Battling Two Fronts With One Stroke
Ava Patricia C. Avila

The prospects for peace with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army/National Democratic Front (CPP/NPA/NDF) are on a high note under the administration of President Benigno Aquino III. The government is now in the process of implementing a new Internal Peace and Security Plan which is focused more on human security involving civil society and the military.
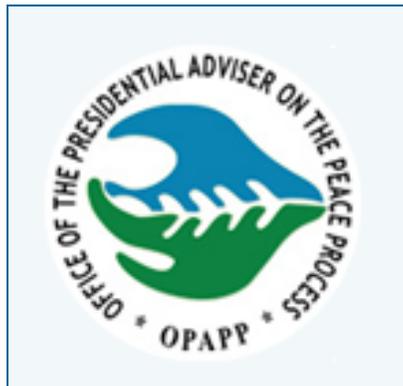
The Office of Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) is mandated to oversee, coordinate and integrate the implementation of a comprehensive peace process. President Benigno Aquino III announced his resolve to talk peace and settle the conflicts with the Muslim secessionist movement and the communist rebels. Image and Photo Credit: OPAPP website www.opapp.gov.ph

The Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) recently resumed peace talks with both the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army/National Democratic Front (CPP/NPA/NDF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The costs of these two conflicts for the country and the people of the Philippines as a whole have been heavy. It is hoped that both peace talks will go smoothly despite a number of stumbling blocks and that agreements will be finalized and implemented before the term of President Benigno Simeon Aquino III ends in 2016.

Aquino and the Two Fronts

In his inaugural address, President Aquino declared his willingness to talk peace and settle the conflicts, inclusive of the interests of all. He presented the peace framework of his administration – good governance, effective delivery of basic services, sustainable development, and security sector reform.

Negotiated peace settlements with the MILF and the CPP/NPA/NDF are promising under the Aquino administration. It was then believed that the prospects for peace is better with the MILF than with the

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(Top) Peace Panel Chairs from the Philippines Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front met in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in February 2011 for exploratory talks. (Right) Heads of the Negotiating Panels of the Philippines Government and the National Democratic Front during a meeting in February 2011 in Oslo, Norway. Photo Credits: OPAPP website www.opapp.gov.ph

communist rebels as the former is perceived to be more open to negotiations.

MILF

Only fifteen days after his inauguration, President Aquino appointed Marvic Leonen, the Dean of the University of the Philippines College of Law as the chairman of the peace panel for negotiations with the MILF. In July 2010, during the State of the Nation Address (SONA), President Aquino expressed hope that the peace negotiations will begin after the Ramadan. The Muslim holiday ended on 9 September 2010 and the MILF named members of its panel four days later.

Civil society groups played a role to get the GRP and MILF panels to meet. Moreover, the apparent openness of both panels to have dialogues and compromises has helped in resolving some of the drawbacks and issues. One of the main issues was the extension of the mandate of the Malaysian-led International Monitoring Team (IMT). The IMT was credited for monitoring the implementation of the ceasefire agreement between the Philippines military and the MILF rebels. The IMT mandate was valid until 9 December 2010 and the Philippines government wrote a note verbale to the IMT member countries and requested for an extension. The IMT was given a three-month extension or until 9 March 2011. It is not yet clear what would be the next move after the deadline ends set but what is certain is that both panels have been able to buy time.

CPP/NPA/NDF

President Aquino challenged the mainstream communist movement to draw concrete suggestions to achieve peace instead of merely criticizing the government. Since its organization in the late 1960's, the activities and anti-government operations of the CPP/NPA/NDF has affected thousands of Filipinos. The group's activities escalated during the dictatorship of the late President Ferdinand Marcos. In 1986, Marcos was ousted from power and the administration of the late President Corazon Aquino declared a 60-day ceasefire with the communist rebels. However, the peace talks failed to address the substantive, if not contentious issues and negotiations broke down in 1987. The succeeding administrations of Fidel Ramos, Joseph Estrada, and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo were successful in engaging the CPP/NPA/NDF in peace talks. But in August 2004, during Arroyo's term, the rebels withdrew from the negotiations and accused the Philippines government of not exerting more efforts to convince the United States and other Western allies to remove the CPP/NPA/NDF from the list of terrorist organizations.

The communist rebels have shown remarkable resiliency over the past years. Despite the decline of support, funding, and the difficulty of recruiting highly educated cadres, the group remains to be the major threat to Philippine security. The Philippines government

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and the military claims that the communist movement is on an irreversible decline. However, clashes still continue. The group has been able to plan attacks and secure weapons and funds locally. In areas where the rebels have a strong presence and the government is weak, efforts to defeat the group are considerably challenging.

Four months into his term, President Aquino appointed lawyer Alexander Padilla as the chair of the government peace panel negotiating with the CPP/NPA/NDF. In early December 2010, Padilla met with Luis Jalandoni, the NDF peace panel chair, in Hong Kong. The two had informal talks and discussed how the negotiations would move forward. The fact that the two panel chairs knew each other since the Martial Law years (1972 to 1981) is seen to be an advantage for the negotiations. Padilla was a member of the national council of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan and was secretary-general of the Nationalist Alliance for Justice, Freedom and Democracy.

Conclusion

Successive governments have made promises to settle the conflicts, resume peace talks, and review the structure of the negotiation process. There have been multiple efforts along the lines of combined military operations and development works. But these efforts were not sustainably implemented and none of these have succeeded in bringing about peace. The Aquino administration has repeatedly professed its commitment to human rights. In its pursuit of a political settlement with the MILF and the communist rebels, the government would have to implement dramatic changes within the military's counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations. The government needs to ensure that it has the widespread and full support from the military, police and paramilitary forces for its new Internal Peace and Security plan (IPSP), known as *Oplan Bayanihan*,

Oplan Bayanihan is focused on human security. Its emphasis is on the security of citizens within their communities, not just the security of the state. The plan was the result of widespread consultations with acade-

mia, civil society groups, and civilian government agencies. *Oplan Bayanihan* acknowledges that a purely military solution will not end the persistent conflicts in the country and it supports the primacy of the peace process. The government has sought to make the IPSP available to all stakeholders in order to have a shared understanding of its plans down to the *barangay* or village level. A major characteristic of the new IPSP is the importance it gives to Civil-Military Operations (CMO). Aside from addressing the needs of communities, CMO also support local governance in the delivery of basic services. Suffice to say that the new IPSP is hinged on the "Whole-of-Nation' approach as the Philippines government has now realized that the local government units are the most critical actors in mitigating the conflict and bringing about peace and security.

With the MILF, the Aquino administration had its first, formal exploratory talks in February 2011. The discussions centered on MILF's erring commanders and the MILF's draft comprehensive compact which contained the group's stand on some issues that need to be taken into consideration by the Philippine government. The next round of talks is scheduled on 27 and 28 April 2011. Meanwhile, the talks in February with the CPP/NPA/NDF resulted in an 18-month timeframe for the completion of agreements on the remaining substantive agenda, such as social, economic, political, and constitutional reforms, and the end of hostilities and disposition of forces. In the most recent survey conducted by Pulse Asia from February to March 2006, majority of Filipinos have given President Aquino a high approval rating for "improving the national peace situation."

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Managing Religious Tensions: Indonesia's Current Dilemma

V. Arianti and Tuty Raihanah Mostarom

Do the current violence against the Ahmadiyahs and recent attacks on churches represent the tip of the iceberg of an increasing intolerance towards minority religions in Indonesia? Will the country slip again into religious communal strife as experienced in Ambon and Poso?

A still lifted from a video clip which shows the 6 February 2011 attacks. Photo Credit: BBC News

On 6 February 2011, a mob of about 1500 villagers attacked an Ahmadiyah group in Banten province, killing three followers. Two days later, another 1500-strong mob carried out arson in the compounds of two churches in Temanggung, Central Java, protesting a prison sentence deemed too lenient for a Christian man found guilty of distributing leaflets seen as blaspheming Islam. This was despite 1,000 policemen safeguarding the court area. The two incidents are part of a trend of increasing confrontations with religious minorities in Indonesia that is capturing international attention from as far as the United States and Europe.

Dynamics behind the alarming trend

Violence against the Ahmadiyahs has been picking up since 2008. Islamists are calling for the complete disbandment of the sect, citing deviation from the rightful teachings of Islam. The government has held its ground in not following the footsteps of Middle Eastern governments that have banned them in their countries. But the authorities in Jakarta have signed a ministerial decree in

2008 banning Ahmadiyahs from spreading their faith. Owing to the pressures from hard-line Islamists, governors of East and West Java issued a decree banning Ahmadiyah activities and similar policies are reportedly in effect in many other parts of Indonesia, including in the provinces of South Sumatra, Banten, West Nusa Tenggara as well as in the cities of Bogor, Kuningan and Samarinda.

Christians in the country also appear to be another primary target for opposition and violence. In a policy brief, the International Crisis Group stated that this is a reaction to perceived "Christianization"— a combined effect of Christian efforts to convert Muslims and the growing influence of Christianity in Indonesia. This has been used by Islamic hardliners to justify mass mobilization and vigilante attacks. It has also been used as a rallying point on online extremist sources. For example, one website linked to the Jamaah Anshorut Tauhid (JAT) has a segment wholly devoted to highlighting the phenomenon of "Christianization" under the rubric *Christiology. The same site has also declared those who stabbed the two priests in Bekasi as jihadists and glorified the city as an area for jihad.*

The results of recent surveys support this grim outlook. A 2010 nationwide survey by the Centre for the Study of Islam and Society (Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat/PPIM), for instance, revealed that religious intolerance among certain sections of Indone-

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sian Muslims has increased in the last 10 years, suggesting a link with the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the country. According to this survey 57.8 percent of the respondents said that they were against the construction of churches and other non-Muslim places of worship, the highest rate recorded since 2001.

The Setara survey revealed that close to 50 percent of respondents in Jakarta and its vicinity thought it was unacceptable for houses of worship of other religions to be constructed in their neighbourhood. The figures are exceptionally high – 66% and 72% - for Depok and Bekasi residents respectively. Coincidentally or otherwise, local residents in there recently objected to the construction of churches in their vicinities.

Implications of discourse and actions

Recent reports by Moderate Muslim Society (MMS) and The Wahid Institute revealed the Islam Defenders Front (FPI) were near the top of the lists of perpetrators of religious violence. Therein lies the intricate link between the attacks against the Ahmadiyahs and Christians in Indonesia.

The Islam Defenders Front (FPI) headed by Habib Rizieq calls for constitutional change in Indonesia for the full implementation of the *shariah* in Indonesia. Their main objective is to uphold '*amar maruf nahi mungkar*' (encourage goodness and refrain from evils) in all aspects of life and see themselves as self-appointed moral and religious guardians of Muslims. The FPI claims to have 5 million registered members and about 15 million sympathisers from 17 branches nationwide.

At the early stages, their activities focused on peaceful protests and raids of places of vice such as nightclubs and gambling dens. This then expanded to recruitment of fighters for Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine and having alleged links to other radical groups and terrorist organisations in the country following involvement in violent attacks. In recent years, FPI has also been at the forefront of attacks against the Ahmadiyahs as well as having members implicated in attacks against churches and Christian elders. In East Kalimantan, Samarinda mayor Syaharie Jaang froze the local chapter of the Ahmadiyah after dozens of FPI members ral-

lied in front of his office. The group gave the mayor a week's deadline to disband the chapter and threatened to take matters into their own hands should nothing be done by the authorities.

The authorities need to elevate their efforts against groups like the FPI due to their hardliner stance. Such groups also have a capacity to come together, such as in Bekasi, where FPI Bekasi chairman, Murhali Barda, led a group of vigilantes from sixteen Islamic organisations to stop construction of a church in February 2010. Themes and discourses which formulate a common enemy -- be it Christians or Ahmadiyahs -- offer the ideal opportunity to find common ground and collaborate, setting aside pre-existing differences among groups, to the detriment of religious freedom and harmony in Indonesia. More disquieting is the prospect of uniting violent and non-violent extremist groups together as demonstrated in Bekasi in May in two religious rallies which saw the coming together of conservatives across ideological lines.

Shadows of Poso and Ambon?

The government already has the Inter-Religious Forum (FKUB) in every district to maintain inter-religious harmony but its effectiveness needs to be reviewed. Despite repeated attacks against the religious minorities the government appears to remain reluctant to take stern measures further than persecuting perpetrators of religious violence. This is due to the complexities of running a Muslim majority state, hence the need to juggle the pressures from all sides. Unfortunately, this may quickly get out of control unless the government takes urgent and comprehensive measures such as reviewing the ambiguity of the 2008 Ministers Decree on Ahmadiyah or outright banning of violent groups.

Otherwise, there is a possibility of a reappearance of major religious and communal strife like that witnessed in Poso and Maluku ten years ago. The period saw thousands dead and many more displaced. Terrorists also added fuel to the fire when groups such as JI infiltrated the conflicts for training, recruitment and indoctrination. The authorities must act now as the situation is fast evolving and increasing in complexity.

Perspectives on the Al Qaeda

Daiju Wada

The Al Qaeda is still seen as the main terrorist threat. But what is clear is that the group's flexibility and adaptability and its ability to draw like minded organizations and individuals to its network have complicated the threat landscape.

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The unprecedented scale of the September 11, 2001 attacks has made the Al Qaeda one of the most serious threats to peace and security. The group is continuously evolving and no one can quite define who are the Al Qaeda today. Some experts suggest that the Al Qaeda of today remains to be the group headed by Osama Bin Laden and his accomplices who are hiding in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan. There are others who insist that today's Al Qaeda is very different from the Al Qaeda which carried out the 2001 attacks. Al Qaeda today is seen as more diversified and could be described as a "franchise" network. Because of the failure to have a shared definition of what is modern Al Qaeda, there is a need to deepen research and academic analysis to come up with as close a description as possible.

The analysis of research and assessments published by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Brookings Institution, the RAND Corporation, among others, seem to indicate that the threat of modern Al Qaeda is composed of four different elements.

Al Qaeda Central

First is the threat of Al Qaeda Central, or "core" Al Qaeda, which is led by Osama Bin Laden and is based in the Taliban-affected areas in FATA, Pakistan. This group was a key player behind many provocative terrorist attacks. But the 9/11 attacks invited the participation of the United States (US) Military to Afghanistan for the purpose of capturing Osama Bin Laden and eradicating the group. While the US succeeded in exhausting Al Qaeda operations- their safe havens were destroyed and their operational space is very limited now- there is still a need to safeguard against the changes Al Qaeda Central have gone through. The group is now seen to prefer the role of encouraging followers to carry out violent jihad although there is still the threat of terrorist attacks coming from them. The group is highly adaptable and played a major role in creating what we now know as Al Qaeda's global network. The US has recently expanded its operations to the tribal border areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. However, the US is still seen to continue to have a hard time penetrating the tribal areas. US military operations and drone attacks will only revitalize anti-US movements and contribute to the resurgence of the Taliban.

Al Qaeda Linked Groups

Second, is the threat coming from other branches of the Al Qaeda such as the Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). These groups are

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operating independently of each other and the degree of mutual interactions between them has yet to be ascertained. These groups do share the objective of building a worldwide Islamic caliphate. The AQAP in particular, is considered to be the most serious threat for US homeland security. The AQAP has proven its intention and capability to plan attacks against the United States. It was behind the Christmas Day plot of December 2009 and the Parcel Bomb plot of September 2010. Anwar Al-Awlaki, the American leader of the AQAP, is making efforts to market the Al Qaeda "brand" through the Internet and magazines such as "Inspire". The group is also known to target Yemeni and Saudi governments- it is capitalizing on socio-economic issues such as corruption, unemployment, and discrimination to gain support and bring about regime change.

The AQIM is based around Maghreb countries, specifically in the borders along Algeria, Niger and Mauritania. The Sahara desert encompasses these areas and police visibility and patrols are critically poor. The ability of the AQIM to carry out attacks is limited compared to the AQAP. The group's targets, if one were to base it on their recent operations, are mainly focused on French interests. This does not mean that other Western states, such as the United States and its allies, are beyond their target scope. It's just that historical backgrounds partly influence the group's ideology and it reflects in their preferred targets. Many analysts believe that the group's operational capability is limited because they have failed to cause large-scale attacks similar to those by the AQAP and AQI. More recently, the cooperation between Maghreb governments have increased in frequency and counterterrorism efforts are now being strengthened. There is a need for the authorities to maintain its focus on the AQIM as the organization could evolve. Historically, there are frequent interactions between South European and Maghreb countries. There is a probability that the AQIM would look to target big cities such as Rome, Barcelona, Madrid and Marseilles.

The Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) escalated its attacks after the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime and his subsequent arrest and execution. The United States implemented a strategy to strengthen its cooperation with local Sunni tribes and this has succeeded in disrupting AQI's operations and weakening the group. Still, the country is considered as one of the key bases for Al Qaeda. Various factors have enabled the group to continue to thrive- institutional corruption, ethnic conflicts, and geopolitical issues.

Homegrown Terrorism

Third, is the threat coming from homegrown terrorism as seen from the car bombing attempt in New York City in May 2010 and the suicide bomb attacks in Stockholm, Sweden in December 2010.The threat of homegrown terrorism is particularly highlighted in the United States and the United Kingdom along with issues of "online radicalization" and "self radicalization." Many analysts believe that the threat from homegrown terrorism is minimal as they are not likely to be well-trained and their capability to carry out operations is not sophisticated enough. But a trend to watch out for is the use of the Internet as a critical medium to consolidate the global jihadi network and to facilitate the self-radicalization of misguided individuals. The threat of radicalization from the Al Qaeda coming from the Internet should be of serious concern because it is through this medium that the group is able to project itself as relevant.

Al Qaeda Network

Fourth is Al Qaeda's purported network and links with various Islamic fundamentalist groups. These groups are not calling themselves Al Qaeda as they are essentially local groups or organizations with localized goals. However, Al Qaeda has proven its capability to infiltrate local groups and provide them financial and logistical support. The local groups have relatively strong organization and capabilities and the Al Qaeda would try to use this to enhance its own capabilities.

Perspectives on the Al Qaeda

This is also used to strengthen Al Qaeda's presence and its networks in a particular region. An example of this would be the Jemaah Islamiyah in Indonesia and the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines. The Al Qaeda's presence in Southeast Asia was due largely to the extent of their affiliation with these two groups which provided them sanctuaries and trainings for new recruits in exchange for financial and logistical support for their own, localized, agendas.

Conclusion

The threat of violence and political extremism coming from Al Qaeda and like-minded groups remains to be a critical issue for the international community. What is clear is that Al Qaeda's flexibility and adaptability, and its ability to draw like-minded organizations and individuals to its network, has complicated the way analysts view the threat situation. It has become difficult to draw the difference between the threat coming from local groups, homegrown terrorists, and Al Qaeda central. Governments must ensure that they undertake efforts that would address both the threat of violence and the ideological issues to offset the terrorist threat.

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GLOBAL PATHFINDER II

The ICPVTR Terrorism Database – Global Pathfinder - is a one-stop repository for information on the current and emerging terrorist threat. The database focuses on terrorism and political violence in the Asia-Pacific region – comprising of Southeast Asia, North Asia, South Asia, Central Asia and Oceania.

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In addition to providing the latest information on terrorist attacks and pronouncements, Global Pathfinder also includes over a hundred terrorist training manuals, counter terrorism legislations and conventions, analytical papers on terrorist ideologies, commentaries on terrorist trends and patterns, transcripts of landmark cases, interviews with terrorists as well as photographs from different conflict zones across the world. Further, Global Pathfinder also has a huge collection of jihadi websites, the contents of which are routinely translated and analyzed by our analysts. This analysis helps develop an understanding of the developments in the ideological spectrum and trajectory of the terrorist threat, in both in tactical as well as strategic space.

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Events and Publications

25 March 2011: Countering the Financing of Terrorism organized by the Association of Banks of Singapore and supported by the Consortium for Countering the Financing of Terrorism (CCFT)
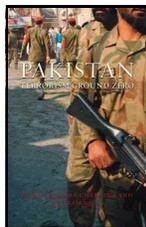
- Pakistan: Terrorism Ground Zero (Reaktion Books, 2011) by Dr. Rohan Gunaratna and Mr. Khuram Iqbal

- International Aviation and Terrorism: Evolving Threats, Evolving Security (Routledge 2009) by Dr. John Harrison
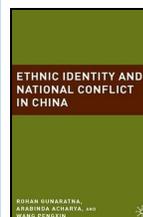
- Ethnic Identity and National Conflict in China (Palgrave Macmillan 22 June 2010) by Dr. Rohan Gunaratna, Dr. Arabinda Acharya and Mr. Wang Pengxin

- Targeting Terrorist Financing: International Cooperation and New Regimes (Routledge 2009) by Dr. Arabinda Acharya