A FERTILE GROUND TO GROW
An Analysis of Terrorism in Southeast Asia and a Joint Case Study of Jemaah Islamiyah in Indonesia and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the Philippines

Hannah Suh
Professor Pek Koon Heng-Blackburn, SIS
University Honors in International Service
Spring 2014
Abstract

This paper analyzes the rise of militant Islam in Southeast Asia through a joint case study of Jemaah Islamiyah in Indonesia and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the Philippines. Examining the factors that contributed to the growth of terrorism in the region, this paper provides a historical context as well as political, economic, and cultural background to answer the question of whether Southeast Asia is the second front for terrorism. While counterterrorism efforts have been successful, they do not target the foundational sources of terrorism. Furthermore, scholars should not view Southeast Asian terrorism through a Middle East lens. As a result, Southeast Asia serves as a fertile ground in which terrorism can grow.
The presence of terrorism in Southeast Asia is not a new phenomenon. However, during the 1990s the “residual threat posed by substate extremism rose.” Post-9/11, terrorist groups based in Southeast Asia have either passed through training camps under the instruction of the Taliban or have established links with Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. Within the region, multiple terrorist groups exist— Abu Sayyaf, Moro Islamic Liberation Front, and Moro National Liberation Front in the Philippines; Patani United Liberation Organization in Thailand; Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia in Malaysia; and Jemaah Islamiyah throughout several Southeast Asian nations. This laundry list of terrorist groups illustrates the prevalence of terrorist groups in the region.

With President Bush’s declaration of a global war on terror, some scholars and experts have pontificated on whether Southeast Asia is the “second front” for terrorism. This question does not yield a simple yes or no response. Instead, the answer is much more nuanced. Conditions in Southeast Asia provide a fertile soil for terrorism to grow. However, by implementing proactive policies that pinpoint the causes for the rise of militant Islam, Southeast Asian governments can mitigate these factors which help create an environment that fosters terrorism.

For the purposes of this project, this paper will focus on Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) in Indonesia and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the Philippines. Al Qaeda’s decision to expand to Southeast Asia was initially due to the region’s lax business and banking environment prime for money laundering as well as the vast network of Islamic charities. Additionally, Southeast Asia’s attraction to Al Qaeda was also due to the “growth of Islamic grievances within Southeast Asian states since the 1970s for socio-economic and political

---

reasons.”2 Upon entering the region, Al Qaeda set out to accomplish three goals—graft onto or co-opt preexisting radicals, link these radical groups together to form a transnational network, and establish a regional arm financially independent and technically proficient to carry out a terrorist attack.3

The independent organization to fulfill Al Qaeda’s third goal was JI. As the world’s largest Muslim country, Indonesia offers a unique backdrop to examine the rise of militant Islam. A country where Islam helped create the foundations of civil society and was the “force that facilitated Indonesia’s transition to democracy,”4 Indonesia is one of the few Southeast Asian countries with such strong ties to Islam. In direct contrast, the Philippines does not have such strong ties to Islam. Due to Spanish colonization, the Christian population greatly outnumbers the Muslim population. Furthermore, the influence of the U.S. as well as Manila’s close ties to Washington compared to Indonesia where U.S. presence is limited provides an interesting case comparison for the rise of terrorism.

**Terrorism, Defined**

Terrorism consists of six elements. Defined as the “use of violence or threat of violence by an organized group to achieve political objectives, the violence is directed against a target audience that extends beyond the immediate victims, who are often civilians. Further, while a government can either be the perpetrator of violence or the target, it is only considered an act of terrorism if the other actors is not a government.”5 Terrorist groups benefit from weak

---

governments as governments with weak militaries cannot exert the amount of pressure needed to persuade terrorist group members that engaging in terrorist acts is detrimental and costly.\(^6\)

Peter Sederberg utilizes three perspectives to analyze terrorism—terrorism as an enemy to be defeated in war, terrorism as a crime, and terrorism as a disease.\(^7\)

Comparing terrorism to an enemy combatant in war suggests that terrorism can be defeated and that the possibility of victory exists. On the other hand, viewing terrorism as a crime assumes that terrorism cannot disappear; it can only be contained. Lastly, terrorism as a disease emphasizes the “need for long-term strategies even if there [are] successes along the way in treating symptoms.”\(^8\)

**Literature Review**

In Southeast Asia, unrestrained corruption has contributed to weak governance. According to Rose-Ackerman, corruption is “‘using public goods or capacity for private benefits.’”\(^9\) Some theories state that corruption causes terrorism because terrorists “resent the government’s inconsistent application of the rule of law.”\(^10\) Thus, corruption is the motivation for terrorism. Other scholars argue that terrorism is a byproduct of corruption with no direct causation. Instead, corruption “indirectly increases the ability of groups to carry out attacks...because of an inability or unwillingness to enforce the rule of law, which reduces the costs of operating within such territories.”\(^11\)

---


\(^7\) Ibid 290.

\(^8\) Ibid.


\(^10\) Ibid 167.

\(^11\) Ibid 168.
This indirect link between terrorism and corruption applies readily to Southeast Asia. Corruption creates a permissive environment in which terrorist groups easily operate. Weakened legal enforcement and the “perception that the government cannot or will not maintain rule of law [allow terrorists to view] such corruption as a signal that they can conduct their own operations with impunity.” As discussed later, Jemaah Islamiyah did not function in Indonesia until after the democratic transition because of poor governance; the founders of JI saw their opportunity and capitalized on it.

A grievance based perspective of terrorism assumes that individuals are justice seeking due to marginalization. There are three areas of marginalization that provide motive—physical security, economic marginalization, and political institutions. These grievances overcome the collective action problem as it is a systemic calculation of grievance.

According to Aspinall, grievance can be a socially constructed value that arises and is understood only within particular historical, cultural, and political contexts. One can use a discourse of deprivation or narrative of suffering (i.e. grievance) to create an identity. An identity of victimhood and exploitation can be powerful in banding people together.

In terms of identity, if the rebel movements are based upon an identity of grievance, there will be an increase of rebel recruits as marginalization and grievance applies to everyone in the system who is not, at present, benefiting from the regime. Marginalization based upon the aforementioned collective grouping of ethnicities or religion can further contribute to an identity of grievance.

---


Modern History of Indonesia

Under Dutch colonization for over 350 years, post-independence Indonesia has gone through four periods of transformation since 1950. Under Sukarno, who ruled for 15 years, Indonesia transformed from a period of fragile parliamentary governance to one of “guided democracy” from 1950 to 1965. After the downfall of Sukarno, Suharto presided over Indonesia’s “New Order” for 30 years until his fall in 1998 which resulted in the present liberal democratic reform under multiple presidents. Since the establishment of JI occurred during Suharto’s regime and its relocation to Indonesia happened after his fall, this paper will focus primarily on Indonesia’s history from 1967 to present.


After a bloody two-year coup, Suharto assumed power in 1967 bringing with him a military government. The “New Order” marked the “beginning of a period of development-oriented, authoritarian, and stable rule that endured” until the Asian financial crisis in 1997. Attempting to create a stable and legitimate political system and rehabilitate the economy, Suharto utilized the military to attain his political and economic goals. Politically, he portrayed the military as a savior against Communism, a threat which existed before the coup. Economically, he utilized bureaucratic repression and nepotism in order to ensure that power remained limited to the state itself, creating a bureaucratic authoritarian state.

Continuing with the theme of symbolizing the military as a national hero, Suharto occupied East Timor in 1976 to reinforce his nationalist credentials. The annexation of East Timor as the 27th province of Indonesia came at a heavy price; ten percent of the population was

---

15 Ibid 104.
16 Ibid.
killed during the invasion. Further consolidating his power and enhancing his authoritarian stronghold, Suharto purged pro-Sukarno forces and depoliticized potential challengers by creating the Golkar and two other parties.

Golkar translates to a political organization or functional group; essentially it is a political party. At each governmental level, ranging from the national level to the village level, the Golkar was present. Suharto also established two other political parties, the United Development Party (PPP) and the Indonesia Democratic Party (PDI). Under PPP, all four Muslim political parties were forced to join together under one umbrella party. In that similar vein, under PDI, all secular and Christian political parties were forced to join together under one overarching party.

Initially, the Muslim community held high hopes for Suharto and this new political party system. Under Sukarno, Islamist groups were repressed, and as a result, supported Suharto against the attempted PKI coup. In return, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah “expected concessions from the new regime—a military-Muslim alliance.” As a whole, the Islamist community thought they would have a “greater role in the New Order regime.” However, once Suharto consolidated power, like his predecessor, Suharto embraced the concept of Pancasila, a philosophical basis for Indonesia, representing the five principles of the Southeast Asian state—belief in one supreme God, humanitarianism, unity, democracy, and social justice.

While the new political system provided Muslim elites with a role in politics, all funding came directly from the state meaning any dissension from the government line would result in

---

18 Ibid 105.
economic ruin.\textsuperscript{22} The PPP in particular was closely scrutinized by Suharto who “subordinated Islamic political activities and required all religious organizations to support pancasila. The PPP was banned from using ‘Islam’ in its name or from using any Islamic symbols.”\textsuperscript{23}

To reinforce his legitimacy, Suharto utilized elections and the Golkar to ensure that his hand-picked loyalists would control the People’s Consultative Assembly (MPR), the body which formally elects the president and vice president. Such political scheming is evidenced by the results of the six general elections under Suharto’s regime from 1971 to 1997; votes for the Golkar never fell below 62 percent.\textsuperscript{24} While the success of the Golkar party is attributable to the fact that all government bureaucrats and employees were required to join the Golkar and laws restricting political parties and prohibiting opposition parties, performance legitimacy also impacted voters. Improving economic conditions and political stability lent Suharto credibility among the Indonesian people. By cutting government and defense spending combined with the revenues from oil sales, inflation reduced and per capita income increased.

However, despite the steady pace of economic growth, the regime’s critics, citing the widening disparity between the wealthy and poor, whispered allegations of nepotism and corruption.\textsuperscript{25} As the standard of living improved, a vibrant middle class emerged and the younger generations began to resist the autocratic regime, especially in an age of democratization. Similar to today’s political revolutions and uprisings, the combination of young people and socio-economic instability contributed to Suharto’s downfall. The 1997 Asian Financial Crisis served as the catalyst for change in Indonesia.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
The Asian Financial Crisis and the Fall of Suharto, 1997-1998:

Financial contagion spread throughout East Asia and Southeast Asia beginning in July 1998. Due to rampant nepotism, the lack of business and economic acumen resulted in “years of poor investment decisions and profligate borrowing from weakly supervised banks had left Indonesian companies with some $80 billion in foreign debt.” Following in the footsteps of its regional neighbor Thailand, Indonesia faced “a loss in investor confidence, capital flight, rising debt, and economic uncertainty.”

In October 1997, the IMF offered a rescue package that temporarily delayed Indonesia’s economic backslide. However, due to Suharto’s declining health and advanced age, investors were nervous and did not invest. As the financial and economic crisis worsened, so too did the rupiah, Indonesia’s currency. Pre-crisis the rupiah was 2,430 per dollar; mid-crisis the rupiah

Source: World Development Indicators


plummeted to 10,000 per dollar.\(^{29}\) Public outrage grew and accusations of corruption, collusion, and crony capitalism permeated the media. Suharto’s twice rejection of an additional IMF package did nothing to dampen the population’s anger.

In April 1998, Suharto finally accepted a $43 billion bailout package.\(^{30}\) As part of its IMF support package, Indonesia was required to implement changes to its economic and banking structure and policies. Most damningly for Suharto was the IMF condition that the government cut subsidies, “dismantle a quasi-governmental monopoly on all commodities (except rice),…and increase the transparency of public policy and budget-making processes.”\(^{31}\) These IMF stipulations reduced Indonesians’ access to goods and exposed Suharto’s family’s control over the public budget and virtually every major economic sector. Tensions finally reached a breaking point and in May 1998, Indonesia erupted into antigovernment protests and riots. The violent nature of these protests only drove the rupiah down further to 16,500 per dollar. On May 20, 1998 Suharto finally resigned. His vice-president B.J Habibie was sworn in as president.

**Democratic Transition After the Fall of Suharto, 1998-Present**

Many viewed B.J. Habibie as Suharto’s protégé, and as a result, he attempted to distance himself from his predecessor. In office for a little more than one year, Habibe’s biggest achievement in his short presidency was giving independence to East Timor via a referendum. Setting in place economic policies to resolve the crises of currency devaluation, inflation, and job unemployment, Habibie called for increased democratization and reform through new elections removed from party constraints. On June 7, 1999, Indonesia’s first democratic elections since Suharto assumed the presidency 32 years ago took place. Forty-eight political parties competed


\(^{31}\) Ibid 9.
The Indonesian Democracy Party-Struggle (PDI-P), led by Sukarno’s daughter, Megawati Sukarnoputri, won the vote. However, since Indonesia is predominantly Muslim, Sukarnoputri decided not to run for president because “her gender worked against her, as many devout Muslims indicated they could not abide a female leader, and she was viewed as a secularist among the more fundamentalist.” As a result Abudurrahman Wahid, the leader of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) party became president.

Unfortunately, Wahid was utterly incapable as a leader and ill-equipped to solve Indonesia’s crises and challenges during this time of major transition. Additionally, his old age and failing health only further contributed to his lack of leadership abilities. Within nineteen months of being elected, Wahid was censured twice, a prelude step to impeachment. On July 22, 2001, Wahid was finally impeached. The vote was 591-0. This time Sukarnoputri agreed to become president, assuming the position of the president of the world’s largest Muslim country on July 23, 2001.

Upon entering office, Sukarnoputri’s policy was one of reform. Her duty was not to “build a new nation but to reform Suharto’s corrupt ancien régime. The effort was dubbed reformasi: an agenda to reform institutions, bring corrupt officials to account, and revive the ailing economy.” Shortly into her presidency, the September 11 attacks occurred, shaping her five-year term in office. President George W. Bush viewed Indonesia as a terrorist haven, but Sukarnoputri rejected Washington D.C.’s assertions that Indonesia was home to terrorist operations. She would be proven wrong with the 2002 and 2003 bombings.

---

33 Ibid 108.
34 Ibid.
Upon the aforementioned attacks perpetrated by JI, Sukarnoputri vowed to combat terrorism but independent of the U.S. as she, along with many Indonesians, “viewed U.S Middle East policy responsible for her own society’s victimization at the hands of chauvinistic Arab-Islamists and extremists.” However, due to the fear of alienating Muslims and acting too strongly against political Islam, Sukarnoputri would not classify JI as an illegal organization. In the realms of economics and domestic politics, she did not fare much better. Indonesia’s economy continued to suffer from lack of foreign investment. Ethnic tensions resurfaced between Christians and Muslims and corrupt officials still had yet to stand trial. Ironically, her largest reform also undermined her political career. Supporting the creation of direct presidential elections, she was voted out of office, losing to Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

In October 2004, Yudhoyono became Indonesia’s first directly elected president and is currently the incumbent. During his presidency, Indonesia has experienced a “phase of extraordinary stability, both in political and economic terms. Yudhoyono has been able to prevent significant challenges to his regime, kept local violence under control, and maintained satisfactory levels of economic growth.” Quite notably, in contrast to his predecessor Sukarnoputri, Yudhoyono has pursued very aggressive counterterrorism measures and experienced relatively impressive success. After the devastating tsunami in 2004, he brokered a peace deal with Aceh militants. In terms of JI, the steady string of arrests and detentions of JI members as well as the establishment of a “terrorism and transnational crime task force designed to oversee counterterrorism trials nationwide.”

---

**History of Jemaah Islamiyah**

The origins of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) can be traced back to Darul Islam, which calls for “establishing an Islamic state in the archipelago” of Indonesia (*Negara Islam Indonesia* or NII). Darul Islam is the oldest violent jihadist organization in Southeast Asia, playing an integral role in the formation of militant Islam ideals in younger, newer generations. Founded by Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Bashir as a faction of Darul Islam, the actual birth of JI as a terrorist movement remains contested. However, many scholars estimate that JI was established in 1992 or 1993.

In line with its Darul Islamic roots, the stated goals of JI “are to turn Indonesia into a Islamic state and then to ultimately create a pan-Islamic state in Southeast Asia.” Under the guidance and authority of a former senior Indonesia Al Qaeda operative Riduan Isamuddin, also known as Hambali, JI carefully built up a network of terrorist cells throughout the 1990s, “establishing madrassas that would serve as centers of recruitment, training, new members, and dispatching them to Al Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan” and the Philippines. Additionally, under the auspice of Al Qaeda, JI also established “front companies and bank accounts, forging documents, procuring weapons, and laundering money.” Hambali’s mission centered on creating a network not only aligned with Al Qaeda’s goals within Southeast Asia but also fulfilled the purpose of the Indonesian cell of JI. However, Hambali ensured that JI was operationally autonomous from Al Qaeda.

---

42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
JI is organized into four *mantiqi* or cells. Mantiqi 1 is located in Malaysia and is responsible for providing funding and senior leadership. Mantiqi 2 is located in Indonesia and is responsible for recruiting new members. Mantiqi 3 is located in Sulawesi and the Philippines and is responsible for sourcing weapons and explosives. Mantiqi 4 is located in Australia and is responsible for establishing *fiaih* or subcells and individual cells of JI in the country.44 Supplying the bulk of JI’s membership, the Indonesia cell has “emerged as the center of JI operations…and a conduit for foreign funding.”45

It is important to note that despite the fact that JI was founded in the early 1990s, it did not conduct its first terrorist acts until 2000.46 This lapse in time is due to two reasons. First, the leaders of JI “patiently built up their network—recruiting training, and strengthening technical proficiency. They were not impatient, nor did they try to conduct operations that they were unprepared for or which would put their organization in jeopardy.”47 Second, due to Sungkar and Bashir’s support of Islamic ideologies, they were exiled to Malaysia for not conforming to Indonesian national ideology and refusal to recognize the authority of Indonesia’s secular state. However, after the fall of President Suharto’s authoritarian regime, JI relocated to Indonesia and experienced a huge increase in activity as hundreds of radical Indonesians returned to their country.48 The political transition “attenuated government pressure on Islamists, creating a more permissive environment for JI.”49

In 1999, Sungkar died leaving Bashir to fill the position as head of JI. Bashir’s appointment disgruntled some of Sungkar’s Indonesian recruits, including Hambali and other

---

46 Ibid 129.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
extremists who would later play key roles in the 2002 Bali bombings. The acrimony and division between these two groups of people only intensified when Bashir founded the Majelis Muhjahidin Indonesia (MMI) in 2000, an overt political organization which served as a front for Bashir’s militant and terrorist activities. Many of Sungkar’s followers believed that the creation of such a political organization “betrayed Sungkar’s *ijtihad politik* or political analysis that JI should remain underground until the time was ripe to move towards an Islamic state.”

**Jemaah Islamiyah in Indonesia Since the 2000s**

The bombing of a Medan church in May 2000 marked JI’s first recorded terrorist attack. Since then, there have been five major terrorist attacks— the October 2002 nightclub bombings; August 2003 Marriott hotel bombing; September 2004 Australian embassy; October 2005 triple suicide bombings; and the July 2009 hotel bombings.

The true turning point for JI’s operations was the outbreak of sectarian conflict in the Malukus provided two paramilitary groups affiliated with JI, Laskar Mujahidin and Laskar Jundullah, their first taste of jihad. Al Qaeda used the conflict as an opportunity to provide inspiration and rejuvenate JI that was only further enforced by the failure of the Indonesian government to inhibit or deter the jihadists’ actions.

On Christmas Eve in 2000, JI planted an estimated 30 bombs of which 18 detonated, killing 19 people and injuring 120 more. These bombings were test runs and provided JI

---

55 Ibid 153.
operatives with the confidence needed to begin planning their next bombing. The targets for a 2001 bombing were the U.S. Embassy, Israeli Embassy, British Embassy, Caltex Oil Company, the American Naval Shipyard and docks, the Yishun MRT station, and the American club in Singapore. However, due to intelligence sharing between the Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines, a number of JI members were arrested, thwarting JI’s plans.

2002 Bali Nightclub Bombing

Regrouping at a January 2002 meeting in Bangkok, Hambali, angered by the arrest of so many in his network, made the decision to switch from “symbolic targets, such as the U.S. and other Western embassies, to soft targets ‘to conduct small bombings in bars, cafes or nightclubs frequented by westerners in Thailand, Singapore, the Philippines, and Indonesia.’” On October 12, 2002, JI was successful and detonated bombs in a nightclub district in Bali frequented by Western tourists. Synchronized bomb blasts and subsequent fires killed approximately 200 people and injured an estimated 300 people.

The 2002 Bali nightclub bombing was the most deadly terrorist attack since September 11, 2001. A wake-up call for President Sukarnoputri, the Indonesian government acknowledged the presence of Al Qaeda and terrorists in the country. The mastermind of the attack, Imam Samudra, along with Ali Gufron, also known as Mukhlas, and Amrozi were arrested; all three were executed in November 2008 for their part in the attacks. Bashir was also arrested and tried in court. Long viewed by U.S. officials as a notable person with links to terrorism, the Bali bombing spurred the Indonesian government to finally acknowledge his role.

---

58 Ibid 164.
Despite testimonies from Samudra, Mukhlas, and Amroz, the Indonesian authorities were hesitant to charge him due to fear of government backlash.\textsuperscript{62}

Ultimately, Bashir was charged under past terrorist plots. On September 3, 2003, an Indonesian court sentenced Bashir to four years in jail for plotting to overthrow the Indonesian government. In March 2004, his sentence was reduced and in April 2004 he was released from prison.\textsuperscript{63} However, citing new evidence which implicated Bashir in other terrorist attacks, Indonesian authorities rearrested him on the same day of his release. His second trial ended with a conspiracy conviction for the 2002 Bali bombings and a 30-month sentence in April 2004. Once again, in April 2005 his sentence was reduced and he was released in June 2006. In December 2006, his conviction was overturned.\textsuperscript{64} Overall, he served less than three years for committing terrorist attacks which drew criticism from the U.S. and Australian governments.

In 2008, Bashir founded another terrorist group, Jama’ah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT) which “preaches jihad against Islam’s enemies.”\textsuperscript{65} In May 2010, JAT came into the spotlight when Indonesian police raided its headquarters. On August 9, 2010, Bashir was arrested on charges accusing him of having an active role in setting up militant training camps in Aceh for JAT.\textsuperscript{66} On June 16, 2011, Bashir was sentenced to 15 years in prison and remains in jail at present.\textsuperscript{67}

Post 2002 Bali bombings, “JI’s leadership came to see mass-casualty terrorism within Indonesia as futile for the time being.” While JI remained committed to its mission of establishing a caliphate in the region, “it came to realize that the current environment was not conducive to armed confrontation. Instead of terrorism, JI began to focus on education and *dawa* (religious outreach).” This shift away from global terrorism caused a division within JI between its more hardline members. These splinter groups, sometimes referred to as “Non-structural JI,” differ from “Structural JI.”

Structural JI denounces jihad, although it does approve of the use of violence if necessary. Non-structural JI, on the other hand, is extremist and Islamist. Initially, Structural JI tolerated Non-structural JI; the official position was that JI members “should not take part in [Non-structural JI] operations…but that it was a good deed to protect them, and a sin to turn them over.” By July 2004, Structural JI leaders “issued guidance to members allowing them to alert the Indonesian authorities as to the whereabouts of specific Non-structural JI leaders.”

Three splinter groups of particular importance and significance are clusters headed by Noordin Mohammad Top, Umar Patek, and Dulmatin. It is Noordin, however, who has perpetrated or supported several massive bombings in Indonesia since his participation in the 2002 Bali bombing, including the 2003 Marriott Hotel Bombing, the 2004 Australian Embassy bombing, the 2005 triple suicide bombings in Bali, and the 2009 Jakarta hotel bombings.

---


69 Ibid.


72 Ibid.

2003 Marriott Hotel Bombing

The accidental trigger for the 2003 Marriott Hotel bombing came in December 2002 as police amped up their search for JI members. One JI member, Toni Togar, nervous due to the fact that he was housing all of the leftover explosives from the 2000 Christmas Eve bombing contacted Noordin Mohammed Top. During the span of time between December 2002 and August 2003 as Noordin and his associates were planning the attack, a number of JI members were arrested. On June 4, 2003, Noordin assembled his final team with him at the helm.  

On August 5, 2003, a suicide bomber detonated a bomb at the JW Marriott Hotel in Jakarta, Indonesia killing 12 people and injuring 150 others. The attack occurred two days before Amrozi, one of the bombers in the 2002 Bali bombing, was sentenced to death. The hotel was viewed as a “Western symbol, and had been used by the US embassy for various events.” Despite Bashir’s arrest, the 2003 bombing “demonstrated that the terrorist network was not powerless, even though it was believed to be leaderless.”

One week after the attack, on August 14, 2003, Hambali was arrested and was the Indonesian authorities’ chief suspect in the bombing. Deemed “one of the world’s most lethal terrorists” by President George W. Bush and as the “Eastern version of Osama bin Laden” by Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, Hamabali’s arrest was met with much enthusiasm by the intelligence community. Due to his classification as a global terrorist leader

---


\textbf{2004 Australian Embassy Bombing}

On September 9, 2004, a bomb exploded outside of the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, killing 9 people and injuring more than 160 others. All dead were Indonesians. The attack occurred less than two weeks before the final round of Indonesia’s presidential elections and exactly one month before Australia’s general election.\footnote{“Massive Blast at Jakarta Embassy.” \textit{BBC News}. BBC, 09 Sept. 2004. Web. 25 Apr. 2014.} One day after the bombing, JI reportedly claimed responsibility for the attack, stating on an Islamist website that Australia is “one of the worst enemies of God and God’s religion of Islam.”\footnote{Associated Press. “Islamist Group Appears to Claim Jakarta Blast.” \textit{NBC News}. NBC, 10 Sept. 2004. Web. 26 Apr. 2014.}

During a police interview, Iwan Dharmawan also known as Rois, one of the plot planners, told authorities that “the funds [for the 2004 Australian Embassy bombing] came from Osama bin Laden.”\footnote{“Bin Laden 'funded' Australian Embassy Bombing.” \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald} 1 Aug. 2005: n. pag. \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}. The Sydney Morning Herald, 1 Aug. 2005. Web. 25 Apr. 2014.} The money was given to Azhari, a master bomber nicknamed the “Demolition Man” and one of Noorin’s top associates. Furthermore, Rois explained that the reason Australia was targeted was “because the Australian government is the American lackey most active in supporting American policies to slaughter Muslims in Iraq.”\footnote{Ibid.}

\textbf{2005 Bali II Bombings}

On October 1, 2005, three suicide bombers entered separate restaurants and detonated their bombs almost simultaneously, killing 25 people and injuring more than 100 others.\footnote{“Bali Bombs 'were Suicide Attacks'' \textit{BBC News}. BBC, 2 Oct. 2005. Web. 26 Apr. 2014.} Most
of the victims were Indonesians. Coincidentally, although there has been no link, the blasts occurred less than two weeks before the third anniversary of the 2002 Bali bombings.

The Bali II bombings “proved crucial to turning public sentiment against the group.”\textsuperscript{86} Prior to the attack, the Indonesian government had not “aggressively pursued the group.”\textsuperscript{87} This was due in part to the public’s skepticism regarding the narrative that Islamic radicals were responsible for bombings such as the 2002 Bali explosion. Furthermore, a 2000 bombing on the Jakarta Stock Exchange initially blamed on Islamists was actually committed by elite members of the Indonesian Special Forces.\textsuperscript{88} Although the U.S. listed JI as a foreign terrorist organization (FTO) less than three weeks after the 2002 bombing on October 23, 2002, many Indonesians viewed the U.S.’ “War on Terror” as a campaign against Islam. Therefore, the lack of public support made politicians wary of pursuing JI—“moderates ignored radical Islamists, and secular politicians refused to challenge them for fear of being dubbed anti-Islamic.”\textsuperscript{89} The 2005 Bali II bombings changed this. Indonesians, shocked by the violence and JI’s tactics, changed their opinion thereby allowing the government to actively and aggressively go after JI without fear of public backlash.

The newly elected president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, cracked down on terrorism and appointed thirteen new regional police chiefs in order to combat corruption and reform the police force to focus on counterterrorism measures.\textsuperscript{90} From President Yudhoyono’s assumption of office in October 2004 to the publication of the U.S. Department of State’s 2005 “Country Reports on Terrorism,” the police arrested more than 50 suspected terrorists and convicted 17

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid 5.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.
terrorists, including Rois who was sentenced to death for his role in the Australian Embassy bombing. During a November 2005 police investigation of the Bali II bombings, the police raided a terrorist safe house in Malang, East Java wherein bomb maker Azhari died.

2009 Jakarta Hotel Bombings

On July 17, 2009, two simultaneous suicide bombings occurred at the JW Marriott Hotel and Ritz Carlton Hotel, killing 9 people and injuring 55 others. A third unexploded bomb was found in a Marriott hotel room. After a period of relative dormancy, the attack surprised many, as it was the “first successful anti-Western terrorist attack in Indonesia in four years.” This lapse in time was “interpreted as a sign of JI’s degraded operational capability.” As recently as 2008, terrorism expert Sidney Jones wrote that Noordin’s “capacity to mount another attack appears low.” The bombings signaled that despite a decrease in funding and an increase in counterterrorism efforts, splinter groups of JI continued to function. A troubling development was the fact that Noordin’s Non-structural JI faction renamed itself to the Al-Qaeda Jihad Organization for the Malay Archipelago as it brought into question whether the group was reestablishing its ties with Al Qaeda or if was “merely a ploy to attract radical adherents.”

Following the bombings, Indonesian authorities conducted a series of raids on extremist groups suspected of having ties with Al Qaeda. These raids resulted in a police uncovering and

---

95 Ibid 9.
ultimately thwarting a plot to assassinate President Yudhoyono.\textsuperscript{98} This discovery intensified the hunt for Noordin.\textsuperscript{99} After a seven-year manhunt, authorities finally found and killed Noordin in a terrorist hide-out in Central Java on September 17, 2009 during a police raid.\textsuperscript{100} After the shoot-out ended, authorities found a laptop computer with documents revealing the relationship between Indonesian militant groups and Al Qaeda.\textsuperscript{101} Although a national symbol for terrorism and JI in Indonesia, his death does not mark the end of extremism in the country.

\textbf{Indonesian Counterterrorism Efforts}

Indonesia has pursued a counterterrorism strategy centered on treating terrorism criminally and trying alleged terrorist members in court. Since the 2002 Bali bombings, as of 2008, some four hundred suspects had been arrested of which three hundred were brought to trial.\textsuperscript{102} Trials are open to the public and media. The use of police and special units as opposed to the military, also illustrates Indonesia’s concerted effort to use criminal and judicial methods to combat terrorism.

Detachment 88, Indonesia’s counterterrorism unit, has experienced a high level of success. Established in 2003 after the 2002 Bali bombings and funded and trained by the U.S. and Australia, the special operations unit has “built up an extensive intelligence network to nab terrorists.”\textsuperscript{103} According to someone who trained the elite Indonesian counterterrorism squad,

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
“‘I’ve trained guys all over the world, and this unit is one of the best I’ve ever seen.’” Its successes are evidenced by the deaths of Noordin, Azhari and Dulmatin.

In terms of a “softer” approach, Detachment 88 has “embarked on a prisoner-focused ‘deradicalization’ program aimed at persuading jihadis to reject the use of terrorist tactics.” The program is based on two key tenets: “the first is the belief that radicals will only listen to other radicals; the second is the belief that through kindness the police can change the jihadist assumption that government officials are by definition anti-Islamic.” The rationale behind these two elements is that in the mind of radicals, moderates have failed de facto due to their moderate beliefs. Therefore, a reformed radical with different view must talk to other radicals in order to help ensure the message does not fall on deaf ears. With JI rooted in Darul Islam, members view the Indonesian government “as kafir, starting with everyone who works for or with the government. They are the enemy and all products from that government are haram.” By accepting money from the police, radicals are rejecting the “jihadi premise that all officials are thaghut. If jihadis are willing to take money from police, the thinking goes, they may be ready to question other jihadi teachings.”

The purpose of this program is to “develop intelligence on the terrorist network and to return detainees to society. The key objective is not to change the mindset of terrorists but to

---

106 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
obtain intelligence...in order to disrupt [the terrorist network] and prevent terrorist attacks.”

From a terrorism-prevention viewpoint, the deradicalization program has been “very successful in eliciting information that has enabled the police to disrupt the terrorist network in Indonesia.” One of the program’s biggest successes is the conversion of Nasir Abbas, an “Afghan-trained former JI senior commander who gave weapons training to several future bombers.”

Under Yudhoyono’s presidency, the government has sought to implement tougher anti-terror procedures which would strengthen the law and allow for longer suspect detention. This has drawn the ire of human rights groups and some believe that such measures could radicalize more militants while also drive current extremists underground. More controversially, Yudhoyono has indicated his intent to use armed forces. If approved, the use of special forces is reminiscent of the use of such forces to suppress Islamist groups under Suharto. As aforementioned, upon assuming the presidency Yudhoyono reformed and reinforced the police system in order to better pursue terrorists. He has also developed an effective anti-money laundering regime to target financial sources funding terrorist activities as well as freeze financial assets. Yet, despite the Indonesian government’s best efforts, “weak rule of law, serious internal coordination problems, and systemic corruption” continue to hamper and strain already limited resources.

---

111 Ibid 109.
114 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
History of the Philippines

The history of the Philippines closely resembles that of Latin American countries rather than those of its neighboring Southeast Asian countries. Spanish and U.S. colonization greatly influenced the trajectory of the country and left a “mixed legacy.” From the Spanish, the Filipino people “inherited not only Catholicism but a highly inequitable system of land tenure dominated by a powerful land-owning class.” From the U.S., the Philippines gained a competitive democracy, public education system, and highly trained technocrats, bureaucrats, and entrepreneurs.

Since the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) was founded in 1986, this section will cover the modern history of the Philippines. After 21 years of rule, President Ferdinand Marcos announced that snap presidential elections were to be held on February 7, 1986. The overarching question of the election was whether the opposition would be able to unite around a single candidate. This question was answered when Corazon “Cory” Aquino, widow of the leader of the opposition Senator Benigno Aquino Jr. who was assassinated in 1983 (many speculate Marcos’ family ordered the hit), reluctantly agreed to run. Running on a people’s campaign promoting her as the antithesis of Marco, she “stressed her sincerity and honesty and her empathetic qualities as a sufferer under Marcos…[and] vilified the president for his corruption and immorality.” Marcos’ campaign centered around his experience and “stressed the need for strong male leadership rather than weak female leadership.”

The election was marred by fraud with the “official” count totaling 54 percent in favor of Marcos. In response to the results, the opposition launched a civil disobedience campaign and

118 Ibid.
119 Ibid 70.
120 Ibid.
protested the government to reveal the true winner of the election. The international community, including the U.S. Department of State, supported the opposition’s claims that Aquino had won. A number of top Marcos officials resigned and defected to the opposition. Infuriated, Marcos retaliated by threatening to bomb the headquarters of Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines Fidel Ramos, both of who had defected from Marcos’ camp. The Filipino people, with the support of the archbishop of Manila, surrounded the building and lay down in front of tanks, preventing them from approaching. This display became known as People Power. The U.S. support of the rebellion marked the final blow to Marcos’ claim that only he enjoyed the confidence of the superpowers. On February 25, 1986, Aquino was sworn in as president with Marcos fleeing the country the next day.\footnote{Neher, Clark D. “Philippines.” \textit{Southeast Asia in the New International Era}. By Robert Dayley. 5th ed. Philadelphia: Westview, 2010. 65-98. Print: 71.}

Aquino’s presidency brought in an era of optimism and reform. Politically, Aquino restored the democratic process and reinstated civil liberties such as the writ of habeas corpus and the holding of free and regularized elections. Economically, the economic growth rate was positive and inflation decreased. Although Aquino achieved remarkable feats and made good on her commitment to reform, her presidency was plagued with “oligarchic rule, economic and social inequality, desperate poverty, and the politics of personalism. Within four years of assuming the presidency, Aquino survived six coup attempts.”\footnote{Ibid 72.} Unfortunately, Aquino was unable to capitalize on her popularity and failed to institutionalize public support by creating a political party. Furthermore, her inability to effectively deal with allegations of corruption among her own family was only exacerbated by her unwillingness to push for meaningful land
reform as her family owned a six thousand-hectare hacienda. Quickly, the post-Marcos period “began to breed new disillusionment.”

Multiple environmental disasters were interpreted as “ominous indications that the government’s mandate was tenuous.” The combination of an earthquake, a typhoon, a volcano eruption, and a major flood demoralized Filipino citizens. Amidst the suffering, the Philippine Senate rejected the Military Bases Agreement with the U.S., ending the U.S.’ military presence in the country. This resulted in the immediate loss of 70,000 jobs and $500 million in U.S. foreign aid. Aquino did not seek reelection and Fidel V. Ramos won the election and assumed office in June 1992.

During his six-year term, Ramos became known as the most effective president in the post-independence period. Joining the rest of the Southeast Asian tigers, Ramos promoted a more open market system, strengthened the nation’s infrastructure, privatized state enterprises, and took on major oligarchic families inhibiting progress. Ramos wanted to transform the country into an economic power with a democratic political system and join the ranks of the newly industrialized countries (NICs). In terms of politics, he galvanized the Filipino people to support democratic institutions and oversaw the reduction of crime in Manila. Diplomatically, his visits abroad and his active role in regional associations brought the Philippines into a more international spotlight. Additionally, he brokered the 1996 peace accord between the Philippines government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), a major feat in itself.

Contemplating a second term despite the fact that the constitution only allows for one term in office, public pushback against the idea led to the election of his vice president Joseph Estrada.

---

124 Ibid.
125 Ibid 74.
126 Ibid.
127 Ibid 75.
Known as a playboy and gambler, the rural poor favored Estrada while the urban intellectuals strongly opposed him. Estrada assumed office on June 30, 1998 during the middle of the Asian financial crisis. The crisis did not affect the Philippines as strongly as it had its neighbors due partially to the fact that the Philippine economy was already a disaster. Commonly referred to as the “sick man of Asia,” the country continued to be plagued with endemic poverty and a lack of development. Yet, the Philippines experienced positive economic growth rates in 2000.

In 2000, Estrada was accused of “gross corruption,” and an impeachment trial began in the Philippine Senate. Many of the rural poor viewed the trial as an attempt by the upper-class elite to overthrow a champion of the poor. As the trial continued, the evidence against Estrada grew, leading to mass demonstrations. In January 2001, the impeachment case fell apart due to the Philippine Senate not allowing bank documents to be shown to the Senate. Viewed as a “virtual exoneration of Estrada,” the Philippine people in addition to the military and most government officials protested against the decision, forcing Estrada to leave Malacañang Palace, the traditional home of the president. Declaring the office of presidency as vacant, the Supreme Court announced that the vice president could legally assume the presidency. Vice President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo became president on January 20, 2001.

Arroyo’s presidency was tainted with political corruption and violence. After completing the remainder of Estrada’s term, she won the presidential election in 2004 but was accused of election rigging and tampering. During the entirety of her tenure, she faced low approval ratings which resulted in “popular protests calling for her resignation, four unsuccessful

---

129 Ibid 76.
impeachment bids, and at least three mutinies against her government led by mid-ranking military officers.”

She maintained support and power “via patronage to politicos and the military brass.”

In May 2010, Benigno Aquino III, the son of former president Corazon Aquino and the late Benigno Aquino, assumed the top leadership position in the country with 45 percent of the vote. Running on the promise to fight political corruption, Aquino has “counted good governance and restoration of trust in government as among his main accomplishments.”

His presidency has represented a “political and cultural shift in the Philippines—a move toward cleaner government, greater sensitivity to political and economic grievances, and less emphasis upon eradicating Muslim and communist insurgencies through military means.”

This last point regarding Muslim insurgencies is especially pertinent to this paper as a peace deal with the MILF was signed in March 2014 under the Aquino administration.

![Map of the Philippines](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Philippines_(en).png)

Source: Wikimedia Commons

---


134 Ibid.

Overview of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front

Despite the fact that 82.9 percent of the Philippines’ population is Catholic compared to the 5 percent of the population who identify as Muslim,\textsuperscript{136} “some of the worst terrorist plots in recent memory were planned in the Philippines…and every major terrorist plot by Al-Qaeda against the United States has had some ties to the Philippines.”\textsuperscript{137} Although the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is Southeast Asia’s “most formidable armed separatist group, the inner workings of the MILF remain poorly documented and understood.”\textsuperscript{138} As a result, there has been little literature or scholarly research published on the group.

Founded in 1984 by Salamat Hashim, the MILF emerged as a result of a 1977 rift within the larger Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) due to “tribal tensions and personal and policy differences among the leadership.”\textsuperscript{139} Moro refers to Philippine Muslims. The front’s stated objective is the “creation of a sovereign Islamic state in all areas where Muslims have traditionally existed as a majority in the Southern Philippines.”\textsuperscript{140}

Of the two organizations, MNLF and MILF, the latter is the more religious and politically militant of the two\textsuperscript{141} but is more ideologically tolerant than Abu Sayyaf.\textsuperscript{142} Since 2002, the MILF has developed a collaborative relationship with Abu Sayaff. The group also has strong ties with JI with JI terrorists training at MILF camps.\textsuperscript{143} Yet, in spite of these ties with Islamists,

\textsuperscript{140} Ibid 21.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid.
the front has “stated its vehement opposition to transnational extremism…and has portrayed itself as a tolerant entity that is ready to coexist with members of other religious faiths.”

The Philippines’ relations with Al-Qaeda date back to the late 1980s and early 1990s when Osama bin Laden sent his brother-in-law Mohammed Jamal Khalifa to the Philippines to recruit fighters for the Afghanistan war. In 1991, Khalifa returned to the Philippines to establish a permanent Al-Qaeda network. Khalifa’s most important achievement within the network was the creation and establishment of Islamic charities that were used to “channel funding to Muslim insurgents and terrorist cells.” Once he solidified the Al-Qaeda network in the Philippines, Khalifa began to “provide considerably amounts of covert assistance to the MILF in two ways: financially and through training.” Overtly, Khalifa funded development projects in zones under MILF control.

The roots of the MILF’s contact with Al-Qaeda date back to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan when the MILF sent an estimated 500-700 Filipino Muslims to undergo military training and join the mujahidin. In a 1997 interview with the BBC, Hashim admitted to receiving aid from bin Laden. Al-Qaeda’s funding was vital to the MILF as its traditional supporter, Libya, was reducing its military assistance because Muammar Gadaffi was trying to improve his country’s international standing. Additionally, the MILF began to engage in criminal activities such as kidnapping, drug trafficking, and extortion as well as more legal avenues for streams of revenue.

146 Ibid 92. 
147 Ibid. 
148 Ibid 90. 
149 Ibid 95-6.
The MILF remained largely invisible until 1996 when Hashim returned from Afghanistan. After the 1998 U.S. embassy attacks in Kenya and Tanzania, bin Laden made a specific request to access the MILF training facilities in Mindanao to offset increased international attention being directed at his operations in Afghanistan. As a result, MILF formed special operations groups (SOG) for urban sabotage missions in 1999, which is alleged to have “worked in conjunction with various regional and outside jihadists.”

While the MILF has denied that its members have received training from Al-Qaeda, turban-wearing individuals with heavy beards uncharacteristic for Filipinos have been seen in MILF camps in addition to a considerable amount of documentation such as visas and passports found during raids. The MILF’s reported ties with Al-Qaeda also extend to JI. Many experts believe that JI has deployed militants to MILF run training camps in Mindanao. An August 2000 bombing assassination attempt on the Philippine ambassador to Indonesia was “interpreted as a ‘thank-you note’ to the MILF for its assistance in training [JI members].” However, it remains unclear “whether MILF links to outside extremists are the product of sanctioned directives from the front’s leadership or merely reflect individual contact that have been made by renegade units as a token of jihadi solidarity.” It must be noted that the MILF has not been designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) by the U.S. and the Philippines government continues to classify the group as a political and criminal separatist organization.


154 Ibid 98.

Since the front’s objective is to establish an Islam state in the southern Philippines where a majority of Muslims reside, the reasons for jihad against the Western world are not present. As a result, unlike JI, the MILF has not conducted large-scale bombings. Instead, the MILF has engaged in a number of firefights with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) due to the Philippines government launching a number of military offensives against the group.

**Peace Talk Efforts**

The MNLF signed a peace agreement with the Philippines government on September 2, 1996 which established the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM); the MILF refused to participate in the talks. Due to legal and technical restrictions, the government could not begin negotiations with the MILF until after it had concluded its deliberations with the MNLF. In the meantime, the MILF expanded and consolidated its military strength.\(^{157}\)

From 1996 to 2000, the Philippines government and the MILF entered into a total of 39 agreements, joint communiqués, acknowledgements and resolutions.\(^{158}\) The MNLF signed a peace agreement with the Philippines government on September 2, 1996 which established the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM); the MILF rejected the agreement. Several months later, Philippines government troops launched a military offensive against MILF rebels from October 21-24, 1996 resulting in the deaths of 33 MILF rebels.\(^{159}\)

Announcing a ceasefire from December 1, 1996 to January 29, 1997, representatives from both the Philippines government and MILF began peace negotiations on January 7, 1997. A ceasefire agreement was signed on July 18, 1997 and went into effect on July 21, 1997.\(^{160}\)

---


\(^{160}\) Ibid.


With a new leader in office, President Arroyo reinitiated the MILF peace talks and declared a unilateral ceasefire in 2001. The MILF proposed three conditions in order for talks to resume—“the talks be mediated by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) or by an OIC member country, the parties comply with the terms of past agreements, and the talks be held in a foreign venue.”\footnote{Ibid.} Manila acceded to all three conditions. Malaysia took an active role as a third-party facilitator during the exploratory phases. The formal talks were held in Libya and negotiations resulted in the 2001 Tripoli Peace Agreement that defined “three major agenda items—security, rehabilitation, and ancestral domain.”\footnote{Ibid.}
Once again, the peace talks were suspended when government troops launched military offensives against the MILF’s headquarters in Buliok, Maguindanao in February 2003 during the Muslim holiday Eid-ul Adha.\textsuperscript{167} The fact that the attack occurred during a religious holiday only angered the MILF more, seeing it as a personal affront. At first, Manila stated that the purpose of the campaign was to go after the “Pentagon Gang,” a kidnap-for-ransom gang, of which MILF rebels were members. Subsequently, government officials admitted that Hashim was the real target.\textsuperscript{168}

Moreover, the MILF was blamed for the March 2003 bombings at the Davao Airport a week after the Buliok attack,\textsuperscript{169} which killed 22 people and injured two.\textsuperscript{170} As the year progressed, relations improved with Hashim issuing a statement “renouncing terrorism and underling the MILF’s commitment to achieving a peace settlement”\textsuperscript{171} before he died in July 2003. The Philippines and the MILF signed a ceasefire agreement on July 18, 2003 but not before 500 individuals were killed and some 400,000 others were displaced in the span of five months.\textsuperscript{172} The carnage did not end there. In 2005, MILF forces attacked government troops in Maguindanao which resulted in the death of 23 people.\textsuperscript{173} On Basilan Island in July 2007, the MILF fighters were involved in a battle that left 14 Philippine troops dead, 10 of who were

\textsuperscript{168} Ibid 208.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{172} “55. Philippines/Moro Islamic Liberation Front (1977-present).” *Department of Political Science.* University of Central Arkansas, n.d. Web. 29 Apr. 2014.
reportedly beheaded. Although MILF stated that the military had violated the ceasefire agreement by entering its territory without permission, they denied beheading the soldiers.\footnote{“Guide to the Philippines Conflict | Moro Islamic Liberation Front.” \textit{BBC News}. BBC, 08 Oct. 2007. Web. 29 Apr. 2014.}

A breakthrough in the peace talks occurred in 2008 with the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD). The memorandum allowed some 700 villages in Mindanao to hold a referendum within the year to determine whether they would join the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity.\footnote{“Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain Aspect of the GRP-MILF Tripoli Agreement on Peace of 2001.” \textit{United Nations Peacemaker}. United Nations, 8 May 2008. Web. 29 Apr. 2014.} However, the Philippine Supreme Court declared the MOA-AD unconstitutional because its proponents “had agreed to sign it even if it had failed to consult with all the stake-holders, including the communities that would have been affected by the formation of the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity.”\footnote{Merueñas, Mark. “It’s Final: MOA-AD Unconstitutional, Says SC.” \textit{GMA News Online}. GMA Network, 21 Nov. 2008. Web. 29 Apr. 2014.} The Supreme Court’s decisions effectively rendered the MOA-AD null and void and led to another failure of peace negotiations. This prompted rouge leaders in MILF to stage attacks against various civilian targets.\footnote{“Fighting and Talking: A Mindanao Conflict Timeline.” \textit{GMA News Online}. GMA Network, 27 Oct. 2011. Web. 29 Apr. 2014.}

On September 23, 2010 MILF Chief Negotiator Mohagher Iqbal said that the MILF “would concede to an autonomous substate within the Southern Philippines rather than complete independence from the Philippines….The Muslim substate will not have its own armed forces but instead will have troops for internal security.”\footnote{“Moro Islamic Liberation Front.” \textit{Mapping Militant Organizations}. Stanford University, 18 July 2013. Web. 29 Apr. 2014.} After President Aquino assumed office, he met with the MILF chair Al Haj Murad Ibrahim in Japan in August 2011, marking the first time a Philippine president has met with the MILF. Supporters of both sides lauded the meeting as a “great leap forward.”\footnote{Merueñas, Mark D. “MILF Calls Aquino-Murad Meeting ‘a Great Leap Forward.’” \textit{GMA News Online}. GMA Network, 5 Aug. 2011. Web. 29 Apr. 2014.}
Despite violence and clashes in Basilan in October 2011 that resulted in 30 deaths and sporadic attacks conducted elsewhere by rogue MILF forces, the peace talks forged ahead. On October 15, 2012, the Philippine government signed the “Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro” which stated that the ARMM would be replaced with the creation of an autonomous economic and political entity named Bangsamoro, including its own police force and Sharia for Muslim residents. President Aquino called ARMM a “failed experiment.” The agreement was reached after 32 rounds of talks spanning nine years.

A sign of improving relations and the effects of credible movement on the peace talks, no skirmishes occurred in 2012. Issues pertaining to how to divide Bangsamoro’s natural resource wealth as well as how to reintegrate former MILF rebels into society were much discussed and the MILF and Manila reached an agreement on wealth-sharing in July 2013.

After almost 20 years of peace negotiations, the MILF and the Philippine government signed a deal in March 2014 officially “ending 45 years of conflict that has killed more than 120,000 people in the country’s south.” The pact calls for the MILF to “disband guerrilla forces, surrender weapons, and rebuild their communities” while the Philippines government gives them self-rule to oversee the region’s economy and culture. Although a joyous occasion, obstacles to the agreement continue to exist; rouge MILF troops and Islamist militant groups could threaten lasting peace in the region.

185 Ibid.
Positive Peace Counterterrorism Efforts

The government of the Philippines has implemented positive peace to counter terrorism efforts against the MILF through peace talk negotiations. Peace is composed of two aspects—negative and positive peace. Negative peace means the cessation of violence for a period of time. Positive peace means the underlying issues which caused the conflict are addressed. Stability is a result of positive peace. Positive peace can only occur after negative peace is achieved. However, positive peace is more of a concept since it can never be fully achieved. Once one underlying issue is fixed, another arises. This perpetual process creates greater regional stability each time the positive peace process cycles.

Due to the country’s religious composition and the geographic disbursement of these religious groups, the factors contributing to the conflict and the rise of militant Islam are social and cultural rather than political and economic. Mindanao and the Bangsomoro region host a large majority of the Muslim population in the Philippines. An island, the physical location of Mindanao makes the region easily separable from the rest of the country. As a result, the physical isolation allows for the Muslim community to create its own environment, identity, and socio-cultural norms. For instance, almost eight percent of the Filipino population speaks Bisaya/Binisaya, a dialect only spoken in the south that is difficult to understand in other parts of the Philippines.¹⁸⁶

As a separatist group, the MILF does not advocate for jihad against the western world, as it does not wish for the creation of a Muslim state like JI. Its primary objective is to create an autonomous Muslim substate in the southern Philippines. Now that a peace deal has been signed, violence has ceded as evidenced by the fact that there were no recorded clashes in 2012. Through nearly two decades of peace talks, at present negative peace has been achieved.

However, the underlying factors stemming from identity and religion causing conflict in the Philippines have yet to be addressed and may never be addressed as they are insurmountable. The implementation of the peace agreement will begin the process of working towards positive peace.

**Concluding Analysis**

Although JI and the MILF’s presence in Southeast Asia have diminished, the region serves as a fertile ground for terrorism to grow. As evidenced with JI in Indonesia, poor governance, rampant corruption, and an anemic economy create an environment in which terrorism is appealing. The 1997 Asian financial crisis and preceding poor financial management led to the 1998 democratic transition ousting Suharto. The heightened instability created an atmosphere in which JI and terrorism could flourish. Although not as weak as it once was, Indonesia continues to be in a fragile state as President Yudhoyono has failed to institutionalize democracy and implement infrastructure reforms that would improve governance. While Indonesian counterterrorism efforts have proven somewhat effective, they do not address the underlying aforementioned causes which attract terrorists.

In regards to the MILF in the Philippines, religion is the primary factor for terrorism in the country. Unlike economics or politics, religion cannot be “fixed.” Though violence has currently subsided, using Sederberg’s analytical metaphor, like a remission from disease this is only temporary until the disease is cured. The physical separation between the predominantly Muslim population in the south and the Christian population in the north creates enclaves with their own norms, culture, and identity. An ethno-religious identity built upon grievance, the

---

Philippine government must engage in meaningful dialogue to understand the Muslim population’s concerns as well as to discuss the implementation of the Bangsamoro peace treaty. If successful, the likelihood of violence breaking out again decreases.

The question of whether Southeast Asia is the second front for terrorism is difficult to answer as the term “second front” possesses a loaded meaning with various connotations. “Second front” conjures images of war. Furthermore, the term “second front” refers to the global war on terrorism which specifically focuses on Al-Qaeda in the Middle East. Terrorist groups in Southeast Asia are different from those in the Middle East. While several groups have ties with Al-Qaeda, many have their own mission and accompanying ideology. Scholars and experts must be wary of lumping all terrorist groups together. Using the lens of Afghanistan to examine Southeast Asia will lead to wrong conclusions and wrong policy.

Overall, the issues of politics and economics must be targeted and religious tolerance must be practiced in order to effectively counter terrorism. While the capabilities and presence of terrorist groups have declined, the aforementioned factors that contribute to the rise of militant Islam remain. Truly implementing anti-corruption policies and strengthening governance will aid in improving the economy. Ideally, with government officials no longer skimming from public funds and nepotism no longer practiced, better fiscal and monetary policies can be effected thereby attracting foreign investors.

In regards to religious tolerance and in the context of the MILF and the Philippines, when discussing the terms of implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, both sides must engage in peaceful dialogue to create a functioning autonomous entity. Reintegrating the MILF rebels into society and rebuilding the communities disrupted by violence are of vital importance to long-term stability. Also, good governance and sound economic policy
must be practiced in the Bangsamoro region as well given the entity’s newfound responsibility to self-rule.

As a result, though Southeast Asia has employed counterterrorism efforts that have yielded positive results, these counterterrorism policies do not address the core and crux of terrorism in the region. Therefore, unless major policy changes are implemented, Southeast Asia remains fertile soil upon which terrorism can thrive.
Works Cited


Jones, Sidney. "Briefing for the New President: The Terrorist Threat in Indonesia and Southeast


