

University of Southern Queensland

***Redefining Domestic Counterinsurgency
Post-2001: Sulu Province, Republic of
Philippines.***

**A Dissertation submitted by
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For the award of
Doctor of Philosophy**



Abstract

The closure of the U.S. Military Bases in the Philippines in 2001 created a vacuum in regional defence both for the Philippines and the U.S. The U.S. lost its only South-East Asian military base, and the Philippine National Administration lost substantial foreign military aid which had been vital in helping it contain domestic insurgency, which for the most part was Muslim in nature.

After the terrorist events in the U.S. in September 2001, the Philippine National Administration of President Gloria Arroyo established closer military cooperation with the George W. Bush Administration. However, to receive increased U.S. military aid President Arroyo had to be “seen” to be containing or confronting Muslim insurgency/terrorism in her country. In other words, domestic counterinsurgency had to be redefined and readdressed.

This thesis examines the methods, and rationale, the Arroyo Administration has been using to confront insurgency in the Philippines, particularly in the province of Sulu in the southern Philippine region of Mindanao. It also questions whether the political and military measures taken by President Arroyo are necessary for national security or are an attempt to be seen as supporting the U.S. in their “Global War on Terror”, with the consequence receiving increased U.S. foreign military aid.

The methodologies adopted for obtaining data for this study have been archival research, and primary evidence gathering in the form of survey questioning from 306 residents of Sulu Province, as well as the questioning of 30 Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) paramilitary operatives.

This study demonstrates that the Arroyo Administration has used the questionable existence of a small terrorist cell, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) as an excuse to deploy thousands of Philippine military personnel to Sulu Province, as well introducing contentious parliamentary legislation. This, the dissertation argues has been an attempt to discourage any MNLF self-determination aspirations in Sulu Province.

Certification of Dissertation

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analysis, and conclusions reported in this dissertation are my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

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Glossary

AFP.	Armed Forces of the Philippines
AFSC	American Friends Service Committee: A Quaker peace group in the U.S.
ARMM.	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao: The ARMM originally consisted of Lanao del Sur, Magindanao, Tawi-Tawi, and Sulu. In September 2001 the province of Basilan and Marawi City were added. And in October 2006 the newly proclaimed province of Shariff Kabunsuan was added. In 2008 Shariff Kabunsuan was withdrawn from the ARMM due to constitutional irregularities
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
CBCP	Catholic Bishop's Conference of the Philippines
CE	Common era. Used in this study, as opposed to AD: <i>Anno Domini</i>
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CSL	Cooperative Security Location (U.S. specific)
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. (Australia)
GRP.	Government of the Republic of the Philippines
HDI	Human Development Index
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICFM	Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers
IMD	Interisland Migration Division. During the American period (1899-1935)
JI	Jemaah Islamiyah
JSOTF-P	Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MLSA	Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (U.S. and RP)
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
MNNA	Major non-NATO ally. Given by the U.S. to close allies who are not members of NATO.
MSIPS	Mid-scale infrastructure projects (U.S. projects)
NCCP	National Council of Churches of the Philippines
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NSCB	National Statistical Coordination Board.
NSO	National Statistics Office (Philippines)
NPA	New Peoples Army: the military wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines
OBC	Overseas Basing Commission (a U.S. Commission)
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Conference
OFWs	Overseas Filipino Workers
OPAPP	Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process.
OPS	Office of the Press Secretary (Philippines)
PEF	Peace and Equity Foundation (Philippines)
PPT	Permanent Peoples Tribunal
PNP	Philippine National Police
PSY	Philippine Statistical Yearbook: Updated versions are produced by the NSCB every October.
RP	Republic of Philippines
RSM	Rajah Solaiman Movement
SF	Special Forces
SOF	Special Operations Forces (U.S.)

SPCPD	Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development
SRSF	Special Regional Security Forces
SZOPAD	Special Zone of Peace and Development
U.S.	United States of America. U.S is used throughout this dissertation. The only exception being in the questionnaires, or direct quotes.
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
VFA	Visiting Forces Agreement
UN	United Nations
USD	United States Dollars

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Brief Overview to Research Dissertation.

1.1 Foreword

Just as the Hukbalahap (Huk) communist revolution in the decades following World War II saw a massive infusion of U.S. military assistance to the various Philippine administrations, as well as the ensuing civil unrest, the contemporary Moro revolution of the southern Philippines has seen history repeat itself. The majority Muslim provinces in this area—Mindanao—are a powder-keg and the unstable detonator is the province of Sulu in the Sulu Archipelago. The New People’s Army—the military wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines—still has a significant following in the remote jungles of the Philippines and their inveterate agenda is similar to the various paramilitary Muslim organisations in the southern Philippines, that is the right to self-determination free of U.S. influence and Manila oligarchies. The hypothesis of this dissertation, spelt out in this chapter, draws heavily on the aspirations of the Muslim Bangsamoro and the opposition to them from players that have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo.

In 1968, following the ‘*Jabidah* massacre’ involving a number of Muslim army recruits at Corregidor, an island located in the entrance of Manila Bay, Philippines, the first contemporary Muslim para-military insurgency group, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) was formed. When Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law in 1972 the MNLF could be best described as a ‘national insurgency, group, that is, antagonists fighting a national government which has some degree of legitimacy and popular support. With the formal recognition of the MNLF by the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1975, which is headquartered in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the MNLF could then be seen as a ‘liberation insurgency’ group, namely antagonists fighting a ruling government/group that can be seen as outside occupiers—for example, the former white minority government in South

Africa or the Afghan insurgency against the former Soviet Union occupation from 1979 to 1989.¹

When the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) was formed in 1984 from disgruntled former MNLF members, the southern Philippines then had its second Muslim para-military insurgency group. Given the subsequent hostilities which occurred between the MILF and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), and given that the OIC did not give it formal recognition, the MILF could have been described as a ‘national insurgency’ group.

In 1996 the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) signed a peace agreement with the MNLF. And in 2003 the GRP started formal peace talks with the MILF and a ceasefire was also agreed upon.

Following the terrorist attacks in the United States of America (U.S.) in September 2001 the MILF and the fledging shadowy Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) were included in the list of terrorist organisations which the U.S. saw as enemy combatants in the so called Global War on Terror. The MILF was removed from this list in 2003; however the ASG remains on the list.

1.2 Topic statement

Although the population of the southern Philippine province of Sulu (see Map 1.2) comprises approximately 90% Sunni Muslims, preliminary research indicates that the violence which has increased there in recent years is not associated with any transnational or global violent Islamic fundamentalist struggle—rather it appears primarily to be a local phenomenon focused on local issues. Moreover, some of the

¹ The OIC in 2008 had fifty seven members: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Benin, Brunei-Darussalam, Burkina-Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Cote d’Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyz, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi-Arabia, Senegal, Sierra-Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Suriname, Syria, Tajikistan, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Yemen.

violence may be seen as a manifestation of the historical ongoing insurgency movement in Sulu. The International Crisis Group report of 14 May 2008 stated emphatically that Sulu Province, is ‘the cradle of Muslim separatism in the Philippines’ and as such attempts to separate the insurgency movement from the population will fail: ‘the population is (*sic*) the insurgency’. The report went on further to suggest that the population of Sulu, especially outside of the capital of Jolo ‘views the AFP, which has thousands of military personnel in Sulu, as an army of occupation.’²

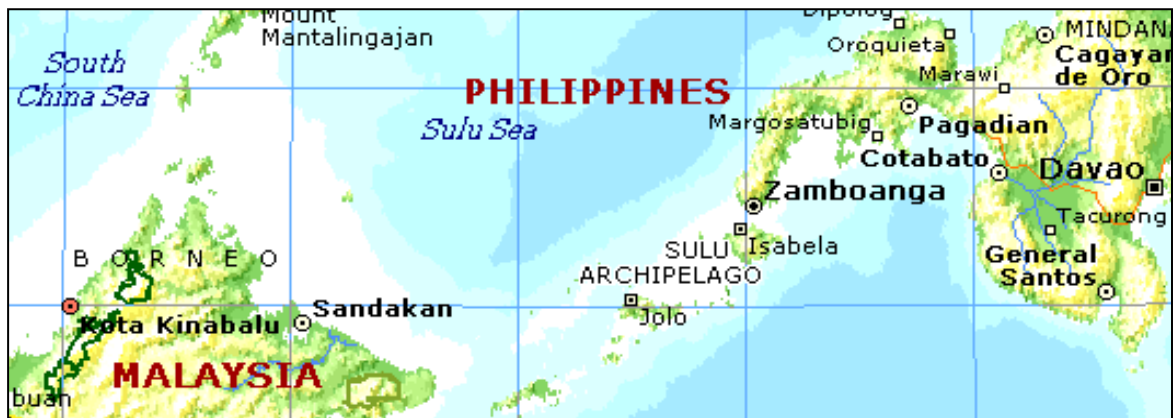
The violence referred to in this dissertation is that which is now occurring in the province of Sulu between the AFP, in accompaniment with the Philippine National Police (PNP), and some members of the population of Sulu, including at times the paramilitary forces of the MNLF. Furthermore, some of the recurrent violence is being blamed by local politicians on the bandit groups who had taken advantage of the lawlessness in the Sulu Archipelago to pursue their own agendas. Moreover, some of the more extreme violence occurring in the Sulu Archipelago is also being attributed, by the GRP, to members of the ASG.

In addition, one of the main aims of this research is to determine the type(s) of insurgency in this region and how and why such labels had been applied by the major actors there, particularly the GRP and the U.S. With that in mind, this researcher has identified two types, or categories, of insurgency, namely ‘national’ and ‘liberation’, referred in 1.1 Foreword, and both categories have been applied to the Muslim Bangsamoro³ struggle in the southern Philippines, especially in the Sulu Archipelago provinces.

² International Crisis Group, *Asia Report no. 152*, 14 May 2008, *The Philippines: Counter-insurgency Vs. counter-terrorism in Mindanao*. Retrieved June 2008, http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/south_east_asia/152_counterinsurgency_vs_counter_terrorism_in_mindanao.pdf.

³ Bangsamoro comes from the Malay word *bangsa*, meaning nation or people, and the Spanish word *moro*, from the older Spanish word Moor, the Reconquista-period term for Arabs or Muslims. Both Moro and Bangsamoro will be used in this dissertation.

It is not unusual for insurgency struggles to change complexion and to be re-categorised; that is from national to liberationist, as in the cases of South Africa and Rhodesia, or from liberationist to national, as was the case in South Vietnam after 1954. There have also been instances, as in China, where insurgency had shifted from national to liberationist, or a combination of both (during the Japanese occupation) and back to national after the end of World War II (although the Chinese communist forces may have seen their struggle as one of liberation insurgency). All of these examples are perceptions of the status of an insurgency that are dependant on philosophical belief or self-interest. The situation in the Sulu Archipelago, and especially the province of Sulu, is difficult to categorise unconditionally insomuch as the insurgency there is generally seen as liberationist by most Muslim states, and especially so by the OIC. This author raises the question as to whether the Filipino Administration of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo is attempting to change the official OIC perception to that of national insurgency and, if so, why and with what implications.



Map 1.1. Regional Map.
Source: www.afpc.org



Map 1.2 Sulu Province: Republic of Philippines. Jolo: Provincial Capital.
Source: www.afpc.org

1.3 Objectives and preliminary hypothesis

Given that the MNLF and MILF entered into peace talks/ceasefires respectively with the GRP, and that agreements were negotiated, the status of both the MNLF and the MILF at this time may now be seen by, for example, members of the OIC, as liberation insurgency groups: a less onerous insurgency label than that of national insurgency. Regardless of the perception of the MNLF being seen as a liberation insurgency group, they have since 1996 been involved in numerous armed encounters with the AFP in the southern Philippines, especially in Sulu. And at the same time the MILF has been accused by many, including Zachary Abuza, of offering training and equipment to the ASG.⁴ Given that these encounters did occur, it makes the perception of the Muslim

⁴ Refer. Z. Abuza, *Balik-Terrorism: the return of the Abu Sayyaf*, Philadelphia, Diane Publishing Co., 2005.

Bangsamoro paramilitary groups in the southern Philippines being seen as liberationist all that more difficult to comprehend. Moreover, given that Sulu is the stronghold of the MNLF and is recognised by the OIC then any national insurgency has to be blamed on another organisation, and this is where the ASG comes into focus.

With the above in mind, this dissertation has two related objectives. First, it aims to assess the degree to which the insurgency, or violence, now occurring in Sulu is fuelled by the Arroyo Administration's domestic counterinsurgency "hereafter referred to as COIN" policies, especially Republic Act no. 9372. As well, the non-compliance of sections of the 1987 Philippine Constitution will be addressed to ascertain if there is a link between the insurgency, or violence, in Sulu and this non-compliance. It should be mentioned here that Sulu is the only province in the southern Philippines that has maintained a static overwhelmingly Muslim population since the colonial periods. (See Chapter 2, 2.3 'Moro Minoritisation').

This study further asks whether the questionable and numerically small ASG in Sulu can be viewed as *convenient*, insomuch as it might enable the Arroyo Administration to draw attention to crimes committed by the ASG, and by drawing attention to ASG criminality the Arroyo Administration can claim that their insurgent actions, if indeed they are insurgent or just criminal, may have been inspired by the previous actions of the major Muslim para-military organisation in Sulu, namely the MNLF.

Second, it examines whether or not the contemporary COIN operations now occurring in Sulu, are in part directly attributed to international events which occurred as a result of the terrorist attacks in the U.S. in September 2001. Particular attention will focus on the Arroyo Administration's decision to allow specific U.S. foreign policy to play a role in Philippine domestic COIN policy in regards to alleged terrorist actions in Sulu. As well, the role of U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) in Sulu engaged in 'unconventional warfare' [operations conducted by an indigenous surrogate force, which is organised, trained, equipped and supported by an external source] will be

investigated.⁵ Furthermore, the U.S. SOF role in ‘foreign internal defence’ [activities conducted to organise, train, advise and assist host-nations military and paramilitary forces, and ensure that operations support U.S. national interests] will be accessed.⁶ The object of investigating the U.S. military presence in Sulu is to ascertain whether their presence is an exacerbating factor in the alleged insurgency in that region.

Therefore, the preliminary hypothesis that will be tested in this study is that the Philippine Administration of Gloria Arroyo whilst at ease with the perception of national insurgency occurring in Sulu is nevertheless concerned enough to enlist U.S. assistance in countering this threat. If the frequent military actions between the MNLF and the AFP are just a ‘flexing of muscles’, or moreover, a question of who actually has legitimacy or authority in certain areas, then the genuine insurgency must be attributed to the ASG, if indeed their existence in Sulu has been proven: the subject of which is dealt with in detail in Chapter 5 of this dissertation. With that in mind, the question to be asked is, ‘does this make the Arroyo Administration’s domestic COIN policies more easily accepted domestically as well as internationally?’ Furthermore, ‘does this in turn give legitimacy to U.S. COIN foreign policies and the U.S. military presence in Sulu?’

At the outset, the preliminary hypothesis would suggest that the Philippine Administration of Gloria Arroyo has orchestrated certain events enabling it to pursue more easily its domestic COIN policies. However, as research unfolds some of the more complex questions, the suggestion of orchestration may very well change.

1.4 Central questions

The specific central questions framed for this study are:

- (1) Does the Province of Sulu have a safer human environment at this time, as compared to pre 2001, because of the large contingent of AFP in the province? If Sulu Province is less peaceful now than pre 2001, what responsibility does the Arroyo Administration accept for this situation?

⁵ Focus on the Philippines, Special Reports, No. 1, *Unconventional warfare*, Bangkok, Focus on the Global South, January 2007, p. 13.

⁶ *Ibid.*

(2) Given that the Muslim struggle in the southern Philippines has been seen as liberation insurgency by many, including the OIC, is the Arroyo Administration trying to change the perception of this insurgency to one of national insurgency—bearing in mind that ‘national’ insurgency has the perception of being seen as a threat to internal national security? And, is this perception more relevant for Sulu Province because of the static majority Muslim population? More importantly, is the Arroyo Administration wittingly allowing the AFP to engage in armed clashes with members of the MNLF?

(3) Does the numerically small presence of the ASG in the southern Philippines, particularly in Sulu Province—where it can also be argued that their existence is questionable—warrant the harsh military action being undertaken by the AFP in that particular region and give legitimacy to the Arroyo Administration's COIN policies?

(4) Given that U.S. troops are stationed in the predominately Muslim Sulu Archipelago provinces of Sulu, Basilan and Tawi-Tawi, and are engaging in military operations as well as critical civil construction projects with the AFP, is this an exacerbating factor contributing to alleged insurgency in that area, especially the province of Sulu?

(5) Is the Philippine Administration of Gloria Arroyo supporting specific U.S. foreign policy as a part of the ‘Global War on Terror’⁷ in an endeavour to implement its own domestic COIN policies, especially in the Sulu Archipelago provinces? And by supporting the U.S. in ‘The Global War on Terror’ is there expectation that greater U.S. military assistance will be given to the Philippines?

(6) Are the military actions currently being undertaken in Sulu Province by members of the AFP and the shortcomings in the areas of economic stability, human rights and anti-corruption action in accordance with the provisions of the 1987 Philippine Constitution?

(7) Was the introduction in 2007 of Republic Act 9372 (An Act to Secure the State and Protect our People from Terrorism) just another tool to assist the Arroyo Administration’s domestic COIN policies? In particular, would this Act be beneficial to

⁷ In March 2009 the U.S. Defense Department officially changed the name of the international operations against terrorism from “Global War on Terror” to “Overseas Contingency Operation”. However, for the duration of this dissertation the term Global War on Terror will continue to be used.

the National Administration and in particular the AFP, if military encounters again occurred between the MNLF and the AFP in Sulu Province?

1.5 Literature review and scope of study

At the outset, it must be recognised that in any study which researches conflict between ethnic minorities and a national administration there will be many publications, journal articles, and indeed research papers that take completely opposing views as to who is regarded as the antagonist. The insurgency and COIN operations in the southern Philippines, Sulu in particular, are no exception.

Having painstakingly searched for relevant and quality literature and sources for this project (such as utilising search engines like Google Scholar and the University of Southern Queensland library databases and e-journals), this researcher found no journal article or research paper, apart from his own published in 2009,⁸ that specifically queried whether the Arroyo Administration was using the questionable existence of the ASG in Sulu Province to neutralise MNLF liberation insurgency aspirations. As will be demonstrated later in this dissertation, there is ample evidence to suggest that this query can be addressed in the affirmative. Moreover, many perused research papers were found to have made unfounded and ill-informed (unsubstantiated) claims that there is a bond or solidarity between the ASG and the MNLF and/or the MILF together with Jemaah Islamiyah (JI).⁹ This argument was further enriched by Rommel Banlaoi, a Professor of Political Science at the National Defence College of the Philippines¹⁰ who also claimed there was a link between the ASG and Al-Qaeda, and the MILF and Al-

⁸ B. East, *The Abu Sayyaf: Terrorism in Sulu Province, Republic of Philippines, or a convenient presence? Globalisation for the Common Good*, ISSN 1931-8138: Retrieved June 2009, <http://lass.calumet.purdue.edu/cca/jcgg/2009/sp09/jcgg-sp09-east.htm>

⁹ See for example. S. C. Cohn, *Countering the lingering threat of the Abu Sayyaf Group*, Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California. Retrieved October 2009, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA473871&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf> Also see. A. Peleo, *Living with a culture of conflict; Insurgency and the Philippines, Political Perspectives*, 1 (1): 2007. Retrieved October 2009, <http://www.politicalperspectives.org.uk/General/Issues/vi-1-2007/CIP-2007-01-04.pdf>

¹⁰ Banlaoi was also at one time a Vice-President for Administrative Affairs at the National Defence College of the Philippines.

Qaeda.¹¹ This claim was made in 2002, after President Arroyo gave unqualified support to President Bush in the Global War on Terror (at that time the MILF was still on the enemy combatant list of the U.S.). Four years later Banlaoi made an exaggerated claim that the ASG from 1991 to 2000 had ‘engaged in 378 terrorist activities, which resulted in the death of 288 civilians’, and also had ‘ventured into 640 kidnapping activities involving a total of 2,076 victims’.¹² As this study will show, these claims have (little or no) validity.

There have also been claims made that the historic 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement has brought peace to the southern Philippines—totally without foundation. Two conference papers, one in 2008 the other in 2009 made just such claims. The first was presented at the annual meeting of the ‘American Political Science Association’ (APSA)¹³ while the second was read at the annual meeting of the ‘International Studies Association’ (ISA).¹⁴ Although both papers were by the same author, the conferences were of international standard, and would have been peer-reviewed before publication. Chapter 4 of this dissertation constitutes a detailed analysis of the MNLF that will show the complete opposite of the claims made in these two conference papers. However, both papers are important insofar as they have some value in analysing central question 1 of this dissertation.

Amina Rasul, a Research Fellow with the Asian Institute of Management Policy Centre in the Philippines who specialises in minority representation in the Philippines, believes social inequities and violence are inexorably linked. She argues that where a section of the Philippine population feels marginalised, there exists the precondition for

¹¹ R. C. Banlaoi, The role of Philippine-American relations in the global campaign against terrorism: implications for regional security. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 24(2): August 2002: pp. 300-301.

¹² R. C. Banlaoi, The Abu Sayyaf Group: from mere banditry to genuine terrorism, *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 2006: p. 249.

¹³ T. Lee, 2008, *Civil-military relations and negotiated settlements in insurgencies: explaining the southern Thailand insurgency and the 1996 Philippine-Moro National Liberation Front Peace Agreement*. Paper presented at the annual 2008 APSA Conference, Boston, Massachusetts. Retrieved October 2009, http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p281103_index.html

¹⁴ T. Lee, 2009, *Civil-military relations and negotiated settlements in insurgencies*. Paper presented at the 50th annual 2009 ISA Conference, New York City. Retrieved October 2009. http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p311420_index.html

armed struggle.¹⁵ This is particularly relevant to the three Philippine provinces of the Sulu Archipelago, namely Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, whose culture and ethnicity are markedly different from the remainder of the Philippine population—with the possible exception of the other two provinces of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, (ARMM) namely, Lanao del Sur and Magindanao. Importantly, the major Muslim province in the Sulu Archipelago, Sulu, had until 1946 been a Sultanate, and as will be assessed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation the majority of Suluanos would prefer a return to what this form of government represented; namely Islamic principles. This, in turn, raises the question of whether past and present Philippine national administrations have been endeavouring to overturn a culture which has existed in Sulu for centuries.

In 1996 an historic peace agreement was signed between the MNLF—at the time the major Muslim para-military group in the Sulu Archipelago—and the Philippine Administration of President Fidel Ramos. This is commonly referred to as the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement. It is problematic whether the Muslim disquiet or unrest in the Sulu Archipelago would have lessened had the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement been fully implemented; which to date it has not. However, one critic, amongst many, who believed that this peace agreement was destined for failure was Ken Bauzon. In 1999 Bauzon published a critique of the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement¹⁶ and made the salient comment that he believed the culture of the AFP and PNP was completely different from the social culture of MNLF guerrillas, making integration, one of the major components of the agreement, impossible. Two years later, Merliza Makinano and Alfreda Lubang made a further assessment of the integration of the MNLF forces into the AFP and PNP. They found the following important shortcomings in the 1996 Agreement; first, that out of 21,200 members of the MNLF, less than 25% had been integrated into the AFP and PNP and; second, that less than 25% of MNLF members integrated into the AFP satisfied the minimal educational

¹⁵ A. Rasul, Poverty and Armed Conflict in Mindanao, in *The road to peace and reconciliation: Muslim perspectives on the Mindanao conflict*, Makita City, AIM Policy Centre, 2003, p. 125.

¹⁶ K. Bauzon, 1999, *The Philippines. The 1996 Peace Agreement for the southern Philippines: an assessment*. Retrieved 05 March 2007, http://www.ices.lk/publications/esr/articles_jul99/ESR-Philippines.doc.

standards.¹⁷ Makinano and Lubang were commenting on an important observation that by 2001 the essential provision of incorporating the majority of MNLF members into the AFP and PNP had unfortunately not yet been met. These writings provide a starting point in analyzing issues raised in central question 2.

In 2006 a report on poverty and violence in Sulu, entitled *Tabang Mindanaw study for Pagtabangan Basulta*¹⁸, was completed and compiled by two close associates, Victor Taylor¹⁹ and Abraham Idjirawi.²⁰ This report, which covered all eighteen municipalities in Sulu, was produced using statistical data available from a survey involving religious leaders, traditional leaders, and other members of the Sulu general public. The interviewees were asked questions relating to their state of well being and their personal safety. More importantly, the interviewees were asked to assess whether they thought the situation in Sulu regarding poverty and violence there had deteriorated in the last ten years. The findings of the report are relevant, in part, to central questions 1 and 3 of this dissertation. The difficulties associated with these researchers, Taylor and Idjirawi, undertaking first-hand fieldwork in Sulu were many. Nevertheless, the survey data obtained has provided invaluable information relevant to most questions raised in this study.

Central question 3 also questioned the necessity for the harsh military actions being undertaken by the AFP in the Sulu Archipelago as a result of COIN operations ordered by the AFP's Commander-in-Chief, President Arroyo. For COIN operations to

¹⁷ M. Makinano & A. Lubang, 2001, International Research and Outreach Programme: International Security Bureau, *Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration: an assessment*. Retrieved 07 March 2007, http://www.defait-maeci.gc.ca/foreign_policy/arms/pdf/Mindanaopaper.pdf.

¹⁸ V. Taylor, & A. Idjirani, 2006, *A Tabang Mindanaw study for Pagtabangan Basulta*. Retrieved April 2007, <http://www.yonip.com/main/articles/DEVELOPING%20A%20CULTURE%20OF%20PEACE%20FOR%20SULU%20Final%20Report.pdf>.

¹⁹ Victor Taylor has been involved in the peace process in the Southern Philippines for over a quarter of a century. He was a technical assistant to the GRP undersecretary of the Department of Defence. He was also on the panel that undertook the first peace talks with the Moro National Liberation Front in Jeddah Saudi Arabia in 1975. He lives in Jolo, Sulu. This author is in constant contact with Victor Taylor.

²⁰ Abraham Idjirani at the time of the writing of this dissertation was Secretary General of the Sultanate of Sulu and North Borneo. He has a Bachelor degree in Elementary Education, a Masters degree in Education and Bachelor degree in Civil Engineering. Both Taylor and Idjirani are Sunni Sulu Muslims.

be successful there are factors or practices that have to be taken into consideration. In the Rand National Defence Research Institute publication *Victory has a thousand fathers: sources of success in counterinsurgency*, Paul, Clarke and Grill argue that there are a number of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ factors and practices in COIN strategy. The ‘good’ factors and practices are necessary for success whilst the ‘bad’ contribute to the failure of the operation. This publication lists 15 good COIN practices and 12 bad COIN practices.²¹

In this study, Paul, Clarke and Grill researched 30 case studies of COIN worldwide which had been resolved from 1978—Nicaragua (Somoza)—to 2006—Nepal. In some cases the ‘legitimate’ or ‘elected’ administration was successful, in others the insurgency forces prevailed—COIN operations failed. The various Philippine insurgency groups, Huk, MILF, MNLF, and the NPA were not included in the study.²²

Although this publication investigated 30 case studies, the Philippine insurgency was not included. However the importance of this study, especially in relation to “good” and “bad” COIN practices can not be overemphasised. Accordingly, in Chapter 8 of this dissertation the “good” and “bad” COIN practices as espoused by Paul, Clarke and Grill will be compared with the COIN policies and operations that the Arroyo Administration adopted in Sulu Province.

A somewhat dated publication, *Measures in control of insurgency*, Pauker, 1962, stressed it was important that non-military measures were used when countering insurgency. Pauker—1917-2002, a consultant for the U.S. National Security Council from the 1960s to the 1980s—claimed President Magsaysay (1954-1957) success in partially controlling the Huk uprising was due to agrarian reform and having the

²¹ C. Paul, C. Clarke, & B. Grill, 2010, Rand National Defence Research Institute, *Victory has a thousand fathers: sources of success in counterinsurgency*. Retrieved August 2010, <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND-MG.sum.pdf>

²² The ASG is deliberately not included in this group of insurgents because this dissertation argues that the ASG is not an insurgency in the true sense.

Philippine Army respected by the local population.²³ This is in sharp contrast to the analytical findings of the “good” and “bad” COIN practices and factors in the Paul, Clarke, and Grill publication which are included in chapter 8 of this dissertation.

In, 2006, Peter Sales of Wollongong University, delivered a paper, entitled *The role of the Abu Sayyaf Group in the campaign against Islamic separatism in Mindanao*, to the 16th Biennial Conference of Asian Studies Association of Australia.²⁴ Sales had no doubt as to the existence of the ASG in the Sulu Archipelago—which is examined in detail in this study—although he made no specific reference to the ASG in the province of Sulu. He described the ASG as a band of thugs and criminals who had no commitment to any higher cause. He also claimed, in part, that the only cause of the ASG was the accumulation of money and local power through criminal activity. Sales may very well be correct as to the present motives of the ASG. However, when researching the ASG it is important to bring into the debate the original intentions of the ASG founder, Abdurajik Janjalani who was killed by the PNP on 18 December 1998 in Basilan Province. To do so will show that the ASG at some time may have been seen to have some claims to a liberating insurgency status, because Abdurajik Janjalani had a vision for an independent Islamic State in the southern Philippines. Sales does make important observations, not the least being that the Arroyo Administration’s domestic COIN policies are counterproductive because they are seen by many as an unnecessary show of strength by the AFP. This publication by Sales is important in addressing central questions 3, 4 and 5 of this study.

In 2009 Sales also published an analysis of the findings of the 2007 Philippine investigation by the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary

²³ G. Pauker, 1962, Rand Corporation, *Measures in control of insurgency*. Retrieved August 2010, <http://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/2006/P.2642.pdf>

²⁴ P. Sales, 2006, *The role of the Abu Sayyaf Group in the campaign against Islamic separatism in Mindanao*. Paper presented at the 16th Biennial Conference of Asian Studies Association of Australia. Retrieved March 2007, <http://coombs.anu.edu.au/SpecialProj/ASAA/biennial-conference/2006/proceedings.html>

Executions, Philip Alston.²⁵ It uncovered horrific cases of human rights abuses by groups, including the AFP, that appeared to follow a culture of impunity. The abusive nature of the Arroyo Administration's domestic COIN policies are interwoven throughout this report/paper. The findings of the paper mirror the questions, in part, posed in central question 6 of this dissertation. That is, are there shortcomings in the areas of human rights and anti-corruption that are in contravention of the 1987 Philippine constitution?

Eric Gutierrez and Saturnino Borrás have their own interpretation on why there has been an increase in contemporary violence in the Sulu Archipelago. According to them, it is the result of the proliferation of 'entrepreneurs in violence', whom they describe as those who use their reputations and capacity for violence to compete for the power to make decisions affecting inhabitants of a region.²⁶ Entrepreneurs in violence could well describe the bandit groups in the Sulu Archipelago, which at times also are loosely described as the ASG. As well, they suggest the term could just as easily describe the AFP, PNP, and the U.S. Special Forces for the actions they are taking in the Sulu Archipelago at this time. This publication by Gutierrez and Borrás is of particular relevance to central questions 1, 3 and 5 of this study. Further to the claim by Gutierrez and Borrás that the ASG could be seen as entrepreneurs in violence the *Economist*, in July 2009 made a similar claim. It asserted that the ASG had now devolved into criminal groups, especially in Sulu Province.²⁷ This publication by the *Economist* is relevant to central question 3 of this study.

The purpose of quoting the following paper authored by Malcolm Cook and Kit Collier is to emphasise that the situation in Mindanao, and the Sulu Archipelago in particular, can be portrayed differently by some academics—and in this case perhaps wrongly. For example, in the December 2006 paper presented at the Lowy Institute, entitled *Mindanao: a gamble worth taking*,²⁸ Cook and Collier follow the same line of argument that many other academics, including Zachary Abuza, do in relation to the violence in the Sulu Archipelago. For example, the paper makes the claim that the

²⁵ P. Sales, State terror in the Philippines: the Alston Report, human rights and counterinsurgency under the Arroyo Administration, *Contemporary Politics*, 15 (3): September 2009: pp. 321-336. Retrieved September 2009, <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all~content=a914507657>

²⁶ E. Gutierrez & S. Borrás, *The Moro conflict: landlessness and misdirected state policies*. Makita City, AIM Policy Center, 2003.

²⁷ Jolo Man, (no author) *Economist*, 392 (8640): July 2009: p. 40. Retrieved October 2009, http://www.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?story_id=14052248#

²⁸ M. Cook & K. Collier, *Mindanao: A gamble worth taking*. Lowy Institute Paper 17, 2006. Retrieved 14 March 2007, <http://www.lowyinstitute.org/Publication.asp?pid=511>

Philippines represents the ultimate ‘crusader nation’ in South-East Asia for foreign *jihadis*. A careful examination of Cook and Collier’s paper reveals a questionable statement that ‘American diplomats in Manila have referred to Mindanao darkly as the new Afghanistan’.²⁹ Unfortunately, they did not reference this statement. In all likelihood, the authors were referring to a statement which Joseph Mussomeli, the U.S. Embassy Charge d’affaires in the Philippines, made in 2005 that Mindanao ‘runs the risk of becoming another Afghanistan’.³⁰ When asked to substantiate his allegations, Mussomeli refused to elaborate.³¹ These claims were immediately refuted by Ignacio Bunye, a Philippine presidential spokesman.³² Statements such as that made by Mussomeli will be addressed in this dissertation when the question of U.S. foreign policy, in particular the Global War on Terror, and Philippine support of it are raised in central questions 2, 4, 5 and 7. Moreover, the relationship between Philippine domestic COIN policy and U.S. foreign policy on terrorism is also relevant to these central questions.

Cook and Collier may have been better informed had they read the 2000 publication by Danilo Vizmanos, *Through the eye of the storm*.³³ Vizmanos, who held various officer ranks in the AFP and the Philippine Navy was arrested, jailed, and tortured during the Marcos Administration for his anti-U.S. views, and national democratic stance. Now aged in his mid 70s he is still involved in the national democratic movement, and his sedulous criticism of U.S. involvement in Philippine COIN policies has seen him criticised by the government and the AFP alike.

The question of whether the Arroyo Administration was benefiting, or indeed profiting from solidarity with the U.S. in the Global War on Terror was raised in central question 5 of this study. The research analysis later in this study would suggest this to be true. This view of benefiting/profitting was raised by Robin Bowman in a paper

²⁹ Cook & Collier, *op. cit.*, p. vii.

³⁰ ABC Radio Australia, 12 April 2005, *Philippine Government denies South is becoming terror haven*. Retrieved 16 April 2005, <http://www.abc.net.au/ra/news/stories/s1343440.htm>

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ D. Vizmanos, *Through the eye of the storm*, Manila, Ken. Inc., 2000.

presented at the 2005 annual meeting of the International Studies Association.³⁴ The suggestions in Bowman's paper go somewhere in confirming the findings of this author and will be further expanded upon later in this dissertation.

Central question 7 of this study queried the need for the introduction of the 2007 Republic Act 9372. It sought to determine whether its introduction would be beneficial to the Arroyo Administration's domestic COIN policies. The wording, in the description of Republic Act 9372 is significant because it stresses the importance of securing the State and protecting the people. With that in mind, Eva-Lotta Hedman published a paper in *Asian Survey* (2005) stressing that President Arroyo in the immediate future would have to address the broader issues of democracy, safety, and stability in the Philippines.³⁵ It was suggested that President Arroyo's political survival depended on these issues being addressed. The predictions of Hedman will be utilised critically in addressing central question 7 of this study.

Zachary Abuza, arguably one of America's leading researchers of insurgency and terrorism in South-East Asia, published a previously mentioned report in 2006, entitled *Balik-terrorism: the return of the Abu Sayyaf*. Abuza believed the existence of the ASG in Sulu was genuine. Abuza normally takes a pro-Bush stance on the need for participation in the Global War on Terror, especially in the southern Philippines. However, he was critical of the Arroyo Administration's obsession with the pursuit of the ASG, believing that the communist New People's Army offers a greater threat to Philippine internal security.³⁶ A careful examination of Abuza's publication is essential when addressing all four of the central questions in this study.

Central question 3 of this study asks whether the small presence of the ASG in the southern Philippines, particularly in Sulu, warrants the attention given to it by the

³⁴ R. Bowman, 2005, *Is the Philippines profiting from the War on Terrorism?* Paper presented at the 2005 International Studies Association, Istanbul. Retrieved October 2009, http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p70955_index.html

³⁵ E. Hedman, The Philippines in 2005: old dynamics, new conjecture, *Asian Survey*, 46 (1): Jan/Feb. 2006: pp. 187-193.

³⁶ Abuza, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

AFP. It also questions the actual existence of the ASG, especially in Sulu. A scholarly paper, *The phenomenon of kidnapping in the southern Philippines*, written by Eduardo F. Ugarte for the *South-East Asia Research* in July 2008, examines the possibility that the crimes attributed to the ASG in the southern Philippines may be shared by many other local criminal organisations. The paper draws heavily on primary evidence and finds that the argument for attributing most if not all of the atrocities occurring in the southern Philippines to the ASG is just simply not valid. The paper goes on further to suggest that the kidnappings, ransom demands, and execution of hostages indicates that that these crimes ‘are instigated mainly by key power brokers, who engage or collaborate with local armed groups’.³⁷

In 2004 Patricio Abinales of the Kyoto University (Southeast Asian Studies) published a paper for the East-West Center entitled *American military presence in the southern Philippines: a comparative historical overview*, the findings of which are relevant to central questions 4 and 5 of this dissertation.³⁸ That is, the nexus between the Moro suspicion of the contemporary U.S. presence in Mindanao and the historical U.S. colonialism of a century earlier.

Formulating accurate and unbiased answers to central question 5 of this study poses difficulties of its own. There is evidence that past differences between the MNLF and the MILF have been healed – commentary on the official websites of both organisations (lawaran.com – MILF) and (<http://mnlf.net> – MNLF) praise each other for their individual efforts both in opposing aggression from the AFP and their quest for peace. Engaging in debate or discussion with members or sympathisers of the MNLF and the MILF by this researcher was straight forward (please refer to Chapter 1.3 Methodology). The problem lies in the accuracy of what was divulged to this researcher. However such feedback did paint a clearer picture of perceptions and positions taken on key issues by various groups.

³⁷ E. F. Ugarte, *The phenomenon of kidnapping in the southern Philippines*, *South-East Asia Research*, 16(3): July 2008: p. 293.

³⁸ P. Abinales, *American presence in the southern Philippines: a comparative historical overview*, *East-West Center Working Papers*, (7): October 2004: pp. 1-20.

There is no shortage of official commentary on the MNLF and the MILF from the Arroyo Administration and U.S. sources. The Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process,³⁹ and the United States Institute of Peace,⁴⁰ respectively, are ideal sources about such positions and policies. An excellent and recognised unbiased peace NGO specialising in conflict resolution in the southern Philippines is the Mindanao Peace Weavers,⁴¹ and the findings of this NGO will be utilised in this researcher's analysis, especially the "peace and solidarity mission" undertaken by this NGO in March 2005.

Central question 5 brought into this study specific U.S foreign policy and how this aligned with Philippine domestic policy. Alfred W. McCoy argues in *Policing America's Empire: The United States, The Philippines, and the rise of the surveillance state*, that this sedulous arrangement between the U.S. and the Philippines has existed for over a century and continues to prevail. Consider McCoy's comments below.⁴²

For well over a hundred years, a transnational alliance of U.S. and Filipino forces has provided security at the price of compromising human rights and slowing social progress...Whenever this brittle polity and its established beliefs have faced a serious challenge from the social margins, U.S. intervention has stiffened the Philippine security forces, preventing both political compromise and social change.

During the past forty years...each infusion of U.S. military aid has rearmed Manila for a renewed war on the Islamic secessionist struggle that has simmered in the southern islands since the early 1970s.

The last word on McCoy's assessment of the closeness of the Bush and Arroyo administrations and their joint determination to suppress any nationalistic aspirations from minority groups in the southern Philippines is described thus:

³⁹ See: Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process. http://ph.88db.com/ph/Services/Post_Detail.page/community_clubs_organization/Government/?PostID=108929

⁴⁰ See: United States Institute of Peace. <http://www.usip.org/>

⁴¹ See: Mindanao Peace Weavers. <http://www.mindanaopeaceweavers.org/>.

⁴² A.W. McCoy, *Policing America's Empire, The United States, The Philippines, and the rise of the surveillance state*. Wisconsin, The University of Wisconsin Press, 2009.

While Bush and Arroyo toasted the success of their combined antiterror operations against Muslim militants in the southern Philippines, Filipino military assassins were targeting social activists across the archipelago. Admittedly, the U.S. counterterror operations in Mindanao tried to balance military aid with social development; yet the sheer power of the American alliance in a poor society with weak institutions induced a shift toward repression and reaction.

Insurgency, like all conflicts, must invariably end at some time. Connable and Libicki, in their publication, *How insurgencies end*, 2010, make some interesting observations and predictions. Their research did a quantitative and qualitative analysis of 89 insurgency cases—the Philippines included. The following salient points are particularly interesting inasmuch they can relate to the insurgency in Sulu Province, or more broadly the southern Philippines. They indicate that the insurgency in the southern Philippines will be long-lived.

- Insurgencies with more than two identified parties involved have longer, more violent, and more complex endings. (NPA, MILF and MNLF—this author's addition)
- Governments do slightly better with no external support. Once support is given, it almost always creates a dependency on the external supporter. (Since 1970—the formation of the MNLF—the U.S. has been assisting Philippine COIN. This author's addition).
- Insurgency is an endeavour best practiced in rural areas or a combination of rural and urban areas. (The MNLF, MILF, and the NPA all have their camps in rural areas—this author's addition)⁴³

The works cited above, therefore, have assisted somewhat in the framing of the central questions of this study, particularly whether or not the Muslim insurgency struggle in Sulu ought to be seen as liberationist or national. Given the dearth of sound research and writings on this dissertation topic, it is an aim that the findings of this study will go some distance towards addressing the gap in this field of study to date.

⁴³ B. Connable & M. Libicki, 2010, Rand National Defence Research Institute, *How insurgencies end*. Retrieved August 2010, <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND-MG965.sum.pdf>

1.6 Relevant theories: historic and contemporary

1.6 (i) Historic:

Franz Fanon, an anti-colonialist from Algeria, wrote in 1963 ‘the starving peasant, outside the class system, is the first among the exploited to discover that only violence pays’.⁴⁴ Fanon advocated insurgency accompanied by violence against the French colonial rule in Algeria. The Algerian insurgency could be described as classic liberation insurgency—and it was successful. At the same time that Fanon was advocating violent liberation insurgency a French military officer, David Galula, who saw the Algerian insurgency as national insurgency wrote *Counterinsurgency warfare: theory and practice*.⁴⁵ In part, Galula argued that the way to defeat insurgency was to have the support of the local population. And that involved using propaganda, the spending of money on public utilities, and offering a place to the insurgents in the COIN forces. Thirty years later the GRP offered similar terms to members of the MNLF in the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement. However, as it will be shown later in this study, this has still to be successfully implemented.

Importantly, in the Algerian ‘liberation’ war of the 1950s and 1960s, the United Nations (UN) gave support to the French Government’s COIN operations, although Arab and communist members of the UN opposed the French operations. By contrast, in the U.S. COIN operations of the Vietnam Conflict, from the early 1960s, the UN was generally opposed to the U.S. occupation. Importantly, the Secretary General of the United Nations at the time, U Thant, claimed in 1967 that the Vietnamese were fighting a war of national independence, not a war of communist aggression.⁴⁶

The French colonial forces defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 could have been seen as successful liberation insurgency. Furthermore the 1970s defeat/withdrawal of the U.S.

⁴⁴ F. Fanon, *The wretched of the Earth*, London, Penguin, 1967. p. 47.

⁴⁵ D. Galula, *Counterinsurgency warfare: theory and practice*, New York, Praegar, 2006. (republished)

⁴⁶ H. Levien, *Vietnam: myth & reality*, Sydney, Bridge Printery Pty. Ltd, 1967, p. 1.

forces in Vietnam and the eventual overthrow of the corrupt Thieu regime could also be seen as successful liberation insurgency.

1.6(ii) Contemporary:

In 2004 Steven Metz and Raymond Millen completed a study for the Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College entitled *Insurgency and counterinsurgency in the 21st Century: reconceptualizing threat and response*.⁴⁷ The underlying theme of their report was that after the terrorist attacks in the U.S. in September 2001, COIN operations throughout the world must be made a priority in U.S. foreign policy. They stressed that where insurgency is seen as a liberating cause it must be reversed, and the insurgency must be perceived as being national insurgency. This recommendation is highly relevant to the current situation in the Sulu Archipelago provinces, especially the stronghold of the MNLF, Sulu.

In the same year, Robert Tomes, a Senior Advisor to the Technical Director, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency completed a report entitled, *Relearning counterinsurgency warfare*.⁴⁸ In the report Tomes drew heavily on past insurgency/counterinsurgency theorists, in particular Roger Trinquier, Frank Kitson and David Galula. Tomes stressed that for counterinsurgents to be successful, they have to develop and deploy psychological operations units in conjunction with propaganda operations as well as social service units that foster the impression that the government is addressing underlying socio-economic problems. More importantly, the counterinsurgents need to avoid negotiations until they are in a position of strength. This recommendation also relates closely to the current situation in the Sulu Archipelago region.

In 2009, David Kilcullen, a former Australian military officer and COIN theorist based in the Pentagon, wrote of his experiences in various countries that had insurgency issues. In his publication, *The accidental guerrilla: fighting small wars in the midst of a*

⁴⁷ S. Metz & R. Millen, 2004, *Insurgency and counterinsurgency in the 21st Century: reconceptualizing threat and response*. Retrieved August 2007, <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/ssi/insurgency21c.pdf>

⁴⁸ R. Tomes, 2004, *Relearning counterinsurgency warfare*. Retrieved September 2007, <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/04spring/tomes.pdf>

big one, Kilcullen stressed that for COIN to be successful, military security forces had to have a continuous presence.⁴⁹ He also argued that the security forces had to establish alliances with local leaders, who could establish self-defence units from the local population, who in turn would work in tandem with the security forces. Kilcullen iterated that the military forces had to adopt the policy of being seen to assist the local population without having the appearance of being permanent. Almost everything that Kilcullen advocated would fail in Sulu, because the military security forces, as will be demonstrated later in this dissertation, are seen by the local population in general to be outside occupiers.

1.7 Research methodology

1.7(i) Personal communication.

To conduct successful research for this study this author had to rely heavily on personal communication as one essential method of obtaining primary evidence, and it must be recognised that without this methodology this study would have been made more difficult. Although this researcher corresponded with many players in the peace processes in the southern Philippines, all of whom are acknowledged, it was informant Victor Taylor (see footnote 12 of this chapter) whose correspondence contributed to the vast amount of information needed to successfully research this study. Although a critic of Philippine President Gloria Arroyo, and some of her more contentious domestic policies, Taylor has nonetheless maintained a professional objectiveness in all his research and writing. His professional objectiveness has enabled this author to trust his judgement when introductions were made to other informants. Although there may be some who claim that Taylor exhibits subjectiveness when analysing contentious issues, the evidence put forward to back up such a claim is simply incorrect. When events involved alleged Moro injustices, Taylor's assistance to this author was always of the highest professional standard, and helped in framing and generating information about central questions of the study, especially central questions 3 and 5.

⁴⁹ D. Kilcullen, *The accidental guerrilla: fighting small wars in the midst of a big one*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 2009. (various pages)

1.7 (ii) Data collection and fieldwork.

This study accessed, both primary and secondary archival and documentary material. These included official government records, reports from the various NGOs in the Philippines who specialise in assistance to persons in conflict areas, scholarly journals and newspaper articles, and electronic historical data. However, the most important and relevant source of primary data was the questioning of a random selection of Sulu residents (Suluanos).

Due to the remoteness of Sulu, as well as civil unrest and violence, it was not possible for this researcher to conduct personal field work there. Moreover, Sulu has been seen as a war zone in contemporary times. Although given certain assurances of personal safety to this researcher by Muslim friends/informants in Sulu, the possibility of injury could not be ruled out entirely. Furthermore, due to the sensitive nature of researching certain Islamic issues, precautions, in the form of extensive reading on such issues, was undertaken. As well, due to the volatile situation existing in Sulu, the collection of information and data, especially how it related to the research, had to be reassessed. This reassessment of research methods was made possible by following the methodology suggested for research in war and conflict areas by Barakat, *et. al.* in the journal article, *The composite approach: research design in the context of war and armed conflict.*⁵⁰

The problems of researching remotely in a war zone are not new. The issue of researching remotely can be seen as a quodlibet. Some academics may approve of the effectiveness of the methodology while others may see it as an amorphous exercise. However, Amnesty International has had no problem researching a war zone remotely—and effectively doing so. Being concerned for the safety of their field officers they have adopted this methodology often. In 2009 Scott Edwards of Amnesty International USA, presented a paper at the International Sudan Studies Association in Pretoria, South

⁵⁰ S. Barakat, *et. al.* The composite approach: research design in the context of war and armed conflict, *Third World Quarterly*, 23(5) September 2002: pp. 991-1003. London, Carfax Publishing Company, 2002.

Africa. The title of his paper was *Field work from the sky: remote data collection from active conflict zones (the case of Darfur)*. In his paper he described how data was collected by remote sensing technology, that is satellite imaging or satellite message receiving—this information was then relayed to a central data collection base. Edwards also made the point that when evidence was collected locally it was not possible, in most cases, to have collectors deliver this data personally to a data collection base.⁵¹

Given that Edward's case study was Darfur and this researcher's case study was the Philippine province of Sulu there were some similarities, albeit Darfur would be classified as a much more volatile war zone than Sulu Province. However, the collection of data and its transmission from both war zones would be similar, insomuch that the collectors would have to rely on reception and transmission of initial instructions and data by cellular phone—both regions have very limited copper landline infrastructure—and the cellular phone transmission is satellite direct. The difference between the despatch of written data from Darfur and that of Sulu Province was that it is almost impossible from Darfur and would be subject to AFP scrutiny and inspection from Sulu—which occurred.

The methodology adopted by Amnesty International and this researcher was similar in some respects, albeit the collectors in Darfur would be in more danger from armed forces than the Sulu collectors. However, initial reliable remote data collection from these areas was possible by satellite technology.

Critical to the entire research was the distribution and collection of 306 questionnaires distributed to Suluanos, of which 206 were from the Jolo Municipality, and 100 from municipalities outside of Jolo, namely Indanan, Talipao and Patikul. It was unknown, nor indeed was it asked from respondents, whether they were members of the MNLF, either as paramilitary operatives or administrative staff—a number of MNLF paramilitary operatives were interviewed at a later date. Prior to personal interviewing,

⁵¹ S. Edwards, 2009, *Field work from the sky: remote data collection from active conflict zones (the case of Darfur)*. Retrieved August 2010. <http://www.amnestyusa.org/science/FieldWorkFromTheSky.pdf>

an application for ethical clearance was submitted to the Ethics Committee of the University of Southern Queensland. This was approved on 17 July 2008 (Reference no. HO8REA040). The distribution of questionnaires and replies utilised email, surface mail, and telephone communication. However, the most numerically successful form of distribution of questionnaires was achieved by transmitting a cover page and a questionnaire,⁵² to a clerical facilitator in Jolo City, capital of Sulu Province—thus, the distribution of the questionnaires to respondents in Jolo City was undertaken in August 2008. To ensure that the most appropriate clerical facilitator was chosen for this task, it was necessary to ‘interview’ a number of volunteers who had replied to a request for assistance in the distribution of questionnaires in the municipalities of Sulu. Consequently, a 34 year-old tertiary educated Muslim female of Tausag ethnicity, Nur Ainie Idjilani, who was fluent in English was chosen.⁵³ Her references were excellent, and her work experiences, both locally and internationally were well documented—when researching remotely it is imperative that a researcher confirms the credentials of facilitators who are willing to help. Idjilani also sought the assistance of four tertiary educated female Muslim helpers who volunteered to be enumerators and/or translators.

Although Idjilani’s English was good, it was not perfect. It also has to be remembered that the Tausug language is spoken by only a little over one million people throughout the world, and there are a number of local dialects of Tausag spoken in Sulu. Furthermore, some English words such as ‘counterinsurgency’, have no Tausug equivalent: this is further expanded on in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, where interviews with MNLF operatives are analysed. Appendix E is a confirmation of assistance from Idjilani, as well as an explanation of the whereabouts of the camp where MNLF paramilitary operatives were interviewed.

As well as answering the multiple choice questions, the respondents had the opportunity to make comments on eleven of these questions, as well as an overall comment at the end of the questionnaire, if indeed they so desired. Overall there were 95

⁵² See appendices A & B. The questionnaire in the Tausag language is also in Appendix B.

⁵³ See Appendix C for curriculum vitae of Nur-Ainie J. Idjilani.

comments written on the questionnaires that were distributed to respondents in the Jolo area. Of the 95 comments received, some were religious in nature, some were angry, some were very poignant, and some were almost pleading for peace and understanding of the problems which they were experiencing in their municipalities.

Section A of the questionnaires dealt with the personal profile of the respondents. At first glance, some numbers in certain categories may seem ‘weighted’. An explanation of these seeming numerical imbalances is covered later in this chapter in the sub-heading, 1.8 ‘Personal Profile of Questionnaire Respondents’.

The questionnaires were specifically designed to encourage respondents to make known to this researcher exactly how they felt about certain issues on security, governance, and their general well being. It was important to extract their feelings, aspirations and in some cases predictions if the central questions of the study were to be properly addressed, especially the central questions dealing with insurgency and COIN. One of the most difficult central questions to be addressed was the presence of U.S. military forces in Sulu. A gradual ‘leading up’ to the more contentious question of their feelings about foreign troops in Sulu had to be undertaken. This was achieved by asking questions about their knowledge of the Arroyo Administration’s COIN policies, the terrorist attacks in the U.S. in 2001 and other Global War on Terror activities.

These questionnaires distributed in Jolo were mostly in English, although some were in the Tausag language. However, where a respondent did not speak English, or was illiterate the questionnaire was verbally translated into Tausug and another clerical facilitator wrote down the responses in English. All completed questionnaires were despatched from Jolo via United Parcel Service, eventually being delivered to this author by Australia Post. United Parcel Service was recommended by the facilitator because of the notoriously inefficient and corrupt practices of the local postal service in Sulu. When the completed questionnaires were received by this researcher, they were assessed for authenticity and then categorised and analysed according to the study’s central questions.

The province of Sulu consists of 18 municipalities. Many of these municipalities were experiencing military operations and it was not possible to interview respondents in their homeland provinces. This problem was partially overcome by interviewing respondents from some municipalities when they were in Jolo City. Jolo, apart from being the capital of Sulu Province, is, at the same time, a 'melting pot' of people from other neighbouring municipalities. As well, Suluanos from neighbouring municipalities travel to Jolo City frequently to take advantage of the well-stocked local markets.

To ensure confidentiality and anonymity all returned questionnaires were allocated a code number. After the recording of answers, any electronic returned questionnaires were permanently deleted from the electronic records, and all answers to surface mail questionnaires were coded and recorded and then the questionnaires were securely stored (these completed questionnaires are available for scrutiny if deemed necessary).

Such is the importance of the returned questionnaires to the central questions of the dissertation that Chapter 3 is devoted almost entirely to the analytical interpretation of the answers and the accompanying comments from respondents in the sections dealing with general knowledge, security, and governance. The importance of the presence of the MNLF paramilitary forces in Sulu, which was included in the questionnaire section dealing with 'security' is dealt with in Chapter 4 of this study.

Beyond the 306 general questionnaires distributed to residents of Sulu Province, another 30 questionnaires were distributed to paramilitary members of the MNLF in early November 2008 and they were received by this author in late 2008. It was deemed necessary to try to interview at least some members of the MNLF because this study endeavoured to try to understand the motives for 'resistance' or any insurgency action of the MNLF in Sulu. The 30 returned questionnaires, together with personal comments from the MNLF operatives in Sulu, account for almost the entire analytical discussion in Chapter 4 of this dissertation. The logistics involved in obtaining these 30 questionnaires

were complicated. In brief they involved Idjilani requesting the assistance of a relative, who was a member of the MNLF. This member of the MNLF was required to travel to the remaining MNLF camp in the Sulu hinterlands, to conduct interviews. This camp is under the control of the MNLF's Provincial Chairman, Khaid Ajibon, and is Barangay Marang (Marang Village) in the municipality of Indanan. The MNLF interviewer requested that he remain anonymous: his request was complied with. The questionnaires for the MNLF operatives were in Tausag,⁵⁴ and English.⁵⁵ The simplicity of the questions had a purpose: contentious questions may have been seen as suspicious. The overriding objective of the questionnaires was to encourage further comment, and this it achieved in 13 replies (these completed questionnaires, together with translated comments, are also available for scrutiny if deemed necessary). The number of questionnaires which had comments may appear minimal, however it must be remembered that the MNLF has been engaging in what they see as justifiable insurgency for over three decades. Furthermore, questions originating from an Australian researcher may have been seen to have an alternative motive—after all Australia and the U.S. are close allies, and the U.S. has troops in Sulu.

Interviews with other major players in the southern Philippines peace processes, such as Eugene Martin, of the United Institute of Peace, have been conducted by either electronic mail or personal interview through telecommunication. This researcher also engaged in dialogue through forum debate and discussion with members of the various electronic Islamic and Bangsamoro organisations. The researcher refers the reader to *Going online: doing qualitative research in cyberspace* by Liamputtong and Ezzy for suggested methodology that was used as an electronic tool for research.⁵⁶ Moreover, this study would not have been possible had it not been for the valuable archival material and introductions from the many friends and informants which this researcher has corresponded with over the years. All personal communication and assistance from key players in the peace processes in the southern Philippines is acknowledged.

⁵⁴ Please see Appendix D.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ P. Liamputtong & D. Ezzy, *Qualitative research methods*, 2nd edition, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 2005.

The alleged presence of the ASG in Sulu seems to have enabled the Arroyo Administration to enact its domestic COIN policies and has been the catalyst for U.S. presence in Sulu. With that in mind, dialogue with members of the ASG would have been helpful. However, there are only an estimated 200 members of the ASG in the Sulu Archipelago region, and as mentioned their viable existence as an organisation is questionable, especially in Sulu Province. Moreover, given that the ASG is classified as a terrorist organisation, and is included in the list of enemy combatants in the Global War on Terror, dialogue with this group was neither possible nor indeed was it sought.

Important to the research of the study was a comparison of the some of the questions and findings of the 50,000 word research document authorised by Taylor and Idjirani, entitled *A Tabang Mindanaw Study for Pagtabangan Basulta* with the findings of this researcher.⁵⁷ The number of respondents in the *Tabang Mindanaw* study was slightly less than 200, whereas the number of respondents to the questionnaires distributed and collected by this researcher was just in excess of 300. Whereas the *Tabang Mindanaw* study focused mainly on personal issues such as safety and living standards, this researcher's questions attempted to find answers about Suluanos' knowledge of insurgency and COIN in their province. Nevertheless, a number of questions were similar and relevant insomuch as a comparison was made of answers to ascertain if the situation had changed in Sulu between the dates of the two surveys in 2006 and 2008.

The importance/significance of generating information from the grassroots localities of Sulu Province can not be overemphasised. Whilst the research conducted by Taylor and Idjirani in 2006 identified areas of concern to selected groups in Sulu, the surveys, with accompanying comments, conducted by this researcher in 2008 went much further. Moreover, the interviewing of the 30 MNLF paramilitary operatives, it is suggested, has a uniqueness about it (this uniqueness is further expanded upon in Chapter 4 of this dissertation). The information generated from the surveys conducted by

⁵⁷ Please refer to "Literature Review", and the corresponding reference footnotes 10, 11, & 12.

this researcher is original. This originality has helped in filling an identified gap in literature and knowledge of this field of study.

1.8 Personal profile of the August 2008 questionnaire respondents

Section A of the questionnaire dealt with the personal profiles of the individual respondents. This was necessary to establish how the factors of security, governance, and personal situations might be conditioned by ethnicity, age, gender, education, and religious belief. The graphs included in this chapter give a numerical breakdown of the personal profiles of the survey respondents. Although 306 questionnaires were returned, some questions were unanswered. The alpha 'N' indicates the number of completed responses to that particular question. The alphas 'Ns' (in Question 1) indicate the respondents who did not wish to have their gender recorded. Graph 1.1 on 'gender' is the only graph in this survey which records the number of non-complying respondents, and is shown as D.N.A. (did not answer). It was not deemed necessary to record the D.N.A. in any other question. Graph 1.2 on 'age' only records the number of respondents who complied.

Question 1: My gender is: (Graph 1.1)

Options: Male. Female.

Response: N = 298 (of 306) Male=45.10% Female=52.94% Ns=1.96%

Interpretation of the Graph 1.1 (see p. 33)

Question 2: My age group is. (Graph 1.2)

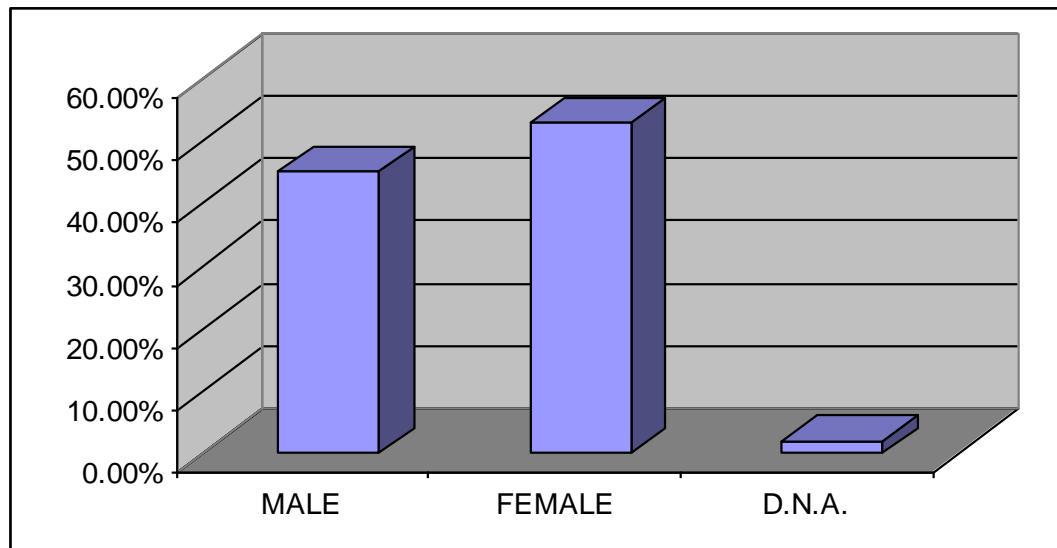
Options: 25-34. 35-44. 45-54. over 55.

Response: N=288 (of 306) Under 25= 9.72% 25-34=51.39% 35-44=16.67% 45-54=13.54% over 55=8.68%

Interpretation of the Graph 1.2 (see p. 33)

Graph 1.1. Personal profile: gender.

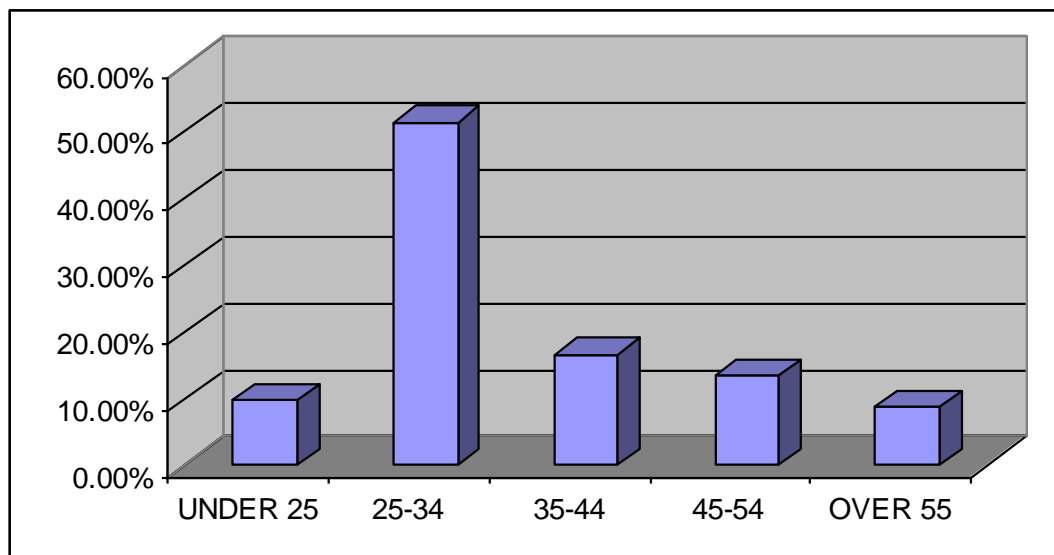
Response: N = 298 (of 306) Male=45.10% Female=52.94% Ns=1.96%



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu (with the assistance of local research facilitators)-see Methodologies section in Chapter 1.

Graph 1.2. Personal profile: age.

Response: N=288 (of 306) Under 25= 9.72% 25-34=51.39% 35-44=16.67% 45-54=13.54%
over 55=8.68%



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu

Preliminary analysis of the gender of respondents.

All effort was made to achieve an equal number of male and female respondents. The ratio of female respondents to male respondents (who disclosed their gender) was 54% to 46%. A reason for the higher number of female respondents than male respondents may be the slightly higher ratio of females to males in Sulu. The 2000 Philippine “Census of Population and Housing” (released in September 2002), showed (in rounded figures) that Sulu had a population 619,668 residents, of which 51% were female and 49% were male.⁵⁸ As well, the slight variation favouring female respondents may have been partly due to cultural factors. The Tausag male, especially those in the over 40 year age bracket, may have felt a little uncomfortable with being interviewed by younger and better educated Muslim females (the principal clerical facilitator was a female of Islamic faith as were the four other female facilitators).

Preliminary analysis of the age of respondents.

The minimum age sought for respondents was set at 25 years. This was because Question 18 of this survey refers to the respondent’s perception of the situation in Sulu 10-20 years ago. Moreover, the dissertation makes reference to the MNLF and the ASG in Sulu, whose existence in this province dates from the early 1970s and the early 1990s respectively. Consequently, it was felt by this author that the answers would be more accurate if respondents had actually “witnessed” the formation of these groups, or been of sufficient maturity in terms of age, to comprehend some of the more violent incidents involving the AFP, MNLF and ASG in the 1990s and/or the first years of the 21st century.

There may appear at a preliminary glance of Graph 1.2 to be a disproportionate percentage of respondents under 35 years, however some of this disproportion may be reflective of the following points:

⁵⁸ 2000 Census of Population and Housing, NSO. 2002 Press Release. (NSO- Philippine- National Statistics Office.) Retrieved 2007,

<http://www.census.gov.ph/data/pressrelease/2002/pr02144tx.html>

In August 2007 the population of Sulu was 849,671 according to the Philippine National Statistical Coordination Board however the ration of male to female was not given.

- In the 2000 Census of Population and Housing, released by the National Statistics Office (NSO) in July 2003, the median age in Sulu was 19 years. Graph 1.3. (page 31) indicates that approximately 50% of the population of Sulu was ‘crowded’ into the 19 years or younger cohort, whereas the remaining 50% may have extended over another 60-70 years. With these NSO figures in mind it is evident that the single majority of the August 2008 survey respondents would have fallen into the 20-34 year column. The assumptions being that the ratio in ages is similar in 2008 to what it was in 2000.
- The enumerators were asked to question respondents who they estimated were 25 years or older. The answers from respondents who were under 25, and most were in the age bracket 22-24, were still considered sufficiently important enough to be analytically useful

The next question to be put to the respondents was their place of birth. It was hoped that the majority of respondents were Suluanos. After all the study was predominately about the population of Sulu Province and their experiences and expectations. The ‘place of birth’ question produced the desired result and this is expanded on later in this chapter.

Question 3: My place of birth. (Graph 1.4)

Options: Sulu. Other province. Other country.⁵⁹

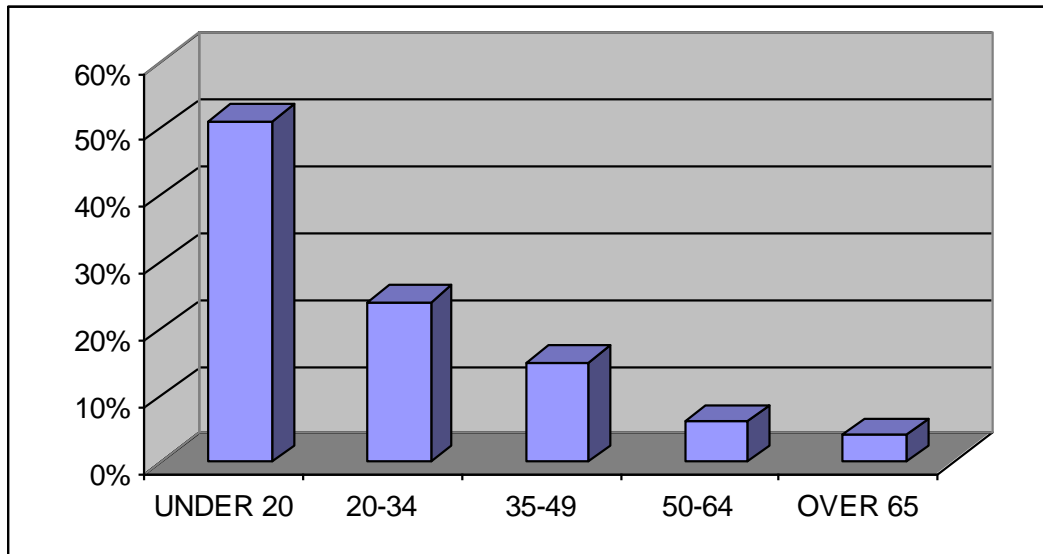
Response: N=296 (of 306) Sulu=83.44% Other province=8.45%

Other country=8.11%

Interpretation of the Graph 1.4 (see p. 36)

⁵⁹ The original questionnaire included the Sulu Archipelago provinces of Basilan and Tawi-Tawi. However only 1 out of the 306 respondents replied Tawi-Tawi, and none cited Basilan.

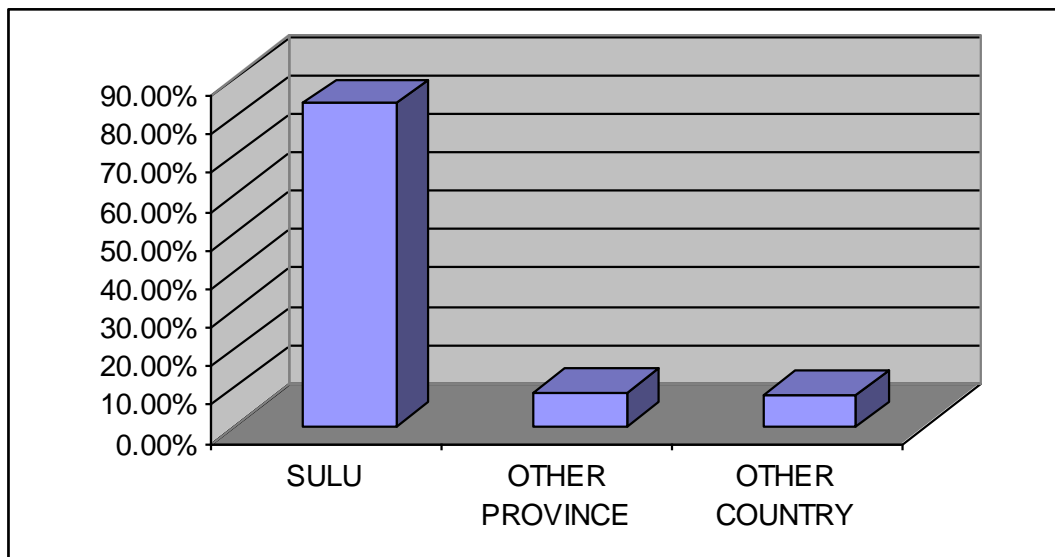
Graph 1.3. Age brackets for Sulu population, 2000.



Source: Compiled from the 2000 Census of Population and Housing, released in July 2003.⁶⁰

Graph 1.4. Personal profile: place of birth.

Response: N=296 (of 306) Sulu=83.44% Other province=8.45%
Other country=8.11%



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu

⁶⁰ 2000 Census of Population and Housing, *op. cit.*

Preliminary analysis of the place of birth of respondents.

The overwhelming majority of respondents were from Sulu Province: approximately two-thirds of whom were from Jolo Municipality and one-third from adjoining municipalities such as Indanan, Talipao and Patikul. Of the other respondents who answered ‘other province’, most were born in either Zamboanga del Norte or Zamboanga del Sur. It is apparent from these figures that immigration to Sulu Province from other provinces in the Philippines, especially from Luzon or from the Viysas has simply not occurred, or at the most is miniscule. This is in stark contrast to most of the other provinces in Mindanao, which over the last 75 years have seen their Muslim majority reduced by Christian immigration. This immigration into Mindanao was as a direct result of policies introduced by successive Philippine Administrations starting in the 1920s. B.R. (Rudy) Rodil cited a number of Philippine Government ‘resettlement’ initiatives, of which six of the most important are included in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1. Resettlement initiatives of various Philippine Administrations from 1935-1971.

1	The 1935 Quirino-Recto Colonization Act
2	The creation of the 1939 National Land Settlement Act
3	The 1949 Rice and Corn Production Administration
4	The 1954 National Resettlement and Rehabilitation Administration
5	The 1963 Land Reform Code
6	The creation of a Department of Agrarian Reform in 1971 which introduced a “Bureau of Resettlement”.

Source: B.R. Rodil, in *The Moro conflict: landlessness and misdirected state policies*⁶¹

The next two significant questions to be put to the survey respondents were those of educational level attained and religion.

⁶¹ B.R. Rodil, cited in E. Gutierrez & S. Borrás, Jr., *The Moro conflict: landlessness and misdirected state policies*. Washington, East-West Center, 2004 , pp. 7-8.

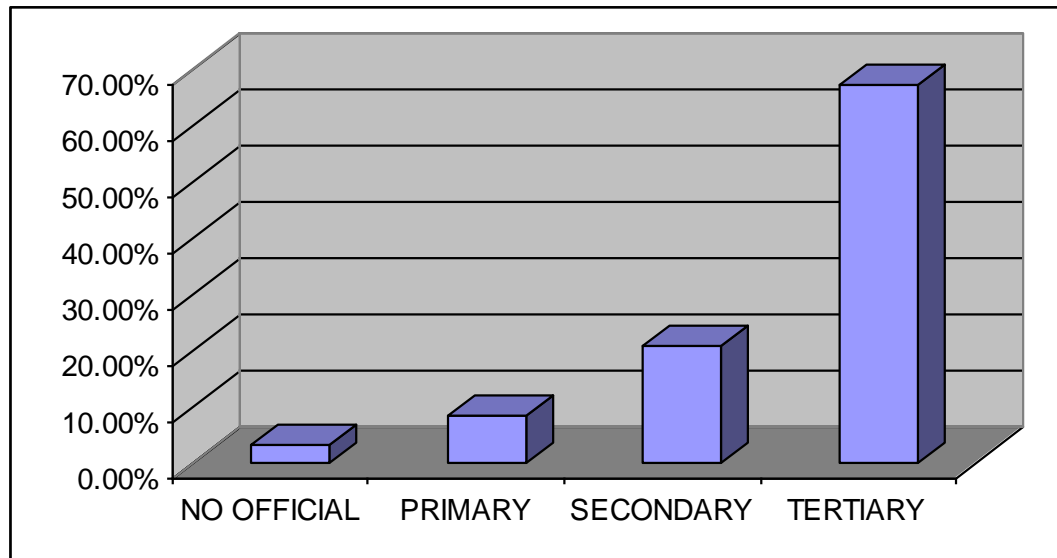
Question4: Completed educational level.

Options: No official. Primary. Secondary. Tertiary.

Responses: N =273 (of 306) No official=3.38% Primary=8.42%
Secondary=20.88% Tertiary=67.32%

Graph 1.5. Personal profile: Completed educational level.

Responses: N =273 (of 306) No official=3.38% Primary=8.42%
Secondary=20.88% Tertiary=67.32%



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu

Question 5: Religion. (Graph 1.6)

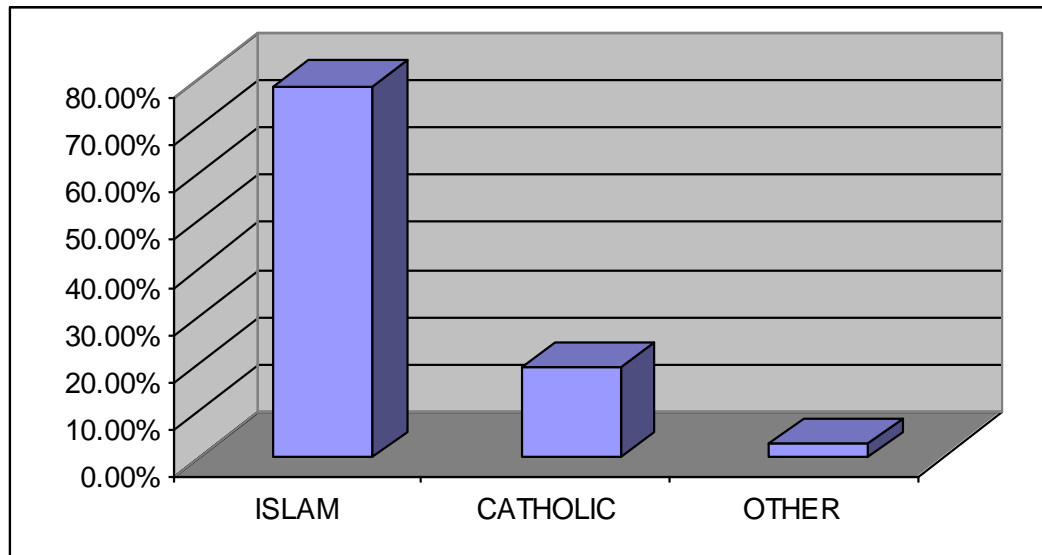
Options: Muslim (Islam). Catholic. Other.

Responses: N=291 (of 306) Muslim (Islam)=78.35% Catholic=18.9 Other=2.75

Interpretation of the Graph 1.6 (see p. 39)

Graph 1.6. Personal profile: Religion.

Responses: N=291 (of 306) Muslim (Islam)=78.35% Catholic=18.90% Other=2.75%



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu

Preliminary analysis of the educational level of respondents.

The question put to the respondents may have been somewhat confusing, because the three categories of education followed the format of formal education in Australia, that is, primary, secondary, and tertiary (with the definition of tertiary education generally accepted as being ‘formal education after the secondary level’). However, it has since been revealed to this researcher that in the Philippines primary education finishes at year 6 and secondary education at year 10. Furthermore, in the Philippines after year 10 (secondary) there are four more categories which can be classified as tertiary, namely post-secondary (sometimes referred to as vocational and usually of 2 years duration), college undergraduate, academic degree holder, and post-baccalaureate (postgraduate). A breakdown of the respondents’ educational levels revealed that respondents living or born in the municipality/city of Jolo had a much higher percentage of ‘tertiary’ education than respondents living or born in municipalities outside Jolo. The most likely reason for this is that both the Notre Dame College and the Sulu campus of the Mindanao State University are located in Jolo municipality/city. Moreover, the urban population of Sulu – as in common in most

regions of the Philippines – is more likely to have a higher income (access to industry and so forth), than the rural areas. This, combined with the fact that more professional people are likely to be employed in urban areas, would ensure that urban dwellers, in general, would have more disposal income to spend on higher education.

Preliminary analysis of the religious preference of respondents.

The total percentage of respondents who indicated Islam as their religion was 78.35%. This is slightly less than the estimated 90% of Suluanos who identify with or practice Islam according to the official 2000 Census date.⁶² The percentage of respondents claiming to be of the Islamic faith in Jolo municipality was 74.87%, whereas in the neighbouring municipalities the figure was 85.87%: albeit there were only half as many respondents from outside of Jolo municipality.

Having now established where the relevant literature fits into the Moro longing for self-determination and the role the MNLF plays in that quest, together with the central questions of the study, and a profile of the August 2008 survey respondents, it was deemed necessary to give a concise account of the history of Islam in the Philippines. This is especially true for the province of Sulu, where the population is overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim. This account, which follows in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, also looks at contemporary events in Sulu Province. Without this overview it is impossible to put the question of whether the self-determination of the Sulu Moros is a genuine liberation insurgency or a national insurgency (or a combination of both).

⁶² 2000 Census of Population and Housing, *op. cit.*

Chapter 2

Philippine Islamic History and Contemporary Events

2.1 Islam in the Philippines to the early 20th century

It is believed that Islam in the Philippines had its beginning in the later part of the thirteenth century CE (common era), when Muslim traders established a settlement in Sulu, as the region was then known.¹ It took until the second half of the fourteenth century CE, before Islamic preachers/missionaries arrived in Sulu and began the process of what is called *makhdumin* (conversion to, or the teaching of, Islam). And by the beginning of the fifteenth century CE, the first Sultanate headed by Rajah Baguinda, had been established in Sulu.²

The process of establishing Islam in Sulu was similar to that which occurred in neighbouring regions of South-East Asia in the early part of the first millennia CE. That is, an initial Muslim settlement was established—this occurred at Buansa, Jolo Island. After the establishment of the Muslim settlement there followed a chain of events such as the coming of missionaries from other neighbouring Muslim kingdoms and the building of mosques. Eventually, a Sultanate was established in what is now called Sulu Province, which consists of four island groups: Jolo, Pangutaran, Tapul and Samales. Islam not only became the official religion of Sulu, it also became a way of life. However, unlike Christianity, which sought to convert by force, Islam in Sulu spread more voluntarily and grew in an evolutionary process. Moreover, Islam in Sulu had a symbiotic relationship with the original indigenous *Katawhan Lumad*, who for the most part were animistic. The *Katawhan Lumad* originally had three major groups, the T'boli, Teduray, and the Subanen, who in 1986 agreed to be known collectively as Lumad.

¹ From the 18th century CE Sulu was referred to, by the Spanish, as Jolo. The translation of which meant at that time, “seat, or capital of the Sultanate”.

² Refer: The Moro National Liberation Front official website, *The coming of Islam to Sulu*. Retrieved 20 February 2008, <http://mnlf.net/History.htm>

By the time of the 1521 Spanish landing in the Philippines³ by the Portuguese navigator Ferdinand Magellan, Islam had spread from Sulu to the three main island groups in the Philippines: Luzon, the Visayas, and Mindanao (see Map 2.1). Manila, on Luzon Island, was ruled jointly by Rajah Sulaiman and Rajah Matanda and a fortress was built at the mouth of the Pasig River which resisted Spanish forces for some time. It was at this time that the term ‘Moro’ was first used by the Spanish to denote those indigenous people who professed Islam. After 1578, the name Moro was applied to all followers of Islam in Mindanao, and including the Sulu Archipelago.⁴

The first permanent Spanish settlement in the Philippines was established in Cebu in 1565 under the aegis of Miguel Lopez de Legazpe. Four years later, in 1569, the first major attack by the Moros was made on the Spanish settlement—it was repulsed. In 1571 the colonial capital was moved from Cebu in the Viysas to Manila, where the conversion to Christianity of the local population began. It was crucial to the consolidation of Spanish power in the Philippines, as it was in other Spanish colonies, that religious conversion to Christianity should be successful.

From 1569 to 1762 there were continuing military confrontations between the Spanish forces and the Moros. These military confrontations were known as the Moro Wars and were significant due to Moro successes. In the two decades to 1596, the Spanish tried unsuccessfully to establish a colony in Mindanao and, significantly, in one military encounter, Christianised *Indios*, (Spanish for natives of a country) fought against fellow Moros. For most of the 17th century the Moros of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago were successful in repelling Spanish attacks, and even captured the Spanish fort in Zamboanga (see map 2.1), the only region in Mindanao where there was a

³ Originally called *Las Islas Filipinas* after Philip II.

⁴ Information researched on [Bangsamoro.com](http://www.bangsamoro.com). Retrieved 2007, <http://www.bangsamoro.info/modules/wfsection/article.php?articleid=8> After the U.S. occupation of the Philippines in 1896, the term *Bangsamoro* was more popularly used. However *Bangsamoro* is now more commonly used to describe all Muslims of the southern Philippines as well as the indigenous Lumads.

significant Spanish presence. The Moro Wars were to last until 1762⁵ when the British occupied Manila in October of that year—this was during the Seven Year’s War. In May 1764 British troops withdrew from Manila and briefly occupied a number of islands in the Sulu Archipelago, eventually being evicted by the Moros around 1773.



Map 2.1. Republic of the Philippines, showing major cities.

Source: Google images. Retrieved 2007,

http://www.apcdproject.org/countryprofile/philippines/images/philippines_map.gif

During the last phase of the Moro Wars, a revolt began which lasted eighty-five years (1744-1829). This occurred on the island of Bohol in the Visayas, and was originally led by Francisco Dagahoy. After Dagahoy’s death in 1780 the revolt was continued by fellow Boholan Moros and lasted until 31 August 1829 when the Spanish

⁵ Although the “official” Moro Wars finished in 1762, the Moros continued their opposition to Spanish aggression against Sulu until 1899. There was a small Spanish military occupation in an area of Sulu from 1876-1899.

commander, Manuel Sanz, defeated these Moros.⁶ This left only Mindanao, including the Sulu Archipelago, where the Moros were undefeated. Consequently, from 1829 until 1898 an uneasy truce existed between the Spanish forces and the Moros of the southern Philippines.

2.2 History of the Royal Sultanate of Sulu

Notwithstanding the brief Spanish occupation of Sulu from 1876-1899, the Royal Sultanate of Sulu has existed in some form or other, from 1390 to the present time (see Table 2.1). However, from 1899 the authority of the reigning Sultan diminished to a stage where the Sultan is now officially only symbolic or ceremonial. This erosion of power and influence initially began on 20 August 1899 with the signing of the Bates Agreement which gave the Sultan (Jamalul Kiram II) authority to govern in exchange for recognition of U.S. sovereignty. Brigadier General Bates may have been able to persuade Sultan Jamalul Kiram II to accept U.S. sovereignty; however, for the Moros of Sulu to recognise and accept sovereignty from a foreign Christian nation was possibly seen as an insult to the Tausag culture and Islamic beliefs. Consequently, Moro unrest and disobedience escalated, ending in the massacre of Bud Dajo on 7 March 1906 (see Figure 2.1). Moreover, in March 1915, after further continued unrest, the Sultan abdicated his temporal powers by signing the Carpenter Agreement, which gave total authority of governance to Frank Carpenter who was by then the Governor of Sulu.⁷ The original palace of the Sultan of Sulu is now in a ruinous state in the municipality of Maimbung (see Figure 2.2.).

⁶ G. Zaide, *Dagohoy: champion of the Philippine freedom*, Manila, Enriquez, Alduan and Co., 1941, p. 154

⁷ Local Government Unit: Province of Sulu, *Republic of the Philippines, Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Province of Sulu*. Retrieved May 2008, <http://www.sulu.gov.ph/index.php?id1=1&id2=2&id3=2&PHPSESSID=165f880ca98>

Table 2.1. Chronology of Sulu Sultanate.

Rajah Baginda	1390-1450
Sayyid Abubakar Sahriful Hashim	1450-1480
Kamalud - Din	1480-1500
Amir ul -Umara (Maharaja Diraja)	1500-1520
Mu'izzul Mulwadi-in (Maharaja Upu)	1520-1550
Nasirud-Din (Awab Digunung)	1550-1578
Muhammad-ul-Halim(Pangiran Budiman)	1579-1595
Batara Sha Tengah (Panguian Tindig)	1596-1608
Mawallil Wasit (Rajah Bungsu)	1610-1650
Nasirud-Din	1640 – 1663
Salahud-Din Karamat (Baktial)	1650 – 1680
Shahabud-Din	1685 – 1710
Mustafa Shafiud Din	1711 – 1717
Badarud Din I	1718 – 1732
Nasarud Din	1732 – 1735
Azimuddin (Amirul Mu'minin)	1735 – 1748 – 1764 – 1774
Muizz-ud-Din	1748 – 1763
Israil	1774 – 1778
Azimuddin II	1778 – 1789
Sharapud - Din	1791 – 1808
Azimuddin III	1789 (40 days reigning only)
Ali ud-Din	1808 – 1821
Shakirullah	1821 – 1823
Jamalul Kiram I	1823 – 1842
Muhammad Pulalun	1842 – 1862
Jamalul Alam	1862 – 1881
Badarud Din II	1881 – 1884
Harun Al-Rashid	1886 – 1894
Jamalul Kiram II	1884 – 1936
Jainal Abirin	1936 – 1950
Ombra Amilbangsa	1936 – 1950
Ismael Kiram	1950 – 1974
Muh. Mahakuttah Kiram	1974 – 1986
Muhammad Punjungan Kiram	1980 – 1983
Abirin, Aguimuddin	1983
Jamalul Kiram III	1983 – 1990
Mohammad Akijal Atti	1990 – 1999
Ismael Kiram II	Present

Source: The official website of Province of Sulu, Capitol Site, Patikul, Sulu. Retrieved December 2007, <http://www.sulu.gov.ph/index.php?id1=1&id2=2&id3=1>



Figure 2.1. On 7 March 1906, U.S. troops killed approximately 1,000 Filipino Muslims, including women and children, at Bud Dajo, a volcanic crater on the island of Jolo, Sulu Province. In this photo U.S. soldiers pose for the camera in the aftermath of the massacre.

Source: Google Images, Retrieved August 2008,
www.thewilyfilipino.com/.../2004_05.html



Figure 2.2. The ruins of the Sultan of Sulu Palace (*Darul Jambangan* or Abode of Flowers) in the municipality of Maimbung, Sulu Province.

Source: V. Taylor, personal collection. Reproduced with the permission of V. Taylor.

2.3 Moro minoritisation

When the U.S. acquired the Philippines in 1899 at the conclusion of the Spanish-American War, the Moros of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago constituted the ethnic majority in their traditional homelands. However, for the next three-quarter's of a century the Moros were subjected to a deliberate minoritisation programme by various Manila Administrations in the form of a massive inflow of settlers into Mindanao from Luzon and the Visayas; the overwhelming majority of whom were Christians. Accordingly, by the 1970s the Moros had become an ethnic minority.

This inflow of settlers into Mindanao was referred to as 'resettlement' which was the result of Acts of Parliament and/or the establishing of government agencies or departments to assist this migration. The resettlement initiatives covered three periods in 20th century Philippine history: the American period (1899-1935), Commonwealth period (1935-1946), and the early part of the current Republic of Philippines period (1946 circa 1971 approx).⁸ The resettlement initiatives are listed below.

The American period: In 1913, Act 2254 ("Agricultural Colonies Act") created agricultural colonies in Cotabato Valley (Pikit, Pagalungan, Glan). In 1914, Act 2280 created an agricultural colony in Momungan (Balo-i), Lanao. In 1919, Act 2206 came into existence and authorised provincial boards to manage colonies. As a result, Zamboanga opened Lamitan, Sulu opened Tawi-Tawi, Bukidnon opened Marilog, and Cotabato opened Salunayan and Maganoy. Furthermore, in the period 1919-1930, resettlement was done by the Interisland Migration Division of the Bureau of Labor. The Interisland Migration Division (IMD) oversaw the opening of Kapalong, Guiangga, Tagum, Lupon and Baganga in Davao province. In Zamboanga Province, the IMD opened Labangan. The IMD also opened Lamitan in Basilan Province, Cabadbaran, Butuan and Buenavista in Agusan Province, and Momungan and Kapatagan valley in Lanao Province.⁹

⁸ The Philippines became a Commonwealth in 1935, and gained independence in 1946.

⁹ R. Rodil, 2007. *What is the Moro problem? How did it evolve?* Retrieved June 2007, http://ki-volunteer.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=1&Itemid=79

The Commonwealth period: In February 1935, Legislative Act 4197 or the “Quirino-Recto Colonization Act” was proclaimed. This Act was intended to be the ultimate solution in colonising Mindanao with settlers from Luzon and the Visayas. It created such opposition from one of the largest ethnic Moro groups, the Maranao, that on 18 March 1935 over 100 Maranao ethnic leaders protested unsuccessfully to the U.S. President, Franklin D. Roosevelt. Furthermore, in 1939, Commonwealth Act 441 was proclaimed, and this in turn created the National Land Settlement Administration (NSLA). The NSLA opened up resettlement in Mindanao in the Koronadal Valley, the Allah Valley, and the Mallig plains.¹⁰

The Republic of Philippines period: In 1949 the Rice and Corn Production Administration (RCPA) was created to promote rice and corn production. Subsequently, the RCPA opened up for resettlement Buluan in Cotabato and Maramag-Wao on the Bukidnon-Lanao border. In 1950 the newly formed Land Settlement Development Corporation (LASEDECO) opened up the municipalities of Tacurong, Isulan, Bagumbayan, Part of Buluan, Sultan Barongis, and Ampatuan to resettlement, predominately for Christians from Luzon and the Visayas. Moreover, in the early 1950s the newly formed Economic Development Corps (EDCOR) opened up for resettlement, Moro ancestral territories in Maguindanao and Maranao, specifically for captured or surrendered communist *Huks*. Further resettlement programs in Mindanao were initiated during the Macapagal Administration, and during the early years of the Marcos Administration the Department of Agrarian Reform established a Bureau of Resettlement.¹¹ This Bureau of Resettlement, which was brought into existence by Republic Act 6389, administered 37 settlements throughout the Philippines, of which no less than 18 were in the Mindanao provinces of Tawi-Tawi, Zamboanga del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Davao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, North Cotabato, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, Bukidnon, and Lanao del Norte.¹² Of these provinces Tawi-Tawi, Lanao del Sur, and Maguindanao went on to form, in part, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), whose population consists of approximately 90% Muslims. It would appear that the resettlement in the Mindanao provinces mentioned had a dual

¹⁰ R. Rodil, 2007, *op. cit.*

¹¹ E. Gutierrez & S. Borrás, Jr., *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.

¹² R. Rodil, 2007, *op. cit.*

effect: minoritisation of Muslims in some provinces and maximisation of Muslims in other regions that would eventually be included in the ARMM.

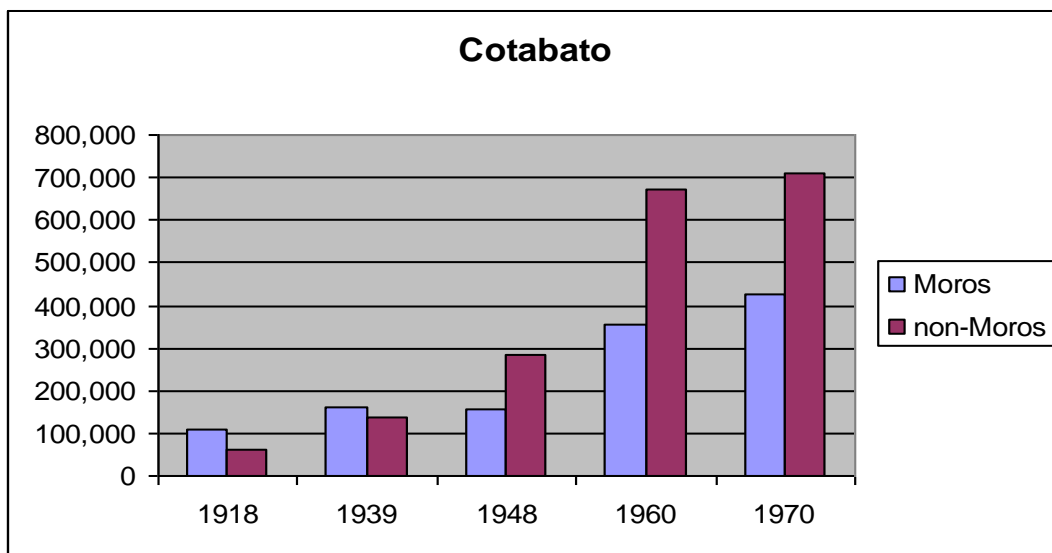
It was during the “Republic of Philippines Period” that another contentious Moro minoritisation program was introduced: the division of Provinces along ethno-religious lines. Prior to May 1959, Lanao was a predominately Muslim Province. In the official census of 1948 there were 106,703 non-Muslims to 237,215 Muslims. In May 1959 the Province of Lanao was divided into Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur. The census of 1960 showed that Lanao del Norte had 214,070 non-Muslims and 56,533 Muslims, whilst Lanao del Sur had 22,600 non-Muslims and 355,727 Muslims.¹³ If Lanao had remained only one province, it would have been a majority Muslim province. However by creating two provinces, political power in the Philippine Congress had further been removed from the Muslims.¹⁴ As a consequence, any vote by Lanao del Sur would now be “neutralised” by Lanao del Norte.

Such was the impact on the Moro ancestral territories that by 1970, the year of the first organised Moro paramilitary resistance, the ratio of non-Muslims to Muslims in provinces which previously had either a majority Muslim population or a substantial Muslim population had been severely eroded through migration from Luzon and the Visayas. The following graphs show this trend. Cotabato (see Graph 2.1, page 45) and Zamboanga (see Graph 2.2, page 45) were selected because of their relatively large populations. Sulu (see Graph 2.3, page 46) was selected because it went against the trend. Of interest, during the World War II the number of non-Moros/Muslims in Sulu dropped to a little over 1000.

¹³ Source: T. O’Shaughnessy, (using data from the Bureau of Census and Statistics). Population trends in the Muslim areas, cited in E. Gutierrez & S. Borrás, *op. cit.*, p. 14

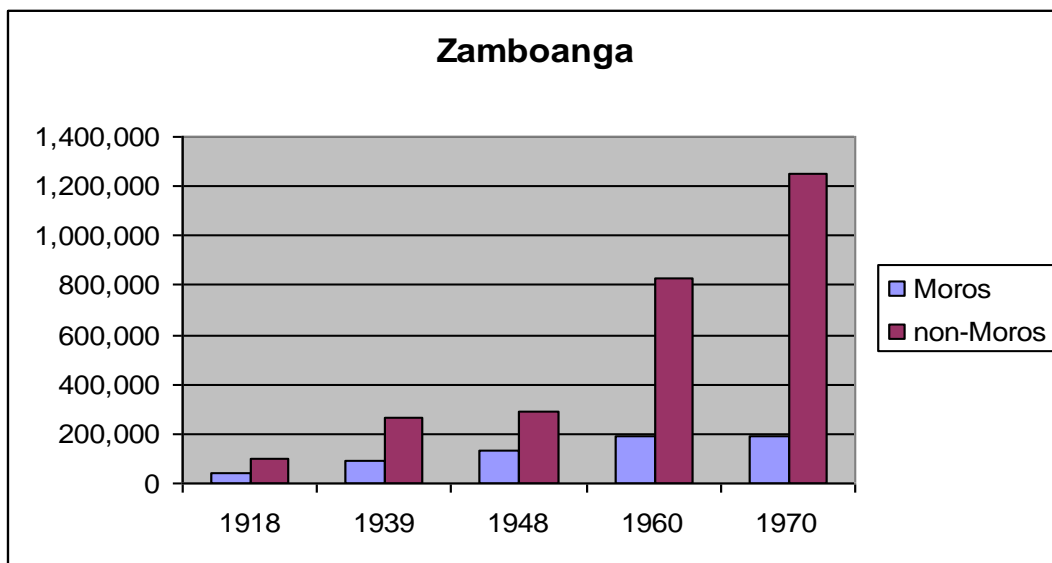
¹⁴ The Dimaporo family, who do not identify with Muslim radicalism, held positions at both the Congressional Representative and Governor level in both Lanaos. There was, and still is vigorous competition in this family. Although members of this political clan may identify with being followers of the Islamic belief it made no difference to Mohammad (Ali) Dimaporo who was the Congressional Representative of Lanao del Norte—the predominate non-Muslim Lanao—he was elected.

Graph 2.1. Moro minoritisation: Cotabato.



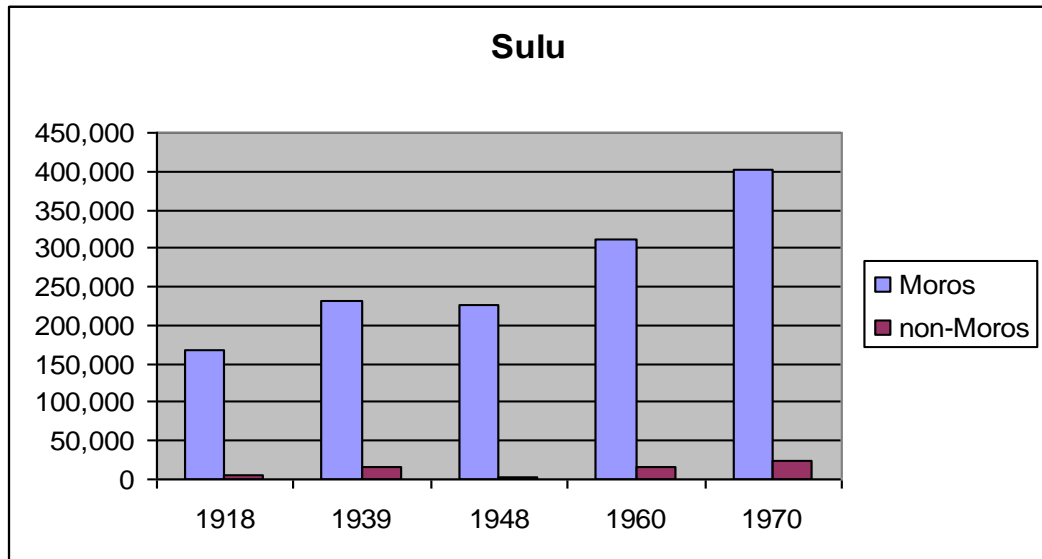
Source: Philippine Bureau of Census and Statistics. T. O'Shaughnessy, *op. cit.*

Graph 2.2. Moro minoritisation: Zamboanga



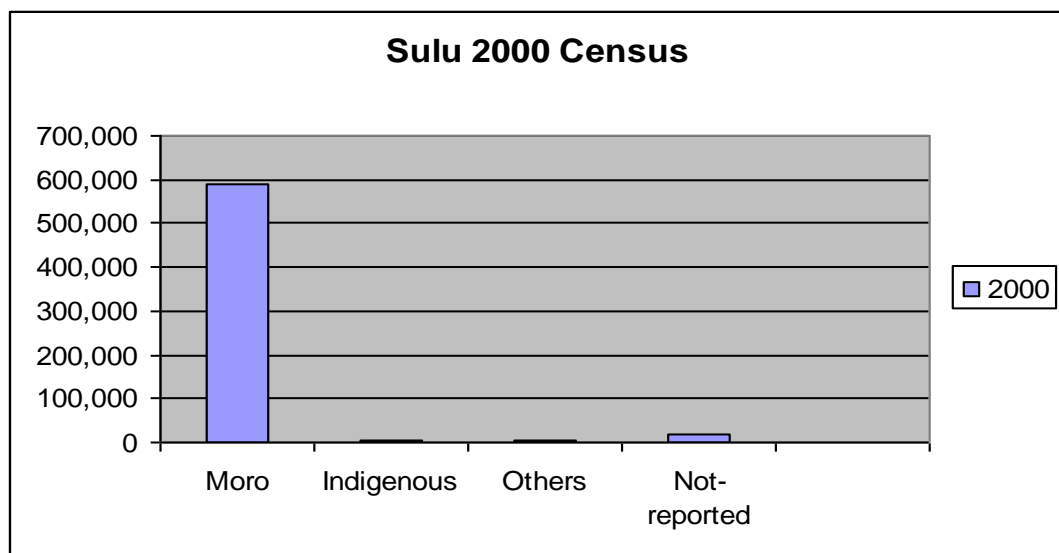
Source: Philippine Bureau of Census and Statistics. T. O'Shaughnessy, *op. cit.*

Graph 2.3. Moro dominance to 1970: Sulu Province.



Source: Philippine Bureau of Census and Statistics. T. O’Shaughnessy, *op. cit.*

Graph 2.4. Moro dominance: Sulu Province, 2000



Source: Philippine Bureau of Census and Statistics. T. O’Shaughnessy, *op. cit.*

In Sulu by the year 2000 (see Graph 2.4, page 46) the population had increased to 619,550.¹⁵ The Moros, the overwhelming majority being Tausug and Sunni Muslim, had increased to 590,815. Indigenous people accounted for 2,026, others 5,397, and not reported 19,419. Leaving aside the ‘not reported’ the ethnic composition of which would be impossible to calculate) the ratio of non-Moros to Moros in 2000 was 0.016. This compared to a ratio of 0.059 in 1970, 0.051 in 1960, 0.006 in 1948, 0.072 in 1939, and 0.025 in 1918.¹⁶ The province of Sulu has remained overwhelmingly Moro, despite the minoritisation of the Moros in other provinces of the southern Philippines—leaving aside the ARMM provinces—for almost 100 years (the first official census was in 1903).

2.4 Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)

As mentioned, on March 1968 a number of young Moro recruits, numbering approximately twenty-eight,¹⁷ and belonging to the AFP were executed on Corregidor Island by their superior officers for refusing to obey orders. This massacre, as mentioned became known as the *Jabidah* massacre. The lone survivor of the massacre, Jibin Arula, who managed to escape after being shot and thrown down a fifteen meter ravine, claimed that his fellow Moro AFP recruits had been ordered to participate in an invasion of Sabah, an island region of Malaysia.¹⁸ Sabah was historically a part of the Sulu Sultanate, and as such some of its Muslim inhabitants may have been related, albeit remotely, to the young Moro AFP recruits. As a consequence of this massacre, the Commanding Officer who issued the orders to execute the young Moro recruits (Rolando Abadilla) was court-martialled together with a number of other officers. However, in what appeared to be a mockery of justice, Abadilla was only transferred,

¹⁵ 2000 Census of Population and Housing (Census 2000), *op. cit.*

Philippine censuses are now undertaken by the National Statistics Office (NSO). Previous censuses were conducted by the Philippine Bureau of Census and Statistics.

¹⁶ T. O’Shaughnessy, *op. cit.*

¹⁷ There are many variations on the number of recruits murdered. “Twenty-eight to sixty-eight” is the figure usually quoted. Twenty-eight is the number chosen by this author because it is at the bottom of the range and therefore allowing for exaggeration is more likely to be near the correct number.

¹⁸ *Manila Times*, 19 March 2008, (no author), *Remembering the Jabidah massacre*. Retrieved March 2008, <http://www.manilatimes.net/national/2008/mar/19/yeheh/metro/20080319met4.html>

eventually being cleared of this crime in 1971. Abadilla went on to become head of President Marcos' Military Intelligence Security Group. In 1996 he was shot dead in Quezon City supposedly by communist guerrillas.¹⁹

In the early 1970s the MNLF received some international support; not the least being from the Libyan President Muammar Al-Qaddafi. Al-Qaddafi accused the Marcos Administration of genocide and offered to give military assistance to the Moros.²⁰ This was in response to massacres of Moros at Ampatuan and Buldun in Maguindanao, Manili in North Cotabato, and Upi in Shariff Kabunsuan. With international attention now being given to the Moros and the MNLF, President Marcos may have felt that his authority, and influence was being eroded. Accordingly, in September 1972 he imposed martial law in the Philippines, citing Muslim secessionists and the communist New People's Army as the two biggest threats to domestic national security.

As mentioned, the MNLF was given formal recognition by the OIC in July 1975 at the Sixth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the MNLF was given permanent observer status in 1977, and as such it was allowed to attend all OIC conferences, including the Islamic Summit Conference, and the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers.²¹ Today, the MNLF is the most popular Moro paramilitary group in the three provinces of the Sulu Archipelago, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, and Sulu—having its headquarters in Sulu.

Four years after the imposition of martial law, and three years after the OIC gave official recognition to the MNLF, President Marcos agreed to open dialogue with the MNLF. Accordingly, in December 1976 a peace agreement was signed by the MNLF President, Nur Misuari, and representatives of the GRP including President Marcos'

¹⁹ M. D. Vitug, & G.M. Gloria, *Under the Crescent Moon: rebellion in Mindanao*, Quezon City, Ateneo Center for Social Policy and Public Affairs, 2000.

²⁰ T.M. McKenna, *Muslim rulers and rebels: everyday politics and armed separatism in the southern Philippines*, Los Angeles, University of Californian Press, 1998.

²¹ In 2009 the following States, Organisations, Communities, and Institutions had OIC observer status: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Central African Republic, Thailand, The Russian Federation, Turkish Cypriot State, **Moro National Liberation Front**, Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States, Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation, United Nations, Non-Aligned Movement, League of Arab States, Economic Cooperation Organization.

wife, Imelda Marcos. This peace agreement, known as the ‘Tripoli Agreement’ included provisions to give full autonomy to 13 provinces in the southern Philippines. The extent of Moro autonomy in the southern Philippines included in this agreement was so far-reaching that it was to include the integration of the MNLF paramilitary forces with the AFP. However, the Tripoli Agreement collapsed when President Marcos insisted that a plebiscite be held on some of the essential provisions of this agreement. Not unsurprisingly the plebiscite failed to get majority support – the Moros were after all now a minority in their homeland. Coinciding with the failure of the plebiscite was an incident in Sulu, where Brigadier General Bautista and 30 of his men from the AFP were ambushed and killed, allegedly by MNLF forces. This gave President Marcos the excuse to resume military action against the MNLF.

Martial law officially ended in January 1981. In early 1987, at the request of the OIC, a conference was held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia to draft a new peace agreement between the new Aquino Administration and the MNLF. This agreement, which was known as the ‘Jeddah Accord’, proposed giving all of Mindanao, including the provinces in the Sulu Archipelago, full autonomy.²² This agreement also failed, not because there was an unfavourable plebiscite but because of a lack of consensus on important issues including ancestral domain between the MNLF and the newly formed MILF. More importantly, the MILF was excluded from the official peace talks. The result of the collapse of the Jeddah Accord was a renewal of hostilities between the Moro paramilitary forces and the AFP.

In 1992, Fidel Valdez Ramos was elected President of the Philippines, and with his election came the expectation of lasting peace between the Moros and the Philippine National Government. President Ramos initiated peace talks with the MNLF, and in 1996 the ‘1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement’²³ was signed. This historic 1996 Peace Agreement was radical in the extreme, for not only did it promise a distribution of wealth from natural resources to the Moros, but it also made provision for members of

²² Nur Misuari was the chief negotiator at this conference for the MNLF.

²³ Nur Misuari was a signatory to this agreement.

the MNLF paramilitary forces to be integrated into the AFP as well as the PNP. At the time of the writing of this dissertation many of the provisions of the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement have yet to be honoured.

The original founder and chairman of the MNLF, Nur Misuari²⁴ still claims to be the chairman, although this is disputed by the former Cotabato City mayor and ex-ally, Muslimen Sema. Misuari had been in detention (house arrest) in Manila awaiting trial on charges of rebellion. However, in April 2008 he was released on bail. Whilst in detention he ran unsuccessfully for Governor of Sulu in the May 2007 elections. Misuari was allowed to run for Governor of Sulu and was allowed temporary freedom to register and cast a vote in Sulu. This was the second failed attempt by Misuari to run for the Governorship of Sulu. The decision by the President Arroyo to allow Misuari to run for Governor of Sulu may have been seen as pragmatic, insomuch as Sulu is the MNLF stronghold, and Misuari still had considerable support there. There is speculation from many quarters as to why Misuari failed to be elected Governor of Sulu. One opinion came from Octavio Dinampo²⁵, a university professor and an acknowledged expert on the conflict in Sulu, who claimed that many of Misuari's supporters were unable to vote in the elections because they were in refugee camps. Dinampo's claim is further reinforced by the Philippine National Red Cross in Sulu, who claim that the voter turnout in the 2007 elections was very low due in part to thousands of families being in evacuation centres since mid-February of that year, and thus unable to travel to voting precincts. As well, over 2000 MNLF paramilitary operatives, who were engaged in hostilities with members of the AFP were unable to vote.²⁶

After his release on bail, Misuari filed a case in the International Court of Justice claiming that Sabah (North Borneo) was, and still is a sovereign part of the

²⁴ Nur Misuari was born in Jolo Sulu in 1942. In 1958 he left Jolo to attend the University of the Philippines (UP). When President Marcos declared martial law in 1972, Misuari was a lecturer at UP.

²⁵ Dinampo is a member of the civil society "Concerned Citizen of Sulu" (CCS). He was also an independent observer in the 2007 elections.

²⁶ A. .M. Remollino, Misuari, a victim of electoral fraud in Sulu, *Bulatlat*, VII(18): June 2007: p. 1. Retrieved July 2007, <http://www.bulatlat.com/2007/06/misuari-victim-electoral-fraud-sulu>

Philippines.²⁷ Misuari believes that Malaysia “owes” the Philippines, and Sulu in particular because Sabah was originally under the rule of the Sultan of Sulu, a considerable debt from exploited resources. If the action in the International Court of Justice is successful, or even partially successful, then Misuari can make claim, on behalf of Sulu, for considerable compensation. Misuari still enjoys popular support from the majority of the members of the MNLF, and, as a sign of solidarity, 10,000 members, and/or supporters of the MNLF held a peaceful meeting in Davao City (capital of Mindanao) in the first week of June 2008. Misuari believes that the struggle for autonomy/independence in the Muslim areas of Mindanao, Sulu in particular is liberation insurgency: a sentiment shared by many members of the OIC. The MNLF is analysed in detail in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

2.5 The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)

Formed in 1981 by the former vice-chairman of the MNLF Hashim Salamat (1942-2003) the MILF embraced Islam as its official ideology. Having Islam as its official ideology brought solidarity with other *Mujahideen* (holy warriors), especially in Afghanistan. Consequently, in the 1980s the MILF sent combatants to Afghanistan to assist the Taliban in their *Jihad* (holy war). These MILF combatants returned to the southern Philippines with the intention of staging *Jihad* to achieve autonomy or independence for their fellow Moros. Hashim Salamat defended the term *Jihad* to describe the fighting in the southern Philippines by stating that Islam was the first religion to be established in Mindanao. Salamat also argued that the Philippine National Government had occupied Mindanao illegally, not through plebiscite or referendum.²⁸

In 2003 the Arroyo Administration entered into official dialogue with the MILF: the aim being to reach a ceasefire with the MILF and find common ground on such issues as ancestral domain. These official talks were referred to as the GRP/MILF Exploratory Talks. In November 2007, the 14th such meeting was held in Kuala Lumpur. In early 2008 these talks broke down over the issue of ancestral domain and violence

²⁷ In 1932 Great Britain ceded Sabah to the newly independent Federation of Malaya. (At the time the U.S. objected to this arrangement).

²⁸ Vitag & Gloria, *op. cit.*, various pages.

erupted again in Mindanao. At the time of writing of this dissertation the GRP/MILF talks had not reconvened.

The MILF is the largest Moro paramilitary group in the southern Philippines. It enjoys enormous popular support in all the provinces of the ARMM, with Sulu being the exception. In personal correspondence with Professor Rudy Rodil²⁹ on 28 March 2005, he made the following comment/s to this researcher, via electronic mail, on the significance of the MILF: ‘What I am aware of is that... the MILF enjoys overwhelming popular support judging from the attendance at the Darapanan consultation on Mayt [sic] 29-30 2005’.³⁰

2.6 The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)

The ASG had its beginning in the early 1990s in the Sulu Archipelago Province of Basilan. The original name of the ASG was *Al-Harakat al-Islamiyah*, which is Arabic for ‘Islamic movement’, not ‘bearer of the sword’ or ‘father of the sword’ as is more commonly believed. Its early members were for the most part former MNLF members disillusioned with what they perceived to be a lack of commitment by the MNLF leadership to fighting for an Islamic state in the southern Philippines. This extreme fundamentalist Islamic paramilitary group has used kidnapping and extreme violence, including beheadings, in an endeavour to pursue its goal for an independent Muslim state in the southern Philippines.

In March 2000, 23 teachers and 30 students were kidnapped by the ASG from the Claret School in Tumahubong, Basilan. The hostages were held and made to walk through the mountains of Basilan for 45 days, until eventually being rescued by members of the AFP. However, a number of the hostages were killed in the rescue attempt.³¹ Even at that time, the ASG cause had some sympathy, albeit small. A number of the female hostaged teachers and students remarked how Khadafi Janjalani, the then

²⁹ Rodil is a Professor at the Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology. Rodil had attended all the GRP/MILF Exploratory Talks as part of the GRP negotiating panel.

³⁰ Personal correspondence, 28 March 2005.

³¹ A very moving account of the hostage’s ordeal was written by Jose Torres Jr. Refer to. J. Torres Jr., *Into the mountain: hostaged by the Abu Sayyaf*, Quezon City, Claretian Publications, 2001.

commander of the ASG, showed kindness to them. Although they also made mention of the callous actions of Abu Solaiman, who at that time was considered Janjalani's deputy.³² However, in the years following the Tumahubong kidnappings, any support the ASG may have had, all but disappeared. Peter Sales, of the Wollongong University describes the ASG as 'an outlaw band composed entirely of thugs and criminals', and 'any claims about commitment to a higher cause, like the assertion that it belongs in company with the MILF as an Islamic force in Mindanao is nonsense'.³³ Similar sentiments are held by Rene Ciria-Cruz who states that 'from the point of view of the purist fundamentalists in the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, the Abu Sayyaf are culturally corrupt. They are known for brutality not suicidal sacrifice'.³⁴

In May 2000 the ASG kidnapped twenty-one tourists from a resort on Sipadan Island, Malaysia, and in May 2001 kidnapped more tourists from a resort in Palawan, Philippines. The 2001 kidnappings included three U.S. citizens one of whom, Guillermo Sobero, was beheaded, whilst the other two, Martin and Gracia Burnham, were kept prisoners until June 2002 when a rescue attempt by the AFP resulted in the death of Martin Burnham and the release of his wife Gracia. Coinciding with the terrorist attacks in the U.S. in September 2001 and the deaths of Sobero and Burnham, the U.S. declared the ASG to be a terrorist organisation and as such was targeted in the Global War on Terror.

It is important in this study to differentiate between the ASG in Basilan Province and the organisation in Sulu Province which also uses the name ASG or just simply *Abu Sayyaf*. The original ASG in Basilan, which had Abdurajik Janjalani as its chairman, had an intelligence chief, Abdul Asshmad, and an operations chief, Ibrahim Yacob, and was highly organised. Whereas, the ASG in Sulu is, or was, at best, comprised of local bandits and criminals who saw some advantage in being likened to the ASG in Basilan. By identifying as being part of, or associated with, the ASG in Basilan would in turn give some credibility to their claim to be fighting for a broader Islamic agenda. As

³² Torres, *op. cit.* Various references are made to the behaviour of Solaiman in this publication.

³³ Sales, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

³⁴ R. Ciria-Cruz, cited in Sales, *op. cit.* p. 3.

Taylor points out, the ASG in Sulu is ‘a more complex phenomenon in the sense that it does not lend itself to the straightforward assessments made by government and military authorities regarding the group and its members’.³⁵

The original founder and leader of the ASG, Abdurajik Janjalani, was killed in an encounter with the PNP on 18 December 1998 in Basilan Province. Following the death of Abdurajik Janjalani, his younger brother Khadafi Janjalani assumed the role of leader of the ASG. He was reportedly killed by members of the AFP in late 2006 on Jolo Island, Sulu Province—his death was later confirmed by DNA testing. After the death of Khadafi Janjalani it was believed that Abu Solaiman assumed the role of leader of the ASG in Sulu. In January 2007, Abu Solaiman also was killed in Sulu in an armed encounter with members of the AFP.

Figure 2.5, page 55, shows an early group of ASG operatives who posed with their weapons for the camera in 2000. This author has endeavoured to identify the majority of these ASG operatives from archival documentation. A number of these ASG operatives went on to become domestic terrorist figures who had rewards posted for them. Whilst some have been killed, other are still alive, or presumed to be alive.

³⁵ Taylor and Idjirani, *op. cit.*, p. 39.



Figure 2.3. ASG operatives 2000. On July 16, 2000 Abu Sayyaf leaders **Khadafi Janjalani** (2nd from left, circled) and **Radulan Sahiron** (3rd from left) posed with fellow Abu Sayyaf rebels. The 5th member of the group, from the left is **Isnilon Totoni Hapilon**. The sixth from the left appears to be **Abu Solaiman**. This group photograph was taken outside their jungle hideout in the Southern Philippines: more than likely in Basilan Province. The combatant with the boyish looks on the extreme left may be a “young” **Albader Parad**.

Source: http://www.lazamboangtimes.com/abu_sayyaf.html Retrieved 2007.

There is no international support for the ASG, rather there is international condemnation. The ASG, it can be argued, has abandoned its original founder’s goal of establishing an independent Islamic State in the southern Philippines. In the early 1990s the ASG was seen to be no different than any other Muslim paramilitary group in the southern Philippines. The ASG saw its primary role as expanding the greater cause of Islam in the southern Philippines at the expense of secular or Christian interests. Having established who the “enemy” of Islam was in the southern Philippines, it then followed that *jihad* was justifiable. After all *jihad* could be justified as having some degree of legitimacy, insomuch that it could be seen as protecting the faith. However, the *Qur’an* has strict rules that must be adhered to in *jihad*, such as not taking up arms against

women and children, the old and the injured. The ASG transgressed these rules, and even demanded ransoms for the release of kidnapped Christians. By transgressing the *Qur'an* rules on *jihad*, the ASG was committing *hiraba*, that is, committing criminal acts against innocent people by causing public disruption or killing/s. However the strongest condemnation of the ASG must go to the Sultan of Sulu who is quoted in Patricio Abinales' 2004 working paper *American military presence in the southern Philippines: a comparative historical overview* as saying the ASG had 'deviated from the true tenets of Islam'.³⁶ The ASG, especially its questionably presence in Sulu Province is analysed in detail in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

2.7 The Rajah Solaiman Movement (RSM)

The RSM, which was founded by Ahmad Santos in 2002, is an organisation which consists of former Christians who have converted to Islam, and was regarded as an enemy combatant by the George W. Bush Administration in the Global War on Terror. The group is named after Rajah Solaiman, the last Sultan of Manila before the Spanish conquest in the mid 1500s. RSM members argue that Islam was the Philippines' original religion but the Muslim population was forced by the Spanish Colonial Forces to adopt Christianity. Brigadier General Ben Dolorfino, chief of the AFP's National Capital Region Command, believes the RSM is concentrated in provinces near Manila.³⁷ The RSM is suspected by the Arroyo Administration, as well as the then Bush Administration of having links to the ASG, JI and Al-Qaeda. However, there is little or no conclusive proof of this claim. Furthermore, the AFP's chief-of-staff, Hermogenes Esperon, when asked to elaborate on what threat the RSM posed to the areas around Manila, replied that there was, at this time, 'no specific plans to sow terror in the capital', and no such threats 'have been monitored'.³⁸ This is in stark contrast to claims made by the U.S. Department of State which accused the RSM, in conjunction with the ASG of bombing Super Ferry 14 in February 2004 (with the loss of 116 lives) and

³⁶ Abinales, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

³⁷ Militant Islam Monitor.org. 16 October 2006, *Christians converts to Islam from Rajah Soleiman (sic) group believed to be planning attacks in the Philippines*. Retrieved 2007, http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2006/10/16/asia/AS_GEN_Philippines_Suspected_Bombers.php

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

bombings in 2005 in Manila, General Santos and Davao City: the capital of Mindanao.³⁹ Furthermore, on 4 June 2008, the United Nations Security Council added the RSM and eight of its members to the UN 1267 Committee’s Consolidated List of individuals and entities affiliated with Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, or Osama Bin Laden.

2.8 Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM)

The 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines included in Article X, Local Government, Autonomous Regions, Section 15, which is reproduced in Text Box 2.1, gave notice of the creation of an area in the southern Philippines that was to be specifically designated for autonomy. This was to apply in certain predominate Muslim provinces.

“there shall be created autonomous regions in Muslim Mindanao and in the Cordilleras consisting of provinces, cities, municipalities, and geographical areas sharing common and distinctive historical and cultural heritage, economic and social structures, and other relevant characteristics within the framework of the Constitution and the national sovereignty as well as territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines”

Text Box 2.1. Article X (Local Government: Autonomous Regions), Section 15.
Source 1987 Philippine Constitution.

Following the inclusion of Article X, Section 15 in the 1987 Philippine Constitution, the ARMM was established in 1990 by the Aquino Administration after a plebiscite in 1989. In the plebiscite, 14 provinces in Mindanao and ten major cities chose not to join the ARMM. The original ARMM comprised the Muslim-majority provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Tawi-Tawi, and Sulu. In September 2001 the province of Basilan (other than its capital Isabela City) and Marawi City were added; the ARMM then encompassed all the provinces in the Sulu Archipelago. In 2007 the province of Shariff Kabunsuan was added to the ARMM after a partition of Magindanao (see Map 2.2). However in July 2008 the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional the “Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act 201” which created the province of Shariff Kabunsuan.

³⁹ *Designation of the Rajah Solaiman Movement (RSM) and Ahmad (Ahmed) Santos*. Retrieved July 2007, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2008/jun/105926.htm>

Magindanao reverted to its original area, and Shariff Kabunsuan ceased to exist and consequently was not a part of the ARMM.



Map 2.2. Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao as it was prior to the exclusion of Shariff Kabunsuan. Marawi City is not shown.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Ph_ARMM.png. Retrieved May 2008.

Although the ARMM does have a degree of self-governance insomuch that the Regional Government can create its own sources of income by taxation and so forth, it is nevertheless subject to Constitutional provisions. The region does have *Shari'ah* courts, but these courts only adjudicate in matters of divorce, property settlement and non-criminal proceedings—there is no provision for criminal court proceedings or hearings. Importantly, *Shari'ah* law only applies to Muslims. The region also has a Governor and Deputy Governor who are elected by popular vote. On the surface it would appear that the ARMM should have the opportunity to prosper. However, the reality is that the ARMM is poor, particularly the three provinces of the Sulu Archipelago that are among the poorest of the 80 provinces of the Philippines. The Philippines National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) in 2006 recorded the ARMM as having the ‘highest

poverty incidence in the Philippines'.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the ARMM has the lowest level of literacy and numeracy in primary schools in the 17 regions which, for statistical purposes, comprise the entire Philippines.⁴¹ In 2004-2005, a national achievement test was conducted throughout these 17 regions for students in years four and six, and the ARMM came 17 (last) in both grades.⁴²

2.9 Wars, Sulu Province: 21st Century

Such is the character of the warrior-like Tausugs of Sulu, that violence, including clan warfare (*rido*), has always been a part of the Suluanos' culture. The Sultanate of Sulu came under constant attack from Spanish forces from the 16th century to the end of the 19th century when, as mentioned, the U.S. gained control of the Philippines, after the Spanish-American War of 1898. Even though there was an uneasy peace which existed between the U.S. colonial forces and the Moros of Sulu up to the time of the Philippine independence in 1946, there still was an undercurrent of resentment of being "occupied" by outside military forces. Therefore, it came as no surprise that when the Moro secessionist movement came into existence in the early 1970s that Sulu was to become a nerve-centre of resistance. This is still the case today, with the MNLF being a strong paramilitary resistance force there, notwithstanding the historic 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement. The resistance of the Tausug people to interference in their religion or matters of governance is referred to as *parang sabil*, and this simply means that when the State is unable to defend its people and beliefs then the individual must take responsibility. Accordingly, it can be argued that when the AFP engaged in hostilities within Sulu, then the paramilitary forces of the MNLF in Sulu are only following the tradition of *parang sabil*. It can also be argued that if the terms and conditions of the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement had been fully implemented, especially in the time

⁴⁰ NSCB figures obtained from the ARMM official web-site, Retrieved May 2008, http://bpi.armm.gov.ph/index2.php?option=com_content&do_pdf=1&id=94

⁴¹ The eleven regions which, for statistical and census purposes in the Philippines are, NCR, CAR, I-Ilocos, II-Cagayan Valley, III-Central Luzon, IV-A. Calabarzon, IV-B. Mimaropa, V-Bicol, VI-Western Visayas, VII-Central Visayas, VIII-Eastern Visayas, IX-Zamboanga Peninsula, X-Northern Mindanao, XI-Sacskargen, CARAGA, and ARMM.

⁴² NSCB figures. *op. cit.*

of the present Arroyo Administration⁴³, then the wars which have occurred in Sulu since 2001 may not have occurred. It must be remembered that the key components of the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement dealt with the sharing of resource income, and more importantly the integration of former members of the MNLF paramilitary forces into the AFP and PNP.

In November 2001, in response to the Arroyo Administration refusing to endorse Nur Misuari for the position of Governor of the ARMM, and instead endorsing the MNLF Foreign Minister, Parouk Hussin, fighting broke out between the MNLF and the AFP. Hundreds of civilians and soldiers were killed, and the MNLF chairman, Nur Misuari was arrested and charged with rebellion. Further fighting between the MNLF and the AFP in Sulu in February 2005 saw an estimated 57,000 people displaced. The catalyst for this fighting was the killing of four civilians by AFP forces in Maimbung Municipality. In November of the same year, fighting occurred as a result of the AFP, which was in pursuit of alleged members of the ASG, trespassing through a major MNLF camp. The fighting was so intense that it lasted for weeks and involved air-strikes and artillery shelling.

There have been many other military encounters between the AFP and the MNLF in Sulu since 2001 which may very well have escalated into all-out war; such as the killing of seven civilians and an off-duty soldier at Ipil, Maimbung Province in February 2008. Most clashes with the MNLF have been the result of AFP personnel pursuing alleged ASG operatives, resulting in mistaken identity or trespassing on MNLF paramilitary bases. Such are the widespread powers invested in the AFP by the Arroyo Administration in the execution of its domestic counterinsurgency policies, especially in Republic Act 9372 (dealt with in detail in Chapter 6 of this dissertation), that by the time this study is completed there will more than likely continue to be major encounters between the AFP and the MNLF paramilitary forces in Sulu.

It was deemed necessary in this chapter to give an historical account of Islam in the Philippines, especially the Sulu Archipelago region, because the belief in Islam

⁴³ The Arroyo Administration formally began in January 2001.

together with all that is culturally significant with that belief underpins the Moro's desire to live according to Islamic traditions, not Christian traditions that are predominate in the Philippines. (Question 16 of the August 2008 survey in Sulu, showed majority support for an Islamic style government: discussed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation). It was also deemed necessary to give a brief overview of the MILF and the MNLF, including the early formation of these groups, because this is where liberation insurgency fits into this study.

The existence and agenda of the ASG (dealt with in detail in Chapter 5 of this dissertation), and the RSM, had to have coverage earlier in the study to understand better that there is no "link" or "common bond" between the terrorist ASG, or indeed the RSM, and the liberation insurgency of the MNLF or the MILF. Having given a brief historical background of Islam in the southern Philippines, and the formation of the various Muslim paramilitary organisations there, as well as a concise account of hostilities in Sulu between these paramilitary groups and the AFP, the following chapters will integrate this information into the study's findings.

Chapter 3

Personal Security, Peace and Order, and Governance in Sulu Province: Suluanos' Personal Perspectives

This chapter addresses, in part, central question 1 of this dissertation, that is: 'does the Province of Sulu have a safer human environment at this time, as compared to pre 2001, because of the large contingent of AFP in the province? If Sulu Province is less peaceful now than pre 2001, what responsibility does the Arroyo Administration accept for this situation?' Chapter 3 also seeks to address, in part, central question 6, that is: 'are the military actions currently being undertaken in Sulu Province by members of the AFP and the shortcomings in the areas of economic stability, human rights and anti-corruption action in accordance with the provisions of the 1987 Philippine Constitution?'

Furthermore, this chapter particularly addresses the questions of personal security, peace and order, and the apportionment of blame as indicated by the 306 selected survey respondents in Sulu Province in August 2008. However, before the responses and comments can be properly analysed, it is deemed important to ascertain the 'general knowledge' of respondents about certain contemporary events pertinent to the research. This 'general knowledge' is contained and graphed in survey questions 6,7,8,9, and 10. The primary evidence presented in this chapter gives the personal perspective of contemporary issues, as seen by selected Suluanos.

3.1 General knowledge

Question. 6: Do you know anything about the Arroyo Administration's counterinsurgency policies? (Graph 3.1)

Options: Yes No

Response: N =296 (of 306) Yes=39.19% No=60.81%

Interpretation of the Graph 3.1: (see p. 71)

Question. 7: If you answered "yes" do you approve of them? (Graph 3.2)

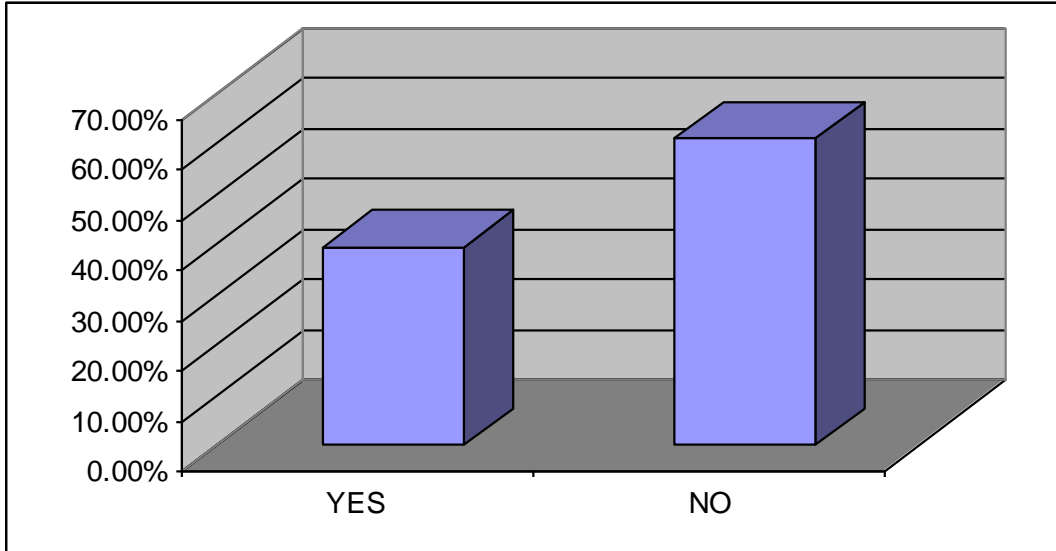
Options: Yes No

Response: N =113 (of 116) Yes=25.66% No=74.34%

Interpretation of the Graph 3.2: (see p. 71)

Graph 3.1. Knowledge of the Arroyo Administration's counterinsurgency policies

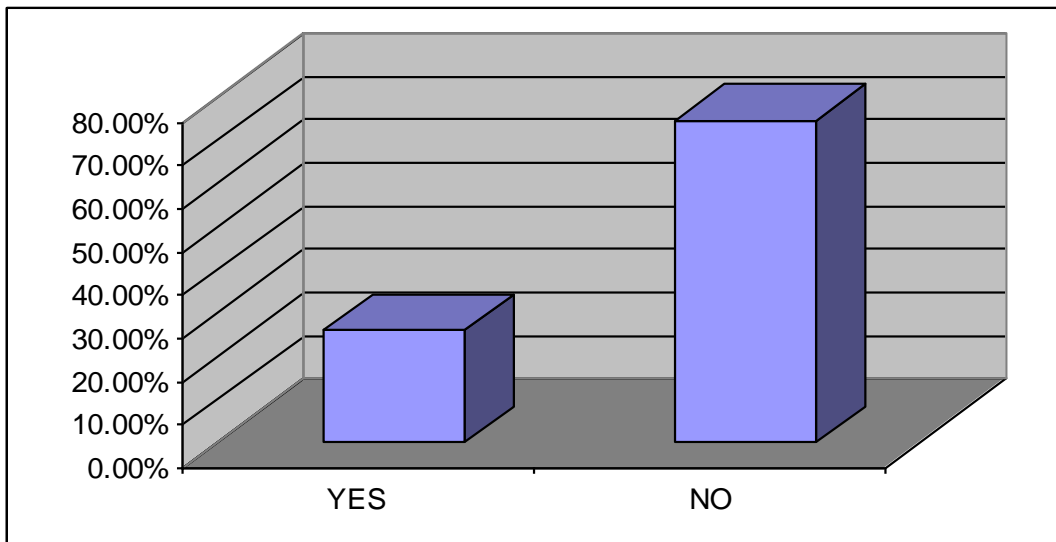
Response: N=296 (of 306) Yes=39.19% No=60.81%



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu (with the assistance of local research facilitators)-see Methodologies section in Chapter 1.

Graph 3.2. Approval of these counterinsurgency policies

Response: N=113 (of 116) Yes=25.66% No=74.34%



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu.

Question. 8: Are you familiar with the term “Global War on Terror”?
(Graph 3.3)

Options: Yes No

Response: N =295 (of 306) Yes=60.68% No=39.32%

Interpretation of the Graph 3.3: (see p. 71)

Question. 9: Are you familiar with the terrorist attacks which occurred in the U.S. in 2001? (Graph 3.4)

Options: Yes No

Response: N =295 (of 306) Yes=65.22% No=34.78%

Interpretation of the Graph 3.4: (see p. 71)

Question. 10: Do you feel that the U.S. military presence in the Sulu Archipelago is connected with the events mentioned in Questions 8 & 9?
(Graph 3.5)

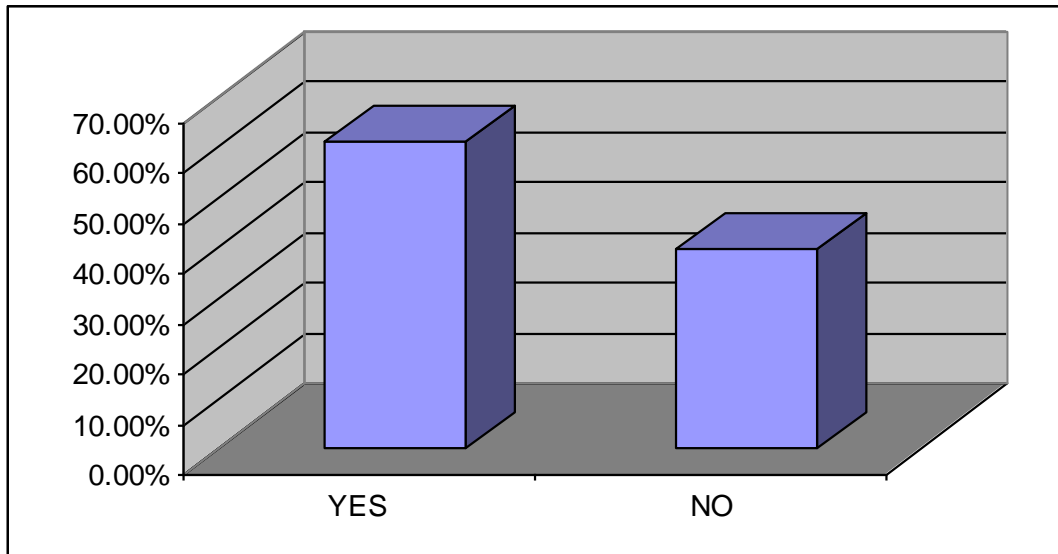
Options: Yes No Unsure Other (please specify)

Response: N =290 (of 306) Yes=37.59% No=16.55% Unsure=43.10%
Other=2.7%

Interpretation of the graph 3.5: (see p. 71)

Graph 3.3. Familiarisation of “Global War on Terror”

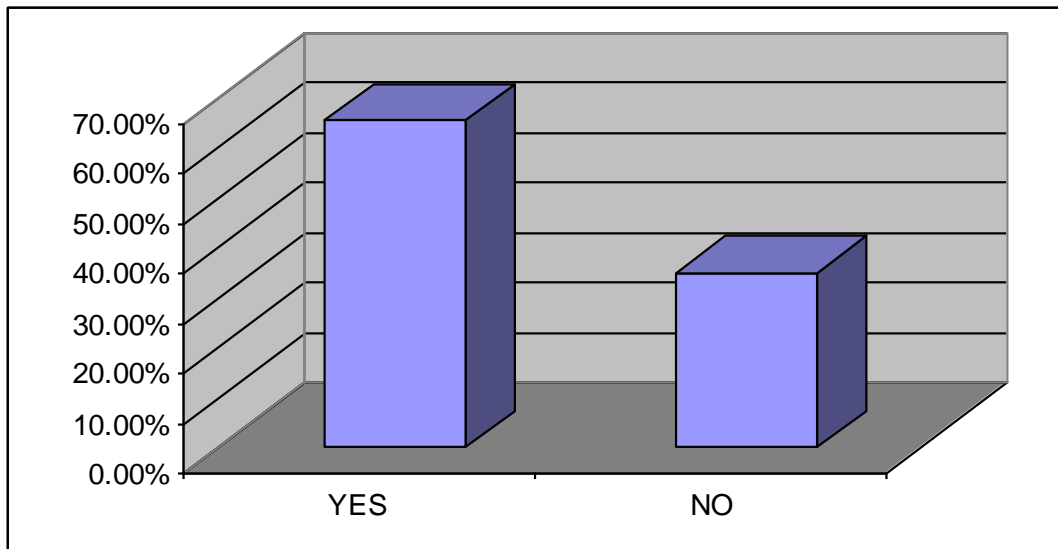
Response: N =295 (of 306) Yes=60.68% No=39.32%



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author, August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu.

Graph 3.4. Familiarisation of terrorist attacks in the U.S. in 2001

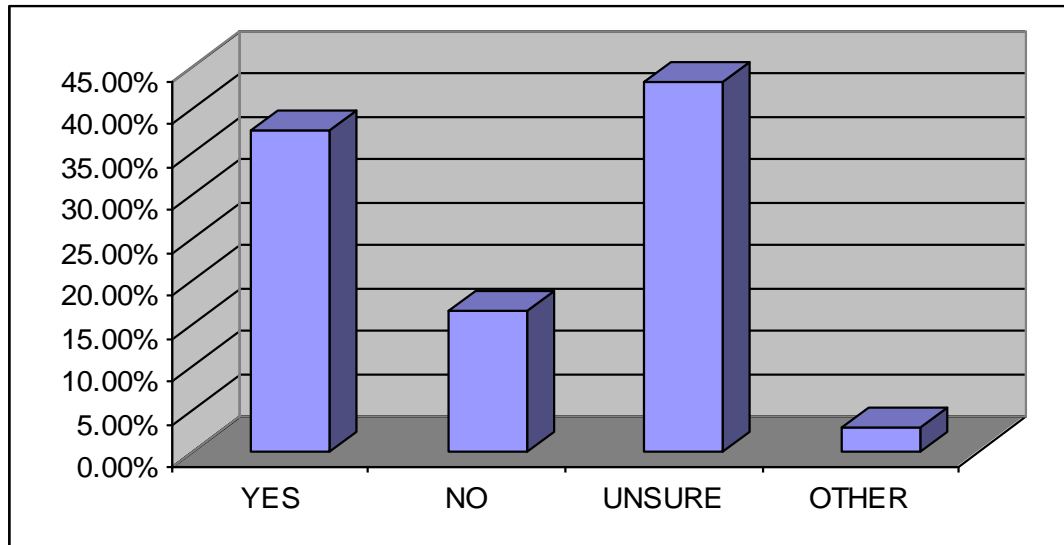
Response: N =295 (of 306) Yes=65.22% No=34.78%



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author, August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu.

Graph 3.5. U.S. military presence connected with events in Questions 8 & 9.

Response: N =290 (of 306) Yes=37.59% No=16.55% Unsure=43.10%
Other=2.7%



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author, August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu.

Analysis of general knowledge questions posed to Sulu survey respondents in August 2008.

It is fair to say that the single most widely reported incident which occurred in the world in the 21st Century to date, would undoubtedly have been the terrorist attacks which occurred in the U.S. on 9 September 2001. This single event was of such significance, that worldwide it is often simply referred to as ‘09/11’. With this in mind, and given that these terrorist events would have undoubtedly had coverage, to the point of saturation, in the Philippines and elsewhere in South-East Asia, why then did almost 3 in every 10 survey respondents claim to be unfamiliar with them—a closer examination of the respondents who claimed to have no knowledge of these events, showed that almost 90% were Muslims, whereas the remaining 10% were either Catholic or had not specified any religious affiliation. The answer may partially lie in the apathy shown towards the U.S. or any event which involved the U.S. regardless of the significance of that event. This assumption may be further strengthened if the answers to survey question 8, ‘are you familiar with the Global War on Terror?’ are brought into the analysis. Interestingly, an even higher number of respondents claimed to be unfamiliar with the term ‘Global War on Terror’: almost 4 of every 10. This unfamiliarity with the term ‘Global War on Terror’ produced a similar ratio to the number of respondents who were unsure of the reasons for the U.S. military presence in the Sulu Archipelago (see Graph 3.5). Given that there is extensive world news coverage (CNN, and so forth) available to most Suluanos at different accessible venues, it strengthens the argument that there is a considerable number of Suluanos who have no interest in U.S. foreign policies, or indeed U.S. domestic issues.

When it came to knowledge of the Arroyo Administration’s counterinsurgency¹ policies, approximately only 4 of every 10 respondents (39.19%) claimed to have any understanding of these policies (see Graph 3.1). More importantly, of this 39.19% of respondents only 25.66% approved of these policies (see Graph 3.2). To put that into some perspective, less than 10% of the respondents approved of the Arroyo Administration’s counterinsurgency policies: a similar

¹ The word “counterinsurgency” does not have an equivalent in Tausug. This is dealt with further in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

percentage was recorded when respondents were asked if they preferred the Arroyo Administration as their ‘type of government’—this question is covered in detail later in this chapter. With the above data in mind, the respondents were now questioned on a number of issues, including personal security, peace and order and the apportionment of blame for violence and poverty in Sulu.

3.2 Personal security, peace and order, and apportioning blame

Sulu Province has an official web-site which, together with the smiling face of the Governor, Abdusakur Tan, advises all would-be tourists of attractions that are to be seen when they visit Sulu. Among the places that the visitor is encouraged to visit is Maubo Beach in Patikul Municipality. However, what the web-site fails to mention is that Patikul Municipality has been the scene of some of the most violent encounters between alleged members of the ASG and the AFP. As mentioned, the leader of the contemporary ASG, Khadafi Janjalani, was killed by members of the AFP in December 2006 in Patikul Municipality. As well, the Philippine 3rd Marine Brigade is permanently based in Patikul Municipality. Moreover, the NGO, “Asia America Initiative” (headquartered in Washington) referred to Patikul Province as ‘an area of devastating poverty, endemic violence and the birthplace of Abu Sayyaf founders and leaders’.² Furthermore, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), has issued (17 September 2008) warnings to Australian travellers intending to visit the Sulu Archipelago. The warning from DFAT is the highest category: ‘Do Not Travel’. It states in part, ‘We strongly advise you not to travel to the Sulu Archipelago, due to the very high threat of terrorist attack, including kidnapping, and related counter-terrorism operations’.³

When it came to the distribution of survey questionnaires, the research facilitators who conducted the interviews and collected the questionnaires for this study were reluctant to travel to neighbouring municipalities for fear of being kidnapped or indeed being caught up in the ongoing military activity there. Nevertheless, they were able to collect completed questionnaires from residents of

² Asia American Initiative, *Development for peace in Sulu*. Retrieved July 2008, http://www.asiaamerica.org/gallery/june_2005.html

³ Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Retrieved August 2008, <http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/Philippines>

other municipalities who were visiting Jolo, largely for necessary shopping—local markets have a greater variety of goods than those available in their local urban areas. These visitations are common events, especially for Patikul residents who share a common border with Jolo Municipality.

The following question was asked of survey respondents in the Jolo market place. It was deemed necessary to divide the answers into two geographical regions to ascertain if the answers were similar in different municipalities. The interpretation is found in Graphs 3.6 (Jolo) and 3.7 (outside Jolo).

**Question. 19: Would you consider the province of Sulu to be peaceful?
(Graph 3.6)**

Options: Yes No Neutral Other

Response: N =302 (of 306) Yes=36.23% No=36.23%
 Neutral=26.82% Other=.72%

Interpretation of Graph 3.6: (see page 73)

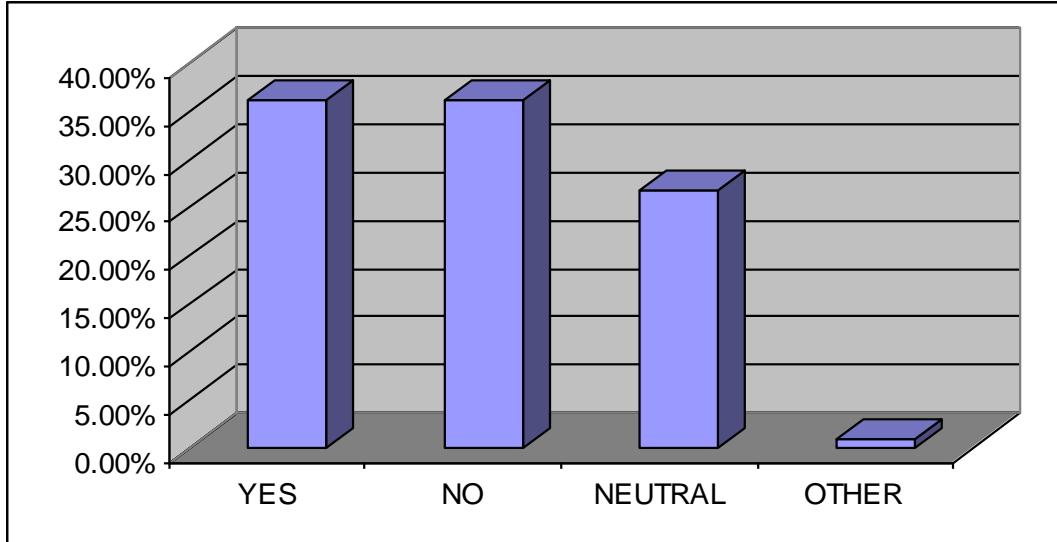
Preliminary analysis of the findings on peace and order in Sulu.

Notwithstanding the threat to personal safety of all persons (both residents and visitors) in Sulu Province, when respondents to this author’s research questionnaire were asked ‘would you consider the province of Sulu to be peaceful?’ (Question 19), 72% of respondents replied that Sulu was either ‘peaceful’ or “neutral” (see Graph 3.6). When respondents’ answers from question 19 were further dissected, that is, answers from those not domiciled in Jolo Municipality, the ‘peaceful’ or ‘neutral’ total was almost the same, 73% (see Graph 3.7).

Given that Patikul Municipality is considered a more dangerous municipality than Jolo—as evidenced by the permanent stationing of the Philippine 3rd Marine Brigade, it was interesting that over 70% of respondents from Patikul Municipality considered Sulu Province to be either peaceful or neutral (see Graph 3.7). Of particular interest was the number of respondents who gave ‘neutral’ as an answer: that is, they seemed to have no perception of the quality/degree of peace in Sulu one way or the other. (continued p. 75.)

Graph 3.6. Peaceful? Sulu Province in total.

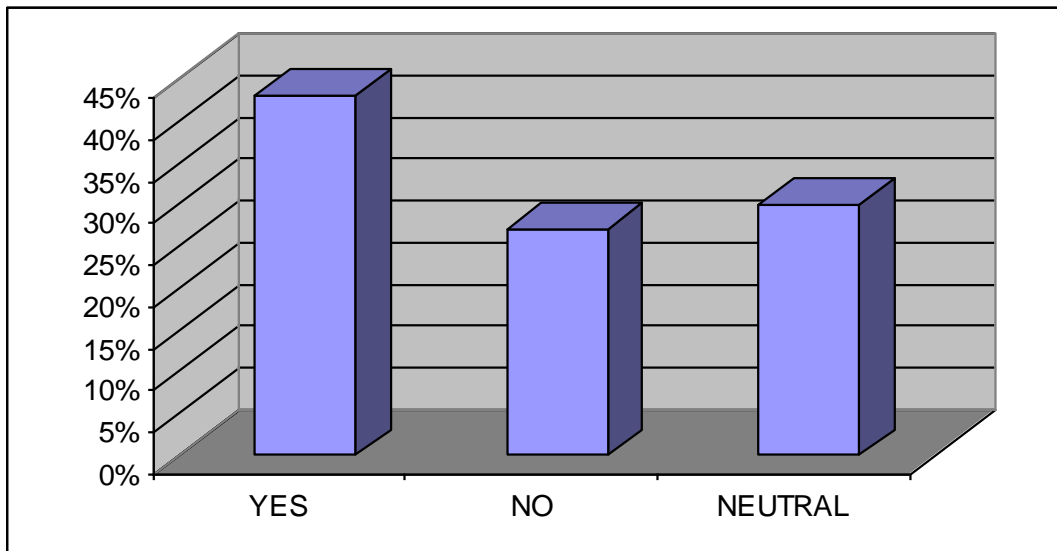
Response: N =302 (of 306) Yes=36.23% No=36.23% Neutral=26.82%
Other=.72%



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu

Graph 3.7. Peaceful? Municipalities excluding Sulu. Predominately Patikul.

Response: N =94 (of 306) Yes=43% No=27% Neutral=30%



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu.

It would appear that even though violence was commonplace in Sulu, it was something that perhaps they had come to be accepted as the norm. Furthermore, although over 70% of all respondents believed that Sulu Province was either “peaceful” or “neutral”, this was/is in stark contrast to the true situation in Sulu. Consider the following violent events (not exhaustive) recorded in the city of Jolo, capital of Sulu Province, from January to May 2006. It is important to bear in mind that the events listed below in Table 3.1 are only those recorded by the authorities and that many other violent incidents, including clan conflicts (*rido*), more than likely would have gone unreported.

Table 3.1. Recorded violence, January-May 2006, Sulu Province.

Date	Victims
28 January	Ten civilians wounded in Lambayong
08 February	Four killed, two wounded. Palar massacre.
10 February	Police Officer Henry Elumbaring killed in PNP headquarters, Camp Asturias. On the same day a civilian, known only as Abujar, was found beheaded in Scott Road.
18 February	Five dead and nineteen wounded in a bombing outside the AFP 104 th Brigade headquarters.
27 March	Five dead nine wounded in a bomb at the Sulu Consumer’s Co-op store.
06 April	One dead and five wounded . Passenger jeep at Barangay Asturias.
11 April	A civilian known as Asula Binang killed in Serantes Street.
13 April	Kidnapping and murder of William Halim: a rice dealer.
16 April	Six civilians seriously wounded in a grenade attack at Barangay Asturias.
17 April	A civilian, Jaime Go, murdered.
21 May	Philippine Marine Sgt. De Luna shot dead at Jolo Airport.
22 May	Philippine Marine Sgt. Joel Muhadi Dagonia shot dead in Jolo CBD. On the same day, Philippine Marine Sgt. Roco de la Cruz and Marine Cpl. Junni were shot dead in a store in Jolo CBD.
23 May	A civilian, Binang Sali was shot dead in the Tulay Mosque.
24 May	Two civilians, Juric Palalas and Roel Vernal were shot dead in Jolo CBD.

Source: A compilation from events recorded in Taylor & Idjirani, *op. cit.*

The tally for recorded violent deaths in the city of Jolo in this 19 week period was 16 shot dead, ten killed by bomb blasts, one beheaded, and 51 wounded: most of the wounded were classified as ‘serious’. And to put that into perspective, this violence occurred in a city having fewer than 90,000 people.⁴ Moreover, the municipality of Jolo is considered to be safer than most other municipalities in Sulu.

Following on from the perception of peace and order, or otherwise in Sulu, it was thought that personal security, especially since 2001, would follow the same pattern, that is, about one in every three of the survey respondents would answer either ‘better’ or ‘worse’, with the balance opting for either no comment, or neutral: this was not to be the case. Compare Graphs 3.8 and 3.9 (on page 77) for the responses to questions concerning personal security post-2001. Graph 3.8 is for Sulu in total. Graph 3.9 is for municipalities outside of Jolo. As well Question 11.1 sought to apportion blame for any deteriorating personal security: (Graph 3.10, page 78).

Question.11: Is your personal security better or worse than prior to 2001?
(Graph 3.8)

Options: **Better** **Worse** **No Comment** **Other**

Response: **N =297 (of 306) Better=9.09%** **Worse=39.06%**
No Comment=49.86% **Other=1.99%**

Interpretation of the Graph 3.8: (see p. 79)

Question.11.1. **If you answered “worse” who do you blame for this?**
(Graph 3.10)

Options: **Philippine Government** **MNLF** **Bandits** **Other**

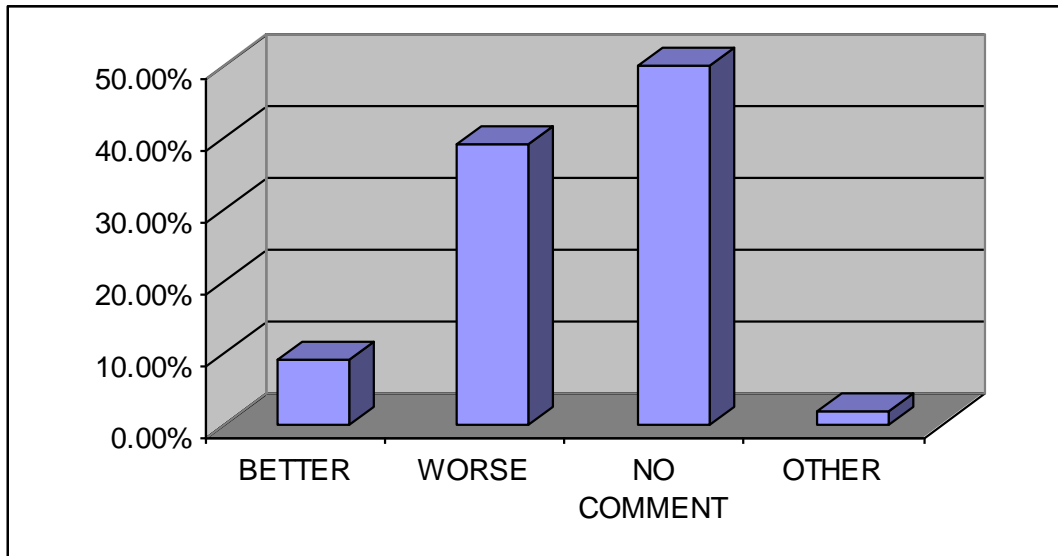
Responses: **N =179 (of 306)** Please note. Only 116 respondents answered “worse” in Question.11. **Philippine Government =72.10%** **MNLF=3.91%**
Bandits=15.08% **Other=8.91%**

Interpretation of Graph 3.10: (see p. 79)

⁴ The census of population and housing in 2000 recorded the population of Jolo as being 87,998. 2000 Census of Population and Housing, NSO. 2002 Press Release, (NSO- Philippine- National Statistics Office.) Retrieved July 2008, <http://www.census.gov.ph/data/pressrelease/2002/pr02144tx.html>

Graph 3.8. Personal security. Sulu Province in total

Response: N=297 (of 306) Better=9.09% Worse=39.06% No Comment=49.86% Other=1.99%

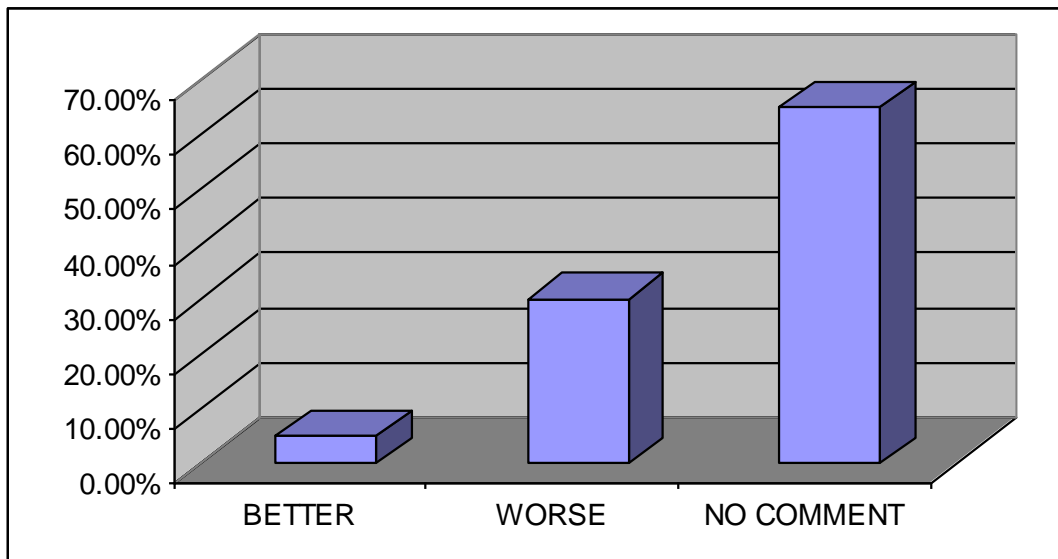


Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu.

Question.11 further analysed. Personal security.

Graph 3.9. Municipalities excluding Jolo Municipality. Predominately Patikul.

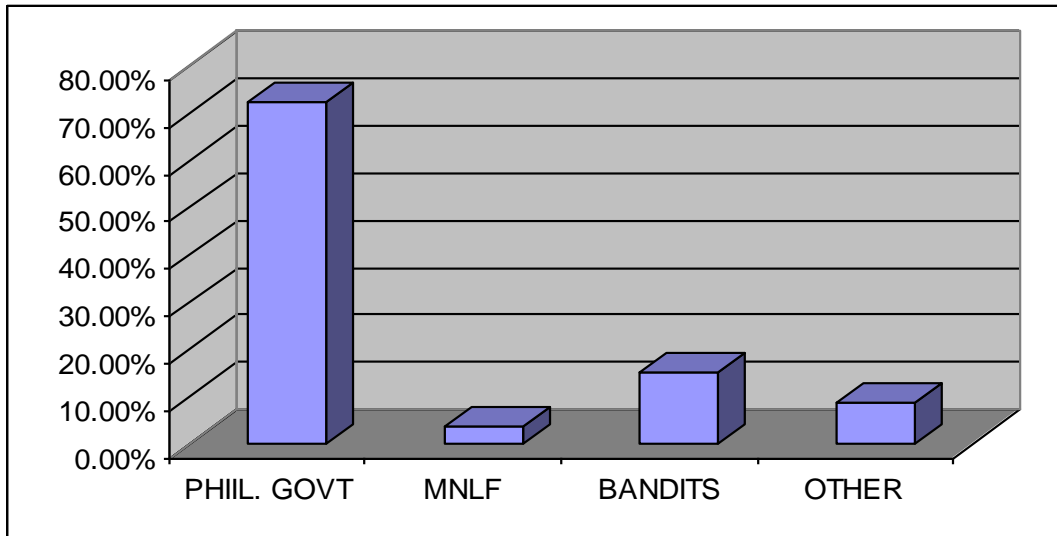
Response: N=99 (of 306) Better=5.00% Worse=30.00% Other=65%



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu

Graph 3.10. Blame? Sulu Province in total.

Responses: N=179 (of 306) Please note. Only 116 respondents answered “worse” in Question.11. **Philippine Government =72.10%** **MNLF=3.91%**
Bandits=15.08% **Other=8.91%**



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author, August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu.

Analysis of the findings on respondents' views about personal security, post-2001.

When asked whether their personal security is now better or worse since 2001, it is interesting (and possibly significant) that almost half of the total respondents gave as an answer 'no comment', whereas over 39% believed their personal security was 'worse' (see Graph 3.8). In the municipalities outside of Sulu, predominately Patikul, respondents were less inclined to believe that their personal security was 'worse' (see Graph 3.9). This further strengthens the argument that violence is an accepted way of life in Sulu, especially outside the capital, Jolo. Furthermore, the high percentage of 'no comment' was interesting, insomuch that when question 11.1 asked respondents if they had answered 'worse', and who do you blame for this, many of the 'no comment' respondents now opted to give an answer (see Graph 3.10). One explanation for this sudden change of attitude, that is, going from 'no comment' to now opting to give an answer might be seen as opportunity for respondents to express a deep-seated feeling on an issue important to them. In other words, the opportunity to express some anger at a conceived culprit now became available to those respondents who were otherwise blasé about their personal security. **Analysis of apportioning blame for worsening personal security.**

More than 72% of respondents blamed the GRP, namely the incumbent Arroyo Administration, for their worsening personal security, whereas only approximately 15% blamed 'bandits'. The term 'bandits' was carefully chosen in the questionnaire because it could include criminals as well as those who may be given the label 'Abu Sayyaf'. What is interesting given this data is that the Arroyo Administration justifies its large military presence in Sulu on the existence of the ASG in that province (the existence, or otherwise, of the ASG in Sulu Province is examined in depth in Chapter 5 of this dissertation).

In question 11.1 the apportioning of blame for respondents' worsening personal security in Sulu saw the MNLF come in last, with less than 4% of the responses. This is not surprising when it is remembered that Sulu is the homeland of the MNLF, and is also the birthplace of Nur Misuari, its founder and current Chairman. Although Misuari failed to secure the Governorship of Sulu in the 2008 elections, he still enjoys considerable support from the Sulu population in general.

Fifteen handwritten comments were included in the responses to question 11.1. The following replies, contained in Text Box 3.1, are as transcribed, with no grammatical, or spelling corrections:

1. From a Muslim female: *'I blame all of the above. The government does not have tight implementation on their security policies. The MNLF always blame the government but they are not doing their part to settle their differences. The bandits are the worst because they use religion for personal gain'*.
2. A Muslim male: *'They're all to be blamed'*.
3. A Muslim male: *'because the govt. he did not do their promise to the MNLF. The Philippine govt. abandon their promise'*.
4. A Catholic female: *'All'*.
5. A Catholic female: *'people'*.
6. A Muslim male: *'The government official and Arroyo Administration'*.
7. A Catholic male: *'Globalization-uneven distribution of global wealth controlled by corporations, oil corporations in particular'*.
8. A Catholic, gender not specified: *'People-all of us has his/her personal contribution to unpeacefulness (sic) and injustices'*.
9. A female, religion not specified: *'The government has not given priority for the security of the people. Firstly, the economic situation has worsened. With high unemployment it is always a cause for trouble. People do not feel economically secure in general. In Mindanao, where there are fighting between the Moro insurgents and the government, the situation is worse. Now, there are more military presence in the area and you feel you are in a militarized zone. I can imagine what it is like in areas where U.S. soldiers are visibly present. People are always on the constant lookout for bombings or random encounters between the military and the people'*.
10. A Catholic male: *'Muslim religions'*.
11. A Muslim male : *'Almost all the sectors'*.
12. A Muslim male: *'All the sectors of the society'*.
13. A Muslim male: *'All the components of the society'*.
14. A Muslim female: *'Both parties contributed to the problem of the gov. They should be the one to be blame (sic) on it'*.
15. A female "born again Christian": *'All of the above'*.

Text Box 3.1. Respondents' handwritten comments to survey question 11.1.
Source: (August 2008 survey by this author in Jolo, Sulu). Respondents written replies. Translated from Tausag to English by survey facilitators.

An analysis of these handwritten comments indicates that the GRP was criticised by Muslim respondents (the answer, 'all are to blame', probably includes the GRP). Catholic and non-specific religious respondents tended to apportion blame

widely, including the military. However, ‘all are to blame’ was also mentioned by this group. The data obtained from these written responses about personal security and peace in Sulu suggested that the GRP must take some responsibility for the volatility in that province.

The overwhelming majority of respondents who thought that their personal security was worse now than prior to 2001—and also those who answered ‘neutral’, and nonetheless decided to comment—apportioned blame on the GRP. Given that the GRP could be taken to include all national legislative decision makers including the Senate, it was interesting to see just how popular President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo was with the respondents. (survey question 15 asked specifically whether respondents accepted the Arroyo Government as their government, and the results are shown in Graph 3.11 appearing on page 84). Of the number of respondents who commented on their personal security being worse now than 2001 (16), seven offered a comment on President Arroyo, the most poignant being ‘I hate her for declaring an all-out war in my province’.

Briefly, respondents’ answers to questions about peace and order and personal safety produced results that were the complete opposite of what would have been expected from residents living in the poorest province of the Philippines, as well as one of the most violent. It would appear that most respondents just accepted the appalling living conditions, and predictable violence. The blaming of the Arroyo Administration for these conditions was predictable, insomuch as it can be seen as a manifestation of centuries of suppression, and ‘forced’ governance on the Sulu people. The analysing of respondents’ answers to question 16, appearing later in this chapter: ‘what type of government/rule would you prefer in your province’ reinforces this view.

3.3 Governance: Acceptance, preference, expectations, and assessments

The 1987 Philippine Constitution allowed for the President to be elected for one six-year term. Gloria Macapagal Arroyo has been President of the Republic of the Philippines since 20 January 2001. An unusual and unprecedented set of circumstances which had occurred in the Philippines may see Gloria Arroyo as President of the Philippines for over 9 years.⁵ In 1998 she was elected Vice-President, whilst Joseph Estrada was elected President. However in 2000, impeachment proceedings were started against President Estrada for alleged economic mismanagement and corruption—Estrada himself in his election speeches admitted to knowing little about national economic policy. Although the impeachment proceedings were not successful, Estrada became so unpopular that even the support which he previously enjoyed from all sections of the armed forces was withdrawn. Consequently, he was forced to step down from office and was replaced by Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. In 2004 President Arroyo beat Fernando Poe in a national election by 1.1 million votes (3.5%) in an election that saw allegations of rigging and cronyism involving political parties that favoured President Arroyo. In the same year, under the rules of the Constitution, half of the members of the Senate and all of the Members of House of Representatives were elected for 3 years. In the 2007 elections, the same procedures for electing Senators and Members of the House of Representatives were followed. As the incumbent Philippine President, Gloria Arroyo was not required to stand for election. However, like the U.S. half-term elections, it was desirable, for political stability, that the majority of Members of the House of Representatives and new Senators be either sympathetic to the President or a member of his/her political party.

The following information is included here so as to better understand some of the complexities of the political situation in Sulu Province. At the time of the writing of this dissertation, Sulu had two Congressional Districts. District Number One was

⁵ The only other Philippine President to serve for more than one term, Marcos excepted, was Elpidio Quirino who took over the Presidency in April 1948 when Manuel Roxas died in office. Quirino was to serve from 17 April 1948 to 30 December 1953, a total of 5 years and 257 days: the presidential term of office at the time being 4 years. At the time of the writing of this dissertation President Arroyo is attempting to secure support of Congress to amend sections of the Philippine Constitution to allow for the President to contest consecutive National elections.

represented by Yusop Jikiri, and District Number Two was represented by Munib Arbison. Congressman Jikiri is in his first term, and belongs to *Kampi*: a party set up by Gloria Arroyo which is usually referred to as ‘her party’. *Kampi* is an acronym of the Tagalog words “*Kabalikat ng Mamamayang Pilipino*”. *Kabalikat* simply means “someone who works with”. Therefore, the party name can be translated as ‘somebody who works with the Filipino citizenry’. Congressman Arbison is in his third, and therefore last, term, and belongs to *Lakas-CMD* (Lakas Christian Muslim Democrats), *Lakas* is Tagalog for strength. *Lakas-CMD* comprises a coalition of several parties who are generally supportive of the Arroyo Administration. Therefore, both Congressmen could be considered ‘friendly’ to President Arroyo, prompting the question of why, then, does President Arroyo, at the time of the writing of this dissertation, have a low approval rating even though both Sulu Congressmen were elected by voters who knew that sympathy and/or loyalty lay with President Arroyo? According to Taylor, it is all about “expediency, funding, and manipulation”. The following comments, contained in Text Box 3.2, are his interpretation, as provided to this author—reproduced with permission.

“This is what the (Arroyo) Administration did. They fielded several candidates belonging to different parties all supportive of the Administration for the same position. Hence most candidates who won were Administration supporters. The reason this was possible was because of the Administration's control of the purse strings. Public funds were used (under various guises) to support different candidates. Because of this control over the Treasury, candidates flocked to run under one or another Administration party”.

TEXT Box 3.2. Possible funding of parties supportive of President Arroyo.

Source: Author’s personal correspondence with V. Taylor. Reproduced with permission.

Bearing in mind that voting in the Philippines is not compulsory, it is possible that many of the August 2008 questionnaire respondents did not vote in the 2007 elections—voter participation in Sulu in the 2007 election was approximately 64%. Question 15 of this survey produced a completely different picture to the 2007 election results—albeit it was not a Presidential election. The interpretation of respondents’ answers appear in Graph 3.11.

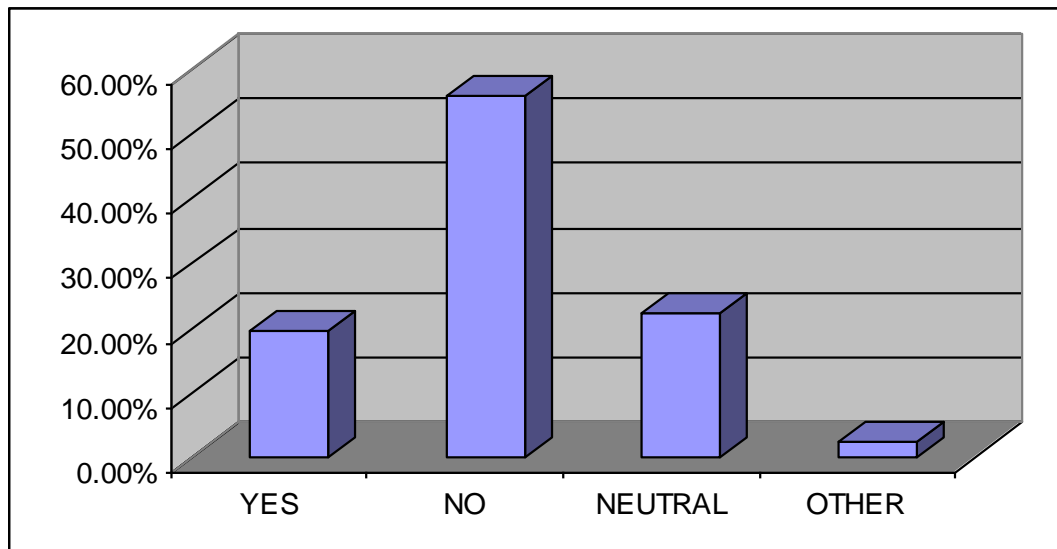
Question.15. Do you accept that the Arroyo Administration is your Government?

Options: Yes No Neutral Other

Response: N=301 (of 306) Yes.19.6% No=55.81% Neutral=22.26%
Other=2.33%

Graph 3.11. Arroyo Government acceptance. Sulu Province in total.

Response: N=301 (of 306) Yes.19.6% No=55.81% Neutral=22.26%
Other=2.33%



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu.

Analysis of the local approval ratings of the Arroyo Administration.

As indicated in Graph 3.11, the Arroyo's Administration's approval rating was less than 20%. This rating is not all that flattering for any democratically elected head of state. In the 2004 Presidential elections, in Sulu, President Arroyo received 78,428 votes in Sulu, while Fernando Poe Junior (not only the main contender, but the Philippines most popular action film star) garnered 60,807 votes from a total vote of 209,677 registered electors in Sulu.⁶ There were three other candidates: Raul Roco, Panfilo Lacson, and Eduardo Villanueva, all of whom were "lightweights", and attracted minor support in Sulu, especially Lacson who was a controversial police chief during the Estrada Administration. Given that the voter participation in

⁶ Parliamentary Library, *Department of Parliamentary Services*. Retrieved August 2008, <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/Pubs/RN/2004-05/05rn13.pdf>

the 2004 elections was 81.4% nationwide,⁷ if this was reflected in Sulu, then voter participation would have been somewhere around 170,000. This, in turn, would have given President Arroyo approximately 46% of the Presidential vote: higher than the national average of 40%.

Given that, in 2008, the approval rating for President Arroyo nationwide was 22% and her disapproval rating was 60%,⁸ then the relevant findings of the research questionnaire where, less than 20% approval for the Arroyo Administration were in line with nationwide trends. This extremely low approval rating made President Arroyo the least popular President of the Republic of the Philippines since President Marcos resigned in 1986. Furthermore, President Arroyo escaped impeachment for corruption and fraud on three occasions since 2005—all charges were related to the 2004 elections. The Philippine Constitution only allows for one impeachment attempt a year. Furthermore, to be successful to the stage where it goes to the Senate for trial, then at least one-third (approximately 80 members) of Members of the House of Representatives have to endorse the complaint. As a sign of the President's growing unpopularity, in the latest impeachment proceedings of 25 October 2008 the former speaker of the House of Representatives, and close ally of President Arroyo, Jose C. de Venecia, endorsed the complaint.

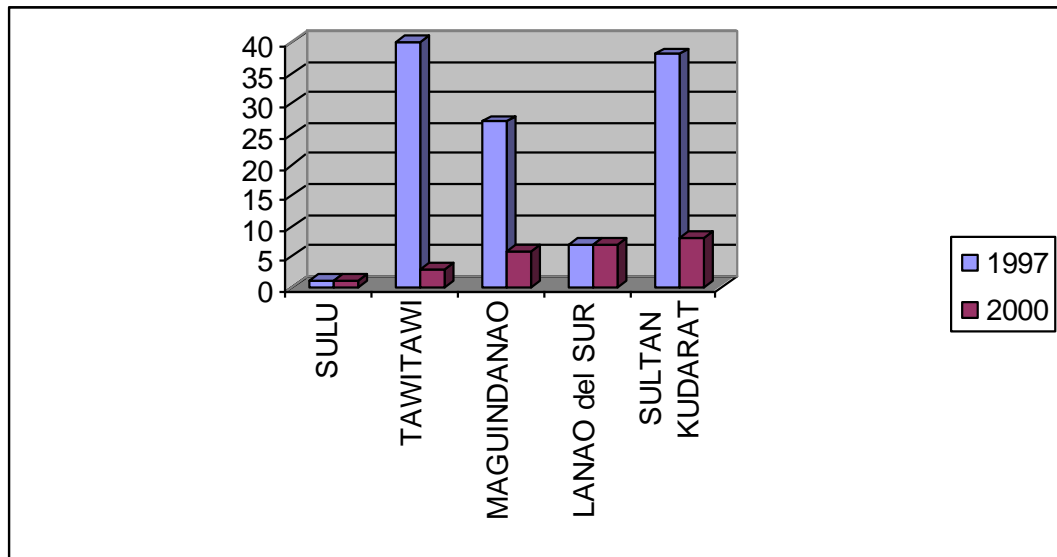
As well as corruption and fraud allegations, the Arroyo Administration has had to contend with a number of international factors over which it had no control. At the time of this study, soaring world oil prices and the global economic 'meltdown', which have contributed to rising domestic food prices, were all factors outside the President's control. However, rising oil and food prices in Sulu would not have contributed very significantly to Presidents Arroyo's unpopularity because poverty is nothing new to the majority of Suluanos who have become somewhat indifferent to it. In 1997 and 2000 Sulu was rated as the poorest province in the Philippines. Graph 3.12 poignantly illustrates the position of Sulu. Of further interest in this graph is the plight of four out of five provinces in the ARMM: Tawi-Tawi in 1997, was rated 40 out of 79 provinces and down to 3 in 2000; Maguindanao 27

⁷ More than 45 million Filipinos voted in 2004 to elect half of the 24 seats in the Senate, and 275 members of the House of Representatives.

⁸ USA today, 18 July 2008. Retrieved August 2008, http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-07-18-1042171277_x.htm

down to 6; and Sultan Kudarat⁹ 38 down to 8; whilst Lanao del Sur remained static at number 7. Basilan is the only ARMM province to be not one of the ten poorest provinces in the Philippines, both in 1997 and 2000.

Graph 3.12. Poverty in the ARMM. Please note, the rating goes from number 1 being the poorest province, number 3 being the third poorest province and so forth.



Source: National Statistical Coordination Board.
http://www.nscb.gov.ph/factsheet/pdf03/fs3_07.asp

Notwithstanding the poverty indicators in the other ARMM provinces, Sulu had suffered from severe poverty prior to 2001 (the 2000 figures were posted in October 2003, and later figures were unavailable at the time of the writing of this dissertation). Nothing has changed in Sulu to either advantage or significantly disadvantage this province economically since 2000. Given that Sulu is economically disadvantaged, and has been for decades, and given that Sulu in the 2004 elections returned approximately 46% of the Presidential vote in favour of President Arroyo, then other factors, other than the international ones mentioned, must have come into play to lessen the popularity of the Arroyo Administration, in particular President Arroyo herself.

It can be proposed that the two most significant events affecting the lives of Suluanos since 2004 have been the Arroyo Administration's domestic

⁹ Sultan Kudarat was not a member of the ARMM in 1997 or 2000. It is included in this graph because at the beginning of this study it was in the ARMM..

counterinsurgency policies, in particular the 2007 ‘Human Security Act’ (dealt with in detail in Chapter 6 of this dissertation), and the stationing of U.S. military forces in Sulu—although the stationing of U.S. military forces had been in existence in some lesser form since 2002. The Arroyo Administration’s domestic counterinsurgency policies have seen thousands of AFP personnel being engaged in military operations against suspected ASG operatives as well as some paramilitary forces of the MNLF. The U.S. military forces, which are referred to as ‘Special Operations Forces’ (SOF), have been assisting the AFP with training, advice, and equipment in their pursuit of suspected ASG operatives since 2002. The SOF are drawn from the ‘Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines’ (JSOTF-P). ‘Special Operations’ are defined as those ‘conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments’ and those which require ‘covert, clandestine, or discreet capabilities’.¹⁰ Both the Arroyo Administration’s domestic counterinsurgency policies in Sulu and the presence of U.S. Military Forces in the same province are further examined in Chapters 5 and 6 of this dissertation. Having now established that the Arroyo Administration is unpopular in Sulu at the time of this study it was important to establish the priority of government preferred by the survey respondents. Question 16 did just that.

Question.16. What type of government/rule would you prefer in your province? (Graph 3.13)

Options: (a) The present Arroyo Government and its representatives/institutions. (b) A secular government, generally. (c) An Islamic Government with Shari’ah Law, generally. (d) A Sultanate. (e) No preference. (f) Other (please specify).

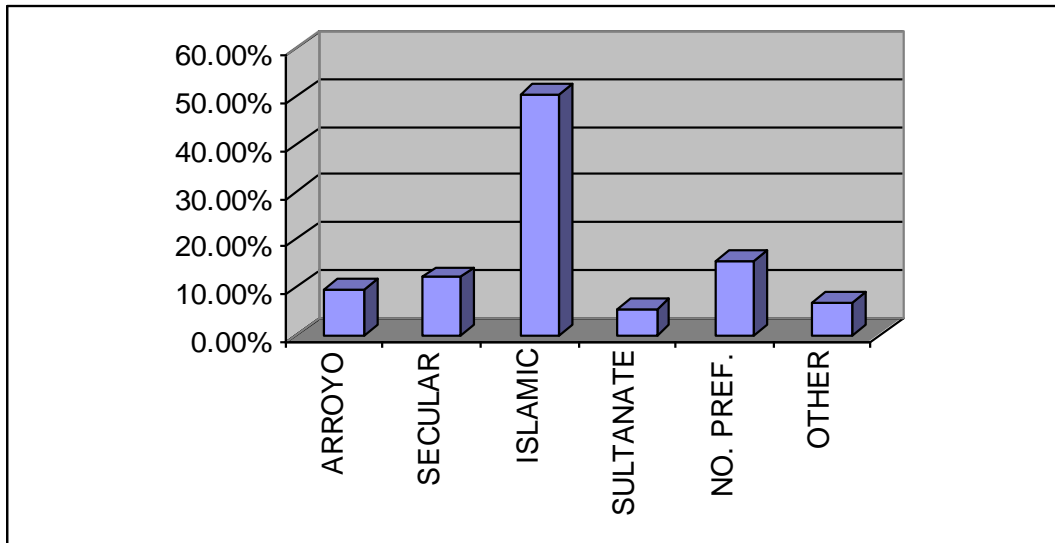
Response: N=291 (of 306) Arroyo Gov.9.62% Secular Gov.12.03% Islamic Gov.50.52% Sultanate5.5% No prefer.15.46%
Other.6.87%

Interpretation of graph 3.13: (see page 88)

¹⁰ Refer: *Special operations posture statement*, in Focus on the Philippines, Special Reports, No. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

Graph 3.13. Government Preference in Sulu Province

Response: N=291 (of 306) Arroyo Gov.9.62% Secular Gov.12.03% Islamic Gov.50.52% Sultanate5.5% No prefer.15.46% Other.6.87%



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu.

Analysis of government preference for Sulu Province.

Preference for the Arroyo Administration was less than 10%; this is only a half of the all-time low national approval rating for President Arroyo in 2008 and less than one-quarter of her approval/vote in the 2004 election. The similarities between the falling popularity of the Philippine President and the U.S. President (George W. Bush at the time of this study) are strikingly similar. This was even more puzzling, when considering the amount of foreign aid—overwhelmingly from the U.S.—that has been ‘pumped’ into Sulu since the Philippine Presidential elections of 2004. The following infrastructure projects, (included in Table 3.2 page 85), have been initiated and financed by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), all of which would have improved the lifestyle of many Suluanos, and should have helped to improve the popularity of the incumbent government, if not attitudes towards the U.S.

Table 3.2. USAID projects, Sulu Province, post-2004.

Livelihood Enhancement and Peace (LEAP) Program
Vitamin A Supplement Program (City/Province Wide)
Credit Union Empowerment & Strengthening (CUES) Program
Enhanced and Rapid Improvement Health (Enrich) Mindanao Program
Conflict in the Philippines Program
Fisheries Improved for Sustainable Harvest (FISH) Program
Development for Peace in Sulu Program
Tudlo Mindanao Teacher Training Program for Suluanos

Source: USAID Philippines, *Growth with equity in Mindanao (GEM) program*.
<http://philippines.usaid.gov/>¹¹

One reason why the above benevolent programs have not translated into improved popularity for the Arroyo Administration may be the source of funding, namely the U.S. The unpopular decision by the Arroyo Administration to allow U.S.A troops to be stationed in Sulu, and other provinces of the southern Philippines, more than likely would have had an adverse effect on her popularity (the acceptance of the U.S. military presence in Sulu is also examined in Chapters 5 & 6 of this dissertation). When President Arroyo gave in to public pressure and withdrew the remaining 51 Philippine peacekeeping forces from Iraq on 26 July 2004, in response to a threat to kill a Philippine truck driver, Angelo de la Cruz, she was criticised by the U.S. Bush Administration, as well as Australia's Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer. Notwithstanding U.S. and Australian criticism, domestic issues overrode this foreign condemnation, and approval for President Arroyo's decision to prematurely withdraw the 51 Philippine peacekeeping forces was rewarded with a high 67% approval rating. The popular decision undertaken by President Arroyo in

¹¹ USAID Philippines, *Growth with equity in Mindanao (GEM) program*. Retrieved August 2008, <http://philippines.usaid.gov/>¹¹

July 2004, by October 2004, had all but been forgotten domestically, and President Arroyo's national approval rating dropped to 48%.¹²

If preference for the Arroyo government and its representatives and institutions was less than 10%, in the survey, then the preference for a secular government fared little better with 12%. Of those survey respondents who generally favoured a secular government, the majority identified themselves as Muslim. The respondents who answered "other", comprised just under 7% and overwhelmingly specified a preference for a federalist system of government. Therefore, under 20% of Suluanos favoured, broadly, a government which encompassed the separation of powers: a surprisingly low figure for a democratic state, albeit Sulu is only a province in a democratic state. Moreover, the number of respondents who had no preference for any particular form of government was over 15%, of which the overwhelmingly majority was Muslims. These respondents may be seen as apolitical and more than likely would accept any form of government that was not tyrannical.

This now left the question of the degree to which Islam would be expected to play a major role in governance in Sulu, if allowed. Over 50% of respondents favoured an 'Islamic government with *Shari'a* Law generally'. The wording in the questionnaire, '*Shari'a* Law, generally' was carefully selected so that respondents would identify those matters which would come under the Court's jurisdictions. That is, the *Shari'a* courts would be responsible for civil and criminal matters. Furthermore, with the 50.52% of respondents who favoured an Islamic government must be added the 5.5% of respondents who were in favour of a Sultanate—a Sultanate more than likely would have *Shari'a* Law. However, a Sultanate would also more than likely be a little less democratic, possibly a theocracy, and would be more authoritarian than what is now the governance in Sulu Province. Nevertheless, 'Islamic government' and 'Sultanate' are so completely different to 'secular government' that they could be interpreted as being 'of one'. This now left those respondents who answered 'no preference'. The Muslim respondents who answered 'no preference' outnumbered the Catholic respondents by three to one. Not much can be drawn from this, because it follows the approximate ratios of Muslims to Non-

¹² *Special operations posture statement, op. cit.*, p. 8.

Muslims in Sulu. Had respondents been given the opportunity of a numerical preference to the type of government they would prefer in Sulu, then the ‘no preference’ answers could have been more definitive. Nevertheless, if it can be assumed that equal numbers of the Muslim ‘no preference’ respondents would have accepted either a secular government or an Islamic government, then the total percentage opting for some form of Islamic government would be approximately 64%; exceptionally high by any international standards. Finally, the small number of respondents, less than 7%, who answered “other” and made comments, as previously stated, overwhelmingly desired a federalist system—which is the preferred form of government of President Arroyo. Interestingly, a federalist system of government is also supported by Nur Misuari, albeit with some provisos.¹³

Having determined that an Islamic government of some sort was supported by almost two thirds of the questionnaire respondents, it now became important to ascertain what the population at large expected from their government, regardless of their political persuasion. The question did not specifically refer to any level of government, thereby allowing comments to be made of all governance if they so desired. Question 17 asked respondents to prioritise numerically (1-7) their expectations. Many respondents exhausted their preferences before (7); indeed some respondents only gave one preference. Interestingly, no respondents answered ‘Other (please specify)’. Having asked respondents what was expected of their government it was important to analyse the responses at large. An analysis of respondents’ priority 1 only is given in (A) ‘Analysis of expectations from government/s, using priority 1 only’, immediately after Graph 3.14. The analysis of the entire numerical prioritisation of respondents is to be found later in this chapter.

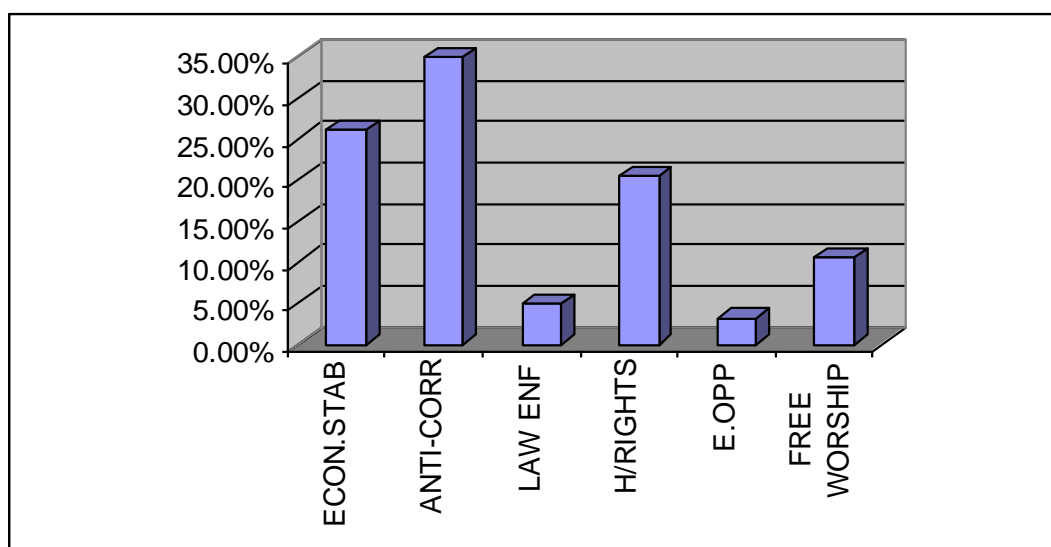
¹³ M. Arnando, August 2005, *A Visit to Chairman Nur Misuari*. Retrieved November 2008, http://www.iidnet.org/docs/mindanao/misuari_visit.pdf

Question.17. What do you expect your/any government to deliver to the local population? Please prioritise with the number 1 being the highest, the number 2 next, and so on.

Options: (a) Economic stability/development. (b) Anti-corruption action. (c) Law enforcement. (d) Human rights. (e) Equal opportunity. (f) Freedom of worship. (g) Other (please specify).

Graph 3.14. Expectation from Government/s utilising priority 1 only

Response: N=281 (of 306) Economic stability/development. 26.06% Anti-corruption action . 34.86% Law Enforcement. 4.93% Human rights. 20.42%
Equal opportunity. 3.17% Freedom of Worship. 10.56%



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu.

(A). Analysis of local expectations from government/s, using priority 1 only.

Over one in every three of respondents (34.86%) expected their government to be corruption-free or to take action to prevent corruption. It is not overstating the obvious to assume that all democracies expect their governments to be corruption-free, and the Republic of the Philippines is no exception. Furthermore, the 1987 Philippine Constitution, Article II, ‘Declaration of Principals and State Policies’, Section 27 reads: ‘the State shall maintain honesty and integrity in the public service and take positive and effective measures against graft and corruption’. If anti-corruption has been instilled in the Philippine Constitution the question must be asked why was it of so much concern to approximately one in every three respondents? It may be argued that these respondents had little faith in the 1987 Constitution, or, more likely, the present incumbent Arroyo Administration’s desire

to enforce anti-corruption. In addition to the 34.86% of respondents who saw anti-corruption as the top priority, a further 20.42% of respondents saw human rights as their major concern. Importantly, the 1987 Philippine Constitution also has two sections dealing with human rights, and they are also found in Article II, 'Declaration of Principals and State Policies'. Section 11 reads: 'the State values the dignity of every human person and guarantees full respect for human rights'. It would appear that over half of the respondents felt that the 1987 Philippine Constitution had betrayed them in what they considered to be their greatest concerns.

The combined figures for top priorities 'anti-corruption' and 'human rights' (55.28%) is almost identical to the number of respondents (55.81%. see Graph 3.11 page 77) who did not accept that the Arroyo Administration was their government. These figures echo the findings of the Permanent People's Tribunal (PPT) on matters of corruption and human rights violations, which were handed down in March 2007.¹⁴ Briefly, the charges against the Arroyo Administration were gross and systematic violations of civil and political rights, extra-judicial killings, abduction and disappearances, massacres and torture, as well as violation of economic, social and cultural rights. More importantly, especially for the Muslims of Sulu, the tribunal found that there was systematic violations of the rights to national self-determination and liberation.¹⁵ The 1987 Constitution, Section 22 guarantees the rights of indigenous cultural communities. The charges against the Arroyo Administration were brought by an array of Filipino organisations, among them HUSTISYA (families of victims), *Bagong Alyansang Makabayan* (New Patriotic Alliance), Peace for Life, the Public Interest Law Center, the Ecumenical Bishops Forum, IBON (an independent think tank), and the United Churches of Christ in the Philippines.¹⁶

¹⁴ The PPT is an independent international tribunal. It examines complaints regarding violations of human rights. It normally convenes in the Hague. In 1980 it condemned the actions of the Marcos Administration for actions it took against the MNLF.

¹⁵ *The Permanent People's Tribunal: the final verdict*. Retrieved 04 September 2007, <http://stopthekillings.org/stknpv1/?q=node&from=40&PHPSESSID=d2455485ded0c70c7d3f388805dd5dd4>

¹⁶ *Asian Human Rights Commission in news*. Retrieved November 2008. <http://www.ahrchk.net/ahrc-in-news/mainfile.php/2007ahrcinnews/1033/>

Economic stability was of primary concern to just over one in every four of the respondents (26.06%), indicating that although Sulu was the most impoverished province in the Philippines, respondents generally considered that there were more important issues than poverty. After all, as stated earlier, poverty was something that they had lived with for years, even though the 1987 Philippine Constitution ‘ensured’ that the State would free all people from poverty.¹⁷ Economic stability/development may have only scored 26.06%; however, when it came to freedom of worship only about one in every ten respondents (10.56%) thought that it was a top priority, and this was unanimously Muslim. It appeared that most respondents felt their religious affiliations were respected by each other. Furthermore, both Islam and Catholicism in the Philippines are both Abrahamic religions and as such have some ‘common ground’. The violent fundamental extremists both in Islam and Christianity are in a minority in the world population, and because of their extremism they attract a disproportionate amount of attention. It is possible that the same scenario is the case in Sulu. It will be shown later in this dissertation that the ASG, because of its fanaticism, may have contributed to the general unrest in Sulu—more so in the latter part of the 20th century than during the time of this study.

Equal opportunity at (3.17%) was simply not an issue. However, what was the biggest surprise in respondents’ answers to question 17 was the priority, or lack of it, to the need for law enforcement at only 4.93%. This seemingly low concern for law enforcement by less than 1 in 20 respondents was puzzling, given that the Arroyo Administration has deemed it necessary to station up to 6000 members of the AFP in Sulu for the express purpose of pursuing a small number of ASG operatives. To try to understand why there was/is such apathy to official law enforcement in Sulu is dealt with in some detail below.

Clan violence, or *rido*, has been a part of the culture of the Tausug males of Sulu for centuries. *Rido* is identified by at least three characteristics, the most common being the duration of the conflict: which at times can extend for decades, a

¹⁷ The 1987 Philippine Constitution, Article II, Section 9. “The State shall promote a just and dynamic social order that will ensure the prosperity and independence of the nation and free the people from poverty through policies that provide adequate social services, promote full employment, a rising standard of living, and an improved quality of life for all”

continuance of revenge killing, and the involvement of members of a particular family: sometimes quite extended, against another family. Put simply, *rido* 'is an act of retaliation, or blood vengeance, of members of one group against an opposing other'.¹⁸ The catalyst for the initial stages of *rido* can involve land disputes, gender offences (normally against females), and acts which violate a family member's pride and/or dignity. Whilst Tausug males are taught to respect the feelings of fellow Tausugs, they are also taught that *sipug* or *kasipugan* (shame) is to be avoided because it brings dishonour to one's immediate family as well as one's extended family. Moreover, if *sipug* or *kasipugan* is brought upon one's family, then family honour (*martabat*) must be protected, and this is usually by revenge (*mamauli*). Such is the commitment of the Tausug male to revenge any dishonour to his family that 'dying in the act of erasing this shame (*magpapas kasipugan*) is considered an honorable act'.¹⁹ Such is the extent of *rido* violence, that the number of reported incidents in Sulu since 1940 is conservatively put at 1235, which resulted in 1440 deaths.²⁰ Personal revenge, when it involves transgressions against females, is seen by the Tausug male as a personal matter which offends his pride and, as such, these matters should be dealt with by personal retaliation rather than the local law enforcement agencies (in Sulu, local law enforcement agencies, can include the PNP as well as members of the AFP).

Given that the Tausug male would rather administer his own form of justice if he felt aggrieved, it followed that questionnaire respondents, and this of course included Tausug females, did not see formal law authority as being very effectual. In fact, they may have seen formal law authority, and this includes the PNP and the AFP, as just another extension of the Arroyo Administration's authority, which, as previously mentioned, was unacceptable to more than half of the respondents. Therefore, if more than 50% of respondents did not accept the Arroyo Administration as their government, and more importantly, over 70% of respondents (see Graph 3.10 page 78) blamed the Arroyo Administration for their worsening

¹⁸ S. Schelcher, February 2007, *Rido and its influence on the academe, NGOs, and the Military*. Retrieved November 2008, <http://www.balaymindanaw.org/bmfi/essays/2007/02rido.html>

¹⁹ Personal communication: V. Taylor. 2008.

²⁰ *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 09 November 2006, *Tabang Mindanaw study on Sulu*-abridged. This author has the complete transcript.

personal security, it was not surprising when respondents rated official law enforcement as not all that important. However, it must be remembered that the majority of respondents favoured an Islamic government with *Shari'ah* Law which, it is safe to say may have been stricter and more severe in punishment in the area of law enforcement. The inference here is that the Arroyo Administration's law enforcement was seen as ineffectual or corrupted, whereas *Shari'ah* Law, administered by an Islamic authority, would more than likely have been trusted by the majority of respondents.

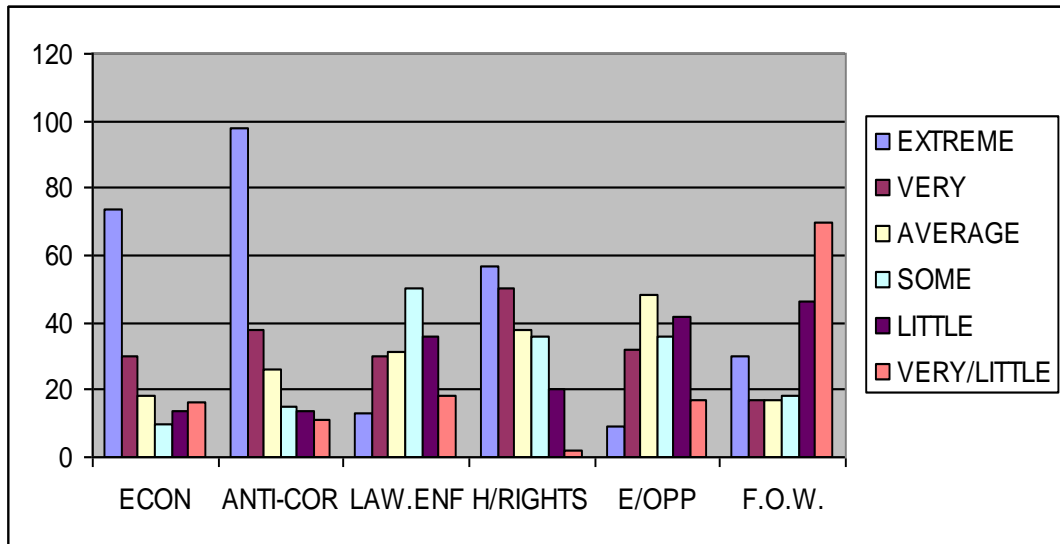
Following on from that, survey respondents' answers to question 17 were further analysed. Graph 3.15 on page 97, indicated the importance of specific expectations as prioritised by respondents in descending numerical order. As mentioned, many respondents prematurely exhausted their priorities: that is, they failed to number 1 to 6, opting to cease their numerical priority prior to 6. Altogether, 281 respondents prioritised question 17 to some degree, with 144 respondents numbering their priorities from 1 to 6. The remaining 139 respondents prematurely exhausted their preference rating before reaching 6.

When analysing the numerical priority answers to question 17, it was necessary that a simplified form of the descending numerical values was needed. Accordingly, the numerical priority ratings were replaced with adjectives to describe the degree of importance. The following adjectives were used, as shown in Graph 3.15, to describe the respondents' numerical priorities. **1**=extreme (importance), **2**=very (important), **3**=average (importance), **4**=some (importance), **5**=little (importance), and **6**=very/ little (importance). As well, Graph 3.15 departed from the past procedure in this dissertation whereby numbers were used as opposed to percentages. Because each category attracted different responses, (for example, 'economic stability/development' attracted 167 votes of varying values, whereas 'anti-corruption action' attracted 212 votes of varying values), it was felt this departure from the norm would make obvious, what respondents thought was important or not.

Further interpretation of Question.17. What do you expect your/any government to deliver to the local population?

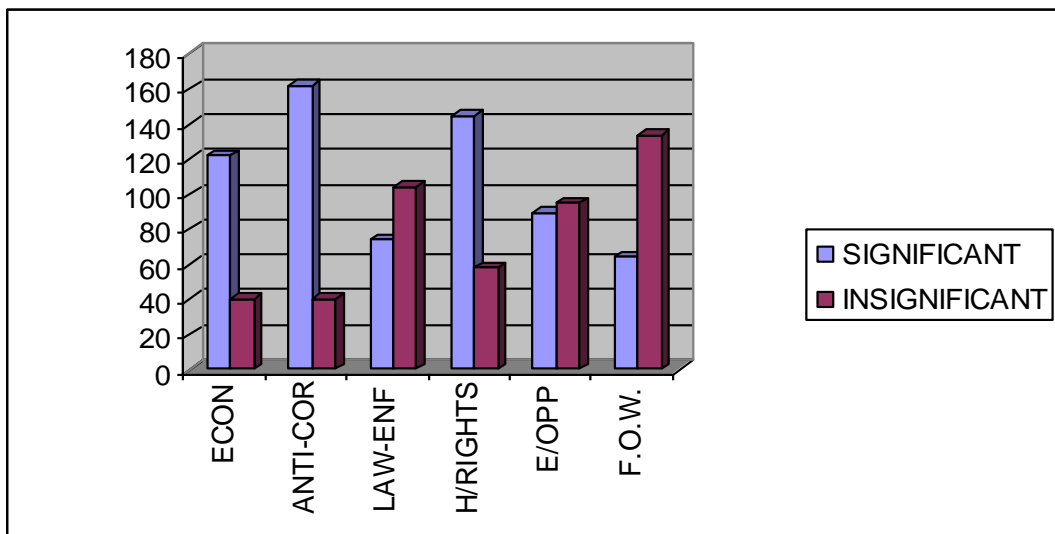
Graph 3.15. Expectation from Government/s: Descending numerical priority, using adjectives in lieu of numerics.

**Response: N =281 (of 306) Total votes per category: Economic stability/development. 167 Anti-corruption action . 212 Law Enforcement. 184 Human rights. 207
Equal opportunity. 190 Freedom of Worship. 200**



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu.

Graph 3.16. Expectation from Government/s: Expressed as total numbers where respondents answered question 17. As well, expectation is now expressed as “significant” or “insignificant”. (explanation in paragraph under graph 3.16)



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu.

In Graph 3.16, for the purpose of differentiating between what was seen as important, as opposed to relatively unimportant, the top three categories, that is, extreme, very, and average will be classified ‘significant’, whereas the bottom three categories, that is, some, little and very/little will be classified ‘insignificant’. As in Graph 3.15 numbers are used in lieu of percentages.

(B). Analysis of expectations from government/s using descending numerical prioritisation.

When only priority 1 was evaluated, anti-corruption action received approximately 35% of respondents’ votes (see Graph 3.14 page 92). However, when the distribution of priority came into the equation, the number of respondents who were judged to have thought anti-corruption action was needed dramatically increased. Moreover, the number of respondents in the ‘significant’ column was over four times the number of respondents who were in the ‘insignificant column (see Graph 3.16). Corruption, or the perception of corruption, appeared to be the overwhelming consideration of the majority of respondents. Using the same formula that was used to evaluate the ‘significants’ against the ‘insignificants’, economic stability, and human rights returned, approximately, three-to-one in favour of “significant” (see Graph 3.16). Although economic stability/development had a higher ‘priority 1’ than human rights, after the distribution of priority both categories were very close numerically, as is evident in the ‘significant’ columns. Overwhelmingly, most respondents appeared to have little faith in their government’s ability to deliver economic stability, human rights, and corruption free administration. Accordingly, it can be argued, that Article II, Sections 9, 11, and 22, of the 1987 Philippine Constitution had been abandoned, or at the best neglected, by the Arroyo administration. The findings and analyses of survey question 17 reinforce this statement.

Having established that anti-corruption action, economic stability/development, and human rights were of prime concern to most respondents, whilst law enforcement was seen as of little concern, why then did freedom of worship, and more importantly, equal opportunity rate so low? The answer may lie in the following assessments. Freedom of worship, as previously mentioned, was considered paramount by only a little over 10% of respondents—and these were

unanimously Muslim. Once the distribution of priority was taken into account, the ‘significant’ rose to a point where it was still only approximately one-half of the ‘insignificant’. It would seem that freedom of religious belief was something that had always been taken for granted. After all, freedom of worship, or freedom of religious belief has been entrenched in the Philippine Constitutions since 1899. The following chronology of Philippine Constitutions (see Table 3.3) shows just how entrenched religious freedom has been. The 1899 Constitution simply had a subheading ‘Religion’, which guaranteed religious freedom, whereas freedom of religion in the 1935, 1973, and 1987 constitutions was included in a ‘Bill of Rights’. The 1935, 1973, and 1987 Constitutions had the same wording, however they were rearranged in different article numbers and sections. The 1943 Constitution, during the Japanese occupation, had no Bill of Rights as such, however it did have an Article VII which was titled ‘Duties and Rights of the Citizen’.

Table 3.3. Philippine Constitutions from 1899 to 1987.

1899	No Bill of Rights, however, Title III, subheading “Religion”, Article 5, states “The State recognizes the freedom and equality of all religions, as well as the separation of the Church and the State”.
1935	Bill of Rights. Article III, Section 3, in part, states “No law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the exercise thereof. The free exercise of enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference will forever be allowed”.
1943	Duties and Rights of the Citizen. Article VII. Section 3, “No law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, and no religious test shall be required for the exercise of civil or political rights”.
1973	Bill of Rights. Article IV, Section 7, in part, states “No law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the exercise thereof. The free exercise of enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference will forever be allowed”.
1987	Bill of Rights. Article 5, Section 5, in part, states “No law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the exercise thereof. The free exercise of enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference will forever be allowed”.

Source: *Philippine constitutional law*, <http://www.chanrobles.com/philsupremelaw.htm>²¹

²¹ *Philippine constitutional law*. Retrieved November 2008, <http://www.chanrobles.com/philsupremelaw.htm>

Table 3.3 indicates that all Philippine Administrations since 1899 have nominally retained the principal of freedom of religious belief, albeit sometimes begrudgingly. During the Marcos and Estrada Administrations, when ‘civil war’ was in progress against the Muslims in Mindanao, the principle of freedom of religious belief, especially Islam, may not have been strictly adhered to, as what was prescribed in the Constitution. Moreover, many Islamic institutions were destroyed during the OPLAN *Bagong Buhay* military strategy, (an offensive against the MNLF by members of the AFP 1972 to 1975). It was reported that not less than 535 mosques, and 200 Islamic schools were destroyed during the OPLAN *Bagong Buhay* military operation.²²

Equal opportunity was rated as the number one concern by only a little over 3% of respondents. Moreover, only approximately 55% of respondents thought it important enough to prioritise it at all. After calculations, the ‘significant’ and ‘insignificant’ percentages were about the same. Interestingly, as opposed to freedom of worship, equal opportunity is only mentioned once in the Philippine Constitution (1987), and this is in regard to candidates seeking office at an election. With these figures in mind, the question must be asked why respondents saw equal opportunity as virtually unimportant. There may have been many factors, not the least being that the majority of respondents were Muslim, and tended to accept the status quo when it came to gender employment roles, or indeed gender family authority roles. However, even among the Catholic respondents, who numbered almost 18% (see Graph 1.6 in Chapter 1) the importance of equal opportunity was the same in percentage terms. Therefore, equal opportunity may be important in developed, or Western countries, however it does not have the same importance in developing countries such as the Philippines, and more so in the poorest province in this nation. Day-to-day survival may be much more important.

To summarise survey question 17, as answered by respondents, the following assessment can be made. Anti-corruption and human rights issues—which can be

²² Figures quoted from the *Philippine Institute for Development Studies*, no. 2006-02, March 2006. Retrieved November 2008, http://www.hdn.org.ph/files/AFP_institutional_response.pdf

loosely aligned because both issues are included in Article II of the 1987 Philippine Constitution—were of prime concern to more than half of the respondents. This ratio is almost the same as those respondents who did not accept the Arroyo Administration as their government (see Graph 3.15). With those figures in mind it could be argued that there is a correlation between the respondents' concerns about anti-corruption/human rights and non-acceptance of the Arroyo Administration. After all 72.1% of respondents (see Graph 3.10 page 78) blamed the worsening situation in Sulu on the Arroyo Administration.

The issue of economic stability/development, which was of prime concern to approximately only 1 in 5 respondents, was a little puzzling, given that Sulu is the poorest province in the Philippines. It would appear that continuing poverty could be endured, but not the continuation of the Arroyo Administration. To the majority of respondents, the issues of freedom of worship, law enforcement, and equal opportunity were peripheral when compared to those issues which were seen to be of greater importance, that is, corruption-free government, a government that has the welfare of citizens as a concern, and more importantly an administration other than the current Arroyo Administration. With anti-corruption and human rights being of such concern to a majority of respondents, then it was important to ask respondents how they compared Sulu today (2008) with what it was like 10 or even 20 years ago. Question 18 of this survey did just that.

**Question.18. Is the province of Sulu better off today than 10 or 20 years ago?
(Graph 3.17)**

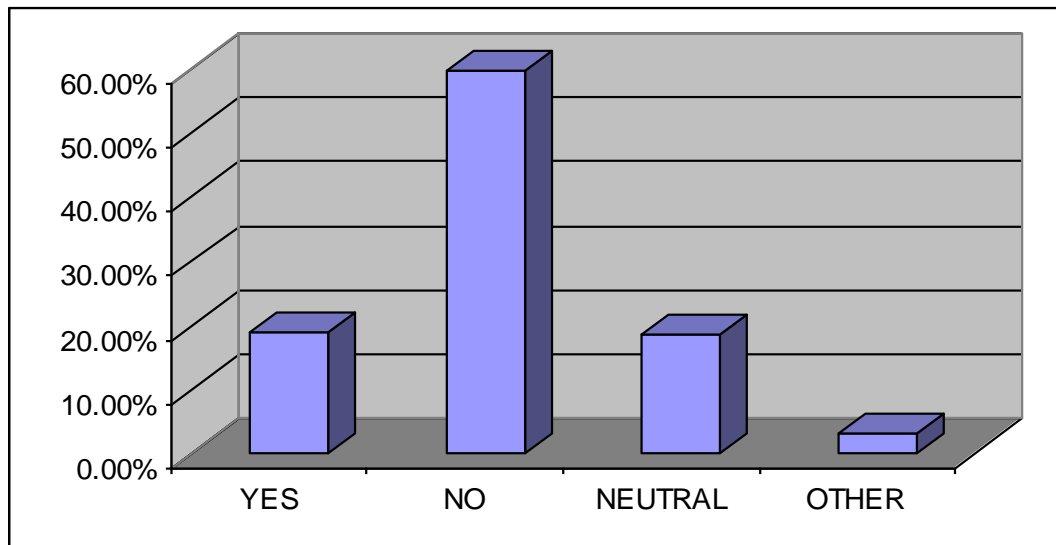
Options: Yes. No. Neutral. Other (please specify).

Response: N =297 (of 306) Yes. 26.06% No. 59.6% Neutral. 8.52%

Interpretation of Graph 3.17 appears on page 102

Graph 3.17. Sulu “better today?” as opposed to 10-20 Years Ago.

Response: N =297 (of 306) Yes. 26.06% No. 59.6% Neutral. 8.52%
Other. 3.02%



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu.

Analysis of Sulu today as opposed to 10 or 20 years ago.

The unusually high (almost 60%) ‘No’ response came as little surprise given that 10 years ago Fidel Ramos was President of the Philippines, and 20 years ago Corazon Aquino was President. Both Presidents were popular with the Muslims of Mindanao, and this would have included the Tausug Sunni Muslims of Sulu, insofar as during the Presidencies of Aquino and Ramos the following events occurred: (a) martial law had ceased,²³ (remembering that President Marcos declared martial law ostensibly to ‘defeat’ the Moro liberation insurgency movement);²⁴ (b) the ARMM was established, giving a degree of self-determination to the Moros; (c) the historic 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement was signed. These three events, especially the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement, had the potential to decrease the poverty levels of the population at large in Sulu. This did not occur. It is worth mentioning here that the husband of President Corazon Aquino, the late Senator Benigno Aquino, was a supporter of the Moro cause, and had dialogue with Nur Misuari on many occasions. Moreover, Misuari had met with Benigno Aquino when the latter was in exile. Accordingly, when Corazon Aquino nominated for the position of President of the

²³ Martial law had been officially lifted in January 1981. However, actions against the Moros still persisted leaving the impression that the military was still acting under martial law conditions.

²⁴ The other reason being the communist insurgency threat.

Philippines in the February 1986 election, Misuari declared MNLF support for her, the only Philippine domestic insurgent organisation to do so.²⁵

3.4 Summation

In summarising this chapter on personal security, peace and order, and governance it is important to compare some of the responses supplied to this researcher with similar questions/responses that were compiled in *A Tabang study for Pagtabangan Basulta*.²⁶ The Tabang study, although published in 2006, was compiled in 2005 and covered all 18 municipalities of Sulu; whereas the 2008 answers and comments in this author's study came only from respondents of the municipalities of Jolo, Indanan, and Patikul. The only obvious difference between respondents in the 2005/2006 Tabang study and respondents to the 2008 questionnaires was the selectivity of respondents. The composition of respondents in 2005/2006 was '2 religious leaders, 2 traditional leaders, 2 persons engaged in earning a living, 2 women, and 2 young people'.²⁷ On the other hand, the respondents in the 2008 study were chosen at random.

One of the more important questions asked in the 2008 survey was the preference of government, and over 50% of respondents replied that they would prefer 'an Islamic government with *Shari'ah* Law, generally'; the salient word here being 'generally'. In the Tabang study, respondents were not asked what type of government/rule they preferred, however they were asked questions generally about law and order. As a rider, 27% of these respondents would prefer Sulu to have a strict application of *Shari'ah* Law. It is not without some foundation to suggest that if the respondents in the Tabang study had been given the same options on government preference, then 'an Islamic government with *Shari'ah* Law, generally', would have scored the same as in this author's survey in 2008. This preference for an Islamic government/rule in Sulu Province was not unexpected, given the history of Sulu, and it underpins the hypothesis that this dissertation assesses; that is, that the domestic

²⁵ Vitag & Gloria, *op. cit.* (various pages)

²⁶ Please refer to the literature review and methodology for details of the study.

²⁷ *A Tabang Mindanaw study for Pagtabangan Basulta*, *op. cit.*, p. 17

counterinsurgency policies of the Arroyo Administration are designed to quash the autonomous wishes of the Sunni Muslims of Sulu Province.

In this author's 2008 survey, corruption and human rights violations were of concern to over 55% of respondents. In the 2005 Tabang survey, corruption was also found to be an issue of importance. For example, the findings of the 2005 survey stated, among other things, that

challenges in the area of governance can be traced to many factors.... the corruption of the electoral system rendering the electorate irrelevant in the process of choosing their leadership, the corruption of the Internal Revenue Allotment system, and the continuing vestiges of practices instituted during the martial law period.²⁸

In the Tabang study on the question of personal security, and who or what may be blamed for their perceived deteriorating personal security in Sulu, 35% of respondents cited a lack of official security, with 30% of respondents blaming the government. Because official security is the responsibility of government, these two percentages should be categorised together: making government responsibility approximately 65%. When it came to responses in the 2008 survey, little had changed. Respondents who blamed the government—and this was expressed as 'Philippine Government'—rose slightly to 72.10%. It is unknown whether respondents differentiated between local or national governments. However, it is more than likely that national government was seen as the culprit, after all the PNP and the AFP are the responsibility of the national government. At this stage it is important to remember that the national government in both 2005 and 2008 was an Arroyo Administration.

On the question of peace and order in Sulu, the 2008 respondents were either equally divided on whether or not Sulu was peaceful (see Graph 3.6 page 74). An explanation for this was given in the preliminary analysis of, 'would you consider Sulu to be peaceful'? However, when the same question was asked of Suluanos in the 2005 Tabang study, an astonishingly high 83% of respondents claimed that Sulu was 'Not Peaceful'.²⁹ However, the single most important contemporary event which would have been fresh in the minds of the Tabang study respondents, and more than

²⁸ *A Tabang Mindanaw study for Pagtabangan Basulta, op. cit.*, p. 3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

likely would have contributed to the high ‘No’ response, was the ‘state of war’ which existed in Sulu in February and March 2005.

Briefly, the catalyst for this ‘war’ in early 2005 was the killing by members of the AFP of four civilians at Barangay Kapuk Punggal, in the Municipality of Maimbung. The four civilians were Tal Padiwan, his wife Nurshida Sidang Padiwan, one of their children Aldasir Padiwan, and a close family friend Salip Faisal Salim. It was alleged by the AFP (Bravo Company) that members of the Padiwan family fired at two soldiers who approached the Padiwan house to ask for water. This single incident resulted in hundreds of casualties both in the AFP and amongst paramilitary members of the MNLF—casualty numbers varied according to the source. Surprisingly there were no reported civilian deaths, however, at the height of fighting, there were an estimated 75,000 internally displaced persons.³⁰ To put that into some perspective, 1 in every 10 Sulu civilians in February 2005 were internally displaced persons.

The ‘state of war’ in Sulu in 2005 was not the only time that fighting had broken out between the AFP and the MNLF. As mentioned in (Chapter 2.9.), hundreds of civilians, MNLF operatives, and AFP personnel were killed when fighting broke after MNLF chairman Nur Misuari was refused endorsement for the position of Governor of the ARMM. Having become accustomed to periodic violence, the 2008 respondents had sufficient time to allow the massive unrest in 2005—and a few years before as well—to diminish from their memories somewhat. But, future events would renew a feeling of unease. The AFP/MNLF fighting of 2005, as well as other clashes between these two adversaries, will be examined briefly in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, ‘The MNLF in Sulu Province: An Analytical Assessment of Primary Evidence’.

³⁰ *Sulu: State of war. Calls for peace.* Report of the Sulu peace and solidarity mission of the Mindanao PeaceWeavers, 27-31, March 2005. Retrieved March 2008, http://www.justpeace.net.ph/report_of_the_sulu_peace_and_sol.htm

Given that corruption, personal security, and peace and order or otherwise in Sulu Province are all factors that weighed heavily on respondents in the survey in 2008, and the Tabang survey of 2005, it followed that there must be a common factor. The Arroyo Administration has laid the blame for unlawfulness on domestic insurgent terrorists; predominately the ASG. In addition, some AFP military commanders have claimed in the past that paramilitary members of the MNLF were actively supporting the ASG—a claim vehemently denied by the MNLF. Furthermore, as will be discussed in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, the existence of the ASG as an organised terrorist group, as in Basilan, is questionable at best in Sulu. Therefore, it can be argued that the Arroyo Administration's domestic counterinsurgency policies are clandestine, insofar as that the real agenda of the counterinsurgency policies is more likely to be the neutralisation of the influence of the MNLF in Sulu. With this in mind, and also bearing in mind that Sulu is the stronghold (and homeland) of the MNLF, Chapter 4, will examine the influence that the MNLF has in Sulu. Furthermore it will assess the acceptance or otherwise of the MNLF in Sulu, by the population at large, as represented by the respondents' answers to the 2008 survey questions relating to the MNLF in Sulu. More importantly, that chapter will analyse in detail the returned questionnaires from MNLF paramilitary operatives in Barangay Marang (Marang Village) in the municipality of Indanan.

Chapter 4

The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in Sulu Province: an Analytical Assessment of Primary Evidence

This chapter addresses central question 2 of this dissertation, that is: 'given that the Muslim struggle in the Southern Philippines has been seen as liberation insurgency by many, including the OIC, is the Arroyo Administration trying to change the perception of this insurgency to one of national insurgency—bearing in mind that national insurgency has the perception of being seen as a threat to internal national security? And, is this perception more relevant for Sulu Province because of the static overwhelmingly Muslim population? More importantly, is the Arroyo administration wittingly allowing the AFP to engage in armed clashes with members of the MNLF?'

Much of the primary evidence analysed in this chapter may at first appear to be imbalanced or biased—this is particularly so in 4.2 'MNLF interviews', which comprises the majority of this chapter. The perception of bias or imbalance might not be surprising, given that the MNLF has been subjected to both military action and verbal condemnation by many Philippine Administrations especially since Philippine Independence in 1946. Moreover, fresh in the minds of the MNLF interviewees would have been two of the most significant contemporary encounters between the MNLF and the AFP in Sulu : the February 2005 encounter which saw an estimated 70,000 civilians displaced; and the November 2005 encounter which saw an estimated 12,000 civilians displaced. As well as these significant encounters, there were many other MNLF/AFP confrontations after 2001 that also saw casualties, albeit on a lesser scale than in 2005.

4.1 The MNLF as a domestic counterinsurgency issue

There is no official Philippine Government policy which prohibits the MNLF to exist as an organisation. Furthermore, the MNLF is not classified as a terrorist organisation. Unlike the MILF, the MNLF was never on the 'enemy list' in the U.S. Global War on Terror. As an organisation, the MNLF is formally 'protected' under the 1987 Philippine Constitution. (Article XIII, 'Role and Rights of People's

Organizations’). Section 16 states: “The right of the people and their organizations to effective and reasonable participation at all levels of social, political, and economic decision-making shall not be abridged. The State shall, by law, facilitate the establishment of adequate *consultation mechanisms*¹”.

The consultation mechanisms emphasised above, describe precisely the action which was undertaken by the Ramos Administration in the early to mid 1990s. The consultative actions during the Ramos Administration led to the signing of the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement. The subsequent failure of full implementation, it is argued in this study, has contributed to continuing unrest in Sulu.

It is further proposed, given significant evidence, that the proper consultative mechanisms for peace in Sulu that include the MNLF have been somewhat neglected under the present Arroyo Administration. Furthermore, it is suggested here, that the previous Presidential Advisor on Peace to President Arroyo, Jesus Dureza, must accept some responsibility for the current state of unrest in Sulu, as well as other provinces of the ARMM. Dureza was, for two years, the official spokesperson for President Fidel Ramos, arguably one of the more ‘progressive’ Presidents that the Philippines has elected. As well, Dureza has held the positions of Chairman of the Mindanao Economic Development Council (1998), Presidential Assistant for Mindanao (1998), Chairman of the Government Peace Negotiating Panel for Talks with the MILF, February 2001-May 2003, and Chairman of the Mindanao Economic Development Council, 2001-January 2006.² These credentials would strongly suggest that Dureza had an intimate knowledge of Mindanao in general, and what was required for peace and stability in that region. But this controversial Presidential Peace Advisor has had his critics, not the least being Victor Taylor.³ However, he has also had his ‘admirers’, as evidenced by the fact that he was awarded the ‘Presidential Award of Merit’ by President Ramos in 1998.

¹ Author’s emphasis

² From the official website of the Republic of the Philippines. Retrieved July 2008, <http://www.gov.ph/news/default.asp?i=20941>

³ This author sought assistance from Victor Taylor in establishing dialogue with Dureza. However, because of previous published criticism of Dureza, by Taylor it was just not possible.

Having served in various high positions under the current Presidential incumbent, Dureza has now been rewarded with the position of Chief Presidential Legal Council. Prior to this appointment, he was Press Secretary to President Arroyo. Evidence suggests that given his various appointments and awards Dureza is well educated, charismatic and pragmatic in nature. Moreover, he has the ability to ‘adopt’ any political decision that the President he is serving makes at the time. For instance, Dureza was involved on the side of the Arroyo Administration in the official peace talks between the MILF and the GRP which started in 2003 (these talks at the time of this study have stalled). Ironically, Dureza is now (2009) giving evidence on behalf of the prosecution involving coup d’etat charges against military personnel who claim that they were given orders by President Arroyo to attack MILF headquarters in Maguindanao and Cotabato. Interestingly, this alleged order was given in July 2003, four months after the first and second official GRP/MILF peace talks had occurred.⁴ It is suggested here that Dureza may have been able to persuade President Arroyo at least to finish implementing the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement. Which, as previously stated, may have gone a long way to helping the cause of peace in Sulu. Whether Dureza discussed the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement with President Arroyo is unknown—however, if discussion was held it amounted to nothing. It would appear, given that there has been no improvement in relations between the GRP and the MNLF, that the Arroyo Administration has no intention of finalising the outstanding issues in the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement. Moreover, it is using the AFP in military actions against the MNLF for political reasons: not the least being to implement domestic counterinsurgency policies which adversely affect the Moros of Mindanao, and in particular the province of Sulu.

If, as proposed, the AFP was, or is, being used for domestic political purposes it became necessary in this study to ascertain whether the MNLF, in Sulu, apportioned the blame for the military encounters which have occurred during the Arroyo Administration, on the AFP or indeed President Arroyo herself. This chapter

⁴ It must be added here that both President Arroyo and Dureza deny having, or indeed given orders to the AFP to attack the MILF camps in July 2003.

demonstrates that attempts to do just that were done by interviewing MNLF paramilitary operatives.

4.2 MNLF acceptance and peace initiatives

As previously mentioned, the OIC gave formal recognition to the MNLF in July 1975 at the Sixth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM), which was held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. In 1977 the MNLF was given permanent observer status, which allowed it to attend all OIC conferences including the ICFM. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the MNLF has in the past entered into three peace agreements with various Philippine Administrations. The three peace agreements were signed during the Presidencies of Ferdinand Marcos (1976), Corazon Aquino (1987), and Fidel Ramos (1996). The 1976 “Tripoli Peace Agreement” may have been seen by some, as nothing more than pragmatism by President Marcos. After all, he was under pressure from the OIC, as well as from close Asian neighbours, such as Malaysia, to find a way to end the fighting between the AFP and the MNLF in Mindanao. However, the “Tripoli Peace Agreement” failed to end the fighting there, and a number of reasons may have contributed to its failure. Not the least of these was the decision by President Marcos to send his wife, Imelda Marcos, to Libya as head of the pre-negotiating team, rather than Defence Minister, Juan Ponce Enrile. The exclusion of Enrile from the peace negotiations appeared to be a deliberate attempt by President Marcos to exclude a non-military minister from internal security matters. Enrile was the only non-military minister in President Marcos’ government, and enjoyed popular support and thus may have been seen as a threat to Marcos’ Presidency, having made clear his ambitions to be in the secession line-up if, or indeed when, President Marcos resigned.

Notwithstanding the failure of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement, President Marcos’ successor, President Corazon Aquino, entered into new peace negotiations with the MNLF and, in 1987, the ‘Jeddah Peace Agreement’ was negotiated. This new peace agreement was also destined to fail. Its most obvious shortcoming was a proposal to give full-autonomy to all of Mindanao, including the Sulu Archipelago Provinces of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi. This proposal, if it had been enacted, would have seen the

minority Muslim population of the southern Philippines gain disproportionate authority and influence in provincial and municipality governance, including judicial authority.

The 1996 ‘GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement’, which was signed during the term of office of President Ramos, was the most far reaching and complex peace agreement that the MNLF had ever entered into. The Peace Agreement included a provision for former MNLF paramilitary operatives to be incorporated into the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the AFP. All in all, 1,750 MNLF operatives were to be incorporated into the PNP, and 5,750 MNLF operatives into the AFP.⁵ As for the remainder of MNLF operatives, which numbered many more thousands, the agreement intended to implement socio-economic, cultural, and educational programs for these personnel. The programs were intended to ‘prepare them and their families for productive endeavours, provide for educational, technical skills and livelihood training and give them priority for hiring in developmental projects.’⁶ Further to these ‘incorporations’ and ‘developmental programs’, the ARMM was to be included in financial arrangements which would ensure that the Moros in the ARMM would benefit from the prosperity which it was hoped would follow when peace returned to that area. Some of the more important clauses relating to the developmental programs contained in Section D of the 1996 ‘GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement’ are shown in Table 4.1 on page 108.

⁵ Bauzon, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

Table. 4.1. Important clauses in Section D of the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement

1	The granting of incentives, including tax breaks, to business establishments and investors; (Article 129)
2	The enactment of a Regional Tax Code and a region-based Local Tax code; (Article 132)
3	The establishment of “economic zones and industrial centers” as well as the construction of port facilities in growth centers for the purpose of attracting both local and foreign investments and commercial enterprises consistent with the special zone act and the Autonomous Investment Act; (Articles 141, 142, and 150).
4	The formulation of economic and financial policies as well as the implementation of economic and financial programs (Article 140), including the encouragement of the establishment of banks, and the entry and establishment of off-shore bank units of foreign banks; (Articles 127 and 136).
5	The control, supervision and regulation “over the exploration, exploitation,, development, utilisation and protection of mines and minerals,” with the exception of certain “strategic minerals” later to be defined; (Articles 146 and 147)”.
6	The acceptance and administration of foreign financial and economic grants for the development and welfare of the people in the region; (Article 137) and the preparation of an annual budget of its own revenue resources and subsidies from the national government, including the planning, programming, and distribution of its funds.

Source: “*The Philippines. The 1996 Peace Agreement for the southern Philippines: an assessment*”. Bauzon, *op. cit.*, p. 258

At the time of the writing of this dissertation, the terms of the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement had not been fully implemented. Indeed, some scholars and journalists argue that very little of the Peace Agreement has been implemented. More poignantly, the leader of the MNLF, Nur Misuari, when interviewed by Mary Arnado of the Mindanao Peaceweavers in 2005, claimed that the Arroyo Administration had no intention of implementing the outstanding provisions of this Peace Agreement. He went on further to say ‘I don’t want them (the Arroyo Administration) to continue fooling and cheating us.’⁷

At the 35th meeting of the ICFM held in Kampala, Uganda, on 18-20 June 2008, the Central Committee Chairman, and founder of the MNLF, Professor Nur Misuari was allowed to address the meeting. Misuari had been in detention in Manila since January 2001 on charges of rebellion, but was released on bail on 25 April 2008). Misuari is known for his eloquence, and this address to the ICFM was no exception. He told the audience at the meeting that he had addressed many of the estimated 136,000

⁷ Arnado, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

supporters⁸ from all areas of Mindanao, at the ‘Second Mindanao Consultative Leadership Summit Meeting’, and urged the Moro people to continue their struggle for independence, promised in 1976 (in the Tripoli Agreement). Misuari further said that he pleaded before the huge gathering in Davao City (capital of Mindanao) to give autonomy one last chance. Eloquence aside, Misuari is also a pragmatist, and, knowing that President Arroyo was in favour of a federalist system of government he went on to state ‘should autonomy prove to be not forthcoming at all, as the last 32 years of our peace agreements have shown, then, and in an effort to prevent an-all out colonial war in the Bangsamoro Homeland, I asked the huge multitude to give the newly proposed federal system of government a chance’.⁹

4.3 MNLF questions in the survey of August 2008

Given that the province of Sulu is the homeland of the MNLF, as well as the birthplace of its founding and current Chairman, Nur Misuari, the issue of armed conflict which has occurred between the AFP and paramilitary members of the MNLF had to be included in the questionnaires that were distributed to the 306 respondents in Sulu Province in August 2008.

In Chapter 3 of this dissertation, question 11.1 asked respondents who they blamed for their worsening personal security: the MNLF being one of the options available to respondents. Of the 116 respondents who proffered an answer, only 3.91% (five persons) apportioned the blame on the MNLF. If this figure was representative of the number of Suluanos who blamed their worsening personal security on the MNLF, then it followed that the MNLF must enjoy an enviable popularity—or at least a ‘neutral popular view’. After all, it must be remembered that the MNLF has been involved in past military actions resulting in tens of thousands of Sulu residents being reduced to refugee status, or internally displaced persons. With only five respondents believing the MNLF had been responsible for their worsening personal security, then it must follow that the MNLF was overwhelmingly perceived as being an innocent party in any past

⁸ Official PNP reports estimated there to be considerably less than this number.

⁹ *Address of Professor Nur Misuari before the plenary session of the OIC ICFM*. Retrieved 12 December 2008, <http://MNLF.net/>

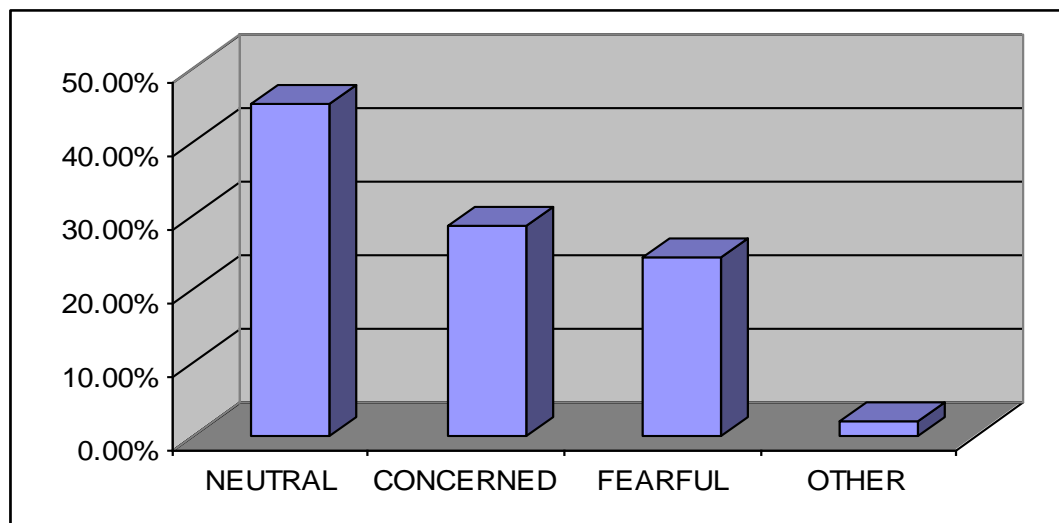
conflicts. The MNLF in Sulu, as perceived by the survey, seemed to be very popular, that is, it was not seen as having contributed to the eroded personal security of respondents. With that in mind, it was then necessary to find out what the respondents thought of military actions involving the MNLF. Question 14 of the August 2008 survey was designed to explore that issue.

Question 14. How do you feel about MNLF paramilitary members engaging in armed contact with the Armed Forces of the Philippines in the Sulu Archipelago?

Options: Neutral Concerned Fearful Other

Graph 4.1. MNLF engagements with the AFP

Response: N =281 (of 306) Neutral =45.20% Concerned=28.47%
 Fearful=24.20% Other=2.13%



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu

Analysis of MNLF engagements with the AFP

Given that the AFP has engaged in numerous, and at times very intense, military encounters with MNLF operatives over the last 40 years in Sulu, and also, given that these actions have resulted in civilian deaths and severe civilian displacement, it was interesting to see the large ‘neutral’ vote recorded in survey question 14. There may have been many reasons for this high ‘neutral’ vote, not the least being that encounters between the AFP and the MNLF may have become so commonplace over the years that

such encounters were expected to occur at regular intervals. Moreover, until these encounters do occur, there are more important issues for Suluanos to confront. For example, everyday existence, bearing in mind that Sulu is the poorest province in the Philippines.

In short, Suluanos may be of the opinion that why should they be concerned about a situation that may never eventuate, or perhaps may occur at some time in the indeterminable future. If 'neutral' attracted over 45% responses, then 'concerned' attracted a larger number than what was expected at over 28%. 'Concerned', by definition, means of interest. Therefore, almost three-quarters of all respondents were less than fearful; in other words, encounters between the AFP and the MNLF were expected to occur, but it was something that the average Suluanos had no control over. 'Fearful' attracted just over 24% responses, not all that high given the seriousness of past encounters. Interestingly, responses to survey question 14 in Jolo Municipality were almost identical in percentage terms to the three adjoining municipalities of Indanan, Talipao, and Patikul. Because these three municipalities have MNLF camps situated within them, and have witnessed military action between MNLF operatives and members of the AFP, it was expected that the respondents in these municipalities would have been more concerned about MNLF/AFP encounters than the respondents living in Jolo Municipality. This was not the case. Given that the MNLF was not seen as a personal threat to respondents (see Chapter 3, Graph 3.10) and, given that MNLF military engagements with the AFP were not considered all that important by the majority of respondents (see Graph 4.1), then it was important to attempt to ascertain what paramilitary members of the MNLF thought on a number of key issues. MNLF interviews discussed in '4.2 MNLF interviews' were designed to do that.

4.4 MNLF interviews

Included as a part of the 'Objectives and Preliminary Hypothesis' in Chapter 1 was the intention of this researcher to 'assess the degree to which the insurgency, or violence, now occurring in Sulu has been fuelled by the Arroyo Administration's domestic counterinsurgency policies'. As well, the hypothesis put forward by this

researcher suggested that the Arroyo Administration was using the criminality of the ASG in Sulu as an excuse to pursue its domestic counterinsurgency policies in that province. Furthermore, the hypothesis stated ‘it asks whether the numerically small ASG in Sulu can be viewed as *convenient*, insomuch that it might enable the Arroyo Administration to draw attention to crimes committed by the ASG, and by drawing attention to the ASG criminality, the Arroyo administration can claim that their (ASG) insurgent actions, if indeed they are insurgent or just criminal, may have been inspired by the previous actions of the major Muslim para-military organisation in Sulu, namely the MNLF’. If the Arroyo Administration’s claim was to be believed then it would establish a ‘link’ between the MNLF and the ASG. And this, in turn, could justify any future action against the MNLF in Sulu.

With the above hypothesis in mind, it was crucial to the research that members of the MNLF had an opportunity to express their concerns about peace initiatives and other related issues in Sulu. Obviously it was not possible to interview personally the MNLF chairman, Nur Misuari,¹⁰ or indeed the Provincial Chairman, Khaid Ajibon, therefore a selection of MNLF willing respondents was sought. Accordingly, it was arranged for a local research facilitator to interview a number of MNLF paramilitary operatives in an attempt to gauge their feelings about the Arroyo Administration as well as general questions about U.S. Forces, autonomy, peace initiatives, and so forth. The methodologies section of Chapter 1 discussed in some detail the complexities involved in the interviewing of members of the MNLF paramilitary. Although only 30 paramilitary members of the MNLF answered questionnaires, and even less, that is, 13 members, offered written responses, their contributions have significantly added to the originality of this study.¹¹ These 13 written responses were firstly translated then transposed into the text of this dissertation. Next, the written responses were assessed and interpreted by this author. Finally, an analysis was made of each question as

¹⁰ This author did, on 21 May 2006, talk to Nur Misuari by phone whilst he was under detention in Manila. Having been given the telephone number, by an informant, of the detention centre where he was held, it was just a matter of calling the centre, and after formal identifications a brief conversation ensued. Nur Misuari apologised for not being able to answer questions but otherwise the conversation was cordial. Attempts by this author to correspond by writing have so far been unsuccessful.

¹¹ To the best of this researcher’s knowledge, this is the first occasion that this number of MNLF paramilitary operatives have agreed cooperatively to be interviewed.

answered by the respondents. The summation of Chapter 4 is a comprehensive analysis of the completed questionnaires by these MNLF operatives.

The questionnaire (see Appendix D for versions in both Tausag and English) submitted to these paramilitary members of the MNLF was deliberately designed for simplicity. Only five questions were asked, and only three answers were stipulated in each answer, that is 'Yes', 'No', or 'Other, Please Specify'. It was hoped the third option, that is, 'Other, Please Specify' would draw comments. The following graphs show the responses to the questions. Where a written answer was given by respondents to any individual answer it was included after the graph. Such was the importance attached to this primary evidence, that a detailed analysis by this author of the written responses was considered necessary; as such, this chapter of the dissertation, at times, may take on the appearance of a report. As well, a final analysis of the combined written responses was also made.

This author acknowledges that 30 respondents may initially not be seen as being significantly representative of the MNLF in Sulu. However, what must be remembered is that the MNLF paramilitary in Sulu, although numerically fluid depending on situations, is highly organised and well disciplined. Furthermore, like all military organisations, the MNLF would have certain officers who are specifically assigned the authority to comment on matters of security, as well as matters of importance to that particular military organisation. With that in mind, those operatives who answered the questionnaires, and more saliently, made comments, would have had permission from the officer-in-charge of the MNLF camp in Barangay Marang (Marang Village) in the municipality of Indanan. The respondents to the questionnaires all signed and dated their comments: this reinforces the statement that all respondents were given permission to answer questions and comment if they so desired.

Before continuing with the assessment of the responses and comments from the MNLF operatives, it is deemed necessary to present, with permission, a copy of an email forwarded to this author from Taylor. The inclusion of the email is important at this

stage of the study, as it mentions other MNLF camps and attempts to give an insight into MNLF strength in Sulu, as well as the popular support it receives.

Dear Bob,

Sorry for not having responded to your earlier message re the MNLF camps. The main MNLF camp in Sulu today is in Barangay Marang (Marang Village) in the municipality of Indanan. It is under the MNLF Provincial Chairman Khaid Ajibon. Until two years ago there was another major camp in the village of Bitanag in the municipality of Panamao under Ustadz Habier Malik. This camp was attacked and taken over by the Philippine military two years ago after fighting broke out between Ustadz Habier's forces and the military. There is another camp in the village of Tiis in Talipao municipality.

It is difficult to estimate the number of MNLF fighters particularly because there are several factions within the MNLF now. The camps I mentioned are under commanders loyal to Chairman Nur Misuari. Numbers are fluid. What is important to note is that in the event of a major conflict particularly against what can be considered to be a common enemy -- like the Philippine military -- armed groups from throughout the province, many times consisting of civilians who bring out their hidden firearms, will come to reinforce the MNLF. This will be true only so long as the MNLF is seen as continuing to champion the cause of the people.

Hope this is helpful.

Vic

Text Box 4.1. Email received by this author from Victor Taylor, 19 January 2009. Verbatim, with no grammatical or spelling corrections. Reproduced with permission from Victor Taylor.

Source: Personal communication to this author, 19 January 2009.

Question 1 (identified as Question 1, MNLF), sought to ascertain whether or not the MNLF thought it enjoyed popular support from the Sulu population at large, and whether the population agreed with the MNLF's belief that peace can only be achieved if the contentious issue of ancestral domain, that is, a recognition of the original Moros right to claim land ownership, is addressed.

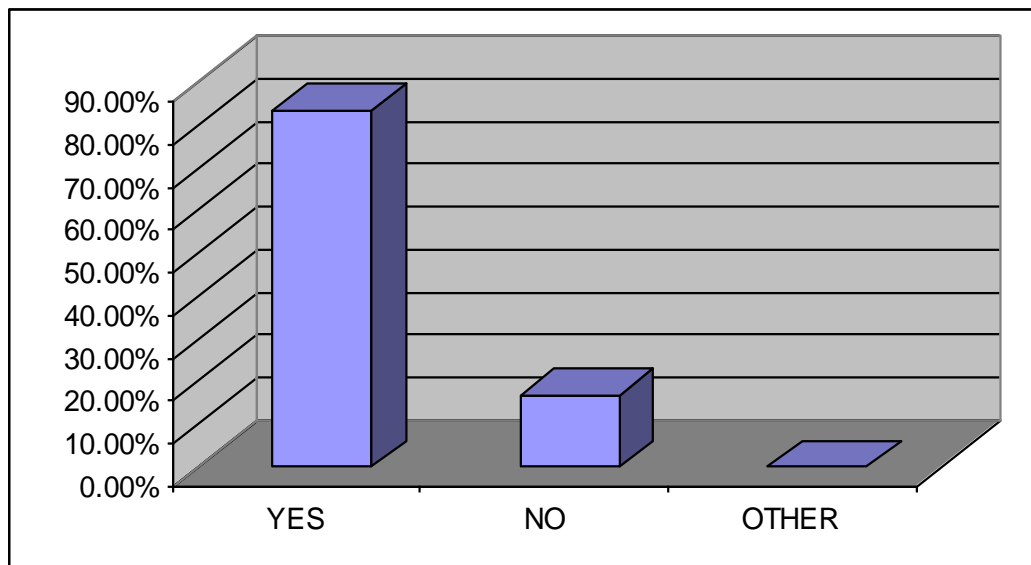
Question 1. MNLF. Do you believe that the majority of the Sulu population support the MNLF and its broader agenda of having ancestral domain recognised?

Options: (a) Yes (b) No (c) Other “please specify”

Response: N=30 (of 30) Yes.83.3% No.16.7% Other.0.00%

Graph 4.2. MNLF acceptance in Sulu, including ancestral domain

Response: N=30 (of 30) Yes.83.3% No.16.7% Other.0.00%



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in November 2008. MNLF camp in Barangay Marang (Marang Village) in Indanan Municipality, Sulu Province (with the assistance of local research facilitators)

Analysis of MNLF acceptance in Sulu, including ancestral domain.

The most significant aspect of the responses to this question was that of those who answered ‘No’ (5 respondents). Not one of them offered a comment. This was in stark contrast to the respondents who answered ‘Yes’ (25 respondents), of whom 10 commented. It would not be unreasonable to suggest that the reluctance of respondents to expand on their ‘No’ answer may be interpreted in a number of ways, not the least being that they were instructed not to negatively comment on a contentious issue that had broad MNLF support. Nevertheless, the comments that were made by the ‘Yes’ respondents made informative, and in some cases poignant reading. The written responses to ‘Question 1.MNLF’ are transcribed from the facilitator’s translated

interpretations with no grammatical, or spelling corrections. A brief analysis of each individual written response follows each translation. Notably, this researcher found some of the transcriptions and translations to be slightly confusing. One reason for this may be that the respondents, who were all from the municipality of Indanan, were using a local dialect of the Tausug language, making exact translation to English by the local research facilitator difficult: this was the case in all five questions that had written responses. Another reason for some slightly confusing written responses may lie in the fact that some MNLF respondents were semi-literate.¹²

4.5 MNLF operatives' written responses to question 1

Written response 1 of 10 to question 1. MNLF. (Do you believe that the majority of the Sulu population support the MNLF and its broader agenda of having ancestral domain recognised?)

Translation: *'We are very happy if the rights of MNLF will be given by the Philippine Government. Sulu will be brighter, happy and glad. The truth is there are lots of people who are happy if the government (in Sulu) will be given to the MNLF'.*

Author's interpretation of translation: The first part of this respondent's comment would appear to suggest that if the MNLF was given some power-sharing in Sulu then peace would follow. The second part of the comment includes the words 'lots of people'. This may indicate that the respondent thought that it would be a popular decision to include the MNLF in some form of power-sharing. (MNLF rights were mentioned).

Written response 2 of 10 to question1. MNLF

Translation: *'There are lots of people in the hinterland that supports the MNLF'*

Author's interpretation of translation: This respondent believed that the MNLF had popular support. The respondent, in all likelihood came from the Sulu hinterland. His

¹² NSCB, Simple literacy of population of 10 years or older. Retrieved February 2009, http://www.nscb.gov.ph/secstat/d_educ.asp . Figures for the ARMM. The ARMM, in 2003 had a literacy rate of 69.4%, as compared to the Philippines as a whole that had a literacy rate of 94.3% (literacy statistics were not available for Sulu).

assessment can be taken as his genuine belief (please refer to Taylor's email to this author in Box 4.1, in particular paragraph 2).

Written response 3 of 10 to question 1. MNLF

Translation: *'In my opinion the people here in Sulu are happy if the MNLF will achieve what they aspire to. Have their rights. 'It is because in the entire world most of them are happy for MNLF. Even the "OIC" Islamic World and the United Nations "UN" recognized MNLF under the leadership of Nur Misuari'.*

Author's interpretation of translation: (This was the first respondent to mention Nur Misuari). The first part of this response was predictable. However, the second part of the response was interesting inasmuch that it mentioned the UN and the OIC. The United Nations (UN) has, in the past, been petitioned and addressed on many occasions on the Moro cause. The following are selected examples. MNLF Chairman Nur Misuari petitioned the UN in December 2001 calling for "the decolonization of the Bangsamoro Homeland in southern Philippines, and the request for United Nations assistance in its establishment as the independent Bangsamoro Republic of Mindanao".¹³ In 2004, Mucha Shim Q. Arquiza, of Sulu, representing the 'Asian Muslim Action Network in the Philippines', addressed the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights seeking assistance in stopping the conflict in Sulu Province.¹⁴

The OIC, as mentioned, gave permanent observer status to the MNLF in 1977 and, as such, the MNLF is allowed to attend all OIC conferences, including the Islamic Summit Conference, and the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers. However, in June 2008, at the 35th OIC Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, Nur Misuari was allowed to address the session. Misuari spoke impassionedly, and in length, about Moro issues; as mentioned, Misuari had been released from detention in Manila specifically to do so. The purpose in quoting these episodes from the UN and the OIC is to emphasise the 'education' or 'instructions' which must have been given to this respondent. It is

¹³ The initiatives of the Moro National Liberation Front at the United Nations Organization. Retrieved January 2008, <http://mnlf.net/index.htm>

¹⁴ Working group on minorities. Retrieved January 2008, http://www.unhchr.ch/minorities/statements10AMANP_3a.doc

obvious that the MNLF not only sees the need for military training, but the importance of keeping its members updated on issues that involve the MNLF internationally. (MNLF rights were mentioned).

Written response 4 of 10 to question 1. MNLF

Translation: *'Yes. Even the entire Mindanao believes that peace will be achieved. As such the Islamic World (OIC) and the UN recognized the MNLF under the leadership of Prof. Nur P. Misuari. The evidence is he is a UNESCO Awardee'.*

Author's interpretation of translation: This was the second respondent to name Misuari, and peace was also mentioned. Furthermore, the OIC and the UN were again mentioned. The UNESCO award that this respondent was referring to was the 1997 UNESCO 'Felix Houphouet-Boigny Peace Prize'. This award was jointly presented to President Fidel Ramos and Nur Misuari for the signing of the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement. The irony here is that this Peace Agreement still has many outstanding terms and conditions that have, at the time of this study, not been addressed. However, as stated in the interpretation of the statement respondent number 3, this respondent's comment is further evidence of "education", during instruction periods.

Written response 5 of 10 to question 1. MNLF

Translation: *'Yes. All communities who love the MNLF will be happy for MNLF if their rights will be recognized. All of the people will be at peace. For those who love the MNLF they will be happy if Prof. Nur Misuari will lead Sulu'.*

Author's interpretation of translation: This was the third respondent to mention Misuari and peace. This respondent believed that there was a genuine love for the MNLF in Sulu. He also believed that this love for the MNLF should translate into acceptance of Misuari "leading" Sulu. Exactly what the respondent meant by 'lead' is not clear. It must be remembered that Misuari had twice been defeated in elections for Governor of Sulu, albeit the latest election in April 2008 drew allegations of electoral fraud. It is just possible that this respondent, when suggesting that Misuari would make a good 'leader' of a predominately Muslim community, was referring to the title bestowed on him in March 2007 by Sultan Muhammad Faud A. Kiram. The title bestowed of Misuari was

the rank and title of *Datu* (Prince) of the Sultanate of Sulu and North Borneo/Sabah.¹⁵ (MNLF rights also were mentioned).

Written response 6 of 10 to question 1. MNLF

Translation: *Yes- All of the people in Sulu are Moro. As Moro they follow and give support to people who in return supported them like Prof. Nur Misuari.*

Author's interpretation of translation: This was the fourth respondent to mention Misuari. This respondent's comment was a little vague, insofar that the question asked about the acceptance of the MNLF and ancestral domain. 'Moro' was mentioned twice, further adding to the confusing statement. It was possible that this respondent identified with being Moro first and Tausug second. Whatever the interpretation, Misuari appeared to be held in high esteem.

Written response 7 of 10 to question 1.MNLF

Translation: *Yes- The MNLF wanted/aspired to get/have their rights over their ancestral domain.*

Author's interpretation of translation: This was the first respondent to acknowledge that the MNLF wanted recognition of ancestral domain. (MNLF rights also were mentioned).

Written response 8 of 10 to question 1. MNLF

Translation: *Yes, majority of the people in Sulu support the MNLF, even though the Phil. Gov't did not recognised the MNLF, other countries recognised the MNLF.*

Author's interpretation of translation: This respondent believed the MNLF was widely accepted in Sulu. He also made mention of the recognition of the MNLF by other countries—presumably members of the OIC. The mention of non-recognition of the MNLF by the Philippine Government was somewhat misleading. The MNLF has been recognised in some capacity by all Philippine Administrations since its conception in 1968/9, albeit reluctantly, as was evident in the Marcos and Estrada Administrations. 'Education' has appeared to have played some part in this respondent's comments,

¹⁵ The 2nd Mindanao MNLF leadership peace summit, 2008. Retrieved January 2009, <http://www.royalsulu.com/mnlf.html>

notwithstanding his failure to acknowledge that the MNLF has been recognised in the Philippines since its conception.

Written response 9 of 10 to question 1. MNLF

Translation: *Yes. It is because all people in Sulu are MNLF.*

Author's interpretation of translation: This short comment was somewhat vague. There may have been some error in translation. The respondent's original answer in Tausag does not include the word 'Sulu'. However, the underlying message in the comment is that the respondent believed the MNLF had wide support.

Written response 10 of 10 to question 1. MNLF

Translation: *Yes- The MNLF live their lives and strive hard in order for the Phil. Govt & other countries to recognise the rights of the MNLF in Sulu.*

Author's interpretation of translation: This respondent made no mention of the MNLF being accepted by the population of Sulu. However, he did stress the point that the MNLF had strived hard to have their 'rights' recognised. The term 'rights' had now been mentioned by 5 out of the 10 respondents. An analysis of this point follows in 'Analysis of written responses to question 1. MNLF'.

Analysis of written responses to question 1. MNLF.

Question 1 was intended to draw responses in regard to MNLF support and the more contentious issue of ancestral domain. As anticipated, most, if not all respondents believed that the MNLF had the popular support of the Sulu population at large. This was not unexpected given that in Chapter 3, question 11.1. less than 4% of respondents to the questionnaires distributed in Jolo attributed ongoing violence in their province to the MNLF. When it came to the question of ancestral domain, only one respondent offered a comment, but the meaning of ancestral domain may have been lost in translation. Or, more likely, the respondents, who were all Tausag Sunni Muslims, believed they still had some control over their ancestral lands, albeit tacit, even if they did not have official autonomy.

‘Rights’, or ‘MNLF rights’, was mentioned in half of the written responses. This would suggest more than a mere coincidence. As mentioned, these MNLF paramilitary respondents would have more than likely been subjected to ongoing ‘education’ which would have included political analysis and legal interpretation. There is also little doubt that these MNLF respondents would have been given some insight into the 1987 Philippine Constitution, in particular those Articles which mention ‘rights’, and ‘human rights’. For example, in Article XII, ‘National Economy and Patrimony’, Section 5, the State guarantees, ‘the rights of indigenous cultural communities to their ancestral lands’. As well, Article XIII, ‘Role and Rights of People’s Organizations’, Section 15 reads ‘The State shall respect the role of independent people's organizations to enable the people to pursue and protect, within the democratic framework, their legitimate and collective interests and aspirations through peaceful and lawful means’. With these two Articles/Sections in mind, it is easy to see why these respondents felt that their rights had been contravened, given that they were indigenous and more importantly also belonged to an organisation which had been subject to military action by the AFP—whose role under the Constitution was supposed to be, in part, ‘the protector of the people and the State’.

The words ‘peace’, and ‘happy’, both of which could be interpreted as having the same broad meaning (that is, a non-violent existence) were mentioned by four respondents, as was the Chairman of the MNLF, Nur Misuari. The role of the UN, the support of the OIC, and the approval of UNESCO, were also mentioned. A summary of the respondents’ written responses to ‘question 1.MNLF’ reads as follows. For peace to return to Sulu Province, the ‘rights’ of Suluanos, which of course includes members of the MNLF, must be addressed. As well, the OIC and the UN must be allowed to participate in the peace processes. Importantly, Nur Misuari must also be allowed to participate at all levels of the peace processes.

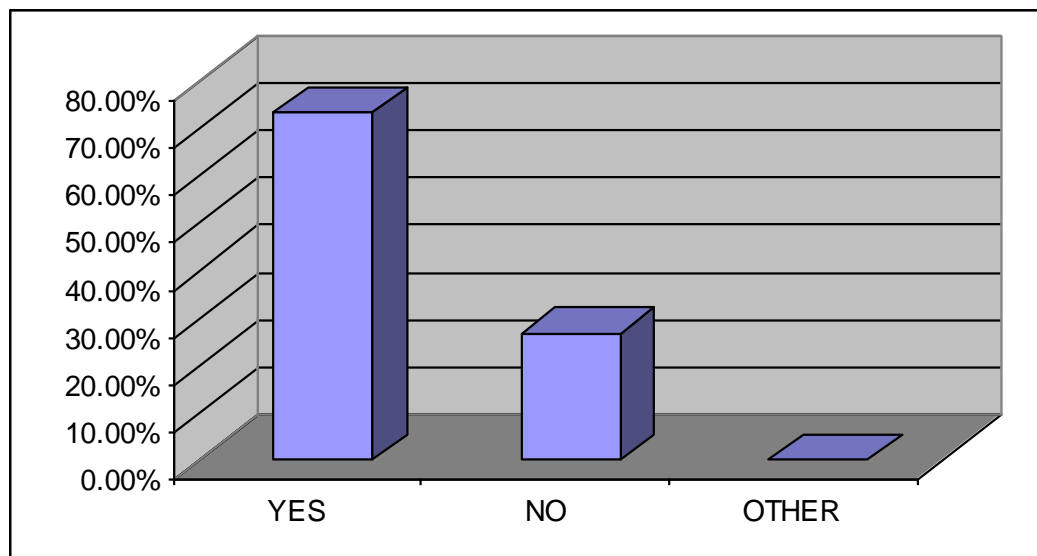
Question 2. MNLF. Do you believe that if the 1996 Peace Agreement between the MNLF and the Philippine Government had been fully implemented, then Sulu would now be more peaceful and prosperous? (Graph 4.3)

Options: (a) Yes (b) No (c) Other “please specify”

Response: N=30 (of 30) Yes.73.3% No.26.7% Other.0.00%

Graph 4.3. 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement, peace and order and prosperity in Sulu Province

Response: N=30 (of 30) Yes.73.3% No.26.7% Other.0.00%



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in November 2008. MNLF camp in Barangay Marang (Marang Village) in Indanan Municipality, Sulu Province

Analysis of The 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement with implications for peace and prosperity in Sulu Province.

In ‘Question 1. MNLF’, of the 5 respondents who answered ‘No’ not one offered a comment. A similar negative response (1 from 8) came from respondents who answered ‘No’ to ‘Question 2. MNLF’. And in the similar manner, those respondents who answered ‘Yes’ (22 respondents), 9 commented.

At the time of the writing of this dissertation the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement was over 13 years old. This Peace Agreement was a complex document that

dealt with issues such as MNLF integration into the AFP and the PNP, and resource revenue sharing by the Moro people. Its partial enactment has had little effect on the quality of life, or indeed the role that the MNLF plays in Sulu Province. However, those respondents who did comment on this Peace Agreement, were critical of the present Philippine Administration's reluctance to fully implement the terms and conditions of the agreement.

The written responses to 'Question 2. MNLF' are transcribed from the facilitator's translated interpretations with no grammatical, or spelling corrections. As with question 1, a brief analysis of each individual written response follows each translation.

4.6 MNLF operatives' written responses to question 2

Written response 1 of 1 "nos" to question 2. MNLF. (Do you believe that if the 1996 Peace Agreement between the MNLF and the Philippine Government had been fully implemented, then Sulu would now be more peaceful and prosperous?)

Translation: No; because each and every (MNLF member) are aspiring something differently.

Author's interpretation of translation: Interestingly, this respondent was 65 years old. He would have been 52 years old at the time of the signing of the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement, and more importantly, at the time of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement, which was considered the model for the 1996 Peace Agreement, he would have been 32 years old. And, more than likely, he could have been very active in MNLF paramilitary actions. There was some poignancy to his answer; maybe disappointment, or even frustration. It is somewhat disappointing to this author that a 65 year-old MNLF respondent, who would have experienced military action between the MNLF and the AFP, was not given the opportunity to expand on his answer, or indeed have the opportunity to recall some of his experiences. These, unfortunately, are some of the shortcomings and frustration when researching a war zone remotely.

Written response 1 of 9 “yeses” to question 2. MNLF

Translation: *Yes. If the agreement will be implemented, the people in every community will be at peace, especially when there is no bombing by the military.*

Author’s interpretation of translation: There is a correlation between the implementation of the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement and a cessation of hostilities in this response. Also the respondent referred to “bombing by the military”; a poignant reminder that there was continued, albeit at the time of the writing of this dissertation, sporadic, AFP military action in Sulu.

Written response 2 of 9 “yeses” to question 2. MNLF

Translation: *Yes. In 1996 the Peace agreement was established but now the Phil. Government deceived the MNLF*

Author’s interpretation of translation: This is a short, but definitive statement. This respondent believed that the Philippine Government is/was acting with deceit by not fully implementing the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement. The term ‘Phil. Government’ may refer to the Estrada Administration as well as the present Arroyo Administration. However, because President Estrada’s Administration was relatively short-lived, the respondent’s comment was taken as referring to the present Arroyo Administration.

Written response 3 of 9 “yeses” to question 2. MNLF

Translation: *Yes, 1996 was the peace agreement established. Now, there is no peace because the Phil. Gov’t. fooled the MNLF*

Authors interpretation of translation: This was the second respondent who believed that the Philippine Government had/has no intention of fully implementing the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement. As was the case with respondent number 2, ‘Phil. Gov’t’ is taken to mean the Arroyo Administration.

Written response 4 of 9 “yeses” to question 2. MNLF

Translation: *Yes, because if the agreement will be implemented all of the people in Mindanao will be happy especially those who love the MNLF. There will be no disorder/disturbance, especially there will be no bombing from the Phil. Government.*

Author's interpretation of translation: Bombing is again mentioned as a consequence of the non-implementation of the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement. Interestingly, this respondent mentioned Mindanao as being more peaceful ('happy'), possibly indicating a solidarity with other southern Philippine Moros.

Written response 5 of 9 “yeses” to question 2. MNLF

Translation: *Yes. If the agreement between the GRP and the MNLF will be disseminated, all communities in Mindanao especially Sulu will be peaceful.*

Author's interpretation of translation: This was the second respondent to show possible solidarity with fellow Mindanao Moros.

Written response 6 of 9 “yeses” to question 2. MNLF

Translation: *Yes. If the Phil. Gov't. did not deceived the MNLF, now there would be progress and development in Sulu.*

Author's interpretation of translation: Deception was again mentioned, but peace or violence was not. However, the respondent did make reference to there being prosperity in Sulu if the Agreement was to be honoured.

Written response 7 of 9 “yeses” to question 2. MNLF

Translation: *Just law, but not followed.*

Author's interpretation of translation: It is unclear whether 'just' refers to being 'fair' or 'barely'. Because it is followed with 'but', this author made the assumption that the respondent approved of the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement, even though it was not fully implemented.

Written response 8 of 9 to question 2. MNLF

Translation: *Yes. It was in 1996 that the peace agreement was established but the Phil. Gov't fooled the MNLF. Until now the agreement was not implemented.*

Author's interpretation of translation: Deception was again mentioned, as was the non-implementation of the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement.

Written response 9 of 9 to question 2. MNLF

Translation: *Yes. Because if they disseminate the mutual agreement between the Phil. Government and the MNLF, the MNLF and its supporters will be happy.*

Author's interpretation of translation: The translator's use of the verb 'disseminate' was confusing; she used the same word when translating the answer from respondent number 5. However the general message appeared to be that the respondent was concerned about the non-implementation of the peace agreement.

Analysis of written responses to question 2. MNLF

The importance of the Philippine Government, in particular the Arroyo Administration, not fully implementing the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace agreement cannot be overstated. It came as no surprise that the majority of MNLF respondents were very familiar with the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement, and all that it contained. After all, the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement was the most significant agreement, and ceasefire to date, between both parties. Leaving aside the 65 year-old, the eight remaining respondents thought that members of the MNLF would have desired different terms and conditions than those which were negotiated in the 1996 Peace Agreement. Importantly, these eight respondents were overwhelmingly critical in their general comments. Six of the 10 respondents believed that the non-implementation of the 1996 Peace Agreement was responsible for the state of unrest in Sulu at this time, and bombing as a full scale military operational tactic was mentioned twice. Deception, referred to by respondents as 'fooled' or 'deceived', was mentioned four times. These four respondents were of the understanding that the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement had some sinister motive for being initiated. This is in sharp contrast to the enthusiasm that was displayed by members of the MNLF at the time of the signing.

Although there was, and still is, some degree of hostility, or more correctly competition for acceptance, between the more popular MILF and the MNLF, a number of respondents referred to the other Moros in Mindanao. There appeared to be a belief

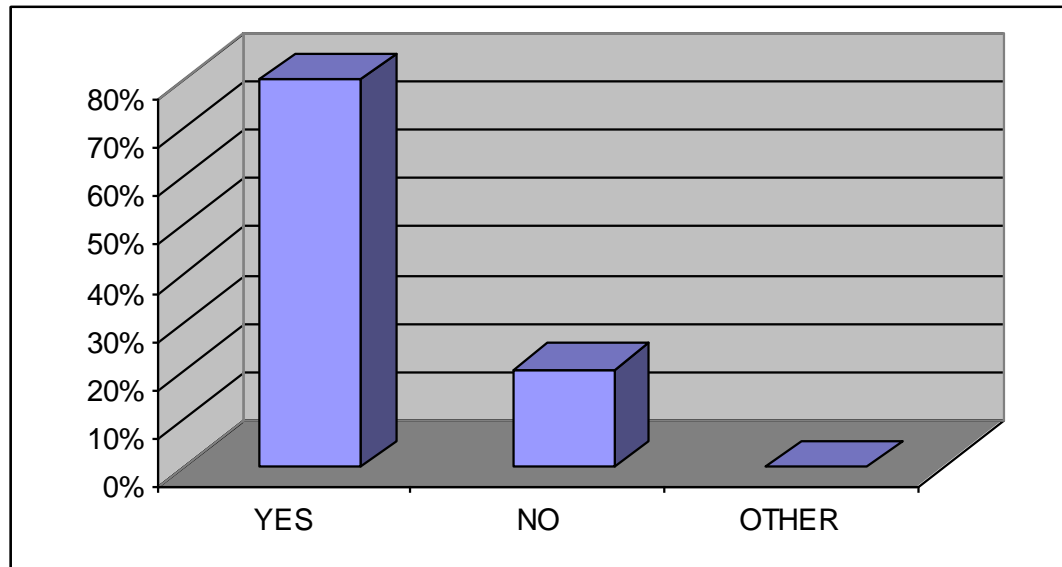
that the full implementation of the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace agreement would have benefited the Moros of Mindanao generally. In brief, the full implementation of the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement would be desirous.

Question 3. MNLF. Do you believe that the presence of USA Military Forces in Sulu has been beneficial in any way?

Options: (a) Yes (b) No (c) Other “please specify”

Graph 4.4. USA Military Forces in Sulu

Response: N=30 (of 30) Yes.80.00% No.20.00% Other.0.00%



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in November 2008. MNLF camp in Barangay Marang (Marang Village) in Indanan Municipality, Sulu Province

Analysis of the benefit or otherwise of USA Military Forces in Sulu Province.

At the outset, it is important to mention that question 3 may have appeared ambiguous to both the translator and the respondents at large, insofar that ‘beneficial’ was intended by this author to imply that it would assist Sulu in some capacity. However, all but one written response assumed (or so it appeared by the content of the answers) that the question was asking if the U.S. military presence benefited either the Arroyo Administration, or the U.S. Military itself. As previously mentioned, the error in translation may be as a result of dialectic difficulties. However, the error in transposition

or interpretation proved not to be an impediment in this research. Moreover, it seemed to be helpful, insomuch as it gave the respondents an opportunity to express their feelings toward the U.S. military presence and the Arroyo Administration, who it must be remembered had given permission for the U.S. Military to be present in Sulu.

Whether the ‘benefit’ was to the advantage of the Sulu Province at large, the Arroyo Administration, or indeed the U.S. Military, the overwhelming majority of respondents (80%) thought there was something to be gained by the U.S. military presence in Sulu. Only 20% of respondents thought there was no advantage at all in having the U.S. Military in Sulu. No respondent who answered ‘No’ to question 3 offered a comment. However, nine respondents who answered ‘Yes’ gave a written comment. Following on from this, Chapter 7 of this dissertation will examine how the presence of the U.S. Military was/is seen by the Sulu population. This will be in context with the results of the survey questionnaire by this author in August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu. The findings of this questionnaire, that is, that over 65% of respondents were either concerned or fearful of the U.S. military presence in Sulu, were in line with the written responses supplied to this author by the MNLF respondents. A further comparison of the two findings is made in Chapter 7.

4.7 MNLF operatives’ written responses to question 3

Written response 1 of 9 to question 3. MNLF. (Do you believe that the presence of U.S. Military Forces in Sulu has been beneficial in any way?)

Translation: *They are the one who give comfort to the youth.*

Author’s interpretation of translation: This respondent originally answered ‘No’ then changed his answer to ‘Yes’. It was unclear why the respondent did so, or indeed if the respondent fully understood the question. His comment likewise is unclear. Whilst it is true that the U.S. Military Forces in Sulu do engage in humanitarian projects (see Chapter 3, Box 3.2 USAID projects, Sulu Province, post-2004), it is doubtful if the sole intention of the projects is to give ‘comfort to the youth’. However, the respondent may have witnessed some incident in which U.S. military personnel assisted children or youths. In the report, Focus on the Philippines, Special Reports No.2, there are

photographs of U.S. military personnel assisting young Suluanos. Although the photographs were, in all likelihood, ‘rehearsed’, and/or ‘stage managed’, there appeared to be a genuine affection between the soldiers and the children of various ages.¹⁶

Written response 2 of 9 “yeses” to question 3. MNLF

Translation: *Yes the USA Military Forces is benefiting because they support and give strength to the Phil. Govt. in the military operation in Sulu.*

Author’s interpretation of translation: Exactly how U.S. Military Forces are benefiting from being in Sulu and assisting the Philippine Government was not explained by this respondent. However, the most salient phrase in this response is ‘strength to the Phil. Govt.’ As well, the words ‘the USA Military Force is benefiting’ indicated to this author that the respondent believed that the U.S. Military Forces were in Sulu for more than just humanitarian reasons.

Written response 3 of 9 “yeses” to question 3. MNLF

Translation: *Yes. Because they are insidious. They are the king in our country while we serve here like slaves. They act as labourers, stevedores, building schools, roads and others. At the same time they are training the AFP to attack the people of Sulu.*

Author’s interpretation of translation: There was obvious hostility, bordering on hatred by this respondent to the U.S. military presence in Sulu. ‘Insidious’ is an extremely strong adjective to describe a visiting military force which claims to be, at most, providing only military advice. Ulterior motives were suggested for the infrastructure being built in Sulu (This view is also discussed in Chapter 7 of this dissertation). There was the claim that the AFP was being trained by the U.S. Military to enable them to ‘attack’ the ‘people’ of Sulu, but this respondent did not differentiate between ordinary Sulu citizens and members of any paramilitary force. This respondent had previously mentioned, in Question 2, the bombing in Sulu by the AFP. The name and rank of this MNLF respondent was given. However, for reasons of confidentiality it is not disclosed here.

¹⁶ Focus on the Philippines, Special Reports, No. 2, *At the door of all the East: The Philippines in United States military strategy*, Bangkok, Focus on the Global South, November 2007, pp. 23, 99, 108.

Written response 4 of 9 “yeses” to question 3. MNLF

Translation: *Yes. These Americans came to Sulu is with the permission of the Phil. Government, because all of them are insidious. They unite to destroy the MNLF.*

Author’s interpretation of translation: As with respondent number 2, the word ‘insidious’ is again used. This respondent believed the motive of the Philippine Government (and he must mean the Arroyo Administration because the U.S. Forces only began their visitation in 2002) for allowing U.S. Military Forces in Sulu is to destroy the MNLF. The assertion by this respondent that the motivation for allowing the U.S. Military into Sulu is to assist in the neutralisation of the MNLF is in line with, in part, central question 2 of this dissertation. That is, the attempt by the Arroyo Administration to have the MNLF perceived as being national insurgents, rather than liberationist insurgents.

Written response 5 of 9 “yeses” question 3. MNLF

Translation: *Yes. They corrupted Sulu. They support the Phil. Govt. in order to make the war in Sulu intensive.*

Author’s interpretation of translation: There is no approval of the U.S. military presence in Sulu from this respondent. The respondent saw U.S. Military Forces in Sulu as being an extension of the Arroyo Administration’s aggression in that province.

Written response 6 of 9 “yeses” to question 3. MNLF

Translation: *Their intention is to create chaos in Sulu.*

Author’s interpretation of translation: The respondent’s comment needs no clarification. Its message is straightforward.

Written response 7 of 9 “yeses” to question 3. MNLF

Translation: *Yes. Their importance is to support the Phil. Government. Bomb, cannon, ammunitions to attack Sulu in battle.*

Author's interpretation of translation: This respondent's comment was similar to the previous respondent's comment in Question 3. That is, the intention of the U.S. military presence in Sulu is to support the Arroyo Administration in the suppression of the local population.

Written response 8 of 9 “yeses” to question 3. MNLF

Translation: *The US military force are happy that they come to Sulu because they have purpose in coming to our place. One of their purposes is to dig up the treasures of our forefathers. They will get all our treasures. That's why they are deceitful to the people.*

Author's interpretation of translation: The reference to treasures being buried in the Philippines dates back to WW II. This theory is widely believed to be true by many Filipinos in some provinces of the Philippines. However, it is the first time that this author has heard mention that some of the 'treasure' may be in Sulu. During WW II there were less than 1000 non-Suluanos in Sulu, and this may have included a small contingent of Japanese military personnel, making the possibility of confiscating 'treasure' from the Tausugs very difficult at the best—if indeed there was any 'treasure'.

The Japanese Commander of the Philippines during WW II was General Yamashita, who was hanged in Davao City, Mindanao, on 3 April 1946. Yamashita had sent back to Japan, during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines, a considerable amount of gold to help with Japan's war effort. He refused to confirm or deny if there had been any gold buried, awaiting shipment back to Japan before he was hanged—hence the rumour.

It is interesting that this respondent chose the 'treasure' rumour as the motive for U.S. military presence in Sulu, rather than the more widely accepted belief of the other respondents, that is, U.S. assistance to the AFP.

Written response 9 of 9 “yeses” to question 3. MNLF

Translation: *The Americans are happy that they came to Sulu because these people are insidious, treacherous. The truth is they will donate something to the people but they will get something in return.*

Author's interpretation of translation: This respondent believed that the U.S. Military Forces in Sulu were mercenary, inasmuch as any assistance given to Sulu must have an ulterior motive to it. The term 'insidious' was again used in the translation of this comment.

Analysis of written responses to question 3. MNLF.

Eight of the nine respondents who answered 'Yes' to question 3 were critical of the U.S. military presence in their province. There was an underlying feeling of enmity, bordering on hatred, in the entire nine written responses mentioned above. The word "insidious" was used to describe the U.S. military presence on three occasions but, there may be no exact Tausag translation of the English word 'insidious', and the adjectives used by the respondents to describe the U.S. Military may have also had no English translation—"insidious" may have been the closest the interpreter could get to the descriptions used. Moreover, the majority of the written responses claimed that the U.S. military presence was intended to give support to the AFP, which was under instructions from the Arroyo Administration. There is some truth to the claim that the U.S. Military has been supporting the AFP, inasmuch as the U.S. Military Forces do advise and train members of the AFP. This is lawful under the 'Visiting Forces Agreement' (VFA) signed in 1998 (the VFA, and all its implications will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7 of this dissertation).

The criticism of the U.S. military presence, inasmuch as they are assisting the AFP and which in turn translates to support for the Arroyo Administration, came as no surprise. After all, there have been numerous clashes, of varying degrees of intensity, between the AFP and members of the MNLF paramilitary forces in Sulu over the last decade (see Chapter 2.9. *Wars, Sulu Province 21st Century*). What did come as a surprise to this author, was the belief by four of the respondents that any humanitarian aid, or public infrastructure undertaken by the U.S. Military Forces had an ulterior motive. Their belief is not without some foundation. In 2004, Steven Metz and Raymond Millen, writing for the 'Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College', espoused the theory that to defeat any liberation insurgency organisation, the local population must be

opposed to the insurgents. And, the most effective way to achieve this is for the national government, or in this case the visiting forces, giving to the local population that which the liberationist insurgents are unable to provide: humanitarian aid, public infrastructure construction, and so forth. This viewpoint will be further examined in Chapter 7 of this dissertation.

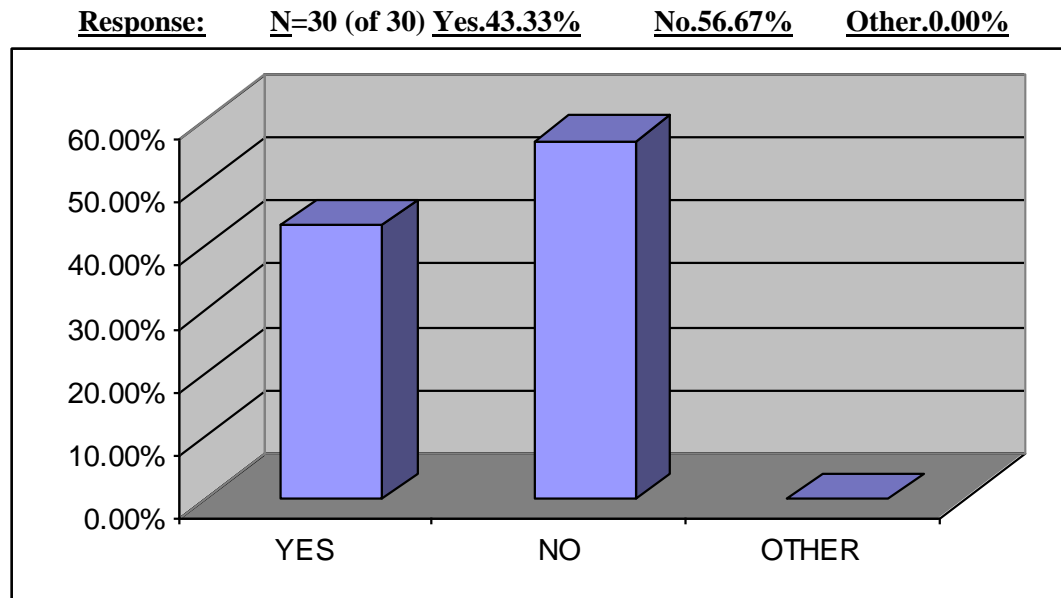
One respondent went so far as to claim that the U.S. Military Forces in Mindanao were there with the sole intention of destroying the MNLF. This claim has no foundation. The MNLF has never been on the ‘enemy’ list in the U.S. Global War on Terror. However, it is in the best interests of U.S. foreign policy to assist any close ally with counterinsurgency efforts; this includes both national insurgency and liberation insurgency. The rationale behind this thinking is that if the local insurgency is successful, then there exists the possibility of any new administration resulting from successful insurgency, being antagonistic toward the U.S. History has shown that national governments of any political persuasion usually oppose vehemently any attempt by minorities to establish independence—the Republic of the Philippines being no exception.

Question 4. MNLF. Are you happy with Sulu being a part of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao? (Graph 4.5)

Options: (a) Yes (b) No (c) Other, “please specify”

Interpretation of Graph 4.5: (see page 138)

Graph 4.5. Acceptance or otherwise of Sulu being in the ARMM.



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in November 2008. MNLF camp in Barangay Marang (Marang Village) in Indanan Municipality, Sulu Province

Analysis of the acceptance or otherwise of Sulu being in the ARMM.

More than half of the MNLF respondents were not happy with being a part of the ARMM. This finding was somewhat surprising given that when the 1989 plebiscite was conducted to form the ARMM, Sulu voted overwhelmingly for inclusion. It must be remembered here that the feeling of discontent at being a part of the ARMM was only from MNLF members. However, given that the MNLF enjoys popular support in Sulu, it is not without some foundation to suggest that the Sulu population, at large, would have the same feeling of unease at being a part of the ARMM as the majority of the MNLF respondents had indicated. In an interview in August 2005, 15 years after the original ARMM was formed, the Chairman of the MNLF, and former Governor of the ARMM, Nur Misuari, described it as a ‘lousy form of government’.¹⁷ It would now appear that the enthusiasm which was evident at the formation of the ARMM in 1990 has somewhat diminished.

¹⁷ Arnado, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

Of the 10 written responses to this question only two were in favour of remaining in the ARMM. These two written responses were short and lacked any worthwhile detail. In contrast, the respondents who were not in favour of remaining in the ARMM, in many instances gave a detailed explanation of why they believed withdrawal from the ARMM was desirable as inclusion in it had not benefited Sulu.

4.8 MNLF operatives' written responses to question 4

Written response 1 of 2 “Yeses” to question 4 MNLF. (Are you happy with Sulu being a part of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao?)

Translation: *Because we call the ARMM Muslim land.*

Author's interpretation of translation: The population of the ARMM is indeed overwhelmingly Muslim. This respondent, who was aged 65 was old enough to remember when the Muslims of Mindanao were the victims of deliberate minoritisation by past Philippine Administrations, and, as such, felt comfortable with being in an official area that was recognised as 'Islamic'.

Written response 2 of 2 “Yeses” to question 4. MNLF

Translation: *Our place became familiar.*

Author's interpretation of translation: Recognition of the ARMM, and what it stands for, was/is important. With recognition of ancestral lands came recognition of the Moro's beliefs.

Written response 1 of 8 “Nos” to question 4. MNLF

Translation: *We passed the law for autonomy. Worst is, it worsened the situation of the people in Mindanao. It did not give something good to the people. What is needed here is independence. There is no assurance of peace if everyone is being denied of their rights and the government will not respect them.*

Author's interpretation of translation: The respondent believed that Mindanao was now worse off than before the creation of the ARMM, and produced nothing that improved the life, or prosperity of the people of Mindanao—this of course includes the Province of Sulu. It is true that Sulu was the poorest province in the Philippines prior to the creation

of the ARMM; a situation which still existed at the time of the writing of this dissertation. The other provinces in the ARMM, with the exception of Basilan have also had worsening living conditions in the last decade or so: (please refer to Graph 3.7 in Chapter 3). This respondent also believed that human rights were being denied (this concern for human rights was also of significant concern to the 306 respondents questioned in the August 2008 survey in Jolo). Lack of respect from the Arroyo Administration was also mentioned. The need for independence was stressed, and this must have meant Sulu, because if the respondent was unhappy with Sulu being a part of the ARMM it then followed that he would not wish to a part of an independent ARMM.

Written response 2 of 2 “Nos” to question 4. MNLF

Translation: *The Phil. Government should give independence to Mindanao and Sulu so that they can give happiness to the masses.*

Author’s interpretation of translation: Independence was again stressed for Sulu. However, Mindanao was mentioned. Whether the respondent would be happy being a part of an independent Mindanao, as in a federalist system, is unclear.

Written response 3 of 8 “Nos” to question 4. MNLF

Translation: *No, because the people are not at peace due to the fact that the government wanted to control the people. What the people wanted was to be independent in Mindanao.*

Author’s interpretation of translation: Independence was again mentioned. Similar to respondent number two, this respondent did not specify whether Sulu should be an independent nation, or be part of a federalist system.

Written response 4 of 8 “Nos” to question 4. MNLF

Translation: *No, we will be happy when independence will be given to us.*

Author’s interpretation of translation: Independence was paramount to this respondent.

Written response 5 of 8 “Nos” to question 4. MNLF

Translation: *No, I want Mindanao to be independent.*

Author's interpretation of translation: Independence for all of Mindanao. Here the limitations of interviewing remotely are again obvious: further questioning of this respondent's answer may have included whether this respondent favoured federalism in which Sulu was a part of a greater Mindanao State.

Written response 6 of 8 “Nos” to question 4. MNLF

Translation: *No. Because we've tried the autonomy. Worst is, the people of Sulu have been displaced. We should be independent. Peace will not be experienced if the original settlers are being controlled. We cannot find peace if the owners of this place are not respected by the GRP.*

Author's interpretation of translation: This respondent stressed the need for respect being shown to the original inhabitants of Sulu (would this include the Lumads?). This respondent made the inference that the ARMM experiment had been tried, and was found wanting. What this respondent desired was for Sulu to be independent. Exactly what this respondent meant by 'people of Sulu have been displaced', is unclear. Internally displaced persons due to civil wars in this century may have been what the respondent was referring to. The respondent could not have been referring to minoritisation because, as mentioned previously, this has not occurred in Sulu. The quality of this respondent's comment, and his depth of understanding of the situation in Sulu, indicated his level of formal education. Because the question of formal education was not asked of the MNLF respondents—unlike the 306 respondents in Jolo in August 2008—the quality of comments is the only indication of formal educational level.

Written response 7 of 8 “Nos” to question 4. MNLF

Translation: *No, as I see it, we have experienced no good.*

Author's interpretation of translation: This respondent believes that the ARMM has not delivered anything of benefit to Sulu. A short decisive answer.

Written response 8 of 8 to question 4. MNLF

Translation: *No. If Sulu is still part of Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, there will be no peace. What Sulu wants is independence in Muslim Mindanao.*

Author's interpretation of translation: The respondent believed being one of the provinces in the ARMM has contributed to the unrest in Sulu. Independence was wanted for Sulu Province in Mindanao, but whether this was meant to be total independence or real autonomy under a part of a federalist system is not known.

Analysis of written responses to question 4. MNLF.

Although the question asked only if the respondents were happy being a part of the ARMM, the majority of respondents took advantage to express an opinion on other issues. Five respondents thought that being a part of the ARMM had contributed to Sulu's worsening situation, including conditions of conflict. By and large, most respondents saw no advantage in being included in the ARMM. As expected, independence for Sulu, in some form, was desired by the majority of respondents. This desire for 'independence' produced comments which were unexpected as it was assumed that the MNLF wanted Sulu to be an independent nation. However, although independence was wanted, the exact nature and form this should involve varied. Some respondents wanted to be 'independent' in Mindanao. This could only occur if an independent state was excised from the Island of Mindanao. Meaningful 'autonomy' could be achieved if there was a federalist system of government in the Philippines: a form of government not opposed by their Chairman, Nur Misuari.¹⁸ The underlying theme in all the written comments was that for peace and stability to be a part of Sulu's future, independence, in some needed to be granted to this province.

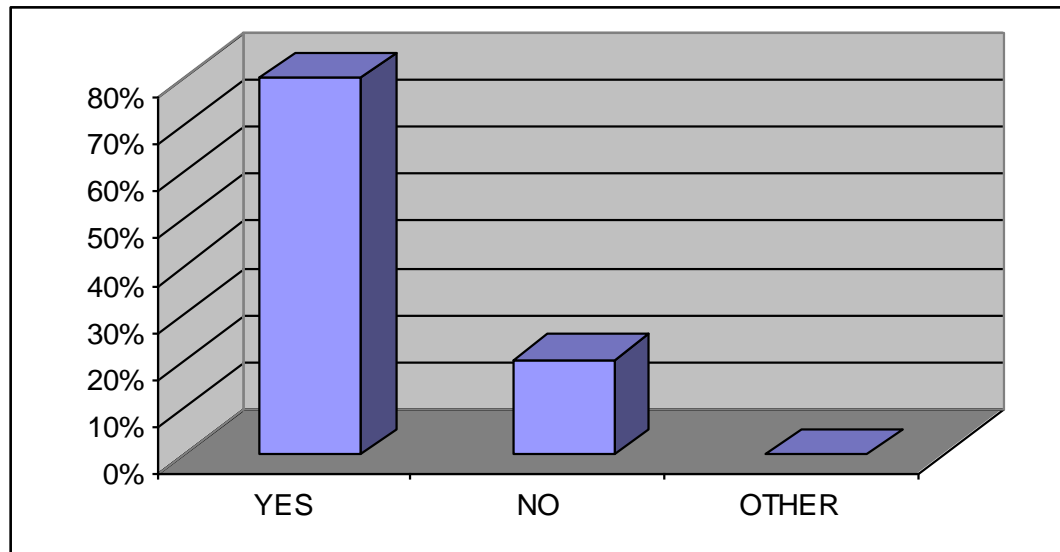
¹⁸ *Address of Professor Nur Misuari, op. cit.*

Question. 5. MNLF. Do you believe that the Arroyo Administration is using its domestic counterinsurgency policies in an attempt to discredit the MNLF?

Options: (a) Yes (b) No (c) Other, “please specify”

Graph 4.6. Domestic counterinsurgency policies as a tool used by the GRP to discredit the MNLF.

Response: N=30 (of 30) Yes. 80% No.20% Other.0.00%



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in November 2008. MNLF camp in Barangay Marang (Marang Village) in Indanan Municipality, Sulu Province

Analysis of the suggestion that the Arroyo Administration is using its domestic counterinsurgency policies to discredit the MNLF.

In “Question 5. MNLF”, of the five respondents who answered ‘No’ not one offered a comment. Moreover, as opposed to questions 1-4, which had written responses from 10 or more of the respondents, question 5 attracted only seven written comments, of which just three could be considered as addressing the question (these three respondents also submitted coherent answers to questions 1-4). The disappointing results of the written responses to this question may have been with translation difficulties. Like ‘insurgency’ the word ‘counterinsurgency’, does not have a Tausug equivalent. The translator had to substitute the Tausug words *Pag-atubang ha kahiluhalaan*, the English translation of which has various meanings, including ‘security’. Like so many

languages, exact translation in this case is impossible, again illustrating the limitations of interviewing remotely, and the constraints faced on this researcher.

4.9 MNLF operatives' written responses to question 5

Written response 1 of 7 “Yeses” to question 5. MNLF. (Do you believe that the Arroyo Administration is using its domestic counterinsurgency policies in an attempt to discredit the MNLF?)

Translation: *It could be that the young generation finds it to be useless in joining the MNLF*

Author's interpretation of translation: This was one of the less coherent comments given on this question.

Written response 2 of 7 “Yeses” to question 5. MNLF

Translation: *Yes, that's why until now we are in a state of disorder in our place.*

Author's interpretation of translation: This respondent may not have fully understood the question. He was obviously trying to convey the message that the blame for 'disorder' in Sulu lay with the Arroyo Administration.

Written response 3 of 7 :Yeses” to question 5. MNLF

Translation: *Yes. There is no hope and no development in Sulu under the Arroyo Administration.*

Author's interpretation of translation: This respondent's statement appeared to be a broad condemnation of the Arroyo Administration.

Written response 4 of 7 “Yeses” to question 5. MNLF

Translation: *What they have done is to just generate income by using the people/civilians who have nothing to do with it.*

Author's interpretation of translation: This was the first respondent to suggest that there is a correlation between the Arroyo Administration's domestic counterinsurgency exercises and internal revenue generation.

Written response 5 of 7 “”Yeses” to question 5. MNLF

Translation: *No respect for what had been agreed upon. And no truth in what has been talked about. However, even if the government lied, whatever they do they cannot defy, even if one person is planning. What they are doing now will one day ricochet onto them. Their (Phil. Government) treachery is very obvious. What has been discussed and agreed upon will fall into nothing, even if it had been talked about already.*

Author’s interpretation of translation: This was the first of the three respondents who, it would appear, had understood the question. Although this respondent ‘strayed’ a little from the original question, his comments nevertheless were important, insomuch as they gave an insight into the intense personal feelings of a domestic insurgent who vehemently believed in a cause; namely, liberation.

The intensity of the feeling portrayed in this respondent’s comment is reflected in his prediction that if the Arroyo Administration does not honour its commitments (the respondent may have been talking about the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement)¹⁹ it would have to take responsibility for any military action that was taken against the local population. The respondent further believed that the true situation in Sulu had been misrepresented (by the media, national government and/or others). He seemed to be inferring that all the talking so far had produced nothing of value or benefit to the Moros of the southern Philippines.

Exactly what the respondent meant by ‘*However, even if the government lied, whatever they do they cannot defy, even if one person is planning*’, is unclear to this researcher: and again translation may have been a factor. What is clear, however, is that this respondent had no faith in the Arroyo Administration, or indeed saw nothing to be gained by continued dialogue.

¹⁹ This respondent gave coherent answers to all the questions, indicating an understanding of all the major issues. The respondent signed his answers, and gave his name and military rank.

Written response 6 of 7 “Yeses” to question 5. MNLF

Translation: *Yes. Promises here and there, no assurances. However, even though they are intelligent there will always there will be an end to it all. Time will come, when what they are doing to us will return to them. It is obvious that they are fooling us. It had been agreed upon and talked about, but still the military are creating disorder.*

Author’s interpretation of translation: This was the second of the three domestic insurgent respondents who, it would appear, had understood the question. His intense feelings for the situation in his homeland was evident. However, some detail in his answer may have been lost in translation, or the result of “poor” handwriting (please refer to appendices D and F).

This respondent’s answer was similar to the answers given by respondent 5, in that reference was made to broken promises, and the threat of repercussions was made. The “disorder” created by the presence of the AFP in his homeland was also mentioned.

Written response to 7 of 7 “Yeses” question 5. MNLF

Translation: *Yes. The Phil. Government is insidious to the MNLF group. What they had agreed upon was useless. They lied. They fooled the people who are straight in the name of God. However, they will experience what the MNLF has experienced. We strive hard for truth. The Philippine government is treacherous.*

Author’s interpretation of translation: This was the last of the three domestic insurgent respondents who it appeared, superficially at least, to have understood the question. This respondent signed his answer, gave his name, and other personal details; he had no wish for anonymity. His poignant answer reflected an intense hatred for the Philippine Government; note the words ‘treacherous’ and ‘insidious’. There seemed to be a salient reminder of the degree to which the MNLF adhere to their religious faith, in his answer as this respondent made mention of ‘God’ noting that the people are straight in the name of God; their cause is just. He went on further to stress that his people ‘strive hard for truth’. Similar to respondents 5 and 6, this respondent also warned of the possible repercussions of broken government promises. This respondent’s answers to questions 1-4 also reflected similar frustrations, as well as his suspicions of the U.S. military intentions in Sulu.

4.10 Overall assessment of the MNLF interviews

When the analysis of the returned questionnaires was initiated, the frustrations and limitations of researching a war zone from a distance became obvious. The answers by these MNLF paramilitary operatives nonetheless generated valuable primary evidence, possibly for the first time in such an academic study. Notwithstanding that the assistance of local research facilitators, (translators, questionnaire distributors, and so forth) made every attempt to follow this researcher's instructions, it was not possible, nor was it expected, that the research facilitators would request respondents to expand on their answers. Therefore, this researcher had to work within the constraints imposed, and, this included the inability to cross-examine respondents. Having accepted these limitations, it became obvious when analysing some translated comments that a clarification of words and meaning was needed. Given that this was not possible, it became necessary in some instances for this researcher to assume or make an 'educated guess' on the respondents' feedback. These assumptions may have resulted in making this researcher appearing to be somewhat intrusive in the data analysis; that is, to suppose that this researcher would 'know' what the respondent may have answered when asked for clarification. However, given the 'obvious viewpoints' that most respondents exhibited to crucial questions, it was not all that difficult to make such guesses, with some degree of accuracy, of their possible positions.

The subjective views reflected in most responses, which were not surprising given the contentious and sensitive issues raised, did not lessen the value of this 'generated data'. In defence of the subjectivity shown by most respondents, it must be remembered that these paramilitary members of the MNLF would have in all likelihood seen military action against the AFP. Moreover, some may have been in the large MNLF camp in the village of Bitanag in Panamao Municipality which was attacked and destroyed by the AFP in April 2007. Subsequent events, including the destruction of 54 *barangays*, which followed the levelling of the MNLF camp in Bitanag, Panamao resulted in the displacement of approximately 8,000 families (over 60,000 persons).²⁰

²⁰ *A Tabang Mindanaw Study for Pagtabangan Basulta, op. cit.*

These events still would have been vivid in the memory of the respondents, as would the knowledge that the Philippine Military, which was responsible for the above mentioned events, had been trained and advised by U.S. Military Forces. Notwithstanding that the majority of respondents acknowledged that the U.S. Military has been responsible for some humanitarian assistance in Sulu, they nevertheless overwhelmingly believed that there was an ulterior motive behind this ‘kindness’ (the extent of the U.S. humanitarian assistance and civilian infrastructure building has been sited in Chapter 3, Table 3.2 of this dissertation, and is further discussed in Chapter 7 of this dissertation).

It has been suggested by this author that the respondents had been subjected to some form of ‘education’, ‘instruction’ or ‘briefing’, as a part of their training. This in itself is not unusual. As mentioned, the knowledge of issues such as awards to Nur Misuari, addresses to the United Nations and so forth would have been a part of the ongoing briefings which MNLF paramilitary operatives would have received. The 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement (arguably the most important peace agreement between the MNLF and the Philippine Government in 30 years) and the promise of security and financial guarantees which the MNLF had been offered by the signing of this peace agreement, was paramount in the answers of most respondents. The 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement was not always specifically mentioned by the respondents, but it was implied. For example, many respondents mentioned ‘being fooled by promises’, and ‘being lied to’. Moreover, over 73% of respondents believed that had the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement been fully implemented then Sulu would be now more peaceful and prosperous (see Graph 4.3). It should be remembered that the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement was designed to bring peace and prosperity to all of the Moros in the southern Philippines, not just in Sulu. However, because Sulu is the homeland of the MNLF, as well as the birthplace of its founder, this peace agreement had special significance. Coupled with the belief that the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement had not been fully implemented, and the broader ramifications that this produced, one of the more interesting findings of the survey was that a majority of respondents were unhappy with being a part of the ARMM.

It is possible that the respondents, who objected to being a part of the ARMM, may have been of the opinion that the MILF, which is in a majority in the other areas of the ARMM, may have in some way been partly responsible for the non-implementation of the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement. This argument may be seen to have some merit if it is remembered that the MILF has, since March 2003, been involved in its own peace negotiations with the Arroyo Administration. Although there is, at the time of this study, no open antagonism between the MNLF and the MILF, it is not unreasonable to suggest that each group is motivated by self-interest; that is, the interests of its own members. It is also not unreasonable to suggest that if the MILF, which represents the majority of the Moros in the southern Philippines, is successful in its current negotiations, which also involves issues of ancestral domain, then the MNLF and its 1996 Agreement will become redundant. This may, in part, explain why the majority of the MNLF respondents were uncomfortable with being a part of the ARMM. After all, Sulu Province, given its size and population relevant to the entire ARMM, is in a minority condition.

Question 5 asked respondents if they believed that the Arroyo Administration was using its domestic counterinsurgency policies to discredit the MNLF. The response was overwhelmingly in the affirmative (80%). It was mentioned in the above analysis that the Arroyo Administration may be using its domestic counterinsurgency policies to discredit the MNLF; but, the word ‘counterinsurgency’ may not have been familiar to some (if not the majority) of the MNLF respondents. Given that this may have been so, the MNLF respondents almost certainly would have understood the meaning of ‘discredit’. Leaving aside ‘counterinsurgency policies’, the words ‘discredit’, ‘MNLF’, and ‘Arroyo Administration’ would have been familiar to the respondents, and, the correlation between these three words would have been obvious. The respondents who answered ‘yes’, and gave supporting statements, were in the main critical of the Arroyo Administration. This criticism included predictions of retribution for past actions against the people of Sulu.

In summarising the various answers and comments proffered by the 30 MNLF paramilitary respondents, it is clear that the following seven factors and recommendations are all important.

Table 4.2. Factors and recommendations to be addressed from MNLF interviews.

1	Nur Misuari is still held in high esteem by the MNLF membership.
2	Peace can only be achieved if the “rights” of the Sulu people are recognised.
3	The 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement has yet to be fully implemented.
4	The AFP and the U.S. military must be withdrawn from Sulu Province.
5	All military action against the MNLF must cease.
6	It is desirable that Sulu should withdraw from the ARMM..
7	The contentious issue of “self rule” or “independence” in some form must be addressed.

Source: Survey questionnaire by this author, November 2008.

Given that there is MNLF animosity toward the Arroyo Administration and, for the most part, animosity and suspicion of the U.S. military presence in Sulu, and that the reasons given by the Arroyo Administration for the presence of the AFP in Sulu Province is to defeat domestic terrorist insurgency (ostensibly the ASG), then it was important that this research should ascertain the strength or otherwise of the ASG in Sulu Province. Chapter 5 assesses this issue.

Chapter 5.

The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in Sulu Province: a Critical Analysis.

This chapter primarily addresses central question 3 of this dissertation, that is: ‘does the numerically small presence of the ASG in the southern Philippines, particularly in Sulu Province where it can be also be argued that their existence is questionable, warrant the harsh military action being undertaken by the AFP in that particular area, and give legitimacy to the Arroyo Administration's counter-insurgency policies?’ This is not to say the ASG does not exist as a terrorist organisation in other areas of the southern Philippines, such as Basilan Province, and Zamboanga Province, which indeed it does. However, in an attempt to give an overall balance to the question of the strength or otherwise of the ASG in the southern Philippines, a detailed analysis of this organisation is undertaken in this chapter. Moreover, it is not possible to make a detailed analysis of the ASG in Sulu Province, which is the area researched in this dissertation, without looking at the ASG in its totality that is, as a terrorist organisation in the entire southern Philippines.

5.1 The ASG: A concise contemporary overview

The ASG under the leadership of its founder, Abdurajik Janjalani (1959-1998), might have, in the early to mid 1990s, been able to lay some claim to adhering to the original doctrines of *jihad*,¹ as outlined in the *Qur'an* (2.190). The original goal of the ASG was to establish an independent Islamic State in the southern Philippines which was free of Christian domination or influence, and as such *jihad* may have been seen as a legitimate tool to achieve that aim. However, the *Qur'an* (2.190) broadly states that when participating in *jihad*, women, children, the aged, and injured are to be respected. Furthermore, the destruction of livestock and fields is

¹ *Jihad*: may be seen as having some degree of legitimacy. That is, it may be seen as “protecting of the faith”.

not permitted, and to do so is to commit *hiraba*². Ironically *hiraba* is a crime of which the ASG is now accused by the MILF as well as the MNLF. There is little doubt that the ASG was seen as a fearful terrorist organisation in the late 1990s and the first 2-3 years of the 21st century, with its influence and presence being felt in Malaysia, the Sulu Archipelago provinces, as well as other provinces in Mindanao (especially Zamboanga). However, after it changed its strategy from military operations against the AFP, and to a lesser degree against the PNP, to the kidnapping and killing of civilians, support from the two other major Muslim paramilitary groups in the southern Philippines (the MNLF and the MILF), diminished. As Peter Sales has stated ‘whatever else, the Abu Sayyaf Group’s primary achievement—intentional or otherwise—has been to discredit the Islamic cause in the southern Mindanao’.³

If, as previously discussed, the Arroyo Administration’s intention in introducing Republic Act 9372, in 2007: ‘An act to secure the State and protect our people from terrorism’, was in part designed to destroy the ASG, and thereby eliminate one of the ‘terrorist groups’ in the Global War on Terror, then it was important that in this study to research the strength and the violent acts attributed to the ASG before the introduction of Republic Act 9372. If the strength and violent acts attributed to the ASG had been diminishing before the introduction of that Act, then the reason for its introduction has to be questioned. Chapter 6 of this study will attempt to query that. With the Arroyo Administration’s haste to introduce that Act in mind, it is worthwhile considering the following statements—some conflicting, and others concurring—from five renowned academics, two respected journalists, a researcher with a major international institute, and a postgraduate student with the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. All of the statements cited below, with one exception (Ugarte), were made prior to the introduction of Republic Act 9372.

Abuza stated in 2005: ‘they (ASG) were a well-armed criminal gang, but not an ideologically motivated political-religious organization. The label *terrorism* was

² *Hiraba*: can be described as a criminal act, perpetrated by an individual or a group of people causing public disruption or killing/s.

³ Sales, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

applied to them by both the U.S. and Philippine governments, but that had more to do with their brutality than their political agenda’---‘the ASG remains a very loose coalition of groups’---‘they have neither the discipline nor the command and control that the MILF has over its troops’.⁴

Sales claimed in 2006: ‘whatever else, the ASG is an outlaw band composed entirely of thugs and criminals. Any claims about commitments to a higher cause, like the assertion that it belongs in company with the MILF as an Islamist force in Mindanao is nonsense’.⁵

Rene Ciria-Cruz argued in 2002: ‘the Abu Sayyaf has just become a renegade bandit group, it’s not ideologically driven, it’s really just a pillage-and-plunder operation’--- ‘from the point of view of the purist fundamentalists in the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, the Abu Sayyaf leaders are culturally corrupt,---‘they are known for brutality but not suicidal sacrifice’.⁶

Victor Taylor stated the following in 2006:

the ASG in Sulu is a more complex phenomenon in the sense that it does not lend itself to the straightforward assessments made by government and military authorities regarding the group and its members. The ASG in Sulu is, first, different from the ASG in Basilan, and second, is not organized in the manner that the Basilan ASG was. Moreover, individuals associated with the ASG in Sulu are motivated by different objectives.⁷

Taylor goes on to state that ‘most incidents that occur in Sulu which at other times would have been attributed to bandits, kidnappers, and extortionists, are now attributed to the Abu Sayyaf’.⁸

⁴ Abuza, *op. cit.*, p.8.

⁵ Sales, *op. cit.*, p.3.

⁶ Ciria-Cruz, R, *Life during wartime: risky business in Mindanao*, 2002. Retrieved March 2009, http://www.sfbq.com/36/19/news_was.html

⁷ Taylor & Idjirani, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 51.

Herbert Docena (2007)⁹, commenting on an atrocity (beheadings) attributed to the ASG by the AFP in Jolo/Sulu in April 2007 wrote:

the Abu Sayyaf probably mentioned in more Philippine news reports these days than any other group or individual, when was the last time a reporter bothered to interview someone from this group? Given that, in Sulu, the Abu Sayyaf seems to be whoever the military claims it to be and given that those who are labelled Abu Sayyaf, being buried six feet under, could no longer contest the military's claims, did the media have any other independent source of information on the beheadings apart from the military?¹⁰

Malcolm Cook and Kit Collier contended in 2006: 'the Abu Sayyaf Group is a declining force facing a growing, foreign-supported counter-terrorism threat from government forces. The Abu Sayyaf would benefit greatly by attracting support from rejectionist MILF commanders,¹¹

Eusaquito P. Manalo (2004) suggested that: 'The Abu Sayyaf could not have survived 13 years of military pursuit without local support, ---'it exists where resistance to the state is deeply embedded'.¹²

Eduardo F. Ugarte (2008) opined:

their [the ASG] significance in the "War on Terror" (WOT) in the southern Philippines has been in dramatically inverse proportion to their numbers. Their core "membership" or number of participants has rarely been calculated at more than several hundred, yet their presence and activities----are cited by William Eckert, Command Sergeant Major of the---(JSOTF-P), as being among the key reasons for the deployment of the United States---(SOF) to the island in 2002.¹³

Ugarte went on to say 'we know for a fact that the ASG (Abu Sayyaf Group) on Sulu are struggling just to keep on surviving for year after year, without any

⁹ Herbert Docena is the chief researcher with "Focus on the Global South", an international policy research and advocacy institute, based in Bangkok.

¹⁰ Docena, H, *Philippines: fanning the flames of war*, 2007. Retrieved July 2008, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/IEO2Ae01.html

¹¹ Cook & Collier, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

¹² Manalo, E, *The Philippine response to terrorism: the Abu Sayyaf Group*, 2004. Retrieved March 2009, <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/manalo.pdf> (various pages).

¹³ Ugarte, *op. cit.*, p. 299.

steady supply... of finances,¹⁴ The conclusion of Ugarte's paper states 'contrary to government and media suggestions, the 'Abu Sayyaf' have by no means been the sole authors of kidnappings and other major criminal activities in the southern Philippines'.¹⁵

The above extracts were included in this study to highlight the diverse opinions that exist as to the strength, motivation, or indeed the very existence, of the ASG as a functioning and disciplined terrorist organisation. Interestingly, most authors appeared to think that the ASG was comprised of bandits, criminals, outlaws and so forth, who were undisciplined. Moreover, Taylor, Docena, and Ugarte questioned whether the ASG was in fact responsible for the reported violence attributed to it in the southern Philippines. To strengthen further the argument of whether the ASG actually exists as an organised terrorist group, one should consider the subjective comment contained in Text Box 5.1 below, also written by Herbert Docena.

'And yet, if one listens to the government and the media, the Abu Sayyaf is still everywhere and nowhere; everyone and no one. Everywhere because almost all "terrorist" incidents are still routinely blamed on the group. And yet nowhere because - despite more than fifty thousands troops based in the south running after them for more than ten years now, and despite the US military's help - the Abu Sayyaf continues to elude pursuit and continues to be cited as the justification for military offensives in the south, [and] for efforts to institute more repressive laws throughout the country.....almost all of those killed or arrested by the military as part of the anti-terror campaign are labelled Abu Sayyaf members. And yet seemingly no one, because - for all those arrested or killed - the Abu Sayyaf lives on and continues to be projected as, in the words of National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales, [by far the most dangerous group in the country today].'

Text Box 5.1. Critical comment of Herbert Docena: February 2006.

Source: Asia Times online, 25 February 2006, *When Uncle Sam comes marching in*,¹⁶

At this point, it is necessary to analyse the strength of the ASG leadership. Key leaders of the ASG who have been killed or are presumed dead are included in Table 5.1. As well, key leaders of the ASG who are alive or presumed to be alive, from 2005 to writing of this dissertation are included in Table 5.2. The names appearing in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 are/were considered to be the major or influential

¹⁴ Ugarte, *op. cit.*, p. 304.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Asia Times online, 25 Feb 2006, H. Docena, *When Uncle Sam comes marching in*. Retrieved February 2008, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast/Asia/HB25Ae04.html>

players in the ASG. Some researchers may question the inclusion of certain names, as well as the exclusion of others. However, the information presented by this author was obtained from primary sources and/or reliable secondary sources such as refereed publications by NGOs including Crisis Group International. The accuracy and reliability of the sources is assumed to be correct. For identification purposes, many of the names appearing in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 are common names or aliases used by those ASG operatives, not necessarily given names. The intention of including the detailed lists of key ASG leaders both alive and dead is to strengthen the argument put forward in central question 3 of this study that the ASG is a dwindling force, and the necessity for the harsh AFP military action, together with its excessive numbers in the Sulu Archipelago, is questionable. Together with this is the introduction of Republic Act 9372.

Table 5.1. Key leaders of the ASG: killed or presumed deceased, post-2001.

Year	Names
2002	Abu Sabaya
2003	Abdul Makim Edris. Mujib Susukan
2004	Hamsiraji Sali
2005	Ismin Sahiron. Allan Burlognatan (shot after escaping from Camp Crame). Tanakalun Lianson. Nadzmi Sabdulla: (aka. Nadzmi Abdulla)
2006	Sahiron Ismin. Khadafi Janjalani. Amilhamja Ajjjul.
2007	Abu Khalid. Abu Solaiman. Binang Sali. Jundam Jamalul. Abu Hubaida.
2008	Hadji Radi Upao. Faidar Hadjadi.

Source: Data compiled by author from primary and reputable secondary sources

Table 5.2. Key leaders of the ASG alive or presumed alive from 2005 to the writing of this dissertation.

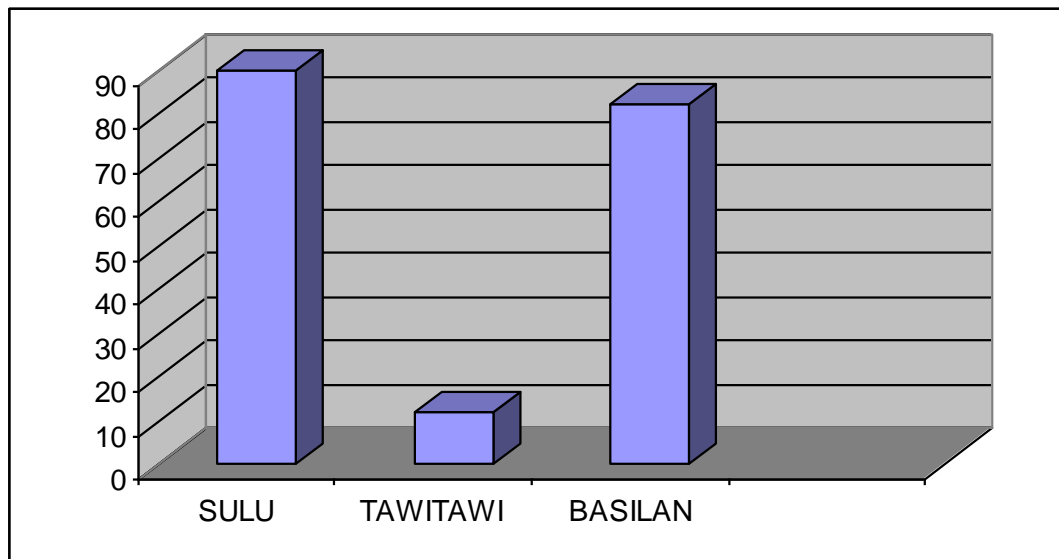
Year	Name
2005	Hajijul. Hadon Adak.
2006	Mubin Ibba <i>alias</i> Abu Black (escaped from Basilan jail 2004) Ghulam Mundas.
2007	Jul Aspi. Binang Sariul. Asman Wadjan. Jahid Susukan. Isnilon Hapilou. Radulan Sahiron (at the time of the writing of this dissertation Sahiron would have been 77. In June 2008 Sahiron was supposedly contacted by a ABS-CBN news group with the possibility of being interviewed).
2008	Albader Parad. Gumbahali Abu Jumdail. Jul Asman.
2009	Ammar Ben Usman <i>alias</i> Dulmatin (also believed to be a member of <i>Jl</i>)

Source: Data compiled by this author from primary and reputable secondary sources.

Graph 5.1, ‘ASG operatives reported killed by the AFP/PNP 2007’, is included in this study only as a guide to ASG casualties. Media reports on the numbers of ASG casualties prior to 2007 are scant, or not reliable. These 2007 numbers were taken from media reports which did NOT include the words ‘suspected Abu Sayyaf’ or ‘suspected Abu Sayyaf members or terrorists’. By far the majority of media reports on ASG casualties in 2007 included the word ‘suspected’. It appeared that after 2007 almost all ASG casualties or encounters with alleged ASG operatives were prefixed with ‘suspected’. As well, many media reports only gave an estimate of the number of ASG killed in any encounter, claiming that the ASG removed their dead. For example, the following report appeared in *The Sunday Times* on 11 August 2007: ‘Jolo brigade commander, Col. Anthony Supnet said that five Muslim rebels have also been confirmed killed but Supnet said that local residents told them that about 40 had been slain. He said the rebels removed the bodies of their comrades’.¹⁷

¹⁷ *Sunday Times*, 11 August 2007. *Thousands flee homes ahead of Jolo offensive.*

Graph 5.1. ASG operatives reported killed in the Sulu Archipelago provinces by the AFP/PNP, 2007 (not exhaustive)



Source: Data compiled by this author from media reports which excluded the word “suspected”. Numbers were, Sulu-86, Tawi-Tawi-9, and Basilan-79.

5.2 Survey respondents’ knowledge of counterinsurgency issues and the ASG

As previously mentioned, for the ASG to be fully understood it was necessary to examine the ASG in its area of greatest strength, the Sulu Archipelago. Question 12 of the August 2008 survey in Jolo/Sulu sought to ascertain whether respondents thought that the ASG had a presence in Sulu, because pivotal to President Arroyo’s domestic anti-terrorist policies was the existence of the ASG, especially there. Therefore the existence, or otherwise, of the ASG, as believed by the respondents was vital inasmuch that if they believed there was an ASG presence in their province then it would follow that they would support President Arroyo’s domestic anti-terrorist policies. Accordingly, Questions 6 and 7 of the survey endeavoured to find out from respondents what they knew about these policies, and if indeed they approved of them—the wording of the question did not include ‘anti-terrorist’, rather it used the term ‘counterinsurgency’, which is the term that most Philippine media outlets refer to the policies, especially when quoting Republic Act 9372. If the majority of respondents believed there was an ASG presence in their province—and it is fair to suggest that the ASG would not have been held in very high esteem—then as a result the Arroyo Administration’s domestic anti-terrorist or counterinsurgency

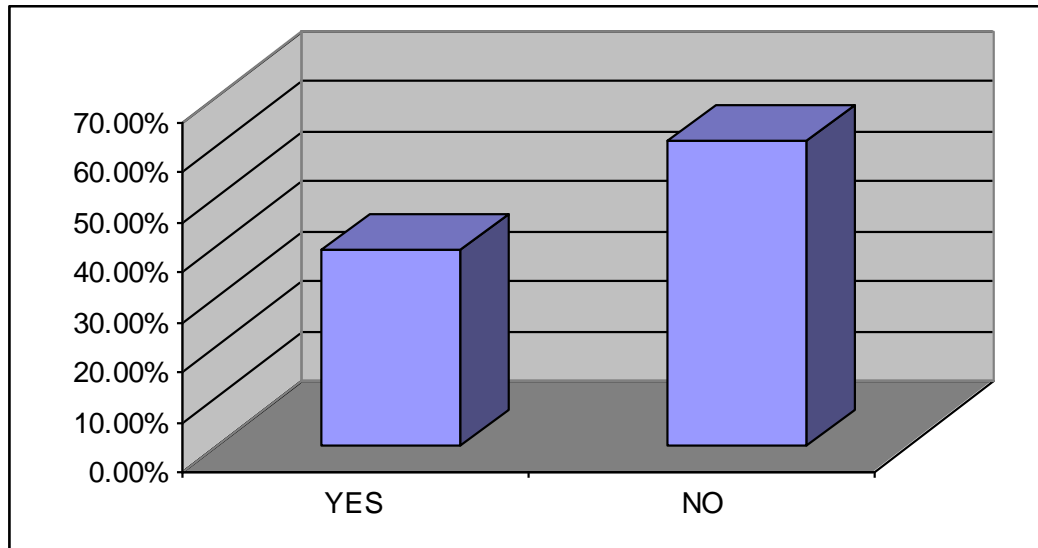
policies should have been supported. The findings for questions, 6, 7, and 12 of the survey were indeed interesting. An analysis of respondents' answers appears immediately after the Graph 5.4 in this chapter.

Question.6. Do you know anything about the Arroyo Administration's counterinsurgency policies? (Graph 5.2) Please note, this question did not include the adjective 'domestic'. It was assumed that respondents would identify counterinsurgency as a Philippine domestic issue. Also the Arroyo Administration did not have a counterinsurgency foreign policy at the time of the writing of this dissertation. However, as mentioned in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, the word 'counterinsurgency', does not have a Tausug equivalent, and as such the translator had to substitute the Tausug words '*Pag-atubang ha kahiluhalaan*': the English translation of which has various meanings, and includes the word 'security'.

Options: (a) Yes (b) No

Graph 5.2. Survey respondent's knowledge of counterinsurgency policies

Response: N=296 (of 306) Yes = 39.19% No =60.81%



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu (with the assistance of local research facilitators)-see Methodologies section in Chapter 1.

Analysis of knowledge of counterinsurgency policies

On 8 February 2007, the Philippine House of Representatives passed House Bill 4839, and, on 19 February 2007, The Philippine Senate passed Senate Bill 2137. As a consequence of both of these bills being passed, on 9 March 2007, they were consolidated to produce ‘Republic Act 9372’, which had the title ‘*An Act to Secure the State and Protect our People from Terrorism*’. This act came into force on 15 July 2007.

Republic Act 9372, Section 1, states ‘this Act shall henceforth be known as the Human Security Act of 2007’.¹⁸ Most Philippine media outlets when referring to the Human Security Act of 2007, also make reference to it being a counterinsurgency tool, and, although it does not mention the word counterinsurgency specifically, it does make mention of rebellion and insurrection. The significance of the Act is dealt with in detail in Chapter 6. “State Security. Memorandum Order No.37, and Republic Act 9372: A Critical Assessment”.

When posing question 6 to the Sulu respondents in August 2008, it was considered more likely that the respondents would be able to identify, or at least recognise, the phrase ‘counterinsurgency policies’ as opposed to the ‘Human Security Act of 2007’, or indeed ‘Republic Act 9372’. However, as mentioned, the word ‘counterinsurgency’ had no Tausag equivalent. This all added to further confusion and it was not surprising that over 60% of respondents (see Graph 5.2) claimed to know nothing about the Arroyo Administration’s counterinsurgency policies. Nevertheless, having established that approximately 40% of the respondents had some knowledge of the Arroyo Administration’s counterinsurgency policies, then it was necessary to ascertain the acceptance or otherwise of these policies. Question 7 of the survey gave the ‘yes’ respondents a chance to do that. An interesting response was received that is expanded on in ‘Analysis, and comment, of acceptance, or otherwise, of counterinsurgency policies’, immediately below Graph 5.3.

¹⁸ Republic Act 9372. Retrieved December 2008. http://www.ops.gov.ph/records/ra_no9372.htm

Question.7. If you answered yes, do you approve of them (Graph 5.3)

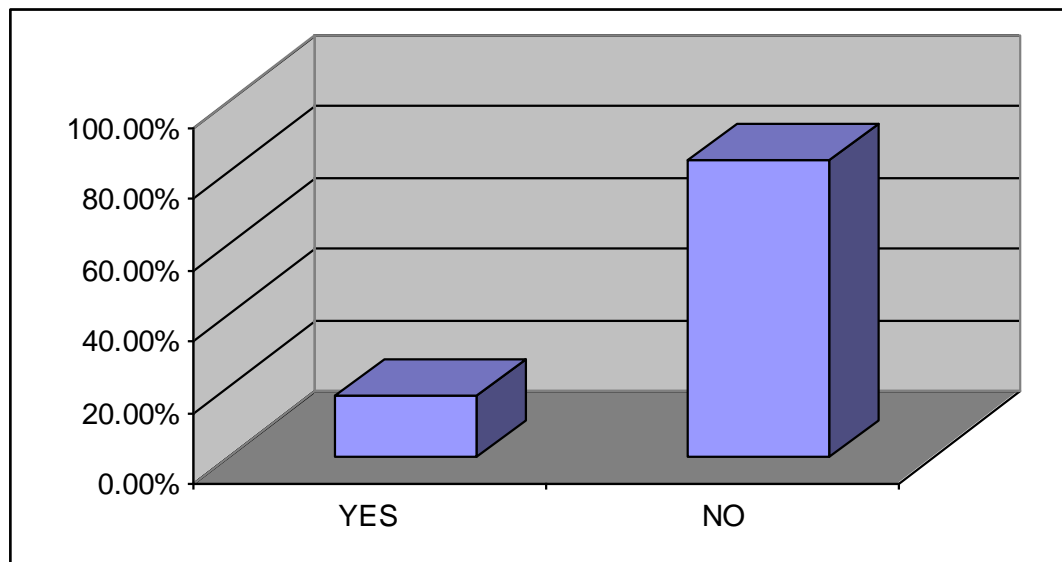
Options: Yes No

Response: N=184 of (306)

Interpretation of Graph 5.3: (see p. 161)

Graph 5.3. Survey respondent's approval of the Arroyo Administration's counterinsurgency policies

Response: N=184 of (306) Yes=16.85% No=83.15% (please note the number of respondents who now offered a definitive answer had increased from the original 116, which was 39.19% of the "Yes" responses to Question 6. The number of respondents now wishing to comment was 184.)



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu

Analysis of acceptance ,or otherwise, of counterinsurgency policies

As mentioned in ‘the analysis of knowledge of counterinsurgency policies’, counterinsurgency is a complex issue, and more easily understood by those who have a knowledge of domestic security and what that may involve. However, as in Question 11.1 (discussed in Chapter 3), the number of respondents who now wished to “expand” on their initial answer was similar. That is, more respondents were now prepared to offer some comments given that they had the opportunity to do so. Moreover, now that some respondents were given the opportunity to voice their disapproval of some policy initiatives of the Arroyo Administration then the

opportunity was seized upon. Whatever the reason, the response was overwhelmingly against the Arroyo Administration's counterinsurgency policies.

Having established that MNLF encounters with members of the AFP in Sulu were not of any major concern to these same respondents (see Chapter 4, Graph 4.1), and that the majority of these respondents knew nothing about the Arroyo Administration's counterinsurgency policies (see Graph 5.1), or when pressed for an answer overwhelmingly disapproved of these counterinsurgency policies, then it is important to bring into this analysis, at least briefly, why President Arroyo deemed it necessary to introduce Republic Act 9372.

If President Arroyo thought that insurgency had become such a threat to national security, why was it not considered a national security threat in her first term of office? It may be argued that the Moro cause in the southern Philippines had become of interest to the U.S. in its Global War on Terror, insomuch as any Philippine Islamic insurgency movement could have the backing of organisations such as Al-Qaeda. It may also be proposed that for the Arroyo Administration to continue receiving U.S. foreign aid, and military assistance, then the perception of taking a tough stance against 'home grown' Islamic insurgency in the Philippines had to be continued. Moreover, if Republic Act 9372 was specifically formulated to counter terrorist action in the Philippines, why was the 'New People's Army' (NPA, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines) not considered a terrorist organisation by the Arroyo Administration? After all, the U.S. in August 2002, listed the NPA as a terrorist organisation, and the European Union did likewise in November 2005. However, in September 2007, President Arroyo signed Amnesty Proclamation 1377, which saw the NPA given an amnesty against the crime of rebellion if in the pursuit of political beliefs.¹⁹ This is in sharp contrast to the 'treatment' given to the MNLF Chairman, Nur Misuari, who was charged with rebellion in early 2002.

¹⁹ *Philippine Star*, 08 September 2007, *GMA signs amnesty proclamation for communist rebels*. Retrieved June 2008, <http://www.newsflash.org/2004/02/pe/pe004248.htm>

Unfortunately, the answers supplied by respondents to survey question 7 did not produce the results which may have been expected had the Tausag language an exact equivalent of the English word “counterinsurgency”. In hindsight, the term ‘counterterrorism’ may have been more easily recognisable by respondents. Nevertheless, the salient phrase in central question 3, ‘give legitimacy to the Arroyo Administration’s counterinsurgency policies’, appears to have been rejected by the majority of respondents.

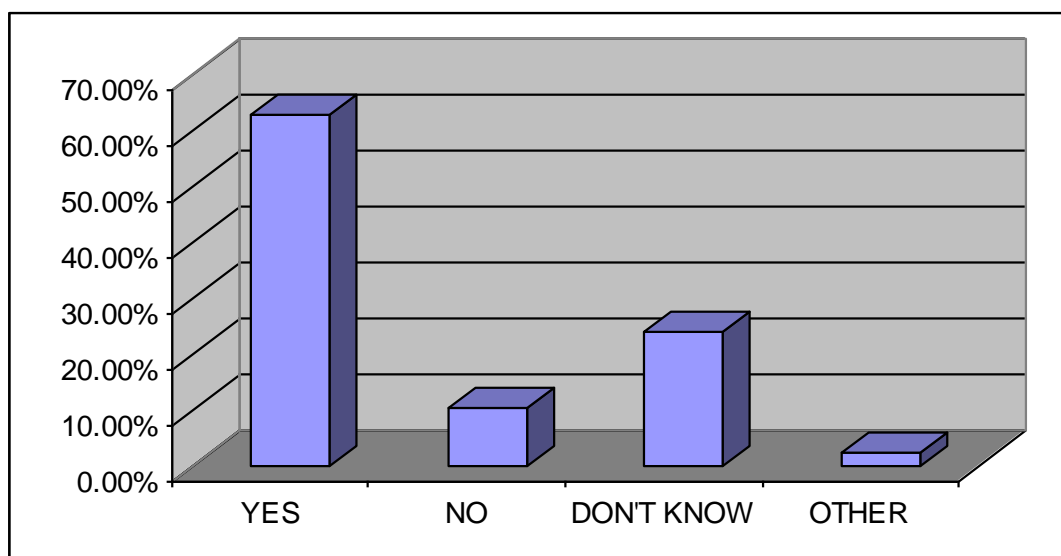
As stated earlier in this chapter, it is believed that the existence of the ASG in the southern Philippines was one of the motivating reasons for the introduction by the Arroyo Administration of Republic Act 9372. With that in mind, it was important to ask the Sulu respondents if they believed that the ASG had a presence in their province. This was done in survey question 12. It should be noted that the question put to respondents was only if they ‘believed’ there was a presence of the ASG in their province, not whether they approved or indeed were fearful of the ASG.

Question.12. Do you believe that the Abu Sanyaf Group has a presence in your province?

Options: Yes No Don’t Know Other (please specify)

Graph 5.4. ASG: belief of a presence in Sulu Province

**Responses: N=302 (of 306) Yes =62.91% No=10.60% Don’t Know=24.17%
Other=2.32%**



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author in August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu

Analysis of Abu Sayyaf Group: belief in a presence in Sulu Province

Before beginning the analysis of responses from Question 12, it needs to be remembered that this question only asked about the ASG in Sulu Province. A different graph of percentages may have been forthcoming if the question had been about the existence of the ASG in the Sulu Archipelago, or indeed the entire southern Philippines. For example, consider the following report which appeared in the *International Herald Tribune* on 19 August 2007: ‘Basilan’s congressman and former governor, Wahab Akbar, said this month that 80 percent of Muslims in Basilan supported Abu Sayyaf.’ However, in the same report, Abhoud Syed Lingga, the Chairman of the Bangsamoro People’s Consultative Assembly, was reported as saying ‘a more accurate way to put it might be that 80 percent tolerate the presence of the Abu Sayyaf on an island that had always been racked by lawlessness and saddled by poverty’.²⁰

Given that ASG activities and their reported atrocities in the southern Philippines have had extensive Philippine media coverage over the last decade, why then did more than one in every three respondents in Sulu claim not to know, or indeed deny the existence of this terrorist organisation? A partial answer to this question may lie in a comment from one of the respondents (see Text Box 5.2):

‘The gov’t says it is the ASG. But local people believe that these are common bandits. It is hard to tell whether those causing trouble are truly ASG or just ordinary criminals. The gov’t has poured millions to fighting the ASG since 2001 and claimed they have captured all of them, but then, the kidnappings and other crimes continue. So, you begin to wonder what the gov’t has done to provide security for the people? It seems that it has created more insecurities because of its inability to suppress the presence of what it claims to be ASG. The people’s trust in the gov’t has been lost.’

Text Box 5.2. Selective respondent answer: verbatim with no grammatical or spelling corrections.

²⁰*International Herald Tribune*, 19 August 2007, *Philippines overruns base of Abu Sayyaf militants*”, Retrieved April 2009, <http://carlosconde.com/2007/08/20/philippines-overruns-base-of-abu-sayyaf-militants/>

Source: Survey questionnaire by this author, August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu. Text included after respondent answered ‘other (please specify)’.²¹

The detailed comment above closely resembles similar ones from informants and key players in the peace processes in Sulu Province who are known to this author (some of these comments and assessments from the informants are included in the main body of this chapter). The remainder of the ‘other (please specify)’ respondents who proffered a comment believed that the ASG is an ‘invention’ of the AFP, giving legitimacy to extra funding for the AFP by the Arroyo Administration. The idea of the ASG being an ‘invention’ of the AFP, in Sulu Province only, is nothing new, and has also been suggested before in articles and papers critical to the military ‘occupation’ of Sulu Province, some of which will be covered later in this chapter.

5.3 The ASG in the context of counterinsurgency policies, and conflicting numbers.

The following statement by Philippine Defence Secretary, Angelo T. Reyes was made whilst speaking at the regular *Kapihan sa Manila* forum²² at the Manila Hotel in October 2001: ‘*The military expects to neutralize the Abu Sanyaf before the year ends*’²³: Almost six years later, and after hundreds of deaths, including members of the AFP, confirmed and suspected ASG operatives, and innocent civilians, Republic Act 9372 was introduced. If Republic Act 9372 was designed to eliminate terrorist insurgency and associated criminal actions, then the presence of the ASG in the southern Philippines, as previously stated, would have been one of the catalysts for its introduction. After all, the Arroyo Administration publicly considered the ASG to be the most lethal terrorist organisation in the southern Philippines. With that in mind, it is all too simplistic to suppose that the Arroyo Administration thought that the ASG offered the only viable threat to national security and, as such, it was necessary to introduce Republic Act 9372 in all its complexity, to eliminate this small group of terrorists. The possible rationale for the introduction of Republic Act

²¹ This survey respondent is an international author and critic of the Arroyo Administration, and is also known to this author. The respondent’s name is suppressed here for reasons of confidentiality.

²² The *Kapihan sa Manila* is the Philippines original and longest running media forum.

²³ *Manila Bulletin*, Tuesday, 30 October 2001, p. 1.

9372 would appear to be much more complex, and is an issue that is dealt with in detail in Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

Interestingly, the ASG was estimated by the Office of the Deputy Chief-of-Staff for Intelligence of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (see Graph 5.5 page 163) to total only 430 members at the time of the introduction of Republic Act 9372. Furthermore, this figure of 430 operatives includes all members in Sulu, Basilan, Zamboanga, and other southern Philippine provinces which claim that they have an ASG presence. If, as stated, the motivating reason for the enactment of Republic Act 9372 was the presence of terrorists in the southern Philippines, and the ASG in particular, then it is important to calculate ASG numbers from data issued by other sources, not just the Office of the Deputy Chief-of-Staff for Intelligence of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Graph 5.6 (page 168) gives ASG estimates from the Office of the Deputy Chief-of-Staff for Intelligence of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Graph 5.6 also compares ASG numbers compiled from the “Office of the Deputy Chief-of-Staff for Intelligence of the Armed Forces of the Philippines”, the “Global South Report”,²⁴ as well as selected figures from “Balik-terrorism: the return of the Abu Sayyaf”.²⁵ The ASG numbers from “Focus on the Global South”, just mentioned, were compiled from the passage in Text Box 5.3 (page 167). To be able to quantify further the ASG in Text Box 5.3, expressions such as ‘non-functional’, ‘null and void’, and ‘no longer resuscitate itself’ were shown as zero, whereas the term ‘not likely to be able to launch any offensive’, was represented by the nominal figure of 25. The years 2002, 2003, and 2004 were not included in the Office of the Deputy Chief-of-Staff for Intelligence of the Armed Forces of the Philippines report; however, these years are included in the estimates from the ‘Focus on the Global South’ report. The figures used to estimate numbers from the ‘Focus on the Global South’ report extract are bolded, and underlined: Table 5.3 (page 168) lists the references exactly as they appeared in this report. It is worth noting that the AFP report does not quote sources, whereas the ‘Focus on the Global South’ report does quote sources.

²⁴ Focus on the Global South, *On-the-job training: are US soldiers engaged in actual combat in the Philippines?*. Retrieved March 2008, <http://focusweb.org/on-the-job-training-are-us-soldiers-engaged-in-actual-combat-in-the-philipp.html?Itemid=93>

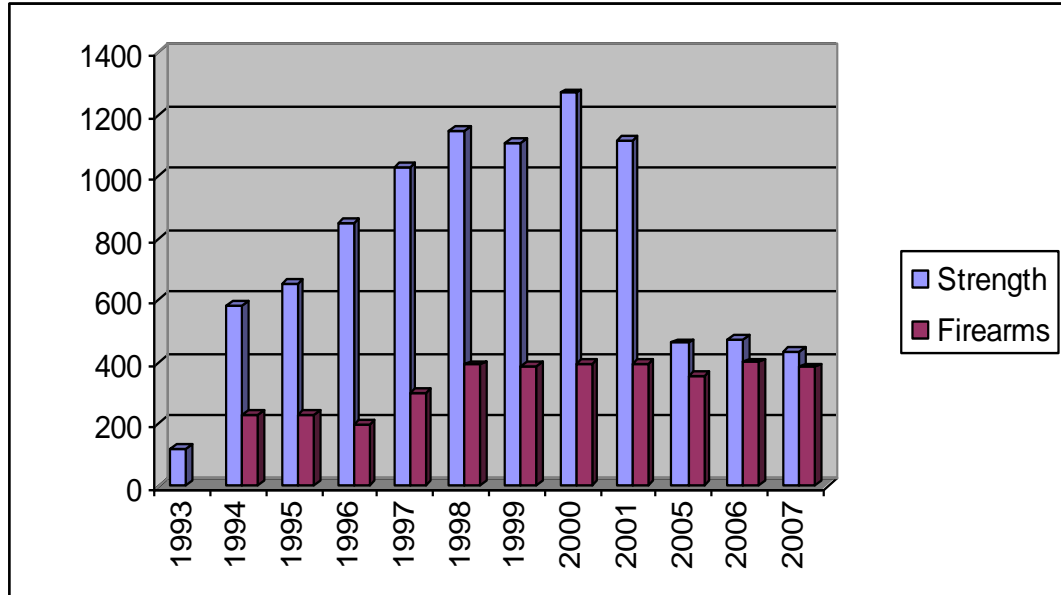
²⁵ Abuza, *op. cit.*, various pages.

In December 2001, the chief military commander in the South said there were only **80** members.[18] A Department of Defense (sic) report in late 2002, after the deployment of Americans, put the number at **250**, down from **800** in 2001. A few months after, just as the government had announced the deployment of US troops to Sulu, the military chief of staff said a review of military documents showed that the membership is actually bigger, closer to **500**.[19]Near the end of the US deployment to Basilan, US Army Brig Gen Donald Wurster remarked, "The Abu Sayyaf are **non-functional** as an organization." [20] At this time, Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio Bunye was saying, "It is widely acknowledged that the training, advice and assistance we received in Basilan [from the US] were critical factors that led to the defeat of the Abu Sayyaf there." [21] A senior US diplomat was quoted by the New York Times as saying that the Abu Sayyaf is "practically **null and void**." (this report was in 2003¹) [22] In May 2004, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, triumphantly said that the Abu Sayyaf "can **no longer resuscitate itself** under other guises or names." [23] As of June 2004, a government report states that the group counts only **508** members, down from **1,300** in 2001. [24] In August 2005, just as certain military officials were blaming Abu Sayyaf members for a spate of bombings in the South, newly installed Army chief Maj. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon said, "We are on full offensive and the Abu Sayyaf are **not likely to be able to launch any offensive** that could inflict harm to our people." [25]¹

Text Box 5.3. Focus on the Global South, ASG numbers, cited in Graph 5.6.

Source: "Focus on the Global South" *On-the-job training: are US soldiers engaged in actual combat in the Philippines?*²⁶

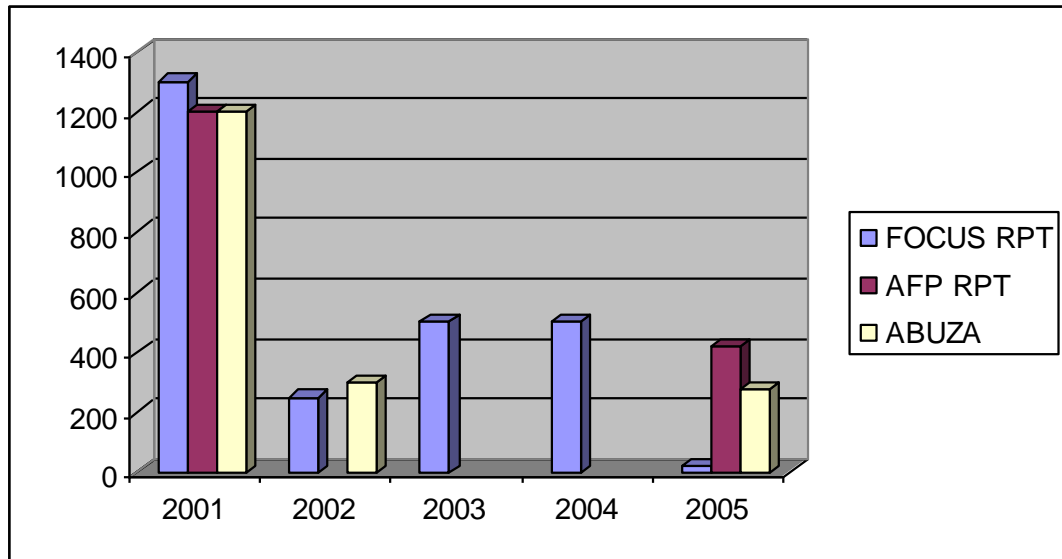
Graph 5.5. Estimated strength of the ASG in the entire southern Philippines 1993-2007 (included is the estimate of firearms).



Source: Office of the Deputy Chief-of-Staff for Intelligence of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Graph 5.6. Comparison of ASG numbers 2001 to 2005 (inclusive): Focus on the Global South, AFP report, and Abuza.

²⁶ Focus on the Global South, *On-the-job training, op. cit.*, p. 33.



Sources: Focus on the Global South, “*On-the-job training: are US soldiers engaged in actual combat in the Philippines?*”. Office of the Deputy Chief-of-Staff for Intelligence of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Abuza 2005, “*Balik-terrorism: the return of the Abu Sayyaf*”.

Table 5.3. Reference list for Text Box 5.3, as transposed from Focus on the Global South.

18	<i>New York Times</i> , 30 December 2001, cited in Shalom
19	B. Garcia, "Claiming firm proof of Al-Qaeda ties, US gears up for Jolo," Associated Press, 21 February 2003; "US troops may fight in Philippines", CNN.com, 20 February 2003.
20	John Hendren, "Deeper US Role in Asia Urged," <i>Los Angeles Times</i> , 5 June 2002.
21	<i>Philippine Daily Inquirer</i> , 17 February 2003.
22	Raymond Bonner, "Philippine Camps are Training Al-Qaeda's Allies, Officials Say," <i>New York Times</i> , 31 May 2003.
23	Quoted in Steven Rogers, "Manila must counter the return of Abu Sayyaf," <i>International Herald Tribune</i> , 21 May 21 2004.
24	Roel Pareno, "2,000 Sulu folk flee fighting," <i>Philippine Star</i> , 15 November 2005.
25	Dona Pazzibugan, "New Army chief vows to get elusive Abu Sayyaf leader," <i>Philippine Daily Inquirer</i> , 18 August 2005.

Source: Focus on the Global South, *On-the-job training: are US soldiers engaged in actual combat in the Philippines?*²⁷

Graph 5.5 would appear not to give a true indication of the strength of the ASG. As mentioned, there were no figures for ASG numbers for the years 2002, 2003, and 2004 in the report by the Office of the Deputy Chief-of-Staff for

²⁷ Focus on the Global South, *On-the-job training*, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

Intelligence of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. This is indeed puzzling, as during this period two of the worst atrocities attributed to the ASG were committed. In March 2003 the Davao International Airport was bombed, resulting in the deaths of 21 people and the wounding of another 148, and, in February 2004, Superferry 14 sank after an explosion which killed 116 people. Both incidents were originally blamed on other groups, such as the MILF, in the case of the Davao International Airport bombing. The ASG did claim responsibility for these crimes at the time, but for reasons unknown were disbelieved. However, the ASG, at the time of the writing of this dissertation, is now believed by many to be responsible for both of these terrorist actions. Moreover, in the case of the ‘Superferry 14 incident’, Redendo Cain Dellosa, alias Hakid Akmal, was arrested later in 2004, and it was reported that he had admitted to planting the bomb on the ferry.²⁸

If indeed the ASG was responsible for the two major incidents mentioned above, then it is not unreasonable to propose that the Office of the Deputy Chief-of-Staff for Intelligence of the Armed Forces of the Philippines would have been deeply involved in the investigation. Furthermore, having looked at the possibility of ASG involvement, then estimates of ASG numbers would have been made. Notwithstanding the official AFP omissions from 2002 to 2004, it would appear that the ASG is a mystery when it comes to actual strength. In Graph 5.6, the only year that there appeared to be a consensus of numbers of ASG operatives was 2001.²⁹ The numbers in the years after 2001 offer little or no credibility or comparability, for instance the ASG in 2005 was estimated somewhere between 25 and just over 400.

Of interest also is the estimate of firearms held by the ASG, as calculated in the Office of the Deputy Chief-of-Staff for Intelligence of the Armed Forces of the Philippines report and shown in Graph 5.5. The number of firearms had remained virtually static since 1998, and at times the estimate of ASG operatives to firearms was a ratio of 3:1. The methodology for these estimates of the number of ASG firearms is unknown, and this in turn raises the question of how can a “terrorist” be a “terrorist” if he is unarmed?

²⁸ Abuza, *op. cit.*, p. 36

²⁹ This is consistent with other figures from different sources prior to 2001.

With the above in mind, it would appear that the ASG in the southern Philippines is an enigma. Indeed, the presence or otherwise of the ASG could very well be seen as a ‘convenient presence’, inasmuch as it gives legitimacy to having U.S. troops in the southern Philippines. This assumption, albeit somewhat subjective, is dealt with in detail in Chapter 7 of this dissertation: ‘United States Involvement in Philippine Domestic Counterinsurgency Policies and Military Action’.

5.4 The demise of ASG influential members.

One day after the after the AFP announced the death in Sulu of Abu Solaiman on 15 January 2007, who was the purported leader of the ASG in Sulu Province, President Arroyo issued a media statement in which she claimed that the ASG ‘core of leaders’ was now reduced to only five: Albader Parad, Jahid Susukan, Asman Wadjan, Binang Sariul, and Abduwa.³⁰ At the time of the writing of this dissertation, Albader Parad was alive and engaging in criminal activity somewhere in Sulu. It was reported in the *South China Morning Post* on 13 July 2009 that the Vice-Governor of Sulu Province, Nur-Ana Sahidulla, had negotiated with Parad on the release of an Italian Red Cross worker, Eugenio Vagni, who had been held captive, in Sulu for almost six months.³¹ Whether Parad was identifying himself at that time as being a part of the ASG is unknown, Albader Parad’s status is further discussed later in this chapter. Thus, whether Albader Parad is the nominal or titular head of the ASG in Sulu is/was questionable. However, the AFP stationed in Sulu, the media in general, and President Arroyo have no doubt that he is/was leading the ASG there.

President Arroyo’s claim that Jahid Susukan, Asman Wadjan, Binang Sariul, and Abduwa are ‘core leaders’ in the ASG is interesting as well as questionable. If indeed Susukan, Wadjan, Sariul, and Abduwa are core leaders in the ASG, then their influence must be, at the best, miniscule. To date, the only terrorist mentioned by President Arroyo, with the exception of Albader Parad, to be identified by this researcher is Abduwa. Research has shown that Abduwa reportedly surrendered to a

³⁰ *Manila Times*, 19 January 2007. p. 1.

³¹ *South China Morning Post*, 13 July 2009. p. A7, *Militant’s hostage savours freedom*

Lt. Parina of the 26th Special Forces Company of the AFP in October 2000 in Maimbung Municipality, Sulu Province.³²

Also, President Arroyo's claims of elimination of key ASG operatives is nothing new. In the past she has made statements about ASG casualties which were found to be totally untrue and had to be retracted. For example, in June 2001 she made a press statement claiming that Khadafi Janjalani had been killed and Aldam Tilao, alias Abu Sabaya, had been seriously injured in a clash with the AFP.³³ Furthermore, President Arroyo's desire to eliminate the ASG in other areas of the Sulu Archipelago, and to a lesser degree Zamboanga, have led to her issuing statements which could have been seen as 'panicking'. In February 2003 she gave the AFP 90 days to 'end the threat posed by the Abu Sayyaf Muslim rebel group' or those 'commanders who failed to perform would be replaced'.³⁴

The ASG, as mentioned, are on the enemy combatant list in the U.S. Global War on Terror. As well, the Arroyo Administration has classified the ASG as an internal terrorist organisation. However, for a terrorist organisation, or for that matter an insurgency group to be effective, then they have to have competent leaders. And these leaders have to be able to make correct strategic decisions and ensure that morale and discipline are maintained in their organisations. With that in mind, both the U.S. and the Philippine Administrations sought to eliminate the leaders of the ASG. Accordingly, both the U.S. Bush Administration and the Philippine Arroyo Administration posted rewards for the arrest or confirmed deaths of the ASG leaders. Money it seemed was no impediment to the Bush Administration. However, it appeared to be a concern for the Arroyo Administration. Consider the following; first, the U.S. reward in Figure 5.1:

³² *Manila Bulletin*, 17 October 2000. Retrieved September 2009, <http://www.e.borneo.com/news/s539.shtml>

³³ *Peoples Daily*, 3 June 2001. Retrieved February 2009, http://english.people.com.cn/english/200106/03/eng20010603_71641.html.

³⁴ BBC NEWS, 28 February 2003. Retrieved December 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/2808223.stm>



Figure 5.1. Members of the ASG wanted by the U.S. Government.

Source: Origin unknown. Circa 2001-2002. (It is estimated that this wanted poster was produced between September 2001 and June 2002). Copy forwarded to this researcher by informant in Mindanao.

Figure 5.1 shows a number of ASG “terrorists” who were on the U.S. wanted list. Note the USD 5 million reward offered. The only three important ASG ‘terrorists’ not included, and believed alive at that time were Radulan Sahiron, Albader Parad, and Binang Sali. All the ASG ‘terrorists’ appearing in this wanted poster, at the time of the writing of this dissertation, are either dead or have not been seen for a number of years. Details of their deaths or disappearance are as follows:

Abu Sabaya: killed by members of the AFP on 21 June 2002, off the coast of Sibucu in Zamboanga del Norte. Sabaya, who was born Aldam Tilao, was 39 years at the time of his death.

Hamsiraji Sali: killed by members of the AFP on 08 April 2004 in Basilan Province. Three Filipino civilians shared the USD 1 million reward on 25 October 2004.

Khadafi Janjalani: killed in October 2006 (although the exact date may be a little later: DNA testing confirmed the identity but not the exact date of death). Khadafi Janjalani was 31 years at the time of his death.

Abu Solaiman: killed by AFP Monday 15 January 2007, Talipao Municipality, Sulu Province. Solaiman was born Jainal Antel Sali Jr., He was 42 years at the time of his death.

Isnilon Hapilon: reportedly last seen July 2007 with MILF members in an encounter with Philippine Marines in Basilan Province. In this encounter 10 Philippine Marines were beheaded, an act usually attributed to the ASG. The reported sighting of Hapilon may be seen as convenient insomuch as the ASG and not the MILF could be blamed for the beheadings. The United States Department of State has a reward of USD 5 million for the apprehension, death, or conviction of Hapilon.

In June 2007 four citizens of Jolo, the capital of Sulu, shared USD 10 million for the deaths of Janjalani and Solaiman (USD 10 million was, at that time, equivalent to approximately 600 million Philippine pesos). This reward was made on behalf of the U.S. Government by the U.S. Ambassador, Kristie Kenney at a ceremony in Jolo. Of the three other important ASG operatives not appearing on the wanted poster, Radulan Sahiron was reportedly captured in 2005, but this claim was subsequently rescinded by the Arroyo Government. There have been no reports of sightings of Sahiron for a number of years, although he is still thought to be alive. If indeed Sahiron is still alive he would have been 77 years old at the time of the writing of this dissertation. Albader Parad remains somewhat of a mystery, insomuch that he is credited with being the leader of the ASG in Sulu Province, a claim that at the time of the writing of this dissertation has not yet been verified. Binang Sali was killed by members of the AFP on 10 January 2007 in Patikul, Sulu Province.

Second, as opposed to the wanted poster issued by the U.S. Government (Figure 5.1) which only had five people, the wanted poster, below, (Figure 5.2) issued by the Philippine Government had considerably more. Both posters do not specifically refer to the wanted men as ASG members, only as terrorists. Therefore, it is interesting to compare these two wanted posters in the context of known ASG members. In the poster issued by the U.S. Government the five operatives, Sabaya, Sali, Janjalani, Solaiman, and Hapilon, were certainly members of the ASG. The

poster issued by the Philippine Government does not include Sabaya or indeed Solaiman; although it may very well be that it was issued post-21 June 2002, the date that Sabaya was killed by the AFP off the coast of Zamboanga del Norte. Also, the poster has a number of so called “terrorists” who this researcher was not able to identify as members of the ASG. It is more than likely that the majority of these unnamed terrorists were nothing more than criminals and bandits who were taking advantage of the unrest in the Sulu Archipelago, or other southern Philippine provinces, to pursue their criminal endeavours.



Figure 5.2. Suspected members of the ASG wanted by the Philippine Government.

Source: Google images. At <http://cache.daylife.com/imageserve>

5.5 Distorted and diminishing ASG criminality.

The argument that the existence of the ASG is convenient inasmuch as all “terrorist” actions and crimes, especially in the southern Philippines, can be attributed to it is a view which is held by many academics, including Soliman Santos: a Filipino lawyer, peace advocate and legal scholar, and Herbert Docena: a research associate at Bangkok’s, ‘Focus on the Global South’. Consider the following two

statements: (1) Soliman Santos wrote in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 24 January 2008: ‘the Abu Sayyaf has long been snatched from the New People’s Army (NPA) the ‘honor’ of being the ‘usual suspects’ in every blast or bombing plot in this country’;³⁵ (2) In March 2006, Docena, writing for Focus on the Global South, stated ‘almost all of the Abu Sayyaf’s leaders have now been killed. The ones that remain are those leaders and factions that are more political than criminal and which reportedly objected to the kidnapping operations’.³⁶ The statements by Santos and Docena help to strengthen the assertion relevant to central question 3 of this dissertation that the ASG is numerically small in the southern Philippines, or questionable in Sulu Province. In 2009 this author had a journal paper peer reviewed and published internationally. The publication was entitled *The Abu Sayyaf: terrorism in Sulu Province, Republic of Philippines, or a convenient presence?* and follows closely the assertions of both Santos and Docena. Text Box 5.4 transposes, in part, the findings of the research.

This paper has attempted to address the central questions of whether the Abu Sayyaf actually exists in Sulu and whether the GRP with the assistance of the AFP, and supported by U.S. military personnel are using the Abu Sayyaf *label* as a convenient excuse to pursue domestic counterinsurgency policies as well as gain electoral advantage. With that in mind there is no doubt that violence in Sulu has increased since 2001. Whether this has been as a result of opportunities taken by bandits under the guise of defending Islamic beliefs, or a belief in what some may call *justifiable* insurgency, has yet to be determined. However what has been determined is that the number of AFP personnel in Sulu is disproportionate to the alleged number of Abu Sayyaf members in that province..... Moreover, it has also been determined that U.S. forces engaged in operations in Sulu are there as part of the *Global War on Terror* having listed the Abu Sayyaf as enemy combatants. What has not been established is a credible threat to the U.S. by the alleged 200 or so Abu Sayyaf members in Sulu Province.

Text Box 5.4. Bob East, *The Abu Sayyaf: terrorism in Sulu Province, Republic of Philippines, or a convenient presence?* 2009.

Source: Journal of *Globalisation for the Common Good*, ISSN 1931-8138: Spring 2009.³⁷

³⁵ S. Santos, cited in E. F. Ugarte, *The phenomenon of kidnapping in the southern Philippines*, 2008, pp. 296-297.

³⁶ Asia Times online, 25 Feb 2006, *op. cit.*

³⁷ B. East, *The Abu Sayyaf: terrorism in Sulu Province, Republic of Philippines, or a convenient presence?* *Globalisation for the Common Good*, 2009: p. 13. Retrieved October 2009, <http://lass.calumet.purdue.edu/cca/jcgc/2009/sp09/jcgc-sp09-east.htm>

To further understand the criminality of the ASG in the southern Philippines it is important to examine and chronologically categorise (see Table 5.4) all major crimes ‘positively attributed to the ASG’ since its inception, which is believed to be in 1990-1991. By chronologically doing so it is possible to ascertain whether their criminality has risen, reached a plateau, or indeed fallen. Only those crimes which have more than five victims, killed, injured, or kidnapped, are categorised.³⁸ There is an exception to the ‘positively attributed to the ASG’ in the incidents recorded in 2007. An explanation for the inclusion of these events in 2007 is given, although two of the events are not included in the total for that year. To illustrate the crimes attributed to the ASG more easily graph 5.7 follows Text Box 5.5.

There were kidnappings in 2008 and 2009 which the media and the AFP attributed to the ASG. They were: an ABS-CBN television crew in June 2008 in Sulu; two academic journalists, Milet Mendoza and Espie Hupida in September 2008 in Basilan; and three Red Cross workers in April 2009 in Sulu. All were eventually freed (as previously mentioned, the last being in July 2009). The kidnapping of the three Red Cross workers was certainly attributed to Albader Parad. However whether he was still identifying as being in the ASG is unclear. Interestingly, major crimes ‘positively attributed to the ASG’ have all but disappeared since the killing of two of the major leaders of the ASG, Khadafi Janjalani in late 2006, and Abu Solaiman in early 2007.

³⁸ There were many more crimes attributed to the ASG with fewer than five victims. It was not possible to list all.

Table 5.4. Crimes, with five or more victims, “positively attributed to the ASG” since 1991.

1991	Bombing of the M/V <i>Doulos</i> . <u>2 killed</u> , 40 injured.
1992	Bombings of Port Pilar shrine, Zamboanga city. <u>5 killed</u> .
1993	A number of abductions in the Sulu Archipelago: all less than 5 victims.
1994	Car bombing, Zamboanga City. 34 injured. Kidnapping (75) in Lantawan, Basilan. <u>16 killed</u> , 59 released or escaped.
1995	Raid on Ipil, Zamboanga del Sur. <u>68 killed</u> , 113 injured.
1996/7	A number of abductions and or killings in the Sulu Archipelago: all less than 5 victims.
1998	Grenade attack, Miriam Christian Crusade rally, Maluso, Basilan. <u>1 killed</u> , 9 injured.
1999	A number of abductions and or killings in the southern Philippines: all less than 5 victims.
2000	Kidnapping (54) raid on the Claret School complex, Tumahubong, Basilan. <u>6 killed</u> or died in captivity, 45 held captive: all either released or rescued. Kidnapping of 13 Christians, three French journalists, and two ABS-CBN journalists. Although the kidnappings were spread over three weeks the same ASG operatives were responsible and all the hostages were at some time incarcerated together. Kidnapping of 20 foreigners and one Filipino from Sipidan Dive Resort.
2001	Kidnappings (35) at the Dos Palmas resort on Palawan. <u>2 Americans killed</u> . August: (33) Christian residents of Balobo village on Basilan were taken hostage, of which <u>10 were beheaded</u> .
2004	Bombing and sinking of <i>Superferry 14</i> . <u>132 killed</u> .
2005	Coordinated attacks on Valentine Day in Davao, General Santos, and Manila. <u>8 killed</u> and 150 injured.
2006	<u>6 members</u> of a family killed and five wounded in a raid on a house in Patikul, Sulu.
2007	<u>7 construction workers abducted and beheaded</u> in Sulu. There is still some speculation that this crime was not committed by the ASG. (However due to some uncertainty as to the perpetrators, the crimes will be attributed to the ASG: beheading of captives in the southern Philippines is symbolic of ASG activity) Text Box 5.5 (page 178), contains an email that was received by this author from Victor Taylor. It puts another perspective on this incident. Also, in 2007, 26 members of the AFP were killed in clashes with alleged members of the ASG in Sulu: although renegade members of the MNLF claimed responsibility. In the same year 14 Philippine marines were killed in Basilan, of whom 10 were beheaded. Because these deaths were attributed to casualties of conflict, they are not included in the total of “crimes” for that year.

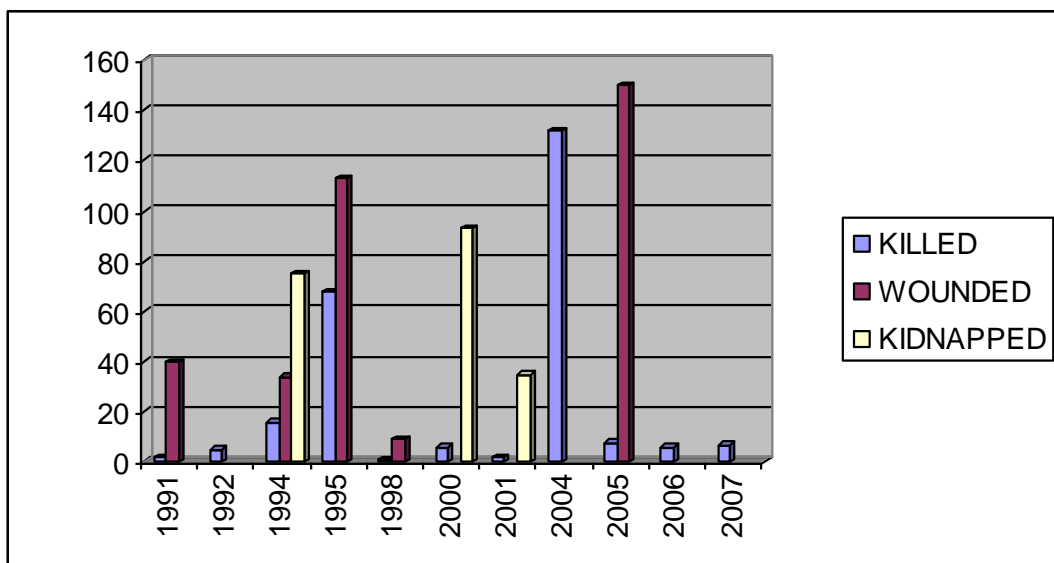
Source: Data compiled by this author from primary and reputable secondary sources.

'It was claimed by the AFP's commander of the 104th Infantry Brigade, Col. Antonio Supnet that the Abu Sayyaf under the command of Albader Parad was responsible for the atrocity (Philippine Daily Enquirer: 21 April 2007). However, Rubelyn delos Reyes, the wife of one of the beheaded workers, claimed that one of the kidnappers called her to apologise for killing her husband explaining that he was instructed by one of the local politicians to carry out this killing. Interestingly, there was a Philippine Daily Enquirer reporter in Sulu at that time and she spoke to Rubelyn delos Reyes about the alleged phone call. In a conversation with me this reporter, who believed the phone call to be genuine, concluded that local politicians are complicating the situation in order to heighten the sense of conflict and violence in Sulu. She also believed that this was being done so that the forthcoming elections (May 14 2007) would either be postponed or, if continued, would be held under very restrictive conditions: voting precincts being clustered, vote-counting being undertaken in the military camps, and son on, so that the forthcoming elections results would be more easily manipulated'.³⁹

Text Box 5.5. Email from Victor Taylor (April 2007 beheadings) : Verbatim with no grammatical or spelling corrections.

Source: Personal correspondence: V. Taylor to author, May 2007. (Reproduced with permission from V. Taylor.)

Graph 5.7. Civilian deaths, injuries, and kidnappings positively attributed to the ASG since its inception in 1991. These numbers are transposed from Table 5.4. In some instances the kidnapping numbers included killed and wounded.



Sources: Figures obtained from primary sources as well as reputable secondary sources.

Having now established that the ASG appeared to peak in numbers in the southern Philippines around the years 2000- 2001 (see Graphs 5.5 and 5.6), it is now important to establish the strength and importance of the ASG in the Province of Sulu. After all, Sulu has seen thousands of members of the AFP stationed there, as well as hundreds of U.S. military personnel since 2001, ostensibly there to eradicate

³⁹ Personal communication May 2007: Victor Taylor to this author.

the ASG. The presence of the AFP and U.S. military forces in Sulu Province will be further investigated in Chapter 7 of this dissertation.

5.6 The ASG in Sulu Province.

5.6 (i) Numerical differences:

As previously stated, the ASG in Sulu is a more complex phenomenon than the ASG in Basilan inasmuch as it does not lend itself to the straightforward assessments made by the GRP and military authorities.⁴⁰ As well, there are simply no reliable sources for the number of ASG operatives in Sulu because, unlike the ASG in Basilan, there is no formal structure of the ASG in Sulu. Moreover, the ASG in Sulu appears to consist of groups of individuals who adopt the Abu Sayyaf name to give some ‘legitimacy’ to their crimes. That is, they use this name so that it would appear that their actions are linked to the original broader agenda of the ASG in Basilan; namely, fighting for an independent Muslim State in the southern Philippines. Adding to this confusion, it is claimed in the International Crisis Group “*Asia Report, No. 152*”⁴¹ that many persons labelled as Abu Sayyaf in Sulu are victims of local vendettas, who are accused of being Abu Sayyaf. This falsity may well swell the estimated ASG numbers in Sulu Province at particular times. With that in mind, the ASG in Sulu fluctuates according to situations, observations, inaccurate estimates or, indeed, if political or military circumstances dictate that a number is required.

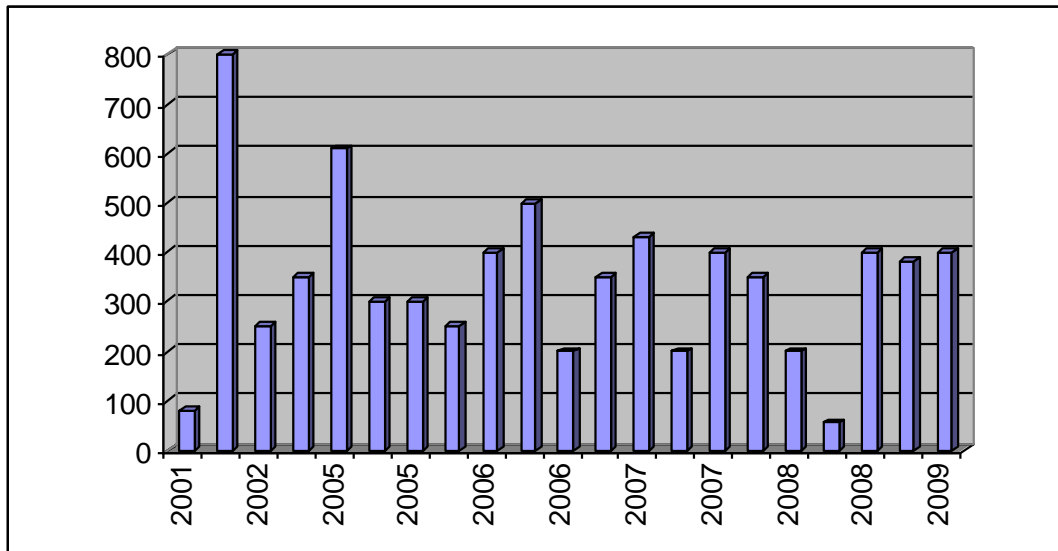
If the number of ASG terrorists in the entire southern Philippines is conflicting as well as confusing, then the estimate of ASG operatives in Sulu Province is even more so. It would appear that when the media is reporting on any incident in Sulu Province involving kidnappings or encounters with the AFP by insurgents, who the Philippine Government label as Abu Sayyaf, then figures are ‘recycled’ from previous articles. Consider the following ASG estimates in Sulu Province which appeared in various media reports, and what would be considered reputable secondary sources (see Table 5.5). Despite the AFP, and the GRP claiming that hundreds of ASG terrorists have been killed in clashes in Sulu Province since 2001, numbers—at least according to these media reports and secondary sources—

⁴⁰ V. Taylor, & A. Idjirani, 2006, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

⁴¹ International Crisis Group, *Asia Report No. 152*, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

have remained static, at somewhere between 200 and 400. The one exception is the obvious ‘mistake’ in 30 December 2001⁴² To illustrate the estimated ASG numbers more easily, graph 5.8 precedes Table 5.5.

Graph 5.8. ASG numbers estimated in Sulu Province: 2001-2009.



Sources: Reported in the printed media, or obtained from reliable secondary sources.

⁴² This figure was probably taken from estimates in all of the southern Philippines (see Graph 5.6)

Table 5.5. ASG number estimates in Sulu Province: 2001-2009

2001	<u>80</u> : <i>New York Times</i> , 30 December 2001. <u>800</u> : <i>New York Times</i> , 30 December 2001.
2002	<u>250</u> : B. Garcia, <i>Associated Press</i> , 20 February 2003.
2003	<u>300-400 (use 350)</u> : B.B.C. News, “Arroyo Allows U.S. Troops in Sulu, 09 April 2003.
2005	<u>609</u> : International Crisis Group, Asia Report No. 152, 14 May 2008. p.16. (Incident February 2005). ⁴³ <u>300</u> . In an operation involving MNLF paramilitary forces and the AFP in Sulu in the first three weeks of March 2005. It was claimed by AFP military commanders including Colonel Pajarito and Lieutenant Colonel Alamia that 300 Abu Sayyaf members had joined forces with MNLF forces. ⁴⁴ <u>200-300. (use 250)</u> Zachary Abuza. ⁴⁵
2006	<u>400</u> : <i>Reuters</i> , 10 April. <u>500</u> : International Crisis Group, Asia Report No. 152, 14 May 2008. p.12. ⁴⁶ <u>200</u> <i>Manila Bulletin</i> 04 Sept.
2007	<u>350</u> : <i>Associated Press</i> 20 April. <u>432</u> : International Crisis Group, Asia Report No. 152, 14 May 2008. p. 15. <u>200</u> : B.B.C. News: Nick Meo, “US Helps Fight Against Abu Sayyaf”. 02 April 2007. ⁴⁷ <u>400</u> : B.B.C. News, “Philippine Group Beheads Hostages”. 20 April 2007. ⁴⁸ <u>300-400. (use 350)</u> : <i>Weekend Australian</i> , Emma-Kate Symons, Manila. 11 August 2007. ⁴⁹ <u>200</u> : Focus on the Global South, Special Reports No.2. ⁵⁰ <u>200</u> : <i>Dailey Inquirer</i> 21 August.
2008	<u>200</u> : <i>Manila Times</i> , Al Jacinto, 26 March 2008. ⁵¹ <u>50-60 (use 55)</u> : International Crisis Group, Asia Report No. 152, 14 May 2008. p.14. (Incident 18 January 2008; may be isolated pocket of Abu Sayyaf). ⁵² <u>400</u> : Lt.General Nelson Allage: Chief of AFP Mindanao. <u>383</u> AFP Chief, General Hermogenes Esperon. ⁵³
2009	<u>2009. 400</u> : <i>Herald Tribune</i> 16 March.

Sources: Figures obtained from primary sources, including the printed media, as well as reputable secondary sources.

5.6 (ii) ASG actuality: Sulu.

The following words were spoken by the AFP’s Southern Command Deputy Commander, Ben Dolorfino, at a meeting between representatives of the NGO, Balay Mindanaw Foundation Inc.”⁵⁴ and high-ranking officers of the AFP in

⁴³ International Crisis Group, *Asia Report No. 152, op. cit.*

⁴⁴ *Sulu: state of war. Calls for peace, op. cit.*

⁴⁵ Abuza, *op. cit.*, p.1.

⁴⁶ International Crisis Group, *Asia Report No. 152, op. cit.*

⁴⁷ B.B.C. News, 02 April 2007, *US helps fight against Abu Sayyaf*. Retrieved December 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asiapacific/6499589.stm>.

⁴⁸ B.B.C. News, 20 April 2007, *Philippine group beheads hostages*. Retrieved November 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/6574773.stm>

⁴⁹ *Weekend Australian*, 11 August 2007, Emma-Kate Symons.

⁵⁰ Focus on the Global South, *Special Reports No.2, op. cit.*

⁵¹ *Manila Times*, 26 March 2008, A. Jacinto.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *AFP to reduce Abu Sayyaf strength in half by year end*. Retrieved 2008.

<http://www.cagape.com/blog?p=206>

⁵⁴ Balay Mindanaw Foundation, Inc. is a Mindanao-based NGO, whose aims include increased democratic participation in local governance.

September 2006.⁵⁵ ‘In Sulu, we have all forms of violence. From insurgency to terrorism to ridos and ethnic violence: maybe when one thinks of a place in the Philippines that is the most violent, I’m sure it would be Sulu’. With the above statement by Dolorfino in mind, it is important to take into account the following thoughts, incidents, and assessments when making a judgement as to whether the ASG actually exists in Sulu, especially since 2001.

Whilst it is not disputed that Sulu, at the time of this study, was experiencing violence, it is all too easy, and convenient, to blame that violence on the ASG. Taylor and Docena claim that the blaming by the Arroyo Administration of all armed clashes with the AFP on the ASG is nothing new: indeed it is common practice. Taylor further makes the point that the Southern Command of the AFP appears to have a ‘blanket authority’ to pursue any person in Sulu suspected of having anti-government sentiment. More importantly, these suspects are assumed to be ASG combatants or ASG sympathisers and are interrogated. Furthermore, Taylor, in interviews with Suluanos, found that it was believed that the ASG ‘becomes a convenient scapegoat’.⁵⁶

Following on from that claim, in 2006 the Southern Command of the AFP also was of the opinion that any criminal activity which involved encounters with either the AFP or the PNP in Sulu, was instigated by the ASG. However, in July 2009 a number of bomb blasts occurred in Jolo, Sulu, the most serious of which killed seven people and wounded 40 others including members of the PNP. In the past the media, and indeed the military commanders of the AFP, would have immediately attributed this criminality to the ASG. However, this particular bomb blast was described at the time by Major General Juancho Sabban of the AFP Southern Command as being ‘remotely detonated, possibly by members of the Abu Sayyaf bandit group’.⁵⁷ By 2009, the AFP Southern Command was prepared to admit that criminality involving explosive devices was only ‘possibly’ committed by the ASG. More importantly, the ASG was now being described as a ‘bandit group’,

⁵⁵ Balay Mindanaw Foundation Inc. Retrieved December 2008, <http://www.balaymindanaw.org/bmfi/newsupdates/2006/08peace.html>

⁵⁶ Balay Mindanaw Foundation Inc. *op. cit.*, pp. 50-51

⁵⁷ ABS,CBN News, *Jolo, Iligan twin blasts' death toll up at 7*. Retrieved 10 July 2009, <http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/nation/regions/07/07/09/blast-rocks-jolo-1-dead-2-hurt>

not a terrorist group. Whether the assumptions and descriptions given by General Juancho were as a consequence of official policy rethinking, or ‘off the cuff’ remarks is unknown. However, it is fairly safe to assume that very high-ranking military officers do not make statements to the media contrary to what has been the official view/stance for years.

As previously mentioned, in February 2005, 57,900 Suluanos⁵⁸ were displaced when fighting began between the AFP and paramilitary forces of the MNLF. The AFP accused the paramilitary forces of the MNLF of being aided by the ASG, a statement strongly denied by the Commander of the MNLF in Sulu, Ustadz Habier Malik. Furthermore, Malik went on to say that ‘there is no more ASG [Abu Sayyaf] in Sulu’. Malik corrected his statement a little when he added ‘it may be correct to rather say that the ASG in Sulu is a small group but which can continue to create big trouble’.⁵⁹

The February 2005 encounters with the AFP were large scale and well executed. It is reasonable to suggest that successful raids and ambushes on well trained AFP soldiers could have only been carried out by well disciplined operatives acting under instructions from efficient officers or leaders, and the ASG in Sulu lacked both, albeit Janjalani, Solaiman, and Sahiron were still alive at this time. However, whether Janjalani, Solaiman, or indeed Sahiron were in Sulu at that time is uncertain. It may very well have been that they were in Basilan. It is almost certain that Albader Parad was in Sulu at the time of these encounters. However, as mentioned it is uncertain whether Parad was still identifying himself as an ASG combatant.

It may be argued that Sulu is a “failed” province. There have been a number of ‘wars’⁶⁰ in Sulu in the last ten years, and these were discussed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation. As with all wars, fault can be found in the interpretation of the conflict. In 1967 the then Secretary General of the United Nations, U Thant, said ‘in times of

⁵⁸ *Sulu: state of war, op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁵⁹ *Sulu: state of war, op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁶⁰ The term “war” in this dissertation is used to describe any confrontation of considerable size/duration which occurs between organised paramilitary groups and the AFP.

war the first casualty is truth'.⁶¹ This simple observation could be applied to many local and international conflicts that have occurred since the U.S. action in the “Vietnam Conflict” and can just as easily be applied to the contemporary military action and “wars” in Sulu, a point not missed by Herbert Docena. In a report written on 26 April 2007 in the *Minda Times*, Docena made the following points, contained in Text Box 5.6.

‘no mention of the group [Abu Sayyaf] now seems to be complete without the phrase “Al-Qaeda linked”. News report after news report point out that the Abu Sayyaf is linked to Osama bin Laden’s worldwide network and leave it at that – as though such a claim has once-and-for-all been established and is not to be questioned any longer’, and ‘the phrase “Al-Qaeda-linked” has become a permanent, self-perpetuating fixture that is questioned by no one and repeated by everyone’.

Docena went on further to say that no reporter has ‘bothered to interview anybody from the group’ [Abu Sayyaf]. Moreover, Docena made a valid point when he wrote ‘isn’t it high time that someone in the media actually tried to find out who they are and what they have to say and why they do the things they reportedly do? Or shouldn’t we talk to the enemies’.

Text Box 5.6. Herbert Docena:

Source: *Minda Times*, April 2007 ⁶²

The point that Docena made about talking to the ASG was important and has been embraced by other academics. In June 2008, Professor Octavio Dinampo of the Mindanao State University, a leading peace advocate, attempted to interview Radulan Sahiron, who was last seen in 2007 (see Table 5.2). Why Dinampo did not try to interview Albader Parad, is unclear. After all, as mentioned the Vice-Governor of Sulu Province, Nur-Ana Sahidulla was able to negotiate with Parad in the Red Cross kidnappings in early 2009. However, Sahiron was chosen. The interview with Sahiron was supposedly set up by an ABS-CBN broadcast journalist Cecilia Drilon. Exactly how this was arranged is unclear. If indeed the interview with Sahiron had been arranged it may very well have been illegal under Section. 6 *Accessory*, of Republic Act 9373. Chapter 6 of this study, which analyses Republic Act 9372, will examine further the implications of profiting from offenders accused of terrorist acts. However, Dinampo did agree to interviewing Sahiron and what transpired can only be described as a fiasco.

⁶¹ H. Levien, *Vietnam, myth & reality*, Sydney, Bridge Printery Pty. Ltd., 1967, p. 1.

⁶² *Minda Times*, 26 April 2007, H. Docena, *Banging the drums of war: mainstream print media’s coverage of recent events in Mindanao*.

Whilst trying to interview Sahiron, Dinampo and the ABS-CBN crew were kidnapped by an armed group in the Sulu hinterlands. As expected, the media immediately attributed the crime to the ASG. Subsequent investigations have led to the charges of ‘kidnap-for-ransom’ against Alvarez Isnaji (the then Mayor of Indanan municipality) and his son Haider, a candidate in the 2008 ARMM elections.⁶³ It would appear that the kidnapping of Dinampo and the ABS-CBN crew involved a network of players, including some young Tausag youths who claimed to be ‘second generation Abu Sayyaf’.⁶⁴ To add to the intrigue, Dinampo and the ABS-CBN crew claim that their guide, Juamil Biyaw, a former MNLF commander betrayed them.⁶⁵ The labelling of the kidnappers of Dinampo and the ABS-CBN crew as being ASG members is, as previously mentioned, all too familiar when the media is reporting on any crime in the Sulu Archipelago Provinces. The irony of this episode is that Dinampo failed to interview the alleged leader of the ASG in Sulu who may very well have had a part in his kidnapping.

There is another school of thought as to who may be contributing to the violence in Sulu, and their motive, namely local politicians. In April 2007, seven construction workers including two sixteen year-old boys were kidnapped in Jolo, Sulu Province, and a 5 million Philippine peso demand for their release was sent to their employer. The seven workers were subsequently beheaded, and their heads, in two sacks were delivered to the AFP headquarters in Sulu. This act was symbolic of past ASG atrocities. Consequently, it was claimed by the AFP’s commander of the 104th Infantry Brigade, Col. Antonio Supnet, that the ASG under the command of Albader Parad was responsible for the atrocity.⁶⁶ However, as previously mentioned (see Text Box 5.5. p.178) Rubelyn delos Reyes, the wife of one of the beheaded workers, claimed that one of the kidnappers called her to apologise for killing her husband explaining that he was instructed by one of the local politicians to carry out this killing.

⁶³ Dinampo denied that the Isnajis were involved, claiming that Sahiron was involved in his kidnapping, although he admitted that he had no evidence to substantiate this claim..

⁶⁴ Ugarte, *op. cit.*, p. 331.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Philippine Daily Enquirer*, 21 April 2007, *Dreams of 2 Zambo teenagers end in Jolo.*

5.7 Overall assessment of the ASG both in Sulu Province and the broader area of the southern Philippines.

It has been established that the ASG was a formidable national insurgency organisation, based in the southern Philippines in the last decade of the 20th century, as well as the first year or two of the 21st century. As well, it can be argued that the ASG lost sight of its original goal of establishing an independent Islamic State in the southern Philippines, opting instead for wealth obtained from criminal activity. If this statement is to be believed then the ASG is “guilty” of discrediting Islam. This assertion that the ASG is discrediting Islam in the southern Philippines was the subject of a paper presented and published in 2009 by this researcher. The publication was entitled *The Abu Sayyaf in the Archipelago, discrediting Islam, abetting USA foreign counterinsurgency policy*. Text Box 5.7 transposes, in part, the findings of the research.

It has been shown that the ASG, which earlier in its history had a vision of creating a pure Islamic State, quickly succumbed to greed. Having seen that violence against “innocents” paid dividends, and the rules of *jihad* could be ignored, the ASG changed its original focus. And by changing focus it forfeited any chance it may have had for acceptance by the Islamic World at large. Also by embarking on such an agenda it was inevitable that the USA would be drawn into the broader conflict in the southern Philippines. In conclusion, this paper has attempted to argue that the ASG, which at one time was a well disciplined organisation, is now only comprised of bandits and criminals whose only agenda is greed and violence, and any claim they have to doing so in the name of a *Higher Authority* is pure fantasy and heresy.

Text Box 5.7. Bob East, *The Abu Sayyaf in the Archipelago: Discrediting Islam. Abetting USA Foreign Policy*. Paper presented at the Global Terrorism Research Centre Conference 2008. **Source:** Paper presented at Global Terrorism Research Centre Conference 2008. Parliament House, Victoria, Australia. ⁶⁷

It has also been shown that the ASG has gradually diminished both in numbers and attributable violence. Most of its leaders, or influential figures, have either been killed, captured, or are missing, and any support that the ASG may have had, nationally or internationally, has disappeared. With that in mind, it would be safe to assume that the ASG now offered at best only token resistance to both the AFP and the PNP in the southern Philippines. As for the role that it may be playing in violence in Sulu Province, it has been argued by leading academics—and this author—that it is minimal at best, or even non-existent. There may be some grounds

⁶⁷ B. East, *The Abu Sayyaf in the Archipelago: Discrediting Islam. Abetting USA foreign policy*, 2009: p. 13. Retrieved October 2009, . <http://arts.monash.edu.au/politics/terrorism-research/proceedings/gtrec-proceedings-2009-09-bob-east.pdf>

to argue that the ASG is still a viable small terrorist organisation in Basilan Province, albeit small. Therefore, the question must be asked why then does the Arroyo Administration continue with the argument that the ASG is responsible for the majority of violent events in the southern Philippines, especially Sulu Province? The answer may be, in part, that the presence of the ASG, which is classified as a terrorist organisation by the U.S. enables the Arroyo Administration to benefit financially from having U.S. forces stationed in the southern Philippines (this will be further dealt with in detail in Chapter 7 of this dissertation). The answer may, also in part, be found in the necessity for enacting Republic Act 9372, which is analysed in detail in Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

Chapter 6

State Security. Memorandum Order No. 37, and Republic Act 9372: a Critical Assessment.

This chapter addresses central question 7 of this dissertation, that is ‘was the introduction in 2007 of Republic Act 9372: An Act to Secure the State and Protect our People from Terrorism, just another tool to assist the Arroyo Administration’s domestic counter-insurgency policies? In particular, would this Act be beneficial to the national administration, and in particular the AFP, if military encounters again occurred between the MNLF and the AFP in Sulu Province?’

This chapter also considers central question 2, specifically: ‘given that the Muslim struggle in the southern Philippines has been seen as liberation insurgency by many, including the OIC, is the Arroyo Administration trying to change the perception of this insurgency to one of national insurgency—bearing in mind that national insurgency has the perception of being seen as a threat to internal national security? And, is this perception more relevant for Sulu Province because of the static majority Muslim population?’ Finally, this chapter also addresses central question 5: ‘is the Filipino Administration of Gloria Arroyo supporting specific U.S. foreign policy as a part of the Global War on Terror in an endeavour to implement its own counter-insurgency policies?’

In addressing central question 7 and, in part, central questions 2 and 5 of this dissertation it is necessary to critically assess Republic Act 9372, and question the need for its introduction. In questioning the introduction of Republic Act 9372 it is also important to understand why Memorandum Order No. 37, which was signed by President Arroyo on 12 October 2001, and was drafted and then gazetted on 10 December 2001. Memorandum Order No. 37 appeared to cover all aspects of counterterrorism in the Philippines. In assessing Republic Act 9372 and Memorandum Order No. 37 it is necessary to analyse some “Articles” of the 1987 Philippine

Constitution to ascertain if there was a conflict of interest in some ‘Sections’ of Republic Act 9372, and some ‘Articles’ in Memorandum Order No. 37.¹

6.1 Memorandum Order No. 37. Article I: an initial overview

The significance of analysing Memorandum Order No. 37 and Republic Act 9372 is that Memorandum Order No. 37 was drafted and gazetted in the immediate aftermath of the 2001 terrorist attacks in the U.S. whilst Republic Act 9372 was passed into law some three years after President Arroyo was elected (or more precisely re-elected)² in May 2004. Memorandum Order No. 37 could be described as a ‘knee-jerk’ reaction taken after the 2001 U.S. terrorist attacks. Whereas Republic Act 9372 was a carefully drafted piece of legislation taken halfway through President Arroyo’s presidential term, and after U.S. troops were given permission to conduct exercises in the southern Philippines. The term ‘carefully drafted piece of legislation’ is chosen because in the three years after President Arroyo’s election in 2004, there were numerous *House Bills* and *Senate Bills* introduced into the House of Representatives and the Senate, all of which dealt with certain aspects of domestic terrorism. For example, in 2005 there were no fewer than ten anti-terrorism bills pending in the House of Representatives, (Congress) and five in the Senate. These bills are listed in Text Box 6.1. It is of some interest that of the ten *House Bills* introduced by the nine members of the House of Representatives, only two members represented constituents in the Mindanao area, where terrorism and domestic insurgency were considered an issue. The two members in question were Barbers from Surigao del Norte, and Cagas from Davao del Sur. Both these Legislative Districts have a minority Muslim population (this is especially so in Surigao del Norte), and both Legislative Districts are considered ‘peaceful’. No anti-terrorist *House Bills* were introduced by Representatives of

¹ In the Republic of the Philippines a Memorandum Order is issued to particular sections of the government. In this instance it was issued to the Executive Branch (there are three branches in the Philippine National Government: the executive branch, the legislative branch, [referred to as Congress] and the judicial branch; all are independent of each other). The executive branch is headed by the President and has, amongst others, 26 cabinet secretaries who control special agencies including the national bureaucracy and the military.

² The term “re-elected” is loosely used. Philippine Presidents are elected for one six year term—this is entrenched in the 1987 Philippine Constitution. However, when President Estrada was forced from office in January 2001, Gloria Arroyo, being the Vice-President assumed the Presidency. Not having been elected President, in 1998, she was allowed to run for the presidency; she was successful in 2004.

Legislative Districts in the ARMM, or indeed from any Province accommodating a significant Muslim population, such as Zamboanga. Philippine Senators, of which there are twenty four, are elected at large, therefore demographics can not be used to substantiate any argument for the introduction of Senate Bills. However, it is worth mentioning that over 20% of Senators introduced anti-terrorism Bills in 2005.

Table 6.1. Anti-terrorism House of Representative Bills, and Senate Bills, pending in 2005. Introduced by Members of Congress or Senators.

House Bill No.309	Rep. Imee Marcos (2nd District, Ilocos Norte)
House Bill No. 948	Rep. Judy Syjuco (2nd District, Iloilo)
House Bill No. 1925	Rep. Robert Ace Barbers (2nd District, Surigao del Norte)
House Bill No. 2222	Rep. Teodoro Locsin Jr. (1st District, Makati).
House Bill No. 2380 & No. 2621	Rep. Amado Espino Jr. (2nd District, Pangasinan)
House Bill No. 2615	Rep. Roilo Golez (2nd District, Parañaque City).
House Bill No. 2639	Rep. Marcelino Libanan (Eastern Samar).
House Bill No. 3032	Rep. Robert Vincent Jude Jaworski (Pasig City).
House Bill No. 3103	Rep. Douglas Cagas (1st District, Davao del Sur).
Senate Bill No. 735	Senator. Manuel Villar.
Senate Bill No. 831	Senator. Panfilo Lacson.
Senate Bill No. 871	Senator. Estrada.
Senate Bill No. 38	Senator. Ramon Magsaysay.
Senate Bill No. 1768	Senator. Alfredo Lim

Source: *Bulatlat*, vol. v, no. 14, May 2005, p. 1.

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the U.S. had such a profound effect worldwide that many countries, especially those that were allies or close “friends” of the U.S. reacted with what could be described as panic—and the Republic of the Philippines was no exception. In just one month, Philippine President Arroyo had issued Memorandum Order No. 37: ‘Providing for the fourteen pillars of policy and action of

the government against terrorism'. Briefly, Memorandum Order No. 37 consisted of five Articles. Article I was considered so important, especially when it came to international issues, that it is included, in full, in Table 6.2. Article II simply stated: 'The Government reiterates its commitment to prevent and suppress terrorism in all forms within the territorial boundaries of the Philippines'. Article III addressed most, if not all issues pertaining to terrorism and the protection of Philippine citizens both at home and abroad. The fourteen 'pillars' were included in Article III, which stated: 'The government adopts the following policies and undertakes the following actions'. The initial headings of each policy are contained in Table 6.3. All headings, reproduced in '6.3 memorandum Order no. 37, Article III: a detailed analysis' are followed by an explanation of action to be taken in relation to terrorism. It is not deemed necessary by this author to include all the text following the headings. The wording in Article IV is standard practice when issuing Memorandum Orders, inasmuch as it stated: 'All issuances and authorizations with this Memorandum Order are hereby modified or repealed'. Finally, Article V simply stated that the Memorandum Order would take effect 'immediately upon approval'. Prior to assessing Sections of Republic Act 9372, which is done later in this chapter, it is necessary to briefly examine Memorandum Order No. 37, Article I and closely examine Article III. This is done immediately after Table 6.3.

Table 6.2. Article I. (In full) Memorandum Order No. 37. Article I started with this statement, “The following measures shall be taken by the Government in connection with its commitment to cooperate in the international struggle against terrorism”.

Measure 1	Join the international counter-terrorist coalition and work with the United Nations
Measure 2	Work closely with the United States on intelligence and security matters concerning terrorism
Measure 3	Make available Philippine airspace and facilities if the latter are required as transit or staging points.
Measure 4	Contribute logistical support in the form of good supplies, medicine and medical personnel.
Measure 5	Subject to the concurrence of the Philippine Congress, provide combat troops if there is an international call for such troops.
Measure 6	Prevent the flow of funds to terrorist groups in accordance with the Anti-Money Laundering Act of 2001 (Republic Act 9160) and other laws.

Source: Philippine Official Gazette. Vol.97. No.50, pp. 7274-7275.³

Table 6.3. Subheadings of policies contained in Article III: Memorandum Order No. 37.

1	Supervision and implementation of policies and actions of the government against terrorism.
2	Intelligence coordination.
3	Internal focus against terrorism.
4	Accountability of public and private corporations and personalities.
5	Synchronizing internal efforts with global outlook
6	Legal measures.
7	Promotion of Christian and Muslim solidarity
8	Vigilance against the movement of terrorist and their supporters equipment, weapons and funds.
9	Contingency plans.
10	Comprehensive security plans for critical infrastructure.
11	Support of overseas Filipino workers.
12	Modernization of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police.
13	Media support.
14	Political, social and economic measures.

Source: Philippine Official Gazette. Vol.97. No.50, pp. 7275-7277.⁴

³ Global Legal Information Network. Retrieved April 2009, <http://www.glin.gov/view.action?glinID=81978>

⁴ *Ibid.*

6.2 Memorandum Order No. 37. Article I: A brief analysis

Before proceeding with an analysis of the Articles in Memorandum Order No. 37, it must be stressed that this Memorandum Order was issued to the Executive Branch of government. That is, it is not a law, rather it is a statement issued to members of the Executive Branch, giving specific directions on policies to be followed. However, prior to the issuing of directions to be followed in Memorandum Order No. 37 President Arroyo iterated, on at least four occasions in the preceding paragraphs that the Philippines must adhere to and/or adopt United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution No. 1368,⁵ which was adopted on 12 September 2001. By endorsing UNSC Resolution No. 1368 in such a determined manner the way was paved for the strong directions/orders issued in the Memorandum Order, especially those in Articles I and III.

The urgent introduction of Memorandum Order No. 37 Article I has all the hallmarks of foreign policy ‘on the run’. Notwithstanding that President Arroyo gave unequivocal support to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373,⁶ which advocated combating ‘threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts’, she also committed the Philippines to assisting the U.S. in whatever was ‘required’ in its Global War on Terror, including the exchange of intelligence. With that commitment came, in paragraph 3, an offer to make Philippine airspace and facilities available to the U.S.

When the U.S. Clarke Airbase in the Philippines was closed down in 1992 it left a vacuum. During the Vietnam War, which is the term normally used to describe the massive U.S. military occupation of South Vietnam in the 1960s and early part of the 1970s, the U.S. Airforce relied heavily on its airbases in the Philippines for logistical support. Therefore, the offer to make available Philippine airspace and facilities would have been very much welcomed by the U.S. It would not be an exaggeration to suggest that President Arroyo, and the then U.S. President, George W. Bush, enjoyed a good rapport. The similarity between the rapport that Gloria Arroyo’s father, President

⁵ UNSC Resolution No. 1368 stated its condemnation of the terrorist attacks in the U.S. on 11 September 2001 and the inherent right of states to individual or collective self-defence.

⁶ UN Security Council Resolution 1373 was passed on 28 September 2001.

Diosdado Macapagal,⁷ and the President of the U.S. during the early parts of the Vietnam War, Lyndon Johnson, is also interesting. It is also not an exaggeration to suggest that the respect and friendship that Gloria Arroyo has had for the U.S. over much of her life is strong, indeed genuine. After all, Gloria Arroyo did attend the Georgetown University in the early 1960s and she accompanied her mother and father to the U.S. on an official visit on 5-7 October 1964.

Having offered airspace and facilities to the U.S. as outlined in paragraph 3 of Article I, President Arroyo then offered, as stated in paragraph 4, ‘good supplies, medicine and medical personnel’. The U.S. is arguably the richest nation in the world. The Philippines can be at the best, described as a developing nation, and any material assistance they would be able to give to the U.S. would be nothing more than tokenism.

In paragraph 5 of Article I there is an indication of the level of ‘authority’ of both the Executive Branch of Government and the Congress. Although both branches are independent, there are certain areas of governance, including national security that need joint cooperation. Paragraph 5 stated ‘Subject to the concurrence of the Philippine Congress, provide combat troops if there is an international call for such troops’: the salient word in paragraph 5 being ‘concurrence’. The President of the Philippines may be able to offer tangible assistance in the way of airspace, facilities, medical supplies and so forth, but she would not be able, without the approval of Congress, to commit combat troops to any international theatre of war.

Memorandum Order No. 37, Article I was more to do with foreign policy than domestic policy. Article III set out in detail the domestic policies,⁸ including security, which were required by the Philippines if they were to secure the nation against “terrorism”: these were the 14 pillars of policy and action outlined in Table 6.3.

⁷ President of the Philippines from 1961-1965 inclusive. It was during 1965 that the U.S. increased their troops in South Vietnam substantially.

⁸ There were two paragraphs in Article III, (2) and (5) which had an international theme. Their content will be addressed.

6.3 Memorandum Order No. 37, Article III: a detailed analysis

Article III can be seen as containing some of the most severe security measures adopted by a Philippine National Government since the introduction of martial law by President Marcos in 1972. The introduction by President Arroyo of such severe measures has to be questioned. After all, the Philippines, being a small world player both in economic and military strength, could hardly have been seen by international terrorists as being a worthwhile or symbolic target. It could be argued that the Philippine Government was only following the same internal security measures that some other countries had adopted since September 2001, including Australia. It can also be equally argued that the September 2001 terrorist events in the U.S. gave the Philippine government the opportunity to introduce severe domestic security measures that it may have been reluctant to do so in the past. With that in mind, an analysis of the paragraphs in Article III is important inasmuch as it could be seen to address some of the concerns expressed in central question 7 of this dissertation. This is especially so in relation to the perceived national insurgency—or, as is now more popularly termed, domestic terrorism—in some southern Philippine provinces. In the analysis of the paragraphs in Article III it is not the intention of this author to criticise many of the paragraphs, but only to question their necessity. Where a contentious issue was raised it is addressed accordingly. All paragraphs analysed below are transcribed from Table 6.3.

Paragraph 1, subheaded *Supervision and implementation of policies and actions of the government against terrorism*, authorised the Executive Secretary of the ‘Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security’ to utilise any support or resources from any government department, agency, or office that he or she may feel is necessary to combat domestic terrorism in the Philippines: these are wide ranging powers normally authorised under a ‘state of emergency’.

Paragraph 2, subheaded *Intelligence coordination*, authorised the National Advisor to exchange information, or sources of information, with international players, especially the ‘international coalition against terrorism’. Exactly what information would have been useful to these players was not specified. Prior to 2001, there had been

no terrorist attacks in the Philippines which had been positively identified as internationally sponsored. There was, and still remains, speculation that Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), and Al-Qaeda operatives have infiltrated the ASG, and indeed may have some influence on personnel in the MILF, the MNLF, and the RSM. However, whilst some Philippine extremists, such as Angelo Trinidad,⁹ may identify with Al-Qaeda and/or JI, Philippine extremists or terrorists are for the most part ‘home grown’.

Paragraph 3, subheaded *Internal focus against terrorism*, was deemed so important that it is included in full in Text Box 6.1. This contentious direction given by the Executive Branch of Government gave authorisation to even civilians to take whatever action they saw fit to prevent or suppress any action that may be perceived as terrorism. The question could be asked just how is it possible to ‘prevent’ a threat. And if a threat is seen to exist, how is it possible to identify it as a terrorist threat? The last part of the paragraph stating that ‘lawless violence engendered by the terrorist threat’ borders on being oxymoronic: violence is almost always lawless, unless it is sanctioned by a legitimate body—then it becomes lawful action. Paragraph 3, if taken literally or seriously, could have had the opposite effect of what was intended. That is, false or inaccurate accusations and accompanying violence may have been possible, indeed probable.

3. *Internal focus against terrorism*.—With the support and active participation of **all** local government units down to the Barangay level,¹⁰ non-governmental organizations and private citizens, the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine national Police shall **perform all acts necessary** to prevent and suppress all lawless violence engendered by the terrorist threat. (bolded emphasis: author)

Text Box 6.1. Paragraph 3, in full, of Article III: Memorandum Order No. 37.

Source: Philippine Official Gazette. Vol.97. No. 50. p. 7275.

Paragraph 4, subheaded *Accountability of public and private corporations and personalities*, gave unprecedented authority to a number of government security departments to decide who, or whatever corporations, were to be investigated, all in the

⁹ Angelo Trinidad admitted to a bomb blast on a bus in Makita city in 2005 which killed four passengers.

¹⁰ Author’s insertion. Barangay is a village or local community.

name of anti-terrorism. Exactly what were the criteria for judgements to be made for assessing whether an individual or a corporation was ‘aiding and abetting’ terrorism were not stipulated.

Paragraph 5, subheaded *Synchronizing internal efforts with global outlook*, had merit insomuch as it sought to enhance a cross-pollenisation of security ideas with Asian neighbours.

Paragraph 6, subheaded *Legal measures*, gave directions from the Executive Branch of Government to the Department of Justice that were somewhat redundant insomuch as the Department of Justice already had these powers. An example was the phrase ‘speedy prosecution’, ‘deportation’, ‘extradition’, all in ‘accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and relevant laws’. The only difference here being that the word terrorism had more than likely replaced the words criminal or criminality.

Paragraph 7, subheaded *Promotion of Christian and Muslim solidarity*, had broader implications and is included in full in Text Box 6.2.

7. *Promotion of Christian and Muslim solidarity*.- The Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process shall undertake all actions necessary to forge religious understanding, ecumenism and solidarity, including but not limited to pursuing broader inter-faith dialogues.

Text Box 6.2. Paragraph 6, in full, of Article III: Memorandum Order No. 37.

Source: Philippine Official Gazette. Vol.97. No.50. p. 7276.

The inclusion of paragraph 7 in the Memorandum Order is somewhat of a mystery. Freedom of religious belief is contained in the 1987 Philippine Constitution, under the ‘Bill of Rights’: Article III, Section 5. For reasons only known to the President she deemed it necessary to mention Muslims specifically. It must be remembered that Muslims only make up approximately 5% of the population of the Philippines. It could be argued that the President may have anticipated some form of retribution against her minority Muslim population because the events of 11 September in the U.S. were committed by extremist Muslims. Moreover, in this paragraph President Arroyo also

instructed the office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process (OPAPP) to take all necessary action to ensure inter-faith harmony. The OPAPP has many roles, including ongoing peace negotiations, and peace overtures with insurgency groups such as the MNLF, MILF, and the NPA. It already has a peace process program which includes the convening of ‘interfaith solidarity conferences’.¹¹ It can be argued that Paragraph 7 reemphasises the importance that President Arroyo places on inter-faith harmony.

Paragraph 8, subheaded *Vigilance against the movement of terrorists and their supporters equipment, weapons and funds*, is a rather lengthy paragraph that keeps referring to people ‘reasonably suspected’ of being terrorists or abetting ‘terrorists’. It instructs the Bureau of Immigration to refuse entry to any terrorist suspect. However, what it does not say is what criteria are used to determine what constitutes a suspected terrorist. As well, there is mention of a process of appeal against such a decision. This paragraph goes on to instruct law enforcement agencies to ‘exercise the strictest vigilance against the movement of all firearms, explosives, toxic materials and other biological materials’. The use of the adjective ‘all’ is interesting, especially when it refers to firearms.¹² It has been estimated that in Sulu Province alone there are 30,000 unlicensed automatic weapons.¹³ Furthermore, the right to carry firearms in Sulu Province is something that has come to be accepted by the vast majority of its population. In a survey done in 2006 in Sulu, only 9.72% of respondents advocated a ban on the carrying of firearms.¹⁴ With these figures in mind it is hard to see how the President was going to overcome the firearm culture in Sulu. Or more correctly, as specified in this paragraph, deal with ‘the movement of all firearms’.

¹¹ See, *Path 6: Asian Center for the progress of peoples*. Retrieved May 2009.

<http://www.acpp.org/uappeals/bground/Backgrounder%20on%20Mindanao.rtf>

¹² This author’s observation, from private trips to Mindanao, is that there is an abundance of automatic weapons displayed on almost all streets and businesses. Every shop, bank, pawnbroker, hotel, even schools and colleges have “guards” armed with automatic weapons. Most of which are M-14 or M-16.

¹³ *Tabang Mindanaw study for Pagtabangan Basulta*, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 23.

Paragraph 9, subheaded *Contingency plans*, referred to action to be taken in the case of ‘catastrophic terrorist attacks’. The paragraph went on to admit that the possibility of this happening was remote. However, this author is of the opinion that no criticism should be levelled against the leader of any nation for exercising such caution.

Paragraph 10, subheaded *Comprehensive security plans for critical infrastructure*. As with paragraph 9, again no criticism can be levelled against the leader of any nation for exercising due caution, or indeed making contingencies for the protection of critical infrastructure. This, it can be argued, is ‘insurance’ against any national disaster.

Paragraph 11 was subheaded *Support of overseas Filipino workers*. Given that almost 1.5 million Filipinos work overseas (OFWs), it was not surprising that President Arroyo, when framing security measures for the population at large, mentioned this significant, and valuable, contribution made by the OFW population. The extent to which OFWs contribute to the Philippines GDP is indicated by the Philippine National Statistics Office which reported that during the period April to September 2005 1.52 million Filipinos worked overseas and remitted back to the Philippines approximately 102 billion Philippine *pesos*¹⁵ (this figure has continued to grow and it was reported that in 2008 the total amount sent back to the Philippines by OFWs was equal to approximately 10.4% of the country’s GDP).¹⁶

As mentioned in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, in July 2004¹⁷ President Arroyo, bowing to public pressure, prematurely withdrew the last of the 51 Philippine military personnel from Iraq in an attempt to have Philippine truck driver Angelo de la Cruz released from Iraqi insurgent kidnappers. Cruz was released and President Arroyo had upheld the promise she had made in 2001 to protect OFWs.

¹⁵ Source: Philippine National Statistics Office. Retrieved May 2009, <http://www.census.gov.ph/data/sectordata/sr08338tx.html>

¹⁶ *Macau Post Daily*, 16 July 2009, p. 8.

¹⁷ In all fairness it must be mentioned that Gloria Arroyo had been elected to the Presidency in May of that year (2004). Therefore any suggestion of pragmatism, inasmuch as it may have translated into votes, must be discounted.

Paragraph 12 was subheaded *Modernization of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police*. This direction by the President to update the AFP together with the PNP was justified by claiming the action was needed to ‘contain the global terrorist threat’, and to ‘support the policies and actions of the government against terrorism’. Both of these statements need to be put into perspective because they help to address some of the concerns raised in central questions 2 and 5 of this dissertation. First, the Arroyo Administration’s contribution to, broadly, a global commitment to the Global War on Terror, consisted of 100 troops sent to Iraq in 2004.¹⁸ Second, the massive build-up of AFP troops, supported by U.S. advisors, in the predominately Muslim areas of the southern Philippines, is a response to crimes allegedly committed by less than 200 leaderless criminals, tagged ‘terrorists’ (please refer to Chapter 5 of this dissertation).

Paragraph 13 was subheaded *Media support*. In most democratic states, the role of the media in accurately reporting government decisions or legislation is expected—indeed it is taken for granted. The Philippines is no exception. However, if decisions made by the Executive Branch of Government or laws passed in the Congress are perceived by the media to be unfair, biased, or just plain bad legislation, then the media also has an obligation to report and make comment. Unfortunately, even in the most democratic of countries, the media can be stifled by administrations who interpret questioning of legislation as criticism. This is particularly so in times of national emergency such as a state of war. With that in mind it is not unreasonable to assume that the Arroyo Administration saw the ongoing domestic insurgency, accompanied by criminal acts, especially in the southern Philippines as approaching a state of civil war. Unlike her predecessor, President Joseph Ejercito Estrada, the possibility of the Arroyo Administration admitting that there is a state of civil war is remote, albeit some NGOs, such as the Mindanao Peaceweavers, have described periodic large scale military encounters as just that.¹⁹ Therefore, it was imperative that the Arroyo Administration maintained good relations with the media in general, if, as suggested in central question

¹⁸ BBC News, 18 April 2004. Retrieved May 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3628959.stm

¹⁹ *Sulu: State of war. Calls for peace, op. cit.*

2 of this dissertation, the administration was to pursue its domestic counterinsurgency policies, in the guise of combating domestic terrorism.

Accordingly, President Arroyo issued instructions to the Office of the Press Secretary (OPS) to forge close ties with all major media outlets in the Philippines.²⁰ Above all, the OPS was to brief all media outlets on government policy and action undertaken in the fight against domestic terrorism.

If the Arroyo Administration saw the AGS as being the country's foremost terrorist organisation, especially in the Sulu Archipelago Provinces, then it would have been expected that the AGS had figured prominently in all counterinsurgency or counterterrorist actions undertaken by the AFP in that area, and this is exactly what transpired. When the AFP had military engagements with any group in the Sulu Archipelago Provinces, and this was more so in Sulu Province, then the "enemy" was always described as the Abu Sayyaf or Abu Sayyaf sympathisers or supporters. In fact, at the time of the writing of this dissertation, the Abu Sayyaf is probably mentioned in more Philippine media reports than any other group in the country. Given that most journalists would rather not travel to Sulu Province because of the dangers involved, it is then the responsibility of the OPS to convey correctly to the Philippine media who is actually responsible for the unrest in that area—unfortunately such action is sadly lacking.

Paragraph 14, subheaded *Political, social and economic measures*, in all probability, is the most important paragraph in Article III of Memorandum Order No. 37. For the first time, the Arroyo Administration admitted that there is a correlation between poverty and domestic terrorism in the Philippines. Such is the importance of Paragraph 14 that it also is included, in full, in Text Box 6. 3.

²⁰ The OPS is a GRP agency responsible for informing the media of decisions made at the Executive Branch of the Philippine Government.

14. *Political, social and economic measures.* The National Anti-poverty Commission shall undertake an in-depth study of the **spawning** grounds of terrorism in the country and recommend concrete and workable political, social and economic measures to act upon the **perceived roots of fanaticism and irrational violence.** (bolded emphasis: author)

Text Box 6.3. Paragraph 14 (in full) of Article III: Memorandum Order No. 37.

Source: Philippine Official Gazette. Vol.97. No.50. p. 7277.

Eight years after the Arroyo Administration admitted the possibility that terrorism, fanaticism, and irrational violence could be linked to poverty, the predominately Muslim provinces of the southern Philippines, especially Sulu, are still amongst the most impoverished in the country.

In Chapter 1 of this dissertation, the author cited Franz Fanon's advocacy of insurgency and violence as being a means of eliminating poverty, especially when that poverty was perceived as a consequence of an occupying colonial power. And a colonial power is exactly how the majority of Suluanos see the Philippine National Government. For over 100 years, the Sunni Muslim Tausags of Sulu have had to endure the colonial administration of the U.S. and from 1946 the perceived colonial administration of the Philippine National Government. The insurgency which is perceived as occurring in Sulu Province may very well be a result of poverty, as espoused by President Arroyo in Paragraph 14. However, it is seen to be more a manifestation of over 100 years of suppression from various colonial powers.

Analysis of the paragraphs contained in Article III of Memorandum Order No. 37.

The examination of the various paragraphs in Article III adds weight to the hypothesis implicit in central question 2 of this dissertation, that is 'given that the Muslim struggle in the southern Philippines has been seen as liberation insurgency by many, including the OIC, is the Arroyo Administration trying to change the perception of this insurgency to one of national insurgency—bearing in mind that national insurgency has the perception of being seen as a threat to internal national security?'

The Executive Branch of Government, having put forward directions that were to be followed by the various government departments, including the AFP, now had to consider how to enact these directions/recommendations into law. Time, and Congressional approval, need to be taken into account. So far as time is concerned, there was a Presidential election, a House of Representatives election, as well as a part Senate election to be won before an appropriate law could be introduced with the guarantee of passage. With the Arroyo Government's win at the 2004 elections it was now time to draft a suitable bill which would outline certain measures to combat the threat of domestic terrorism in the Philippines, and in so doing would also assist the Arroyo Administration's domestic counterinsurgency agenda. Accordingly, in 2007, Republic Act 9372 'An Act to Secure the State and Protect our People from Terrorism' passed both Congress and the Senate to become law. An assessment of Republic Act 9372 is made in the following section 6.4.

6.4 Republic Act 9372: a brief analysis, including critical responses.

Such is the complexity of Republic Act 9372 that only a brief analysis is made here, and this is confined to issues that could have been seen as having a direct correlation between domestic counterinsurgency and domestic counterterrorism. As with any Congressional Bill it would have been expected there would be critics as well as supporters—Republic Act 9372 was no exception. Criticism was forthcoming from opponents of the Arroyo Administration's Republic Act 9372, now more commonly known as the Human Security Act of 2007, who, for the most part thought that current penal codes were adequate to deal with any perceived threat of terrorist action—or indeed any actual terrorist action. However, the Arroyo Administration perceived the possibility of domestic terrorist action occurring in the Philippines to be so real that it needed a specific Act to cover such a possibility. Such was the extent of criticism of this Act, and to a lesser degree praise,²¹ that it was only deemed necessary to quote

²¹ Praise from the Bush Administration for the introduction of the Human Security Act was forthcoming, as expected. So too was support from allies of the Philippines. At the same time criticism was levelled at the Philippines from other countries. However, to exclude bias, it was felt necessary only to include criticism from non-political sources such as the Church, or agencies of the UN.

statements from three documents. Nevertheless, the excerpts are salient to the brief analysis of this Act. The first excerpts are from President Arroyo herself, issued as a press release from Malacanang Palace on 20 July 2007 (included in text Box 6.4). The second excerpts are from The Uniting Church in Australia synod of Victoria and Tasmania. Included in the United Church's excerpts are quotes and comments from the UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), and the Catholic Bishops of the Philippines²² (included in Text Boxes 6.5 and 6.6). The third excerpts are from the NCCP addressing the UN 42nd Session of the Committee Against Torture (included in Text Box 6.7).

In President Arroyo's speech at the launching of the Human Security Act of 2007, she insisted that the terrorist events in the U.S. in September 2001 were not the catalyst for the introduction of this legislation (see excerpt (a) Text Box 6.4). However, if as mentioned, Memorandum Order No. 37 was drafted in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist events of September 2001 in the U.S. and the Human Security Act of 2007 was an "extension" of this Memorandum Order, then it is hard to imagine that there was no correlation between the introduction of the Human Security Act of 2007 and the 2001 terrorist acts in the U.S. If, as President Arroyo would have the Philippine people believe, the catalyst for the introduction of this Act was domestic terrorism then there must have been an escalation or the threat of escalation in Philippine domestic terrorism—this was simply not the case. After all, the ASG had been extremely active before 2001, (see Chapter 5, Table 5.4) and, with the exception of the Superferry event in 2004 there had been a diminishing domestic terrorist threat. Moreover, the MNLF and the MILF are not classified as terrorist groups either by the GRP or the U.S.

²² President Arroyo, being a practicing Catholic, would have felt uncomfortable with the criticism of the Catholic bishops. However it must be stressed the criticism was not forthcoming because of the president's religious preference.

- (a) ‘this law is not an offshoot of 9/11’
- (b) ‘they’ [the military] ‘will fight to eliminate the armed **terrorist threats** to the nation from **religious extremists**
- (c) ‘if you are a **religious terrorist** we will stop you’
- (d) ‘**poverty**, though not the cause, **abets terrorism**’ (bolded emphasis: author)

Text Box 6.4. Excerpts from President Arroyo’s press release of 20 July 2007.
Source: Philippine Information Agency.²³

Excerpts (b) and (c) of Text Box 6.4 are important inasmuch as President Arroyo stressed the need to eliminate religious extremists and religious terrorists. There was no mention of the word Muslim. Was the omission intentional since the word “Muslim” may have offended the MNLF, and even more so the MILF who have since March 2003 been engaged in protracted and sensitive peace talks? And it would have been incorrect to mention the ASG by name, as religious extremists or religious terrorists. And, even more so, to refer to them as Muslim extremists or Muslim terrorists. Therefore, it is curious why President Arroyo deemed it necessary to use the adjective “religious” when making a speech introducing the Human Security Act of 2007. Also, it must be added here that the NPA, who Abuza believes offers the greatest threat to Philippine internal security,²⁴ is for the most part a secular organisation.

When reading the introduction to the Human Security Act of 2007 (Section 2: Declaration of policy) it became clear, as it also did in paragraph 14 of Memorandum Order No. 37, that the Arroyo Administration acknowledged the correlation between poverty in the Philippines and domestic terrorism. Section 2 of the Human Security Act of 2007, whilst acknowledging that poverty was no justification for terrorist acts, nevertheless advocated that ‘promoting equitable economic development’ could address the root causes of conflict. Ironically, former President Fidel Ramos recognised this as well. After his Presidential term he wrote: ‘we consciously nurtured the atmosphere of

²³ Philippine Information Agency. Retrieved May 2009,
<http://www.pia.gov.ph/?m=12&sec=reader&rp=9&fi=p070720.htm&no=82&date=>

²⁴ See the discussion of Abuza’s views in Chapter 1. 1.4 Literature Review and Scope of Study.

peace and development, for it is the only way to make sustainable progress happen'.²⁵ As mentioned previously in this dissertation, the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement which President Ramos introduced, advocated a sharing of wealth from resources with the predominately Muslim provinces of the southern Philippines—sadly this has not transpired. Whereas President Ramos attempted to secure peace in his country by equitable wealth redistribution, the Arroyo Administration, which agrees in principle with the theory, have, to this date, offered it only 'token support'.

If, as President Arroyo believes, there is a correlation between poverty and terrorism (referred to as *abets*; see excerpt 'd', Text Box 6.4) then the major spawning grounds for poverty would be the predominately Muslim provinces of the southern Philippines. These provinces, especially the provinces of the ARMM, are among the poorest in the Philippines. As evidence of this, in 2007 the Philippine NGO 'Peace and Equity Foundation' (PEF) found Sulu to be the most impoverished province in the southern Philippines.²⁶ However, a possible solution to the elimination, or at least reduction of poverty in these predominately Muslim provinces would be the full implementation of the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement, for which the Arroyo Administration has the authority and indeed the means to fulfill—but to date it has not done so. The assumption that the full implementation of the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement would assist in the elimination of poverty in Sulu Province has been shown by the response to just such a question put to MNLF survey respondents in November 2008 (over 73% believing it to be true).²⁷ Having briefly discussed President Arroyo's press release at the introduction of the Human Security Act of 2007, it is now important to look at the criticism leveled at this Act, by members of the clergy.²⁸ The first comes from the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania in April 2008, excerpts of which are included in Text Box 6.5.

²⁵ F. Ramos, *The continuing revolution: Meeting the challenges of development and poverty reduction*, Makati City, Ramos Peace and Development Foundation, 2001, p. 27.

²⁶ The PEF uses lack of housing, lack of access to clean water, sanitation facilities, incidence of malnutrition and income level, to assess poverty levels. Refer *NowPublic*. Retrieved May 2009, <http://www.nowpublic.com/health/n-samar-sulu-masbate-poorest-provinces>

²⁷ See Chapter 4, Question 2 MNLF.

²⁸ It was not deemed necessary to include any criticism from any political opponent or political party as bias would be hard to eliminate.

- (a) 'The Human Security Act will surely result in many human rights violations - it basically presumes guilt unless proven innocent - it actually legitimizes terrorism-state terrorism'.
- (b) 'the definition of terrorist activities is too broad', and concessions to the military are practically unlimited'
- (c) there are some positive aspects of the definition of terrorist acts in the Human Security Act but the end result is an overly broad definition which is seen to be in variance with the principle of legality and thus incompatible with Article 15 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights'

Text Box 6.5. Excerpts from the April 2008 Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania.

Source: Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania: April 2008.²⁹

The Philippines is arguably one of the most religious nations in South-East Asia,³⁰ and excerpts (a) and (b) in Text Box 6.5 are exceptionally important, because they were made by leading figures in Philippine Christian churches or organisations of churches. Excerpt (a) was a statement made by Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz-Duremdes, who, in 2008, was the General Secretary of the NCCP.³¹ Whilst the language that Ruiz-Duremdes used may have been seen as somewhat emotional, even irrational, especially where she accused the Arroyo Administration of 'state terrorism', it has to be put into context. The NCCP has at times been a vehement critic of the Arroyo Administration, blaming it for extrajudicial killings and torture of Philippine nationals, including members belonging to the NCCP.

Excerpt (b) was a statement, made by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the

²⁹ *Uniting Church of Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania*. Retrieved May 2009, <http://victas.uca.org.au/outreach-justice/justice-and-international-mission/resources/past-mailings/april-2008/church-039-s-concern-over-anti-terrorism-laws-in-the-philippines.pdf;m.1207876891>

³⁰ The Roman Catholic Church represents approximately 80% of the Philippine population, whilst Protestants account for a further 12%. Islam represents approximately 5% of the population. In the 2000 Philippine census only 0.5% of the population claimed to have no religion. Refer: *Religious demographic profile, Philippines*. Retrieved May 2009, <http://www.census.gov.ph/data/pressrelease/cent-qs.html>.

³¹ The NCCP consists of the Apostolic Catholic Church, Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches, Episcopal Church of the Philippines, Evangelical Methodist Church in the Philippines, Philippine Independent Church, Iglesia Unida Ekyumenikal, Lutheran Church in the Philippines, The Salvation Army, The United Methodist Church of the Philippines, and the United Church of Christ in the Philippines.

The NCCP represents over 12.5% of the Philippine population: Protestant/non-Roman Catholic.

Philippines, and presented at the Synod. It is more than likely that the Catholic Bishops' statements were introduced at the Synod to give the impression of Christian religious solidarity. The Synod, which was critical of the Arroyo Administration's Human Security Bill of 2007, and also critical of the Administration, would no doubt have been aware of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) harsh criticism of President Arroyo herself.

President Arroyo, a devout Catholic, has visited Pope Benedict XVI on a number of occasions, and had even sought advice and blessing from the previous Pope, John Paul II, when she was unsure whether or not to contest the 2004 Presidential election. Moreover, in justifying a trip to the Vatican in 2007, her Presidential Management Staff Chief, Cerge Remonde, claimed the President saw herself as a "child of the Catholic Church".³² With such conviction, it is difficult to see why President Arroyo has incurred the ire of the CBCP. In 2005, President Arroyo was applauded by the CBCP for opposing certain sections in House Bill 3773. This bill commonly referred to as a 'Population Bill' would have restricted the number of children in any family to two, as well as introducing compulsory sex education in all schools. However, only one year later the CBCP defended the right of Bishop Deogracias Iniguez, Chairman of the CBCP Commission on Ecumenical Affairs, for advocating impeachment proceedings against President Arroyo. And, in 2008, the Chairman of the CBCP, Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, called for new elections to be held in an effort to elect a new government because he claimed the current Arroyo Administration 'has been severely stricken by the social and moral cancer that is corruption'.³³ Relations between President Arroyo and the CBCP have become distanced, and the introduction of the Human Security Act of 2007, which gave inordinate power to the Executive Branch of Government—which the CBCP sees as corrupt—only strengthened the CBCP opposition to the Arroyo Administration.

³² *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 06 January 2007, p. 1. *Arroyo departs for Rome Saturday*. Retrieved May 2009, http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/breakingnews/nation/view/20070601-69059/Arroyo_departs_for_Rome_Saturday

³³ *Malay News*, 29 October 2008. *Gloria must go: CBCP head*. Retrieved May 2009, <http://www.malaya.com.ph/oct29/news1.htm>

With the CBCP antagonistic to the Arroyo Administration and opposing the introduction of the Human Security Act of 2007, it was important to gauge the reaction of world bodies to this Act. Excerpt (c) in Text Box 6.5 quotes a statement from Martin Scheinin, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism, who had serious misgivings about the legality of the Act as it pertained to Article 15 of the ‘International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights’ (ICCPR). Article 15 of the ICCPR states, in part, that all crimes must be defined in the law in a manner that is precise. Moreover, the Human Security Act of 2007 mentions the words “person/s suspected of the crime of terrorism” no less than 40 times. Scheinin went further to say that Section 19 of the Act allowed security forces to arrest without warrant and detain without charge any person who is suspected of a terrorist act.³⁴

Although the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, accepted statements from both the CBCP and the UN’s Martin Scheinin, in relation to criticism of the Philippines Human Security Act of 2007, it was felt necessary to include in the criticism of this Act a submission to the UN’s 42nd Session of the Committee Against Torture. This submission was in response to a report that the Arroyo Administration gave to the committee, assuring it that the Philippines totally supported the committee in its fight against torture. Text Box 6.6 contains relevant sections that were submitted to the UN’s 42nd Session of the Committee against Torture in April 2009, by the Philippine Government. Coincidentally, the Human Security Act of 2007 has a specific section forbidding the use of torture on detained persons.³⁵

³⁴ *Uniting Church of Australia synod of Victoria and Tasmania, op. cit.*, p. 1.

³⁵ Republic Act 9372, *op. cit.*, p. 6. Section 24. states in part “no threat, intimidation, or coercion, and no act which will inflict any form of physical pain or torment, or mental, moral, or psychological pressure, on the detained person, which shall vitiate his freewill, shall be employed in his investigation and interrogation”

The Philippine Government ‘has always been conscious of its obligation to respect, protect, promote and fulfill the rights of its citizens’.

The Philippine Government ‘has not been remiss in its responsibility to prevent torture in all its forms’

The Philippine Government believes ‘there are enough legislative, judicial, and administrative measures that give effect to the provisions of the Convention’

Text Box 6.6. Excerpts from the written submission of the NCCP to the 42nd Session of the United Nations Committee against Torture.

Source: National Council of Churches in the Philippines: Submission to the 42nd Session of the United Nations Committee against Torture.³⁶

In response to these statements from the Philippine Government, the General Secretary of the NCCP, the Reverend Father Rex Reyes, Jr., submitted three cases, included in Text Box 6.7 to the Committee, all allegedly involving torture and abduction committed against members of the NCCP. These incidents occurred after the introduction of the Human Security Act of 2007.³⁷ Furthermore, these incidents allegedly were committed by members of the AFP, the Philippine Naval Intelligence Security Force, or the Philippine National Police (PNP). More poignantly, Reyes also told this Session of the United Nations Committee against Torture that the Philippine NGO *Karapatan*³⁸ had claimed that between 2001 to 2008 there were 1,010 victims of ‘official’ torture in the Philippines.³⁹ There have been other charges of torture and extra-judicial killings brought against the Arroyo Administration. One such hearing was before the Permanent People’s Tribunal (PPT) in 2006/7, and this will be dealt with briefly at the conclusion of this chapter.

³⁶ See: *National Council of Churches in the Philippines: Submission to the 42nd Session of the United Nations Committee against Torture*. Retrieved May 2009, <http://www.google.com.au/search?hl=en&q=%22Philippine+government+in+its+report+to+the+Committee%22&btnG=Search&meta=>

³⁷ Reyes did submit other cases of torture against members of the NCCP, but these were committed before the introduction of the Human Security Act of 2007. It is important to stress here that these cases submitted by the Reyes were members of the NCCP only.

³⁸ The NGO *Karapatan* also known as the “Alliance for the Advancement of Peoples Rights” has, over the years been a constant critic of the Arroyo Administration.

³⁹ *National Council of Churches in the Philippines, op. cit.*, p. 1.

1. Pastor Berlin Guerrero of the United Church of Christ of the Philippines. Abducted and tortured on 27 May 2007 by members of the PNP and the Naval Intelligence Security Force. Location: Binan, Laguna. Crime: alleged officer of the NPA.
2. Ruel Munasque. A leader of the Christian Youth Fellowship of the United Church of Christ of the Philippines. Abducted and tortured on 24 October 2007 by members of the AFP. Location: Barangay Poblacion, Municipality of Dumalinao, Zamboanga del Sur. Crime: alleged member of the NPA.
3. Pastor Rodel Canja of the United Church of Christ of the Philippines. Abducted and tortured on 06 May 2008 for four days. Canja was blindfolded during the whole ordeal so the identity of the abductors is uncertain. However they were believed to be members of the AFP because they made continual reference to Pastor Berlin Guerrero (see case 1). Crime: alleged member of the NPA.

Text Box 6.7. Alleged cases of abduction and torture of NCCP members post Human Security Act of 2007, submitted to the 42nd Session of the United Nations Committee against Torture. **Source:** *National Council of Churches in the Philippines: Submission to the 42nd Session of the United Nations Committee against Torture.*⁴⁰

The above incidents in Text Box 6.7 are not intended to be exhaustive. They are included here because they were high profile and reported in many Philippine and international media outlets. As well, the victims were Christians not Muslims or indigenous Lumads. There were other reports of human rights violations presented to UN Committees, however they occurred before the introduction of the Human Security Act of 2007. To gauge the extent of criticism of the Arroyo Administration prior to the introduction of this Act, it is now important to introduce the findings of the PPT in March 2007.

6.5 Permanent People’s Tribunal (PPT): 2007 verdict

The PPT is an independent tribunal that examines alleged violations of human rights committed by States or Heads of State. It was founded in 1979 in Italy, and comprises law experts and intellectuals. It succeeded the International War Crimes Tribunal set up by the Nobel Prize Laureate, Bertrand Russell.⁴¹ In 1980, the MNLF submitted to the PPT a list of charges alleging human rights violations committed by the

⁴⁰ *National Council of Churches in the Philippines, op. cit.*, pp. 5-9.

⁴¹ 1872-1970

Marcos Administration. And in 2006 the PPT heard charges brought against the GRP and the U.S. and their respective Presidents, Gloria Arroyo and George W. Bush. Three charges were brought against the Administrations and their Presidents by a coalition of social and religious organisations, some based in the Philippines and some in Europe. However only charge number one (see Text Box 6.8) will be mentioned here, because it is relevant to central question 4 of this dissertation insomuch as the U.S. in regards to the Global War on Terror, has in its foreign policy a desire to convince its allies that insurgency and terrorism go hand-in-hand. With that in mind, if the GRP wishes to comply with U.S. foreign policy then it must be seen to be uncompromising concerning any form of dissent, or more importantly any insurgency action.

(1) Gross and systematic violations of civil and political rights: extra-judicial killings, massacres, abductions and enforced disappearances, torture, arson, bombings, mass intimidation, forced mass evacuation and other human rights violations against unarmed political activists, workers, peasants, women, youth, church people, journalists, lawyers, human-rights defenders, and peace advocates.
--

Text Box 6.8 Charge no.1. As presented to the 2007 Permanent People’s Tribunal (PPT) in The Hague.

Source: *Permanent People’s Tribunal: the final verdict.*⁴²

The list of human rights violations and victims in Text Box 6.8 may at first appear to be overstated. However, the accusations and evidence, as previously mentioned by CBCP, Martin Scheinin of the UN’s Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism, and the NCCP submission to the United Nations Committee against Torture, addressed some of the alleged violations in Text Box 6.8. More importantly, the detailed evidence of 839 extra-judicial killings during the Arroyo Administration was accepted as true by the PPT. Included in the 839 extra-judicial killings were nine church dignitaries, 18 human rights workers, and 125 identified as ‘national minority’: Muslim, or possibly Lumad.⁴³

In response to charge number one submitted to the PPT, the following verdict (see Text Box 6.9) was delivered. And in a final condemnation of the Arroyo

⁴² *Permanent Peoples Tribunal: The final verdict.* Retrieved September 2007, <http://stopthekillings.org/stknpv1/?q=node&from=40&PHPSESSID=d2455485ded0c70c7d3f388805dd5dd4>

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

Administration, the PPT concluded by saying ‘The PPT denounces as unacceptable the inclusion of the Government of the Philippines in the UN Human Rights Council’⁴⁴

The atrocities of extra-judicial killings, of massacres, of tortures, of communities destroyed and dispersed are the visible and dramatic expression of one strategy --- The extension and the systematic nature of the violations of the rights of the Filipino people committed by the governments of Mrs. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and with the support and full awareness of the government of George Walker Bush, qualify the same violations as crimes against humanity, with all the consequences for the persons who are responsible for them. Such violations must be stopped immediately.

Text Box 6.9 Verdict, in part, of the PPT delivered on 26 March 2007 in The Hague.

Source: *Permanent People’s Tribunal: the final verdict. op. cit.*

6.6 Summary of the criticism of Republic Act 9372

Central question 7 of this dissertation sought to explore the possibility that the introduction of Republic Act 9372 assisted the Arroyo Administration’s domestic counterinsurgency policies by closer linking them with U.S. counterinsurgency foreign policy. This evidence suggests that this may be true. The result of introducing radical legislation by the Arroyo Administration has been proposed to be a continuation of human rights abuses. Weighed against this is the financial advantage that the Arroyo Administration has gained by allowing U.S. military forces to be stationed in the Philippines—particularly in the southern Philippines. With that in mind, Chapter 7 of this dissertation, ‘U.S. Involvement in Philippine Domestic Counterinsurgency Policies and Military Action’, will analyse the advantages or otherwise of the decision by the Arroyo Administration to allow the U.S. military to be present in the Philippines.

⁴⁴ *Permanent Peoples Tribunal: The final verdict. op.cit.*



Chapter 7

U. S. Involvement in Philippine Domestic Counterinsurgency Policies and Military Action.

This chapter addresses central question 5 of this dissertation, namely ‘is the Philippine Administration of Gloria Arroyo supporting specific U.S. foreign policy as a part of The Global War on Terror in an endeavour to implement its own domestic counterinsurgency policies, especially in the Sulu Archipelago provinces? And, by supporting the U.S. in this matter is there expectation that greater U.S. military assistance will be given to the Philippines?’ As well, this chapter addresses, in part, central question 4 of this dissertation, ‘given that U.S. troops are stationed in the predominately Muslim Sulu Archipelago provinces of Sulu, Basilan and Tawi-Tawi, and are engaging in military operations as well as some civil construction projects with the AFP, is this an exacerbating factor contributing to insurgency in that region, especially the province of Sulu?’

Although this dissertation is primarily concerned with events occurring in Sulu Province, it is considered necessary in this chapter to examine carefully the larger picture of the U.S. in the Philippines as a whole, especially the provinces of Mindanao. With such scrutiny, the volatile situation in Sulu can be put into better perspective. With the above central questions in mind, it is proposed that pivotal to the U.S. military presence in Sulu since 2001 was the belief by the George W. Bush Administration and the Arroyo Administration that the ASG, in conjunction with Al-Qaeda and/or possibly JI, have been using the jungles and remote mountainous regions of that province to train and ‘educate’ terrorist cells. A further view is put forward that the Bush Administration believed these alleged terrorists could at sometime in the future be used as an attack force against the U.S. and its interests or its allies—the Philippine Government included. Moreover, it is further proposed that the Philippines Administration of Gloria Arroyo is in agreement with U.S. foreign policy, especially that which refers to the need to contain domestic insurgency in the southern

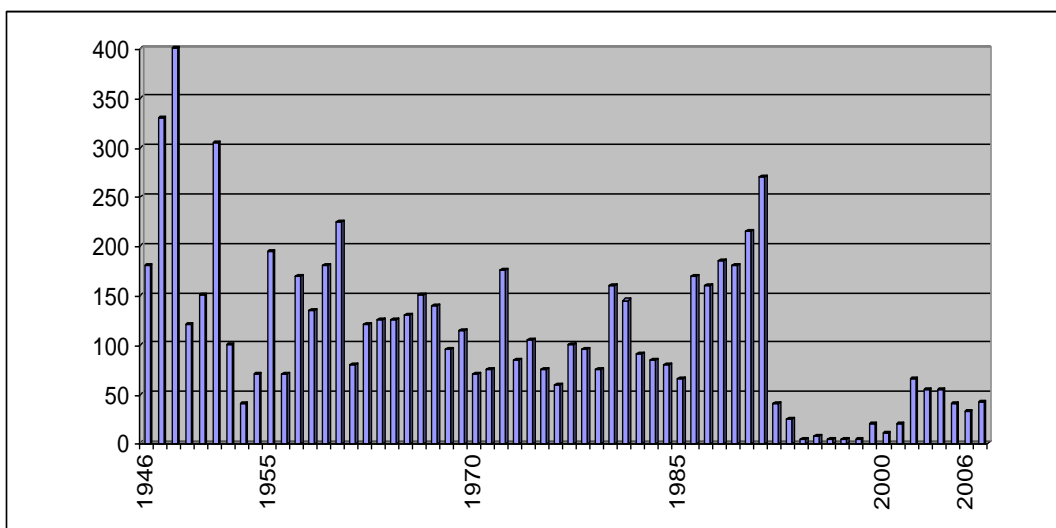
Philippines. And this, in turn, allows the Arroyo Administration to have inordinate numbers of the AFP in Sulu as a sign of solidarity with this particular aspect of U.S. foreign policy. Finally, it also is proposed that this solidarity with U.S. foreign and defence policies follows a tradition that previous Philippine Administrations have adopted.

In March 1947, the then President of the Philippines, Manual Roxas, signed into law a military assistance pact which gave the U.S. a 99-year lease on designated military bases. In 1967, under the Presidency of Ferdinand Marcos, this was reduced to 25 years, effectively making the renewal—or termination of the lease agreement—due in 1992. However, following a 1991 vote in the Philippine Senate rejecting an extension of the 25-year lease, renewal was then not an option. Accordingly, in 1992 the Subic Naval Base, Clarke Air Force Base, three support bases, and 19 smaller military facilities closed—and with this came the departure of thousands of U.S. military personnel. The consequence of this was that hundred of millions of US dollars (USD) in military assistance to the Philippines almost ceased. However, the ‘Mutual Defence Treaty’ of 1951—ratified by President Truman in 1952—remained in force. Briefly, the 1951 ‘Mutual Defence Treaty’ remains in force indefinitely unless either the U.S. or the Government of the Republic of the Philippines gives one year’s notice of its termination. At the time of this study the treaty was still in force.

Before analysing the complexity of just how the U.S. post-2001, was given permission to station hundreds of its military personnel in the southern Philippines—as well as the participation of thousands of its military personnel in joint military exercises with the AFP—it necessary/useful to closely review two critical periods of military assistance given to the Philippines. First is the period from its independence in July 1946 to the closure of U.S. military bases in 1992. This period is included in Graph 7.1. Second is the period from 1992 to 2007 and is included in Graph 7.2. The statistics for U.S. military aid to the Philippines were, at the time of the writing of this dissertation, only available to 2007.

7.1 U.S. military assistance to the Philippines, 1946-1992.

Graph 7.1 Overall U.S. military assistance to the Philippines 1946-2007, in millions of USD (rounded to nearest USD 5 million—the exception being the years 1994-8 where the annual assistance averaged just under USD 2 million). (All figures are given in constant 2007 prices)



Source: Compiled from statistics published in *US overseas loans & grants [Greenbook]*.¹

Leaving aside for the moment the period of U.S. military assistance post-1992, it can be seen from Graph 7.1 that increased military assistance given by the U.S. to the Philippines in most cases coincided with either U.S. preparations for war, its major involvements in theatres of war, or the immediate period preceding renewal of defence agreements. These criterion as shown bolded in brackets at the end of each category listed below.

- The Subic Bay Complex originally began operations around 1904, and the Clark Air Force Base become operational in 1915. The years 1947-1948 saw the reconstruction of U.S. military installations including the

¹ *US overseas loans & grants [Greenbook]*. Retrieved June 2009, http://gesdb.usaid.gov/cgi-bin/broker.exe?_program=gbkprogs.report_program_page.sas&_service=default&unit=R&program=G BK419929

Subic Bay Naval Complex and the Clarke Air Force Base, which had been damaged or destroyed during World War II. The U.S. military assistance in these two years, the highest recorded, coincided with the first serious crisis of the Cold War, the Berlin Blockade. (**Preparations for war.**)

- At the height of the Korean Conflict (1950-1953), U.S. military assistance to the Philippines reached its third highest level, USD 300 million in 1951. During the Korean Conflict, the Philippine Expeditionary Forces operated with the U.S. Cavalry and Infantry Divisions. The Philippine military commitment to this theatre of conflict was approximately 7,500 combat troops, and was the fourth largest contingent under United Nations Command. (**Theatre of war.**)

It is also worth mentioning here that 1950/1951 was the height of the Hukbalahap rebellion in the Philippines. And it can be argued that without massive U.S. military assistance in the form of advanced weaponry, the Administration of Ramon Magsaysay may very well have fallen to the communist insurgents. This was a situation which would have given some credence to President Dwight Eisenhower's 'Domino Theory'.

- In 1960, the U.S. was making preparations for a huge extra commitment of military personnel to South Vietnam. This was accomplished in 1961 with an additional 16,000 troops being deployed there. The Philippines was one of the closest geographical allies to this theatre of war. Consequently, in 1960 the U.S. gave approximately USD 220 million to the Philippines in military assistance. This was the fifth highest amount recorded. (**Preparations for war.**)
- From 1966 to 1968 the Philippines—being only one of five non-neighbouring countries—deployed over 2000 military personnel to South Vietnam to assist the U.S. in its military involvement in that country. Consequently, this solidarity with the U.S. war mission, as well as allowing the U.S. to use military bases in the Philippines as a springboard for its operations in South Vietnam, saw military assistance to the

Philippines in the years 1962 to 1969 consistently hover between USD 100-150 million annually. (**Preparations for war.**) (**Theatre of war.**)

- The years 1980-1981 saw a spike in U.S. military assistance to the Philippines. This coincided with the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, an episode which saw tensions escalate between the two superpowers of the day.
- In 1986, at the beginning of the Presidency of Corazon Aquino, debate began in the Philippines about the renewal of the 25-year lease of U.S. military bases due to expire in 1992. In 1986 the military assistance had increased to USD 170 million. This was an increase of approximately 140% from the previous year. From 1986 to 1990 this assistance hovered between USD 160 million and USD 220 million, and in 1991, the year before a crucial "bases" vote was to be taken in the Philippine Congress and Senate, this military assistance soared to USD 270 million (the fourth highest on record). (**Immediate period preceding renewal of defence agreement.**)
- In the Persian Gulf War of 1990-1991, the Philippines sent approximately 200 medical personnel to that theatre of conflict.

It can be seen by the reviewing above periods in U.S. military history that the support of the Philippines either in troops or military facilities, was strategically important to the U.S. Commensurate with this support came increased U.S. military aid to the Philippines.

Analysis of U.S. military assistance to the Philippines, 1946-1992.

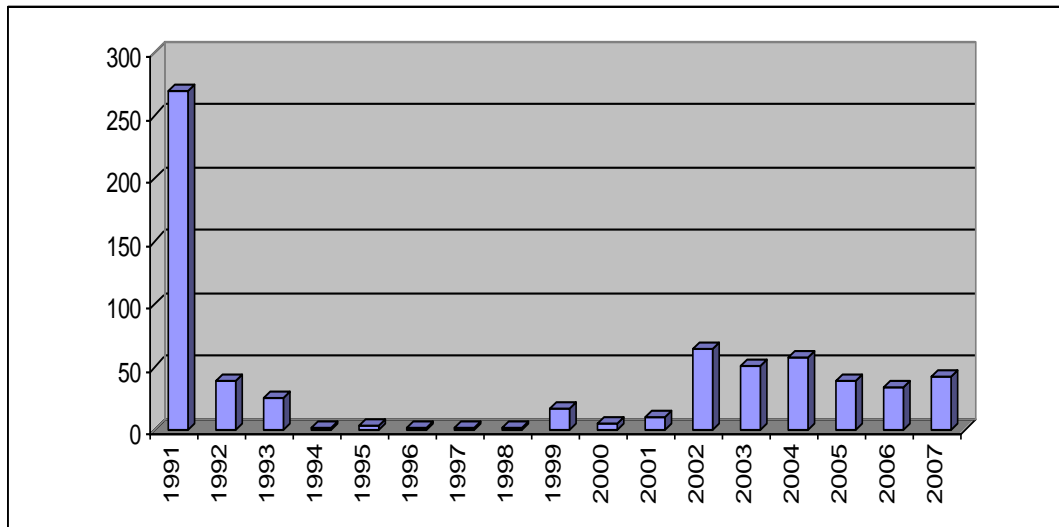
The evidence has indicated that from 1946 to 1992 whenever U.S. military assistance to the Philippines increased, it was almost always as a result of the factors mentioned above. That is during periods defined by U.S. preparations for war, involvements in theatres of war, or lead-up to renewal of mutual defence agreements—the exception being 1980-1981, although it could be argued that this was more a posturing of military strength in response to the Soviet invasion of

Afghanistan. After the decision was taken in 1992 by the Philippine Government not to renew the leases of the U.S. military bases, military assistance seriously declined. With that serious decline in mind, it would not be unrealistic to suggest that the military assistance given by the U.S. to the Philippines, especially prior to 1992 was not an act of altruism, but rather it was driven by geo-strategic interests.

7.2 U.S. military assistance to the Philippines 1992-2007

After the closure of the U.S. military bases in the Philippines in 1992, there was deemed to be little strategic value to be gained by the U.S. in continuing to supply the Philippines with military assistance, especially in the form of hardware. If the Philippines wished to purchase military hardware from the U.S. then it would have to be purchased with Philippine pesos. The days of receiving large grants of USD to buy U.S. military hardware were over. The following graph summarises U.S. military assistance to the Philippines in this period.

Graph 7.2 U.S. military assistance to the Philippines 1992-2007, in millions USD (rounded to the nearest USD million with the exception of the years 1994/5/6/7/8 where the annual assistance averaged just USD 1.6 million). All USD figures are millions and are constant 2007 prices.



Sources: *Focus on the Global South, special reports 1&2, 2007, op. cit.* And, *US overseas loans & grants [Greenbook] op. cit.* (figures were compiled from various references in both sources)

A superficial glance at Graph 7.1, as shown earlier, reveals a dramatic decrease in military assistance post-1991. However, a closer examination as revealed in Graph 7.2 indicates military assistance has increased from 1999 to 2007. This increase certainly was not to the extent of pre-1991, but was significant compared to the years 1994-1998. Bearing in mind that the U.S. now has no military bases in the Philippines, then why has military assistance to the Philippine been increasing since 1999? The answer, it is suggested, would be as a consequence of the terrorist events in the U.S. in September 2001. However, this does not take into account spikes in Graph 7.2, like that which occurred in 1999. Table 7.1, which follows, is an individual analysis of the years from 1991 to 2007 with commentary.

Table 7.1 U.S. military assistance to the Philippines 1991-2007, with relevant events.

1991	This was the penultimate year before the legislated renewal/cancellation of U.S. military leases in the Philippines, and, as mentioned, was the fourth highest year in U.S. military assistance to the Philippines (USD 270 million). There are two salient factors to be taken into account here (a) although the U.S. was engaged in the first Persian Gulf War, the Philippines had despatched no combat forces to that theatre; and (b) The U.S. military bases in the Philippines were not used as a launching pad for U.S. forces in this Middle-East conflict. The likely scenario to be drawn from this huge increase in military assistance in 1991 may be seen as an attempt to convince the Philippine Government that continued increased military assistance would be forthcoming in the event of the renewal of the leases.
1992	The U.S. military assistance to the Philippines fell approximately 85% from the previous year. The assistance was now only USD 40 million. In this year there no doubt would have been U.S. military aid that was already in transit to the Philippines, and this would account for the assistance still not being inconsiderable.
1993	U.S. military assistance now fell to USD 25 million. It is suggested that the same factors which were mentioned for the previous year were still, to a lesser degree, applicable.
1994	U.S. military assistance to the Philippines fell to an all time low of just under USD 2 million.
1995	This year saw U.S. military assistance go to just over USD 3 million. The reason for this very small increase is not known. However, in real terms, USD 1 million increase translates to only 0.37% of the U.S. military aid given to the Philippines in 1991.
1996	U.S. military assistance was just over USD 2 million.
1997	As 1994, and 1996 (that is, approximately USD 2 million).
1998	As 1994, and 1996/7.
1999	This year saw U.S. military aid increased by over ten-fold to USD18 million. This increase coincided with the signing, in May of that year, of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA). Briefly, the VFA allow the U.S. Government to have jurisdiction over its military personnel although they may be accused of serious crimes in the Philippines. It also had provision for the U.S. to refuse to detain or arrest its military personnel accused of serious crimes in the Philippines.
2000	U.S. military aid dropped to USD5 million. There appeared to be no reason for over 70% decline from the previous year (all archival research has failed to establish conclusive indicators for this decline). Continued page 221

2001	<p>Table 7.1 continued</p> <p>USD11million was given to the Philippines in this year. 2001 was the year of the terrorist attacks in the U.S.. These attacks occurred on 11 September, and by October the Executive Branch of the Philippine Government issued Memorandum Order No. 37. This advocated working closely with the U.S. on intelligence and security matters. As well, it offered the U.S. airspace and facilities. (See Chapter 6 of this dissertation).</p> <p>There is no monthly breakdown of U.S. military aid. Therefore, whether the majority of aid was given pre-11 September or post-11 September is unknown.</p> <p>However, although there was no military emergency pre-11 September, the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) was being negotiated. The MLSA is an agreement between the U.S. and the RP that allow for shared military logistics, supplies and services.</p>
2002	<p>U.S. military aid now climbed to USD 64 million: the highest in over a decade and on a par with military aid given to the RP in some years of the 1970s. More saliently, it must be remembered that in the 1970s the U.S. had military bases in the Philippines.</p> <p>2002 also saw U.S. military personnel, including members of its Special Forces and Navy Engineers, participate in <i>Balikatan</i>² exercises in Basilan Province; the first such time that a <i>Balikatan</i> exercise had been held in a predominately Muslim province of the southern Philippines.³</p>
2003	<p>U.S. military aid for this year was now a little over USD50 million. <i>Balikatan</i> exercises were announced, but were postponed. In this year the U.S. conferred the status of “Major Non-NATO Ally” (MNNA) on the RP. (This status is given to close allies of the U.S. who are not members of NATO). There are many strategic advantages to be gained from this status. In effect this status gave the Philippines access to US technology and weapons systems reserved exclusively for NATO and other closer allies. However, what is significant to this study is that the status of MNNA gives the RP the right to participate with the U.S. in certain counter-terrorism initiatives and operations.</p>
2004	<p>U.S. military aid for this year was just slightly over USD 57 million. <i>Balikatan</i> and other U.S. military exercises were held in this year. However, the only southern Philippine province to host exercises was North Cotabato.</p>
2005	<p>U.S. military aid again hovered just under USD 40 million. Nine joint U.S./AFP exercises were held in 2005. Two of these exercises, “Balance Piston OS-6, and Balance Piston 06-01 were held in the southern Philippine provinces of Basilan and Zamboanga del Sur respectively.</p> <p>In this year the U.S. Overseas Basing Commission (OBC) claimed that the Philippines was now seen as a “Cooperative Security Location” (CSL). Further analysis of this claim is covered, in part, in 7.5 of this chapter.</p>
2006	<p>U.S. military aid fell slightly to approximately USD34 million. <i>Balikatan</i> 2006 (20 February-05 march) involved 5000 U.S. troops. Sulu Province was one of the locations where exercises took part. There was another joint U.S./RP military exercise conducted in Basilan and Tawi-Tawi. This now meant that all three predominately Muslim provinces of the Sulu Archipelago were host to U.S. military personnel. Further details of these U.S./GRP military exercises in the Sulu Archipelago were, at the time of the writing of this dissertation. Unavailable.</p>
2007	<p>U.S. military aid in this year was slightly under USD43 million. <i>Balikatan</i> 2007, and Carat '07 joint U.S./RP military exercises were held in February/March and May/June, respectively. Approximately 1700 U.S. troops were involved, and all locations were in the southern Philippines. Importantly, the ARMM provinces of Sulu, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, and Basilan saw these joint exercises conducted in their provinces.</p>

Sources: *Focus on the Global South, special reports 1&2, 2007, op. cit.* and *US overseas loans & grants [Greenbook], op. cit.* (figures were compiled from various references in both sources)

² *Balikatan*: literally translated means “shoulder to shoulder”. The first such exercises were held in 1981.

³ Troop numbers taken from *Focus on the Global South, special reports, No.1. op. cit.*, pp 32-35.

Analysis of U.S. military assistance to the Philippines, 1991-2007.

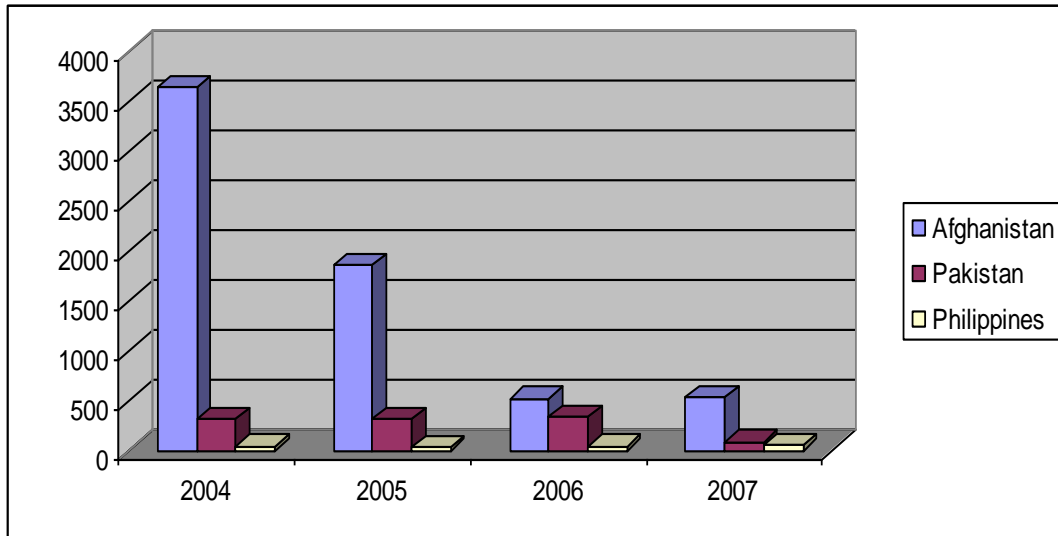
The above assessment has demonstrated that after the closure of the U.S. military bases in the Philippines in 2002 U.S. military aid fell to an all-time low of just under USD 2 million in the years 1994-1998. To put this figure into perspective, leaving aside the years 1992 and 1993 when military aid was seriously winding down, the average annual military aid to the Philippines in the immediate five years before the closure of the U.S. military bases was approximately USD 200 million, the majority of which was used to purchase U.S. arms and ammunition and engage in military training. The immediate five years after 1993 (1994-1998), the annual military aid to the Philippines was only approximately USD 2 million, or a drop of 99%. Obviously, this considerable decline in U.S. military aid was unsustainable, and unacceptable, and the trend had to be reversed if the AFP was to remain a viable military force in the region. Notwithstanding that military aid to the Philippines climbed steeply from 2002—ostensibly to combat militant Islamic terrorist insurgency (the ASG in particular)—it is now important to compare two other Asian countries receiving military aid from the U.S. in their fight against fundamentalist Islamic militant insurgency: The Islamic Republic of Pakistan and The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. This is done, in section 7.3.

7.3 Comparison of U.S. military aid to the Philippines with other Asian allies in the Global War on Terror

Any analysis of U.S. military foreign policy on the Philippines would be incomplete without including a comparison of military aid given to two close neighbours, namely Afghanistan and Pakistan. This is important because both these nations, similar to the Philippines, believe that the greatest threat to their internal security is insurgency. Graph 7.3 shows the amount of U.S. foreign military aid given to Afghanistan, the Philippines, and Pakistan for the years 2004-2007 (individual annual totals for years prior to 2004 were unavailable from reliable sources). Pakistan and Afghanistan, in their operations against militant Islamic insurgency, have targeted Al-Qaeda and the Taliban; whereas the Philippines has specifically targeted the ASG. Whilst it is true that JI is included in the list of belligerents in the Global War on Terror, it is predominately an Indonesian domestic problem—although in all probability its

influence may have spread to neighbouring states. Even though Indonesia receives military aid from the U.S. (USD 21 million in the years 2004-2007),⁴ it is not included in Graph 7.3 because Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, or indeed and the ASG have little to no influence in any domestic insurgency in that country.

Graph 7.3 U.S. military assistance to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Philippines, 2004-2008. (All USD figures are millions and are constant 2007 prices).



Source: *US Overseas loans & grants [Greenbook] .op. cit., p.1.*

Analysis of U.S. military assistance to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Philippines, 2004-2008.

At the time of writing of this dissertation, U.S. military involvement was waning in Iraq and increasing in Afghanistan. The war in Iraq was becoming increasingly unpopular in the U.S. and there was a change in Administration in Washington, D.C. which saw the focus of foreign military involvement change from Iraq to Afghanistan. Therefore, it can be assumed that the military aid to Afghanistan, if figures had been available, would have been considerably more in 2008-2009 than it was in 2007. Consequently, because the only reliable U.S. foreign military aid figures available to this researcher were for 2007, these are the figures analysed.

⁴ *US Overseas loans & grants [Greenbook], op. cit., p. 1.*

It can be argued that Al-Qaeda, a non-state terrorist organisation with multinational operations, poses a threat to the U.S. not only on home soil but also its foreign interests, including military installations, military personnel, and nationals working abroad. By association, the Taliban, can also be seen as offering a threat, although this is more likely where the U.S. is involved in a military capacity such as Afghanistan or Pakistan. Because Al-Qaeda is 'stateless', it has no formal military structures, although it could be argued that the coterie protecting Osama bin Laden is a military structure. It could further be argued that Al-Qaeda adheres to a philosophical belief—adopted by like-minded militants—that includes a hatred for Western, or predominately Christian states and this philosophy in itself places Al-Qaeda in the belligerent camp in the Global War on Terror. The Taliban, even though they may share some of the philosophical beliefs of Al-Qaeda, do possess a well disciplined, and in most senses an adequately equipped, military force.⁵ As mentioned in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, ASG operatives are at best only somewhere in the vicinity of 200 personnel, or indeed may be non-existent—this more so in Sulu Province.

From 2004-2007 the average U.S. military aid to Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Philippines was USD1634 million, USD 264 million and USD 43 million, respectively. The ratios of military aid are approximately 38:6:1 and pose the question of why is there such a discrepancy. The answer lies not so much in the stationing of foreign troops in the Philippines but the legality of having such troops participating in domestic counterinsurgency operations. Large numbers of U.S troops participating in joint counterinsurgency operations, such as occurs in Afghanistan, involves greater expenditure. Leaving aside Al-Qaeda, which may be perceived as a global threat, then the question has to be asked why the U.S. finds it necessary to give such large amounts of military aid to Afghanistan and Pakistan to fight domestic insurgency, and to give the Philippines substantial military aid—albeit considerably less than Afghanistan and Pakistan—to fight bandits or criminals: the ASG—whose only agenda seems to be

⁵ The exact number of Taliban fighters is so speculative, that to quote numbers in this dissertation would be an over-reliance on questionable secondary sources.

‘terror for profit’.⁶ The answer cannot be seen deemed geo-political, because Afghanistan and Pakistan are both Islamic republics and members of the OIC, whilst the Philippines is an overwhelmingly Christian democracy based on the U.S. political system. The answer must be geo-strategic. The U.S. needs a strategically located friendly democrat ally in South East Asia and this must come at a price—military and humanitarian.

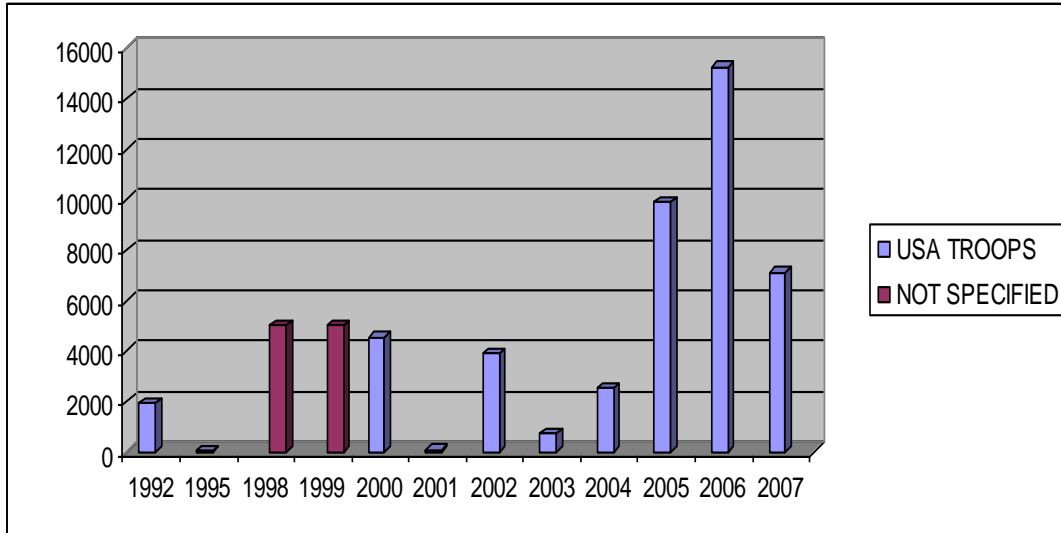
7.4 Philippine support of specific U.S. foreign policy and defence policies

As demonstrated, since 1999 the amount of U.S. military aid given to the Philippines has increased. Commensurate with the increased military aid to the Philippines has been the increase in joint military exercises of both countries. Graph 7.4 indicates the number of U.S. military personnel involved in joint U.S./AFP exercises, whilst Graph 7.5 indicates the number of confirmed joint exercises (post-1992) as reported in the *Focus on the Global South special reports 1 & 2*. However, the number of joint military exercises since 2002 may very well be considerably more. *Focus on the Global South special report 1* claimed that there may have been as many as 17-24 joint U.S./AFP exercises held annually since 2002, with some lasting only a few days.⁷

⁶ At the time writing the fragile MNLF peace agreement was still holding, albeit in Sulu there were spasmodic skirmishes. However a series of clashes between the AFP and the MILF in mainland Mindanao provinces have seen the collapse of that fragile peace agreement. These clashes are not seen as insurgency. This may have more to do with the USIP being involved in the original peace negotiations between the Arroyo Administration and the MILF.

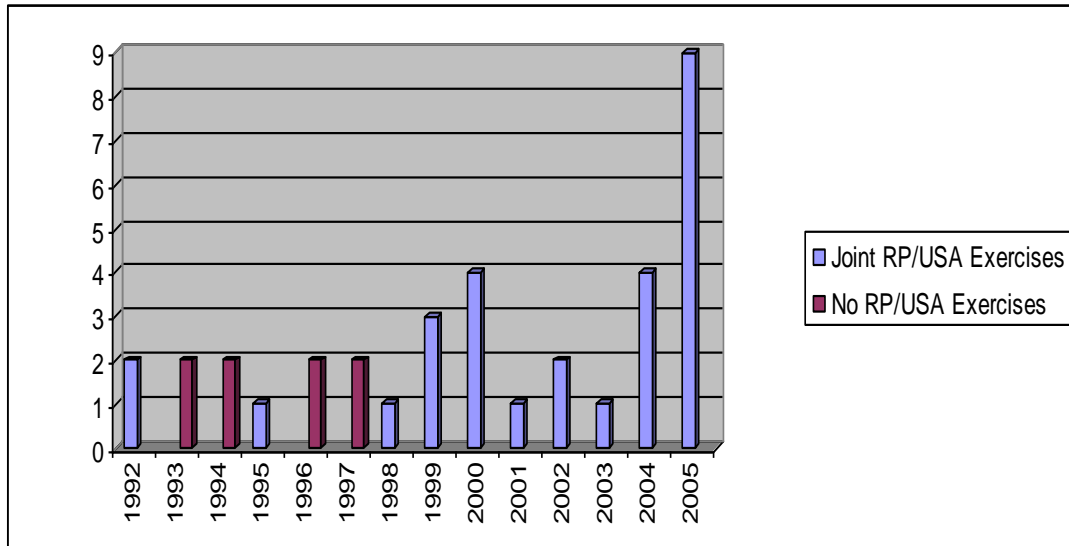
⁷ *Focus on the Global South, special report No.1*. January 2007. *op. cit.*, p. 32.

Graph 7.4 Reported U.S. military personnel involved with the AFP in joint military exercises post-1992



Sources: *Focus on the Global South, special reports 1&2, 2007. op. cit.* (figures were compiled from various references in both sources)

Graph 7.5 Reported number of U.S./AFP joint military exercises post-1992



Sources: *Focus on the Global South, special reports 1&2, 2007. op. cit.* (figures were compiled from various references in both sources)

Official confirmation of the duration or the personnel involved in all of the exercises was unavailable due to security classifications. Therefore, the exercises illustrated in Graph 7.5 are only those known to have actually occurred, the sources of information being media reports and reliable military websites.⁸

Analysis of joint U.S./Philippines military exercises.

Although the U.S. military bases in the Philippines officially closed in 1992, *Balikatan* '92 and *Balikatan* '93 had been in the planning phase for some time. Accordingly, both were held simultaneously in October 1992 and involved approximately 1900 U.S. military personnel. From 1993 to 1998 there were only two joint U.S./AFP exercises conducted. One, with the code name '*Palah* '95-02', was conducted in 1995 in the island province of Palawan and involved only two U.S. Navy Officers and 13 U.S. Marines. The price that the Philippines had paid to 1998 for the closure of U.S. military bases on their soil, as previously mentioned, was a drop of 99% in U.S. military aid and the holding of one, or possibly two, joint military exercises with a confirmed U.S. military complement of only 15 Navy personnel.

It would be not be unreasonable to suggest that this dramatic decline in military aid and military joint ventures would have been totally unacceptable in terms of national security to the then President, Fidel Ramos, who himself was at one time a Deputy Chief of Staff of the AFP. President Ramos received military training at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and had served in the Korean and Vietnam Conflicts. Notwithstanding that Fidel Ramos had been President of the Philippines during the closure of the U.S. military bases in his country, he was not President when the decision was made to do so. Furthermore, in 1999 when the VFA was signed with the U.S. coinciding with the three confirmed joint U.S./AFP exercises, President Ramos had completed his term as President. However, it would be reasonable to assume that President Ramos had more than likely played an important role in initiating of both the VFA and the three confirmed joint military exercises.

⁸ *Focus on the Global South, special report No.1. op. cit.*, p. 32.

In a military sense, the truncated Presidency of Joseph Estrada was notable only for his “declaration of war” against the MILF. However, during his presidential term, just short of 31 months, there were eight confirmed joint U.S./AFP exercises, and military aid to the Philippines had increased, averaging USD 12.5 million for the years 1999-2000, albeit USD 18 million was given in one year, namely 1999 which was the year of the signing of the VFA. This increase in military aid and joint military cooperation may have been more than just coincidental. Consider the following. The Vice-President of the Philippines at this time was Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. Vice-President Arroyo, who was a graduate from Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. in 1964, and an economics graduate in 1968 from the Philippines Assumption College, was highly articulate and had come from an influential political family. Vice-President Arroyo was the daughter of former Philippine President, Diosdado Macapagal, who, during his Presidency had seen the need for close military cooperation with the U.S. With such political and academic credentials, Vice-President Arroyo would no doubt have been able to exert some influence on President Estrada in terms of national security and bi-lateral relations with the U.S.

When Gloria Arroyo assumed the Presidency of the Philippines on 20 January 2001, it was, coincidentally, the last day in office of President Clinton. However, the bi-lateral relations between the U.S. and the Philippines which had been growing since the VFA, continued with the election of President George W. Bush. And, as already mentioned, the terrorist events in the U.S. of September 2001 saw even closer bi-lateral relations between the U.S. and the Philippines. By supporting the U.S. in the Global War on Terror, the Philippines, since 2001 has received ever-increasing military aid from the U.S., despite having no U.S. military bases on its territory. With that in mind, the expectation of receiving greater military aid from the U.S. to support the Global War on Terror has addressed, in part, central question 5 of this dissertation. That is, the support of the U.S. in the Global War on Terror has resulted in greater military assistance being given to the Philippines. Section 7.5 goes further towards answering central question 5 of this dissertation.

7.5 U.S. quest for foreign military bases in the Philippines

There are no U.S. military bases, either Air, Naval, or Army, in South-East Asia. However, there are air bases in Asia as a region. Japan has three bases, namely Howe Kadena Air Base, Misawa Air Base, and Yokota Air Base; whilst South Korea has two bases, Kunsan Air Base and Osan Air Base. Kyrgyzstan does have Manus Air Base, however, Kyrgyzstan is more Eurasian than Asia specific. There is the Andersen Air Force/Naval Base, in Guam, but this is approximately the same distance from the Philippines as both South Korea and Japan—over 2000 kilometers. This vacuum of a permanent U.S. military presence in South-East Asia has existed since 1992 when the U.S. military bases in the Philippines were closed.

It can be argued that the closure of the U.S. military bases in the Philippines was inevitable after the 1987 Philippine Constitution was adopted. In Article II of that Constitution, ‘Declaration of Principles and State Policies’, Section 7, referred to an independent foreign policy. Previous Philippine Constitutions in 1899, 1935, 1943, and 1973 had not stipulated an independent foreign policy. As well, and this would have had a profound effect on the type of air/naval crafts entering Philippine territory, Section 8 forbade nuclear weaponry in the Philippines (see Text Box 7.1 for both Sections 7 & 8). However, more important was Article VII, ‘Executive Department’, Section 21, which referred to international agreements or treaties (see Text Box 7.2).

With a new emphasis now on the right to determine future independence and national self-determination, almost half (12) of Philippine Senators, including Senator Juan Ponce Enrile, a future Presidential aspirant, drafted a resolution seeking the closure of the U.S. Bases, citing the 1987 Constitution as justification. This in effect meant that if there was to be a renewal of the leases of the U.S. bases then it would require an amendment to the Constitution. And this would require a two-third’s Senate approval, something which President Aquino did not have.

Section 7. The State shall pursue an **independent foreign policy**. In its relations with other states, the paramount consideration shall be national sovereignty, territorial integrity, national interest, and **the right to self-determination**.

Section 8. The Philippines, consistent with the national interest, adopts and pursues a **policy of freedom from nuclear weapons in its territory**. (bolded emphasis: author)

Text Box 7.1 1987 Philippine Constitution: Article II, Declaration of Principles & State Policies, Sections 7 & 8

Source: 1987 Philippine Constitution

Section 21. No treaty or international agreement shall be valid and effective unless concurred in by at least two-thirds of all Members of the Senate.

Text Box 7.2 Philippine Constitution: Article VII, Executive Department, Section 21

Source: 1987 Philippine Constitution

Having now lost military bases in a country that General Arthur MacArthur⁹ in 1901 described as having a strategic position ‘unexceeded by that of any other position on the globe’¹⁰, the U.S. more than likely had gone into almost a state of disbelief, indeed almost denial, until the early part of the 21st Century. To gauge the extent of the military ‘suffering’ that this exclusion from the Philippines caused, one can refer back to Graphs 7.2, and 7.4. However, the terrorist events of September 2001 in the U.S. called for a rethink of all options in the foreign military bases debate. Moreover, whilst it has been suggested that the 1999 VFA had been the catalyst for increased military aid to the Philippines, it was not until after November 2002 when the MLSA with the Philippines was signed, that the possibility of the U.S. operating at an alternative level in the Philippines became a possibility. However, before this possibility could be seriously considered, the MLSA needed a settling-in period, as there was widespread opposition in the Philippines to a MLSA with the U.S. and this had to be addressed.

⁹ General Arthur MacArthur was the father of WWII U.S. General, Douglas MacArthur.

¹⁰ *Focus on the Global South, special report, No. 2, op. cit.*, p. 45.

Filipino opposition to the MSLA with the U.S. came from within the Philippine Congress. House Resolution No. 584 was introduced by five members of the House of Representatives¹¹ claiming that the MSLA circumvented Article XVIII, Section 25, of the Constitution. The quoting of this article was particularly relevant to that argument, and is illustrated in Text Box 7.3.

Article XVIII, Section 25. After the expiration in 1991 of the Agreement between the Republic of the Philippines and the United States of America concerning military bases, foreign military bases, troops, or facilities shall not be allowed in the Philippines except under a treaty duly concurred in by the Senate and, when the Congress so requires, ratified by a majority of the votes cast by the people in a national referendum held for that purpose, and recognized as a treaty by the other contracting State.
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Text Box 7.3 Philippine Constitution: Article XVIII, Transitory Provisions, Section 25

Source: 1987 Philippine Constitution

Opposition to the MLSA also came from a broad section of the population including a coalition of peace organisations called ‘Gathering for Peace’ (GFP) as well as Bishop Alan Ray Sarte of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. However, opposition to the MLSA amounted to nothing when President Arroyo signed the MLSA claiming that it was an ‘administrative agreement’ which did not require legislative approval. President Arroyo was now to provide the U.S. military—when in the Philippines—‘logistics supplies, support and services during exercises, training, operations, and other military deployments’.¹² The signing of the MLSA in November 2002 gave retrospective legitimacy to the assistance given to the U.S. military in the January-July *Balikatan* exercise in the ARMM Province of Basilan. And, as expanded on in Table 7.1, 2003 saw a significant milestone in U.S./Philippine relations with the conferring of the status of “Major Non-NATO Ally” (MNNA) on the Philippines by the U.S.

¹¹ S.C. Ocampo & T.A. Casino from the Bayanmuna Party List. C.B. Beltran from the Anakpawis Party List. L.L. Maza & L.C. Ilagan from the Gabriela Women’s Party.

¹² *Focus on the Global South, special report No. 2. op. cit., p. 65.*

The U.S. had been successful with the signing of the MLSA by President Arroyo, and the Philippines was equally successful by having the status of “Major Non-NATO Ally” conferred on it. A symbiotic relationship was being formed. However, these concessions fell far short of what might have been considered desirable; that is, a return to the pre-1992 conditions where there were permanent U.S. military bases (this, as previously mentioned, was impossible at this time). With that in mind, it now was necessary to find an effective alternative, and this may have been found in what the U.S. Department of Defence calls a “Cooperative Security Location” (CSL). However, before examining what may have been necessary to establish a CSL in the Philippines, it is useful to place a CSL into perspective. It is the third, and least effective, of the three U.S. overseas military structures. Text Box 7.4 explains the structure of these three facilities as defined by the U.S. Department of Defence.

Main Operating Base (MOB)

Main operating bases, with permanently stationed combat forces and robust infrastructure, will be characterized by command and control structures, family support facilities, and strengthened force protection measures. Examples include: Ramstein Air Base (Germany), Kadena Air Base (Okinawa, Japan), and Camp Humphreys (Korea).

Forward Operating Site (FOS)

Forward operating site will be an expandable “warm facilities” maintained with a limited U.S. military support presence and possibly prepositioned equipment. FOSs will support rotational rather than permanently stationed forces and be a focus for bilateral and regional training. Examples include: the Sembawang port facility in Singapore and Soto Cano Air Base in Honduras.

Cooperative Security Location (CSL)

Cooperative security locations will be facilities with little or no permanent U.S. presence. Instead they will be maintained with periodic service, contractor, or host-nation support. CSLs will provide contingency access and be a focal point for security cooperation activities. A current example of a CSL is in Dakar, Senegal, where the Air Force has negotiated contingency landing, logistics, and fuel contracting arrangements, and which served as a staging area for the 2003 peace support operation in Liberia.

Text box 7.4 Three U.S. overseas military structures: U.S. Department of Defence (as transposed literally)

Source: *Strengthening U.S. global defence posture*. Report to Congress, September 2004.¹³

¹³ *Strengthening U.S. global defence posture*. Report to Congress September 2004. Retrieved July 2009, http://74.125.155.132/search?q=cache:3Q507W13qKUJ:www.dmzhawaii.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/12/global_posture.pdf+%22US+Global+Defense+Posture,+September+2004%22&c d=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=au

Having now defined a CSL according to the U.S. Department of Defence, it is interesting to compare the definition of a CSL from the renowned, and sometimes controversial, U.S. author and international journalist, Robert D. Kaplan. It is considered important to quote Kaplan (Text Box 7.5) because the examples that he gives correspond with actions being undertaken by the U.S. military in the southern Philippines. In Kaplan's interpretation of a U.S. CSL, he uses the first-person plural when identifying with his country's policies.

A cooperative security location can be a tucked-away corner of a host **country's civilian airport**, or a dirt runway somewhere with fuel and mechanical help nearby, or a military airport in a friendly country with which we have no formal basing agreement but, rather, an informal arrangement with private contractors acting as go-betweens... **The United States provides aid to upgrade maintenance facilities, thereby helping the host country to better project its own air and naval power in the region.** At the same time, **we hold periodic exercises with the host country's military**, in which the base is a focus. We also **offer humanitarian help to the surrounding area.** Such civil-affairs projects garner positive publicity for our military in the local media... The result is a positive diplomatic context for getting the host country's approval for use of the base when and if we need it. (bolded emphasis: author)

Text Box 7.5 Definition of a U.S. CSL as given by Robert D. Kaplan

Source: Robert D. Kaplan. *Atlantic Monthly*, 295(5) June 2005.¹⁴

Leaving aside the 'periodic exercises', which have been analysed in this chapter, and the 'humanitarian help' (to Sulu only) which is detailed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, the infrastructure projects needed, according to Kaplan, for a CSL to be successful are bolded in Text Box 7.5 (an edited list of these U.S. funded projects in the Sulu Archipelago Provinces only, is included in Table 7.2—Sulu Province bolded).¹⁵ Although the infrastructure that the U.S. military creates or upgrades is primarily used for civilian purposes, it should be realised that in the future, if these facilities are needed by the U.S. military in exercises or tactical military operations, then the infrastructure is in place. In other words, if the operational need arises, the critical infrastructure needed for logistical operations has been prepared. Importantly, it is to be maintained by a host country.

¹⁴ R.D. Kaplan. How we would fight China, *Atlantic Monthly*, 295(5): June 2005: multiple pages.

¹⁵ At the time of the writing of this dissertation infrastructure information was only available to 2007.

The citing of the critical infrastructure projects included in Table 7.2 is important for two reasons. First, the projects started in earnest in early 2006, and this coincided with the U.S. OBC identifying the Philippines as a CSL in late 2005. This time lapse, approximately nine months, would suggest that the critical infrastructure projects had not been started, but were awaiting the official confirmation from the OBC about the Philippines being approved as an appropriate CSL. Second, and this is where the first part of central question 5 of this dissertation leads to the stated hypothesis, that is, by supporting specific U.S. foreign policies it is of benefit to the Arroyo Administration's domestic counterinsurgency agenda. Specifically, Sulu Province, the homeland of the MNLF and scene of contemporary 'wars' between the AFP and the MNLF has been singled out for massive infrastructure upgrading or rebuilding. This, of course, would have been completely outside budgetary allocations for Sulu Province by the Arroyo Administration—this was particularly so in the Sulu Airport upgrade. Accordingly, President Arroyo personally sought, and received, financial assistance from President George W. Bush to upgrade the Jolo Airport.¹⁶

Table 7.2 Critical infrastructure projects funded by the U.S. in the Sulu Archipelago since 2005

Sulu	Jolo Airport	Under Construction
Tawi-Tawi	Bongao Airport	Under Construction
Sulu	Siasi Port upgrading	May 2005
Basilan	Matarling Bridge construction	February 2006
Sulu	Maimbung Poblacion Wharf upgrading	March 2006
Tawi-Tawi	Bongao Port upgrading	May 2006
Basilan	Poblacion Tuburan Boat Landing	June 2006
Sulu	Maimbung Road upgrading	January 2007
Sulu	Indanan-Parang Road	February 2007
Tawi-Tawi	Tundow Boat Landing	February 2007
Basilan	Campo Uno (Lamitan)-Tuburan Road upgrading	February 2007
Basilan	Maluso Port upgrading	May 2007
Tawi-Tawi	Balimbing Boat Landing	May 2007
Basilan	Matarling Bridge construction	July 2007
Sulu	Jolo Market upgrading	July 2007
Tawi-Tawi	Bongao Water Supply System upgrading	July 2007
Basilan	Camanse Bridge construction	July 2007
Sulu	Maimbung Port Road concreting	July 2007
Tawi-Tawi	Paliut Boat Landing	July 2007

Sources: *Summary of completed mid-scale infrastructure projects.*¹⁷ *Philippine Consular General press release.*¹⁸

¹⁶ *Philippine Star*, 25 September 2007, p. 1. *Bush approves \$3.7 M. for Jolo Airport.*

¹⁷ *Summary of completed mid-scale infrastructure projects (MSIPs)*. Retrieved July 2009, http://www.mindanao.org/components/rip_completed.htm

There is no argument that the infrastructure projects funded by the U.S. in Sulu Province may be of benefit to the population at large. However, consider the following issues. First, the Jolo Airport is being widened, strengthened, and lengthened to 1.845 kilometers, effectively allowing larger aircraft to use this airport. Jolo is no longer considered a safe tourist destination, therefore the need to accommodate larger passenger aircraft is not an issue in that regard. That only leaves the need to upgrade Jolo Airport for the safe arrival of heavier military aircraft, or private cargo aircraft. Second, the port and wharf facilities being upgraded at Siasi and Maimbung Poblacion will be capable of accommodating much larger vessels than those that are currently using these facilities. Last is the substantial upgrading, and strengthening to concrete of roads linking various provinces and MNLF strongholds such as Indanan and Maimbung. Therefore, whilst it can be argued that the critical infrastructure upgrading being carried out in Sulu Province can be of benefit to trade and commerce, it can also be argued that this infrastructure upgrading may be strategically beneficial to the AFP in the event of any future military operations against MNLF forces.

7.6 Local acceptance of U.S. military presence in the Sulu Archipelago

History has shown that the presence of foreign military forces, regardless of any altruistic reasons or regardless of any humanitarian projects they may undertake, will, in all probability, at some time in the future be seen as overstaying their ‘original welcome’. Therefore, it normally is deemed imperative that foreign military forces in a country have a ‘sunset clause’ that includes a timely withdrawal or an orderly exit strategy. At the time of the writing of this dissertation, neither the U.S. military, nor indeed the AFP, have such a sunset clause for their presence in Sulu—the assumption being that the AFP are seen by Suluanos as ‘foreign troops’. A similar situation also exists in the other provinces of the Sulu Archipelago, as well as Zamboanga. Notwithstanding that the U.S. military has been engaged in humanitarian and/or infrastructure projects in Sulu, its JSOTF-P¹⁹ presence, which takes on the appearance of

¹⁸ *Philippine Consular General press release*. Retrieved July 2009, <http://www.pcgny.net/pcgny/2008/IMO-Mindanao.pdf>

¹⁹ See Chapter 3.3 of this dissertation.

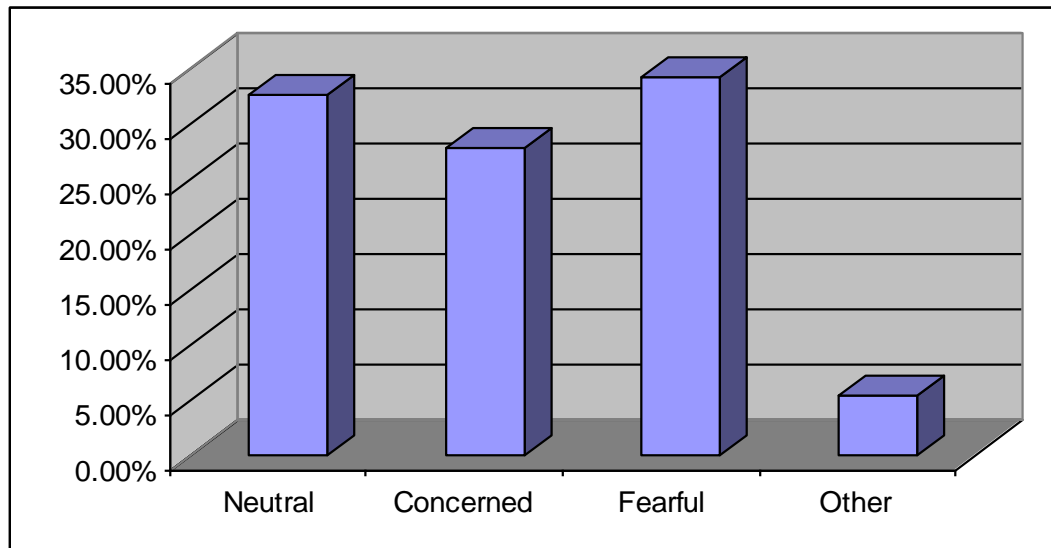
permanency, has been visible since 2002. Whilst the Arroyo Administration may welcome the presence of the U.S. military in the Sulu Archipelago provinces, it is important that the local population shares this enthusiasm, for without popular support from the local population the U.S. military stationed in Sulu could take on the appearance of being nothing more than another colonial master—this is similar to the situation that the Suluanos have fought against for centuries. With that in mind, this researcher sought to ascertain the population’s approval or otherwise of the U.S. military being stationed Sulu. This was achieved by adding such a question to the survey questionnaire, distributed in August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu, and the answers and analysis of which comprised the bulk of Chapters 3, 4 and 5 herein. The question asked of respondents was ‘How do you feel about the presence of U.S. forces in the Sulu Archipelago Provinces’? The findings on this question (13) and a corresponding graph (Graph 7.6) appear on the following page. It was deemed necessary to include in Question 13 ‘Sulu Archipelago Provinces’, not just Sulu Province because the population of the Sulu Archipelago Provinces have common historical bonds, and what may be of importance to one province will more than likely be of similar importance to neighbouring provinces. (Question 13 analysis and Graph 7.6 are on p. 237).

Question.13. How do you feel about the presence of U.S. Forces in the Sulu Archipelago Provinces?

Options: (a) Neutral. (b) Concerned. (c) Fearful. (d) Other (please specify).

Graph 7.6 Acceptance of U.S. Forces in the Sulu Archipelago Provinces

Response: N=295 (of 306) Neutral=32.54% Concerned= 27.8%
Fearful=34.24% Other=5.42%



Source: Survey questionnaire by this author, August 2008 in Jolo, Sulu

Analysis of local acceptance of U.S. Forces in the Sulu archipelago Provinces

A little over one-third of respondents (34.24%) were “fearful” of the U.S. military, and a little over one-quarter (27.8%) were “concerned”. Added to this was that over 5% of respondents who offered comment, the overwhelming majority of whom were very critical of the U.S. military. It is important to add here that only one respondent approved of the U.S. military presence. Therefore, the 5% of respondents who offered a critical comment can be classified as being in the “fearful” category, bringing the amended ‘fearful’ number to more like 40%, of respondents. Moreover, the number of respondents who answered ‘concerned’ (27.8%) cannot be seen as approving of the U.S. military presence—although in hindsight it may have been more judicious to include an option of ‘approve’ (even if respondents did have the option to comment). With the ‘neutral’ answer at slightly less than one-third of respondents (32.54%), it is considered important to attempt to calculate the percentage of these particular

respondents who would be likely to approve or disapprove of the U.S. Military in the Sulu Archipelago Provinces.

One-third of survey respondents came from municipalities outside of Jolo where there is no U.S. military presence. This may account for some of the 'neutral' responses. Furthermore, the almost one in three respondents who chose 'neutral' may be a similarity to the result and analysis on 'general knowledge' in Chapter 3 of this dissertation. That is, many Suluanos seem to be apathetic to the U.S. or any event which involves the U.S. Therefore, translating the above figures into approval or non-approval stances is problematic. Certainly the non-approval option is easy to calculate: 'fearful', 'concerned' and 'other'---approximately 72%. However, the difficulty lies in what percentage of respondents who answered "neutral" would, if pressured, approve or disapprove. There is no definitive answer to this, so for simplicity this researcher has gone for a 50/50 option. This now gives the figures of a little over 16% approval and slightly under 84% disapproval. This approval rating of the U.S. military presence is even lower than the approval rating of President Arroyo in Sulu Province (see Chapter 3, (3.3) of this dissertation). Even with the goodwill and humanitarian projects being undertaken in the Sulu Archipelago provinces, the U.S. military presence is overwhelmingly unpopular and simply not welcome. This is a situation which must be of concern both to the Arroyo Administration and to the U.S.

7.7 Critical arguments for and against U.S. military involvement in the southern Philippines post-2001.

Central question 5 of this dissertation sought to ascertain whether the Arroyo Administration's support of U.S. foreign policy, in particular the Global War on Terror has resulted in increased military aid to the Philippines. This has been demonstrated to be true, and one consequence of this increased military aid has been the continuing presence of U.S. Special Forces, especially in Sulu. It has also been shown to be true that local opposition to the U.S. military presence in Sulu is overwhelming (84%). Moreover, if the opposition to this presence is so strong in Sulu, then it is more than likely that it would be just as intense in the other predominately Muslim provinces of the

southern Philippines. However, to give balance to the debate as to whether the U.S. military is beneficial or not to the Philippines it is necessary to argue the merits or otherwise of such conditions. And, in trying to ensure that the larger picture is taken into account, it is necessary to examine the U.S. military presence in the entire Philippines, not just Sulu, or indeed Mindanao at large. Although Sulu is the homeland of the MNLF—the original domestic and arguably liberating insurgents of the southern Philippines—the ‘for’ and ‘against’ U.S. arguments would be somewhat baseless if Sulu was the sole subject of this assessment.

The U.S. military presence in the southern Philippines is not for the sole purpose of being a show of strength to the Sulu’s Sunni Muslims—even if it could be argued that the visual appearance of heavily armed, well equipped, and highly trained foreign soldiers would be intimidating to average Suluanos. The U.S. military presence in the Philippines, and Sulu in particular, is at the invitation of President Arroyo. And, by being there at her invitation, it is to be expected that any arguments for and against would be both emotional and highly charged. With that in mind, the following views have been put forward by reliable sources, with the intention of achieving an objective balance in what can only be described as a contentious issue.

It can be argued that historically and globally most national leaders would opt for ‘national unity and/or integrity’ when deciding on domestic issues, including domestic security. The U.S. military presence in the Philippines, in particular Sulu Province, cannot be seen as unifying the nation therefore ‘integrity’ or ‘honesty’ must have been a consideration when making this decision. Honesty or integrity insofar as one of the main responsibilities of a national leader is the protection of its citizens, and at this time that must include protection from terrorist threats. Whilst there are numerous arguments for the U.S. military presence in the Philippines, most originate from sources that could be described as favourable to the U.S. or the Arroyo Administration. These include politicians or influential figures both from the Philippines and foreign allies. As well, and this is only to be expected because of loyalty to a commanding officer who must follow government policies, most, if not all Philippine military interviews, take the view

that the U.S. military presence in the Philippines is strategically important and necessary. On a similar note, most emotional arguments against the U.S. presence would be expected to originate from political opponents or those who have a philosophical or idealistic belief different to President Arroyo. Therefore, political opponents as well as military commanders are excluded in the following arguments. Because of this restriction, the number of debaters is somewhat diminished. Accordingly, only two academics from each side of this contentious debate are included; none of whom have connection with any military institute. As well, data will be drawn on from ‘fieldwork’ exercises in the comparative arguments for and/or against the U.S. military presence.

7.7 (i) Arguments for the U.S. presence in the southern Philippines

Cook and Collier, in presenting their 2006 paper at the Lowy Institute (previously mentioned) claimed that a major part of the renewed U.S. military support, especially in Mindanao, is to ‘help professionalize the AFP and reorient it towards external defence’.²⁰ Domestic counterinsurgency or indeed counterterrorism was not mentioned.

Abuza, as mentioned, a noted international authority on insurgency and terrorism in South-East Asia, when writing the report in 2005, entitled *Balik-terrorism: The return of the Abu Sayyaf*, claimed that U.S. Military Forces are ‘exceptionally well-received by the local communities’. Whilst it is true that the U.S. military has engaged in humanitarian relief operations in the Philippines, such as 2004 floods in the province of Quezon, the 2006 massive mudslides in Guinsaugon, Leyte, and the 2008 typhoon in the central island of Panay, these relief operations could be seen as an investment in the future. The equating of relief operations and civil infrastructure to investment is something that is not lost on Abuza’s analysis. He claimed that the U.S. military, by engaging in road construction, civil construction, and offering medical assistance to the local populus is a ‘**low cost, high yield investment**’.²¹

²⁰ Cook & Collier, *op. cit.*, p.35.

²¹ Abuza, *op. cit.*, p.54. (bolded emphasis: researcher).

In addition to the above contemporary arguments by Cook and Collier, and Abuza, there are other relevant points which are worthy of inclusion in this section. For instance, Robert Tomes of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency wrote in *Relearning counterinsurgency warfare*,²² that for counterinsurgency to be successful, a government (or in this case an invited foreign military force) must address socio-economic issues or problems if the support of the local populus is to be achieved or maintained. In a similar argument, David Galula, writing in *Counterinsurgency warfare: theory and practice*²³, advocated the spending of money on public utilities as a way of ensuring popular support for the invited military forces from the local populus whilst at the same time ensuring that support for insurgents lessened (see Chapter 1.6).

The above arguments have been cited to support the U.S. presence in the southern Philippines but they generally are in contradiction to the findings of the “infield” surveys conducted in Sulu Province in August 2008 (support for the U.S. military presence was only 16%). As well, many of the local opponents to the U.S. military presence feared there was some ulterior motive to their presence.

7.7 (ii) Arguments against the U.S. presence in the southern Philippines

Julkifli Wadi, a professor at the Islamic Studies Institute of the University of the Philippines, does not subscribe to the somewhat emotional argument that the U.S. military presence in his country is all about neo-colonialism. Rather, he believes that ‘the Philippines government is able to make her presence felt on the radar screen of US foreign policy and therefore receive hefty financial assistance, making it appear that there is indeed a threat.’²⁴

Professor Herman Joseph Kraft of the Institute of Strategic and Development Studies, Singapore sees the U.S. military presence in the Philippines as assisting

²² R. Tomes, *Relearning counterinsurgency warfare*, 2004. Retrieved September 2007, <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/04spring/tomes.pdf>

²³ Galula, *op. cit.*

²⁴ B.B.C News, 28 march 2008, *US plays quiet role in Philippines*. Retrieved July 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7316761.stm>

President Arroyo's domestic counterinsurgency agenda. He wrote: 'the Arroyo Administration had latched on to the United States in its war against terror because of American support for its own [Arroyo Administration] war against Muslim secessionism in Mindanao'.²⁵

In 7.7 (i) both Tomes and Galula cited strategies for counterinsurgency to be successful. Tomes drew heavily on the U.S. involvement in assistance to states who were "friendly" to the U.S. especially since the terrorist attacks in the U.S. in 2001. To enable balance to be maintained in these 'for' and 'against' arguments it is now necessary to quote an author, William Blum, who did not share the same enthusiasm for U.S. foreign policy, specifically, counterinsurgency assistance to 'friendly' states. Blum did not advocate the violent overthrow of the U.S. just a curtailment of its hegemonic aspirations.

Blum is an American historian and author who, in 2000, wrote a damning book on U.S. foreign policy titled, *Rogue state: a guide to the world's only superpower*. Consider the following passage from the introduction in Blum's publication:

a decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall, America is still saving countries and peoples from one danger or another. The scorecard reads as follows: From 1945 to the end of the century, the United States attempted to overthrow more than 40 foreign governments, and to **crush more than 30 populist-nationalist movements struggling against intolerable regimes**.²⁶

The above argument has been cited as non-support of the U.S. military presence in the southern Philippines (indeed U.S. military aspirations and/or strength globally) and it is in accordance with "infield" surveys conducted in Sulu Province in August 2008—opposition to the U.S. military presence was 84%. The comments from the Sulu survey respondents may not be as emotional as Blum but they nevertheless express a similar albeit local sentiment.

²⁵ H.J.S. Kraft, The Philippines: the weak state and the Global War on Terror, *Kasarinlan: Philippine journal of Third World studies*, 18(1-2): 2003: p. 149.

²⁶ W. Blum, *Rogue state: a guide to the world's only superpower*, Mayne, Common Courage Press, 2000, introduction. (bolded: dissertation author).

7.8 Summary of the U.S. involvement in Philippine domestic counterinsurgency policy.

This chapter has demonstrated that U.S. military assistance to the Philippines almost ceased after the closure of the U.S. military bases in 1992. It has also been shown that after the signing of the VFA Agreement in May 1999 U.S. military assistance to the Philippines once again increased. And, coinciding with the terrorist events in the U.S. in 2001, and the wholehearted support of President Arroyo of the Bush Administration's Global War on Terror, military assistance to the Philippines continued to increase considerably. This increase in U.S. military aid helped the AFP in operations against alleged domestic terrorists. Moreover, the increased infrastructural aid provided by the U.S. military assisted the Arroyo Administration in strategically important areas such as ports and airports, especially in Sulu Province. This, in turn could assist the AFP in transporting military equipment, if needed, to areas where fighting may once again occur as it did between the MNLF and the AFP in Sulu Province in 2001 and 2005—as discussed in Chapter 2.9 of this dissertation. These findings and predictions thus go a considerable distance towards addressing the issues raised in central question 5 of this study.

Central question 4 of this research queried the possibility of increased domestic insurgency in the Sulu Archipelago provinces because of the U.S. military presence there. Whether there has been increased insurgency in this area since the 'presence' by U.S. military forces is a matter for debate. There certainly has been, as reported by the Philippine media at large, continuing violence. Moreover, if the findings of question 13 in the survey questionnaire by this author in Jolo, Sulu in August 2008, namely 'How do you feel about the presence of U.S. Forces in the Sulu Archipelago Provinces?', are an indication of the lack of public acceptance of the U.S. military, then there is a possibility that unrest will persist. It must be remembered that over 72% of respondents were either 'fearful' or 'concerned' about the U.S. presence, and such results seem to may go some distance towards answering central question 4 of this study. However in concluding this chapter the complex question of U.S. involvement in the southern Philippines perhaps can be summed up in this concluding remark from Abinales' 'East-West' paper: 'only a

portrait that brings in the complex world of domestic power politics into the picture will enable one to get a more in-depth, perhaps better picture of “US imperialism” in the Philippine south’.²⁷

Having addressed all of the central questions set for this study, in this and previous chapters of this dissertation, it is now necessary to collate and analyse the findings of the seven central questions that were posed. This is done in Chapter 8.

²⁷ Abinales, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

Chapter 8

Collation of the Findings of the Central Questions Framed for This Study and Some Conclusions

This chapter addresses the findings of the specific central questions framed for this study that were addressed in Chapters 3 through 7. Such was the complexity of a number of the central questions that, in some instances, they were addressed in more than one chapter. A brief set of ‘conclusions’ is given at the end of this chapter.

8.1 Central question 1

Central question 1 sought to answer: ‘does the Province of Sulu have a safer human environment at this time, as compared to the pre-2001 period, because of the large contingent of AFP in the province? If Sulu Province is less peaceful now than that earlier period, what responsibility can be assigned to the Arroyo Administration for this situation?’ In attempting to answer this question, it was necessary to adopt a dual approach. First, personal experience, views, and expectations were sought from the 306 survey respondents interviewed in Jolo, Sulu in August 2008, as well as 30 MNLF operatives interviewed in the MNLF camp in Indanan Municipality. Second, archival data was researched and compared to the respondents’ answers. The salient words or phrases in central question 1 were ‘less peaceful now than pre-2001’ and ‘responsibility for and acceptance of ‘ this situation by the Arroyo Administration.

On the issue of personal safety at this time compared to pre-2001, only a little over 9% of the survey respondents thought that they were safer. However, when it came to the question of peace and order in Sulu at this time, over 36% of respondents thought Sulu to be peaceful. A further 27%, were ‘neutral’ or had no feeling one way or the other. An explanation of the contradiction between personal safety and overall safety in their province is given in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, under subheading ‘3.2 personal security, peace and order, and apportioning blame’. Almost two-thirds of respondents

thought Sulu was peaceful or that the situation was not worthy of assessment. However, the statistical data on violence in one period researched, namely January to May 2006, was at odds with respondents' perceptions.¹ It has also been noted that the cited violence occurred in the relatively 'peaceful' city of Jolo. However, if the neighbouring province of Patikul was the subject of recorded violence then the number of violent crimes, as a ratio to population, would more than likely have been considerably higher.²

Having established that violence in Sulu has been an on-going reality, and even more disturbingly that the local population has seen it as normal or unimportant, then the second part of central question 1 is pivotal to the entire question of volatility versus peace/safety. That is, where does the responsibility for this trend of violence lie? Given that the Arroyo Administration's popularity has plummeted, it was no surprise that the majority of survey respondents apportioned blame for this increase in violence on the national government. After all, security and peace and order are the responsibility of the PNP, who, in turn, are answerable to the national administration. Therefore, violence is reported as occurring in Sulu, and the surveyed population overwhelmingly apports blame for it on the Arroyo Administration—and, it can be seen that when blame is analysed in the findings of central questions 2 and 3 the Arroyo Administration has to accept a considerable share of the blame for the current violence in Sulu. This of course includes the failure to implement fully the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement.

8.2 Central question 2

Central question 2 sought to assess: 'given that the Muslim struggle in the southern Philippines has been seen as liberation insurgency by many, including the OIC, is the Arroyo Administration trying to change the perception of this insurgency to one of *national* insurgency?' One must bear in mind that national insurgency is perceived to be a threat to internal national security. Was this perceived threat to national security made more relevant because of the Sulu Province's overwhelmingly Muslim population? More importantly, has the Arroyo Administration wittingly allowing the AFP to engage in

¹ 27 killed and 51 seriously wounded in Jolo City alone. See Chapter 3. 3.2.

² Refer to Chapter 3. 3.2 quoting Asia America Initiative's assessment of Patikul Province.

armed clashes with members of the MNLF? And this in despite of the latter having official recognition status from the OIC but nonetheless are often still seen by the Arroyo and past Philippine Administrations to be domestic insurgents?” The relevant words or phrases in central question 2 are “liberation insurgency” and “national insurgency”. Whereas the salient question to be addressed was whether the Arroyo Administration is “wittingly allowing the AFP to engage in armed clashes with members of the MNLF”.

In addressing the question of whether the MNLF was indeed a liberating insurgency force or a national (domestic) insurgency organisation, the answer seems to rest in the perception of the behaviour of the MNLF, or indeed which player—the MNLF or the Arroyo Administration—thought that its cause was just. The MNLF, especially in its home base of Sulu, certainly believes its insurgency struggle is one of liberation. In this light, many similar contemporary international liberation insurgency struggles were cited in Chapter 1 of this dissertation. With this in mind, this study also pointed out that the Moros of Sulu have been part of a Sultanate from 1390 to the present time, albeit for the last century the Sultan has had gradually diminishing power or influence. This, combined with the duration of the ‘Moro Wars’ from 1569 to 1762 and the continuing opposition to past Spanish and U.S. occupations (as discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation), would suggest that the MNLF certainly sees its cause as a liberating struggle. Notwithstanding that the preference of the majority of the Suluanos is for an Islamic style government, as was reflected in the survey findings of August 2008 presented in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, the aspirations and actions of the MNLF must be seen as a liberating cause. To add further weight to the argument of it being a liberationist struggle, one must add the official recognition of the MNLF by the OIC.

However, the Arroyo Administration, as well as most of the previous Philippine Administrations since independence in 1946, have seen any direct confrontation between the AFP and the MNLF as ‘national’ (domestic) insurgency citing sovereignty and national integrity as the overriding consideration. This belief that sovereignty overrides all other considerations is not new. In recent times, a neighbour of the Philippines, Indonesia, was confronted with just such a dilemma in Aceh. Similar to the Indonesia

national government, the Philippines national government under the Arroyo Administration has shown a reluctance to cede any national territory to ‘secessionists’.

The second part of central question 2 sought to ascertain whether the Arroyo Administration has wittingly allowed the AFP to engage in military action against the MNLF in Sulu. Chapters 2 and 3 sought to address this through survey/interviews and an examination of contemporary military encounters between the AFP and the MNLF in that province.

As was expected, despite objective questioning, the MNLF in Sulu enjoyed a very high profile as well as a high acceptance from the local population. This was further borne out in answers given by Jolo respondents to survey questions in August 2008. Equally expected, again with objective questioning in personal interviews and surveys conducted in November 2008 in the MNLF camp in Barangay Marang, Sulu, was the distrust and loathing by members of the MNLF towards the Arroyo Administration. However, the high profile and the wide acceptance of the MNLF and the apparent distrust and loathing of the Arroyo Administration may not necessarily translate into open hostility. However, if provocation by the AFP is also added, then the possibility exists for a state of war to develop—as was twice the case in 2005.

These two armed clashes which occurred between the AFP and the paramilitary wing of the MNLF in February and November 2005 saw, respectively, 70,000 and 12,000 civilians being displaced. Not surprisingly, both sides apportioned blame on each other. The AFP claimed that the MNLF had members of the ASG in its ranks, and this in turn justified the extreme military action taken. The claim that the MNLF had ASG members fighting with them was strenuously denied by both MNLF group leaders, Ustadz Habier Malik and Khaid Ajibon, as was the claim that the MNLF had used landmines. However, what is indisputable concerning these two armed conflicts are: (a) the Philippine national government and the MNLF had a ceasefire agreement which was negotiated in 1996; (b) the AFP used intensive military action involving 30-50 calibre machine guns, 60mm and

81mm mortars, and 155mm howitzers against the MNLF paramilitary forces;³ and (c) the AFP attacked and captured the MNLF camp in Bitanag in the municipality of Panamao. These incidents and assessments are documented in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 of this study.

The research has established that the AFP, in recent times has conducted other intensive military operations against the MNLF in Sulu. Such operations would no doubt have been approved by the Philippine Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, President Arroyo. Therefore, the question of whether President Arroyo has wittingly overseen the AFP's engagement in armed clashes with the MNLF has been established.

8.3 Central question 3

Central question 3 sought to assess whether 'the numerically small presence of the ASG in the southern Philippines, particularly in Sulu Province where it can also be argued that their existence is questionable, has warranted the harsh military action being undertaken by the AFP in that particular area, and largely to give legitimacy to the Arroyo Administration's counterinsurgency policies'. The relevant words or phrases in central question 3 are 'ASG: small or existence questionable', and 'legitimacy of counterinsurgency policies'.

Central question 3 is arguably the most significant of the entire study, because without the presence of the ASG in Sulu Province, then all AFP military operations must be seen as being directed against the MNLF—or Suluanos sympathetic to the MNLF or indeed Suluanos who simply do not approve of the Arroyo Administration. If this observation, based on fieldwork information, is correct, then it follows that the Arroyo Administration has been able to implement its domestic counterinsurgency policies against all its opponents in Sulu Province, ostensibly in the name of national security (or perhaps for the purpose of 'regime security').

³ *Sulu, state of war, op. cit.*, p. 7.

Chapter 5 of this dissertation was designed to trace the ASG from its beginnings to its present strength and influence. It found that most, if not all, of the key leaders had been killed, captured, or were unaccounted for at the time of this study. Furthermore, the number of ASG operatives has been shown to vary considerably depending on the source of information. Moreover, leading academics, scholars, noted journalists, and other experts or observers do not agree on whether or not the ASG has an actual existence in Sulu Province. The majority of persons quoted in this study, however, are sceptical of any formal organisation of the ASG in Sulu. In fact, most of the sources quoted in Chapter 5 were inclined to agree that the ASG does have some presence in Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, and/or Zamboanga—albeit without good leadership. Whether the ASG exists as an organised terrorist cell in the southern Philippines is unclear: thus, further research, and the passage of time may be needed to resolve this question. That notwithstanding, at the time of the writing of this dissertation, what seems clear is that the ASG, or those purporting to be members of the ASG, engage in criminal activity (such as kidnapping and extortion solely for monetary gain or greed). In 2009, this view appears to have been strengthened by criminals claiming to be members of the ASG who demanded a huge ransom for three kidnapped international Red Cross workers in Sulu. The last remaining captive was eventually freed in July 2009, with the payment of any ransom being unknown at the time of this writing.

The research conducted for the dissertation's Chapter 5 does not conclusively demonstrate that the ASG is no longer an organised terrorist cell. Neither does it substantiate that the ASG is a viable threat to the Philippines national security. However, the question asked was whether the ASG was numerically small and therefore questionable in terms of its existence or viability in Sulu Province. The answers to both these questions was, beyond any reasonable doubt, 'Yes'. And, with that being established, the second part of central question 3 'does the questioned existence of the ASG in the southern Philippines, in particular in Sulu Province, give legitimacy to the Arroyo Administration's domestic counterinsurgency policies?', the answer is 'No'. The research has found that the ASG does NOT fit into the category of insurgents, either national or liberationist. President Arroyo's domestic counterinsurgency policies have

been claimed to be framed, in part, on the premise that the ASG was a threat to national security. But, the research for this study suggests that this assertion is bogus.

8.4 Central question 4

Central question 4 (addressed, in part, in Chapters 6 and 7 of this dissertation) considered the presence of the U.S. military in the Sulu Archipelago and whether this presence contributed to insurgency there. The key words or phrases in this central question were ‘civil construction projects’, ‘military operations’, and ‘exacerbating factor contributing to insurgency’.

Whilst the evidence suggests that the U.S. has engaged in large-scale civil construction projects, and continues to do so, it was found that for the most part, particularly in Sulu Province, the upgrading of existing infrastructure would certainly be beneficial to the AFP when or if military operations recommenced against the MNLF paramilitary forces—which in all probability will occur, given the volatility in the province. Notwithstanding that the U.S.-funded civil construction projects that were mentioned would have benefited the Sulu population at large, there is no reason to believe that this infrastructure upgrading would have been a catalyst for any insurgency in the area. On the contrary, as Tomes has argued, for counterinsurgency to be successful then a government, or in this case an invited foreign military force, must ‘foster the impression that the government is addressing underlying socio-economic problems’.⁴ This, so it would appear, is the strategy employed by the visiting U.S. Military with the permission of the Arroyo Administration. With this strategy in place, it is to be expected that the threat of domestic insurgency would lessen. Moreover, if domestic insurgency was to take the form of aggression against the AFP or indeed the U.S. military in Sulu, then this did not happen. Whilst it is true that the AFP and the MNLF did engage in major military operations against each other twice in 2005, this was as a result of the AFP ‘trespassing’ on a MNLF headquarters.

⁴ Tomes, *op. cit.* See Chapter 1.6.

Regarding military operations in Sulu, it has been shown that, apart from 2005, all AFP military operations (which at times had the assistance of U.S. Special Forces advisors), have been directed against suspected ASG terrorist cells. Furthermore, the ASG has been shown in this study NOT to be domestic insurgents but criminals and/or bandits. Therefore, AFP military operations in Sulu Province have not contributed to any domestic insurgency. And, notwithstanding that, the visiting U.S. forces are unpopular (as indicated by the responses to question 13 of the Jolo survey in August 2008, whereby 72% were either ‘fearful’ or ‘concerned’), their presence also has not contributed to any domestic insurgency. Therefore, the likely answer to whether there are any exacerbating factors contributing to domestic insurgency in Sulu is ‘No’. With that ‘No’ answer in mind, it is proposed that the inordinate number of AFP in Sulu Province are there more as a visible deterrent against any MNLF domestic insurgency, should indeed that ever occur.

8.5 Central question 5

Central question 5 sought to ascertain whether the Arroyo Administration, by supporting U.S. foreign policy on the issue of international terrorism, could expect to obtain greater U.S. military assistance. Furthermore, by supporting U.S. foreign policy on international terrorism could the Arroyo Administration draw parallels with its own domestic counterinsurgency policies, thereby making it easier to implement its own counterinsurgency policies. The relevant words or phrases in central question 5 are “supporting U.S. foreign policy on the issue of international terrorism”, and “easier to implement these counterinsurgency policies”, and “greater U.S. military assistance”.

In addressing central question 5, it was necessary to access and analyse the vast amount of archival material available on the U.S. bases and military aid given to the Philippines, for the most part pre-1992. The sources researched here were both primary and secondary in nature. It was also deemed important to attempt an analysis of the reasons for the partial resumption of military aid to the Philippines post-2001. However, for reasons of national security set by the Philippines government it was not possible to access certain data—for example, troop numbers and weaponry in critical bilateral military operations. Notwithstanding that, it was important to review the U.S.

involvement in the Philippines after World War II, especially in the southern Philippines, and it was deemed to be useful to assess the general feelings of the current local population about the U.S. presence in their area. This was achieved by relevant survey questions being raised in Jolo in August 2008. These analyses comprised the majority of research in Chapter 7 of this dissertation, and are included in the summary below.

When it came to supporting the U.S. on the issue of combating international terrorism, the Arroyo Administration had signed Memorandum Order No. 37 just a little over one month after the terrorist attacks in the U.S. in September 2001. This Memorandum gave the U.S. permission to use Philippine airspace and facilities in its newly declared ‘Global War on Terror’. During the writing of this dissertation, support for the U.S. in this context has continued unabated. Interestingly, there was a premature withdrawal of a token force of Philippine military personnel from Iraq in July 2004, however this had little or no effect on bilateral relations between the U.S. and the Philippines.

On the question of whether the Arroyo Administration has benefited from support from the U.S. in its endeavour to eradicate international terrorism, the answer is ‘Yes’. It was demonstrated in Chapter 7 of this research that U.S. military aid to the Philippines since 2001 has increased significantly. Whether this would have been forthcoming had the terrorist events in the U.S. in September 2001 not occurred cannot be ruled out entirely. After all, the signing of the VFA in 1999 had ushered in a ten-fold increase in military aid to the Philippines. However, the following year, 2000, saw a reduction from the 1999 figure of USD 18 million to USD 5 million, a decrease of approximately 72%. Coupled with the ten-fold increase in U.S. military aid to the Philippines in 1999 (the year of the signing of the VFA) was the joint U.S./AFP exercises in early 2000 that involved over 4,000 U.S. military personnel—the largest since 1992. These statistics indicate that increased military aid and joint operations followed significant ‘concessions’ from the Philippine Government. Therefore, it can reasonably be argued that the signing of Memorandum Order No. 37, and the logistical and political support offered by the

Arroyo Administration after the terrorist events in the U.S. in September 2001, would have been welcomed by the U.S.—and ‘rewarded’ accordingly.

Central question 5 also sought to enquire whether or not there was a correlation between the U.S. foreign policy on international terrorism and the Arroyo Administration’s domestic counterinsurgency policies. The answer to this question is also ‘Yes’, for the following reasons. First, the MNLF was not placed on the U.S. ‘terrorist’ list, ostensibly because the OIC had given official recognition to it as a legitimate Muslim organisation. However, the MILF initially was classified by the U.S.A as a terrorist organisation, a classification that was later reversed. That left the small ASG, and later the RSM, as being the only terrorist organisation(s) in the Philippines on the U.S. ‘enemy’ list. And, it has been demonstrated that Republic Act 9372 was enacted, in part, to combat the ASG. However, it has also been evidenced that the ASG is no longer considered an insurgent group but rather bandits and criminals by leading experts. That notwithstanding, indications are that the Arroyo Administration may differ in this assumption. Finally, by making the claim, as was done by senior officers in the AFP in the military encounters in Sulu in 2005, that the MNLF had collaborated with the ASG, thereby loosing credibility, then if the MNLF again engages in military encounters with the AFP, it can be ‘reclassified’ under sections of Republic Act 9372.

8.6 Central question 6

Central question 6 brought into this research the question of whether the positioning of the AFP in Sulu Province was in accordance with the 1987 Philippine Constitution. It also queried whether shortcomings in human rights, economic stability, and anti-corruption had occurred as a result of the AFP being permanently stationed there. The relevant words or phrases in central question 6 are ‘positioning of the AFP in Sulu: in accordance with the 1987 Philippine Constitution?’, and ‘shortcomings in human rights, economic stability, and anti-corruption’.

Chapter 3 of this dissertation analysed the August 2008 Jolo survey undertaken by this author in relation to a number of questions about human rights, economic stability, and anti-corruption. In question 17 of that survey, the two most important areas of enquiry were human rights and anti-corruption. Importantly, both these issues are guaranteed under the 1987 Philippine Constitution. The responses to survey question 17 indicate that human rights are being abused and corruption is rife in Sulu Province. When respondents were asked who they considered was responsible for the worsening personal security situation in Sulu (survey question 11), over 72% put the blame on the Philippine national government. Although the AFP was not included in the range of answers, there was room for comment, but not one respondent mentioned the AFP. Therefore, the survey found that the AFP had not contributed to corruption or human rights abuses in Sulu Province. However, this result was in sharp contrast to the views of many academics, journalists, and organisations (such as the PPT) who saw a correlation between the AFP presence in Sulu and corruption and human rights abuses). Chapter 3 also analysed primary evidence from many sources, including first-hand accounts of human abuses and corruption (elections, for example) and the conclusion, beyond reasonable doubt, indicates that there is a correlation between the AFP in Sulu and these issues. However, it must be stressed that the AFP, for most the most part, is only carrying out instructions from higher authorities, specifically the Supreme Commander.

When it came to the question of economic stability, although the poverty in Sulu is among the worst in the Philippines, the presence of the AFP did not seem to be an overwhelming factor contributing to this condition—although its presence may have been able to alleviate the situation marginally had the conditions of deployment been more flexible. As mentioned, the population of Sulu, in general, seems to have become somewhat ‘indifferent’ to poverty and accompanying high unemployment. The AFP has not created employment, and it has been mentioned in this study that the AFP in Sulu do not easily assimilate with the local population, with personnel preferring to spend leisure time and disposable income in their own establishments. Therefore, the AFP stationed in Sulu, which can number in the thousands, can be seen as contributing to some

shortcomings in economic stability by not supporting the local enterprises in this province.

Finally, central question 6 sought to ascertain whether certain provisions of the 1987 Philippine Constitution had been contravened by the stationing of thousands of members of the AFP in Sulu Province. To answer that part of central question 6, it was necessary to break the question down even further. First, under the Constitution the Arroyo Administration does have the authority to deploy members of the AFP anywhere in the country if national security is deemed to be in danger. And, although this study found that the ASG seemed not to be a risk to national security, the Arroyo Administration saw this differently. Second, Article X of the Constitution, under the subheading of ‘Autonomous Regions’, stipulated that the preservation of peace and order within these autonomous regions would be the responsibility of the local police agencies. It has been found here that the local Sulu PNP have been ineffectual because the pursuit of criminals has been undertaken by the AFP, especially outside of the main municipality of Jolo. Last, and this has been shown to have some credence, this study found that the AFP had become embroiled in local politics—for example, using military establishments for voting precincts. This is a contravention of Article XVI, “General Provisions” of the Constitution. Whilst it has been shown that the deployment and stationing of the AFP in Sulu is constitutionally legal, its jurisdiction has been extended, contrary to certain provisions of the 1987 Philippine Constitution.

8.7 Central question 7

Central question 7 brought into this research a consideration of the introduction of the controversial 2007 Republic Act 9372. Although it was originally entitled ‘An Act to Secure the State and Protect our People from Terrorism’, it was subsequently short-titled in Section 1 as the ‘Human Security Act of 2007’. In analysing Republic Act 9372 this study posed the question of whether its introduction was just another ‘tool’ to assist the Arroyo Administration’s domestic counterinsurgency policies. That is, was its introduction to be beneficial to the national government, and in particular the AFP, if military encounters again occurred between the MNLF and the AFP in Sulu Province.

This central question comprised the majority of the research analysis in Chapter 6 of this dissertation. The relevant words or phrases in central question 7 are ‘assist the Arroyo Administration’s domestic counterinsurgency policies’, and ‘military encounters—again occurring between the MNLF and the AFP in Sulu Province’.

In answering whether Republic Act 9372 was a tool to assist the Arroyo Administration in its domestic counterinsurgency endeavours, it has been argued that the penal codes that were already in place prior to this act were adequate to deal with any ‘emergency’ resulting from any act of violence. Therefore, the extra provisions contained in this Act could be seen as an extension of powers to the AFP and the PNP, all in the name of preventing or dealing with organised domestic terrorist actions (which, it has been shown, has not occurred). In fact, the threat of organised terrorism has been found to have actually decreased. Furthermore, the ASG has been revealed to have been all but eliminated, especially as an organised terrorist group, whilst the MILF is engaged in ongoing peace talks, and the MNLF has not been engaged in military action with the AFP since 2005. Moreover, both the MILF and the MNLF are not classified as terrorist organisations. Therefore, the added penal codes contained in Republic Act 9372 must be there to discourage any intended illegal action, or any form of armed encounters from any domestic insurgency organisation. And, the only paramilitary insurgency group to have displayed, or indeed to have engaged in armed conflict on a large scale in recent years is the MNLF, the homeland of which is Sulu Province.

It has also been demonstrated that after the terrorist events in the U.S. in September 2001 the Arroyo Administration hastily introduced Memorandum Act No. 37. As mentioned, it provided the Bush Administration access to Philippine airspace and military installations in its fight against international terrorism. Furthermore, Memorandum Act No. 37 sought to synchronise internal anti-terrorism efforts with a “global strategy”. This, it has been evidenced, resulted in renewed and reinvigorated bilateral military exercises between the U.S. and the AFP. Furthermore, this led to the permanently stationing of units of the AFP, as well as U.S. Special Forces, in Sulu. Therefore, the question of whether the introduction of Republic Act 9372 has helped

prevent military encounters between the AFP and the MNLF, especially in Sulu Province, is uncertain. But, there may very well be improved infrastructure that could assist the AFP in Sulu Province as a result of closer bilateral military cooperation between the U.S. and the Philippines. However, whether or not this could result in advantage to the AFP in the event of a military encounter with the MNLF is also uncertain, but such better infrastructure available to the AFP would certainly not be a hindrance.

Finally, it has been shown that certain penal provisions contained in Republic Act 9372 have far outweighed the threat posed by any avowed domestic terrorism. Therefore, as mentioned, Republic Act 9372 might have been enacted partly to discourage any domestic insurgency. The wording in the Act, “to protect our people from terrorism”, may hide the real underlying theme, namely to promote the Arroyo Administration’s domestic counterinsurgency policies.

8.8 “Good” and “Bad” COIN Practices

In ‘Literature Review’ Chapter 1 of this dissertation, Paul, Clarke and Grill in their publication *Victory has a thousand fathers: sources of success in counterinsurgency*, opined there were certain “good” and “bad” COIN practices or factors that influenced success or otherwise. Accordingly, a selection of these practices/factors are now tabled on pp. 259/260 for comparison in relation to the situation in Sulu Province. This assessment is in regard to the MNLF not the ASG.

Table 8.1 “Good” and “Bad” COIN practices or factors in Sulu Province

GOOD	YES/NO and ASSESSMENT	BAD	YES/NO and ASSESSMENT
The COIN force significantly reduced tangible insurgent support	<u>NO</u> The MNLF has maintained its strength and support.	The COIN force used both collective punishment and escalating repression	<u>YES</u> See Chapter 2, 2.9. 57,000 Suluanos displaced as a result of AFP military action
The government established or maintained legitimacy in the area of conflict	<u>NO</u> The AFP on a number of occasions violated an agreement that MNLF camps would not be attacked	The primary COIN force was an external occupier	<u>NO/YES</u> At different periods post 2001 there were hundreds of U.S. military personnel stationed in Sulu. There is prima-facie evidence to suggest that they were involved in COIN operations
The government was at least a partial democracy	<u>YES</u>	COIN force or government actions contributed to substantial new grievances claimed by the insurgents	<u>YES</u> The MNLF has repeatedly claimed that the much of the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement has not been enacted—proven. Please see Chapter 2 for examples
COIN force intelligent was adequate to support effective engagement or disruption of insurgents	<u>NO</u> The current strength and mobility of the MNLF is evidence enough	The COIN force resettled or removed civilian populations for population control	<u>YES</u> Please refer to Chapter 2, 2.9 <i>Wars, Sulu Province: 21st Century</i> . The 2007 election for Governor of Sulu may have been different had not thousands of Suluanos not been in “detention” camps
The government or state was competent	<u>NO</u> This answer may be disputed, however this dissertation has established that the Arroyo Administration was found wanting in many areas. Corruption was rife; members of the AFP mutinied; and the president only just survived impeachment proceedings	COIN force collateral damage was perceived by the population in the area of conflict as worse than the insurgents	<u>YES</u> The questionnaires distributed in Jolo/Sulu for this study overwhelmingly saw AFP action in a worse light than any MNLF action
The COIN force avoided excessive collateral damage, disproportionate use of force, or other illegitimate applications of force	<u>NO</u> Again please refer to Chapter 2, 2.9 <i>Wars, Sulu Province: 21st Century</i>	In the area of conflict, the COIN force was perceived as worse than the insurgents	<u>YES</u> In the question on security and blame put to the respondents in the Sulu survey, 72% blamed the government forces for the worsening situation whereas less than 4% blamed the MNLF
Continued p. 260			

The COIN force sought to engage and establish positive relations with the population in the area of conflict	<u>NO</u> The Arroyo Administration failed to explain to the population of Sulu the reason for their COIN policies. In the Sulu survey over 74% of respondents disapproved of these policies	The COIN force engaged in more coercion or intimidation than the insurgents	<u>YES</u> Again refer to the Sulu survey questions about security, acceptance of COIN operations and Chapter 2. 2.9 Wars, Sulu Province: 21 st Century.
Short term investments, improvements in infrastructure or development, or property reform occurred in the areas of conflict controlled or claimed by the COIN force	<u>YES</u> However, the dissertation did make mention that all the redevelopment—airport; wharfs; major roads; and so forth;--would benefit AFP operations in the event of an outbreak of hostilities	The COIN force and government had different goals or levels of commitment	<u>YES</u> Although President Arroyo was the Commander-in Chief of the AFP, they differed on many ways to conduct COIN operations. On more than one occasion President Arroyo gave ultimatums to AFP officers to be successful or face dismissal
The majority of the population in the area of conflict supported the COIN forces	<u>NO</u> Again refer to the Sulu survey on the acceptance of the AFP in their province		
The COIN force established and then expanded secure areas	<u>NO</u> The total MNLF area of control has been the same for years. There have been times when the AFP have increased their area of control however this was only temporary		
The perception of security was created or maintained among the population in areas that the COIN force claimed to control	<u>NO</u> Question 11 of the Sulu survey asked respondents if their personal security was better or worse than prior to 2001—the beginning of major COIN operations. Only 9% believed their personal security was better		
	NO=9 YES=2		YES=8

Table 8.1 clearly shows that the “good” Coin practices or factors are in the overwhelmingly minority. Even more disturbing in the tally of “bad” COIN practices—unanimous.

With the findings of the central questions and the objectives and preliminary hypothesis of this dissertation having been addressed, this chapter now offers an overall analytical summary.

8.9 Conclusions

The period expressly designated for this study was post-2001, although to properly analyse the post-2001 period it was necessary to refer to events prior to 2001. It is only by having a knowledge of events pre 2001 can some contemporary issues be better placed in perspective. This is especially so in the events leading up to and immediately after the closure of the U.S. military bases in the Philippines. It was also necessary, indeed imperative, to trace the history of the Sunni Muslims of the Sulu region, Sulu Province in particular, from the establishment of the first Sultanate in the 14th century CE to the time of this study. Only by doing this can the desire for self-determination of the Sunni Muslims of the Sulu region be better understood.

With the above events in mind, this study had two related objectives, the first being whether the perceived insurgency and/or violence now occurring in Sulu Province was directly related to the Arroyo Administration's domestic counterinsurgency policies. And this more so since the introduction in 2007 of the controversial Republic Act 9372. Furthermore, it had to be ascertained whether sections of Republic Act 9372 were in contravention of the 1987 Philippine Constitution.

This study has not found that domestic insurgency did occur after 2001 in Sulu Province. There were times of all-out 'war' between the AFP and paramilitary members of the MNLF, especially in 2005. However, this was not an act of domestic insurgency, and even less an act of domestic terrorism. There were acts of violence against civilians, and members of the AFP, but these were found to be attributed to criminal elements, who either identified themselves as being members of the ASG or more commonly were identified by the Arroyo Administration, and/or military officers of the AFP, as members of the ASG.

The study found that the introduction of Republic Act 9372 has not contributed to any domestic insurgency in Sulu Province. Indeed, violence attributed to terrorist cells has actually decreased since 2007, and especially so in the immediate years prior to 2007. This finding puts into question the necessity for the introduction of Republic Act 9372.

Evidence pointed to a desire by President Arroyo to quash MNLF self-determination aspirations. The study also found that the introduction of Republic Act 9372 was unpopular and that in the future it may become the catalyst for insurgency action in Sulu Province.

The Arroyo Administration's non-compliance with sections of the 1987 Philippine Constitution was evident in Republic Act 9372 resulting in national and international criticism and condemnation. However, this also did not result in any domestic insurgency action. Furthermore, the introduction of Republic Act 9372 did not bring any change in the popularity of President Arroyo or her administration; her popularity, and that of her administration, has been waning since the 2004 Presidential elections.

This study also sought to ascertain whether the presence of the numerically small ASG in Sulu Province was 'convenient' to the Arroyo Administration because its crimes may have been inspired by previous actions taken by the MNLF, which in turn would link the agendas of the ASG and the MNLF together. This link between the ASG and the MNLF was found to have no substance. Although it is true that domestic insurgency by the Moros did occur during the Presidencies of Marcos and Estrada, it was not an issue at the time of this study. However, what was established in this study is that any previous domestic insurgency, and any future domestic insurgency, should it occur, and in particular if it should happen in Sulu Province, was, and will be seen by many as liberation insurgency, not national insurgency.

Contemporary domestic counterinsurgency operations, or now more commonly referred to as anti-terrorist operations, were researched to ascertain whether these operations were in part directly attributed to international events which occurred as a result of the terrorist attacks in the U.S. in September 2001. This study found that although the ASG had no affiliation with Al-Qaeda, they were nevertheless included in the U.S. 'enemy' list in its 'Global War on Terror'. It has been shown that the ASG was operational for almost a decade before the events in the U.S. in 2001, and only after this

time was it considered 'terrorist'. Therefore, the question of whether the alleged presence of the ASG especially in Sulu Province was the 'nominal' target of counterinsurgency or counterterrorist operations because of the events in the U.S. in 2001 has been found to be true.

This study also sought to determine whether the resumption of joint AFP/U.S. military exercises, as well as substantially increased U.S. military aid to the Philippines was as a result of the Arroyo Administration's willingness to embrace the U.S. foreign policies on terrorism and insurgency post-2001. The overwhelming evidence pointed to this being the case. It was also found that the U.S. military presence in the southern Philippines post-2001, Sulu Province in particular, gave support to the AFP in that region. This contradicted the claim that the U.S. military presence was there solely for the purpose of training the AFP in military strategies. Whilst it was found that the U.S. military did assist in infrastructure rebuilding it was also shown that this infrastructure modernisation will benefit the AFP in times of 'war' with the MNLF.

Importantly this study found that the success of the Philippine domestic counterinsurgency policies will not be possible without embracing U.S. global counterinsurgency policies. They are symbiotic. And by embracing U.S. global counterinsurgency policies, the present Philippine National Administration will stand to gain substantial military aid, which in turn can be used against future insurgency in Sulu Province.

In conclusion, the research of this study has uniquely generated data and views from a geographical region, Sulu Province, that is viewed as a 'war zone'. This researcher has personally sought the views, and recollections, of a substantial number of residents in this war zone, as well as interviewing 30 members of the insurgent MNLF. The research has also revealed that President Arroyo has many critics, both nationally and internationally, and that this in turn may impede her desire to defeat the self-determination aspirations of the Moros of the southern Philippines, especially the Sunni Muslims of Sulu Province. With that in mind, and with the findings of this study

available it is recommended that future research needs to be undertaken in Sulu Province somehow. It is also recommended that future research extend to other remote municipalities outside of Jolo, Patikul, and Indanan. Such further research should be done after the completion of President Arroyo's present term in office, because the new incoming administration may have different domestic counterinsurgency policies.

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DINAMPO, Octavio A. Professor at Mindanao State University, Sulu. Also member and chair of various NGOs including Mindanao Peace Caucus and Mindanao Peaceweavers.

DOCENA, Herbert. Research associate at Focus on the Global South, a Bangkok-based policy research and advocacy centre.

GO, Alex. First Secretary, Philippine Embassy, Canberra, ACT.

KHO, Madge: author and member of AFSC's Peace and Economic Security Committee, Jolo Philippines

KIRAM, Jaz: Dr. Chancellor, Mindanao State University, Patikul, Sulu, Philippines.

LINGGA, Abhoud, Syed, M: Executive Director, Institute of Bangsa Moro Studies, Cotabato City, Philippines.

MARTIN, Eugene G: Executive Director, Philippine Facilitation Project, United States Institute of Peace, Washington.

MISUARI, Nur: Chairman, Moro National Liberation Front. Former chairman of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

RODIL, Rudy Buhay: Professor of History, Mindanao State University. He is also a member of the GRP peace negotiating panel involved in all the GRP/MILF Exploratory Talks. He is also head of the GRP Technical Committee working on ancestral domain research. He was also a former active member of the National Democrat Front (NDF): an alliance of revolutionary organizations led by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

SAHOT, Fred: (Al Saud): editor, *Sulu Peninsula Journal*, Sulu, Philippines.

TAYLOR, Victor: Involved in the peace process in the southern Philippine for over a quarter of a century. Taylor has taught at the Notre Dame College in Jolo. He was a technical assistant to the undersecretary of the Department of Defence. He was also on the panel that undertook the first peace talks with the Moro National Liberation Front in Jeddah Saudi Arabia in 1975. He is currently a principal in an energy company introducing thermal energy storage in the Philippines. He lives in Jolo, Sulu.

Appendix A

Cover page given to respondents in Sulu Province 2008

Information on the Nature and Aims of the Research

“Redefining Counterinsurgency Post 2001: Sulu Province: Republic of Philippines”

You are invited to participate in a survey questionnaire that is an integral part of my research dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. If you agree to participate, please recognise that the researcher, (Bob East) is totally responsible for the project.

The research seeks to determine if there is a correlation between the violence now occurring in the Sulu Archipelago and the Philippine Government’s domestic counterinsurgency policies. Other casual factors will also be explored. It is hoped at the conclusion of my research that some of the findings may be used to “improve” the situation in Sulu in certain areas.

It would be greatly appreciated if you could find the time to complete all of the questions. However if you feel uncomfortable about any question, please feel free to “ignore” that question. The survey will be used for scholarly purposes only. You can be assured that the answers and or data collected in my research will **remain strictly confidential**. All respondents will remain **anonymous** (as each will be assigned a code number).

I can be contacted as shown below.

Thank you
Bob East. BA(hons)

Email: eastr@bigpond.com
or Q1120732@uail.usq.edu.au

Phone: Australia. 07 46837383

Surface Mail: Bob East
80 Parrish Lane
Eukey
Via Stanthorpe
Qld.
Australia. 4380

Appendix B

Questionnaire given to respondents Sulu Province August 2008: English version

Dear Participant

Please **CIRCLE**  the appropriate answers

Section A

Profile Data about Myself

1. My gender is: Male Female
2. My age group is: 25-34 35-44 45-54 over 55
3. My place of Birth: Sulu Basilan Tawitawi Other Province Other
Country
4. Completed educational level: No Official Primary Secondary
Tertiary
5. Religion: Muslim Catholic Other

Section B

General Knowledge

6. Do you know anything about the Arroyo Administration's counterinsurgency policies? Yes.
No.
7. If you answered **yes**, do you approve of them?
Yes. No.
8. Are you familiar with the term "Global War on Terror"?
Yes. No.
9. Are you familiar with the terrorist attacks which occurred in the USA in 2001?
Yes. No.
10. Do you feel that the USA military presence in the Sulu Archipelago is connected with the events mentioned in Questions 8 & 9?
Yes. No. Unsure. Other (please specify)-----

Section C

Security Data

11. Is your personal security better or worse than prior to 2001
Better. Worse. No. comment Other (please specify)-----

- 11.1 If you answered "**worse**" who do you blame for this?
Philippine Govt. MNLF. Bandits. Others (please specify)

12. Do you believe that the Abu Sayyaf Group has a presence in your province?
Yes. No. Don't Know. Other (please specify)-----

13. How do you feel about the presence of USA Forces in the Sulu Archipelago provinces?
Neutral. Concerned. Fearful. Other (please specify)-----

14. How do you feel about MNLF paramilitary members engaging in armed contact with the Armed Forces of the Philippines in the Sulu Archipelago provinces?
Neutral. Concerned. Fearful. Other (please specify)-----

15. Do you accept that the Arroyo Administration is your Government?
Yes. No. Neutral. Other (please specify)-----

16. What type of government/rule would you prefer in your province?
(a) The present Arroyo government and its representatives/institutions
(b) A secular government, generally
(c) An Islamic government with Sharia Law, generally
(d) A Sultanate
(e) No preference
(f) Other (please specify)-----

17. What do you expect your/any government to deliver to the local population? Please prioritise with the number 1 being the highest, the number 2 next, and so on.
(a) Economic stability/development
(b) Anti-corruption action____
(c) Law enforcement____
(d) Human rights____
(e) Equal opportunity____
(f) Freedom of worship____
(g) Other____ (please specify)-----

18. Is the province of Sulu better off today than 10 or 20 years ago?
Yes. No. Neutral. Other (Please specify)-----

19. Would you consider the Province of Sulu to be peaceful?
Yes. No. Neutral. Other (Please specify)

Thank you for your time. And please feel free to expand or comment on any of the above questions.

Questionnaire given to respondents in Sulu Province August 2008:
Tausag version

Ligungan in sambag ha mga pangasubu.

Section A:

Hal ha Baran/Pangilahan sin magsasambag

1. In aku hambuuk : Usug Babai
2. In ummul ku : 25-34 35-44 45-54 55 pataas
3. Piyag-anak aku ha: Sulu Basilan Tawi-tawi
Dugaing Hulah ha Pilipinas Ha guwah hulah sin Pilipinas
4. In pangiskul ku: Bukun Iskul Anggalis Elementary Secondary (Highschool)
Tertiary (College)
5. Ha agama,in aku: Muslim Catholic Dugaing Agama

Section B:

General Knowledge(Katibuukan Pangingat sin Kahalan)

6. Awn kaingatan mu misan unu ha pagtagun “counterinsurgency policies” sin pamarinta hi Prisdinti Arroyo? (Counterinsurgency policies – Atulan sin Parinta ha Pag-atubang sin Kahiluhalaan)
Hun Wayruun
7. Bang in sambag mu hun, tumaaud ba kaw ha manga ini?
Hun Di’
8. Awn ba kaw pamaham ha pagbahasahun “Global War on Terror”? (Global War on Terror – Pag-gubat sin kabubugaan atawa aramhala ha katilingkal dunya)
Hun Wayruun
9. Awn ba kaw pamaham sin pagpang-gubat atawa pag-atak sin manga tirurista ha Hulah Milikan sin tahun 2001?
Hun Wayruun
10. Kiyananaman mu baha in paghanti sin sundalu Milikan di ha Lupah Sug awn palsugpatan iban sin aramhala na awn amuin nassabbut ha panagasubu hika-8 iban hika-9?
Hun Wayruun Bukun-tantu Dugaing sambag (sulatan)

Section C:

Security Data: (Hal Kahahanggawan)

11. In kiyahahanggawan mu baha’ pa baran mu marayaw atawa masangat pa dayn sin ba’gu dimatung in patahanan 2001?
Marayaw Masangat Di aku makabayta

- 11.1 Bang in sambag mu mangi , hisiyu in mataksil mu ha parakala ini?
 Parinta Pilipinas MNLF Mga tau-mangi' Dugaing tumpukan
 (sulatan)
12. Magkahagad kaw in manga tumpukan Abu Sayaff kiyananaman tuud ha Lupah Sug?
 Huun Wayruun Di' ku kaingatan Dugaing Sambag (sulatan)
13. Unu in ha pangatayan mu ha paghanti sin manga Sundalu Milikan di ha Lupah Sug?
 Ha gi'tungan Awn paghimmat Mabuga' Dugain sambag (sulatan)
14. Unu in ha pangatayan mu ha tumpukan sin MNLF amuin imaatu ha Sundalu Parinta sin Pilipinas
 di ha Lupah Sug?
 Ha gi'tungan Awn paghimmat Mabuga' Dugain sambag (sulatan)
15. Tiyatayma' mu ba in Pagnakuraan hi Prisidinti Arroyo amuin pamarinta (iyaagaran) mu?
 Huun Di' Ha gi'tungan
16. Unu in kabayaan mu Pamarinta di ha Lupah Sug/Province of Sulu?
 i. Pamarinta hi Prisidinti Arroyo ha bihaun
 ii. Pamarinta way lamud sin agama
 iii. Pamarinta Islam in diyara Sarah sin Shariah
 iv. Pagsultan
 v. Way tantu kabayaan
 vi. Dugaing pamarinta (sulatan)
17. Unu in hiyuhulathulat mu hikatukbal sin pamarinta kabayaan mu atawa sin dugaing pamarinta pa
 manga raayat? (butangi umbul hambuuk (1) in kabayaan mu tuud hikatukbal, ubus magsunud-
 sunud na in kaibanan ha hika-2, hika 3...)
 i. Tutug in kabuhianan/Kasambuhan sin Kabuhianan ____
 ii. Atubangun in Pagtakaw ha parinta ____
 iii. Pagpapanaw maamu sin Sarah ____
 iv. Kaadilan pa manga Manusiya ____
 v. Sama-sibu kahalan atawa lugal ____
 vi. Kalimayahan ha Pag-agama ____
 vii. Dugaing sambag : _____
18. In Lupah Sug baha', marayaw in kahalan ha bihaun dayn sin ha manga hangpu pa kawhaan
 tahun na in limabay?
 Huun Bukun Ha gi'tungan Dugain Sambag (sulatan)
19. Bibilang mu ba in Lupah Sug masanyang (atawa sajahitra)?
 Huun Bukun Ha gi'tungan Dugaing sambag (sulatan)

Magsukul ha dihil niyu waktu. Bang awn pa kamu kabayaan lilyun ha manga pangasubu
 nasabbut ha taas, sulatan niyu di ha bahagi ini.

Appendix C

C.V. of Nur Ainie J. Idjilani, Research Facilitator...

- City Address: 112 P. Santos St. Malibay, Pasay, City -1300 Philippines
- Provincial Address: 483 Zone 7 Camp Asturias, Jolo, Sulu – 7400, Philippines
- Education: Bachelor of Arts in History (March 1994)
Notre Dame of Jolo College, Jolo Sulu, Philippines
March 1994
- Master of Arts in Education (Social Studies)
Western Mindanao State University, Zamboanga City
(Finished Academic Requirements)
- Work-Related Experience:
- April 2005 – present Coordinator (Philippines)
SCOLA Educational Television
(Program Director: Mr. David Decker)
SCOLA Main Office: 21557 270th St., McClelland
IA – 5158, USA (712-566-2202)
- April 2008 - Present Consultant (Tausug Content Object Selection)
National Foreign Language Centre @ University of Maryland
Main Office: 5201 Paint Branch Parkway, Suite 2132
College Park, Maryland 20742, USA
301-405-9806
- May 2005 – December 2007 Researcher
SCOLA Dictionary Project
Project Coordinator: Mr. Riccardo Marchio
SCOLA Educational Television
- June 2001 – October 2005 Subject Area Coordinator
Social Sciences Department
Notre Dame of Jolo College
Jolo, Sulu – 7400 Philippines
- June 1997 – March 2006 Faculty Member
Arts and Sciences Department
Notre Dame of Jolo College
Jolo, Sulu – 7400
Philippines
- Achievements:
- Chief Consultant – Philippines “Intensive Tausug: A Pedagogical Grammar of the language of Jolo,
Philippines”
Author: Dr. Carl Ralph Galvez Rubino
Copyright: McNeil Technologies, Inc. and Dr. Carl Rubino
Dunwoody Press, USA: 2006
- Consultant – “Peace Education Integration in the Basic Education Curriculum”
Ateneo de Zamboanga University Research Centre
Zamboanga City – 7000

Philippines

Facilitator and Lecturer - “Basic Orientation Seminar: Towards Establishing a School Zone of Peace in Sulu”
Notre Dame of Jolo College Peace Centre
2004 – 2005

“History, language, and Culture of the Tausug”
Notre Dame of Jolo College
Jolo, Sulu, Philippines
1998 - 2004

Author - “Portfolio of Sulu Province: A Photographic Documentation of the Historical Landmarks found in Jolo Island”
Kamahardikaan Journal, Inc.
Copyright: Notre Dame of Jolo College
2004

Presenter – “Portfolio of Sulu: Preliminary Investigation”
Paper presented at the ADHIKA ng Pilipinas Conference
Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, Philippines
2003

“Tausug Culinary Arts: Pastries and Delicacies”
Paper presented at the ADHIKA ng Pilipinas
Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines
2002

Curator “Tilamsik ng Liwanag”
National Commission on Culture and the Arts – Travelling Exhibit
Exhibit Venue – Sulu Province
2001

Personal Data:

Age: 34 Ethnicity: Tausug
Gender: Female Nationality: Filipino
Status: Single Religion: Islam
Interests: Reading and Travelling
Email Address: eyesnai@yahoo.com
Contact No.: +63-916-8368003

Appendix D

Questionnaire given to MNLF respondents in November 2008: English version

Question 1. Do you believe that the majority of the Sulu population support the MNLF and its broader agenda of having ancestral domain recognised?

Answers Yes No Other “please specify”
.....
.....

Question 2. Do you believe that **if** the 1996 Peace Agreement between the MNLF and the Philippine Government had been fully implemented then Sulu would now be more peaceful and prosperous?

Answers Yes No Other “please specify”
.....
.....

Question 3. Do you believe that the presence of USA Military Forces in Sulu has been beneficial in any way?

Answers Yes No Other “please specify”
.....
.....

Question 4. Are you happy with Sulu being a part of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao?

Answers Yes No Other “please specify”
.....
.....

Question 5. Do you believe that the Arroyo Administration is using its domestic counterinsurgency policies in an attempt to discredit the MNLF?

Answers Yes No Other “please specify”.
.....
.....
.....

Please feel free to add any extra comment, bearing in mind that all comments will be treated with respect, and your anonymity will be guaranteed. If you wish to add your status or “rank” in the MNLF then that would be appreciated. However if you do not wish to disclose this, that is ok with me.

Thank You. Wasallam.

Bob East. BA (hons) Doctorial Candidate.

Questionnaire given to MNLF respondents 2008 in Tausag

Pangasubu ha mga MNLF

1. Magkahagad kaw ha in kamatauran sin tau ha Lupah Sug timutuku ha manga MNLF iban sin ha iyaangut nila madawhat in kilahun in kapatut nila ha Lupah Sug?

Huun: _____ Di _____

Dugaing Sambag (lilaya): _____

2. Magkahagad kaw bang sawpama napatuman in baljanjian amuin pagtagun “1996 Peace Agreement” ha antara sin Parinta Pilipinas iban sin MNLF, in Lupah Sug ha bihayaun labi in Kajahitraan iban Kasambuhan niya?

Huun: _____ Di _____

Dugaing Sambag (lilaya): _____

3. Magkahagad kaw in paghanti sin manga Sundala Milikan di ha Lupah Sug awn kiyapus paiddahan niya?

Huun: _____ Di _____

Dugaing Sambag (lilaya): _____

4. Makuyag baha kaw ha in Lupah Sug talbilang sin Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao?

Huun: _____ Di _____

Dugaing Sambag (lilaya): _____

5. Magkahagad kaw in pamarinta hi Pres. Arroyo iyuusal hadja in pagtagun “domestic counter-insurgency policies” ha amuin sulayan babaun in MNLF? (In hati sin “domestic counter-insurgency policies” amuin “aturan-sarah sin parinta ha pag-atubang ha kahiluhalaan ha paghulah”)

Huun: _____ Di _____

Dugaing Sambag (lilaya): _____

@ Bang awn pa kamu mabaya lilayun atawa hisugpat dugaing dayn ha pangasubu ha taas, manjari niyu ra isab hisulat ha baba. In katan sin sasambag-sambagan niyu pangamdusan ku bawgbugan ha tungud ha uway makaingat sin hisitu kamu. Bang kamu mabaya isab kilahun in kahantang niyu ha tumpukan MNLF manjari niyu ra isab hibayta in rangu niyu, landu ku tuud ini halgaan. Sumagawa bang di kamu mabaya hibayta halgaan ku ra isab ini kaniya.

Magsukul. Wassalam.

Bob East BA (hons) Doctoral Candidate.

Appendix E

Email received Nur Ainie Idjilani on 19 December 2008 and letter confirming her facilitation

Dear Bob!

Salam. Alhamdulillah that I have a good overseas trip. I enjoyed and learned a lot as usual. By the way, I am so sorry that I was not able to send the letter immediately. My internet connection got some problem. Anyway, the MNLF members that I interviewed were all from Indanan.

God bless and more power,
Ainie

- On **Wed, 12/17/08, bob east** <eastr@bigpond.com> wrote:

From: bob east <eastr@bigpond.com>

Subject: MNLF responses

To: "Nur Ainie Idjilani" <eyesnai@yahoo.com>

Date: Wednesday, December 17, 2008, 4:22 PM

Ainie,

forgot to ask. The 30 MNLF people that answered my questionnaires, were they from Jolo, or a camp in Indanan? I know that the camp in Panamao was taken over by the AFP a few years ago.

Bob

Letter of confirmation of research facilitation

To Whom It May Concern

I am writing this letter on behalf of Mr. Bob East who requested me to act as his research facilitator. I distributed questionnaires to residents, including members of the MNLF, in Sulu province. I translated the questionnaires into Tausug where necessary and retranslated back into English. The completed questionnaires were then despatched to Mr. East via United Parcel Services (UPS).

I assisted Mr. East with the intention that his research will be of importance in understanding the situation in Mindanao and in finding solution in the settlement of the conflict here. I also believe that his research will contribute in finding peace in Mindanao and in some parts of the world that has the same problem like Mindanao.

Respectfully yours.

Nur-Ainie J. Idjilani

Jolo, Sulu, Philippines