 20 percent is utilised towards payment for “personnel services and pension payments” (Wilson 2005, p.73). Furthermore, 50 percent of the government’s budget is applied against the national debt making the economic situation for the country even more dismal. Consequently, only 15 percent of the government’s budget is allocated towards the rest of government services (Harrison 2003; Wilson 2005). Thus, the increasing economic concerns, encompassed with political and economic marginalisation experienced specifically within the Mindanao region has clearly played its part in the inception of, as well as the continuing insurgencies being experienced within the Philippines (Abuza 2003b; Hoddie and Harzell 2005; Cragin and Chalk 2003).

Addressing the Threat of Terrorism

Despite none of these groups really representing a major international security challenge, the Philippines government has received more than \$100 million from the United States in military assistance in 2002 alone, under the banner of the 'war on terrorism' (de Quiros 2003; Dalpino 2003; Burgess 2002; Supapo and Little 2004; Berrigan 2003). Indeed, whilst it could be argued that it was in the interests of the Arroyo government to play on the alleged links between the ASG and al-Qaeda in order to receive this financial assistance and training from the United States. In fact it would have been naïve to pretend that there were not ongoing internal conflicts, nor that there was any terrorism threat in the region. As mentioned previously, the economy was in tatters, and any financial assistance it was able to get would have been gladly received by the Philippines government. Secondly, with the levels of corruption, and bribery experienced and the levels of lawlessness undertaken by these different 'terrorist' groups, a perception of instability has been created within the region (Aquino-Gonzales 2007; Berrigan 2003). In addition, lack of faith in law enforcement had begun to permeate the region. Thus, with the inability to monitor all of the 7,100 islands completely and effectively, encompassed with the levels of criminality being experienced internally, the Philippines could easily become a safe-haven for terrorist groups that many had been warning about (Dalpino 2003).

Whilst the injection of \$100 million by the United States in an effort to address the threat perceptions of terrorism within the Philippines can be seen to be a positive step - as the Philippines economic situation is dire, and some law enforcement and military personnel are engaged in corruption - the real failure will come if all the money is kept within the Manila-based government (Dalpino 2003; Tadem 2006; Supapo and Little 2004; Hoddie and Harzell 2005). Firstly, this will widen the gap between the government and Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao further marginalising these groups. Secondly, weapons and military equipment will not assist in addressing the underlying causes of terrorism and its prevalence within the Philippines, nor will it resolve the marginalisation being felt by Muslim minority groups. Such actions have the potential of exacerbating the conflicts and tensions being experienced.

In addition to the financial assistance, the United States of America is also currently engaging in training exercises with Philippines forces. Whilst being beneficial from the point of knowledge transfer, these activities can also be used to mobilise foreign radical Islamic organisations into gaining support under the notion that the US are using the Philippines government to target the minority Muslim populations (Supapo and Little 2004). Finally, another major concern for the Arroyo government is the number of extra-judicial killings that are taking place (Reuters Foundation 2007). Whilst the Philippines has been described as still maintaining a semi-feudal system, with clan conflict rife, these extra-judicial killings actually weaken the legitimacy of both the law enforcement forces and government, thereby creating an environment that will continue to breed violence.

As we have already argued, terrorism is recognised as a criminal offence both at the domestic as well as international levels. As a result, there are certain procedures, specifically within the legislative and judicial systems, for addressing terrorists and their associated offences. However, the military campaign within the Philippines demonstrates that this principle no longer appears to apply in practice (Brzezinski and Myers 2004; Makdisi 2002; O'Day 2004). Rather, military actions, heavily imposed by governments are being used in an

attempt to eradicate all forms of terrorism. However, these actions invariably include the loss of innocent lives and infrastructure, as well as allowing for the possibility for widening the gap between government and citizens. This is especially the case with regards to the potential for human rights violations as well as perceptions of government and law enforcement legitimacy.

Terrorism as Crime

Widespread corruption, lack of economic resources and the multiplicity of motivations for terrorist acts demonstrates the difficulty in attempting to address the prevalence of terrorism by traditional methods. One possible way of limiting the threat of terrorism is to address how terrorism is firstly perceived, and secondly how it should be responded to militarily. Within the Philippines, acts of terrorism are used for both financial as well as political gain. Yet, despite current government initiatives, the pervasiveness of these offences does not appear to have reduced. Instead, increased military operations have impacted negatively on the current situation. The heavy-handed tactics employed by the government, and assisted by the current US deployment, rather than alleviating the threat, may actually exacerbate the conflict experienced within the Philippines. Consequently, rather than addressing the threat of terrorism they may assist in enticing external supporters for these organizations, which can have serious repercussions, not only for the Philippine's government, but also for wider regional security.

One of the biggest problems with the current military/terrorist relationship is the continued counter-responses from both parties that spirals and escalates the threat perceptions. For this reason, it is perhaps important to remember that whilst terrorism is a criminal offence, motivations are the important differentiator between those defined as criminal acts and terrorist acts. For example, some groups like the Abu Sayyaf are predominantly driven by criminal motivations (namely profit), rather than through any ideological cause. As no real differentiation is made by the government between these acts, the label "terrorist" can imply that there is an ideological motivation that is quite often lacking (Deflem 2004; O'Day 2004). Likewise, whilst for the most part engaging in 'pure' forms of terrorism, other separatist movements have also resorted to using terrorism for profit. These acts should not be attributed to the groups' ideological cause. Rather, criminal acts need to be identified as such to remove any ideological overtures from the offence so that people are no longer forced to choose between their ideological or religious viewpoints. The premise for this is that fewer people are willing or able to identify with a criminal that has broken the law, than a person that appears to be fighting for a cause. Furthermore, the removal of political or religious ideological overtones makes it less attractive for foreign extremists to become involved. However, in order for this strategy to be successful, extra-judicial killings, corruption and bribery currently experienced within the political, law enforcement forces and judicial systems need to be addressed, and there is little evidence that the government has been willing to seriously deal with these issues to date.

Conclusion

For the most part, socio-economic and political marginalisation has played a huge part in creating and exacerbating tensions within the region. However, financial motivations and the acts that they generate are increasingly playing a major role in the rationale of groups

that call themselves terrorist organisations within the Philippines. These terrorist acts are often difficult to separate from the criminal enterprises that appear to be motivating many of the offences. Consequently, the continuing violence has not only created a perception of instability within the region, but has also elevated the potential for future threats emanating from this region to the international security arena. As a result, the potential for the domestic threats to become linked to larger ideological causes has increased. In order to reduce the threat alternative approaches need to be utilised.

We would suggest that the primary way of effectively tackling the threat of terrorism within the Philippines is to address the root social causes, rather than attempting to simply eradicate all forms of terrorism through military force. Such force may actually assist in exacerbating the problems and may also involve the more radical Islamic international organisations who have the methodology for recruiting further supporters. Until political and economic conditions improve it is unlikely that these changes will occur. However, the recognition that a great deal of terrorism is criminal behaviour will play a key role in reducing the threat perceptions within the region. The use of the judicial system will assist in legitimising these actions, without exacerbating the threat of marginalisation. In addition, by limiting the heavy-handed tactics that the military employ, the focus of damage and destruction will be aimed at those engaging in criminal acts rather than at the government.

In conclusion, it is clear that the government needs public support to limit the spread of extremism - which can only be gained by the government demonstrating its willingness to address the root causes that have instigated the prevalence of terrorism, rather than providing opportunities which legitimise the acts of terrorism.

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