Title: Civil Military Operations (CMO) in the Philippines: Examining Battlespace Management in the Past and the Present

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Abstract

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) continues to be involved in a drawn out war against insurgencies, namely coming from two armed fronts: the communists and the Muslim separatists. As part of its counterinsurgency (COIN) program, the AFP has utilized non-traditional military activities such as civic action, public affairs, and psychological operations to deal with the complexities emanating from socio-economic and political dimension of the insurgency. Now, collectively known as Civil Military Operations (CMO), these operations first appeared in its nascent form during the American colonial period. The modern foundations nonetheless can be traced back to the early 1950s when it was developed as the left-hand approach (activities to persuade and influence) to compliment the right-hand approach (coercive force). The succeeding decades maintained this formula in varying degrees in almost all of the AFP’s campaigns. Nevertheless, it was only in 2006 that CMO was institutionalized for the first time.

Despite the AFP’s long experience in CMO, it remained one of the most poorly understood operations within the military. Due to its unmilitary-like characteristics, it was associated more with developmental assistance and public relations, setting it aside from core military operations. Apart from select COIN specialists within the AFP, the CMO has faced challenges in its application because the concept has been far too abstract and hypothetical for soldiers to comprehend. Furthermore, actual practices of CMO have often been eclipsed by the military’s proclivity to conduct what they are trained for or know best, which is to plan for and execute lethal force. Consequently, CMO operations did not mesh well with standard military operations, making it more difficult to reach mission objectives.

Not surprisingly, its track record has been uneven. CMO lacked a doctrinal framework to guide its operations until 2006, which has encumbered the process of transferring its best practices to succeeding generations. Nonetheless, the thesis argues that CMO has achieved the best effects at an operational and tactical level, when military commanders understood, in what the author interprets, as a form of maneuver warfare that allows soldiers to reach the depth of insurgent battlespace. By tracing its successes and failures in history, the thesis seeks to ultimately to answer the question whether these lessons were absorbed and refined upon, after its institutionalization in 2006.
Acknowledgements

As it turned out, this merciless task of completing the dissertation could not be undertaken with my efforts alone. I was proven lucky in so many ways because of the assistance provided to me by numerous people. A simple acknowledgement of their part falls short of giving them the proper recognition they deserve. But I would like to express that the completion of this thesis would not have been possible without their contribution.

My utmost appreciation goes to my academic advisor, Professor Shiraishi, Masaya who has patiently guided me over the years. He not only gave me direction on the overall research and writing, but always motivated me do better. If it weren’t for his inspirational teaching, pursuing a PhD would have never crossed my mind.

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My trips to the Philippines have left me with nothing but warm memories and I can never properly thank the Filipino people for their kindness. In Manila, the men and women at the headquarters of the Armed Forces of the Philippines went out of their way to receive my requests for interviews. In particular I would like to thank Gen. Jaime Buenaflo, the first commander of the National Development Support Command, for introducing me to the “revitalized” CMO; Col. Buenaventura Pascual and Lt. Col. Ronaldson C. Cutillon for their assistance in organizing a trip to Taguig city and the information furnished; and Col. Paul T. Regencia, for allowing me lengthy interviews and sharing with me so much insight on the topic.

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this work in memory of my father who continues to be a driving inspiration behind my life’s endeavors.
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<td>ALPS</td>
<td>Army Literacy Patrol System</td>
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<td>AI</td>
<td>Area of Influence</td>
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<td>AO</td>
<td>Area of Operations</td>
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<td>AOI</td>
<td>Area of Interest</td>
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<td>AOR</td>
<td>Area of Responsibility</td>
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<td>Abu Sayyaf Group</td>
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<td>BCT</td>
<td>Battalion Combat Team</td>
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<td>BIAF</td>
<td>Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces</td>
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<td>BMA</td>
<td>Bangsa Moro Army</td>
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<td>CA</td>
<td>Civil Affairs</td>
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<td>Civil Affairs Office</td>
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<td>CENCOM</td>
<td>Central Mindanao Command</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-H-C-D</td>
<td>Clear-Hold-Consolidate-Develop</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIMIC</td>
<td>Civil-Military Co-operation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMCoord</td>
<td>Civil-Military Co-ordination</td>
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<td>CMO</td>
<td>Civil Military Operations</td>
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<td>COC-IS</td>
<td>Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security</td>
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<td>COIN</td>
<td>Counterinsurgency</td>
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<td>COG</td>
<td>Center of Gravity</td>
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<td>CORDS</td>
<td>Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support</td>
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<td>CPP</td>
<td>Communist Party of the Philippines</td>
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<td>CPT</td>
<td>Communist Party of Thailand</td>
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<td>CRS</td>
<td>Civil-Relations Service</td>
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<td>DCS</td>
<td>Deputy Chief of Staff</td>
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<td>DENCAP</td>
<td>Dental Civic Action Program</td>
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<td>DOD</td>
<td>Department of Defense</td>
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<td>EastMinCom</td>
<td>Eastern Mindanao Command</td>
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<td>EDCOR</td>
<td>Economic Development Corp</td>
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<td>ENCAP</td>
<td>Engineering Civic Action Program</td>
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<td>FM</td>
<td>Field Manual</td>
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<td>GK</td>
<td>Gawad Kalinga</td>
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<td>GVN</td>
<td>Government of Vietnam</td>
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<td>GWOT</td>
<td>Global War on Terror</td>
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<td>HR</td>
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<td>HUK</td>
<td>Hukbo ng Bayan Laban sa Hapon (HUKBALAHAP)</td>
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<td>JDA</td>
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<td>JI</td>
<td>Jemaah Islamiya</td>
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<td>JP</td>
<td>Joint Publication</td>
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<td>JSOTF-P</td>
<td>Joint Special Operations Task Force - Philippines</td>
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<td>JUSMAG</td>
<td>The Joint Assistant United States Military Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>KBP</td>
<td>Kalayaan Barangay Project (Freedom Village Project)</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
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<td>KKK</td>
<td>Kilusang Kabuhayang at Kaunlaran (Livelihood and Development Program)</td>
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<td>LGA</td>
<td>Local Government Agency</td>
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<td>LGU</td>
<td>Local Government Unit</td>
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<td>LIC</td>
<td>Low-Intensity Conflict</td>
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<td>LOI</td>
<td>Letter of Instruction</td>
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<td>MCP</td>
<td>Malay Communist Party</td>
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<td>MEDCAP</td>
<td>Medical Civic Action Program</td>
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<td>MILE</td>
<td>Military Livelihood Enhancement</td>
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<td>MILF</td>
<td>Moro Islamic Liberation Front</td>
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<td>MILVED</td>
<td>Military Values Education</td>
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<td>MNLF</td>
<td>Moro National Liberation Front</td>
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<td>MTPDP</td>
<td>Medium Term Philippine Development Plan (2004-2010)</td>
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<td>NADESCOM</td>
<td>National Development Support Command</td>
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<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<td>NISP</td>
<td>National Internal Security Plan</td>
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<td>NDF</td>
<td>National Democratic Front</td>
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<td>NDSC</td>
<td>National Development Support Command (this acronym precedes NADESCOM but refers to the same command)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NISP</td>
<td>National Internal Security Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPA</td>
<td>New People’s Army</td>
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<td>OPAPP</td>
<td>Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process</td>
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<td>OPCAP</td>
<td>Optical Civic Action</td>
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<td>OPLAN</td>
<td>Operations Plan</td>
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<td>PA</td>
<td>Public Affairs</td>
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<td>Philippines Army</td>
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<td>PACOM</td>
<td>Pacific Command</td>
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<td>PAZ</td>
<td>Peace Advocates Zamboanga</td>
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<td>PC</td>
<td>Philippine Constabulary</td>
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<td>Philippine Defense Reform</td>
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<td>Peace and Development Team</td>
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<td>PKP</td>
<td>Communist Party of the Philippines</td>
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<td>PSYMAT</td>
<td>Psychological Material</td>
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<td>Psychological Operations</td>
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<td>Psychological Warfare</td>
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<td>PHILCAG</td>
<td>Philippine Civic Action Group</td>
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<td>PHILCON</td>
<td>Philippines Contingent to Vietnam</td>
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<td>RAM</td>
<td>Reform the Armed Forces Movement; Rebolusyonaryong Alyansang Makabayan</td>
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<td>RMA</td>
<td>Revolution in Military Affairs</td>
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<td>ROTC</td>
<td>Reserves Officers’ Training Corps</td>
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<td>SALAAM</td>
<td>Special Advocacy on Literacy/Livelihood and Advancement for Muslims</td>
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<td>SEMP</td>
<td>Socio-Economic Military Program</td>
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<td>SI</td>
<td>Social Investigation</td>
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<td>SOF</td>
<td>Special Operations Forces</td>
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<td>SOT</td>
<td>Special Operations Team</td>
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<td>SOUTHCOM</td>
<td>Southern Command</td>
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<td>TANGLAW (Beacon)</td>
<td>Tanod at Gabay ng Lahi at Watawat</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAFFE</td>
<td>United States Army Forces in the Far East</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<td>USIA</td>
<td>United States Information Agency</td>
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<td>VETCAP</td>
<td>Veterinary Civic Action</td>
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<td>VFA</td>
<td>Visiting Forces Agreement</td>
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<td>WestMinCom</td>
<td>Western Mindanao Command</td>
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<td>Young Officers’ Union</td>
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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has spent most of its existence combating insurgencies within their borders. Even before the Philippine Army was formally organized under the American Commonwealth in 1936, elements of the future standing army, the Philippine Scouts and the Constabulary were fighting alongside the American soldiers against various Filipino insurrectionists. With independence in 1946, the Philippines was faced with a communist-inspired agrarian uprising that threatened to destabilize the new Republic. The AFP successfully quelled the communist rebellion, only to be faced with a new generation of communist fighters in less than two decades. The emergence of the communist threat coincided with the armed Muslim separatist movement, which dragged the Philippines into a full-blown war in the early 1970s. Though the intensity of the violence has not returned to the proportions of this period, the AFP continues to be locked in an armed struggle with threat groups coming from these two fronts.

A combination of what the AFP refers to as the “right-hand approach” (coercive force) and the “left-hand approach” (persuasive measures) have in varying degrees, dictated the course of its counterinsurgency (COIN) programs. The right-hand approach is generally understood as the employment of firepower or combat-centered measures to physically remove the threat. In contrast, the left-hand approach is supposedly integrated into the overall military mission for the purpose of engaging the population in a manner that would gain their support, and ultimately weaken the armed opponent’s will to fight. They include civic action, civil affairs, public affairs, psychological operations, and nation-building. Such activities are now collectively referred to as Civil Military Operations (CMO). CMO in its nascent form first emerged during the Philippine-American War (1899-1902), but gained recognition as an inseparable component of counterinsurgency (COIN) under Ramon Magsaysay who served as Secretary of National Defense from 1950 to 1953. The succeeding decades saw the integration of CMO in most of the AFP’s military campaigns but without the official recognition that would place it on par with other military operations.

The decades-long experience in CMO activities finally culminated into its institutionalization in 2006. The move was in alignment with President Gloria Arroyo-Macapagal’s (2001-2010) national security strategy to deliver a decisive blow on the insurgencies that was draining the country of its resources, not to mention, stunting economic development. She called for a holistic approach to cover not only the military dimensions of the insurgency but also the socio-economic aspects as well. Under theses initiatives, CMO was institutionalized for the first time, equipped with its own independent office at the AFP headquarters and furnished with its first doctrine.1

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1.2 Statement of the Problem

The AFP has experience in CMO dating back over a century. Despite its long history, the AFP has faced challenges in exploiting CMO to bolster its counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. One such reason lies in the military’s proclivity to prioritize combat operations over non-traditional or indirect approaches. This is not a surprising revelation since the military is an institution created for the defense of the nation, and soldiers are most comfortable in their prescribed roles of combat. Subsequently, CMO was considered a mere adjunct to the overall military mission rather than an important force multiplier. Such attitudes posed problems for the implementation of CMO. In many instances, any intended outcomes of CMO, such as winning the goodwill of the population especially of those living in insurgent-affected areas, were short-lived. The bloodshed and rapine that the AFP left behind in their offensives only alienated the population further. To put it another way, CMO did not synchronize well with the overall military operation, as the intricate relationship between the application of force and persuasive measures were not well understood.

Another challenge in regards to the planning and execution of CMO was the theoretical basis of the operation as a COIN operation was too abstract for the general military audience to comprehend. Aside from a handful of COIN specialists within the AFP, the tenets of CMO were not successfully propagated to the soldiers out on the field. CMO planning and implementation had been guided more by “common sense” rather than the operational rigor that comes with other military operations such as combat and intelligence. While this gave flexibility for soldiers to adapt to the situation, it required seasoned experts to lead such military operations. Without such leadership, the majority of soldiers were limited to the superficial understanding of CMO, which evolved around socio-economic assistance and information campaigns to seek the support of the population.

Nonetheless, there were instances in Philippine history that CMO helped the AFP to produce results. CMO was successfully incorporated with operational sophistication into some of the AFP’s military campaigns under civilian/or military leadership that appreciated the validity of CMO. These results were especially important in leaving a mark on the evolution of CMO practices.

1.3 Research Objectives

The first objective of the thesis is to trace the evolution of CMO in Filipino history. Even though CMO is a relatively new term in Philippine military jargon, what constitutes as CMO activities

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today such as civic action, information campaigns, displaying courteous behavior towards the residents, and psychological operations to demoralize the enemy, has its roots dating as far back as the American colonial period. These activities have been carried over from generation to generation, and used in varying degrees to fight internal security problems. Certain components were either magnified or modified to match the security conditions. Though the process did not follow a progressive development, certain periods in history have been instrumental in shaping the CMO that is practiced today.

At the same time, in tracking it evolution, the thesis seeks to assess CMO in the past and current counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in the Philippines. In the process, the thesis seeks to answer the questions, why it demonstrated success in certain campaigns and why it did not in other campaigns.

Finally, as the institutionalization of CMO in 2006 was considered to be a turning point for the operation, a case study was conducted in Western Mindanao to determine whether institutionalization has internalized lessons from the past and has set down a path for an improved the application of CMO on the ground.

1.4 Survey of Literature on Relevant Aspects of CMO

1.4.1 Overview

Literature devoted entirely on the Philippines’ CMO remains limited. In fact, much of the existing information and analysis on the topic draws from Filipino military history, counterinsurgency (COIN), nation-building, and civil-military relations. As research done on CMO emerges from different fields of study to support a particular theoretical interest, the purpose of the survey is to short-list the relevant publications and gather the main points that have been made in their respective fields.

Broadly speaking, existing academic inquiry into the subject of the Philippine’s CMO follows two strands of thought. The first is that, CMO is examined for its utility in COIN operations. Most of these works are written by Filipino military officers, who have approached the subject from a military standpoint, placing the study within the area of war studies and military history. The second strand of thought concerns itself with the question of whether CMO really falls within the purview of military responsibilities. Such discussions are largely found in studies related to nation-building and civil-military relations in the Philippines.

1.4.2 Counterinsurgency Literature

A starting point in gaining insight into the AFP’s current understanding of CMO is found in a work dating back to the early 1960s. Written jointly by two army officers: one Filipino and one American, Counter-Guerrilla Operations: The Philippine Experience draws from their direct experience in fighting the communist-inspired agrarian uprising (1946-1954), or more popularly known as the Huk Rebellion. It is not a scholarly work per se, nor, an historical account of the events. Rather, it illustrates the operational principles that dictated the military campaign under the Secretary of National Defense, Ramon Magsaysay.

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The CMO described in this book was referred to as activities directed by the Civil Affairs Office, an early predecessor of the CMO office that exists today. The office was established to support the Department of National Defense’s initiatives to apply friendly persuasion on those that could be coaxed into supporting the government (including both the population and the enemy). The basis of this concept comes from an understanding that the armed component was largely a by-product or an effect of unrequited socio-economic aspirations of the impoverished masses. At the same time, the authors recognized that these sentiments were exploited by the Hucks to not only gain legitimacy for their movement, but to also translate this legitimacy into tangible support from the people that included supplies, recruits, intelligence, sanctuaries, and freedom of movement - all factors needed to offset the conventional capabilities of the AFP. Therefore, early components of CMO that included medical missions, infrastructure support, information campaigns, and amnesty programs for Huk fighters, were organized “to beat the guerrilla at his own game.”

The significance of this study, in regards to CMO, is that it demonstrated that the underlying basis of its operations is psychological. Even the famed resettlement program for the surrendered Huk fighters that involved extensive developmental projects by the Army Corps of Engineers was purely a means to an end. In other words, all activities undertaken by the military, be it socio-economic assistance or counterpropaganda was calibrated towards psychologically defeating the enemy.

More recent works on CMO do not depart greatly from the central concepts introduced in Counter-Guerrilla Operations. For instance, the Small Wars Manual’s Strategic and Psychological Principles in Philippine Counterinsurgency (COIN) Operations by Lt. Col. Ben D. Dolorfino also stresses the importance of recognizing the psychological dimensions in formulating an effective COIN strategy. Dolorfino argues like many proponents of CMO that centering a military operation on force cannot resolve a conflict. Namely since one, it does not target the deeper roots of the problem and two, a combat-centered approach that is often accompanied by collateral damage and human rights violations, only alienates the population and increases the likelihood of them giving their support to the insurgent. Therefore, Dolorfino’s main criteria for success in COIN is understanding the nature of the insurgency problem and then achieving it with the least amount of force: a strategy requiring soldiers to also engage in activities to uplift the lives of the people.

Dolorfino’s article brings to mind other works that support the military’s role in socio-economic projects to fight insurgencies. Like Dolorfino, military writers see the significance of alleviating poverty to deter the people from supporting insurgents. AFP journal articles such as “Community Organizing Towards Economic Development” discuss a COIN plan that seeks to re-orient communities towards economic development with the help of other civilian agencies for the purpose of shifting people’s attention to their well-being. Interestingly enough, they fall short of establishing a direct link to the soldiers’ work to actual

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economic progress or poverty reduction for that matter. This does not come as a surprise. By whittling down the various development themes, it comes down to the understanding that CMO’s function lies primarily in changing the perception of the people in favor of the military and government. In short, such activities serve psychological objectives.

Marilen J. Danguilan takes a more critical look on the perceived effects of CMO especially in regards to its socio-economic aspects. While she acknowledges the validity of the military in performing socio-economic functions to extend immediate relief to people affected by conflict, she doubts the assumption held by the AFP that the provision of high impact and visible projects such as health care and infrastructure support alone has the effect that the military seeks to psychologically demoralize or break the will of the enemy.

Danguilan’s concern is not so much on the operation itself, but whether the entire nation has the intent and capabilities to deal with the underlying causes of insurgency. No matter how much a CMO mission achieves in gaining temporary gratitude from a community, the effects cannot reverberate up to the national strategic level if the regime is repressive, the military abusive, the civilian agencies incompetent, and existing socio-economic conditions continue to deepen the woes of the people. These are the very conditions that fuel support for insurgencies.

Danguilan rounds off her study by underlining that CMO cannot cover for gaps in poor military planning and government policymaking. To extract and sustain any positive effects CMO has on the populace, these operations have to be followed by an overarching and long-term reform plan initiated by the government.

When examining CMO from a military operational standpoint, Victor Corpus’ *Silent War* (1989) provides one of the most penetrating insights into how CMO was necessary in helping the AFP overcome their weaknesses in fighting an armed communist movement. As a former member of the New People’s Army, his understanding on the inner-workings of the communist movement provided an operational plan for the AFP to follow in order deal with the problem. In his work, he underlines the importance of CMO in countering the political-hold that the communists had over the people and provides operational and tactical details on how this can be achieved. In a nutshell, his take on CMO is that it should duplicate the communist methodology in gaining the support of the people.

Another work that supports the utility of CMO in COIN is done by Lt. Col. Eugenio V. Hernandez in his 2009 thesis. The author, being a Marine himself, focuses his study on the Philippines Marine Corps and its three lines of operations guided by the Macapagal-Arroyo government’s National Internal Security Plan. These lines of operations include combat, intelligence, and CMO.

Hernandez takes a slightly different approach in examining the viability of CMO by proposing

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that out of the three lines of operation, CMO provides the best set of criteria in measuring the performance of a COIN program. He begins by arguing that performance indicators for combat operations, which base its progress on enemy casualties, the capture of arms, and intelligence documents, can be misleading because it only reveals short-lived tactical gains made on the battlefield. In lieu, he proposes that a more realistic indicator of progress against the insurgencies can be measured by the impact that CMO has on the people. While Hernandez admits that these performance indicators are much more difficult to quantify in comparison with enemy kills, he suggests that they should be measured along the following lines:

1. The number of persons and/or households that benefit from CMO.
2. The number of information operations and other initiatives conducted by the AFP that have changed the perceptions of the people and have resultantly worked in favor of the government.
3. The number of insurgent-influenced or insurgent-controlled communities that have “turned their backs against the internal threat groups and joined the mainstream of Philippine society.”

Unfortunately, Hernandez does not nail his argument with enough supporting evidence to demonstrate that CMO is a better indicator of progress with a set of comparative statistics (enemy kills vs. CMO effects). Nonetheless, his work reveals an increasing trend in the military, even within the Marines where soldiers are typically trained and indoctrinated under a warrior ethos, to place more premium on CMO to improve the outcome of military operations.

1.4.3 The Expanded Role of the Military

CMO is a contentious topic in both military and civilian circles. The debate spawns from the question whether the military should be involved in activities that are normally reserved for civilian agencies.

In the late 1950s to the 1960s, there was a considerable amount of work done in viewing the military as a “modernizing agent” or a catalyst for “economic take-off” in a newly independent country.10 Based on these theories, the military was seen as one of the most organized and efficient institutions, making it practical for the government to rely on it for national progress.

Since the 1950s, in the Philippines, the military has been directed to support, in varying degrees, nation-building. Therefore, it is of no surprise that some scholars study CMO from within the brackets of nation-building. It is of interest to gather the views presented in these works, because it provides insight on how the military perceives their roles. Much of the research points out that extra-military activities have become so embedded in the AFP’s operations, that it is considered to be one of the most important missions after defense.11 Nevertheless, more recent works by military scholars such as Dencio Acop take the middle

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ground. While recognizing that the military has a role to play in development and nation-building, it cannot be at the expense of compromising combat competency and draining resources from an already cash-strapped military. This brings to surface whether the AFP can strike a balance in performing in both combat and CMO activities without weakening its core mandate to provide defense for the nation.

In issues related to the military’s role in civilian-like roles, some writers have expressed apprehension on the over-expansion of military responsibilities. Roy Devesa who assessed the Philippine Counterinsurgency Operational Methodology is critical of the National Internal Security Plan (NISP) under the Arroyo administration that has heavily relied on Special Operations Teams (SOTs) to support the government’s holistic approach to the insurgency problem. These are composite teams (units ranging from teams to company-size units) that integrate combat, intelligence, and CMO in their operations. Their efforts target the communist armed front and play a unique role in dismantling the enemy’s political structure in remote barangays. He believes that the CMO component of SOTs, where the soldiers are tasked to conduct infrastructure development, has been a drag on the military’s abilities to conduct their core missions of combat and intelligence. He argues that the government has to do more in providing better funding and establishing mechanisms to ensure a better follow-up after the military has finished its initial job of clearing an area of enemy presence. In place, he proposes that improved coordination between the military and civilian agencies: government agencies, local government units (LGU), and non-governmental organizations (NGO) is necessary to ensure that the military’s responsibilities do not become overstretched.

Civilian scholars, on the other hand, are more concerned with the repercussions that CMO or other non-traditional military activities have on democratic institutions. This strand of critical disposition frequently falls under the academic study of civil-military relations. Not to be confused with CMO, civil-military relations, in the simplest terms, concerns itself with civilian control over the military and the mechanisms needed to ensure that the military submits to the authority of a democratic state.

Examining the military’s interventions in politics is beyond the scope of this research. However, civil-military relations is a matter of interest for scholars in areas concerning COIN, because of the fear that activities performed by the AFP outside of defense, have jeopardized civilian control over the Philippine military.

Carolina Hernandez, who has done extensive research on the AFP, also turns her attention to the civil-military relations aspect of the issue. She explains that President Ferdinand Marcos’ expansion of the AFP’s role in development (frequently referred to as CMO) has “militarized the process on the ground.” By this, she means that the government’s understanding of insurgency as a multi-dimensional problem has allowed the military to expand their roles to tackle socio-economic areas, which in turn has

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made the AFP dominate the spheres that are normally the remit of civilian authorities. Hernandez argues that the military’s role in extra-military activities has paved way for the military to be the dominant actor in security operations. This is a problem, she says, compounded by the fact that in conflict areas, there is a lack of functioning government services, which inadvertently, makes the AFP the sole decision-maker in communities.

Another analysis on how a distorted civil-military relationship can negatively impact CMO is forwarded by Rosalie Arcala Hall. Her research centers on AFP operations against the communists in the hinterlands of Central Philippines between the years 2003 and 2004. Her primary concern stems from her findings that there is no civilian control over the AFP operating out on the frontlines. Hall argues that their actions go largely unchecked and held unaccountable because of the lack of civilian oversight. She states that the source of the problem comes from the fact the state places much of the COIN burden on the AFP, especially in remote areas where there is limited government presence. Consequently, it is the AFP that makes decisions over security with little or no consultation with civilian authorities.

While CMO is not the focus of her paper, Hall does reveal that there is a lack of civilian participation in this area as well. Concerning CMO activities like civic action or information campaigns, civilian participation is limited to its implementation. Hall argues that this is problematic because such decision-making powers belong to the military, which not only endangers democratic principles, but it also creates a biased assessment on the security problem. This leads to security measures that serve military objectives rather than work for the interests of the local population. In short, it is stated that CMO, along with other military operations, has to actively enlist the participation of civilians in “devising solutions for the insurgency program.”

1.4.4 Deepening the Study

Existing literature sheds considerable light on CMO from a variety of perspectives. From the military operational standpoint, the effects of the operation are examined for its impact in the psychological domains. In particular, its utility in persuading the civilian audience through friendly measures is dwelt upon in the works that are available. From the perspectives that deal with the military involving themselves in realms outside of defense, studies explore the broader implications that a military institution has on the state and the society at large. Earlier studies pursued the AFP’s role in socio-economic assistance for its potential in accelerating development in a young Republic. At the same time, it can be gathered from later studies that there is a degree of discomfort expressed by both military and civilian circles concerning the over-expansion of military roles. From the military side, there is debate whether the military can afford to engage in such activities without impacting its primary responsibility of defense. As from the civilian scholars, they articulate problems that arise from the excessive entry of the military in areas normally reserved for civilian agencies. Here, they point out that it dilutes civilian oversight, which ultimately leads

to an unhealthy tilt in the civil-military balance.

In summing up the literature that is available, it appears the focus is placed on studying what CMO is either supposed to achieve or its effects and the broader implications it has on the military, society, and state. While these arguments and insights are indispensable in exploring aspects of the AFP’s CMO and they remain invaluable contributions to the field of study in which scholars are pursuing, the author believes for the purpose of this research, the operation deserves more attention on the fundamentals of what CMO is as a military operation. COIN is a long-drawn out process that includes a mixture of conventional and unconventional methods. CMO belongs to the latter where its activities straddle both military and civilian spheres. Resultantly, there is much confusion over what CMO is and in order to clear that up, it is necessary to subject the operation to more intellectual rigor.

While paying homage to the works done by previous scholars, the thesis seeks to take an approach that slightly departs from mainstream studies, and seeks to uncover the validity of CMO in the realm of warfare. Rather than treat the operation as a binary opposite to combat, the research studies the topic from the perspective that it is closely aligned to the application of force.

1.5 Research Methodology

1.5.1 Entry-point to the Research

The general understanding of CMO rests on diverting a portion of the military’s resources to non-traditional military activities in areas such as civic action and public relations for the purpose of winning the hearts and minds of the people. As the most magnified component of these operations is friendly persuasion through good works, it is not uncommon to see it viewed for its dichotomous relationship with the application of force. CMO is typically categorized under the headings of humanitarian, non-traditional, non-combat, and indirect action and such such labeling obscures rather than illuminates its operational use, which not only makes it more difficult to understand but also poses challenges for its implementation. Though CMO departs from conventional military practices of preparing for and conducting war, it still falls under the remit of military responsibilities, making it unavoidable to examine the context (warfare) from which it derives from. Therefore, a conceptual framework that reconciles the seemingly antipodal (binary) relationship between persuasive measures and coercive force is necessary to probe deeper into the utility of CMO and subsequently use this to assess the operations within the Philippines.

1.5.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used to guide the inquiry into CMO in the Philippines draws from various theoretical contributions to insurgency and counterinsurgency (COIN) studies, maneuver warfare, and battlespace management. Details are fleshed out in chapter three, but it begins with studies on guerrilla warfare. It reflects on the main challenges that a conventional force faces in tackling the guerrillas.

Drawing from Mao Tso-tung’s treatise on guerrilla warfare, the study narrowed its focus on the way guerrillas manage battlespace. The guerrillas transform the battlespace from one in which a
conventional force is most comfortable working with, to one that a conventional force has trouble discerning its frontlines and its rear. The guerrillas rely on movement to avoid presenting themselves as targets to a superior force, and they retreat into the depth, or the area behind the frontlines. The depth is of particular interest for the counterinsurgent because it is in this dimension that they have the most trouble reaching. The guerrillas are able to survive because they maximize the use of the depth that includes both the complex physical terrain (jungles, mountains, forests, and urban areas) and the human terrain. While the physical terrain provides concealment and a manmade or natural obstacle course for the regular army to traverse through, it is the population that sustains their movement through their provision of sanctuaries, supplies, recruits, and also the space for them to move in fluidly. These in effect, make it difficult for the conventional force to apply firepower decisively.\textsuperscript{16}

The history of COIN reveals the variety of methods that the conventional forces uses to reach the depth of insurgent battlespace. They include the abandonment of stationary defense in exchange of mobile pursuit operations, improving reconnaissance, and overall attempts to discard the rigidity of thought that accompanies a conventional force in dealing with a supposedly inferior force. CMO is one such operation that is used, but is developed to deal exclusively with the population. Nonetheless, rather than treating the operation singularly as a means to deal with the population component of the battlespace, it seeks to frame it within a study that explores its relationship with coercive force and persuasive measures to reach the depth of battlespace.

The underlying theoretical concept used to allow CMO to manage this depth, rests on the principles of maneuver warfare. Maneuver is typically associated with movement, as troops look for advantageous positions to direct a decisive blow on the armed opponent.\textsuperscript{17} When applied to CMO, F.G. Hoffman theorizes that it is a “form of non-traditional maneuver” that seeks to generate and exploit advantages over the insurgent by shaping not only the military dimension of the battlespace but also the political, socio-economic, diplomatic, social, legal and informational dimension as well. In essence, Hoffman argues that the concept of maneuver warfare has to go beyond the movement of troops in the “spatial sense” and include non-tangible dimensions such as the support of the people.\textsuperscript{18} It is also a method to generate opportunities in the depth that gives the counterinsurgent the edge they need to help defeat the opponent.\textsuperscript{19}

While it may appear at first glance delimiting to focus on the maneuver aspects of CMO, which is based on a disciplinary approach derived from military studies, the complexities of this operation lie in the

\textsuperscript{16} Theoretical basis is drawn from Mao, Tse-Tung, \textit{Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung}, Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1967.
fact that it involves the society at large. It requires the military to understand the complex nature of insurgency which is frequently rooted in the nation’s historical, socio, economic, and political dimensions, in order to manage battlespace effectively.

1.5.3 Method of Data Collection

Data collection was adjusted to meet the needs and objectives of each section. In presenting the general overview of CMO and building the conceptual framework, information was drawn from secondary resources, primarily written by military scholars specializing in warfare studies. Additionally, in order to incorporate the accepted principles and procedures of CMO and related operations, tertiary resources that included military doctrines, field manuals, and dictionaries were relied upon.

In tracing the history of CMO in the Philippines, a combination of primary and secondary resources was used. Particularly with the American colonial and Marcos period, archival and library research for relevant material was conducted at various libraries in Manila. Personal interviews with AFP officers also provided insight on the development of CMO since the 1980s.

In the section outlining CMO’s institutionalization, the scarcity of information made available to the public, necessitated visits to the AFP headquarters in Manila and other AFP military installations. The research mainly used primary techniques of data collection through military briefings and face-to-face interviews with AFP officers. At the same time, wherever possible, information and comments gathered were supplemented with media reports, theses and journal articles by Filipino officers, and government documents such as policy outlines, statistical reports, circulars, and executive orders.

In the section that dealt with a case study of CMO practices on the ground, research trips were made yearly from 2007 to 2010 to Zamboanga City and its neighboring vicinitie s. Information, opinion, and insight was gathered primarily through face-to-face interviews with the local military command, the American forces, the police, and NGOs/religious organizations, local government units, local government agencies, and academia. The time spread over 4 years, allowed the researcher to conduct follow-up interviews with key respondents. These interviews centered on pointed questions but left enough room for additional information using soft questions. Thus, they were typically semi-structured and lasted anywhere between 30 minutes and 3 hours.

Additionally, interviews were sought with CMO beneficiaries that loosely followed a survey construct, but as the intentions were to make a qualitative analysis, outcomes were generated to form a mini-narrative (details of interview methods should be referred to in chapter 7).

1.6 Definition of Terms

The following lists the definitions of terminology used in this research. As the existing definitions are numerous and have variations, the definitions that the AFP provides and those that best fit the study were selected.

Battlefield: The piece of ground, within more or less fixed physical parameters in which an overt
engagement of belligerents occurs.

**Battlespace** – For the purposes of this study, the author sums up that battlespace refers to one, a geographical area where military operations take place or are expected to take place; **two**, the areas that either belligerent has influence on and its forces can move freely in without the hindrance and obstruction by the opposing force; and **three**, an area where the opposing force operates in, which may fall outside of the area of influence of the commander but is still considered to have a potential impact on the military mission.20

**Battlespace dimensions** – Battlespace dimensions constitute elements of a mental box that helps commanders visualize the location of both friendly and enemy troops, and design operations accordingly. These dimensions include width, height (air space), and depth (length).21 The width corresponds to the “ground space occupied by the military force. The height represents the space required to employ weapon’s effects. The depth represents both the distance of the weapons effects, plus the distance to the rear of the military force and its logistics.”22

**Campaign:** A “series of linked battles and engagements designed to meet the desired end state.”23

**Civil Military Operations (CMO):** The AFP’s CMO are activities undertaken independent of or in coordination with civilian entities to gain popular support, to strengthen the will of the soldiers to fight, and weaken the will of the enemy to resist to support the accomplishment of military mission. They are divided into three pillars: Civil Affair, Public Affairs, and Psychological Operations.24

1. **Civil Affairs:** Formally known as the Civil Relations component of CMO, it is currently the pillar that involves activities that seek the good will of the population and are often done in partnership with civilian entities. Its ultimate objectives are to secure the environment so that other government agencies can function and provide services to the community.25

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25 Briefing provided by the National Development Support Command (NDSC) to the author, October 8, 2007, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Philippines, Hereafter cited as NDSC briefing and date; *PAM 7-00*, p. 22.
2. Public Affairs: This is the pillar that deals with the public. It seeks to create trust with the people by the timely dissemination of information through all available media such as the TV, radio, newspapers, and the Internet. Additionally, it is not restricted to a one-way flow of information, but involves the participation of people with soldiers in conducting symposiums, consultations, and dialogues in communities. Though somewhat overlapping in civil affairs, soldiers also participate in community events such as festivals and clean up drives.26

3. Psychological Operations (Psyps): In the Philippine setting, Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) is defined as a CMO pillar conducted to influence the beliefs, emotion, attitude, opinion and ultimately the behavior of selected target audiences (primarily the enemy and secondarily its civilian supporters) toward the accomplishment of the mission of military force. These are further divided into one, deeds propaganda that deals with information to influence the attitudes of the target audience and two, deeds psyops that involve combat and other activities that fall outside of “pure communication” but still seeks a psychological effect on the target audience.27

Counterinsurgency (COIN): These are, generally, operations conducted in response to insurgencies. In theory, they include the whole government approach involving the following aspects: political, social, economic, and security. Though “counter” can be read as “reactive”, the military generally avoids transmitting this image and defines its role in COIN as military activities initiating action or proactive measures against insurgents.28 Either way, counterinsurgency requires a significant re-orientation of the military’s method of fighting that does not fit in comfort zones of established military institutions.29

Guerrilla warfare: Insurgents are typically inferior to a conventional force in terms of official training, equipment, organization, mechanized transport, and weaponry. Therefore, in order to offset their disadvantages, insurgents rely on a set of tactics and strategies that deny conventional forces of doing what they are best at, which is fighting a conventional war. In short, insurgents, seek to fight battles on their own terms. They launch lightening attacks, accompanied by quick withdrawal; they do not seek to hold terrain but capitalize on mobility; and they excel in concealing their movements. While the insurgents cannot expect a decisive victory through their hit-and-run tactics, they seek to wear down the conventional force through a protracted war.30

26 NDSC briefing, October 8, 2007; PAM 7-00, p. 23
27 PAM 7-00, pp. 25-26.
**Insurgency**: An armed manifestation of a political struggle against an incumbent authority of the state. The objectives of an insurgency can range from the complete overthrow of the government to secession. In some cases, political aims can be obscured by the contents of their activities that share more similarities with violent criminal organizations.

**Maneuver Warfare**: Unlike attritional warfare, which entails the use of aggregated amounts of firepower and manpower to wear down and defeat the opponent, maneuver warfare seeks to find positional advantages over the opponent, for the purpose of directing firepower selectively.\(^{31}\) It is often associated with movement in a “spatial sense”, as troops are moving over terrain to “generate and exploit opportunity” to deal a blow on the opponent. Nevertheless, with increasing studies on insurgent warfare after 2001, maneuver has come to be understood also as movement in psychological realms, where nontraditional operations such as CMO play a role in exploiting opportunities that can be shaped from their interactions with the population.\(^{32}\)

**Military Civic Action (MCA)**: The AFP defines their version of MCA as the following: \textit{military initiated developmental and sociological services to the people in order to promote public trust towards the military... It can range upward from the delivery of basic services up to major engineering projects.} Popular forms of civic action are dental, medical, educational, and construction of roads and buildings.\(^{33}\)

**Operational level**: In the simplest terms, it is understood as the level that connects upper-strategy with lower-tactics. It organizes planning and actions to shape tactics on the ground. More often than not, the level points to a geographic area (theater and area of operations). It is also the level where campaigns and major operations are planned and executed to attain strategic objectives. In regards to actual operations, it is responsible for sequencing tactical actions in a coherent manner to reach military objectives.\(^{34}\) The Philippine Army defines this level as operations conducted to reach mid-level or medium term objectives and encompasses operations in support of unified commands and the campaigns of military divisions.\(^{35}\)

**Tactical level**: Located at a level where actual battles and engagements take place. The level concerns itself on the arrangement and maneuver of friendly forces and enemy forces in relation to each other on the ground. In other words, this is where troops have direct contact with the enemy and the population. Tactics are shaped at the operational level.\(^{36}\) The Philippine Army defines this level as activities conducted


\(^{33}\) \textit{PA M 7-00}, p. 24.


\(^{35}\) \textit{PA M 7-00}, p. 19.

in battle zones that support short-term objectives. These activities typically fall under the responsibilities of brigades, battalions, companies, platoons, teams and squads.\textsuperscript{37}

1.7 Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study is limited to evaluating CMO’s effects as a counterinsurgency (COIN) measure. Even though the author recognizes insurgency in the Philippines is a multi-faceted and multi-layered problem emanating from weak governance, problems with elitist politics, lack of meaningful socio-economic and political reform, and the treatment of minority groups, among others;\textsuperscript{38} for the purpose of this research, the study remains within the confines of military studies, as it seeks to uncover CMO’s utility as a military operation. Additionally, the study excludes CMO in disaster-relief and humanitarian assistance for the purpose of retaining its focus on its COIN application.

In regards to the time frame, the study basically stops at 2010. The last research trip was made in this year. 2010 can be considered to be a timely cut-off point because it coincides with the end of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s presidency. However, any significant developments or events that have occurred in the two years that followed are included either in the footnotes or in the concluding chapter.

Internal security problems in the Philippines are not concentrated in one area. Armed groups, namely the communists, have presence throughout the archipelago. Nonetheless, due to time and resource constraints, research trips were only made to Manila and Western Mindanao. In Western Mindanao, the information gathered was used for the case study.

1.8 Limitations

A difficulty imposed on the author in conducting the research was gaining access to official military publications and testimonies that dealt with the more sensitive side of CMO. The most challenging was that the author could not access the AFP-CMO doctrine (2006). Therefore, its contents could only be attained from personal interviews with AFP officials, other military publications, and existing research made available to the public. Furthermore, certain aspects of the operation, especially those tied in directly with combat or the deeds component of the psychological operations on which were not elaborated. Even though attempts were made wherever possible to fill in these blanks by piecing together information from outside sources, there were some constraints in providing a detailed analysis on these aspects.

It is also important to let the reader know, that direct information concerning the impact of CMO in conflict zones was not accessible for the author. Moreover, interviews could not be secured with any armed group, thereby making it difficult to discern their personal feelings concerning the supposed effects of CMO. Wherever possible, interviews and information were gathered from other sources to help fill in these gaps.

\textsuperscript{37} PA M 7-00, p. 19.

Another limitation to this thesis lies in the findings from the case study. This case study was used to demonstrate the utility of CMO operations on the ground after institutionalization. In the course of the research, it became apparent that the finding made on Western Mindanao could not be directly transplanted to other regions in the country. Military commands located throughout the country, face a different set of challenges in their areas of responsibility, be it the context of a security problem or the AFP’s relationship-dynamics with the people. Therefore, these differences will be noted in the conclusion.

Nonetheless, the most difficult aspect of measuring COIN success with the incorporation of CMO is that it does not produce decisive results. Rather it is a cumulative effort that seeks to lead the enemy into an intractable decline. Thus, even for this study, indicators of success still relied on traditional methods, which include enemy strength (armed fighters and weaponry), number of armed incidents, number of enemy-influenced communities, and progress in the peace talks.

1.9 Thesis Organization

The objective of Part 1 of the thesis (chapters 2 and 3) is to provide a general overview of CMO. Chapter 2 begins with a portrayal of its historical roots in the world arena and traces its evolvement from three different trajectories. This is followed by a summary of the definitions and operational concepts put forth by various militaries. Chapter 3 centers on building a conceptual framework for the purpose of understanding the utility of CMO in COIN operations. The framework draws its theories from battlespace management in COIN and maneuver warfare.

Part 2 (chapter 4) focuses on the history of CMO in the Philippines. It begins with the emergence of these practices during the American colonial era and ends with the administration of Joseph Estrada (1998-2001). Particular attention will be paid to COIN campaigns waged by one, the Americans against various Filipino revolts starting from 1898 until the mid-1930s; two, the Huk Rebellion during the Magsaysay Era (1950-1954); three, the administration of Ferdinand Marcos (1965-1986); and finally, the administration of Corazon Aquino (1986-1992). They deserve a more detailed analysis because they have left significant imprints on CMO.

Part 3 (chapter 5-7) describes CMO in contemporary times. The focal point of this section is its institutionalization in 2006. Chapter 5 sketches its path to its institutionalization. It identifies factors that led to its revitalization and subsequently, its official recognition. Chapter 6 provides the operational guidelines of CMO which was secured after the publication of its first doctrine in 2006. Chapter 7 uses a case study to provide insight on whether institutionalization has helped increase CMO effects in the overall COIN operations on the ground.

Part 4 (Chapter 8) seeks to summarize and analyze findings.

1.10 Significance of the Study

The culmination of this study hopes to provide some insight and information on aspects of CMO where less attention is paid. After the Cold War, studies on CMO gained currency among academics and military practitioners. The end of the bi-polar tensions allowed large powers and/or multinational forces to
engage in wars of choice. CMO emerged as an operation to reduce the impact of military operations on the population, and furthermore, provide humanitarian assistance for people in war zones and in concert with other international and local civilian agencies. Nevertheless, studies on CMO by indigenous armies remain limited in contrast to expeditionary forces. Expeditionary forces operate under a different set of circumstances. Most significantly, they are engaging in “wars of choices” and also have the resources and capabilities to better accommodate the full-spectrum of conflict. In contrast, indigenous forces are often under-resourced but are tasked to not only fight internal rebellions, but also to help the government extend developmental work. Thus, CMO emerges from these circumstances. Nonetheless, the largest difference between CMO in these nations, in contrast to expeditionary forces, is that operations are directed towards their people. As a result, a substantially different set of dynamics come into play when integrating CMO in COIN operations.

Additionally, even when CMO capabilities of indigenous forces are studied, they are from the viewpoint of the intervening force. In the case of the Philippines, existing studies that focus on the joint military partnership between the American and Filipino forces have a tendency to highlight American challenges and contributions in stabilizing the security situation. This is not to say Filipino input is overlooked but these studies are shaped for the most part, with American global security interests in mind. Therefore, an in-depth examination on the subject from the Philippine side can help balance what has already been produced.

Another factor in pursuing this research is that CMO is a difficult concept to understand, primarily because it is an operation that straddles military and civilian spheres. CMO is frequently defined for its aspects in winning the support of the population and its partnerships with civilian agencies, not to mention also, that this has and continues to be considered “unmilitary-like” within the military institution. These have the effect of limiting its understanding to a superficial level. In order to uncover more layers, it was decided that the Philippines’ long experience in CMO and its recent revitalization would provide a wealth of material from which to pursue the study.

Chapter 2. The Contemporary Understanding of CMO and Exploring its Roots in Military History

2.1 Introduction

Civil Military Operations (CMO) is a term that began cropping up in military jargon after the Cold War. This was the result of a change in the security environment, which dramatically altered defense priorities. During the bipolar confrontation, military institutions planned and prepared for dealing with the imminent threat of an interstate nuclear showdown, a contingency requiring the mobilization of conventional capabilities. As ties improved between the former Cold War foes, nations, especially those with the ability to project power, turned their attention to conflicts in areas, which did not necessarily pose an immediate threat to their national borders. Also referred to as “wars of choice,” there appeared to be a heightened sense of moral responsibility for the international community to deploy soldiers for military and/or humanitarian intervention in distant lands. These conflicts frequently erupted as a result of ethnic or religious tensions, separatist movements, and the breakdown of state functions. As attention turned to stemming the violence and deflecting as much as possible the impact of war on civilians, an increased recognition on the validity of civilian-like activities of the military came about. Nations with the ability to project power such as the United States, United Kingdom, and international organizations like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United Nations (UN) made strides from applying activities, such as coordinating with civilian agencies and extending humanitarian assistance, in an impromptu manner to institutionalize its role in military operations proper. Yet, much of the core components, categorized now under the heading of CMO such as civic action and civil affairs predate its contemporary utilization and draw its roots from early military history.

The intentions of this chapter are to deliver a broad definition of CMO, explore the originating sources and components of CMO, and then proceed to sketch-out its general application in the contemporary world. For the purpose of understanding the context in which CMO was developed in the Philippines, the chapter also devotes a section to looking at the different historical trajectories that the practice evolved from.

2.2 Defining CMO

A number of military institutions and international organizations have produced their own definitions of CMO with periodic updates to match the evolving challenges of the post-Cold War military operational environment. In general, they conform to the operational principles that non-military

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instruments of power are just as important as military ones in shaping the security environment; and that the military has a valid role in undertaking tasks in the former. This view is largely backed by four views. The first is to limit the interference that the population can have on military operations. For example, managing the movement of people escaping from conflict. The second is that the degree of violence that exists in an environment makes it difficult for civilian agencies to work unharmed without assistance from the military. The third is that there is more concern for the population that frequently bears the heavy brunt of the conflict. As a result, the intervening force is also expected to provide security and assistance to the people. The fourth is that conflict is now recognized for its complex interplay of factors such as political, socio-economic, and religious and ethnic tensions, which cannot be ignored by the military that is operating in its midst. The common denominator regarding CMO activities is that it seeks to establish a collaborative relationship with non-military actors out in the field, including civil authorities, humanitarian agencies, and NGOs, for the purpose of stabilizing an area undergoing conflict. Areas of responsibility include restoring civilian infrastructure, providing logistics and resource control, rendering humanitarian assistance, protecting and supporting the population, and promoting legitimacy for the host government. Additionally, CMO can take place both in hostile or non-hostile areas. For the military, these activities are often considered a force enabler or force multiplier for its capability to shape the battlespace in favor of the military and therefore help them accomplish its mission.

Though all members of the armed forces are expected to fulfill their part in CMO when called upon, it is still an operation that requires expertise, which does not fall within the usual responsibilities of the soldier. Therefore, militaries have dedicated units to facilitate such operations and draw its members from both trained and experienced military personnel (Special Operations Forces and reservists) and civilian experts (doctors, lawyers, engineers, police, computer programmers, bankers, etc.). For instance, in the United States and United Kingdom, the units that support CMO are called Civil Affairs (CA) teams. CA members liaise and coordinate with civilian actors in the battlespace on various projects. They also provide

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3 A summary of these points are made in Richard A. Lacquement, Jr. “Integrating Civilian and Military Activities,” Parameters, Spring 2010.

4 The United States military define CMO as “activities of a commander that establish collaborative relationships among military forces, governmental and nongovernmental civilian organizations and authorities, and the civilian populace in a friendly, neutral, or hostile operational area in order to facilitate military operations are nested in supporting the overall U.S. objective.” See Department of Defense, Joint Publication (JP) 3-57, Civil-Military Operations, Washington, D.C.: CJCS, July 08, 2008. NATO defines their version of CMO, referred to as CIMIC, as “The co-ordination and co-operation, in support of the mission, between the NATO Commander and civil actors, including national population and local authorities, as well as international, national and non-governmental organisations and agencies.” See Allied Joint Publication-9. NATO Civil-Military Co-operation (CIMIC) Doctrine, June 2003, p. 1-1. Hereafter cited as AJP-9, 2003.


the commander with the information he or she needs to deal with the population such as their cultural background and their immediate needs. While they hold commonalities, the armed forces’ approach to CMO reveal a differing military culture from which it has evolved from, leading to varying degrees of emphasis on peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, counterinsurgency (COIN) and nation-building aspects of CMO. With these in mind, the following sections explore its history.

2.3 Distant Roots

CMO would not even exist today nor lend justification to the soldier undertaking civilian tasks if members of the armed forces did not have expertise in areas such as engineering, medicine, public health, communications, transportation, logistics, and education. It holds true that soldiers are experts in violence and the organization that they belong to is mandated to plan and mobilize for war. Yet, the act of war in itself is a complex endeavor. Training limited to drills, marksmanship, physical fitness, and other curricula related to advancing combat skills are not sufficient in managing battlespace. Long gone are those days when wars were more simplistic, resembling sporting competitions in which one warrior outdid another with strength and valor. Militaries have evolved to become large organizations that are faced with the complexities of not only war but effectively run a large organization. Specialization beyond the realm of war-making includes officers with administrative skills to oversee the organization, soldier-engineers for building roads and bridges, doctors and nurses to maintain the health of military personnel, quartermasters to handle supplies for the troops, and intellectuals to produce doctrines and field manuals. In short, the military organization operates like a community operating in the civilian world, where the provisions of services that are expected in civilian life are replicated within the camps or bases.

A launch pad in examining the roots of CMO is when the military began to develop capabilities outside of war-making. And even so, extracting such date or time period is difficult to pinpoint precisely. Since antiquity the military has always been involved one way or another in non-military forms of activity. One place to begin is with the expansion of non-military technology (not involving the production of weapons and arms), which played a critical role in managing battlespace and shaping warfare.

Early demonstrations of those capabilities are found in the military engineering feats realized in the ancient empires. In the late Iron Age, armies were traveling longer distances and projecting power. An enabling factor for the expansion was the building of roads to ensure “strategic mobility” and the construction of fortresses to defend occupied territories. The ancient Roman Empire developed a 250,000-mile road network built mostly by army engineers that provided control over the empire and rapid

9 Martin van Creveld, Technology and War: From 2000 B.C. to the Present, New York: The Free Press, 1989, pp. 141-146; 161-162. Van Creveld in these sections is making an analysis on how the development of technology increases the specialization of soldiers. The thesis’ author applies his argument to put forward the idea that such specialization is also the underlying basis of CMO.
10 Ibid., p. 49.
deployment of troops. At the same time, these roads benefited civilians in terms of transport and commerce.\textsuperscript{11} Militaries also had manpower at their disposal and in the Warring States Period of ancient China, commanders made use of their soldiers in public works in-between campaigns.\textsuperscript{12} Alexander the Great (356B.C.-323 B.C.) also had engineers directly under his command and were utilized to build battering-rams, siege towers, ramps, bridges, and military bases, and unknown hitherto, infrastructure for the occupation of his rapidly expanding empire.\textsuperscript{13} Centuries later, the 19\textsuperscript{th} century United States, still a new nation, tapped into the technical expertise of graduates from military academies to undertake construction projects such as roads, bridges, and laying down telegraph wires to expand its Western Frontier.\textsuperscript{14}

Such expertise became more meshed with political aspects during the colonial period. Following the Age of Exploration, colonial powers such as Britain, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, and later the United States practically reached all corners of the globe in the aggrandizement of their empires. While undeniably brute force was used to drive the natives into submission, empires also had to contend with the overall administration of the colonies. As succinctly put by Douglas Porch, “Imperialism…was essentially a military phenomenon.” It was the soldier who determined the battles and it was the soldier oversaw control over the subjugated areas.\textsuperscript{15}

During this era, the British army was configured to engage in expeditionary wars and the occupation of its empire. Colonial forces did not have enough personnel to administer a large population, thereby making it more practical to take an indirect approach to governance. This resulted in a development of civil expertise within the military which involved working with colonial subjects and deemed more effective than putting energy and resources into repressive measures that would ultimately alienate and incite rebellion from the population.\textsuperscript{16} Thomas Mockaitis points out that the British developed the know-how of civil-military cooperation from their colonial policing\textsuperscript{17} and John A. Nagl adds that this experience helped the British later to deal with the political-military aspects of counterinsurgency (COIN) in the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960).\textsuperscript{18}

The overseas tenures in France’s colonies by General Hubert Lyautey also demonstrated the complicated mixture of civilian-military duties that the soldiers participated in. Deeply impressed by his

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experiences in his first posting in Indochina in 1894, where agricultural assistances, infrastructure development, and construction of markets were rendered by colonial forces to help the populace, he carried these ideas to Madagascar, Algiers, and Morocco. Though he never underrated the importance of combat operations, he disdained a complete resort to force to suppress incalcitrants and preferred to share the benefits of Western civilization to the populace. Resultantly, his interest in the political aspects of colonization superseded military ones, and while being in the position of a professional soldier, he betokened to a certain degree, what became the de rigueur for COIN operations in the 1950s and 1960s.19

The United States, a late arrival in the colonial scene, also had their share in handling activities outside of fighting. They involved work in education, public health, and sanitation, among other civil administrative duties during the transitional phase from military to civilian authorities. The practice was particularly pronounced during the Philippine-American War (1899-1902) and the colonial period that followed it. American soldier used a mixture of force and a policy of attraction through extensive public works and social assistance programs to establish American control over its new colony.20

These extra-military capabilities, transmitted from generation to generation, are an indelible part of the military. It would not be an overstatement to say that the built-in expertise of the military regarding these areas provided some of the building blocks for CMO. Nevertheless, the organization of these activities into a recognized category, that takes into account the population as an important variable in the outcome of a war, did not emerge until the latter-half of the 20th century.

2.4 Direct Antecedents

2.4.1 Introduction

The author contends that the direct forerunners of modern-day CMO have evolved largely from three tracks. The first stems from World War II when Allied powers took into deeper consideration the impact war had on the population and the occupational experience the Allied Powers had in their defeated territories after the war. The second is from the counterinsurgency (COIN) campaigns waged by the Democratic bloc against the tide of armed communist movements that swept through the Third World at the height of the Cold War. Both were essentially experiences belonging to Western powers. The third track lies in the development of CMO in the armed forces in developing nations, a majority of them gaining independence from colonial powers after World War II. Unlike Western powers, their experience with CMO evolved from within their national borders.

2.4.2 The Development of CMO during and after World War II

The first section will outline the roots of contemporary CMO from World War II. In the European theater, the Allied forces had to develop a “practical” solution to the interruption of military operations caused by the large-scale evacuation of people, not to mention attend to their welfare. This prompted the

20 Ibid., p. 46.
Allied Forces including the United States and Great Britain to establish units dedicated to the civilian component of the battlefield, where much of the focus was on mitigating inadvertent civilian interference on military operations.\(^{21}\) These were called Civil Affairs (CA) Divisions and they continue to exist today in supporting the planning and implementation of CMO.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, the United States also mobilized CA to play a key role in the administration of occupied territories of Japan and Germany. The war was such that its conclusion could only be brought about with the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers. The United States military went beyond “liberating” these nations from “fascist” rule to take on the responsibility of temporarily occupying these nations to ensure political rehabilitation, economic reconstruction, and the immediate relief to the population. Initially referred to as the military government, it was later renamed Civil Affairs.

This was not entirely new to the United States. In its war with Mexico (1846-1848), the United States ended up setting up a temporal government in Mexico after defeating its neighbor in order to govern its territory, establish security, aid in fiscal recovery, and administer civil affairs.\(^{22}\) The American Civil War also experienced a similar endeavor by the government forces in the South during the Reconstruction Period. But it was only during World War II that any serious attempts were made to institutionalize the process by creating a specialized branch known as Civil Affairs (CA). CA is roughly divided into two areas: one is civil administration where an occupying military assists foreign governments in meeting the basic requirements of governing the people and secondly, extending socio-economic projects.\(^{23}\)

In the case of Japan and the Germany, the United States mandated its military to administer the defeated nations and take responsibility over the welfare of the vanquished people until the host nation and its civilian agencies could function on its own. The long-term objectives of this endeavor were to ultimately produce American-friendly governments as the world was beginning to divide into two ideological camps.\(^{24}\)

In sum, the CMO from this track evolved from one, to limit civilian interference in military operations; two, born out of humanitarian concerns for people caught in the throes of conflict; and three; as a means to shape the post-war battlespace to serve geostrategic interests.

\subsection*{2.4.3 The Counterinsurgency Tradition}

\subsubsection*{2.4.3.1 Understanding Counterinsurgency (COIN)}

The development of CMO also comes from another strain of military tradition, which is...
counterinsurgency (COIN). These are wars waged by government forces against armed people that are banded together in order to achieve political aims such as liberation from an occupying foreign power, revolutionary overthrow of the incumbent government, break away from the state, or even have their grievances stemming from socio-economic disparities, unresolved land issues, and ethnic/religious disputes acted upon.

While the Cold War represents a period where militaries raced to build conventional capabilities under the thickening clouds of a nuclear standoff, actual fighting occurred under the nuclear threshold. Powers from the Democratic bloc became increasingly concerned that armed developments in newly established states or regions trying to wrest back control from the colonial powers, were in large part, ideologically rooted in communism. Consequently, from the late 1940s and peaking in the 1970s, they stepped up their off-shore involvement, sending their troops to in order to protect their overseas’ vital interests. COIN was born out of these circumstances, and more specifically, from an American-led foreign policy measure that sought to contain the spread of communism. Some examples of these interventions include the British in the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960) and the Americans in the Vietnam War (1955-1975).

The basis of these wars was embedded in a web of factors that drew in part, from indigenous resistance movements against the Japanese during the Second World War. After the war, these resistance groups morphed into wars of liberation and/or against the newly established government. To add to the complexities, in 1948, Joseph Stalin endorsed communist armed uprisings in the Far East, as a means to add pressure on the Western bloc. The Chinese communists also followed this line. Even though by the 1950s, the Soviets did not determine policies for communist uprisings in Vietnam and Cuba and China’s seriousness in her commitment to instigate regional uprisings were fading, the United States had already viewed the growing insurgencies as a sign that communist influence was spreading in the less-developed parts of the world and crafted policies to contain them.

The United States has referred to these wars as “limited brush-fire wars,” asymmetric wars, low-intensity conflict (LIC), irregular wars, insurgencies, and unconventional wars. These terms tend to underline the imbalance or disparity in the capabilities existing between a regular force and an irregular force. Nonetheless, while the regular army has the advantage of superior firepower, hardware, and troop organization, the irregular troops (guerrillas or insurgents) could offset these deficiencies by exploiting time, space, and psychological factors that included gaining the support of the people. Unlike the conventional forces that seek to capture and occupy key physical terrain, insurgents put off such objectives until they reach military parity with the opposing force. In the meantime, they rely on hit and run tactics to harass and wear down the conventional forces over an extended period.

For the counterinsurgent, the approach to waging such wars is typically framed by two methods: the direct approach or the indirect approach. The direct approach centers on a military solution where the physical annihilation of enemy forces is the main objective. This relies on massive firepower in which for the most part, collateral damage cannot be avoided. On the other hand, the indirect approach combines military action with socio-economic-political measures. Actual force is used more sparingly, to avoid alienating the population.\(^{28}\)

The unfolding of the COIN era directed considerable attention on the indirect approach. The underlying basis of this approach stemmed from the view that victory could not be attained over the insurgent in a set-piece battle.\(^{29}\) For the insurgent, a battle-loss did not spell surrender. Rather, his ability to secure the resources to wage small-scale skirmishes indefinitely gave them a powerful edge over a conventional force. What sustained this insurgent activity became a focal point in COIN.

By the 1960s, many COIN experts concurred on the factor that the population was the source of strength and at the same time, a critical vulnerability for the insurgents.\(^{30}\) It was primarily the support from the population that allowed the insurgents to conceal themselves and obtain lines of communication, financial support, intelligence, and recruits.\(^{31}\) Therefore, the indirect approach was devised in accordance with the population as the center of gravity (COG)\(^{32}\) and a considerable amount of COIN efforts were directed towards denying the insurgents their links with the population.

### 2.4.3.2 “Winning Hearts and Minds”

A representative example of severing the link between the population and the insurgents is using friendly persuasion. It is a type of psychological operation that seeks to influence the emotions and attitudes of the target audience for the purpose of creating a “desired behavior” that ultimately works in favor of the military mission. When these operations target a friendly, neutral, or hostile population, information campaigns and social programs are implemented to dissuade people from supporting the insurgents.\(^{33}\)

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\(^{32}\) In military terms center of gravity (COG) is the capability or resources that the enemy and friendly forces derive their freedom of action, physical strength, and will to fight. In simpler terms, targeting COGs remove the source of strength from the opposing force. More information can be found in Department of the Army, FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, December 2006, p. 3-13.

Referred to as “winning hearts and minds” in popular vernacular, this was in fact developed in response to Mao Tse-tung’s tenets of warfare. Eminent COIN thinkers of the period such as David Galula, George K. Tanham, Roger Trinquier, Naoplean D. Valeriano, and Charles T.R. Bohannan, among others, do not fail to bring up this element of Mao in their writings. In particular, they use Mao’s analogy of fish in the sea where the fish represents the insurgent and the sea, the population. As with fish that cannot live without water, the insurgents cannot survive without the support of the population. Mao understood that in order for the communists to gain popular support, the Red Army could not take on a purely military approach. Soldiers had to be prepared to undertake tasks outside of fighting, which included conducting propaganda work among the masses and organizing them into political fronts. Mao devoted his energies into building their image by responding to the people’s grievances and ensuring that the soldiers behaved properly in their interactions with the people. The army’s ability to systematically organize people’s support into base areas ultimately provided them with an area to withdraw to, have people provide information about the enemy and conversely block information from the enemy, produce armed recruits, provide transportation, supplies, etc.

The insurgencies that ensued after the end of Second World War, including the Huk Rebellion in the Philippines, the Chinese-communist movement in Malaya, and the Viet Minh and later the Viet Cong in Vietnam, have in varying degrees integrated Mao’s principles of guerrilla warfare in their line of operations. In particular, the Viet Minh adhered to Mao’s line of placing weight on the political aspects of war and soldiers underwent political indoctrination. The establishment of a solid political front subsequently allowed the Viet Minh to conduct propaganda, socio-economic programs, not to mention, “selective terror,” which effectively led to the mobilization of people en masse against the French.

Thus, wresting the support of the population from the clutches of insurgents became an important theme for COIN planners. As a means to psychologically persuade the population in favor of the counterinsurgent, military civic action became one of the most widely used activities. Broadly defined, military civic action is the use of military forces in projects that promote economic development and delivery of basic services to the population.

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34 See Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, p. 28 on further discussions on the direct and indirect counterinsurgency approach. Mao Tse-tung was the visionary leader of the Chinese communists that fought the Kuomintang, then the Japanese invasion, and then reverted to ousting the Chinese nationalist party that embroiled the country in a civil war.


39 The United States military define MCA as “the use of preponderantly indigenous military forces on projects useful to the local population at all levels in such fields as education, training, public works, agriculture, transportation, communications, health, sanitation, and others contributing to economic and social development, which would also serve to improve the standing of the military forces in the eyes of the population.” Department of the Army, *Field Manual 41-10, Civil Affairs Operations*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
COIN measures led by indigenous and/or intervening government forces made use of civic action to take a more comprehensive approach to the insurgency problem. Military civic action, under the overarching objective of “winning hearts and minds” had various sub-objectives. The first was to minimize as much as possible, the negative impact of standard military operations on the people.\textsuperscript{40} This involved using military capabilities such as in civil engineering to rebuild broken infrastructure; and in the medical fields, to provide medical treatment to the people. For instance in Vietnam, the Americans provided treatment for South Vietnamese casualties of war, on top of other ailments and illnesses.\textsuperscript{41} Another was to provide assistance in socio-economic realms as a supporting instrument in removing the sources of instability.\textsuperscript{42} Nevertheless, it cannot be forgotten that though the military’s interaction with civilians during a war was relatively a new phenomenon and still in the process of experiencing professional development, the means used to “win hearts and minds” was derived from existing capabilities within the military such as civil engineering and medical assistance.\textsuperscript{43}

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17 December 1985, pp.1-6; 3-2.  
\textsuperscript{43} Hanning, \textit{Peaceful Uses of the Military}, pp. 29-31.
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Text Box 2.1: Vietnam - CORDS

Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) 1967-1971

The United States’ involvement in Indochina culminated into the Vietnam War. Failures in securing a democratic government to help stem the tide of communism were exacerbated with a military strategy that overly relied on firepower and a conventional posture. However, there were attempts to use “pacification” or operations to gain the support of the people for the South Vietnamese government. Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) was established to create a military-civilian apparatus that involved personnel from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the United States Information Agency (USIA), Agency for International Development (AID), the State Department, the White House, agencies from the South Vietnam government, and all military services. It was supposed to be a large-scale project to disrupt the Vietnamese insurgents’ political and military infrastructure through projects that would empower rural villages in areas of security and economic development.44

Overall assessment on the concept of CORDS in itself was not negative in the sense that it was the first time that the United States began to seriously link agencies together in a coordinated effort in Vietnam to take comprehensive action towards the deeper problems of insurgency.45 Even though there was a growing acceptance for the soldiers to undertake non-military roles such as protecting civilians and assisting in rural development in order to separate the insurgents from the populace, CORDS could not contribute to the COIN effort because the military organizational culture was steadfast in its ways of using massive firepower. This rigidity did not allow room for the full utilization and proper implementation of these projects to win hearts and minds.46

2.4.3.3 Physically Separating People from the Enemy

De-linking the population from the enemy was not only limited to changing the attitudes of the people. Counterinsurgents also sought to physically separate the population from the enemy. The main objectives were to cut off supply lines to the guerrilla and help them in differentiating the civilians from the enemy. For reasons stemming from the fact that it exacts hardships on the people through forced removal and constraints on their freedom of movement, it is generally not considered ethical, and subsequently is not practiced today. Yet, it reflects an early method in dealing with the population variable of a conflict.

**Text Box 2.2: Algeria - Defensive Grid System (Quadrillage)**

The Algerian War (1954-1962)- Defensive Grid System (Quadrillage)

The French forces determined that population control was necessary to protect civilians from insurgent attacks and systematically cut the enemy off from their support base. A system of gridding was introduced where security forces would be integrated into these tightly defended hamlets. These areas were administered through sectors and sub-sectors with civilian leaders entrusted to take care over their designated areas. In rural areas, the population was relocated and resettled in camps. Residents were issued census cards that not only identified them and the households they belonged to, but also the livestock they kept. In this way, the French forces could keep tabs on the population and monitor the flow of their food supply in and out of a designated hamlet. Food rations were also implemented to ensure that extra food was not passed on to the insurgents.47 The outcome of these resettlement projects did not produce the results the French wanted, primarily because it could not deny the insurgents of their mobility. The insurgents expanded their operations beyond the quadrillage areas to reach all corners of the colony. Moreover, it had the negative effect of alienating the population by the hardships that accompanied these relocations.48

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**Text Box 2.3: Malaysia - The Briggs Plan**


The British fought in the Malay Communist Party (MCP) in a guerrilla warfare that took place in their colony after World War II. The MCP depended on its food, support, and recruits from the squatter population living on the jungle fringe. In order to sever the MCP’s link to the population, a massive resettlement program called the “Briggs Plan” was introduced and 400,000 peasants were moved to new settlements (“New Villages”) that provided both security and basic social services. This project was instrumental in cutting off supplies to the guerrillas and is considered to be a turning point in the British COIN effort, leading to the eventual demise of the MCP.49

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Text Box 2.4: Vietnam - Strategic Hamlet Program

**Vietnam War – “Strategic Hamlet Program”**

The American forces and the Government of South Vietnam (GVN) relocated isolated villagers in fortified settlements known strategic hamlets or agrovilles. The concept was borrowed from the British COIN method in Malaya for the purpose of physically cutting the population’s links with the insurgent. It originated in Vietnam from GVN’s plan to deal with the insurgent’s base of support which was the rural folk. In the early 1960s, the United States and GVN officially joined hands in relocating and resettling peasant rural communities in fortified villages in attempts to cut off population ties with the Communist insurgents. At the same time, these villages were supposed to improve the socio-economic well being of the people.\(^50\) The program appeared to have some effect by 1962, since the Viet Cong were forced to deal with the immediate impact of these hamlets by diverting energies into destroying them and propaganda activities to discredit the GVN.\(^51\) If the program had been subjected to more funds, less corruption, and general appreciation on the roots of insurgency, it may have up to a certain degree flushed out the Viet Cong from these areas, and helped with the livelihood of peasants through the economic development of these hamlets.\(^52\) Nevertheless, the plan that worked in Malaya failed miserably in Vietnam since these peasants were forced off their ancestral lands and made to live in hamlets that lacked constructive government support. This in turn, fueled more support for the Viet Cong and the program fizzled out in 1963.\(^53\)

**2.4.3.4 Summary of CMO Roots in Counterinsurgency**

CMO in the COIN trajectory evolved from the growing recognition, that the direct approach produces limited results especially when insurgencies are embedded in a complex web of political, social, and economic factors. Beginning from the late 1940s, the population was taken more seriously in planning for military operations. Armies hell-bent on massive destruction were not only considered to be inappropriate for democracies, but were also thought to have the effect of losing the support of the people.\(^54\) Therefore, CMO emerged as a means for soldiers to secure strategic and tactical objectives with minimal force through the inclusion of non-military activities. In one sense, these activities resembled humanitarian assistance but it cannot also be forgotten that CMO was adopted in the context of an armed political struggle.\(^55\)

\(^{50}\) Tanham, *Communist Revolutionary Warfare*, p. 72.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., p. 72.


\(^{53}\) Ibid., pp. 129-130; 142-145.


2.4.4  CMO and Southeast Asia

2.4.4.1  Overview

The practice of CMO in developing countries has followed a different trajectory from their Western counterparts. As the topic is expansive, the study limits itself to those nations in Southeast Asia, many of them achieving statehood after the war. CMO has only recently latched on in usage, especially within military circles\(^{56}\) but terminology such as “winning hearts and minds,” non-traditional roles of the military, nation-building, peaceful uses of the military (PUMP), or military civic action were already in circulation since the end of the Second World War. Actual delineation in terms of objectives can be befuddling since they can swing either towards a developmental orientation or a COIN orientation and more than often, are combined to achieve a multiple effect. This is undeniably due to the fact; the military institution in Southeast Asia has been characterized for their pronounced role in state-building.

Understanding CMO within this contexture requires a cursory look at the recent history of the region. Since the end of World War II, countries achieved their independence in succession and began an arduous process of de-colonization and state-building. For those countries that gained independence, the colonial powers left a legacy of state boundaries that marked their territory for administrative purposes, rather than reflect ethnic or religious makeup. Consequently the leadership of these fledgling states was faced with the challenge of achieving political legitimacy, building a collective identity to bind the new nation, and implementing policies that accommodated groups divided along ethno-religious-linguistic lines.\(^{57}\) Many of the states experienced an over-centralization of power by the ruling elite that failed to represent the uniform needs of the entire state, leaving minority or fringe groups, the most neglected and disaffected.\(^{58}\)

Since the state lacked an institutional framework that could channel opposition voices into meaningful changes, aggrieved groups were left with the limited option of an armed uprising. For the central government, their option in dealing with civil disobedience and suppressing opposition was unleashing the military and other security forces (the police and militia). Thus, the security apparatus became the elite’s repressive tool to maintain their control over the state. Resultantly, it fueled further internal unrest, and the armed aspect took the form of secessionism, ethnic conflict, subversion or

\(^{56}\) Aside of the Philippines, the Royal Thai Military also uses the term CMO. Similar to the Philippines, its version of CMO was developed in response to the communist insurgency during the Cold War. Currently, CMO is still development-oriented but is also geared toward terrorism, drug problems and transnational crime. For more details about CMO in Thailand see Aries A. Arugay, “The Military Along the Security Development Frontier: Implications for Non-traditional Security in the Philippines and Thailand,” NTS-Asia Research Paper No. 10, Singapore: RSIS Centre for Non-traditional Security (NTS) Studies for NTS-Asia, 2012, pp. 16-19.


\(^{58}\) Ganguly, “Introduction: The Challenge of Ethnic Insurgency and Secession in South and Southeast Asia,” pp. 11-12, 16-17.
Another factor that strengthened the internal-orientation of the militaries was the presence of an extra-regional power. During the Cold War, countries in the anti-communist camp such as the Philippines and Thailand forged military alliances or security arrangements with the United States. In exchange for their support, especially in allowing the United States to use their soil to build bases, they secured military assistance in terms of financing, hardware support, training, and advice. In short, the United States guaranteed security to these states from external attack, while providing assistance in fighting the communist expansion within and along their borders. This in turn, allowed such nations to devote their military resources into quelling internal rebellions.

2.4.4.2 Security and Development

The circumstances of such shaky and precarious beginnings also placed the military in yet another role, which is nation-building. In the 1950s and 1960s, scholars broached the topic of the military’s role in nation-building from the standpoint that the military had the potential to expedite the democratization process and economic development of a fledgling republic. W.W. Rostow forwards the theory that countries could “take-off” or arrive at a stage where sustained economic growth can be achieved if certain pre-conditions were met. In one of them, he argues that in a developing country, the military has the potential to form the elite group, which could organize policies for the economic development of a nation. The basis for his argument was that the military had a more sophisticated organization than any of the newly established government bureaucracies. It also had at its disposal a pool of technical and administrative experts, soldiers with a modern outlook due to their international exposure e.g. military officers being trained in military academies in the West, and a strong sense of nationhood. Akin to the idea that the military was a “modernizing agent,” Lucien Pye also expressed that technical training within the military provided the country with skills, which are needed for economic development. Those included civil engineering, operating machinery, managerial skills, and industrial work. The argument that the military can expedite development is beyond the scope of this study, but it is suffice to say that development is one of the raison d’etres of the military and a factor which gave the military credence in undertaking activities which are usually the business of government and civilian agencies. It also has figured into the deep-rooted belief that development and security are inseparable. In

64 Muthiah Alagappa, ed., *Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia,*
fact, Southeast Asian countries traditionally view the lack of development as a root cause of insurgencies and domestic unrest. In response, militaries have used extensive elements of CMO to target these issues.65

As security was perceived to be tied in closely with development, for many of the militaries in the region, development became a secondary role after defense.66 The promotion of economic welfare was also sought to secure support for the regime and protect its territorial integrity. Since Southeast Asian nations were made from a patchwork of ethnic, religious, or linguistic groups, they have had to contend with secessionism and independence movements from groups that refused to identify themselves with the ruling group. The Muslim minority groups in the Philippines and recently Thailand have waged secessionist wars and East Timor experienced outright independence from Indonesia. CMO was also launched as a nation-building exercise intended to develop an encompassing national identity by having the military set an example for the people through socio-economic works, engaging in information campaigns, and conducting educational programs.67

Even in areas where there is no overt ethnic tension, the military continues to engage in developmental projects in depressed communities. For instance, the Malaysian army has a “Hearts and Minds” program known as Jiwa Murni to win the people’s support for the government. In it, a component called Tentra Masak Desa or “military goes rural” is a public works project in which the army undertakes to dispel suspicion towards the central government in the more recent entrants of the Malay Federation like Sabah and Sarawak.68 Similarly, modern-day Vietnam dispatches soldiers to security-sensitive areas such as the central highlands, remote border areas, and islands, to engage in socio-economic work and education as a means to stabilize areas inhabited by minority groups.69

Though there is no clear delineation between nation-building and COIN, the latter is also a pronounced characteristic of Southeast Asian militaries. As mentioned above, promoting internal stability to protect territorial integrity was one thing, but the Cold War security climate triggered militaries in many countries such as the Philippines, Malaysia, and Thailand to launch aggressive COIN measures against the armed communist movement. Foreign intervention has also played a significant role, because as it turned out they were proxy wars fought on behalf of the democratic camp.
The COIN posture of the state’s militaries did not make an overnight entry into the scene. They were the byproducts of colonial legacies and the difficulties faced in the subsequent road to statehood. Nations like the Philippines, whose military was organized along Western lines, drew its nascent beginnings from being a colonial auxiliary force. Native officers learned at first-hand on the colonial power’s method of putting down internal rebellions. After independence, the newly established military received assistance from the United States through funding, training, and advice that was subsequently applied to their internal threats (see chapter 4). The same could be said for Thailand. Even though Thailand did not experience colonization, its modern military establishment was modeled after Western militaries, and many of the officers experienced training in overseas military academies.  

Thailand’s version of CMO evolved in response to the communist threat. Since the state was seen as a critical buffer to the communist expansion in Southeast Asia, it was able to receive extensive funding and support from the United States. The military’s CMO included civic action to help stabilize threat areas, establishing community-based organizations to facilitate the people’s cooperation with authorities, setting up village defense systems, and having soldiers propagate the ideal of democracy through a form of counterpropaganda. Though not without brutality, the culmination of these efforts led to the successful demise of the armed communist movement in the 1980s.

2.4.4.3 Summary of CMO in Southeast Asia

CMO in Southeast Asia is an outcome of their respective military traditions, which is ingrained, in the state-building process as well as in their pronounced role in fighting internal security problems. CMO

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71 Thailand’s version of CMO evolved in response to the communist threat during the Cold War. American policymakers viewed this country as a critical buffer to the communist expansion and funneled huge amounts of military and economic aid, which experienced highs in the 1950s, and during the late 60s and 70s due to communist conflict in neighboring countries of Vietnam and Laos. The military had to contend with an armed communist movement led by the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) that was destabilizing the rural and border areas at an alarming rate. Both U.S. and Thai officials saw economic development as inseparable to COIN; and civic action was launched with support of U.S. military funds. Programs included road building, education to counter communist propaganda, and basic socio-economic services. See Robert J. Muscat, Thailand and the United States: Development, Security, and Foreign Aid, New York: Colombia University Press, 1990, pp. 146-150; 159-161. Another component of CMO was the development of mass organizations. This was the creation of village organizations to encourage people residing in both rural and urban areas to cooperate with government forces in fighting the communist armed movement. A distinctive feature of this program was not just to encourage development but also to provide training for the villagers to protect themselves. See Suchit Bunbongkarn, The Military in Thai Politics: 1981-86, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1987, p. 50. The Thai military also involved the soldier in the political aspect of COIN. Between the periods of 1973-1991, soldiers were tasked to destroy the communist political infrastructure based on promoting democracy. Activities included infiltrating leftist parties, taking over key positions in government, building a strong base of support for the military through the mass-based organizations, and using radios to broadcast the military’s view on democracy. See James Ockey, “Thailand: The Struggle to Redefine Civil-Military Relations”, in Muthiah Alagappa, ed., Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia, Stanford, California: California Stanford University Press, 2001, pp. 196-197.
has been noted for its successes in Thailand against the communists, the Philippines in the 1950s against the Huks, and in Malaysia during the Malayan Emergency. At the same time though, it is shaded in controversy because of its overlapping role in regime protection and the violations of human rights. Still, the foundations of CMO are significantly different in approach in contrast to Western militaries, due to its inward-looking nature.

2.4.5 Examining Current Military Trends in CMO

The birth of a reunified Germany, followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union were epoch-making events which dramatically altered perceptions on the security landscape. The Cold War not only entrapped the world order between two ideological camps but also braced the superpowers for a conventional state vs. state war that spelled out nuclear doom. The end of the Cold War removed this threat and it was replaced by a short-lived elation that the new world order would be based on peace. In light of these events, catchy phrases such as the “peace dividend” defined a movement to restructure defense forces where costs saved from cutting military expenditure could be redirected towards social programs. At the same time, the elimination of a potential interstate warfare posed a question to the armed forces in Europe on what their roles should be in peacetime. Charles Moskos, an advocate of the post-modern military ideal called on the defense community to utilize their organization for “forces of good.” Thus, in Europe, a trend was emerging where mission planning would be directed under normative values. The new ways of the future would be based on militaries working jointly to conduct humanitarian intervention, peacekeeping, and disaster relief.

But it was not long before a new set of security issues began to occupy the international scene and they took the form of civil wars and complex emergencies. A sense of responsibility for maintaining peace in the international system, not to mention overseas national interests, spurred states to intervene in wars waged outside of their borders. Militaries were now faced with “wars of choice” which required an “expeditionary force model” that would allow leaner and more mobile troops to be deployed to distant lands.

These contemporary wars, largely occurring in weak states, necessitated not only a military solution, but also a diplomatic, political, socio-economic approach as well. The delineation of who takes over what in a war zone became increasingly blurred as the security situation made it precarious for civilian actors to provide humanitarian assistance or basic government services to the affected populace, leaving the military, at least temporarily, to cooperate with other agencies or take over functions normally reserved for civilian authorities.

Against this backdrop, countries integrated CMO in their military operations based on their military traditions or historical past. In the case of the United States, CMO was a military operation that was not initially welcomed. In the late 1980s and early 1990s. The United States began to fixate on reinvigorating energies and resources on producing an overwhelming technological-edge that would ensure an immediate and decisive victory in any battlefield as encapsulated in the concept, Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA). However its ideal version of military reform took a blow with the harsh reality of contemporary conflict. Undoubtedly, its superior technology helped deliver a quick victory on the battlefield and lead to the toppling of the regimes in Iraq and Afghanistan but unexpected challenges were met in securing peace in a post-invasion phase. Hereon, American policymakers were faced with “remaking a nation” or long-term nation-building that included security, economic, political, and humanitarian realms.  

For the United States, CMO was something associated with COIN, a messy business that involved long-term commitment, not to mention the debate over CMO’s importance in comparison to traditional military tasking. In short, it was against its ideals of performing high-intensity operations for the purpose of delivering quick military results. The United States only began to adopt CMO in earnest as COIN specialists advocated that a conventional military approach could not meet the challenges faced in the occupational phase of Iraq and Afghanistan. Their point of reference has been to revisit the COIN annals of their past, including their experience in Vietnam and Latin America. Therefore, elements of population treatment that dictated their implementation of CMO came from their COIN experiences rather than peacekeeping.

On the other hand, Canada and Nordic countries tend to follow the traditional tenets of peacekeeping, which is grounded in contributing to global stability and humanitarian efforts. Organizations such as NATO which is comprised of alliance forces reflect a broader interpretation of collective-defense with an understanding that the mandates and activities of civilian organizations have to

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79 Landon and Hayes, National Approaches to Civil-Military Coordination in Peace and Humanitarian Assistance Operations.
be reconciled with NATO troops to make military interventions more successful.\textsuperscript{80} Another political organization, the United Nations avoids association with COIN and labels their version of CMO as Civil-Military Co-ordination (CMCoord) and CIMIC. Its activities are utilized for both peacekeeping and humanitarian operations.\textsuperscript{81}

It was against this backdrop that Civil-Military Operations (CMO) officially came into use to describe a distinct military function which centers on dealing and cooperating with civilian actors operating in a conflict zone. The first commanding of media-attention in regards to CMO came from the wars in the Balkans (Bosnian and Kosovo) that required NATO intervention and more recently the United States’ counterinsurgency and counter-terrorism operations in post-September 11\textsuperscript{th} attacks. These types of expeditionary wars have pushed militaries to institutionalize CMO practices in order to improve the overall effectiveness of the military mission which include undertaking responsibilities normally performed by civilian agencies, cooperating and coordinating with numerous actors in a conflict area, and also meeting humanitarian obligations in protecting and/or minimizing damage to the population.

The timing of the Philippines’ institutionalization of CMO also coincides with the post-Cold War trend in the Western world, reflecting a widespread movement to move away from applying CMO in an ad hoc manner and formally incorporating CMO in core military missions. However, unlike Western powers that engage in expeditionary wars, nations like the Philippines have developed CMO in order to deal with internal threats. That is why even though there is an outpour of publications of doctrines and field manuals that produce a similar-sounding definition, in actuality, there is a marked difference in the context that CMO is applied in which comes from the type of military mission, the security environment, and the military tradition that the soldiers come from. Consequently, any attempt on reaching a standard definition of CMO can obscure issues and challenges that a particular armed forces faces in conducting CMO. For this reason, a detailed investigation on the historical roots of CMO and its development was considered to be indispensable before approaching CMO in the Philippines’ operational environment.

\textsuperscript{80} \textit{AJP-9}, 2003, pp. 1-2.
Chapter 3.  CMO in Warfare: Battlespace Management

3.1  Introduction

This chapter seeks to theoretically substantiate the role of Civil Military Operations (CMO) in the context of insurgent battlespace management. The conceptual framework established in this chapter will draw from general theories on warfare, insurgency, and counterinsurgency (COIN). The basis of this framework is anchored on analyzing and understanding CMO as a form of maneuver warfare. Applied in insurgent battlespace, it is considered to be a means to reach the deep depth that also includes the human terrain. These will subsequently be used to support inquiries into the operational and tactical effects of CMO in the military operational environment of the Philippines.

The section commences with an overview on the existing approaches to CMO. It is argued that for the purpose of understanding its utility in COIN, they do not sufficiently explain CMO as a tool of warfare. The section is followed by a cursory definition of warfare, battlespace dimensions and maneuver warfare. The core of the discussion leads to the main theme of the thesis, which approaches CMO from the standpoint that it is a form of non-traditional maneuver that allows the soldier to operate in the depth of insurgent battlespace.

3.2  Existing Approaches to CMO

3.2.1  Overview

CMO owes its existence to the practical challenges arising from the ground where the military is required to operate in a space that is not only occupied by belligerents but by non-combatants and civilian entities as well.1 Rather than engaging in full-scale destruction that involves heavy collateral and property damage, the military can choose to mitigate, as much as possible, the effects of military operations on the local population and conversely, limit the population’s inadvertent interference with military operations by supporting a full range of tasks that also fall outside of traditional defense roles. These activities include providing the people with security, evacuation assistance, and humanitarian assistance.2 Not surprisingly, CMO produces a fertile ground for debate since the operation straddles the realms of military and civilian activity. The following summarizes the popularly explored aspects of CMO.

3.2.2  Winning Hearts and Minds: A Friendly Persuasion?

More than often, CMO is used synonymously with ‘winning hearts and minds.’ This was a public relations slogan coined by the British Army during the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960)3 to gain the

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1 The section here only discusses CMO operating in areas where there is the presence of an armed threat and not in the context of pure humanitarian and/or disaster relief operations.
3 Richard Stubbs, Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency 1948-1960, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 1. Though the term has more than its fair share of media and military usage, it has no official definition, for one; it is not listed in the United States Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms. However it is a value-laden phrase that the military uses to promote their humanitarian activities to project the good-will of the soldier on the target population in place of military jargon.
support of the people living in insurgent zones. The phrase is catchy and supposedly objectifies one of the key tenets of the indirect approach in COIN. As the population is considered to be the Center of Gravity (COG) or the source of power for the insurgent, CMO activities are designed to deny this from the insurgent and thereby regain the allegiance of the people to the government side.\(^4\)

In broad terms, the ‘hearts and minds’ approach is a non-punitive or non-coercive approach to persuade the population that may or not actively support the insurgency to throw in their lot with the government forces. The means to achieve this is typically done through enticing the target community with “material rewards” such as building schools, the provision of health-care, and other socio-economic services. This in turn seeks the desired effect of psychologically destroying the enemy’s will to fight by alienating him in his cause and denying him of his supply-lines by de-linking him from the support of the population. Therefore it is considered to be more effective than launching a campaign to physically annihilate the enemy.\(^5\)

As catchy and easy-to-understand the slogan seems, the semantics behind ‘winning hearts and minds’ “obscures rather than illuminates.” A cursory glance on the term makes it appear that the military is simply engaging in civic action or developmental work to secure the support of the population. However, the phrase is criticized to downplay the complexities of insurgency and threatens to misguide the military operation by boiling down CMO activities in a quest to “win the popularity contest” with the insurgents over the people.\(^6\) Ian Roxborough argues that it is too simplistic to assume that the “material improvement” of lives alone will win insurgencies. Rather ‘winning hearts and minds’ programs should be about the government conducting institutional reforms i.e. land reforms, fair elections, and reducing abuses in the governing institutions. In other words, the military singularly cannot gain enough support unless the government plays up to the population’s expectations of meaningful change.\(^7\)

In a vein not too distant from Roxborough, Paul Cornish argues that CMO is not about winning over the population through tangible means as the slogan suggests but the political element has to be appreciated as well. This requires the military to “understand” the local population and persuade them. This inevitably requires the soldier to have “political sensitivity” built upon cultural understanding of the population. He also adds that these intentions have to be backed by strong will from the government to provide to the people with long-term stability and security.\(^8\)

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7 Roxoborough, “Counterinsurgency,” p. 18. For more details on the effects and necessity of winning the support of the population, Ian Roxoborough summarizes the popular arguments in pp. 16-18.
On the other hand, there are skeptics on the population-centric approach which is considered to be too narrow-minded. For one, the “soft” (non-coercive) approach of separating the population from the enemy through persuasion is not a strategy but an operational method. Though the population is an important factor, the enemy-focus is just as important. Rather than separating the two into different schools of adherents and propose a singular approach, COIN practitioners should exercise lateral thinking and deepen their knowledge on the contextual parameters of the insurgency and be prepared to switch the focus depending on the situation. Therefore, it is implied that it is dangerous for soldiers to be misled into thinking that a “soft” approach like CMO will be the “blueprint” for success.9

Another semantics issue is that, contrary to the friendly image that the military attempts to project with ‘winning hearts and minds’, CMO should not be “considered a completely benign military function or one that can be considered in isolation from combat.” CMO is still an instrument of warfare where even though there is no direct use of force, its activities support the overall military mission.10

Concerning CMO’s relationship with warfare, a large component of CMO is psychological. It’s a type of military operation that intends to influence the attitudes of the target audience (both enemy and local population).11 Some of the cited controversies of ‘winning hearts and minds’ campaigns are that it cloaks the more sinister, covert, and subversive side of the operation. For instance, CMO information campaigns can include black propaganda where information is misrepresented or distorted (to show how evil the enemy is). Though success hinges on the target audience (local population) believing the information that discredits the enemy, it can also backfire if the people are doubtful of these enemy representations. When the people suspect the military is lying, it can lead to the loss of credibility for the military and consequently, destroy the ‘good guys’ image that they are trying to project.12

Intelligence is another controversial issue since CMO is one tool for soldiers to get information from the community. However, unlike information, which is open, intelligence is marked by secrecy. The methods used to secure it are done covertly and the information gathered must be concealed from the enemy.13 CMO plays an important role in improving the situational awareness of the battlefield not only through social surveys to enhance their cultural awareness of the community and understand the needs of the people, but more importantly, secure critical intelligence about enemy movements through the cooperation of the people.14

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14 Many military COIN experts feel express reservations in systematically organizing children for intelligence gathering. While soldiers should engage in activities to help children so as to develop their acceptance by the community, information should only be given only on a voluntary basis so as not to exploit the children for
However, CMO has difficulty in winning the support of the people when it becomes associated with intelligence operations per se. While intelligence is critical in waging in any type of warfare, the cloak and dagger aspect of intelligence can threaten to risk the credibility of the CMO operation.\textsuperscript{15} As was discovered in the Philippines, some local critics of the Philippines-CMO claim that so-called the ‘hearts and minds’ campaigns is just a smoke screen for spying and other intelligence gathering.\textsuperscript{16} This leaves the military practitioner with the question on how much of CMO can be disassociated from other aspects of the military operation, but at the same time maintain the good will of the people.

In COIN, conventional wisdom places the population as an important factor in determining the outcome of a war against insurgency. Although the maxim is accepted as inseparable to COIN, the slogan still invokes the image of two suitors showering the much-coveted damsel with material goods in hopes to win her attentions. Or simply put, shoring up the support of the population through material incentives does not resolve the social-political-economic and/or religious and ethnic issues that embroils the conflict-affected society. Additionally, the emphasis placed on the ‘good works’ of the soldier tends to distort the understanding of CMO that blends in with psychological warfare (targeted terror operations, ruse, covert operations, increasing troop morale, and demoralizing the enemy), intelligence gathering, and standard combat. Therefore, equating CMO to ‘winning hearts and minds’ does much more disservice to its understanding than add clarification to it.

3.2.3 Civil-Military Interface: the Dilemma for Civilian Partners

In conducting CMO, more than often, the military partners with civilian actors. In particular, managing the civilian-military interface is a significant challenge for the military and vice versa for civilian agencies; and there are numerous studies that broach this topic from this angle.

A well-coordinated and collaborative relationship is a resourceful way for both parties to maximize their capabilities in fulfilling their respective missions in a conflict zone. An advantage to the relationship is that each party can compliment each other and make up for each other’s shortfalls. The military has the organizational structure and resources to provide manpower, rapid deployment, logistics, and force capabilities. Although civilian partners are not entirely bereft in areas outside the realm of soldierly, they often lack resources to mobilize for sustained periods in a hostile environment. Nonetheless, they are an enormous assistance to the military because they are endowed with a reservoir of knowledge and expertise to deal with the affected population, which can ultimately ensure a better delivery of assistance to the people.\textsuperscript{17}


\textsuperscript{17} Jennifer Morrison Taw, “Interagency Coordination in Military Operations Other Than War: Implications for
Nonetheless, the “compatibility” issue appears to be the main thorn in the relationship. Besides the practical challenges that these organizations face on the ground that include the duplication of activities, dealing with different organizational cultures i.e. chain-of-command, division of labor, timing the transfer of activities from the military to civilian agencies, and coordinating activities between multiple players, there is a concern from the side of humanitarian organizations and NGOs that the lines which used to delineate the spheres of military and civilian activity, have increasingly become blurred. Due to complexities arising from the modern battlespace, boundaries that have kept the respective actors in their mandated roles are less restrictive. The only line that remains untouched is that humanitarian and NGOs do not participate in the planning and execution of combat.

Even though civilian agencies such as humanitarian organizations and NGOs do not play a role in combat, they can be reluctant to work alongside the military due to concerns that their impartiality, neutrality, and independence would be compromised on account of their humanitarian activities being integrated into the military mission. For one, the lines that have separated the functional specialty of the two spheres “cease to be relevant in the eyes of the population and authorities.” Humanitarian organizations risk losing their neutrality, when the military mission begins to apply pressure on the population to take sides with the intervening forces in exchange for protection and delivery of socio-economic assistance. At this point, these organizations face the choice of withdrawing and retaining their neutrality and leaving the entire humanitarian mission in the hands of the military, or having to accept the reality that they would be perceived to be taking sides.

Humanitarian actors also perceive information sharing with the military as a risk to being inadvertently co-opted into the military mission. They fear information provided to the military would not just be utilized for coordinating activities and determining the needs of the local population but also have a role in intelligence and surveillance activities as well. Especially problematic is that the covert and subversive nature of intelligence operations makes these organizations reluctant to provide information to the military. With this in mind, the military is faced with the challenge of overcoming this distrust, which largely lies dependent on increasing the transparency of military intent and operations.

Preserving neutrality is a key issue for humanitarian organizations and NGOs. But the reality reveals that even though cooperation with the military is beneficial and in many cases inevitable, it can imperil their efforts to uphold humanitarian principles. In fact, what these civilian agencies fear most is that collaboration can inadvertently make them “an active participant in hostilities.”

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18 Ibid., pp. ix-xi, 3.
21 Ibid., p. 580
22 Ibid., pp. 578-579; 580; 584:
24 Ibid., p.103.
When CMO is approached from this angle, the prime discussion at the academic watering hole centers on the “compatibility” between the military and civilian organizations and whether these obstacles can be overcome. Though the lines that delineate the respective sides’ functional specialty become nebulous, both sides still retain their own different mandates, missions, and organizational culture. As a result, current trends on the study of this subject grapple over bridging organizational differences between the military and civilian agencies to ensure a smooth accomplishment of each other’s goals while preserving and recognizing the “separateness” of the two.27 These studies lean more towards the topic of “civil-military cooperation” which is only one aspect of CMO.

3.2.4 The Expanded Role of the Soldier

Undeniably, one of the most debated issues regarding CMO from a military standpoint is that it does not snugly fit the job description of a soldier. The military is an institution vested with a unique prerogative by the state, the monopoly over violence. The soldiers that make up the organization are “specialists in violence”28 or professionals that have the expertise and state-sanctioned use of lethal means to provide defense. Even other security apparatuses such as the police do not have access to weapons of such destructive power, signifying the military is the vanguard on the very survival of a state when faced with armed threats.

The end of the Cold War has brought to light the increasing complexities of warfare, punctuated by complex humanitarian emergencies, civil wars, joint-military interventions which draw a stark contrast with interstate industrial war paradigm that continued to define the mindset of the military throughout the bipolar confrontation. Largely developed during the Napoleonic times, it was based on unleashing force to take territory, hold territory and physically destroy the enemy. Simply put, soldiers were in charge of implementing military action that determined the outcome of the war.29

Current realities reveal that no matter how much might a military has technologically and industrially, it is morally and politically unviable to bring about the total destruction of the opponent in a battlespace that is occupied by non-belligerents. Military action does not become the deciding factor in war; rather, political and diplomatic factors also have a critical if not, play a more important role.30

Under these circumstances, soldiers are subjugated to roles that do not fall in their preordained area of warfighting. An illuminating example is set forth in the “Three Block War” concept which was forwarded by a U.S. Marines General in the 1990s. Gen. Charles Krulack articulated his concept in a magazine publication. His article is furnished with a fictional account about a marine squad leader and his platoon operating in a failed state in Central Africa. What begins as a marines-led humanitarian mission

28 The term “specialist in violence” was coined by Harold D. Lassell in “The Garrison State” in the American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 46, No. 4 (Jan., 1941), pp. 455-468.
30 Ibid., pp. 5; 190; 279.
deteriorates into an armed confrontation with the insurgents over the course of a morning. The story is captivating because it conveys the realities of modern warfare. One minute, the city resembles a sense of normalcy as the inhabitants go about their daily lives, but in the next minute, a deadly clash between the tribal warlord and the intervening forces erupts, transforming an urban block into a battlefield. The author uses this as a metaphor to bring to attention that soldiers have to undertake the full spectrum of operations: humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping or policing, and combat operations in order to fight effectively in contemporary wars.\textsuperscript{31}

On the same token, but more from a perspective steeped in the European peacekeeping experience, military sociologists like Gerhard Kummel argue that the “definitional criteria” of the soldier cannot remain static and that it has to adapt to changes in both the international and domestic environment. He proposes that the ideal modern soldier must on one hand maintain his traditional function of combat but on the other hand, must be well versed in nontraditional tasks such as engaging in policing, diplomatic-type activities, and humanitarian work to stay relevant in the security climate of the post-Cold world.\textsuperscript{32}

While there are advocates within military circles to expand their roles, there are scholars like Michael J. Mazaar that put their foot down on having militaries take on the additional burden of non-traditional roles such as CMO or stability operations.\textsuperscript{33} He argues that an over-focus on non-traditional tasks embroil expeditionary forces in prolonged commitments that do not have decisive-endings. And ultimately, it would risk degrading conventional military capabilities that allow major powers like the United States to respond to major contingencies, as well as maintain its role as a global deterrent.\textsuperscript{34}

Being relevant for today’s wars and preparing for tomorrow’s big wars have created a quandary for defense planners. Militaries still display a reluctance to undertake roles that are normally reserved for civilian agencies. The largest concern in adapting to non-traditional roles like CMO is that it requires a drastic reorientation of the military in training, organizational structure, and capability-building which would ultimately take away from their core capabilities of defense. Even with militaries like the United States that have the financial wherewithal and resources to cover the entire spectrum of military operations, it still cannot accommodate two types of warfare: conventional and unconventional at the same time.\textsuperscript{35}

In summary, the existing approached to CMO, takes into consideration the dilemma the military faces in undertaking roles normally reserved for civilians. It reveals that on one hand, CMO is equated to


\textsuperscript{33} There is a growing preference for US commanders to use stability operations rather than CMO because it is an overarching term for nation-building in the counterinsurgency context. Stability operations is defined as missions, tasks, and activities that the military conduct to secure an environment and provide government services, infrastructure support, and humanitarian assistance. See \textit{JP 3-57}, 2008, p. I-1-17.


soldiers doing good works, which can be regarded as un-military like. But on the other hand, it also brings to light; CMO cannot be completely delineated from the military’s core responsibility of defense. These issues that encircle CMO have uncomfortable bearings on the military. In summary, up to certain extent, these studies help shed light on the factors that impede the optimization of CMO. Still, the author argues that in order to place CMO into better perspective, it is necessary to reconcile seemingly antipodal aspects (civilian and military; combat and non-combat) and position its role within the framework of warfare.

3.3 Conceptual Framework: CMO in Maneuver Warfare and Battlespace Management

3.3.1 Introduction

This section seeks to provide the theoretical building blocks to support the argument that CMO in the Philippines can be better understood and assessed for its effects when examined for its utility in dealing with insurgent battlespace. The previous section dealt with the popularly taken conceptual approaches to CMO that included one, friendly persuasion as opposed to coercive force; second, the military’s partnership with civilian agencies; and third, the debated “definitional criteria” of a soldier. While these concepts cannot be overlooked when providing a general overview of CMO, these approaches tend to highlight its ambiguous positioning in the conventionally defined roles of the military and pose difficulty in understanding CMO as a military operation.

Therefore, rather than analyzing CMO from these perspectives, the author has decided reconcile the seemingly binary or antipodal roles that CMO has in respect to standard military operations by approaching CMO from the principles of warfare and exploring its utility in battlespace management. This is based on the understanding that CMO cannot be taken out of the context of war or else, its activities would be categorized as pure humanitarian assistance. The gist of the argument lies in the concept that CMO helps shape the battlespace in favor of the counterinsurgent. Before heading into CMO’s implicit role in warfare and battlespace management, a brief repose will be taken to provide an overview on the fundamentals of war, its playing field, and the differences between conventional and unconventional war. Based on these theories, the chapter will proceed with the core argument on how CMO is positioned in warfare, which will ultimately be used to examine CMO in the Philippines.

3.3.2 Explaining War and Warfare

War is a complex social phenomenon that occurs when a confrontation between opposing sides (nation-states, sub-states, and other organized groups) reaches a point where the issue in dispute cannot be resolved without the resort to force. War, however is not an “act of blind passion” but is dictated by political objectives, meaning a political settlement is “exact” following a military victory. Wars are fought for territorial aggrandizement, state survival, defense, to right an injustice, for honor, or anything the


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What causes or fuels wars are not bound in a uniform theory, differing from one academic discipline to another, but in regards to the act of war itself, Prussian military thinker, Carl von Clausewitz’s dictum provides an entry point. He says war in is a duel or contest between organized groups on an extensive scale where the opposing sides uses “physical force” or the “act of violence” to “compel our opponent to fulfill our will.” He elaborates further by commenting that only by disarming the adversary or deriving him of any strength to carry on the armed collision would make the adversary submit to our will (accept defeat).

The institution that is vested in carrying out physical force is the military. The military is the arm of politics that serves no other purpose than to prepare for and implement force.

Every activity in war, therefore, necessarily related to combat either directly or indirectly. The soldier is levied, clothed, armed, exercises, he sleeps, eats, drinks, and marches, all merely to fight at the right time and place.

The culmination of military activity takes place on the battlefield. This brings to question what happens on the battlefield. The underlying basis of this activity is combat or force. “It is both the physical means of destruction – the bullet, the bayonet – and the body that applies it.” Force kills and maims living things; it destroys equipment, facilities, and property, and it in-turn, the effects of force renders maximum psychological impact that compels the opposing force to be subjected to our will. Therefore force is the tool used to wage warfare and achieve results. How to direct that use of force is typically divided into two concepts: firepower and maneuver.

### 3.3.2.1 Firepower

Firepower refers to a military’s capability to decimate the adversary with weapons and weapons systems. It refers to both amassed firepower and amassed manpower (soldiers mobilized to use the weapons). Also known as the kinetic (destructive) or attritional approach (continuous use of firepower to wear down the opponent), its simplicity lies in its straightforward approach that uses direct and overwhelming amounts of destruction to break the opponent’s will and achieve victory.

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38 Clausewitz, On War, Book I, Chapter I, Section II, p. 11.

39 Ibid., Book I, Chapter I, Section IV, p. 12.

40 Ibid., Book I, Chapter II, p. 27.

41 Smith, The Utility of War, pp. 8; 27; 61.


43 FM 3-0, p. 4-6.
3.3.2.2 Maneuver

In a nutshell, maneuver is about placing the enemy in a disadvantageous position and establishing conditions to make his actions irrelevant.

In contrast to firepower, maneuver does not use firepower disproportionately but is selective. Maneuver is associated with movement. In the spatial sense, it is the speed that accompanies troop movement over the battlespace, which enables them to direct firepower selectively on enemy vulnerabilities.\(^{44}\) It does not just mean to move into a “better firing position” but it entails creating conditions that negatively impact the enemy, both physically and psychologically.\(^{45}\) It also seeks to delay, forestall, disrupt, surprise, degrade, and destroy enemy capabilities.\(^{46}\) It is premised on the idea, the right timing, the right amount of force, and the right positioning of forces can achieve an advantage over the adversary and lead to mission success.\(^{47}\)

It is also important to note, no military operation is considered wholly maneuver or wholly firepower for that matter, and elements of both are utilized to maximize its effects on the opponent.\(^{48}\)

3.3.3 Defining Battlefield and Battlespace

The apex of military activity takes place on the battlefield. Terms such as battlefield and battlespace are used interchangeably, but for the purposes of this thesis, the two will be handled separately with their respective definitions. Firstly, battlefield (also referred to as battleground, war zones, combat zones, and conflict areas) is defined as an “area where a battle is fought.”\(^{49}\) Simply put, the battlefield is the environs in which an armed encounter takes place between belligerents. These include engagements that not only unfold on the ground but in airspace and on the water as well.

On the other hand, battlespace is a broadened concept of the battlefield that takes into consideration any factors and conditions that can impact the military operation. Hence, it is considered to be an instructive approach for commanders to plan for war. For instance, the United States Department of Defense (DOD) defines battlespace as follows:

> The environment, factors, and conditions that must be understood to successfully apply combat power, protect the force, or complete the mission. This includes the air, land, sea, space, and the included enemy and friendly forces; facilities; weather; terrain, the electromagnetic spectrum; and the information environment within the operational area and areas of interest.\(^{50}\)


\(^{47}\) \textit{FM 3-0}, p. 4-5.

\(^{48}\) \textit{FM 3-0}, p. 4-6.


This definition of battlespace in fact signifies a strategic framework for the military to not only visually construct the battlespace but also to generate plans and execute them to attain a military mission. As battlespace is a concept, for tangible purposes, space is divided into manageable components or ‘sub-spaces.’ The first is the area of responsibility (AOR) which is the geographic area associated with the combatant command, where its commander has authority to plan and execute operations within this space. The second is the area of operations (AO), which is the “sub-division” of the AOR. Here, the geographic area is smaller than the AOR and is assigned to a local commander by the joint force commander to employ his forces. The third is the area of influence (AI), which is “the geographical area in which a commander is directly capable of influencing operations by maneuver or fire support.” Ideally, the area of influence should exceed the area of operations so that it allows the commander to anticipate future scenarios and prepare for them accordingly. And fourthly, the area of interest (AOI), which is “the area of concern to the commander, including the area of influence, areas adjacent thereto, and extending into enemy territory to the objectives of current or planned operations. The area also includes areas occupied by enemy forces that could jeopardize the accomplishment of the missions.”

In returning to the concept of battlespace, which departs from a geographical construct as a means to help commanders exercise lateral thinking, at moment, there is no fixed universal definition other than the overarching definition of battlespace put forward to by the DOD. This leaves some flexibility for scholars in the perusal of the term. For the purpose of this study, the battlespace definition used does not depart too far from the above, but borrows from Maj. Frank R. Boynton’s concept that seeks to add clarity to existing definitions put forth by both the U.S. Army and Navy.
The battlespace is the sum of the areas of interest and influence. It is the area in which the friendly commander can locate and influence enemy actions with fire or maneuver. It includes the areas essential to the conduct of force projection operations. It also includes areas where the enemy can influence friendly actions with his fires or maneuvers, including those areas essential to allow force projection operations. These areas may be beyond the area of operations.

Based on the above, the author sums up that battlespace can one, refer to a geographical area where military operations take place or are expected to take place; two, the areas that either belligerent has influence on and its forces can move freely without the hindrance and obstruction by the opposing force; and three, an area where the opposing force operates in which may fall outside of the area of influence of the commander but is still considered to have potential to impact the military missions. In all three points, it takes into account populated settlements and actors outside of the belligerents operating in the battlespace. These considerations will be fleshed out more in detail in section 3.4.

3.3.4 Unpredictability of War: Fog and Friction

Yet, no matter the amount of planning and the preparation that goes into war, the battlefield is shrouded by unpredictability and uncertainty. Rupert Smith draws on Clausewitz’s idea that war is “the event of circumstance” where outcome is ultimately dictated by chance.59

War is the province of uncertainty; three-fourths of these things upon which action in war must be calculated are hidden more or less in the clouds of uncertainty.60

Clausewitz attributes this to the fact that war is a reciprocated activity. It is not a one-way application of force on an inert object but rather an interactive relationship between the antagonists that creates an ever-changing balance, not to mention the influence of other unforeseeable circumstance such as irregularities in the weather and terrain that also play a part in reducing predictability on the battlefield.61

Clausewitz uses metaphors such as friction and fog to describe this phenomenon. He likens the military organization to a machine. Well-oiled, it is expected to run smoothly but without the lubricant, the machines not only slow down but also experience a breakdown. Friction in battle involves all the impediments that the military can face on a battlefield. They range anything from mental and physical exhaustation that soldiers experience to weather conditions that can delay the delivery of forces.62

The fog on the other hand represents information that is obscured. One of the most important factors in waging wars is gathering intelligence about the adversary’s intent, capabilities, arsenal, and force.

Footnotes:

59 Smith, The Utility of War, p. 66.
60 Clausewitz, On War, Book I, Chapter III, p. 33.
61 Ibid., Book I, Chapter VII, p. 46; Book II, Chapter II, p. 59.
62 Ibid., Book I, Chapter VII, pp. 46-47.
numbers and movement. There is always no complete information and much of the existing information can be deceptive which requires a trained and experienced eye to shift through and to grasp the picture of the battlefield. Thus, this lack of information can also be categorized as an impediment to military operations.63

The point that Clausewitz drives at is that battle planning cannot be reduced to numerical or deductive scientific reasoning, emphasizing the point that there is a great deal that will appear differently from what was expected. Each war he says is an “unexpected sea” that has its unique attributes.64 Every war is different: the terrain, the people, the culture, the military organization, arsenal, available resources, and allies, to name a few, that embody the context that war is waged in. While battle outcomes can never be entirely predictable, military practitioners and thinkers strive to reduce the uncertainties Battlespace is a concept used by the military to assist them on making a sound strategy based gathering as much information as possible and recognizing the possible or existing impediments and controlling them as much as possible.

3.3.5 Battlespace Management: Exploiting 3-Dimensions in Conventional War

The challenge in waging war is reducing the friction and fog so that war can be made more predictable. There are numerous things the commander takes into consideration in planning a battle such as combat units, force protection, intelligence, and topography/climate/terrain. The preparation and the sustenance of the battle also rely on non-combat expertise derived from engineers, logisticians, quartermasters, commissariats, and medics.65

Typically, commanders form a mental construct of the location of friendly and enemy forces to organize and enact his capabilities. This visualization process is aided by breaking the battlespace down into geometric/spatial properties. Known as dimensions, they traditionally include width, height (air space), and depth (length).66 The width corresponds to the “ground space occupied by the military force.” The height represents the “space required to employ weapon’s effects.” On the modern battlefield, this dimension now refers to airspace that extends vertically. The depth represents both the “distance of the weapons effects, plus the distance to the rear of the military force and its logistics.”67 In conventional battles, forces are organized to direct firepower in these dimensions to seek decisive victory.68

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63 Ibid., Book I, Chapter VI, p. 45; Book II. Chapter II, section 24, p. 59.
64 Ibid., Book I, Chapter VI, p. 45; Chapter VII, pp. 46-47.
65 Engineers for one have to build bridges and roads to facilitate movement over natural impediments such as mountains and rivers. Logistics also ensure that a battle can be sustained by supplying troops and equipment. See Tsutomu Matsumura, Senjyutsu To Shiki, Tokyo: PHP Kenkyusho, 2006, Ch. 1. Hereafter cited as Matsumura. Senjyutsu To Shiki
68 With the development of firepower, these dimensions have incorporated technological advances to include air
Combat formations developed prior to pre-industrial warfare; represent the fundamentals of a 3-dimensional battlespace. Troops were amassed into tactical formations, such as lines and columns, to deliver to achieve desired effects of controlling fire and movement over a given battleground. For instance, the line formation represents the width where troops are lined up horizontally. This spread allows for the distribution of volley-fire, which covers a wider area. In contrast, the column formation, targets the depth of the battlespace. This is where troops are queued up in elongated rows. Though this arrangement restricts the breadth in which firepower can be applied, due to less numbers in the front, it allows for faster movement than that of the line formation. The sheer weight of the men in back also aids in achieving break-through of enemy lines. It embodies in essence the tenets of maneuver warfare where speed, mobility, and precision of firepower allow force to be applied selectively on high-value targets in the depth.

Over centuries, technological and tactical innovations have altered the positioning and the organization of military assets and forces in these dimensions. When national conscription was introduced under Napoleon, the French leader used sheer manpower, capable of rapid mobilization, to inflict devastating losses on the opponent on the frontlines. Yet, the Napoleonic battlespace remained largely linear, as mass (force) was applied to a single point on the ground space that soldiers fought on.

Further experimentation on managing full set of dimensions, came with increased lethality of firepower, mechanized warfare, and air power. This had the effect of emptying out the battlespace where there was more distance between the operating units. Unlike the Napoleonic battlespace, men and firepower could not be amassed to strike against a single point to secure decisive victory. Rather, troops had to conduct military actions simultaneously, target multiple targets, and essentially maneuver in the depth of the battlespace.

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70 Smith, Utility of Force, p. 45.
71 Matsumura, Senjyutsu To Shiki p. 53-82. In ancient history, Persian and Roman armies depended on well-trained soldiers to form complex tactical formations to maximize the effects of their weaponry. See Matsumura, Senjyutsu To Shiki p.34.
74 Experimentation in reaching the depth of the battlespace was initiated largely due to the problem of being unable to reach quick victory on the front-lines, despite amassed manpower and firepower (i.e. as demonstrated in trench warfare in World War I). See details in Nickolas, “Inside the Battlespace of Stability Operations,” pp. 7-12. An innovative concept to reach the depth was developed by the Germans. At the end of World War I, the Germans, lagging behind France and England in their industrial output, focused on tactical innovations to overcome their weaknesses against their adversaries. Their tactics sought the depth of the enemy, and ultimately they developed the art of maneuver warfare. Their ideas culminated into one of the most famed examples of maneuver warfare, the blitzkrieg. This was a concentrated attack aimed to seek deep penetration of the enemy rather than use overwhelming power. With the appearance of improved tanks and airpower, this maneuver tactic was accompanied with unprecedented speed, producing shock and awe that allowed the breakthrough of the
Achieving effects in the dimension of depth through maneuver was more recently demonstrated by the United States. The American military, from the late 1980s, was drawn to the concept of Revolution of Military Affairs (RMA), made more feasible with the rapid advances in technology. RMA was considered to be the answer to make battlespace more predictable within the paradigm of mechanized/industrial warfare. It is based on the notion that a military’s overwhelming superiority in weaponry, network systems, and industrial base can ensure a decisive and quick victory over the adversary.\(^7^5\) An event, which highlighted the much-anticipated capabilities of the United States in mastering RMA, was exemplified in the 1991 Gulf War. The United States used the German Blitzkrieg as its model; to by-pass enemy front lines and collapse the enemy from within. By combining superior intelligence, communication systems, and the delivery of precision-based firepower, they were able to target the opponent’s critical vulnerabilities. It was a feat that was thought to spell out the ultimate form of warfare.\(^7^6\)

No doubt this allowed the United States to achieve lightening victory in the initial stages of the Gulf War, and later in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003). Nonetheless, the RMA-oriented military’s preference on protecting its force by depending on the remote control of the battlespace and over-reliance on military technology, did not prepare the troops to manage the post-invasion battlespace. Remaining armed groups capitalized on the invading force’s lack of legitimacy in the eyes of the people, and exploited the human terrain to wage an effective and deadly form of guerrilla warfare.\(^7^7\)

As history has shown repeatedly, no matter how superior an army is in terms of equipment, firepower, and technology, it could not solve the problem of fog and friction. The prolonged and messy wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have reduced the validity of RMA or tech-centric warfare and not surprisingly, it was met by acerbity from COIN practitioners and military theorists alike who argued that such an approach is irrelevant in today’s wars where a scope of actions that involve social, economic, political, and psychological activities are required as well.\(^7^8\) Thus, the renewed interest in dealing with the pressing concern of insurgencies has impacted the approach in managing battlespace.

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\(^7^5\) Jeremy Black, *War and the New Disorder in the 21st Century*, New York & London: Continuum, 2004, pp. x; 91; 119; 123; 131. Black, *War and the New Disorder in the 21st Century*. Fighting quick and decisive wars are essentially the preferred method for a nation such as the United States that is endowed with industrial and military might. Furthermore, decisive victory is rooted in their military tradition, which draws from the nation-building experience bent on national survival. See Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, p. 49.


\(^7^8\) Black, *War and the New Disorder in the 21st Century*, p. x.
3.4 Managing the Dimension of Depth in Insurgent Battlespace

3.4.1 Explaining Insurgent Warfare

Insurgency,\(^{79}\) in the broadest terms, is a war that is waged between forces belonging to a legitimate authority and an armed group that does not have constitutionally recognized rights to monopolize violence. The aims of the insurgent group may be to completely overturn the status quo and reestablish a government of their own or seek limited aims such as secession and socio-economic or political reform. It is differentiated from other forms of violence such as crime and mob frenzy because the insurgent consciously uses political resources in conjunction with violence to seek political goals.\(^{80}\)

Insurgents do not wage war based on conventional standards until they reach parity with the conventional force. Any attempts to fight a battle on the same playing field as the conventional force would risk decimation of their forces. Rather, they use guerrilla tactics, a choice weapon for a weaker force that cannot compete with a regular army that has advanced weaponry and communication systems, aircraft, logistics, official training, and large military formations. By avoiding pitched battles and relying more on hit-and-run tactics, insurgents can preserve their force while being committed to harassing their opponent. This allows them to buy time to not only build up their forces, but to also wear down and demoralize the conventional force as well.\(^{81}\)

3.4.1.1 Utilization of Space

The successful insurgent is able to engage in military action without being defeated through the “utilization of space.”\(^{82}\) In sharp contrast with the traditional notion of conventional battles that take place in open space within relatively fixed physical boundaries, the insurgents invert the battlespace into one that works to their advantage. To put it another way, the insurgents deny the conventional forces of the linear battlefield that they are most comfortable working in, by transforming it into one that has “no definable battlefields and fronts.”\(^{83}\)

\(^{79}\) Also referred to as revolutionary war, people’s war, wars of national liberation, colonial wars, partisan wars, guerrilla war, small wars, low-intensity wars, longs wars, irregular wars, and asymmetric war. For a contemporary understanding of insurgency see Steven Metz, *Rethinking Insurgency*. Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, June 2007, pp. 4-10. Hereafter cited as Metz, *Rethinking Insurgency*.


One of the methods that illustrate this is through the allocation of their forces. Hence, expressions such as “emptying out of the battlespace” or a “disaggregated battlespace” are also applied to insurgent warfare to depict how insurgents scatter their forces over large swaths of land, using a complicated interplay of concentration and dispersal of forces. This has the effect of extending the width, or the ground space occupied by insurgents. Since forces are so spread out, it makes it difficult for the conventional force to locate and engage the insurgents amassed in a singular encounter to produce a decisive result. While a conventional force is typically numerically superior to the insurgents, any conventional method to obtain results in this type of battlespace, requires a force-to-space ratio that for the most part, exceeds the capabilities and resources that the conventional force has.

3.4.1.2 Insurgent Depth

How insurgents make space unmanageable for the conventional forces is done by shifting the focus of operations to the depth. In a three-dimensional battlespace, the width provides the conventional forces with a clear-target for attack. With airpower capabilities, the conventional forces can also take advantage of the height to support ground maneuvers. Since the insurgents do not have the same capabilities to project lethal force in these two dimensions, they shift their operations to the depth.

Broadly speaking, the depth is located behind the frontlines. Managing the dimensions of depth hinges on narrowing down the targets and applying concentrated amounts of firepower on them. Targets in the depth are critical because it also constitutes the rear that provides the forces on the frontlines with supplies and reinforcement. In conventional militaries, they are the command and control centers, logistics, and infrastructure. In other words, it is the space that shapes future operations. Opposing forces attack these “critical nodes” in the rear for the purpose of denying the opponents the freedom to maneuver, disrupting tempo, and generating conditions for a decisive blow. Targeting the depth in any type of military operation is important also because it produces opportunities to gain intelligence and help

Changing Face of War: Into the fourth generation.”

84 “The emptying out of the battlespace” also refers to the increase in the distance that firepower can reach due to technological revolutions.
85 Exclusive interview with Brig. Justin Kelly (Australian Army) in Pointer, Journal of the Singapore Armed Forces, undated. Available at: http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/publications/pointer/index.html, Nickolas, “Inside the Battlespace of Stability Operations.” The minimum number of soldiers required to effectively control affected terrain is 10 men per square kilometer or 1,000 men to every 100 square kilometers. See Beaufre, Strategy for Tomorrow, p. 36. From a Philippine perspective, see Victor Corpus, Silent War. Quezon City: VNC Publishing, p. 73.
87 Smith, The Utility of Force, p. 45.
influence events. It is also a means to reduce the uncertainties and make operations more predictable.\textsuperscript{91}

Insurgents do not have a rear in the conventional sense.\textsuperscript{92} Insurgents avoid stationary and large rear-service (lines of communication) and depend on self-sustaining units that can operate off the territory they move in.\textsuperscript{93} Nonetheless, to avoid being a “roving bandit-group” there is still a necessity to exploit and create conditions in the depth that can serve as their rear.\textsuperscript{94}

The first area in the depth in which insurgents exploit, is the complex physical terrain.\textsuperscript{95} As the name suggests, these are areas that present a cumbersome obstacle course for a regular army since it includes mountains, jungles, swamps, and dense forests. Regular armies typically operate in large unit formations (battalions, brigades, and divisions) equipped with heavy equipment and transport vehicles. While the natural environs prevent the mobility of the conventional forces, it works in favor for the insurgent who operates in highly-mobile and compact units, unhampered by heavy equipment. The terrain also reduces visibility for the regular army since dense forests or triple canopy jungles conceal the insurgents’ whereabouts, even obscuring the line of sight for military aircraft to drop bombs on its targets.\textsuperscript{96} Additionally, there is limited government presence in some of these areas due to its remoteness, making it an ideal place for insurgents to establish sanctuaries or bases.\textsuperscript{97}

Terrain is also not limited to topography, but also populated areas as well.\textsuperscript{98} The dispersion of the battlespace includes the enemy’s society.\textsuperscript{99} More than often, insurgents engage in political activities to not only legitimize their cause, but to also effectively organize and mobilize the people to support their movement.\textsuperscript{100} By securing this support, the insurgents can gain from the population, weaponry, victuals, bases, training grounds, concealment, intelligence about enemy movements, and recruits to sustain their movement, as well, as a place to blend into and hide.\textsuperscript{101} From a military viewpoint, the population provides

\begin{footnotes}
\item[91] FM 100-5, 1993, p. 2-7.
\item[93] Mao, “Problems of Strategy in China’s Revolutionary War, December 1936,” pp. 98; 138.
\item[94] Mao, “Problems of Strategy in China’s Revolutionary War, December 1936,” p. 98.
\item[97] Exclusive interview with Brig. Justin Kelly on \textit{Pointer}, Journal of the Singapore Armed Forces, undated;
\item[99] Lind et al., “The Changing Face of War,” p. 15.
\end{footnotes}
the rear services for the insurgent.

3.4.1.3 Freedom of Action

By securing the above conditions in the depth of the battlespace, insurgents are able to achieve mobility over space. “Constant mobility ensures security and survival” since the conventional forces cannot pin them down for a decisive blow.\(^{102}\) Ability to sustain their operations comes from the population, and being able to relocate their bases, resultantly rids them of the burden of holding and defending territory. This works in detriment to the conventional force, because the capture of any given terrain does not translate into a substantial victory.\(^{103}\) Moreover, by representing the government, the military is responsible for defending key national and local assets, and ensuring control of the government over its territories. Therefore, by being rigidly confined to easily identifiable physical areas, conventional forces are more susceptible to hit-and-run attacks and/or raids by insurgents.\(^{104}\)

By shedding “physical assets”\(^{105}\) insurgents follow what Mao codified in his writings about guerrilla warfare: “Oppose fixed battle lines and positional warfare and favor fluid battle lines and mobile warfare.”\(^{106}\) In effect, it makes them a shapeless entity. These operational tenets guide the conduct of guerrilla action that is composed of a series of tactical engagements that relies on stealth and speed to inflict damage on the conventional force in the form of sallies, ambushes and raids.\(^{107}\)

In effect, mobility in the depth allows insurgents to attain “the freedom of action.” Freedom of action translates into initiative. With initiative, the insurgents can seize opportunities, to turn around the strengths of a conventional force into their advantage. Without initiative, insurgents would be cornered into a defensive position, spelling out eventual defeat.\(^{108}\) Therefore, for the conventional force, the main task at hand lies in denying the insurgents’ of their freedom of action.

3.4.2 Approaching the Depth of the Battlespace

An armed adversary that is shapeless (not posing a clear line of attack) and that does not operate within the clearly defined parameters of a linear battlespace compels the conventional force to dramatically

\(^{102}\) Corpus, Silent War, p. 79.


\(^{104}\) Galula, Counterinsurgency Warfare, pp. 7-8.

\(^{105}\) Ibid., pp.7-8.


\(^{108}\) Mao Tse Tung, “Problems of Strategy in Guerrilla War Against Japan, May 1938” in Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-tung, Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1967, pp. 159-165. These ideas are also summarized by Corpus, Silent War, pp. 80-81.
alter their approach to managing the dimensions of the battlespace. Since it is from the insurgents’ adept management of the depth that allows them the “freedom of action,” the counterinsurgent, therefore must seek the depth.109

Targeting the depth that provides the “freedom of action” for the insurgent poses an immense challenge for the counterinsurgent. To achieve success, the counterinsurgent must secure his “freedom of action” first before launching decisive operations. This requires the counterinsurgents to deny the conditions in the deep dimension that sustain the insurgency.

Military action used in a conventional war, that is used to destroy the opponent, capture key territory, and finally impose the victor’s will on the vanquished, rarely renders success in an insurgency.110 Insurgents do not stick around long or amass enough forces to allow the conventional forces to engage them decisively.111 Instead, they use mobility and stealth, aided by the complex physical terrain of the battlespace to launch attacks when conditions work in favor for them. Traditional COIN practices have adapted by the use of flying columns, or lightly equipped and compact military units to overcome these natural barriers, to attain the same fluidity as the insurgents have over the terrain. Nonetheless, while it has the same effect the insurgents have in harassing forces, its operations alone cannot “create a permanent presence or influence with the population.”112

This leaves the counterinsurgent with an aspect of the depth, which is considered to be less tangible and more difficult to manage based purely on military operations. Insurgencies take place in a complex battlespace occupied not only by the belligerents, but also the whole of their society.113 What has traditionally been considered separate such as combatants and non-combatants, civilian and military spheres of activity, and war and peace have “converged” or have become “blurred.”114

The population component of the battlespace is decidedly one of the most perplexing components of the battlespace for the counterinsurgent. Populated communities are where the insurgents blend in and hide. Therefore, applying the usual aggregates of firepower in this area is more problematic than prescriptive since the inability to discern the combatant from the civilian risk great collateral damage.115 A conventional force may be tempted to use its superiority in armaments and capabilities to physically destroy the opponent but an over-reliance on the military solution does not address the real issue that fuels armed rebellions.116 Insurgents exploit internal tensions in a country that stem from social, economic, and

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political grievances. This in turn provides them with the psychological grounds that help them drum up support for their cause. Any military action that is repressive and leads to the curtailment of civil liberties only widens the rift between the population and the government. Consequently, it has the likely effect of increasing the support for the insurgents further.

In short, the population represents the “new ground” that the counterinsurgent has to manage in order to win the war and this requires the counterinsurgent to plan for deep operations that allow them to enter the everyday space of civilians.

3.4.3 CMO: Helping the Military to Maneuver and Secure Conditions in the Depth

In planning for operations in the depth, it is decidedly a riskier choice to rely on firepower to physically destroy the insurgent who operates in the midst of the population. An alternative choice is to refocus firepower from the width to the depth, and apply it selectively. Known as maneuver warfare, it seeks to gain positional advantage over the opponent especially in the depth, in order to strike decisively. It is typically associated with movement, since soldiers attempt to preserve their freedom of mobility while denying this from the opponent. Commanders are also required to have an extensive understanding on the strengths and weaknesses of the opponent and exercise lateral thinking to generate or find opportunities to exploit.

Conventional understanding of maneuver deals with securing vantage points to direct firepower within the physical parameters of the battlespace but F.G. Hoffman theorizes that maneuver has to go beyond movement of troops in the “spatial sense” and include non-tangible dimensions such as the support of the people and the morale of the enemy (psychological realms). Therefore, combat skills alone cannot attain this.

Hoffman argues that CMO is a non-traditional form of maneuver that allows soldiers to gain positional advantages over the insurgents in their deep depth. Its primary utility lies in securing the population by developing closer links with the people.

At a tactical level, CMO allows the soldier to maneuver within the population and seek positional advantages over the insurgent. These activities require direct contact with the population and this is facilitated through activities such as civic action and information campaigns. The culmination of these activities basically shapes the human terrain of the battlespace. Here, maneuver is implemented at an operational level. By influencing the attitudes of the civilian audience in favor of the counterinsurgent, it denies the insurgent positional advantages generated by population support (see textbox 3.1).

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117 Trinquier, Modern Warfare, p. 5.
118 Galula, Counterinsurgency Warfare, p. 4.
120 FM 100-5, pp. 2-5, 2-14.
123 Ibid., p. 185.
sets the conditions of the battlespace so that if they are exploited successfully, the counterinsurgent can engage the insurgents decisively. In essence, the maneuver element of CMO is about finding the source of power or Center of Gravity (COG) for the insurgent, and transforming that into a vulnerability that the counterinsurgent can exploit and gain military success.

**Textbox 3.1: Denying the Positional Advantages of the Insurgent Generated by Population Support**

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<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Deny the insurgents of their base of support (sanctuaries, supplies, recruits, intelligence, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Deny their psychological appeal over the population by targeting the grievances of the people and thereby securing support for the government and the military</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Deny them the mobility over the battlespace (cannot move freely in communities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Deny them the freedom of action (overall initiative in battle)</td>
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CMO is not limited to persuading the population to drop their support for the insurgents. The battlespace is increasingly assuming a “crowded and complex face.” In fact, it is a kaleidoscope of communities that include the contesting forces (government troops vs. insurgents), auxiliary (paramilitary) forces, fringe groups that capitalize on the status quo to run criminal activities, intervening foreign forces (either in support of the government or the insurgents), non-combatant insurgent supporters, humanitarian organizations, NGOs, media, local government agencies, and the general population. Thus, the counterinsurgent has to develop capabilities in dealing with an assortment of actors. With lawless or fringe groups, coordination with the police is required. Lack of available security personnel can be filled in by civilian militia, but must be closely supervised and trained to prevent them from overstepping their lines of duty. CMO in particular is tasked to coordinate with humanitarian organizations, NGOs, and local government officials. With an improved working relationship, the counterinsurgent can share resources and skills, and prepare for a smooth transfer in the post-conflict stage. In dealing with the enemy, amnesty programs can also be initiated so that they can be coaxed into giving up their cause and re-joining society as non-combatants.

While the civilian sphere, be it coordination with various actors or influencing the people psychologically to secure vantage points, it cannot be forgotten that CMO has also a role to play in the

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125 See the following field manual for details on operational and tactical levels of war. Department of the Army, *FM 3-0, Operations*, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, June 2006, pp. 2-4; 2-5; 4-4; 4-5. Hereafter cited as *FM 3-0*; It is important to note that at the strategic level, CMO requires solid strategic guidance to link military and civilian efforts in tackling the root causes of insurgency and containing or eliminated the armed threat. From the government side, CMO on the ground can only achieve long-term success, through its implementation of meaningful structural reform in society and addressing the grievances of the people. U.S. Government, *Counterinsurgency Guide*, United States Government Interagency Counterinsurgency Initiative, Jan. 2009, p. 2.

126 United States Marines Corps, Department of the Navy, *MCWP 3-33.1 MAGTF Civil-Military Operations*, U.S. Marines Corps (Coordinating Draft 01-21-01), 7 April 2003, p. 2

physical terrain. The mainstay of CMO capabilities is civil engineering. Military engineers not only provide construction or repair of damaged infrastructure in war zones, but military engineers “execute mobility, counter-mobility, and survivability missions in the forward combat zone.” Construction of roads and bridges provide mobility for forces, ensuring their freedom of movement even over difficult physical terrain.\textsuperscript{128} Especially in insurgent battlespace, insurgents locate their forces in difficult topography such as mountains and dense forests, often times, having limited access to arteries that connect to the outside world. The construction of roads not only intends to benefit isolated and depressed communities, but also is important in allowing the soldiers to maneuver in the physical depth.

Combining all the factors mentioned above, CMO is a form of maneuver that designs operations to penetrate the depth of the enemy and collapse the insurgent internally with limited force.\textsuperscript{129} The focus lies in denying the insurgents the conditions of the depth that sustain their mobility and freedom of action\textsuperscript{130} and thereby, making the battlespace more manageable by the counterinsurgent.

### 3.4.4 Conclusion

This section places CMO within a conceptual framework that could better understand its role in counterinsurgent warfare. It draws theories on insurgent capabilities in upsetting the might of the conventional forces. In particular, it examined the dimension of the battlespace in which the insurgents adeptly use, which is the depth that includes the population that supports them. Thus, the framework established for the purposes of assessing CMO in the Philippines, derives from concepts that situates CMO within the scheme of maneuver, one of which that allows troops to reach the populated depth of the insurgent battlespace. It is a method that seeks to put the insurgents at a disadvantage by shaping the attitudes of the people in favor of the counterinsurgent. Ultimately, it helps deny the insurgents’ freedom of action, providing the counterinsurgents with opportunities to deliver decisive blows either psychologically or physically.

Hence, it is instructive in examining CMO in the context of the Philippines, because all threat groups, at one time or another, have engaged in guerrilla action using the tenets of Mao’s mobile warfare where the depth of the battlespace ensures their survival. Additionally, it provides another way to measure the effectiveness of the AFP’s COIN program. In applying this framework, it can examine the effects of CMO on the ground. Therefore, a focused study from the operational and tactical level is conducted. At the operational level, CMO is examined for its role in shaping the battlespace to generate opportunities for the counterinsurgent and exploit weaknesses of the insurgent. And at the tactical level, it is studied for its utility in allowing soldiers to directly interact with the people, which in turn, can help set the conditions for the battlespace in favor of the counterinsurgent.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{128} *FM 100-5*, 1993, pp. 2-9; 2-24.
  \item \textsuperscript{129} Lind et al, “The Changing Face of War: Into the fourth generation,” p. 15.
  \item \textsuperscript{130} Frank G. Hoffman, “Hybrid Warfare and Challenges,” *JFQ*. Issue 52, 1\textsuperscript{st} quarter 2009, p. 38.
\end{itemize}
Chapter 4. Historical Background to the AFP-CMO

4.1 Introduction

While much fanfare accompanied “institutionalization” of the Philippines’ Civil Military Operations (CMO) within the military institution in 2006, from the perspective on the type of activities conducted, they were the mere repackaging of those found in a long history replete with them. Even CMO officers interviewed after 2006, admit that operation in itself was nothing new. Variants of CMO were practiced as early as 1898, with the entry of the Americans on the archipelago. By the 1950s, its components such as psychological operations, civic action, and public affairs were already in place, directed by various military bureaus such as the Civil Affairs Office and the Army Engineering Corps. It was precisely due to its successful application in quelling the armed communist movement in this period that succeeding administrations have either maintained its function or have readapted them to meet the security demands of each passing generation.

Yet, when tracing the history of CMO, it did not directly build on past successes. Rather it was punctuated by periods of failure and followed by a process of relearning. Part of the problem was that CMO were not fully understood in the way that could replicate the success of the early 1950s. It was mainly disjointed from overall military operations and frequently swept into the category of nation-building. Though it appeared that they worked in conjunction with military operations, since a lack of security was perceived to be due to the lack of development, the military’s propensity to use indiscriminate firepower, often diluted or nullified the effects of CMO that sought to uplift the lives of people. More often than not, the nature of such military operations alienated the population, which ended up providing a means for the insurgents to increase their support.

Taking into consideration the above factors, the objectives of this section is first, to trace the historical development and two, explore the conditions, which either brought about its success or failure. The chapter magnifies in particular four periods: the American colonial period, the Ramon Magsaysay Period, the Ferdinand Marcos period, and the Corazon Aquino Period.

4.2 The American Colonial Period (1898-1935)

4.2.1 Introduction to the American Period

The direct antecedents of CMO can be traced back to the early 1950s, when the AFP established the Civil Affairs Office (CAO) to counter the threat of the communist-led agrarian uprising. Nonetheless, a closer scrutiny on the subject reveals that the Philippines was exposed to CMO practices in the decades that preceded Philippine independence. Many of the CMO activities that are conducted today first emerged during the American colonial period. When the United States came into possession of the Philippine Islands in 1898, an early form of CMO that the Americans pursued were initially in response to the mounting challenges that dealt with having the military take lead in the administration of the Islands. Various activities such as the delivery of healthcare, providing education, and infrastructure-building, normally

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reserved for a civilian administration were undertaken by the American military initially. As the war continued, civic action programs were also geared to “win the hearts and minds” of the Filipino for the purpose of building the legitimacy for American control.

The maneuver element of CMO emerged when the American soldiers shifted from a conventional approach to a counter-guerrilla one. It was integrated in its seedling form at the end of the Filipino-American War (1899-1902) and refined by the Philippine Constabulary that was laden with the task of maintaining peace and order throughout the Philippines. One of the methods that the constables devised in penetrating the physical and human depth of the complex battlespace were activities that falls in the category of what is referred to as CMO today.

The American period merits a deeper examination because it left a significant imprint on the orientation of the Philippine military. After independence, the AFP in practice became a predominantly internal security force. The Filipinos that formed the officer-core of the first Filipino army were from a pool of Filipino auxiliary and policing forces that fought alongside the Americans in their counterinsurgency campaigns. They were the very Filipino soldiers acquainted and trained in American practices in using CMO not only for the purpose of legitimacy-building for the government in charge but also to enhance COIN capabilities. This segment of history reveals that it is no coincidence that future CMO programs resemble or are reminiscent of the ones conducted in this period. Thus, it can be argued that the tradition was passed onto to the new independent army mainly through collective experiences.

Additionally, even after independence, the Philippines maintained a strong relationship with the United States that included a military alliance. Though the United States did not become directly involved in the Philippines’ future internal security problems, they were instrumental in providing military assistance that included financing, equipment, and training. Therefore, up to a certain extent, the manner in which the AFP fought internal rebellions that included CMO was shaped by American input.

### 4.2.2 Background to the Entry of Americans on the Philippine Islands

The Spanish-American War (April 25, 1898 – August 12, 1898) was a turning point for the Philippines. It was a war that had begun on the other side of the world, with Americans rallying to the cause of the Cubans in their quest for independence from Spain. In a matter days after the Americans declared war on Spain, the war extended to the Pacific. The United States sent a squadron of Navy warships to Spain’s key possession in the region, the Philippines. Led by Commodore George Dewey, the American Navy dealt a lightening blow on the Spaniards in the Battle of Manila Bay (May 1898).

In the same decade that preceded the arrival of the Americans, the Filipinos were already fighting their own war of resistance against the Spanish. The independence movement originated from a secret society called the Katipunan that fought to free the Philippines from the tyrannical and corrupt rule of Spain.132 When the Spanish authorities discovered its existence; it triggered the Filipino Revolutionary

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War (1896-1898).\textsuperscript{133} The American entry allowed the revolutionaries to join forces with the Americans in ousting Spain. On June 12, 1898, the leader of the Filipino resistance movement, General Emilio Aguinaldo, proclaimed Philippine independence and set up a revolutionary government and army.\textsuperscript{134}

For Aguinaldo’s revolutionaries, the Spanish-American War was a short but a sordid affair. Even before the billows of smoke from Commodore Dewey’s battleship could settle, they had nagging doubts about America’s true intentions.\textsuperscript{135} This was not unfounded since back in Washington, a heated debate was going on concerning the future of the Philippines. The success of the American Navy in defeating the Spaniards, demonstrated that the United States could project power.\textsuperscript{136} This could not have but strike a reverberating chord with McKinley’s Republican camp, the military, business groups, and Protestant groups who saw the Philippines as a vast pool of untapped potential to serve their respective interests. On the other hand, the opposition party, the Democrats were staunchly against expansionism. President McKinley, with presidential elections of 1900 in sight, was wedged in the middle.\textsuperscript{137}

Under these political currents back at home, McKinley still pushed on with war, while in the Philippines; he played a delicate balancing act with both the Filipinos and the Spanish. The Americans needed the revolutionaries to remove the Spanish from power but avoided making any explicit promises on recognizing Philippine independence.\textsuperscript{138} On the other hand, the Spanish, aware of their approaching defeat, made secret concessions with Americans so that they could at least retain some dignity in their defeat. As a result, the conquest of Manila by the Americans on August 13, 1898, was a face-saving battle for the Spanish and the Filipinos were deliberately shutout from participating in the Spanish surrender.\textsuperscript{139}

Filipino suspicions of American’s imperial ambitions in their Islands were finally confirmed with the subsequent signing of the Treaty of Paris (1898) in December that formerly ended the war. In it, it was stipulated that the United States would gain most Spain’s colonial possessions, including the Philippines. The Philippines’ 333-year control under Spain ended with a consolation check of 20 million dollars made out by the United States to Spain. Within a month and a half after the treaty, the Filipino revolutionaries angered by the terms of agreement began attacking the Americans in February 1899. What followed was a long and bloody war between the Americans and Filipinos.\textsuperscript{140}

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{134}] Teodoro A. Agoncillo, \textit{Malolos: The Crisis of the Republic}, Quezon City: The University of the Philippine Press, 1997, ch. 7, for details about Aguinaldo’s proclamation and plans to set up a revolutionary government. Hereafter cited as Agoncillo, \textit{Malolos}.
\item[\textsuperscript{135}] Agoncillo, \textit{Malolos}, p.143. See Ch. 7 for more on the growing rift between the American and Filipino “alliance.”
\item[\textsuperscript{136}] Herman Herst, Jr., “Philippine Guerrilla Posts,” \textit{Bulletin of the American Historical Collection Foundation}, Vol. XXVII, No. 3 (108), July-September 1999, p. 31. Hereafter cited as Herst, “Philippine Guerrilla Posts.”
\item[\textsuperscript{137}] Agoncillo, \textit{Malolos}, pp. 517-520.
\item[\textsuperscript{138}] Ibid., pp. 118-119.
\item[\textsuperscript{139}] Ibid., pp. 145; 148; 160-168; 518.
\item[\textsuperscript{140}] Herst, “Philippine Guerrilla Posts,” p. 31.
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4.2.3 Decision to Annex the Philippine Islands and Impact on American Policy

As soon as Dewey’s ships dropped anchor in Manila Bay, German naval ships began to surreptitiously coast the Philippine waters. This alarmed the Americans, since they considered a fledgling Republic under Aguinaldo would be too weak to stave off other imperial powers. McKinley, not wanting to miss the opportunity to secure a strategic docking position in the Pacific; one that that would allow the Americans to impose their military presence in the region and control over trade routes, sought to fulfill these geostrategic ambitions by taking control over the Philippines.141

However, the United States’ decision to annex the Philippines was problematic for a nation that had carved out its existence from its own war of independence and denying this from the Philippines was contradicting the very democratic principles that the nation was built on.142 Thus, McKinley chose his words carefully to appease the anti-imperialists and those elements of the American public that were not ready to accept a new American colony. He played down American imperial ambitions by emphasizing that it was not in the initial intentions of the United States to take control over the Philippines but it was God who chose the United States to undertake the duty of enlightening and civilizing the Filipino people.143

Though this is generally accepted as McKinley’s attempt to rationalize American imperial expansion, this paternalistic approach was reflected in the broad policy directed towards the Islands that centered on persuading Filipinos to accept American sovereignty.144

4.2.4 Winning Hearts and Minds through Nation-building

The Philippines was an unexpected outcome of the Spanish-American War. Even before Washington had prepared a set of guidelines regarding the administration of its new colonial possession, the decision to annex the Philippines was made. There were urgent questions on how to administer the Islands. The Philippines presented numerous challenges especially since it was geographically distant from the United States and at the same time, the outbreak of hostilities by the Filipino revolutionaries in February 1899 placed them at a state of war. Considering the security situation, and the lack of policy direction, the expeditionary forces sent by the United States War Department were tasked to not only fight the revolutionaries, but also for the time being, take charge of the colonial administration. This enabled Washington to buy time, in studying, preparing, and setting up a civil government. Consequently, until the


142 Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, p. 97.


termination of the Filipino-American War in 1902, the Philippines was led by a military government.\textsuperscript{145}

Due to these circumstances, the War Department operated under limited supervision from Washington. American military personnel filled in numerous civilian posts, assuming gubernatorial and mayoral positions, supervising tariff collection and revenue affairs, establishing schools and teaching in them, building infrastructure, and overseeing the implementation of health measures such as disease control and sanitation.\textsuperscript{146} This was in line with McKinley’s proclamation made on December 1898 that stated that the United States military was not only tasked to ensure American authority over the islands but also to win the support of the people in what he called benevolent assimilation.\textsuperscript{147}

Thus, the first U.S. commander of the Islands, Major General Elwell Otis, laid out civic action as the base of his military operations.\textsuperscript{148} Particular care was given to respecting local and law customs while assuming responsibilities in improving health standards, educating the masses, and introducing the Filipinos to the democratic model of governance.\textsuperscript{149} The operation was based on severing the links between the revolutionaries and the people, but some military commanders were driven by feelings of responsibility to uplift the Filipinos from socio-economic deprivation and help them enjoy the fruits of civilization.\textsuperscript{150}

One of the classic examples of “winning hearts and minds” approach was education, which remains a permanent fixture in current Filipino CMO. Even before the ink could practically dry on the Treaty of Paris, the United States military had embarked on a project to reopen schools and provide wide-scale education to Filipino children. This was perceived to be the quickest way to gain the support of the Filipinos adults by giving their children the advantages of a free public schooling. Furthermore, a soldier acting as a teacher would improve the image of the military and dampen the appeal that the revolutionaries had over the population.\textsuperscript{151} In fact, the effects of the civic action program in Manila were felt so quickly, that the revolutionaries were soon stripped of their population support. Along with dimming prospects of winning the war against the Americans through a conventional method, it became one of the factors that forced them to pack up and relocate their base of operations in the neighboring mountain provinces.\textsuperscript{152}

Even after the official turnover of the Islands to civilian authorities, the military continued to conduct civic action. The beginning of Filipino involvement in CMO began with the establishment of

\textsuperscript{145} Romeo V. Cruz, \textit{America’s Colonial Desk and the Philippines, 1898-1934}, Quezon City: University of the Philippine Press, 1974, pp. 25-28. Hereafter cited as Cruz, \textit{America’s Colonial Desk and the Philippines, 1898-1934}.

\textsuperscript{146} Cruz, \textit{America’s Colonial Desk and the Philippines, 1898-1934}, p. 27.

\textsuperscript{147} Pres. William McKinley’s \textit{BENEVOLENT ASSIMILATION PROCLAMATION} Dated December 21, 1898.


\textsuperscript{150} Linn, \textit{The Philippine War, 1899-1902}, pp. 84-85.


native forces such as the Philippines Scouts and the Philippine Constabulary. They assisted the American soldiers in extra-military tasks such as road and telegraph construction. American colonial bureaus used the Filipino auxiliary forces to assist them in other areas such as public health where they were tasked in setting up quarantines and fighting diseases like cholera and small pox. In farming areas, they participated in controlling foot-and-mouth disease and rinderpest in livestock and battling locusts on farmlands.\(^\text{153}\)

Dencio S. Acop assesses that the American period “suppressed the nationbuilding capacity of the Filipinos,” and argued that the Filipino soldier was only trained to put down resistance against the Americans and not prepared to engage in developmental programs.\(^\text{154}\) While it’s true, the Americans led the nation-building projects for their own purpose of stabilizing the Islands and preparing it for independence, it can also be argued that the future nation-building role of the Filipino military draws its experiences from the American period. Civic action practiced in this era (construction of roads, bridges, schools, and communication lines, as well as the delivery of healthcare and education) has striking similarities with those that are practiced in the Philippines today and for the same purpose of building legitimacy for the government.

4.2.5 Counter-guerrilla Operations

4.2.5.1 The Switch from Conventional Warfare to Guerrilla Warfare

The development of CMO capabilities in actual warfare during the American period was only nascent in form but the way the Americans approached unconventional warfare, laid a basis for understanding how a mixture of direct action (coercive force) and indirect action (persuasion) were important in regulating guerrilla battlespace.

Initially, the Philippine revolutionaries fought a conventional war along European standards; part of the reason was to raise their prestige and international recognition for the fledgling army.\(^\text{155}\) However as they were no match for the conventional might of the American forces, by the end of 1899, Aguinaldo’s group had fled to the mountains where the leader promptly dissolved his regular army and transformed it into a guerrilla force.\(^\text{156}\)

The switch allowed the Filipinos to successfully maneuver in remote areas. They discarded military uniforms and donned civilian clothes that enabled them to blend in with the population.\(^\text{157}\) They shifted to classic guerrilla tactics of roaming the countryside in flying columns and operated in stealth, launching ambush attacks to harry the American army ceaselessly.\(^\text{158}\) The terrain and the population helped

conceal the guerrillas so effectively that Aguinaldo’s forces were nicknamed the “Phantom Army.”

Additionally, Aguinaldo promoted a loose-command structure, allowing any eager Filipino to join the movement, and he delegated more power to local commanders. With a flatter organizational structure and more fighters, the revolutionaries could rapidly gain ground coverage.

They were also successful in dominating the population by creating shadow governments in parallel to municipalities set up by American authorities led by Filipino officials. Under these shadow governments, the population was especially useful in providing intelligence about the movement of American troops, hiding weapon supplies, providing material support to the revolutionaries, and also spreading propaganda. In summary, the revolutionaries had the upper hand not only in the physical domain of adjusting military operations to counter large, conventional armies, but also in securing the support of the population.

4.2.5.2 The American Military Adjusting to Guerrilla Warfare

The initial adjustment to the type of warfare that the revolutionaries fought was painful for the American Army. The tables had turned when the initial advantage they had over their opponent in terms of armaments, logistics, and troop organization worked against them in hunting down guerrillas who chose hit-and-run tactics. The topography of the Islands’ wilderness obstructed conventional tactics of big movement that included the transport of troops, bulky equipment, and supplies through precipitous mountains, dense forests and jungles, and rivers that became swollen during the rainy season. To add to their woes, tropical disease like malaria and dysentery festered in the jungle. Not surprisingly, casualties rose also from exposure to the elements. Initially, American troops were pushed into a reactive role, as they had to deal with increasing surprise attacks and ambushes. Early firearms were rendered useless against the oncoming rush of the bolo or kris, the traditional bladed weapons used by the various Filipino tribes; and battle casualties rose at alarming rates.

Thus the regular Army had to revise their formations to flying columns, where combat units were reduced in size and were required to operate independently, discarding the luxury of having stable lines of

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162 “A Howling Wilderness? The Samar Campaign 1901-1902, as Recorded in the Military Papers of Major Littleton L.T. Waller, U.S.M.C.,” (part II), *Bulletin of the American Historical Collection*, Volume XXX, Number 1 (118), Jan-Mar 2002, pp. 31-55; Hurley, *Jungle Patrol*, pp. 32; 37-37. The War Department had to recall the .38 caliber Colt and Smith and Wesson revolvers, and issue the colt.45 pistol instead in 1911. It was determined that former firearms were rendered useless in fighting against the charge of the Moros. The Moros tightly wrapped their torso in strips of white cloth, allowing them to sustain gun injuries long enough to reach their opponent and strike a deadly blow with their kris. See an account of these attacks in Roth, *Muddy Glory*, pp. 29-30.
communication. Objectives switched from fighting pitched battles to mobile warfare, where soldiers were constantly on the move in quests to find enemy trails, weapon caches, food supplies, and enemy letters of correspondence or anything that could lead them to the guerrillas. This was a difficult adjustment for an army used to depending on overwhelming firepower and large formations.\(^{163}\)

In regards to the population, one of the first attempts to physically separate the population from the enemy in areas where shadow governments existed was instituted by Brigadier General J. Franklin Bell in Southern Luzon. Also known as “the Reconcentration System,” Bell used the method of zoning the population in pre-selected areas for the purpose of separating belligerents from the non-belligerents. Any individual found outside the zone without permission was treated as the enemy and dealt with accordingly. Food, livestock, and other materials located outside of the zone were destroyed as well. The measure was harsh on the population if not brutal, for people’s lives were disrupted by their relocation to squalid camps not mention, the extreme measures taken against guerrilla sympathizers. Though it was successful in cutting off enemy supply lines and dissuading the population from supporting the insurgents, this formula was considered to be too excessive for further use.\(^{164}\)

Yet, it was evident that the Americans still faced numerous challenges in maneuvering in enemy territory even with adjustments through small-unit action and population zoning. One of the most difficult problems came with the “fog” of operating in foreign soil. It came with the unfamiliarity in dealing with the people and tribes that were so diverse, not to mention the fact that there were more than 500 dialects, making interaction with the locals almost impossible. Furthermore, the physical terrain, which teamed with lush vegetation, contained labyrinthine swamps, and jagged volcanoes and mountains bisecting the land, was a nightmarish experience for the average soldier to traverse through and plan operations accordingly.\(^{165}\) Thus, in order to reduce these uncertainties and make the battlespace more predictable, the United States Army embarked on what was considered to be controversial at this time, the hiring of native Filipinos as their auxiliaries.

### 4.2.5.3 Recruiting Native Forces: The Philippine Scouts

American policy-wise, activities to deal with the population took the form of nation-building, primarily to ensure a smoother recognition of the American sovereignty over the Islands and strengthen political institutions for eventual statehood. However, actual pacification of the Islands was more challenging, especially in remote areas since the conventional army could not maneuver successfully in the rugged interior and where the allegiance of the population was questionable. In order to counter the advantages the enemy had, the United States Army began employing and training Filipino soldiers to help them operate in the same way the enemy did, which was conducting operations with the same mobility over

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\(^{163}\) Hurley, *Jungle Patrol*, pp. 36-37; 40-41; 43.

\(^{164}\) Linn, *The Philippines War, 1899-1902*, pp. 154-161; Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, pp. 66-67. Bell was in fact put on trial by the Americans for this method since it was considered to be too excessive but later was exonerated.

\(^{165}\) Marple, “The Philippines Scouts: A Case Study in the Use of Indigenous Soldiers, Northern Luzon, the Philippine Islands, 1899,” p. 51.
the physical and human terrain. The Filipinos were not only utilized for their knowledge over the terrain, but to serve also as an interface between the Americans and the local communities.

The use of native forces to assist the United States army began as an experiment soon after the outbreak of the war to augment COIN capabilities and at the same time put a cap on the drainage of American manpower and expenditures. Resultantly, the success of these American-trained security forces became not only instrumental in defeating the revolutionary movement but also became the partial basis of the indigenous army that would be created during the American commonwealth.

U.S. Lieutenant Matthew Batson was the first to propose the creation of a Scout company composed of the Macabebes, a tribal group located in central Luzon. He selected them because of their bitter feelings towards the Tagalogs, the ethno-linguistic group that dominated the ranks of Aguinaldo’s Philippine Revolutionary Army. The raising of Scouts was nothing new. Many of the American officers in the Philippines were veterans of the Frontier Wars back home, meaning they were familiar with raising Scouts from among the American Indian tribes. The Indian Scouts, many of them motivated by inter-tribal enmity, assisted America’s Westward Expansion by serving as scouts, guides, and interpreters. Their role was indispensable for the Army to navigate in the hostile and unfamiliar terrain of the West.

Following Batson’s success, other American officers also raised Filipino Scouts in their area of operations (AO), which eventually led to the dramatic capture of Aguinaldo in March 1901. This effectively ended the first phase of the Philippine-American War. Despite some skepticism displayed by some American officers on arming a native force, the Scouts became a permanent unit of the U.S. Army by an act of Congress that took effect in September 1901. They were trained and organized by American officers based on U.S. Army regulations. As it turned out, their roles were not limited to just interpreters and guides, but participated in battles and in intelligence gathering. After the defeat of the main revolutionary forces, the Scouts were deployed to almost every part of the Islands to defend American sovereignty by fighting regional uprisings and outlaws.

166 Parker, “The Philippine Scouts and the Practice of Counter-Insurgency in the Philippine-American War, 1899-1913,” p. 94.
Campbell assesses that without the cooperation of these natives, the Americans would have never been able to gain “human intelligence,” which was key to increasing battlespace awareness of the local geography, culture, and language, and personality.\(^{171}\) However, contrary to popular assumption, the native Scout could not place themselves exactly in the shoes of the guerrilla.\(^{172}\) Unlike the American Indians in the United States that had extensive knowledge on the terrain and people they operated in, Filipino Scouts were sent to areas outside their home provinces, where they had little or no knowledge on.

Therefore, their contribution in allowing Americans maneuver through physical and human terrain came only through training and experience working under the Americans. The American trainers drew out their talents in memorizing features and landmarks in the topography, distinguishing tribes, ferreting out infiltrators, and other skills required maneuvering in enemy territory. In short, they quickly adapted to American COIN methods.\(^{173}\)

Consequently, they gradually stepped up their responsibilities from non-combat roles such as guard duty to covering the full-spectrum of warfare. Those included combat,\(^{174}\) skillfully using ruse and deception as a component of psychological warfare,\(^{175}\) and interacted with the population to gain intelligence and conduct reconnaissance activities. Later, they were given positions of responsibility in their command,\(^{176}\) and by the eve of the Commonwealth, many of the Filipino Scout officers were recruited into the new Filipino Army.\(^{177}\) In retrospect, the success of the Philippine Scouts lay in the fact that they were groomed to become a skilled counterinsurgent force.\(^{178}\)

4.2.5.4 Recruiting Native Forces: The Philippines Constabulary (PC) and its Methodology in Operating in the Depth of Enemy Battlespace

If the Filipino Scouts became skilled counterinsurgents, it was the Philippine Constabulary (PC) that took it up a notch higher. In what appeared to be an approaching closure to the American military campaigns in the Philippines, a civilian counterpart of the Scouts, the Constabulary was established July 18, 1901 so that the military could unload their security responsibilities. If the subjugation of the Islands had been completed, the Constabulary would have been a mere policing force to maintain law and order.

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\(^{171}\) Campbell, “Making Riflemen from Mud: Restoring the Army’s culture of Irregular Warfare,” p. 20.

\(^{172}\) Parker, “The Philippine Scouts and the Practice of Counter-Insurgency in the Philippine-American War, 1899-1913,” p. 2.


\(^{175}\) Parker, “The Philippine Scouts and the Practice of Counter-Insurgency in the Philippine-American War, 1899-1913,” pp. 90-93.

\(^{176}\) Ibid., pp. 101; 103.


However, the circumstances that the Constabulary evolved from and subsequently operated in; consigned it to a path of COIN, and as it turned out, became the basis of the future independent army.

The Constabulary was established largely for political reasons. The capture of Aguinaldo in March 1901 rang the death knell for the principle revolutionary movement, leading way for an official end to the Philippine-American War in 1902. However, the United States was still far from subjugating the Islands. Due to Aguinaldo’s loose-command structure, spinoffs of the original movement led by former revolutionaries created power bases throughout Luzon. Additionally, regional uprisings in Samar, Leyte, Panay, Surigao and the “Moro Wars” in the Muslim South were a major headache for American security efforts, not to mention security problems posed by quasi-Christian groups and bandits led by local ‘cult’ personalities that roamed and terrorized the countryside.

Nonetheless, the American military in the Philippines wanted to impress upon Washington and the American public that the resistance had successfully been put down and that there was now only a law and order problem. And with the official end to the war in 1902, it was hard to justify the presence of 74,000 American soldiers. As an urgent necessity, an insular police force was established to fill in the security gaps that would emerge with the incremental withdrawal of American troops.

The Constabulary, in practice was an organization run initially by a few American and European army veterans, the ratio being 50 natives to 2 white officers. The force was mandated to ensure law and order but in practice, the Constabulary became a quasi-military organization conducting operations alongside the Army and the Scouts. The main difference between the Scouts and the Constabulary was jurisdictional, with the former belonging to the United States Army, and the latter directly under the control of the civilian colonial administration.

It is a wonder, that a force numbering no more than 7,000 men at its peak, working in the most

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179 Hurley, _Jungle Patrol_, p. 46.
182 Timothy K. Deady, “Lessons from a Successful Counterinsurgency in the Philippines, 1899-1902,” _Parameters_, Spring 2005, p. 55; Parker, “The Philippine Scouts and the Practice of Counter-Insurgency in the Philippine-American War, 1899-1913,” pp. 16-17; Hurley, _Jungle Patrol_, p. 57. Following the creation of the PC, the United States Army was able to reduce their presence from 74,000 men to 12,000 men by 1904. See Hurley, _Jungle Patrol_, p. 64.
183 Pobre, _History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People_, p. 98.
184 Roth, _Muddy Glory_, p. 31.
185 “The Philippine Constabulary is the armed force of the Government of the Philippine Islands subject to the command and general supervision of the Governor-General, established and maintained for the preservation of peace, law, and order in the Philippine Islands. The Constabulary is in the Department of the Interior. Members of the Constabulary are peace officers and are authorized and empowered to prevent and suppress brigandage, unlawful assemblies, riots insurrections, and other breaches of the peace and violations of the law.” _Manual for the Philippines Constabulary_, Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1922, p. 8.
186 Hurley, _Jungle Patrol_, p. 31; Marple, “The Philippines Scouts: A Case Study in the Use of Indigenous Soldiers, Northern Luzon, the Philippine Islands, 1899,” pp. 117-118; Parker, “The Philippine Scouts and the Practice of Counter-Insurgency in the Philippine-American War, 1899-1913,” pp. 84-85. Pobre, _History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People_, p. 108. The military-like characteristics of the constabulary was in part, due to the fact they were run by retired Army personnel. The training was similar to the army, the force assumed military titles and ranks, and the uniforms resembled army uniforms.
dire conditions of inadequate pay, lack of equipment, antique weapons, operating in isolated base stations with nil lines of communications, practically bereft of commissary and medical divisions, and under suspicion by some American officers who questioned their loyalty and discipline, were able to place the “finishing touches” on the subjugation on the entire Islands\textsuperscript{188} and transform into a militarily capable force on the eve of the Commonwealth.\textsuperscript{189}

Its success can be attributed to the fact that the Constabulary was able to refine what the Scouts had done in practicing \textit{maneuver} in both physical and psychological depth of the insurgent battlespace. The Constabulary is of particular interest in the study of CMO because it emerged to be a classic example of a force that was capable to conduct maneuver warfare in the depth of the enemy battlespace. Untangling early elements of CMO from actual combat operations are difficult, because its role is obscured under the layers of bloody fighting. Nonetheless, from the way the Constabulary sought mobility over the battlespace, especially through patrol and pursuit operations, it was unavoidable that they would be entering populated settlements. The following section summarizes the main points on how the Constabulary dealt with the depth of the battlespace.

\textbf{Physical Terrain}

In terms of jurisdiction and duties, the Constabulary had an advantage over the Scouts. The Scouts were employees of the U.S. War Department. The war had officially been concluded and this could not justify the retention of numerous army bases nor have American soldiers and their Scouts engage in military operations that went beyond the immediate vicinity of the existing posts they were stationed in.\textsuperscript{190} By comparison, the Constabulary was under civilian authority, meaning local governments could use the policing force to fight rebellions under the pretext of enforcing law and order in their localities. This allowed for a greater dispersion of Constabulary camps throughout the entire archipelago.\textsuperscript{191}

The Constabulary was also able to cover for the weaknesses that a conventional military faced in adapting to jungle warfare. In 1901, most of the colony was covered in dense forests and jungle. A mere 100-mile road crisscrossed the archipelago. The means of tracking down guerrillas were through trails that were frequently impassable. But the Constabulary, unlike the conventional military could operate in small units, typically no larger than a squad, which enhanced their mobility.\textsuperscript{192} The supply-line problem was also resolved because native constables demonstrated the ability to live off the land.\textsuperscript{193}

As it turned out, patrols became a major factor in its success. In contrast to slow-moving conventional large-army units, patrols allowed soldiers to traverse the country with more agility to comb

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\item[188] Hurley, \textit{Jungle Patrol}, p. 11.
\item[189] Pobre, \textit{History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People}, p. 118; To prove this, the constabulary recorded better results than the United States Army in the number of lost arms, desertions, and renegades; Hurley, \textit{Jungle Patrol}, pp. 34-26.
\item[190] Hurley, \textit{Jungle Patrol} pp. 59–60. In 1904, there were approximately 250 Police Stations in the Philippines and as opposed to the Army’s 34 posts, see Hurley, \textit{Jungle Patrol}, p. 93; Roth, \textit{Muddy Glory}, pp. 31; 100.
\item[193] Hurley, \textit{Jungle Patrol}, pp. 36-37; 41; 48 Roth, \textit{Muddy Glory}, p. 162.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
out guerrillas. Patrols when conducted successfully, allowed forces to reach even the most remote areas of the brush. Aided by information from the people, they could prepare for and launch ambushes against the enemy. Over time, they were able to prove that no mountain or forest was impenetrable.

**Human Terrain**

The Constabulary drew its members from “nearly all the tribal groups.” It was America’s use of Filipino scouts that opened up possibilities for the increased trend in recruiting natives but the Constabulary recruited troops from the district that they would operate in, which was in stark contrast with the Scouts that hired natives that were deployed to areas outside of their home village. This was an advantage since they were familiar with the terrain, geography, and the people. These native constables were a key factor in allowing the Americans to operate more smoothly in the human terrain because the constables aroused less suspicion and were more welcomed than those forces entirely composed of Americans and other white officers.

Being a civilian agency, the constables additionally provided more leeway for local authorities to ask for their assistance in participating in civilian tasks. This was precisely something that the U.S. Army wanted the Scouts to disengage from, since they were expected to focus on defense. Consequently, the Constabulary was tasked to work under various government departments and agencies in areas such as health, pest control, and husbandry. They also assumed some responsibility over telegraphy and telephone lines, which were left behind by the gradual pullout of the U.S. Signal Corps.

As part of their training, all members were expected to study the geography, topography, personality, and history of the residents in their assigned areas. The constable also played the role of the policeman, the diplomat, and advisor, and mediated in local disputes to gain the confidence of the local and tribal leadership. In their interactions with the residents on a day-to-day level, constables were expected to act courteously and respectfully. They included respecting the law, i.e. not entering private residents without a warrant, and also rendering assistance to the community in various activities such as village festivals.


196 Roth, *Muddy Glory*, p. 32.

197 Hurley, *Jungle Patrol*, pp. 11-12; 58.

198 Marple, “The Philippines Scouts: A Case Study in the Use of Indigenous Soldiers, Northern Luzon, the Philippine Islands, 1899,” p. 93

199 Roth, *Muddy Glory*, p. 32.

200 Hurley, *Jungle Patrol*, p. 36. Even though the Scouts engaged in civil works, the U.S. Army was careful that they did not get too involved in this area, fearing that the Scouts could potentially develop a close relationship with mayors and governors, that could potentially help Filipinos turn against American rule. Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, pp. 106-109.


Gaining intelligence to improve situational awareness was indispensable in fighting the guerrilla. Native constables were directed to use their observatory and communication skills to collect vital information about the enemy from the villages in the course of their patrols. They could be as simple as joining a discussion at a local gathering or developing a close relationship with the village to develop a better understanding on its customs and history.\textsuperscript{205} As the population was seen to be key variable to the success of these military missions, patrols that were dispatched to remote areas, also undertook civilian responsibilities such as providing education, organizing sanitation inspections, the treatment of minor injuries and ailments, registering marriage, births, and deaths, among others. In fact, this patrol system was later revived during the early 1950s against the communist uprising.\textsuperscript{206}

The list of factors listed above demonstrated the Constabulary’s success in battling insurgents by devising tactics to increase their maneuverability over the insurgent battlespace. They operated in smaller units and conducted extensive patrols to enhance mobility. They also paid attention to the population as a means to bolster their operations and secured vantage points over the enemy in terms of intelligence and securing other forms of cooperation.

4.2.6 Planning for an Indigenous Army

It was never in the intentions of the United States to keep the Philippines permanently. The long-term notion that guided the United States from the beginning was to stabilize the country and strengthen its governing institutions so that it would not fall prey to other colonial powers. Once this was on track, the Islands under American guidance would incrementally move towards independence.

In 1916, the Jones Law was passed which marked the first legislative milestone in preparing for the Islands’ future independence. In taking steps towards establishing their self-government, the biggest issue that the American Congress grappled over was with defense. The Philippines still did not have a force that was capable of protecting the Islands from an external attack and that entire obligation was left up to the United States military.\textsuperscript{207} With World War I in full swing and the increased likelihood of an American entry, there was an imminent need for the Islands to create a Filipino force strong enough to one, defend the Islands from foreign aggression and two, to assist the Americans in its war against Germany.\textsuperscript{208}

After much brainstorming and debate by both American and Filipino authorities, their first concrete attempt in building an indigenous army was essentially starting from scratch. Despite continuous calls for creating a force with the existing capabilities and men from the Constabulary and Scouts,\textsuperscript{209} the

\textsuperscript{207} Perley, “The Philippine National Guard,” p. 40; Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, pp. 124.
\textsuperscript{208} Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, pp. 122-123.
proposal did not take off at this time. The most obvious reason was that these forces were geared towards internal security operations and they lacked the large, coordinated action and capabilities that a conventional army would need to protect the nation. Additionally, there were some technical difficulties in using the Scouts because they were under the United States War Department, making them “American soldiers.” And as for the Constabulary, though they were seasoned combat fighters, they were expected to operate within policing duties. In short, the American colonial authorities were looking to create a conventional army in line with the tenets of self-determination, which was a building a force “created by Filipinos, composed of Filipinos, and for the Filipinos.”

The first bold attempt was made with the National Guard. It was modeled on the American National Guard, a type of militia force, which upon its founding in 1917, strove to recruit Filipinos in the 25,000 range. Despite the pomp and circumstance that surrounded its birth and it expectations that it would evolve into a standing army for the future republic, lack of funding and arms requisition, supine commitment from Congress, weak discipline, and overall shortage of recruits, thwarted its development. By 1921, the National Guard had become defunct. There were other attempts to build a force, one being the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC), and another with the Philippines National Volunteers, a semi-military organization, but these also failed to materialize into a permanent defense organization.

Interestingly enough, World War I had the effect of strengthening the military capabilities of the Constabulary which was not officially slated to become the national army. With the majority of American officers called to fight the war in Europe, the depleted ranks of the Constabulary were filled up by Filipino officers, accelerating the Filipinization of the insular police force. Furthermore, they became the primary force in battling internal security threats. Moreover, there were trends in strengthening the military capabilities of the Constabulary prior to the inauguration of the Commonwealth in 1934. Funding was increased for manpower and weapons acquisition, the force was reorganized along military-lines, and a Philippine Constabulary aviation unit was created.

In 1934, Senate President Quezon, pending the likely assumption of presidency of the New Commonwealth, sought the consulting services of the American General, Douglas MacArthur, then the

213 Perley, “The Philippine National Guard,” pp. 41-45. The failure of the National Guard to takeoff was largely due to WWI. It was this war that propelled to set into motion, the decision to create a new army, but with the end of the war, the sense of urgency dissipated. See Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, p. 153.
215 See Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, pp. 154-165, for more information concerning early attempts to organize an indigenous Filipino force.
216 For instance in 1917, the number of American officers leading the Constabulary were 102, whereas in 1918, the number of officers dived to 39, and by 1926, there were only 25 American officers to lead 6,000 Filipino men. See Hurley, *Jungle Patrol*, p. 364 and Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, pp. 131-132.
218 Ibid., p.185.
chief of staff of the U.S. for defense planning.219 Under MacArthur’s directives, a Philippine National Defense Plan was created in Washington and in it, it was decided using the Constabulary, was the most practical and cost-effective approach in building a new Philippine regular army.220

After much debate and experimentation with various organizations including the National Guard, it was determined by the eve of the Commonwealth that the Philippine Constabulary would serve as the basis of the new indigenous Army. The main reason for this was because the Constabulary on a day-to-day basis was on the front lines fighting internal wars, making them the most organized, best trained and most militarily capable.221

So it came to pass, after years of debate the transfer of the Constabulary to the new Philippine Army.222 The new Filipino Army was established in 1936, consisting of a small regular force, with the Constabulary at its kernel, and a reserve force that would be trained gradually to augment the core. Their duties would be for the time being carrying on what the Constabulary was doing, which was maintaining internal security. In fact, upon establishment, they went on the fight the lingering resistance in the Muslim-dominated South, labor unrests, and election violence. As with officer recruitment, they were drawn from the Scouts and Filipinos from other regular American units.223

4.2.7 The American Legacy

With the Philippine Constabulary serving as the kernel for the new Army, the tradition and experiences that they were built on had lasting implications on the orientation for the new Philippine Army. It remained an overwhelmingly land-based force with a strong proclivity to police-like functions.224 It was also no coincidence that the future Armed Forces of the Philippines would be influenced by the American’s method of fighting internal security operations, not to mention the military’s pronounced role in nation-building.225 Interestingly enough, the American military legacy did not bequeath the Philippine Army with an institutionalized understanding of such practices, because it was preparing to transform into a conventional force. Still, many of the Filipinos that constituted the officer corps of the first indigenous Filipino Army came not only from the Constabulary but from the Scouts as well. Having had the exposure and experience in the American way of COIN, inclusive of early CMO, these were transmitted to the new Army in the form of collective experiences that provided a reservoir of experiences that could be drawn

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219 Ibid., pp. 174-175; 195.
220 Ibid., pp. 186; 188-189; 205.
223 In 1938, the PC was separated from the Army. It was subsequently, reintegrated into the Armed Forces of the Philippines after World War II. Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, pp. 190; 206-207; 212-214.
225 Ibid., pp. 160-161.
from for reference or replicated and/or refined in the succeeding generations.

4.2.8 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to substantiate claims that the AFP-CMO’s *embryonic* beginnings can be traced back to the American period. Originally, it was developed from the need to have the American military temporarily be responsible for administering the colony and promoting America’s legitimacy on the Islands through numerous civic action projects. Later, civic action resurfaced in COIN operations against guerrillas and outlaws. They involved the use of native auxiliary troops to maneuver in the human terrain that hinged on gaining the support of the population.

In assessing the use of CMO activities of this period, it can be discerned from the outcome, that it played an instrumental role in facilitating the United States’ control over the Philippines. But the true challenges came when the war was officially declared over in 1902. The Americans were still faced with numerous armed groups that operated in the rugged interior, propelling the American colonial administration to delegating the internal security operations to the Philippine Constabulary. Even though, the policing force was underfunded and left to their own devices to put down revolts, it was led by seasoned American and European officers that understood what was needed to operate in insurgent battlespace. Their success lay in hiring native constables that not only allowed them to operate in the difficult physical terrain, but also provided them with a means to interact with the population. Rather than terrorizing the population, there were more efforts to secure friendly relations with the people, which were made possible with native recruits that knew the culture and language of the locality. In effect, these operations culminated into a form of maneuver warfare where the constables were able to gain initiative over the armed groups by securing unhampered mobility in both the human and physical terrain.

4.3 The Post-Independence Years: Direct Antecedents of CMO (1946-1965)

4.3.1 Introduction

The American soldiers and later their Filipino auxiliaries engaged in a form of CMO that had elements of one, psychological persuasion to boost the legitimacy of the American government; two, improve the military-civilian interface in order to enhance the mobility of troops. Yet, the practice was never institutionalized or recognized as a distinct operation within the U.S. military. Consequently, the concept was not incorporated into the formal training of the fledgling Philippine Army. The American approach to guerrilla warfare that took into consideration the population factor was not carried out in the immediate years after independence since the Philippine Army had ambitions to evolve into a conventional force. As a result, in face of the new republic’s first armed threat from the agrarian uprising, security forces could not adapt to guerrilla warfare. That was, at least until the appointment of the new Secretary of Defense, Ramon Magsaysay. Magsaysay, with the assistance of American advisors, used a daring and an unconventional method of combining precision-based force, socio-economic projects, and psychological operations to quell the internal threat. Many of the activities launched resembled those of the American period, supporting the argument that the military drew ideas from this period. However, it was in the 1950s
that CMO once again demonstrated its utility in bolstering the AFP’s maneuverability in the depth of the insurgent battlespace. Though it was yet to be known under the appellation of Civil Military Operations (CMO), the period laid down the foundations of a method of warfare upon which the AFP-CMO is anchored on today.

The following section covers the period from the first president of the independent Republic, Manuel Roxas (1946) until the end of President Diosdado Macapagal’s term (1965) but magnifying in particular the period 1950-1954, when then-Secretary of National Defense Ramon Magsaysay ran military operations against the Huk Rebellion.

4.3.2 The Emergence of the Armed Leftist Movement

After the liberation of the Philippines from Japanese control in 1945, the country was in disarray. The newly inaugurated independent government was preoccupied with the economic reconstruction of the country. In matters related to defense, the internal security condition was deteriorating since the war allowed a proliferation of loose firearms that sustained the existence of armed bands. To aggravate the situation further, the effects of the Second World War was especially hard on the people occupying the lower social stratum. With a political structure that predominantly represented the interests of the elite, the Philippine communist movement emerged to become the de facto spokesperson of the impoverished masses. These circumstances added momentum to the armed component of the movement, which was rapidly snowballing into a full-fledged confrontation with the government forces.226

The leftist movement in fact emerged before the Japanese invasion in the 1930s. During the American period, the economic structure of the Philippines remained largely unchanged.227 The Philippines was largely agricultural where the majority of the people eked out a living by tilling the lands held by the elite minority. As plots of land allowed for cultivation became smaller by the rapidly expanding population, life became increasingly harder for these peasants. Land yields were insufficient to sustain a family and peasants had to draw loans at usurious rates from their landowners who ensnared them in a grinding cycle of debt and poverty.228

But the Americans did encourage the development of a political conscious that spread throughout the masses, instigating the creation of labor unions and farmers’ associations that eventually became the basis of the Philippine Communist Party (PKP). The party was organized in 1930 under the platform to emancipate the downtrodden people like the peasants and laborers from economic bondage.229 While its

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party was forced to disband in 1932, its military wing continued its operations against plantation owners and raids on their property. 230 When the Japanese took over the Islands, they shifted their energies to fighting a war of resistance. In March 1942, they established Hukbo ng Bayan Laban sa Hapon (HUKBALAHAP) or in English, the People’s Army Against the Japanese. 231 Popularly known as the Huks, they did not join the other resistance groups. And instead, continued their attacks against plantation owners and even other resistance groups. 232

During the Japanese occupation, the Huks demonstrated their organizational capabilities. They were equipped with a political apparatus, an army, and mass base support. This allowed them to easily recruit supporters and fighters. As a strategy, they played down the original political nature of their movement (the communist platform) and embraced the anti-Japanese cause to further swell their ranks. Resultantly, by the end of the war, they were well entrenched in the countryside. 233

After liberation, the government’s attitude towards the Huks was ambiguous. On one hand, there appeared to be some tolerance on the part of the government to accommodate the Huks politically. To begin with, Huk fighters numbering in the 10,000-range were invited in 1944 by the Commonwealth President Osmeña along with other resistance groups to join the newly reactivated Philippine Army. After the Philippines gained independence, they were also allowed to join the congressional elections in 1946, and the Huk supremo, Luis Taruc and 5 other members succeeded in gaining seats. Yet on the other hand, suspicions towards them were running high. The Huks’ war-record of frequent skirmishes with other resistance groups and their political ideology, especially at the dawn of the Cold War, did not sit well with the Americans who still had significant influence over the Philippine’s economic and military policy after independence. 234 From the Filipino-side, the government led by the elite minority was not comfortable with their political platform of agrarian reform, and so it came to pass, that these sentiments took the upper hand, and ousted the communists from any political representation. Consequently, the newly elected 6 Huk congressmen were denied of their seats in Congress, which sent the Huk supremo, Luis Taruc and his men fleeing to the mountains of Central Luzon. Shortly afterwards, they resumed guerrilla operations. 235

4.3.3 The Initial Government Response (1946-1950)

Government initiatives that dominated its anti-Huk campaign from 1946 to the end of 1950 were a mixture of intensive military operations and piece-meal amnesty and attraction programs.

The first president of the independent Republic, Manuel Roxas (1946-1949) began with an

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231 Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, p. 312.
232 Ibid., p. 323.
ambitious pledge to eliminate the Huks within 60 days. Roxas swiftly launched an amnesty program, which included a number of economic incentives for the Huks to return to the folds of the law while meting out stiffer punishments for those carrying unauthorized firearms, a move directed towards disarming the Huks. In response, Taruc presented a list of demands that called for drastic socio-economic reforms to benefit the peasant and allow for the political representation of the Communists. It was only a matter of time, before it became to light that these talks had reached a dead end. Roxas was more interested hammering out a deal quickly rather than committing to long-term reforms which diluted the government’s sincerity in Taruc’s eyes.236

When the Huks took no heed to the deadline in surrendering their firearms, fighting broke out again in September 1946. This time the administration took a “mailed-fist” approach, where military action would take center stage in fighting the rebels.237 “Mailed-fist” was supposed to impress upon the public that the government was taking a firm stance in wiping out the internal rebellion but it was only a matter of time before it had become a byword for brutality.238

When Roxas suddenly succumbed to a fatal heart attack, Elpidio Quirino took over. The new president decided to ease the all-out-force approach and embark on a “policy of attraction” to coax the Huks to give up their struggle. An amnesty was proposed to the communist guerillas on June 21, 1948. Encouraged by the government’s position to make mends, Taruc showed willingness in complying but talks broke down again and war resumed.239

By 1949, rebel strength had reached 12,000 with more than 100,000 mass base supporters.240 Despite the fact the rebels were outnumbered by government forces (24,000 PC and 13,000 AFP), three to one, the government finally came to realize that this was no simple law and order problem. The Huks had virtual control over the countryside surrounding Manila and were ready to spread the movement to the islands outside of Luzon. The government was also faced with the increasing possibility that the Communist Party of the Philippines and their armed organization could overrun the central government.241

In retrospect, the major factor behind the failure to address the Huk problem was that the Manila government never took the Huk problem seriously. They ignored the socio-economic, political, and psychological dimensions of the agrarian problem and left the actual security operations mainly in the hands of a poorly equipped and trained police force.242

236 Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, pp. 390-391.
237 Ibid., p. 391.
239 Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, pp. 393-396.
240 By 1949, the Huks had renamed their armed component to Hukbong Magpayapa ng Bayan (HMB) or People’s Liberation Army but the term Huks will be used to avoid confusion.
4.3.4 Examining the Huks’ Control over the Battlespace

The Huks were adept in dictating the conditions of the battlespace to ensure their freedom of action. They Huks did not fight battles to gain or defend territory, which gave them the advantage of moving freely. In regards to the human terrain, their success in propagating their political ideology to the villagers combined with terror threats to non-cooperative villagers and officials assured them of political control, a sanctuary, a steady flow of funds and recruits to sustain their movement. Additionally, the villagers provided information about government troop strength, location, and movement.

In stark contrast, government troops lacked these maneuver capabilities and support of the population, which was in part due to the government’s unwillingness to face the problem as more than a criminal problem, and used the police as the main instrument of force rather than the AFP to handle the situation.

This led to poor strategy and tactics, scarce intelligence, and insufficient training. Combat operations were restricted to large-scale sweeps and encirclement; which seldom produces results in guerrilla warfare, not to mention, the haphazard nature of these operations, produced more civilian casualties than damage to the enemy.

It was the Philippine Constabulary (PC) that was sent to the frontlines but they became notorious for human rights abuses. As the former PC was forced to disband during the Japanese period, upon liberation in 1945, the new PC was hastily put together, this time under the Department of the Interior. In a rush to fill the ranks, Japanese collaborators and criminal elements were recruited. A problem from this became manifest in the abusive behavior of the police in regards to the population. Compounding the problem, they were inadequately supplied and poorly trained. They left a trail of destruction in the villages they entered. There were extra-judicial killings of Huk suspects, looting, and the burning down of villages. In fact, these tactics backfired, since it drove the people to favor the Huks over the government.

Planning for offensive action was also met with challenges. As soldiers were located in scattered camps, they could only provide limited protection or “static defense” to villages and officials being targeted by the Huks. Furthermore, the military that was established after liberation was orientated towards external defense and were trained to become a conventional army. Not surprisingly, the heavy equipment–toting army units were no match for a highly mobile guerrilla force that had mastered the tactics of surprise.


\(^{244}\) Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era*, p. 38.

\(^{245}\) In April 1946, Roxas removed the PC from the military and placed it under the Department of the Interior.


stealth, and concealment.249

4.3.5 The Magsaysay Approach to the Huk Rebellion (1950-1954)

The lackluster performance the government counterinsurgency program finally reached a turning point with an event that spurred President Quirino to take drastic measures. On April 28, 1949, the Huks ambushed and killed the highly popular former first lady, Aurora Quezon and members of her entourage.250 Quirino had enough foresight to understand that unless fundamental reforms were made, the country would be swept up in chaos. As it turned out, the institution that was entrusted with the reform was the military.251

Quirino appointed Ramon Magsaysay to head the Department of National Defense, and his selection was based on his known competence in military affairs. During the Japanese occupation, he fought the Japanese and become an adept guerrilla leader. He later joined other American officers in the resistance movement, and was eventually assigned to run an entire guerrilla operation consisted of 10,000 people in his home province, Zambales.252 In the post-war period, he entered politics, winning a congressional seat in the Zambales district and became chairman of the House National Defense Community in 1946.253

Magsaysay was as man of colossal character, with an abundance of energy, dedication, and shrewd judgment.254 Endowed with extraordinary jurisdictional powers over the military and support from American advisors, he was able to swiftly translate his ideas into action. He immediately set to work on revamping the AFP, and creating a new set of COIN strategy and tactics. He recognized that a complete mobilization of the military and other government resources would be needed to fight the insurgency. Furthermore, he recognized that a military solution alone would not suffice, and socio-economic programs would be necessary to break the Huk’s sway over the population. Thus, this two-pronged approach became summed up in his own words as, “With my left hand, I am offering to all dissidents the road to peace, happy homes, and economic security; but with my right, I shall crush all those who resist and seek to destroy our democratic government.”255

4.3.6 The Left-Hand Approach and its Positioning in Warfare

Magsaysay’s right-hand approach and left-hand approach remain the operational tenets of COIN today in the Philippines with the left-hand, now referred to as CMO. The broad range of activities that fit this operational scope not only centered on winning hearts and minds of the population, but also was

251 Blaufarb, The Counterinsurgency Era, pp. 27; 29.
255 Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, p. 400.
inherently linked with the psychological and the physical realms of warfare. These overlapping effects are expressed as follows:

In practice, effective counterguerrilla action – especially that of troops-so intermingles concrete useful actions, protective actions (combat against guerrilla), and psychological operations that it is difficult to tell where one action leaves off and the other begins. Properly performed they blend in a spiral, moving more and more rapidly from one success to another, from one field to another, until the desired objective is achieved, until the fish is driven out of the sea in which he can no longer live.256

At the heart of this centrifugal blend of combat, psychological operations and civic action, is what the author argues, a period that understood and practiced the most sophisticated form of maneuver warfare in the history of the Philippines.

Maneuver warfare is typically associated with movement or the ability of a force to move their units over terrain to secure positional advantage over the enemy to seek its destruction.257 Maneuver warfare is the choice method for an inferior army that does not have the capabilities to defend fixed territories and assets or attack the opponent and take control over territory. In lieu, they offset these deficiencies by moving more fluidly over battlespace that is secured through the insurgent’s control over the population.258 Therefore, Magsaysay used a mixture of force and psychological warfare to deny the Huks of their mobility in their battlespace, ultimately securing key positions in both the physical and the psychological dimensions to deliver force decisively. This was achieved in a mere 15 months after Magsaysay took office. And in large part, success can be attributed to incorporating the tenets of CMO in the majority of operations. Before going further into how CMO contributed to maneuver warfare, the following sections will briefly examine how Magsaysay understood the battlespace and the actors operating in them.

4.3.7 Magsaysay’s Understanding of Battlespace

During the Philippine-American War, the American soldiers faced numerous challenges in improving their mobility in the rugged and mountainous interior, covered in dense jungle and swamps to hunt down the guerrillas. The revolutionaries used their knowledge of the physical terrain to secure food and cover. At the same time, it was the perfect base of operations for the guerrillas since the remoteness provided little or no communications and roads, making it difficult for bulky and large troop movement of


the regular forces. The Huks on the other hand, took advantage of a different type of terrain. Though they continued, like the revolutionaries to operate in the rugged interior, they were also operating in the wide-open plains of Central Luzon, an area that had a network of roads and communications. Such an environment would have usually made it easier for government forces to traverse through and hunt down the Huks had it not been for the fact that these lands were densely populated by people long victimized by landlords, politicians, and land racketeers. It was amongst these oppressed people, that the Huks were able to build their bases.\footnote{Comments made by Col. Charles T. Bohannan in “Characteristics and Patterns of Guerrilla Warfare,” April 16, 1962, A.M, in Stephen T. Hosmer, and Sibylle O. Crane eds. \textit{Counterinsurgency, a symposium}, Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2006, p. 8; Valeriano and Bohannan, \textit{Counter-Guerrilla Operations}, p. 27.}

Magsaysay from the outset was acutely aware there was an inseparable link between the people’s grievances and the sustainability of the movement.\footnote{Blaufarb, \textit{The Counterinsurgency Era}, p. 28.} Since the Huks operated in the midst of the population, a pure military approach would only increase civilian casualties and subsequently risk alienating the population from the government and the military. Therefore, he expanded the spatial confines of the battlespace to include the human terrain, where the thrust of his anti-Huk campaign would rest on psychological operations.\footnote{Blaufar, \textit{The Counterinsurgency Era}, p. 28.}

4.3.8 Recognizing the Actors in Battlespace and Targeting the Respective Audiences

Magsaysay was astute in making a clear connection between the population and the enemy. The enemy thrived on the people’s grievances and manipulated these attitudes to sustain their movement. But Magsaysay did not resort simply to \textit{winning the hearts and minds} approach to sever the link between the population and the guerrilla. In other words, activities were not implemented with a “one-size fits all” formula. They were carefully crafted to apply the greatest psychological impact on their respective audiences (the population, the enemy, and the soldiers) in order to support the military mission.\footnote{Bridgewater, “Philippine Information Operations During the Hukbalahap Counterinsurgency Campaign,” pp. 39-40; McClintok, \textit{Instruments of Statecraft}, p. 6.} With the Huks, he organized activities based on their shades of allegiance. With the core Huk members, he struck with force and used psychological warfare that included sowing seeds of confusion within their ranks, deception, and terror to ultimately demoralizing the dissidents\footnote{Bridgewater, “Philippine Information Operations During the Hukbalahap Counterinsurgency Campaign,” p. 39; Blaufar, \textit{The Counterinsurgency Era}, p. 30.} With the part-time guerrillas, he sought to coax them into siding with the government through incentives that included amnesty, rewards, and socio-economic assistance.\footnote{Bridgewater, “Philippine Information Operations During the Hukbalahap Counterinsurgency Campaign,” p. 39; Valeriano and Bohannan, \textit{Counter-Guerrilla Operations}, pp. 113-114.} The population was also not treated singularly. They were those that were actively supportive or against the Huk cause, and there were those that were indifferent or tolerant.\footnote{Ibid., pp. ix; 56.} While he sought to promote the sincerity of the government to the general populace, he paid special...
attention to negating the appeal the Huks had over the supportive population.\textsuperscript{266}

He also did not neglect the soldiers themselves. He implemented a reform program to boost the morale of soldiers by providing more benefits, delivering recognition for exemplary soldierly action, and punishing or removing the errant ones.\textsuperscript{267} In sum, actors were differentiated for the purpose of tailoring activities to shape events on the battlespace that would work in favor for the counterinsurgent.\textsuperscript{268}

Table 4.1: Magsaysay’s Target Audience

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<tr>
<th>Target Audience</th>
<th>The Enemy</th>
<th>The Population</th>
<th>The Philippine Military</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core Huk Fighters</td>
<td>Huk supporters</td>
<td>Dedicated soldiers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Part-time Huk Fighters</td>
<td>Huk opponents</td>
<td>Errant Soldiers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Neutral/Tolerant</td>
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4.3.9 Creating the Civil Affairs Office (CAO) and the American Input

Magsaysay was a man of ideas and he liked to deliver them on the spot. But he was not a military theorist nor did he have any grounding in psychological warfare (psywar). What he knew was that simply issuing an order from the top to the soldiers on something fuzzy as shaping military outcomes through psychological manipulation was not going to translate into meaningful action.\textsuperscript{269}

It was the American advisors assigned to the Philippines to assist in this Huk campaign that helped codify the psywar aspect.\textsuperscript{270} American involvement in this war remained on the sidelines, but they provided support through funding and advice under the Joint Assistant United States Military Group (JUSMAG).\textsuperscript{271} The coterie of advisors dispatched to the Philippines consisted of American military officers well versed in counterinsurgency and intelligence work. The most notable of them was Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Edward Lansdale, who headed the intelligence divisions of the Philippines (Ryukyus)

\textsuperscript{266} Ibid., p. 22.
\textsuperscript{267} Ibid., pp. 112; 190; 268 F.G. Hoffman, “Combating Fourth Generation Warfare,” p. 185, Blaufarb, \textit{The Counterinsurgency Era}, p. 30. \textsuperscript{269} Pobre, \textit{History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People}, p. 412; Valeriano and Bohannan, \textit{Counter-Guerrilla Operations}, pp. 165-169; 170. 270 The increased American involvement came in 1949, as the Americans became anxious about the state of affairs in the Philippines. They feared they were losing a pro-American government to the communists. In the end, the United States decided against committing combat troops and in place, bolstered military funding and sent more American advisors to the Philippines under the Joint Assistant United States Military Group (JUSMAG); Michael McClintok, \textit{Instruments of Statecraft}, Ch. 4, available online. JUSMAG was created in 1947 for the purpose of having American military officers advise, organize, and train the Philippine military. 271 Jops, \textit{Modern Guerrilla Insurgency}, pp. 75-76. JUSMAG was made up of the American Army, Navy, and Air Groups for the purpose of giving military advice, training and assistance to the AFP.
Command and Captain Charles Bohannan, an army counterintelligence officer that experienced wars in the Philippines, Indochina, and Latin America. The setup was successful especially since Lansdale formed an extraordinary relationship with Magsaysay. For reasons that stemmed from the fear that the Huks would assassinate the Defense Secretary, Magsaysay roomed with Lansdale in a JUSMAG compound for close to a year. The relationship was characterized as something of a brotherhood but with some evidence showing that Lansdale in fact, was the man in control over charting the course of the Philippine’s COIN program.

The culmination of these consultations led to the creation of a special psychological warfare division called the Civil Affairs Office (CAO), an early predecessor to the CMO office that exists today. Along with this office, Lansdale also contributed to the formulation of the Economic Development Corps (EDCOR) and other psychological warfare schemes. As it turned out, the CAO was the answer to Magsaysay’s problem of translating his ideas on psychological persuasion into action.

4.3.10 The Civil Affairs Office (CAO): Organization and Functions

The Civil Affairs Office (CAO) was designed to “beat the guerrilla at his own game” which was the Huks’ dominance in the psychological dimension. Until 1950, they were able to attract popular support by demonstrating that they were “morally superior” to the government by promoting the cause of the peasant. The new office was tasked to reverse this effect and improve perceptions of the people towards the government disillusioned by its policies and its heavy-handed military measures.

The CAO had an unusual arrangement. The office was placed directly under the control of the Secretary of National Defense, meaning all Civil Affairs officers reported directly to Magsaysay himself. Though it had the trappings of a technical service such as the Engineering Corps, it was not positioned in the General Headquarters of the Military (GHQ) and remained an office within the Department of Defense. In short, Magsaysay prevented it from being institutionalized within the military’s organizational structure so that he could have full control over it and remove any “arbitrary or formal limitations” that could obstruct any “activities designed to win popular support for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).”

The office itself was staffed at most with 200 CAO officers (military officers, enlisted personnel, and civilians) and these officers were assigned to the highest echelons of command down to the battalion level, where they served as advisors to the local commanders in their respective areas of operations.

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272 McClintock, *Instruments of Statecraft*, p. 3 of ch. 4.
278 Ibid., p. 170.
The mission of CAO was never made specific but in broad terms, they were responsible for all activities that required or initiated interaction with the population. In one sense it functioned as a Public Relations office that worked on both the national and local level, to disseminate information to the public at large. They organized public rallies, open forums, movie showings, distribution of leaflets, to promote the accomplishments of the AFP and to discredit the communists in the form of propaganda and counterpropaganda. In areas where there was a low literacy rate, they utilized plays, movies, and other forms of entertainment, as a practical means to transmit information and to establish good relations with the community.

On the more surreptitious side, the CAO officers launched rumor campaigns, devised black propaganda, manipulating local superstitions to raise terror, and provided rewards for information, capture, or the killings of Huks, for the purpose of demoralizing the enemy. One simple technique, which had far-reaching implications on the psyche of the enemy, was when the AFP made repeated radio broadcasts from Taruc’s mother that pleaded her son to return to the folds of the law. Resultantly, this became one of the reasons that drove Taruc to his surrender. Ultimately, with his surrender, the Huk movement lost steam and spelt out its decline.

The CAO was also not directed solely outwards. The CAO officers kept themselves up-to-date on issues related to the community they were working in, and attempted to address the needs of residents. They took action if there were reports by residents on abusive soldiers. CAO made sure, the culprit was promptly tried and prosecuted. They also did not fail to publicize this clean-up action.

Activities also expanded to include other government agencies such as the Department of Education and Bureau of Public Works. This was for the purpose of collaborating with non-military government personnel in the COIN effort. It also had the effect of augmenting the functions of these agencies with the help of the soldiers. Thus, the military was extensively used in civic action projects, which involved infrastructure repair and construction, medical assistance, and educational assistance. Nonetheless, CAO made sure that these projects were selected based on gaining the most favorable impression from the people, and did not neglect to publicize its activities.

4.3.11 The Economic Development Corps (EDCORS)

The Economic Development Corps (EDCORS) was one of the most touted projects of the Magsaysay period. Approximately 1,500 Huks surrendered due to the psychological effect of EDCOR.
It was a program established on December 15, 1950, under advice by the Civil Affairs Office (CAO). Originally a benefits program for retired military personnel that fell out of use; it was resurrected and redirected towards the rehabilitation of surrendered Huks. Provided that the Huks did not have a criminal record and were willing to reintegrate in society, they would to be given homesteads (six hectares to twelve hectares of land) in undeveloped public land. Army Corps of Engineers would help clear the land, build basic infrastructure, and facilities such as schools and the government would provide a startup capital for each settler. Once the Huks did their share of clearing the land, they would be able to acquire land deeds after 2 years. By the end of the program, three resettlement colonies were carved out in Mindanao and one in Northern Luzon, all distant from population centers and Huk bases. But a final project targeted a community right at the nose of Luis Taruc’s hometown in San Luis in 1953. It involved relocating an entire village to a nearby but more arable land. This hammered in the final nail, since almost all of the members of the village had at least one family member active in the movement. Indebted to the government’s initiatives that improved their lives, they pressured their Huk relatives to surrender. This led to another irreversible decline for the Huks.

EDOCR was essentially a message by the government to counter the Huk’s slogan, “Land for the Landless” which struck a chord with the majority of peasants. The civic action component was simply a means to an end. Magsaysay was not under any delusion that the military could uplift the people from poverty. While it was true that a number of rebels were resettled and there was some effect in spurring economic activity in the areas where settlements were built, the reality was that the military could not give land to all the landless. Rather, CAO officers selected high-value targets where Magsaysay could achieve the most effects in negating the Huks’ slogan: “Land for the Landless.”

The true success lay in influencing and behavior of the enemy and its supporters. The Civil Affairs Office (CAO) made sure that the program got maximum publicity, and instilled in the minds of the population, that the government was taking constructive action to address the grievances of the peasants. Although less than 1,000 Huks were resettled and the actual commitment of resources by the government minimal, the propaganda effect surpassed these inputs. News quickly circulated through the media and by word-or-mouth, which spurred Huk supporters to advise the fighters to give up the cause and it even had the effect of persuading fighters to surrender.

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288 EDCOR was originally intended for drafted or retired soldiers. By giving them homesteads, this would provide these soldiers a post-retirement arrangement, and the crops harvested from these lots could be diverted to provide food for the military. Even though a bill was passed by Congress, it was never implemented.
289 Settlers also included retired personnel of the AFP and ex-guerrilla fighters who fought under the U.S. command during the Japanese occupation to act as “stabilizers” in a new community consisting of former communist guerrillas. Blaufarb, The Counterinsurgency Era, p. 32; Valeriano and Bohannan, Counter-Guerrilla Operations, p. 178.
290 EDCOR also had side projects such as job training for Huks and helping villagers relocate to more arable land. See Valeriano and Bohannan, Counter-Guerrilla Operations, p. 179.
291 Valeriano and Bohannan, Counter-Guerrilla Operations, pp. 177-182.
292 Ibid., p. 40.
293 Valeriano and Bohannan, Counter-Guerrilla Operations, p. 180; Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, p. 416.
294 Col. Bohannan comments made in “Psychological Warfare and Civic Action,” April 18, 1962, P.M, in
EDOCR effectively dislodged the Huks from their vantage point in the psychological dimension and seized the initiative to win back the masses including those who had joined the dissident movement for a lack of a better choice. EDOCR was a large-scale program that effectively used the non-coercive form of psywar to improve the image of the soldier and win back substantial support for the government.295

4.3.12 Targeting the Soldier

As the majority of activities organized under the CAO were directed to gain control over the psychological domain of the population, the real raison d’etre of the office tends to be overlooked. That was, Magsaysay’s primary mission to indoctrinate the soldier who was rigidly conformed to operate under conventional war-making principles, to make them understand that their actions would have political implications, and wherever necessary, they had to be prepared to expand the scope of their activities to achieve mission success.

Magsaysay began by raising the morale of the troops. He made sure they got the full backing of the government by providing sufficient equipment and supplies, benefits, and promoting soldiers based on merit.296

At the same time, he used the CAO to propagate the notion of psychological warfare. It began with something as simple as their behavior and conduct towards the population for any abuse could reverberate all the way up to the top of the command and jeopardize the entire military campaign. Magsaysay dealt with this aspect by encouraging troops to demonstrate friendly behavior to the population and enforcing discipline amongst the AFP through surprise inspections and punishing infractions on the spot.297

However, this did not mean that soldiers would be disproportionately involved in “winning the hearts and minds” projects. Rather, CAO helped to instill in the minds of the soldiers the intricate relationship between one, combat operations; two, intelligence-gathering; and three, psychological warfare including public relations. Hence, the slogan directed at the soldier “Every soldier is a PsyWar Man” was to remind him that the political implications must be always considered when conducting any type of


295 Magsaysay as president, made the first substantial moves towards alleviating the plight of the peasants by attempting to improve the delivery of government services in rural areas and also reforming the agrarian sector. He passed several major bills such as Agricultural Tenancy Act (1954) to correct exploitive behavior by landlords over tenants and the Land Reform Act (1955) to redistribute massive landholdings (rice and corn) to individuals. See David Wurfel, “Philippine Agrarian Reform under Magsaysay,” Far Eastern Survey, January and February 1958. Available in two installments at:

296 Valeriano and Bohannan, Counter-Guerrilla Operations, p. 111.

297 Blaufarb, The Counterinsurgency Era, p. 30; McClintock, Instruments of Statecraft, p. 7 of ch. 4; Valeriano and Bohannan, Counter-Guerrilla Operations, pp. 75; 171-176.
operation. Today, the slogan has been revived for the same purpose with a slight alteration of the term: “Every soldier is a CMO Man.”

4.3.13 CMO’s Role in Allowing the Mobility of Troops over Battlespace

4.3.13.1 Battalion Combat Teams (BCT)

CMO also had a critical role to play in ensuring the mobility of troops over insurgent battlespace and denying the insurgents the freedom of action. Prior to Magsaysay, offensive measures took the form of occasional large-scale sweeps carried out by conventional military or police units, but for the most part, security operations were characteristically those of static defense.

To counter this, the AFP reorganized its combat units into Battalion Combat Teams (BCT), a recommendation made by JUSMAG, for the purpose of allowing a more efficient spread of its forces. At the same time it was large enough to amass men for concerted military actions to either deflect Huk attacks or strike them. They were also highly mobile military units manned approximately by 1000 men, and assigned to different geographical locations. There was a reduced need for lines of communication since they were close to self-sufficient. All BCTs were equipped with heavy weapons, artillery, and service units that included the signal corps, engineering corps, as well as a Civil Affairs unit.

The BCTs were effective against the Huks who moved fluidly in both the physical and human terrain. Being more mobile, the BCTs could pursue the Huks better than in the previous strategy of organizing large-scale sweeps to capture a handful of escaping guerrillas. Its success was based on-inflicting deadlier force on its intended targets. The BCTs were equipped with highly-trained scouts squads that were capable of penetrating the depth of the enemy strongholds to conduct strikes, and harassment.

But much of this could not have been done without acquiring the ability to maneuver in the sea of population. The population was important for providing information, severing their lines of support to the insurgents. Much of the directives of CAO were carried out by these battalions operating on the front lines. Civil Affairs (CA) officer were assigned to each BCT for the purpose of advising the commander on the best approach in developing and maintaining friendly relations with the population. They also helped the commanders to select projects that would elicit the most positive reaction from the people. Some commanders even depended on CA officers to serve as a liaison with the civilian authorities in his area of responsibility.

CA officers’ tasks did not end here. Their job was also to disseminate the information to the public. They were always equipped with projectors, radios, leaflets, and other forms of communication devices to publicize the achievements of the AFPs, deliver an awareness campaign on the repercussions of

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299 Valeriano and Bohanan, Counter-Guerrilla Operations, pp. 99-100
300 Ibid., pp. 91-92.
301 Blaufarb, The Counterinsurgency Era, p. 28; Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, p. 397.
302 Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, p. 410.
joining the Huk movement, and keep their soldiers up-to-date on general military affairs.\textsuperscript{303}

4.3.13.2 Patrols

One of the key characteristics of guerrilla warfare is that it does not operate within fixed parameters of a conventional battlefield. Guerrilla movements are likened to fish in the water where they can swim fluidly over terrain. They are also masters of dispersal and reassembly, which make them an elusive target when they are hunted and lethal when they amass to launch ambushes and raids.

This typically requires a response based on maneuver rather than on one that relies on indiscriminate firepower. Counterinsurgents can only overcome the challenges of operating in this type of battlespace in highly agile, mobile, and compact units to seek penetration of the enemy and collapse it from within.\textsuperscript{304} As it turned out patrols, combined with combat and civic action became the most effective weapon in allowing the AFP to gain initiative and control over the battlespace.\textsuperscript{305}

The advantages of patrols are that it allows troops to one, go on an offensive, two, deny the freedom of movement for the guerrilla, and third, increase the frequency that it can make contact with a guerrilla. Patrols in this period were usually conducted in units ranging from half-squads to platoon size. They were arranged to follow random timetables and random routes. They were frequently conducted, so as to keep the guerrillas always on the move and in a state of anxiety, of not knowing when to expect the next encounter. While patrols yielded a small number of kills and captures, it had an effect of demoralizing the guerrillas, and ultimately clearing an area of insurgent control.\textsuperscript{306}

At the same time, patrols also had to take into consideration they were operating in the midst of the population. Patrols conducted previously by the notorious Nenita units that hunted down and killed the leaders of Huks produced successes but it also had the effect of terrorizing the population. Furthermore, other patrols stole food from the people when supplies ran low, creating more hostility from the population.\textsuperscript{307}

Thus, patrols under the Magsaysay leadership were led with more focus on limiting the negative impact it had on the people. The patrols that entered populated realms were suggestive of those conducted by the Philippine Constabulary during the American colonial era where civic action and community assistance programs were incorporated to improve the relationship between the military and the population. But under Magsaysay, the practice was more formalized and specific, as he assigned CA officers, trained in

\textsuperscript{303} Valeriano and Bohannan, \textit{Counter-Guerrilla Operations}, pp. 171; 174; 175; 177
\textsuperscript{305} Valeriano and Bohannan, Counter-Guerrilla Operations, p. 104.
\textsuperscript{307} Valeriano and Bohannan, \textit{Counter-Guerrilla Operations}, pp. 79; 84-85.
the field, to accompany patrols to provide advice to the commanders. For instance, CA officers gave pointers on how to distribute psywar material; how to investigate a community and gauge attitudes of the people, and how to formulate corrective measures to change negative perceptions of the people towards the government. But such actions had to be accompanied with action to demonstrate the good will of the soldier. Those included having medical-aid men accompany patrols for the purpose of providing treatment to civilians wherever needed. Others also included rendering assistance to residents fleeing from military operations.308

Patrols were also the most effective way to collect basic combat intelligence. They could be secured by extensive patrolling over unfamiliar terrain, or scouting for unusual activity. They could also be conducted in secrecy, under disguise or concealment, to locate positions of guerrillas to prepare for full-scale military operations.309 Yet, when it came down to interaction with people, obtaining their cooperation was one of the most reliable forms of intelligence gathering. Therefore, soldiers on overt patrols, meaning identifying themselves as soldiers, were expected to act cordially and respectfully towards the peoples and previous practices such as taking food from the population were forbidden.310 The following lists the three basic missions of a patrol. Civic action, public information campaigns, and other community assistance activities were incorporated in 2 and 3.

1. To find and capture, kill, or harass the enemy
2. To obtain and compile information
3. To win the support of the people by demonstrating their concern for them.311

In summary, promoting better relationships with the people played into the factor of facilitating troop movement in a battlespace occupied by non-combatants. It not only helped gain the cooperation of the people and deny the support-base that the insurgents relied on, but it also helped the soldiers secure information that would allow for selective and targeted used of force.

4.3.14 Summary

In retrospect, the main factor that determined the success of the Huk campaign was an administration that appointed the appropriate person for the job in leading the campaign. Under the leadership of Magsaysay and with his support of his American advisors, the AFP was able to take a creative approach to a problem that could not be solved with punitive action alone. The very ingredient that bolstered COIN operations were those activities categorized as the left-hand approach, now referred to as CMO. Magsaysay made sure that the know-how of CMO was transmitted down the chain of command. And he did not conduct activities without a clear purpose. He established targets (the people, the Huks, and

308 Ibid., pp. 174; 176-177.
309 Ibid., p. 126.
310 Ibid., pp. 84-85; 176.
311 Ibid., pp. 104; 197.
the soldiers themselves) and had CA officers plan and oversee the implementation of these activities with the clear goal of supporting the military mission. In its implementation, the left-hand approach was successful because it was guided by principles of maneuver. CMO effectively demonstrated the soldiers’ commitment to the people that had the effect of dislodging the Huks from their pedestal of moral superiority (decisive point) over the agrarian poor, which ultimately secured the intractable decline of the Huks.

Table 4.2: The Left-Hand Approach and the Right-Hand Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Left-Hand Approach</th>
<th>Right-Hand Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>Abandoned static defense--&gt;Spreading out forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical assistance</td>
<td>Compact and semi-independent military units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candy for children</td>
<td>Patrols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information campaigns through newspapers, leaflets, radio broadcasts, and movies/plays/entertainment in remote areas</td>
<td>Psychological terror</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Infiltration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Deception</td>
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<tr>
<td>Counter-propaganda</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic action (roads and school building)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Huks</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Amnesty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocational schools</td>
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<td>Resettlement programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soldier Behavior</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bringing own food or paying for food</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Punishing errant soldiers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Acting cordial</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In the following decades, the left-hand approach was maintained as reflected in the replication of its activities in future administrations. Nevertheless, the know-how was not transferred smoothly, underlining the problem that without efforts to formally preserve its lessons with periodic updates, it was difficult to implement successfully without the exceptional leadership such as one by Magsaysay.

4.3.15 A Synopsis of Events in the Post-Magsaysay Years (1957-1965)

The military under Magsaysay was allowed to expand its role beyond the normally accepted boundaries of military prerogatives, most notably in socio-economic spheres. Riding high on his popularity, he became president in the December of 1953. However after his untimely death in a plane crash in 1957, the succeeding administrations under Carlos Garcia and Diosdado Macapagal dramatically reduced the
AFP’s roles in both military and non-military spheres, which in effect stalled any further development in CMO. The first reason for this was because the internal security problem was basically under control, with only an estimated 500 Huk fighters holed up in the remote mountains of Luzon. The second reason was by 1957, the power of the AFP relative to civilian bureaucracies and political leaders had grown to a level where it became a source of suspicion for Garcia and Macapagal. Both presidents, unlike Magsaysay did not have military background, nor, the interest in cultivating close ties with the AFP to secure their political base. Rather, they sought to diminish the role of the military. This was made apparent in personnel and budget cuts, frequent reshuffling of the AFP’s top brass, the removal of military officers from civilian posts, and the reduction of civic action.

In regards to the civic action component of CMO, it was especially considered to be problematic. President Garcia’s constituents were the landed-elite and they did not view with favor the interference of the military in rural areas to uplift the lives of impoverished people. There was an apprehension that the AFP could potentially alter the power balance between the traditional oligarchy and the peasant. Additionally, too much civic action was considered to be dangerous, since it could politicize the military.

Still, what Magsaysay started in involving the military in socio-economic areas was not completely erased. Civic action was maintained to target the roots of dissidence, particularly in rural areas. Under President Macapagal, a token effort to continue the tasks of EDCOR, materialized into the 1958 Socio-Economic Military Program (SEMP). This authorized the use of military personnel and facilities for public works, construction, farming, land resettlement, and rural development. It was a program that made use of available military manpower in peacetime to help improve socio-economic conditions in rural and depressed areas.

In summary, CMO in this period can be characterized as something that was losing its utility due to the improved security situation and experienced further decline with the deliberate curtailment by the presidents in allowing soldiers to participate in areas sensitive to political control. What was continued, especially under SEMP, was characterized more for its developmental orientation rather than for its utility in COIN.

4.4 The Marcos Years (1965-1986)

4.4.1 Introduction

The AFP marks 1985 as the official conceptualization of CMO. As history has shown, what

312 Berlin, *Before Gringo*, p. 87
313 Ibid., pp. 84-85.
315 Ibid., pp. 86-87, 100-101.
318 Berlin, *Before Gringo*, p. 105
constitutes as CMO today were integrated into numerous military campaigns but were referred to under different names, depending on the contents of these activities, such as psychological operations, civic action, public affairs, civil affairs, and civil relations. Under Marcos, these activities fell under the jurisdiction of the Home Defense Program, later renamed CMO. However, it was only at the tail end of the Marcos regime that these activities were bound together and conceptualized as a distinct military operation.

Yet, the conceptualization of CMO during the Marcos years followed a long and arduous path. The lessons provided from the Magsaysay era in quelling the Huk Rebellion through a combination of combat, intelligence, psywar, and early CMO activities, were not applied with the same understanding and sophistication towards the insurgents. Rather, the AFP underwent a painful experience of relearning the tenets of COIN warfare before CMO emerged in the form that it is understood today.

Still, events in the Marcos era had a critical role in shaping CMO in basically two phases. The first phase (1969-1978) was marked more by its developmental orientation. Marcos mobilized the military to fit in his scheme of nation-building and impose social order. As a result, the developmental aspect of CMO is derived in part, from this period. The second phase (1981-1986) was in response to the emergence of the internal security threats. CMO were intensified to deal with the armed communist movement. However, the AFP encountered colossal challenges in integrating CMO into their newly established COIN plan due to their weakening military capabilities and poor adjustment to COIN warfare. While this mainstream COIN plan was underway, a small group of military officers had begun to experiment with a form of maneuver warfare that incorporated CMO. This was in response to the limited progress that the military was making towards the insurgents. The fruits of these efforts led to the conceptualization of CMO in 1985. The section below traces the transition of CMO from a large-scale nation-building exercise to one that evolved into a COIN tool.

4.4.2 CMO in the First Phase: Expanding the Military’s Role in Development
4.4.2.1 The Early Years: Marcos Cultivating his Relationship with the AFP and Role Expansion

CMO during the early Marcos period cannot be explained in isolation from the web of politics that it emerged from. CMO would not have grown to play such a major role in national affairs if Marcos did not use the military to centralize his power. From the outset, President Ferdinand Marcos latched onto the military to strengthen his powers as executive. Through a series of well-timed and deftly planned moves, he succeeded in bringing the military behind him. In the course of cultivating his ties with the military, he secured increased funding for the AFP and also helped improve its prestige by expanding its roles, most notably in development which later became to be referred to as CMO. Thus, the first phase of CMO under Marcos re-emerged under these conditions.

Initially, the new leader had a lofty vision to bring about revolutionary politico-socio-economic change from the center through a massive redistribution of power, land, and wealth in a nation suffering from a wide disparity between the haves (wealthy land-owners) and have-nots (landless peasants and/or impoverished people). With the traditional elite (landowners) dominating the legislature, Marco could not implement his scheme to restructure Philippine society without drastically altering their status quo.

Marcos began to cement his ties with the military as soon as he stepped into office.\footnote{In actuality, Marcos began cultivating his relationship with the military long before his presidency. Unlike his predecessors, Carlos Garcia and Diosdado Macapagal who did not have a military background and did not see any political advantage in coddling the AFP, Marcos capitalized on his association with the AFP, which began before WWII. Marcos’ military experience began as a member of the Philippines Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC). During WWII, he saw action as a lieutenant with the United States Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE). After independence, he played a role in gaining more recognition for Filipino veterans and upon entering politics; he continued to develop close ties with members of the AFP. See Donald Lane Berlin, Before Gringo: History of the Philippine Military 1830-1972, Pasig City: Anvil Publishing, Inc, 2008, pp. 87; 112-117. Hereafter cited as Berlin, Before Gringo.} For the first 13 months of his presidency, he served as his own Secretary of Defense and presided over organizational and personnel changes to consolidate his control over the military.\footnote{Berlin, Before Gringo, pp. 117-121; Richard J. Kessler, Rebellion and Repression in the Philippines, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989, p. 116. Hereafter cited as Kessler, Rebellion and Repression in the Philippines.} He also secured their loyalty by increasing military funding. The national defense budget rose from P271.1 million in the year he was elected in 1965 to P366 million in 1967. This was followed by P415 million in 1968 and another jump in 1969, with P513 million.\footnote{Berlin, Before Gringo, op. cit., p. 128. (1965-USD 69.5 million, 1967-USD 93.8 million, 1968-106.4 million, 1969-USD 131.5 million Currency rates from The University of British Columbia: Pacific Exchange Rate Service. Available at: http://fx.sauder.ubc.ca/etc/USDpages.pdf. Accessed January 18, 2013).} This endeavor was largely made possible due to Marcos’ ability to manipulate Cold War events, and in particular the Vietnam War.

The Vietnam War involved the Philippines in an unavoidable net of commitments with the United States. The Philippines, being America’s military ally, was asked to contribute to the war effort. Even before Marcos took office, in 1964, under President Macapagal, a bill was passed to allow the Philippines to send their troops to Vietnam for civic action, psywar advisory roles, and medical assistance and by the time Marcos took office, three Filipino contingents had already been deployed to Vietnam with the fourth, in-waiting.\footnote{The three contingents were the Philippines Contingent to Vietnam (PHILCONV I), consisting of 28 military and 6 civilians, deployed in September 1964; PHILCON II, numbering 34 men deployed in April 1965; PHILCON III, composed of 15 psywar-civic action officers, 1 surgical team of 6 men and 2 rural health teams, deployed in August 1965. After Marcos assumed presidency, PHILCON IV was sent in April 1966. This group consisted of 7 doctors, 6 nurses, and 7 enlisted men. For details see Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, pp. 464-474.}

As the war intensified in Vietnam, the United States ratcheted up pressure on its military ally to
increase its support. Military civic action became the centerpiece of negotiations between the two countries, as the agreement was based on the Philippines providing non-combat support. The United States promised increased military funding, specifically aimed at bolstering the AFP’s engineering capabilities. In 1966, Marcos agreed to send the fifth Filipino contingent, the Philippine Civic Action Group V (PHILCAG V) to Vietnam, with numbers exceeding 2,000 personnel. The civic action group focused on large-scale infrastructure construction as well as other community-level civic action to increase the good will of the Vietnamese people.

This give-and-take arrangement between the two countries was in fact based on Marcos’ calculated move to strengthen his political powers. In exchange for his support to the United States, in what he described in his own words as “precedent-breaking,” the AFP was able to organize a new engineering brigade with ten engineering construction battalions. Politically, this meant two things for Marcos. The first was that civic action became the chess piece that allowed him to secure extra military funding which solidified his control over the military as an uncontested patron. The second was that with strengthened engineering units, the military now had the resources and capabilities to be incorporated in Marcos’ scheme of development. Marcos could now use the military to implement his policies without relying solely on government bureaucracies that he had a deep-seated distrust for. And from the military aspect, the civic action contingents sent to Vietnam would later influence the way AFP conducted COIN, including the implementation of civic action (see section 4.4.4.1).

4.4.2.2 Reviving Civic Action: Marcos’ Quest for National Development

Increased U.S. military funding helped strengthen the engineering battalions and Marcos used them to further expand the activities of the military. But from a legal standpoint, Marcos used what was preserved from the Magsaysay era of using soldiers in socio-economic projects through the Socio-Economic Military Program (SEMP), which was established between 1958 and 1959. Though previous administrations only retained what Magsaysay started to preserve the option of using military resources where needed, Marcos used this as a legal basis to directly involve the AFP in nation-building.

326 For more details on the contents of PHILCAG V see Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, pp. 474-484.
327 Kessler, Rebellion and Repression in the Philippines, pp. 122-123.
329 David G. Timberman, A Changeless Land: Continuity and Change in Philippines Politics, New York: M.E. Sharpe and Singapore Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2001, p. 84. Hereafter cited as Timberman, A Changeless Land; The United States provided at least 7 million dollars to train and equip AFP engineering construction battalions in 1967 and 1968, and an additional 39 million dollars for the PHILCAG unit. See Kessler, Rebellion and Repression in the Philippines, p. 123.
330 Timberman, A Changeless Land, p. 84.
In his first State of the Nation address (1966), he outlined a bold initiative to fast track the development of the Philippines in his *Four-year Development Plan*. The plan centered on large construction projects to improve ground, air, and waterways infrastructure as well as electrification and irrigation projects. In his address, he declared his intentions to mobilize the armed forces to help the nation achieve its developmental aims. What Marcos saw in the military was not only a pool of untapped potential of technical expertise, manpower, and equipment, but also an organization bound by discipline and cohesiveness.

To implement his massive scheme of involving soldiers in infrastructure development, civic action, and community assistance programs, in 1966, he directed the AFP to create a *Department of Defense-Home Defense Program* (later renamed *AFP Civil-Military Operations Program* in 1982), which was officially launched in 1970. The program had two broad objectives: development and national security. Marcos perceived that the two had a complimentary relationship since social and political dissent stemmed from conditions of poverty. Already in the mid-1960s, there was growing unrest from the student and labor sectors in the nation’s capital, and Marcos declared publicly in 1968 that the only durable solution to internal subversion was advancing the nation economically and to achieve this, he said, “I intend to harness to a greater extent the resources of our defense establishment in our task of nation-building.”

Thus, the Home Defense Program became the official embarkation point for Marcos’ scheme to involve the military beyond its prescribed roles of defense. In the years leading up to martial law, these roles remained bracketed in development, but at levels that far exceeded those of the previous administrations, so that the program itself almost resembled a developmental agency. As a result, the expansion of military’s roles allowed Marcos to use the AFP to implement his policies after he declared martial law.

### 4.4.2.3 The Home Defense Program (1970): Supporting Martial Law and Marcos’ New Society

Martial law (1972) was the answer to Marcos’ quest to centralize his power. The pretext in which he used to declare a state of emergency was the raging protests in the capital and the war against both the Muslim separatists and communists. Though the leader argued that asserting emergency powers was unavoidable due to the uptick in violence, his ultimate motive was seeking an extension of his powers,

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334 At the AFP level, the implementing arm was the *AFP Home Defense (Strategic) Program*, supervised by the Deputy Chief of Staff for Home Defense.

335 Crisol, *Men and Arms*, p. 69.


since his presidency was coming to a close. The efforts that Marcos put into increasing the military’s developmental role had paid off. Marcos needed the military to enforce his rule, serve as the basis of his legitimacy, and impose law and order. The expanded prerogatives of the AFP were made apparent immediately. Upon declaration of martial law, the military literally marched up the steps of Congress and shut it down. They muzzled the press, suspended civil liberties, and arrested elements of society determined to be a threat to Marcos’ regime. They assumed judicial roles by creating military tribunals that tried civilians. In effect they became the implementers of Marcos’s laws, decrees, and orders.

Marcos also did not fail to reward the military for their backing. He raised their motivation with an enlarged military budget that led to pay raises. The ballooning manpower not only meant there were more soldiers to fight, but also more soldiers to engage in non-military activities. In the latter, Marcos divvied out administrative and managerial positions to AFP officers in state-run and private companies.

The Home Defense Program, in fact a CMO office, was established in 1970 prior to Martial Law. What it did was establish a basis for the military to widen and deepen the scope of its role that went beyond defense. Prior to martial law, it remained largely confined to national development and developing the AFP’s reserves but starting from 1974, it began to add more pillars that sought to rationalize Marcos’ authoritarian control and at the same tackle the growing insurgency problem.

Table 4.3: The Pillars of the Home Defense Program as of 1978

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Pillars of the Home Defense Program as of 1978</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Manpower, reserve affairs/administration and reserve force development (1966)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Civil security force development (1966)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Civil assistance (added in 1974)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Civil Relations (1966)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Military economic development activities -MEDA (1966)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Motivation and Enlightenment (added in 1978)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first two components were carried over from before martial law and fell under the objectives

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338 Prior to the 1987 Constitution, Philippine presidents were allowed to serve a 4-year term, with a single chance at re-election (based on the 1935 Constitution, amended in 1940).
340 Timberman, A Changeless Land, pp. 75-77; 81-85; Jose M. Crisol, Men and Arms, p. 9.
344 Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, p. 560.
of developing a citizenry response to national security. The first one, **manpower, reserve affairs/administration and reserve force development**, dealt with strengthening core military manpower by developing the military reserve forces in preparation for war or a national emergency. The second component, **civil security force development** was aimed at creating a local defense system especially in remote towns and villages. This involved training civilian volunteers and organizing them into a security force. The umbrella organization for these paramilitary groups including both armed and unarmed men, was the Integrated Civilian Home Defense Forces (ICHDF).\(^{345}\)

The next two pillars (3 and 4) operated under the principles of supporting government programs and activities on socio-economic progress. **Civil assistance**, a component added in mid-1974,\(^{346}\) involved a coordinated effort between the military and civilian authorities to conduct law enforcement, infrastructure and civil engineering, civic action or social services, disaster relief, and the take over of public utilities in case of emergency.\(^{347}\) Most of the activities conducted under this pillar were civic action. Broadly defined, civic action was the use of military resources for constructive civilian activities that would elicit the support and respect of the people for the government but not at the expense of diluting combat effectiveness.\(^{348}\) The activities included road and school building, electrification, irrigation, road cleaning and de-clogging sewage systems, and dispensing medical and dental assistance.\(^{349}\)

**Civil Relations**, an original component of Home Defense, dealt with the military’s relations with the public at large. Its main responsibility was making sure that Home Defense activities left a favorable mark on the people. It had four aspects: one, **command information** which was directed towards the military in order to keep the soldiers well informed about their duties and obligations; two, **public information**, to inform the public about the AFP and its activities through the press; three, **community relations**, to foster good relations with the target community such as through sports’ competitions and other social events; and fourth, **psychological operations**, aimed at influencing the attitudes of the target audiences in support of the military operation. These included the transmission of propaganda and counterpropaganda through the radio and other forms of media. Target audiences also included the enemy and the AFP themselves. With the enemy, attraction programs were put into place in attempts to elicit their surrender, and with the AFP, actions were designed to boost their morale and ensure that their sense of mission was intact. In regards to the psyops component of civil relations, it came directly under a separate office, the Undersecretary for Civil Relations (USCR) as it dealt directly with the enemy.\(^{350}\)

The fifth pillar, **military economic development activities (MEDA)** focused on agriculture and up to a certain extent, the industrial sector. Simply put, it was a Research and Development center for

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\(^{347}\) Crisol, *Men and Arms*, pp. 72-73.


\(^{350}\) Crisol, *Men and Arms*, pp. 69; 73; Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, pp. 564; 567-570.
developing techniques to improve the lives of the people. The bulk of the projects were related to food production that included cattle raising, fish cultivation, rice-production, improving agricultural yields through environmental engineering, and tree-planting.351

While development remained a significant theme in Home Defense throughout the first half of the 1970s, it experienced a qualitative change when the military was placed in the role as the vanguard of social change against the backdrop of growing unrest. As Timberman put it, Marcos’ “grab for power did not happen in a vacuum” underlying the fact its imposition was not made purely on political whim. Marcos’ quest for absolute authority was partially intended to actualize his vision to revolutionize Filipino society by removing the old repressive structure dominated by the oligarchy. He viewed the traditional elite as the obstacle to progress and peace. They were the ones that monopolized power and economic wealth, leaving the masses impoverished; and to make matters worse, these socio-economic grievances fuelled insurgencies. And the only way to defeat the subversive elements that fed off the grievances of the oppressed was to transform the old society into what he termed the New Society.352 In the New Society, he called for the self-sacrifice and self-discipline of the people to turn the Philippines into a unified and prosperous nation in which all of its citizens could equally benefit.353

Thus, the Home Defense Program not only placed the military as a key player in development and security, but it also took up psychosocial concerns which dealt with the “values and attitudes of the people.”354 That is why the sixth pillar, motivation and enlightenment was added in 1978. By way of example, the AFP was tasked to propagate democratic values of unity and self-reliance to the people. This was geared so that the people could emulate the soldiers’ dedication to the nation and take their own initiative in generating socio-economic development.355 In other words, the AFP would take the leading role in transmitting the values of the New Society to a nation bound more by family, tribal, and ethnic affiliations, and help rally the Filipinos under a modern and single Filipino identity.356

Under the motivation and enlightenment pillar, a CMO program called Tanod at Gabay ni Lahi at Watawat (TANGLAW) or “beacon” was devised specifically to indoctrinate the soldier on the principles of the New Society, mold his image as both a “fighter” and a “nation-builder,” and thereby transmit these values to the people.”357 A component of Tanglaw, the Army Literacy Patrol System (ALPS) was established in 1979, to help the government propagate the values of New Society through the soldier. The

351 Crisol, Men and Arms, pp. 69-74; Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, pp. 561; 564.
353 Timberman, A Changeless Land, pp. 80; 90-91.
354 Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, pp. 560; 570.
355 Crisol, Men and Arms, pp. 63; 76-77.
356 AFP Annual Report ’82, A Year of Solid Achievement, pp. 8-9. The AFP defines nation-building as a “process whereby a sense of national loyalty is developed, which transcends local, family, tribal or ethnic loyalties. It involves the development of a national identity and the establishment and maintenance of the legitimacy of the political system so that diverse groups within the national boundaries perceive themselves as constituting a simple entity.” Crisol, Men and Arms, p. 63.
357 Crisol, Men and Arms, pp. 145-148; PAM 7-00, p. 9; Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, p. 590.
ALPS was a program that sent soldiers to remote areas to teach reading, writing, math, livelihood skills, and health awareness. Incorporated into the educational curriculum was also personality development and values-formation.\(^{358}\)

In conjunction with the ideals set forth in the New Society to transform barangays (villages) into self-reliant and productive communities, a large-scale livelihood program called Kilusang Kabuhayan at Kaunlaran (KKK) was launched. KKK’s purpose was to generate jobs in depressed areas especially in waste utilization, agriculture, livestock and light industry enterprises. Soldiers were dispatched to rural areas to conduct job training.\(^{359}\)

A new pillar that directly involved the community in tackling the insurgency problem was the **mass base operations**. Added in 1978, when the state was faced with the growing communist threat, these were activities conducted by the military in insurgency-influenced areas or combat zones. The main objective of this pillar was to isolate the insurgents from their base of support, which was the population, by using the AFP to build closer ties with the people and help depressed communities to be self-reliant. Activities such as evacuation and resettlement of civilians during military operations, humanitarian assistance, and socio-economic projects were designed to address grievances of the people and win their support for the central government. Other activities such as the organization of youth, religious, and civic leaders in action groups and the training of local government leaders were designed to strengthen the community’s political apparatus so that it could prevent the infiltration of the enemy.\(^{360}\)

### 4.4.2.4 The Outcome of the Early Home Defense Activities

During the 1960s, the economy was growing at approximately 5 per cent per year. Much of the efforts that Marcos put into improving irrigation and electrification with the assistance of the military benefited the agricultural sector. Between 1972 and 1976, the Philippines was able to reach food self-sufficiency.\(^{361}\) Marcos also devoted his energies into infrastructure building using the military. For instance in 1969, the army engineers’ involvement in civilian construction projects were double the military ones; and in most years leading up to 1977, the military’s involvement in civil works overtook military ones (see table 4.4).\(^{362}\) It is also interesting to note, the amount of civil projects began to drop when the AFP began turning their attention to the armed communist front in 1978 (see section 4.4.3.3).

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\(^{360}\) General Headquarters, AFP, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Civil Military Operations, J-7, Quezon City: Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, April 19, 1982, Annex D-1; D-2; D-3.

\(^{361}\) Timberman, *A Changeless Land*, pp. 48; 87. Between 1972-1976, Philippines was able to reach food self-sufficiency.


102
Table 4.4: Projects Accomplished by the AFP Corps of Engineers, 1966-1986

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Civil Projects</th>
<th>Number of Military Projects</th>
<th>Total Number of Civil and Military Projects</th>
<th>Ratio of Civil to Military Projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>2: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>1: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>1: 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1.4: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1.3: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>1: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>2.3: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>1:11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>1: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>1:11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>1: 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>1: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>1: 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>1: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>1:16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


By the late 1960s, it became a common sight to see a soldier toiling on a construction project. Thus the Philippines continued to ride high on the economy in the first-half of the 1970s. Yet, martial law could not sustain these economic gains indefinitely. By the late 1970s, martial law began to bear signs of a seriously flawed economic system. The nation slid into an economic crisis. Bad economic policy-making often tainted with cronyism and corruption, combined with externally generated events such as the oil price rise in 1979 were behind the widening income disparity and increased unemployment rates. The ambitious land reform program that Marcos also had set up was faced with challenges in finding enough land to
distribute, not to mention dealing with increasing resistance from landowners. Consequently, any impact the military may have had on economic development was submerged under the failure in Marcos to implement effective economic and fiscal policies.

The declining economy also impacted the successful implementation of CMO programs. For instance, KKK or the livelihood program which was intended to develop the countryside by generating jobs, failed to make in-roads. In the end, Manila lacked the finances to support local governments in delivering basic services. Without the financing, the AFP could not do their part of the job. Even though KKK was also supposed to foster good relations with the people, it eventually backfired, because it only exposed people to the incompetence of the military and the government.

Nevertheless, the largest issue concerning the effective implementation of Home Defense was that the soldiers were insufficiently trained to handle these extra-military roles. The Defense College did not furnish these soldiers with courses that allowed them to work smoothly in the civilian world. With the only check in the system coming from Marcos, the military had a free hand in almost everything. Rather than cooperating with civilians, they used coercive practices to dictate their method of administration. Placed in corporate and bureaucratic roles, the positions exposed them to the lure of self-aggrandizement. Not surprisingly, corruption and graft became rampant. Opportunists in the military made profits through illegal enterprises such as racketeering and gambling. The abuse of power was also made manifest in the trampling of human rights. Suspected political enemies were imprisoned, tortured or killed. Thus, it contradicted the very principles of the CMO program, which was supposed to create a friendly military-people partnership under the guidance of the disciplined and dedicated soldier.

In sum, though CMO espoused in the Home Defense Program was initially to realize Marcos’ ideal of transforming Philippines into a New Society and bringing economic progress, any intended effects became negated by Marcos’ poor economic policymaking and the brutality of martial law. The slide into a political and economic crisis added momentum to internal unrest, fostering armed movements that would grow in strength. As Marcos became more preoccupied in protecting his power, he also neglected tending to the military’s defense capabilities. By the time the first COIN plan came into effect (1981), it was evident that the military was in no state to effectively fight the internal security problem.

4.4.3 Background to the Armed Movements

4.4.3.1 Growing Unrest

The Philippines in the early 1960s was not immune to the global student protests. The student movement was building up steam on Manila’s campuses where students, intellectuals, and labor unions linked up to organize protests. By the late 1960s, these radical student movements capitulated into

363 See Timberman, *A Changeless Land*, pp. 91-92; 106-114, for more details about the impact of martial law on the Philippine economy.
existence a new generation of armed organizations that included both the Communists and the Muslims separatists. The protest movement in the capital, along with the threats from the two fronts was used as a pretext for Marcos to declare martial law. Soon after, the Muslim rebellion escalated into a full-blown war while at the same time, the military were fighting the communists. CMO or what was known as Home Defense Activities were not aligned well with military operations. They sat at the far ends of a long table, with only an occasional nod to each other. Internal security operations focused on conventional military assaults that left limited room for CMO to exercise its utility. It was only when the communists regrouped and refined their strategy and tactics in guerrilla warfare that the AFP began to experiment with CMO driven by tenets of maneuver warfare. The section below will cover the two threat groups, the AFP’s approach to them, and the process in which CMO shifted from a nation-building orientation to one that became re-conceptualized as a distinct operation within the confines of COIN warfare.

4.4.3.2 Background to the Muslim Separatist Movement

The distant roots of the modern Muslim struggle can be traced back to the Spanish era when various Muslim powerful sultanates fought off Spanish attempts to conquer the Southern portion of the Philippine archipelago (Mindanao and its outlying islands). These sultanates had an advanced political system, thriving trade, and military prowess, which allowed them to maintain their sovereignty until the turn of 20th century. Following a protracted and bloody war against the Americans, the Muslims or Moros fell under the control of the United States. Thus, the Muslim South (Mindanao and its outlying islands of Sulu) was incorporated into the Filipino polity in preparation for independence.

The integration of the Muslim South with the rest of the Christian dominated archipelago was a painful process and to this day, remains incomplete. The central government of the Philippines since independence directed ill-guided policies towards the Muslim, a minority currently consisting of a mere 5 per cent of the population but concentrated in the Mindanao region. The most outwardly damaging was the government-sponsored migration of Christian settlers from other parts of the archipelago to Mindanao in order to ease population pressure and cultivate new lands. Many foreign and domestic businesses also tapped into the resource-rich region. Consequently, many Muslims were forced off their ancestral lands and made a minority in their homeland. Their plight was further exacerbated by overall government neglect on the socio-economic welfare of the Muslims and the lack of law-and-order in the region. A proliferation

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367 The Spanish instilled strong feelings of fear and animosity in their colonial Filipino subjects toward the Muslims as the Filipinos were conscripted to attack the Muslim strongholds. Moreover, the Spanish incorporated themes of anti-Muslim sentiment in their cultural plays. Consequently, this prejudice was transferred to future generations, which was one factor in creating a cultural fault-line between the Hispanicized Filipino and the Muslim Filipinos in the independent Republic. See Macapado Abanton Muslim, *The Moro Armed Struggle in the Philippines: The Nonviolent Autonomy Alternative*, Marawi City: Office of the President and College of Public Affairs, Mindanao State University, 1994, pp. 47-51. Hereafter cited as Muslim, *The Moro Armed Struggle in the Philippines.*

368 Moro was a term used by the Spanish colonial administrators to refer to the Muslim population in the Southern Philippines. It is still an appellation that Muslim Filipinos use to identify themselves.

of firearms and tensions between the Christians and the Muslims led to an outgrowth of private armies in the 1960s, which were controlled by political dynasties and business owners.  

All these conditions made the region ripe for a rebellion but the politicization of the Muslim struggle had yet to take hold as a unifying force. In the post-war period, a self-conscious Muslim identity that transcended multiple Muslim ethnic divisions engendered in part by the American colonial authorities as a means to expedite their social progress and entry into Filipino statehood, guided the Muslim elites in the 1950s and 1960s to take steps towards self-determination. However its success was limited because it ultimately failed to gain mass-based support. Nevertheless, it did lay down the foundations for a separatist movement led by new set of young Muslim leaders. This movement, which was more successful in mobilizing the ordinary Muslims to fight for the cause of a homeland, was not led by traditional leaders but came from young intellectuals, and many of them coming from the Marxist persuasion. One such intellectual who emerged to become the leader of the armed Muslim independence movement was Nur Misuari. As a young political science professor at the University of the Philippines, he was active on the organizational side of the student movement. Originally from Jolo, an island some 951 km from Manila, he was not of aristocratic stock. Coming from an impoverished background himself, he was acutely aware of the social issues that entrapped the Muslim Filipino in poverty and sought to unshackle them from all forms of oppression that not only came from being denied of statehood, but also from the feudalistic control by the traditional Muslim elites. This attracted a new breed of young recruits that did not want an independent homeland under the old leadership. Between 1969 and 1971, Misuari created his underground resistance group, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and its military arm, the Bangsa Moro Army (BMA). Upon declaration of martial law, the MNLF launched a full-blown war against the Philippine government.

4.4.3.2.1 Military Response against the MNLF: Conventional Warfare

The Muslim conflict embroiled the nation in a five-year war, transforming much of Mindanao and its outlying islands into a ferocious battleground. The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) stunned the international community with their ability to fight in well-trained units along conventional lines. Unlike other known sub-state armed movements, the Muslim rebels did not resort to guerrilla tactics of hit-and-run. Rather they demonstrated their capabilities to engage in large-scale offensives that not only included sheer striking power and amphibious landings but also the capacity and resources to capture and hold key terrain.

371 Thomas M. McKenna, Muslim Rulers and Rebels: Everyday Politics and Armed Separatism in the Southern Philippines, Berkeley: University of the California Press 1998, pp. 132-149. Hereafter cited as McKenna, Muslim Rulers and Rebels. The underlying argument of this book departs from conventional understanding that the Muslim Filipino identity was engendered during the Spanish colonial period but argues it was the American colonial and military authorities that were responsible for laying down the foundations for a unified Muslim movement.
372 George, Revolt in Mindanao, pp. 192; 194-199.
373 Ibid., pp. 197-201.
In 1973, it was estimated that there was anywhere between 14,000 and 16,000 rebels.\textsuperscript{374} The initial gains of the Muslim rebels were in large part due to Misuari’s diplomatic acumen. From the outset of the war, Misuari was able to build an international platform for the recognition of the Filipino-Muslim struggle. Islamic countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and Libya saw the war as a persecution of people of their own creed and condemned Marcos.\textsuperscript{375} The most enthusiastic support came from Libyan leader, Moammar Gadhafi, who allowed the exiled Misuari to set up his interim government in Libya while providing armaments and logistical support to the MNLF. Malaysia and Indonesia were also suspected of extra-diplomatic support, but Malaysia got the most heat from Marcos, as captured MNLF documents revealed that the rebels including Misuari were trained in base camps in Malaysia. Yet, both countries maintained for the official record that intervention was only through diplomatic channels. Either way, securing the supply-lines for the war allowed Misuari to sustain operations against the AFP and concurrently have control over his army, which in fact was far from a cohesive force, composed of loosely-aligned bands of armed Muslims.\textsuperscript{376}

Government forces had no choice but to counter the armed insurrection with the full mobilization of sea, air, and ground forces. Troops on the ground were supported by air strikes and naval bombardments as they advanced from one town to another to neutralize rebel strongholds.\textsuperscript{377} What dictated the AFP’s methods were the American doctrines used in the Vietnam War. These operations focused on unleashing overwhelming firepower; and success was determined by body counts, arms captures, and battle wins tacked up on the battlefield scoreboard.\textsuperscript{378} The war effort was also manpower intensive and required resources. In response to the accelerating war and the sharp increase in MNLF numbers, which had reached 20,000 fighters in 1975, the AFP in response had nearly tripled their numbers from 58,000 to 142,490 by 1976 (see table 4.5). Along came increased military funding which went up from 136 million dollars to 410 million dollars in 1976 (see table 4.6).\textsuperscript{379}

\textsuperscript{374} Ibid., pp. 212-213.
\textsuperscript{375} Ibid., pp. 244-245.
\textsuperscript{376} Ibid., pp. 231-233.
\textsuperscript{377} For further information about the military campaigns fought in Mindanao, refer to Pobre, \textit{History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People}, ch. 16.
\textsuperscript{378} Pobre, \textit{History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People}, p. 503.
\textsuperscript{379} Timberman, \textit{A Changeless Land}, p. 90.
### Table 4.5: AFP Strength and Estimated MNLF Strength and Armaments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>AFP Strength</th>
<th>MNLF</th>
<th>MNLF Armaments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>58,000</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>62,715</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>73,500</td>
<td>14,100</td>
<td>9,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>87,920</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>9,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>90,804</td>
<td>9,300</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>142,490</td>
<td>6,900</td>
<td>4,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>146,527</td>
<td>21,200</td>
<td>13,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>152,561</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>13,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>146,068</td>
<td>13,325</td>
<td>7,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>146,400</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>149,265</td>
<td>14,380</td>
<td>10,050</td>
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<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>149,107</td>
<td>13,130</td>
<td>7,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>154,773</td>
<td>11,190</td>
<td>6,941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>151,051</td>
<td>9,179</td>
<td>5,739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>153,365</td>
<td>8,099</td>
<td>5,336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>156,139</td>
<td>19,833</td>
<td>10,638</td>
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### Table 4.6: National and Defense Budgets of the Philippines 1970-1983

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>National Budget (P million)</th>
<th>Defense Budget (P million)</th>
<th>Defense as Percentage of National budget</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>3,196</td>
<td>367</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>3,462</td>
<td>413</td>
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<td>1972</td>
<td>4,574</td>
<td>608</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5,639</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>14.9</td>
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<td>8,606</td>
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<td>20,169</td>
<td>2,962</td>
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<td>22,399</td>
<td>2,918</td>
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<td>23,759</td>
<td>5,381</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>28,681</td>
<td>5,845</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>32,236</td>
<td>5,579</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>37,894</td>
<td>5,864</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>50,320</td>
<td>7,108</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>57,092</td>
<td>8,312</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>61,838</td>
<td>8,808</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The conflict spiraled into a full-blown war covering provinces in Mindanao, the Sulu Island chain, Basilan, and Palawan. At the height of the war, the AFP had 17 battalions, equating to approximately 75 per cent of their combat forces in Mindanao.380

#### 4.4.3.2.2 The Role of CMO in Response to the Muslim Secessionist Threat

In a strange twist of events, the psychological operations (psyops) program (one of the precursors of CMO) carefully cultivated by Magsaysay to promote the credibility and friendly image of the AFP during the Huk Rebellion, became the direct instigator of the Muslim Rebellion. Magsaysay’s successors preserved the civic action and psychological component of EDCOR, which was originally tasked to induce the Huks to surrender through socio-economic incentives. In the Vietnam War, it actively played a role in directing socio-economic programs, public affairs, and psywar operations conducted by Filipino soldiers deployed to Vietnam. In 1967, Marcos redesignated the office as the Civil Affairs Office (CAO).381

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381 Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People,* p. 418; The Civil Affairs Office (CAO) was elevated to the status of General Staff on July 1, 1967. See Civil Relations Services, AFP website:
In 1968, news erupted on a CAO-orchestrated military operation that went haywire. In fact, it was an operation so covert that many of the AFP officers in the upper-echelons of command were kept in the dark about its existence. According to a lone Muslim survivor, the AFP’s Christian soldiers murdered at least 14 of their fellow-trainees when they mutinied on the account of not being paid their monthly allowance. Even to this day, the details of the “Jabidah Massacre” remain murky as none of the suspects were charged. The popular theory that emerged was that it was part of Marcos’ intentions to take over Sabah, a contested island between Malaysia and the Philippines. Sabah, once belonging to the Sultanate of Sulu in 1658 but was absorbed into the Malaysian Federation in 1963. The Muslim recruits, some of them natives of Sulu were handpicked by the CAO because of they were perceived to have a kindred spirit with the Muslim inhabitants of Sabah. For reasons unknown, the plan was aborted and the recruits were killed under the pretext they had mutinied. The event sent shock waves throughout the Muslim communities and subsequently drove a deeper wedge between the Muslim Filipinos and the central government. In that same year, Misuari, also a native from Sulu rode on the wave of protests launched by Muslim students in the capital against the Jabidah Killings to launch a separatist movement. No less significant was the impact that it had on relations with Malaysia. The affair triggered certain sectors in Malaysia to support Misuari’s forces through training and logistics.

This blunder led to the abolition of the CAO and many of its activities that were related to the non-combat aspects of psyops appeared to have been partially absorbed or expanded in the Home Defense Program and Civil Relations. Nevertheless, it remains true, that the early CMO-like practices of Magsaysay-origin began on the wrong footing with the Muslims and destroyed the credibility of the AFP. As the war intensified in the Southern Philippines, there were various attempts made to restore the faith of the Muslims with the government. Home Defense activities were squeezed into places to take care in theory, the population needs and to win hearts and minds. According to the campaign plan named “Bagong Buhay” (New Life), CMO was to be incorporated in almost all stages of the war that included the evacuation of people during the offensive, the reestablishment of civil authority after clearing the area of rebels, and the re-launching of basic government services. And in the final stages, reconciliation was promoted in order to remove prejudices between Muslims and Christians. A new military command called the Central Mindanao Command (CEMCOM) was established by Marcos in 1973 to stem the spiraling violence in the central portion of Mindanao (Cotabato) and in their line of operations, CMO was included, albeit, on a limited scale. These included the dropping of leaflets in rebel strongholds to warn the population of an approaching artillery bombardment and induce the rebels to relinquish hold over the town. Others included the use of the media to inform the population of AFP operations and improve the image of the military. Some civic


382 George, Revolt in Mindanao, pp. 122-127, 200; McKenna, Muslim Rulers and Rebels, pp. 140-141.
383 Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, pp. 513-514.
action was also conducted to help evacuees and improve literacy rates of the Muslims.\textsuperscript{385}

Despite efforts made in this area, it did not close the divide between the Muslims and the government. The main reason being was in the way AFP managed the overall battlespace. From the get-go, the MNLF engaged the AFP in a conventional war that left the AFP with limited option of countering them with an attritional approach. There was little room for Home Defense activities to exercise its utility and therefore could not alleviate the sufferings of the Muslim people victimized by the war. The conflict left scores of Muslim civilians dead or homeless. By the end of 1977, it was estimated that anywhere between half-a-million and a million people were displaced.\textsuperscript{386} In the provinces of Cotabato and Lanao alone, there were as many as 100,000 evacuees of whom were mostly Muslim.\textsuperscript{387}

No less significant was also the force-space ratio issue. The war covered the western peninsula of Zamboanga in Mindanao, and its outlying islands of Palawan, Basilan, and the Sulu Island Chain. In central Mindanao, there was fighting in Lanao and Cotabato, the latter forming the MNLF’s main base of operations which fielded anywhere between 5,000 to 6,000 men.\textsuperscript{388} In the early stages of the war, the AFP was particularly stretched thin and soldiers were at times without air cover or any lines of communications.\textsuperscript{389} In 1971, the AFP had only 58,000 personnel, of which only a portion were re-assigned to the region to fight the rapidly increasing strength of the rebels.\textsuperscript{390} With the lack of troops to cover large swaths of land occupied by the MNLF, the AFP depended on airpower. On the ground, the first batch of young officers deployed to the field in Mindanao traded physical space with psychological terror. They resorted to brutal tactics that focused on interrogation, torture, revenge and extrajudicial killings. This psychological terror became another brutal characteristic of the war.\textsuperscript{391} In short, Home Defense activities could not achieve its effects because they were not compatible with the destructive methods of the AFP.

\textbf{4.4.3.2.3 The Decline of the MNLF and the Repercussions of the War in the Muslim South}

The war dragged on with the same intensity until Marcos and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) were forced to sit at a table for peace negotiations in 1976. Marcos was put in a diplomatic squeeze by oil-producing Islamic countries (Libya and Saudi Arabia), as well as the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) that included member-states such as Malaysia and Indonesia who threatened the Philippines with an oil embargo unless Marcos created some sort of an arrangement to recognize the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{385} \textit{PAM 7-00}, pp. 7-8.
\item \textsuperscript{387} Timberman, \textit{A Changeless Land}, p. 90.
\item \textsuperscript{388} AFP, “Challenges and Opportunities.”
\item \textsuperscript{389} George, \textit{Revolt in Mindanao}, p. 217.
\end{itemize}
national aspirations of the Muslim people. Furthermore, with the growing communist threat, Marcos was in a hurry to shift his resources to fighting the communist front.392

On the other hand, the MNLF could not prolong the war fighting a conventional method since they needed more numbers and arsenal as the war carried on. After CENCOM began an unrelenting offensive in central Mindanao, the MNLF forces were forced to scatter and downgrade their tactics to guerrilla-style ambushes, terrorism, and harassment in which they did not have sufficient experience in.393 To add to their blows, Misuari was losing credibility in the eyes of the Islamic countries that were supporting him. There was a growing suspicion that Misuari was seeking his own political aggrandizement rather than looking out for the interests of the Filipino Muslims. They began to pressure Misuari to abandon the armed struggle and to come to the negotiating table. Consequently, an agreement was forged in Tripoli (Libya) between the Philippine government and Misuari to end hostilities. A compromise was made for a ceasefire in which Marcos promised autonomy for 10 Muslim provinces in 1976. Though the ceasefire did not last and Marcos dodged from making a full-commitment to Muslim autonomy, the MNLF was not able to gather the same number of fighters and resources to mobilize a war with the same intensity.394

While the war carried on after the breakdown of the ceasefire, from the military viewpoint, the attritional approach was successful in wearing down the MNLF and containing the threat to occasional skirmishes. As for the use of the soft-methods as embodied in the Home Defense Activities, it did not play a significant role. Still, the war had repercussions for the AFP.

The first was that it locked the military in a mindset that overwhelming firepower was the most effective method in fighting internal rebellions. The AFP used the same approach towards the communists but with staggering setbacks. The armed communists quickly learned to offset the AFP’s conventional capabilities by adopting Mao’s strategy of guerrilla warfare.395 Consequently, the AFP was forced to re-think its usual choice of military strategy and tactics, which resultantly led to a gradual integration of CMO related activities in military operations.

The second was that, though the military was able to extract military successes in the war in the Muslim South, it did not lead to a sustainable peace. Splinter groups such as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) emerged in the succeeding generations, uncovering a host of problems, which were not resolved with the military’s successes in wearing down the MNLF. The Muslim South was still trapped in a culture of violence and grinding poverty. The after-effects of this war also left the Muslim people traumatized, making them distrustful of the central government and the AFP. The reemergence of the Muslim armed threat at the turn of the millennium instigated a response from the military that could not only rely on force to quell rebellions. Thus, paving way for the greater dependence

392 Timberman, A Changeless Land, p. 90.
393 Aijaz Ahmad, “The War Against the Muslims”, in Kristina Gaerlan and Mara Stankovitch eds., Rebels, Warlords and Ulama, Quezon City: Institute for Popular Democracy, 1999, pp. 30-31; AFP, “Challenges and Opportunities.”
394 See ch. 14 and ch. 15 in George, Revolt in Mindanao to see details leading to the cease-fire and immediate aftermath.
on CMO to regain the people’s faith in the military and the government (see chapter 7).

4.4.3.3. The Communist Movement

4.4.3.3.1 Overview

In contrast to the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the armed communists were able to rebuild their strength and adapt to a sophisticated form of politico-guerrilla warfare after experiencing military setbacks in the 1970s. It was the AFP that had the difficulty in adjusting to the CPP-NPA’s switch in strategy and tactics due to their preference in fighting full-scale offensives based on firepower. To make matters worse, AFP capabilities were deteriorating in the last few years of the Marcos regime. This was acutely felt on the frontlines as the AFP lacked adequate resources, training, and morale to stem the rising tide of communism. When Marcos lifted martial law, the AFP began to turn its attention to battling communists and developing a military strategy to counter the communist’s control and influence over the majority of the nation’s provinces. Though they appeared good on paper, it produced little results, if not making the security situation even worse. Nonetheless, on a tactical level, a method of integrating combat, intelligence, and CMO was underway experimentally, and was gaining currency amongst officers deployed to communist strongholds. Consequently, CMO emerged to play a key role in directing COIN efforts as more attention began to be paid to how the communists gained the upper hand in manipulating the depth of the battlespace. This section covers the second phase of CMO of this period, which laid down the track to its conceptualization as a distinct military operation.

4.4.3.3.2 The Resurgence of the Communist Movement: the CPP-NPA

The communist movement emerged more than two decades after Magsaysay consigned them to near dormancy. What helped revive the movement was student activism building momentum on university campuses from the early 1960s. Jose Sison, the future leader of the reactivated PKP (Communist Party of the Philippines) was introduced to the communist circuit by the old guard that allowed him to organize a new mass youth organization known as the Kabataang Makabayan (Youth Nationalist) in 1964. Originally an adherent of Mao Tse-tung, by the time he formed the new Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), he espoused a combination of Marxist-Leninist-Mao thought to better accommodate the situation of the Philippines. He gained traction with the youth, intellectuals, and labor groups. Upon the party’s founding, its original members included 25 members and in the following year (1969), its military wing, the New People’s Army (NPA) was formed with a mere 9 squads and 35 assorted rifles.

Similar to the earlier Huk uprising, they initially focused their operations in rice-rich Central Luzon and in Manila. The CPP-NPA capitalized on the grievances of the poor, especially since a mere 10 per cent of the population controlled 90 per cent of the national’s wealth. Regarding the student sector,

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there were plenty of potential recruits, as the young were politically driven and idealistic. By 1971, Bernabe Buscayno, the commander of the NPA managed raised the number of fighters to anywhere between 300 and 400 men and women. Nonetheless, the Marcos leadership did not treat the problem as a serious security threat until after a series of grenade-triggered explosions in the capital in the year preceding martial law, allegedly orchestrated by the NPA. As Marcos took steps to declare a state of emergency, the AFP began to intensify its operations.

Martial law effectively eliminated a large number of political fronts of the CPP-NPA such as labor unions and student groups, but it did not stop its armed wing from expanding into rural areas. They were successful in developing a mass-based support in Northern Luzon such as in the provinces of Cagayan, Isabela, and Bicol. In the Eastern Visayas region, they infiltrated Samar and Leyte. They also attempted to penetrate the Northeastern and Southeastern provinces of Mindanao. Nevertheless, thanks to the Muslim secessionist movement, the AFP was better funded, better equipped, and had more soldiers to engage in sustained combat operations. With superiority in firepower, the government forces pounded the rebel strongholds, effectively neutralizing them. By 1976, many of the senior commands were either killed or captured, and scores of fighters deserted or surrendered. To add to their woes, their very existence was put to test with the capture of Bernabe Buscayno, the senior commander of the NPA in 1976, which was followed by the capture of Jose Sison in 1977. By the late 1970s, the communist threat was considered to be contained.

Driven further underground, the CPP-NPA changed its strategy and entered a period of rebuilding. They withdrew from launching military attacks and focused on re-learning the tenets of Mao’s guerrilla warfare, which depended on developing a “mass base” of rural supporters. They also worked on making their movement more attractive to non-communists or the so-called middle forces by using an umbrella organization established in 1973, called the National Democratic Front (NDF).

From the period between 1979 and 1980, the CPP-NPA started to engage the AFP in aggressive military campaigns. Their years of preparation finally bore fruit. In 1981, the NPA had approximately 6,000 fighters (see table 4.7) and were known to have 26 guerrilla fronts through the archipelago. In 1981, the NPA claimed to be operating in 43 of the 72 provinces in the Philippines. In a reversal of fortune, the NPA had gained the initiative in battlespace and they were able to overcome factors, which worked against them initially, namely from the AFP’s superiority in numbers and firepower.

398 There are various factors concerning the explosion of the leftist movement on the campuses. They included immediate economic problems such as tuition hikes and unemployment. Regarding political freedom, they protested against diminishing rights in school campuses and in press. They also protested on wider issues such as economic disparity, graft and corruption in the government, and American Imperialism. See Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, p. 420.
400 Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, pp. 504-509; 592; Timberman, A Changeless Land, p. 89.
402 Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Philippine Army, 1993 cited in Ligot, “Communist Insurgency in the Philippines,” p. 79.
403 Timberman, A Changeless Land, p. 115.
Table 4.7: AFP Strength and Estimated CPP-NPA Strength and Armaments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>AFP Strength</th>
<th>NPA Regulars</th>
<th>NPA Armaments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>55,000</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>59,000</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>700</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>4,908</td>
<td>1,960</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2,834</td>
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<td>May-87</td>
<td>154,893</td>
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4.4.3.3 Factors Leading to the Successful Resurgence of the Communists

1. Applying Mao’s Principles of Guerrilla Warfare

Upon declaration of martial law, the CPP-NPA suffered devastating setbacks in both its military and political fronts. The AFP launched aggressive military campaigns, which neutralized many rebel strongholds, and in the capital, a crackdown on the dissident movement left the CPP bereft of a legal front.\(^{404}\) Consequently, they were driven underground and forced to rethink their strategy and tactics.

The CPP-NPA began placing more attention on the classical tenets of Mao’s guerrilla warfare. Being largely inferior to the government forces, they needed *time* to train, equip, expand, build, and mobilize their armed units alongside building their political apparatus.\(^{405}\) In other words they embarked on

\(^{404}\) Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, pp. 504-505.
\(^{405}\) Corpus, *Silent War*, p. 25.
a strategy of *protracted warfare*, dictated by three stages. The first stage, *strategic defense* begins with the preparation of building military and political strength, which is based on mobilizing the support of the population. This is followed by *strategic stalemate*, which involves initiating periodic armed assaults on the government forces, primarily to harass the government forces and drive them towards a defensive posture. The *strategic offensive* is the final stage, in which the guerrilla forces have mustered enough strength to launch an overwhelming offensive and overthrow the central government.406

During the period between 1977 and 1981, the rebels laid down the groundwork to control the battlespace. To achieve the requirements of the first stage, they refrained from armed activity so as not to attract the attention of the AFP. Especially since their forces were still weak, any major offensives by the AFP would risk the decimation of their forces. Instead, they devoted their attention to quietly building their base areas.407 Though seeming contrary to the principles of mobile warfare where the physical and stationary control over key territory was shunned, they still needed a base area to serve as their command center and maintain lines-of-communication with operatives out in the field, not to mention also the necessity in tending to the day-to-day needs of armed fighters such as training, food, recuperation, and shelter.408

Therefore ideal areas in building bases were the hinterlands. The plan was to dot the countryside with self-reliant and semi-autonomous guerrilla fronts. As soon as there were sufficient numbers, they would link-up and launch a coordinated attack on the cities.409 Also known as the “encirclement strategy,” this was a move to first build NPA strength in the peripheries where government presence was the weakest and then gradually work their way into the city-center, to prepare for the final stage of capturing the seat of the government.410

Building bases did not mean a preoccupation with a physically defined piece of territory. Rather, their idea of a base area was produced from a supportive community. In other words, the CPP-NPA built a political infrastructure through their own mass organizations and political organs to exercise control. At the same time, they also developed guerrilla zones, where guerrilla presence was even more fluid. In these zones, the communists only exercised control when they were physically there and relinquished that control, upon leaving. These were important to maintain, especially when the infrastructure for political control was still under works.411

Physical elements of the battlespace were also taken into consideration such as the natural topography. Their choice-terrain for fighting guerrilla warfare resided in the physical depth of the battlespace: in mountainous or forested areas. The rebels maneuvered in physical space that provided natural barriers for large and heavily equipped military to operate effectively in. Often times the

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406 Ibid., pp. 27-30.
408 Ibid., p. 34.
410 Corpus, *Silent War*, p. 93.
411 Ibid., p. 33.
government forces did not have the same familiarity with the terrain as the rebels did; and the rebels used their knowledge of the physical environs for cover when escaping and launching ambushes and raids.\textsuperscript{412} Additionally, the communists selected areas that straddled two or more provinces, making it a jurisdictional nightmare for government security forces to chase the rebels.\textsuperscript{413}

2. Building the Support of the Population: the CPP-NPA’s Version of CMO

How the CPP-NPA gained the support of the population is also a remarkable study on what was wrong with the existing Home Defense Program. The CPP-NPA understood that in order to reverse their fortunes, mass support was indispensable. The people were the building blocks for their control especially in the countryside. For starters they differentiated their targets. In the urban areas they recruited idealistically youth from the student-sector, as well as professionals and intellectuals. They went on to serve as the instructor-cadres in the countryside. In rural areas, the CPP-NPA capitalized on the socio-economic plight of the peasants to gain their support.

They won the hearts and minds of the rural folk through their own version of CMO called \textit{mass work}.\textsuperscript{414} In contrast to those of the AFP, the CPP-NPA made efforts to understand the communities located within the boundaries of their chosen base-area. The cadres (drawn from the intellectual pool) were dispatched to these communities first for the purpose of conducting Social Investigation (SI). SI involved holding small meetings with the villagers to acquire an understanding on their sources of discontent. In the process, the cadres identified individuals in the community of whom they could befriend such as people from the lower social stratum and listed up those that were considered to be potential enemies such as people with close ties with the military or the wealthy landlords. After compiling and processing the results of the survey, the cadres began organizational building through the spread of propaganda and civic action.\textsuperscript{415}

SI was followed by revolutionary propaganda. This included the oral element, which was intended to indoctrinate the villagers with communist ideology through mass meetings, speech, and radio broadcasts. The written element was circulated through underground newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets. In regards to the contents of the propaganda, the CPP-NPA gained more credibility than the AFP due to the fact that they took a truth-centered approach. AFP propaganda failed miserably in garnering the trust of the populace as they mixed truth with gray propaganda (half-truths) and the more notorious, black propaganda (falsehood), which was used in their psyops program to cover-up AFP misdeeds and vilify the enemy. The CPP-NPA propaganda was also successful in rallying target communities to their cause since they were propped with deeds. Deeds ranged from the day-to-day behavior of the rebels towards to the people to actual implementation of projects to benefit the people.\textsuperscript{416}

Concerning deeds, the activities that had the most pronounced effect on the people were their

\textsuperscript{412} Ibid., pp. 64-65
\textsuperscript{413} Ibid., pp. 33-35
\textsuperscript{414} Ibid., p. 39.
\textsuperscript{415} Ibid., pp. 36-40.
\textsuperscript{416} Ibid., pp. 42; 124-125.
own version of civic action work. Though the AFP’s extensive implementation of civic action was operating under the correct assumption that a military solution is not the answer to the insurgencies, any success gained was quickly erased by the destruction, the terror, and intimidation that came with military entry into the communities. Furthermore, it did little to solve the fundamental problems of socio-economic inequalities since they were not backed by workable government policies. Even Marcos’ ambitious land reform scheme fell flat as he made too many exemptions due to resistance from landlords, the challenges of administrative work, and the reality that there were just not enough lands to redistribute. It was here that the communists made a difference. While they did not have the resources to engage in large-infrastructure work, they were still able to provide rudimentary healthcare and assist people in their house and farm chores. The cadres also helped to improve the livelihoods of the peasant by increasing productivity of the lands, ensuring better prices for their products, pressuring landlords to reduce rent, and forming trade unions and cooperatives for them.

In short the CPP-NPA skillfully managed the human element of the battlespace by bringing the people to their side with a combination of attractive ideology and the prompt delivery of action. The rural support was especially indispensable in their military build-up. The people replenished their supply-lines and provided manpower. The community members could also be depended on as a communications system. Intelligence was vital since the people could block information from leaking to government authorities and simultaneously provide the rebels with information about troop movement and dispositions. All these factors provided the NPAs with the capabilities to offset the superior forces of the AFP. By 1981, the CPP-NPA had influence in 1,173 barangays and had infiltrated 2,147 barangays out of the nation’s approximately 40,000 barangays.

4.4.4 CMO in the Second Phase: Integrating CMO in COIN

4.4.4.1 The Vietnam Doctrine vs. Guerrilla Warfare

The first difficulty the AFP had in adjusting to the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA)’s battlespace was in the way the AFP conducted military operations. The AFP’s combat methods were largely built and organized along methods which relied heavily on firepower and air-support, search and destroy, and combined with addressing the population component through the organization of village defense, strategic hamleting, civic action, and population control. All of these
methods were borrowed from the American military’s COIN doctrines applied in Vietnam. While it bore results in the military campaigns against the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), it did not wear down the CPP-NPA. Rather the communists showed resilience and honed in on classic guerrilla tactics of hit-and-run, rapid concentration and dispersal, feint and deception, small-unit operations, and the building of bases in the midst of a supportive population. It was increasingly becoming clear that the Vietnam doctrines was in fact unaffordable for the AFP and misaligned to the Filipino conditions, and even worse, stalled the AFP in re-orientating its methods in facing guerrilla warfare.

4.4.4.2 AFP: Alienating the Population and its Repercussions

One of the largest failures of the AFP in countering the surge in the communist threat lay in its treatment of the population. For starters, the AFP did not build an effective presence in those remote communities that were considered to be under the influence or control of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA). Rather, soldiers operated from their military bases located in urban areas. This static-defense posture was almost a flashback to the early campaigns against the Huks in the late 1940s. They made the same mistake in launching occasional search and destroy missions into rebel-strongholds. The net-effect of these forays was that it was seldom decisive and it was only a matter of time before the rebels returned to a cleared area. Additionally, these missions left a trail of destruction, which drove the people further away from the military. The deepening gulf between the population and the military was not simply a matter of civilians being caught in the crossfire but senior officers on a rotational-basis did not make the efforts to develop contacts with the population. Not surprisingly, it revealed the fact that Home Defense activities were not used initially in the most needed places. Having little understanding of the population, the commanders tended to view the civilians with suspicion, which in effect, exacerbated the relationship between themselves and the communities they were supposed to protect.

Even CMO activities embodied in the Home Defense Program, which had a “noble” purpose of uplifting the lives of the people and promoting friendly relations with the communities, fell short of their objectives. What happened was that they became “disjointed” with the actual COIN plan as any positive effects of the programs were quickly overrode by the destruction and uprooting of lives accompanied by military operations. Furthermore, the AFP was dictated by the Vietnam COIN doctrine, which was more interested in physically cutting the people’s links with the guerrillas. These included the strategic hamleting

423 The two American military doctrines referred to is the Airland Battle Doctrine and Low Intensity Conflict.
424 Corpus, Silent War, p. 108.
425 The retreat of rebel forces during a government offensive is a strategic move by the rebels to preserve their forces. It is a method to avoid confrontation with an opponent superior in numbers and armaments. It also serves as a feint where the opposing forces are made to think the rebels are running away where in fact, they are buying time to prepare themselves for a counter-offensive. Also known as the “strategic retreat.” See Corpus, Silent War, pp. 63-64; 108.
426 Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, p. 508; Kessler, Rebellion and Repression in the Philippines, pp. 146-147.
427 Corpus, Silent War, p. 108.
program that forcefully resettled villagers. The ones conducted in Samar and Davao del Norte were done at such severity that it turned the people against the AFP. In the latter province, the AFP impounded food from villagers and Home Defense soldiers engaged in extortion in the set up roadblocks. And in regards to the physical defense of the people, the overstretched military delegated village protection to trained and armed civilians. The Civilian Home Defense Forces (CHDF) in particular became notorious for their abuse of power and terrorized the very people they were supposed to protect.428

Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that the most serious drawback to the AFP COIN campaign was the declaration of martial law. In Marcos’ quest for total control, he used the military as a tool to crush political opposition and suppress civil liberties. There were unwarranted arrests, prolonged detentions, and summary killings of people suspected to be enemies of the state, and many of them attributed to the AFP. Therefore any attempts to gain the support of the people through CMO would only serve as a hypocritical reminder that the AFP was only serving the interests of the regime.429

As the war against the CPP-NPA continued, it was increasingly becoming apparent how critical the support of the population was. The AFP was often operating on the home turf of the rebels. With the population supporting the rebels, the military did not have the means to gain intelligence from the civilians. Without local intelligence, the soldiers could only rely on maps and other navigational instruments to trek through the physical terrain that consisted of jungles, mountains, and marshes in search of the rebels. Making the job even more difficult was that the NPA had mastered the know-how of mobile warfare. With no stationary targets, the government forces at best could only wait for a chance-encounter with the enemy. With the opponent having superior knowledge over the terrain, and having a near-monopoly over intelligence sources from the population, it allowed them to initiate attacks at their own choosing. As a result, troops were often caught unaware in ambushes when they were insufficiently unmanned and too exhausted from a long march to effectively counter such attacks.430

4.4.4.3 The AFP Adjusting to the New Battlespace: Operation Plan Katatagan

The resurgence of the communist movement forced the AFP to re-examine its existing internal defense program. In the process of searching for a better approach, the military examined the factors that enabled the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA) to dominate the battlespace. These findings are listed as follows:

428 Kessler, Rebellion and Repression in the Philippines, p. 144; Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, p. 508.
430 Corpus, Silent War, pp. 65: 78-79. Corpus also points out, there was something fundamentally wrong with the methods of the AFP intelligence community. He cites that the AFP did not understand the enemy thoroughly and primarily depended on intelligence gathered from urban centers. While, the CPP-NPA did build political organizations and recruited in the cities, actual armed operations occurred in the countryside. Therefore, any intelligence gathered from urban centers and shared with combat units deployed at the front were hardly of use. See Corpus, Silent War, p. 21.
1. Socio-economic issues which made the people vulnerable to the lure of communism.
2. The lack of government presences in rural areas.
3. The lack of coordination between the military and civilian authorities in answering to the security and developmental needs of the people.
4. The CPP-NPA’s ability to commit to an ideological struggle.
5. The CPP-NPA’s overall organizational strength in producing quality leadership and situational awareness (socio-economic and cultural issues) over the battlespace or Area of Operations (AO). \(^{431}\)

Based on these insights, the AFP came out with its first comprehensive strategy to fight insurgencies. In 1981, the same year that martial law was lifted, Letter of Instruction (LOI) 2/81 Katatagan (stability) Operation Plan (oplan) was put into action. \(^{432}\) It was a strategy that placed civic action at its centerpiece. It prioritized meeting the needs of the people over applying overwhelming force. \(^{433}\)

Katatagan was formulated to rollback the successes of the CPP-NPA in the countryside by streamlining combat operations and CMO. The objectives were twofold. One was to improve security operations for the purposes of protecting the government, allow the safe entry of government services in conflict zones, and most importantly, to protect the people. The second was to win the hearts and minds of people by removing the seeds of discontent that came with poverty, ignorance, disease, and injustice. This was done by developing a partnership between the military and civilian agencies, especially at a grass-roots level, towards an overall COIN effort. \(^{434}\) Katatagan would be carried out in four stages:

1. **Clearing** the battlespace of insurgents through combat and civil-military activities.
2. **Holding** or maintaining a security presence to prevent the return of the insurgents, removing the communist political infrastructure, rehabilitating the people, and having local government agencies resume delivery of basic services.
3. **Consolidating** control by maintaining security and having civilian agencies conduct immediate socio-economic and political reform.
4. **Developing** the area for long-term and establishing permanent security. \(^{435}\)

\(^{431}\) [AFP Annual Report ’82, *A Year of Solid Achievement*, p. 40.]
\(^{432}\) Ligot, “Communist Insurgency in the Philippines,” p. 41; When Letter of Instructions (LOI) preceded the name of AFP campaign plans, it meant that civic action was central to the campaign. See Espino, “Counterinsurgency: The Role of Paramilitaries,” p. 28, footnote 97.
\(^{433}\) Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, p. 597.
4.4.4.4 The Reorganization of Home Defense: the Establishment of the CMO Program

In accordance to Katatagan’s Letter of Instruction (LOI), the Home Defense Program also experienced an organizational change in the following year (1982). Katatagan ultimately changed the course of Home Defense Activities from one that was oriented towards nation-building to one that was supposed to be streamlined with military operations. One of the major obstacles in sustaining any gains of CMO was that there was a lack of coherent connection with combat operations. Intensive ground and air assaults that produced casualties, property destruction, and the forced-relocation of villagers in combat zones only worsened the plight of the people. Consequently, it gave the rebels an upper hand in seizing the psychological domain of the battlespace as more and more people threw in their support for the communists.436 In order to support the people component of Katatagan Home Defense was combined with Civil Relations (CR) and labeled under the heading The AFP-Civil Military Operations, marking its first official use of the term. Under the new AFP-CMO, its activities were organized under two sub-programs: Home Defense and Civil Relations. Home Defense retained most of its former activities (see section 4.4.2.3) but dropped motivational enlightenment and civil relations. Civil Relations gained a semi-independent position as a sub-program, with motivational enlightenment becoming fused into its respective components. The components of Civil Relations are as follows:

1. Public Information – Keeping the public informed on the AFP’s activities.
2. Command Information – Keeping the soldiers well-motivated, educated and informed on military matters.
3. Community Relations – Activities involving the civilian community.
4. Psychological Operations – Aimed at producing psychological leverage over the target audience (population and enemy). Activities includes both psywar and non-combat operations 437

The basis of these activities resembles those of Magsaysay’s Civil Affairs Office. The combining of Civil Relations and Home Defense led to the explicit recognition on the psychological effects of its programs. All activities, be it civic action or the dissemination of information to the public, were to be integrated with propaganda to raise the standing of the government. They included the use of written publications (word), pictorial messages such as through movies (symbols), and socio-economic activities (deeds).438

The CMO component, which was supposed to play the largest role in reaching the depth of the communist strongholds, both psychologically and physically, was the Mass Base Operations. These were military activities that were specifically tailored to de-influence communities under communist control for the ultimate purpose of isolating insurgents from their base of support and thereby, securing the support of the population for the government. They included the protection of people from military operations and

436 Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, pp. 508-509.
437 Ibid., pp. 560; 564; 568-569.
438 Ibid., pp. 568-569.
insurgent retaliation, socio-economic assistance to impoverished communities, and the re-habilitation and re-settlement of people affected by military operations. It also had long-term objectives of preventing the insurgents’ return by taking steps to ensure that local government agencies were on the forefront of strengthening the Mass Base Operations, even after the termination of military operations.439

Having said that, CMO was not formalized. Nor was it treated as an independent operation. Rather it was referred to a collection of activities that embraced various functional areas and fell under various chief of staff responsibilities including Deputy Chief of Staff (DCS) Personnel, DCS Intelligence, DCS Operations, DCS Plans and DCS CMO.440

4.4.4.5 The AFP: a Faltering Mammoth against a Growing Communist Threat

Oplan Katatagan was unarguably a practical solution to reverse the setbacks that the AFP faced against the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA). Some progress was seen especially in improving the civil-military partnership (involving 26 government ministries and 91 government corporations)441 and the variety of civic action programs carried out (installing electrification lines, building schools and housing, dispensing medical and dental treatment to patients, and conducting dialogues in communities).442 Nonetheless, as good as the ideas were, there were too many factors blocking its proper implementation. The first was that it was not an indigenous doctrine tailored to fit local conditions. Rather it still drew ideas from American COIN practices.443 It was not only infeasible because of the astronomical amount of resources needed, especially in developing all areas influenced or controlled by communist insurgents,444 even though it was funded by 1 billion pesos, an eighth of the total defense budget in 1985.445 Furthermore, actual practices spelled out a sharp departure from the tenets of Katatagan, which called for small-unit action, with corresponding activities that involve CMO and intelligence gathering. Military commanders could not easily rid themselves of a combat-oriented mentality that focused on large-scale operations nurtured by American COIN practices. This became increasingly apparent as the bulk of resources went disproportionately into combat operations at the expense of intelligence and CMO.446

Another difficulty for the AFP in weaning themselves off from the Vietnam COIN doctrine was the way in which they treated the human element of the battlespace through strategic hamletting and village

442 See Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, pp. 561-563 for statistics on the number and type of CMO carried out by 1984.
446 Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, pp. 509; 597.
defense. Strategic hamleting was already in practice before 1981, but the new operation plan intensified efforts to physically separate the rural communities from the communist rebels. As villages were forced to relocate under military threats, many of the inhabitants were deprived of their farmlands and livelihood. This was just another factor that defeated the purpose of bringing the people closer to the military.\(^{447}\)

Village defense was also strengthened as a means to provide improved security for the people in rural communities. The Civilian Home Defense Force (CHDF), a part of the CMO program, had already been established in 1976. Though it seemed like a practical answer to make up for the shortfall of troops to cover extensive areas and reduce costs, it backfired since the militia made up of civilians was not only abusive but failed to protect the people and consequently, drove the people into the arms of CPP-NPA. Furthermore, the militia, being poorly trained was easy targets for NPA raids. Militia detachments turned out to be a godsend for the CPP-NPA, since foreign sponsorship was by that time non-inexistent. Arms could now be acquired by raiding poorly defended CHDF posts. Ironically, the CHDF ended up replenishing the NPA’s arms supplies.\(^{448}\)

Defense capabilities were also not commensurate with what was required in Oplan Katatagan. The military institution was beginning to fray. Officers were promoted based on their loyalties to Marcos, and not by merit, which was in sharp contrast to the NPA’s command structure.\(^{449}\) Consequently, the AFP became a top-heavy organization where the majority of high-ranking officers served Marcos in the capital, draining the battlefield of competent field commanders.\(^{450}\) Furthermore, their assignments in top civilian management positions also presented them opportunities for graft and corruption.\(^{451}\) To make matters worse, Marcos with his failing health was becoming more preoccupied in protecting his regime and diverted much of the needed military resources in protecting himself. Thus, many of the combat units were reassigned to Malacanang, the presidential palace.\(^{452}\)

Needless to say, all this put a drag on the combat capabilities of the AFP. The soldiers fighting on the frontlines against the NPA were sorely lacking in training, supplies, equipment and quality leadership. It was not only damaging for their morale, but it also spurred a movement amongst certain elements within the military to eventually embroil the country in a series of coups in the post-Marcos period.\(^{453}\)

In actuality, Oplan Katatagan remained a military endeavor and it was not backed up with a blueprint for political reform. Following relative peace in the late 1970s, Marcos could not justify the

\(^{447}\) Timberman, *A Changeless Land*, p. 100.
\(^{450}\) Corpus, *Silent War*, p. 129.
\(^{453}\) Timberman, *A Changeless Land*, pp. 96-98.
continuation of martial law and terminated it, only to be replaced with *developmental authoritarianism*. Yet, in practice, this was only a euphemism for an extended authoritative regime. However, it was evident that Marcos’ power was eroding and the country was sliding into a political crisis. A pivotal moment came in 1983, when the only viable opponent to Marcos, Benigno Aquino, Jr. was shot to death on the tarmac of Manila’s international airport. When it was revealed that the elements of the AFP were behind the assassination, the public targeted their anger against Marcos. The event was so ground-shaking that people became more emboldened to protest against the Marcos regime. The CPP-NPA was able to capitalize on the growing discontent on the people, as they provided the most viable alternative to opposition. In 1983, the CPP-NPA had 20,000 regulars. By 1985, it was estimated that there was anywhere between 12,000 to 20,000 fighters, of whom, two-thirds were armed. It was not only the countryside that was affected, but also their umbrella organization, the National Democratic Front (NDF) had managed to gain a foothold in urban areas by infiltrating leftist groups. In 1984, the NPA launched urban-based terrorist attacks especially in Davao, Mindanao where squads struck terror by assassinating government and security personnel.

Against this backdrop, CMO could not reach its potential in the revitalized COIN program. The main reason being was that Marcos was not committed to turning around the failing AFP and seriously taking the insurgent threat by the horns. While the reorganization of Home Defense Activities and Civil Relations under CMO spelled out a better understanding on the non-combat activities of the military from the aspect of countering the insurgent hold over the population, its planning and its implementation remained flawed.

### 4.4.5 Development of CMO in Reaction to Mainstream COIN Practices

#### 4.4.5.1 Reviewing Insurgent Battlespace

In conventional warfare, the objective is to find the main body of the opposing force in order to destroy it and also attacking a physically territory that the enemy defends and capturing it. Once these are accomplished, the outcome of the war is decidedly in the favor of the attacker. Nevertheless, these same ideas cannot be applied to guerrilla warfare since the guerrilla deny denies the attacker from locating it main body through mobility and also do not typically have to stick around to defend a geographical area to preserve their existence. Therefore, the counter-guerrilla has to find what allows the guerrilla to sustain his operations and when denied of this, significantly plays a part in his demise.

As with most guerrilla movements, the *population* became the lifeline to the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA). During the late 1970s, the communists were able to gain influence if not control over wide stretches of land in the rural backwaters. By the early 1980s, the

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454 Ibid., p. 81.
456 Ibid., p. 507.
458 Ibid., pp. 503-504; 507
CPP-NPA had the “best articulated and most effective political organization in the Philippines countryside.” This created a sea of population that provided a resourceful alternative to fixed supply-bases and lines of communication that a conventional force would be equipped with. The population not only secured the CPP-NPA of recruits, supplies, and intelligence about the government forces, but also did not physically tie down the NPA to an area. They were able to control communities through shadow governments, which did not require a stationary presence but allowed them to move in and out as they pleased. In sharp contrast, government forces were either tied down to defending their posts or were constantly chasing an ever-moving target. The chase was a nightmarish challenge since the AFP was not only bogged down by their heavy transport and equipment in mountainous or jungle terrain, but they literally “groping in the dark” to find the whereabouts of the rebels that the population so effectively hid from the AFP either by concealing them or denying them on any information concerning their location.

4.4.5.2 Integrating CMO in Maneuver Warfare

CMO was further developed under the new COIN plan to fix these problems but if failed to reach its objective in separating the insurgents from the people. The biggest challenge was that many of the AFP officers could not really grasp how the communists systematically organized the human element of the battlespace and how this in turn, provided the guerrillas with an overwhelming advantage over the AFP in conducting warfare.

Yet, the guidelines set forth in Katatagan involving the organization of small military units for tactical engagements; improved intelligence gathering and managing the human component of the battlespace were not rendered useless. On a tactical level, a handful of army officers that had a deeper understanding on the link between the mass-base support and the excellent maneuverability of the communists over the battlespace, began to experimentally counter-organize the communist-infiltrated communities based on these guidelines. They deployed what became known as Special Operations Teams (SOT), which had three built-in capabilities: combat, intelligence, and CMO. It was based on these operations that CMO emerged to become better conceptualized within the confines of maneuver warfare.

SOTs began experimentally by Army Captain Alex Congmon of the Army’s 4th Infantry Division (ID) in a village called Agusan Del Norte in Mindanao. Having a background as a field intelligence officer, he initially focused on intelligence gathering and psychological operations. He believed that the only way the military could override the influence of the communists in villages was to gain the trust of the people in the manner that the communists did. At the same time, he demonstrated his understanding on the tenets of maneuver warfare in an insurgent battlespace where large military units could not produce results in the operational depth that the NPAs so skillfully exploited. He sought out to deny these positional advantages that the insurgents had over the population, by placing closer attention on building relationships with the people. By 1982, he developed what became known later as the Special Operations Teams (SOTs), military

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461 Corpus, Silent War, pp. 77-79; 111.
462 Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, p. 597.
team that had integrated components of CMO, combat, and intelligence. These teams registered enough success to be further tested by the 53rd Infantry Battalion under Colonel Cesar F. Ilano in Misamis Oriental and later refined and implemented by units of the 4th ID under Brigadier General Mariano P. Adalem.463

One early prototype of SOT bore success in Arakan Valley, Mindanao, an impoverished agricultural region located at the base of the nation’s tallest mountain, Mount Apo. For the communists, it was an ideal spot for base-building due to its rugged terrain, isolation, lack of government presence, and socio-economic conditions. In 1978, communist propaganda teams began entering the area and within the span of two years, effectively organized many of the communities under their political control. Around the same time, the AFP’s Central Mindanao Command (CENTCOM) was tasked to stabilize the area and re-establish government control. The notion to use large army sweeps was quickly discarded since it only had the effect of clearing an area of guerrilla presence temporarily. Once the military withdrew, the guerrillas made their way back. Therefore, the focus was placed on dismantling the communist political apparatus by deploying teams of Special Forces trained for no less than a year for this specific mission.

The nascent SOT engaged firstly in providing security for the communities, which was backed by a Home Defense Company whose main role was to train and organize village defense forces. Secondly, they ferreted out guerrillas through aggressive reconnaissance and combat patrols. And thirdly, in what was considered to be the most important in dismantling the communist infrastructure, was CMO. CMO here did not simply engage in civic action or broadcast propaganda. It was developed to mirror the mass work of the communists. In contrast with existing military missions that were deployed to enemy areas for a short duration, the Special Forces embedded themselves in the community for an extended period, literally “living, eating, working, and studying together” with the people. As a result, they were able to project their image as a dedicated soldier and gain the trust of the people. In the course of their stay, the CENTCOM got the support of the provincial and national government to deliver services based on the people’s needs such as schools and farm-to-market roads. To top it off, these projects provided employment to the local inhabitants. This had the effect of restoring the people’s faith in the government. By the end of 1982, the AFP reported that they had removed the communist political apparatus and expelled the core fighters from Arakan Valley. While it did demonstrate initial success, reports that elements of the NPA were returning into the valley later, exposed the budgetary constraints placed on these operations, especially in the follow-up stage that largely depended on developmental initiatives.464

In many ways, the SOTs draws striking similarities with Battalion Combat Teams (BCTs) of the Magsaysay period, where military units were stripped down in size and made to operate semi-independently, which in turn allowed them to move more fluidly over the physical and human terrain. Both were formed in response to the problems of static defense and engaging in large-scale sweeps, which rarely net results. CMO was similarly recognized to be a stepping-stone to penetrating the depth of the

insurgents. The major difference was that it had a more pronounced political aspect on the ground, where the AFP sought to counter-organize the political infrastructure with their own community organizations.

4.4.5.3 COIN Plan Revamped in the Last Year of the Marcos Regime

The AFP states that the CMO as it is practiced today was developed between 1985 and 1988. Actual conceptualization of CMO as a distinct military operation and separate from its former developmental orientation is said to be in 1985. The timing is logical since in the very same year, a new COIN plan was in the works to replace Oplan Katatagan. In fact is was drawn up and implemented in parts by the end of 1985, but was prevented from unveiling itself until a few weeks after Corazon Aquino was installed as the new president in 1986. Despite the argument that nothing had fundamentally changed between the old and the new operation plans, it was evident that more emphasis was placed on integrating CMO better with the overall military operations (see section 4.5).

4.4.6 Assessment of CMO in the Marcos Period

CMO from the Magsaysay period was not understood concretely in the way he did by succeeding administration, and his untimely death left the legacy of this program on nebulous terms. What was retained of early CMO was broadly split into two branches where the developmental aspect was retained in SEMP and the psychological aspect in Civil Affairs.

In the early years of the Marcos administration, Marcos latched onto the developmental component of CMO rather than on the COIN aspects. He used it to develop the nation and also bring the military behind him. Furthermore, it had a strong nation-building orientation where the military would set examples to the people for the purpose of unifying them under a single Filipino identity.

Concerning warfare, it played a minimal role in the Muslim secessionist war, as both sides for the most part relied on conventional operations. However, when it became apparent that the same method could not be applied with same results on the communists, the AFP worked towards developing a COIN program that relied on CMO to not only to deliver socio-economic to the impoverished people but to also tackle the psychological dimensions of the war, especially through winning hearts and minds. As pointed out earlier, even though it had a role to play in battling insurgents, CMO was disjointed from the overall military operations since both operations did not compliment each other. The AFP still could not shake off its old ways based on firepower, not to mention Marcos’ lack of interest in boosting military capabilities was taking a toll on the AFP. When it became apparent that the new COIN program directed towards the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA) was yielding little results, certain

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468 Magno and Gregor, “Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in the Philippines,” p. 510
commanders began to experiment with small-unit action that involved CMO to counter the communist insurgents’ control over remote communities. Hence, this laid down the basis for how CMO would play out in the next administration.

4.5 The Corazon Aquino Administration (1986-1992)

4.5.1 Introduction

The period that bridges the administration of Marcos and Aquino, and the events that transpired in the latter, makes the analysis of CMO difficult. CMO is often eclipsed by the turbulence of the period, marked by the explosion of events that led to the downfall of Marcos, and the period of government instability that followed. One author describes the Aquino period as “too short for basic reforms,” suggesting that little could be said on any progress the AFP made in CMO. Even the Philippine Army’s field manual on CMO, that has a section devoted to its history, hardly makes any references to this period. Yet, when carefully uncovering the layers of political turmoil, military intrigue, and the mounting threats from the communists that so often define this period, it can be argued that it was one of the most critical chapters in the history of CMO.

The AFP marks 1985 as the official beginning of CMO, stating that the operation itself was conceptualized for the first time as a distinct operation geared towards insurgency. Even though CMO was utilized in military campaigns during the Marcos era, not to mention the fact that the official use of its term had already emerged in 1982, accompanied by the creation of a CMO office (J7) at the AFP Deputy Chief of Staff level, CMO still connoted a stronger socio-economic role rather than one that was fine-tuned to counterinsurgency (COIN). It was only with the rebound in the armed communist movement at the tail end of the Marcos regime that propelled a handful of Army commanders to incorporate CMO within the context of maneuver warfare. Consequently, the diffracted components of CMO that included civic action, psychological operations, civic action, public affairs and community assistance were bound together in an understanding that it was a distinct operation that should be treated for its utility in COIN warfare. From evidence collected in the previous section, CMO was conceptualized as result of the improved understanding on using maneuver to reach the enemy depth. The CMO concept was based on activities to remove communist influence in barangays through a series of persuasive activities. Nevertheless, the idea remained for the most part too abstract for the majority of the soldiers to understand and implement. Actual implementation on a larger-scale, practice came only in the latter-half of the Aquino administration.

Based on a close examination of events of the period, the author argues that CMO during the Aquino administration was shaped by two phases. In the first phase, it embodied up to a certain extent, an attempt to redefine the AFP’s role in society and restore the public’s trust in them, especially through a

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470 PAM-7-00, p. 10.

moral and spiritual indoctrination of the soldiers. Nevertheless, these attempts were eclipsed by the difficult transition the nation was undergoing to achieve democracy. The second phase began when the AFP was able to regain full control over COIN measures after a series of coup attempts. CMO shifted from one that was supposed to be aligned with her administration’s quest to politically end the communist conflict through reconciliation and peace agreements, to one that was retooled to bolster the AFP’s COIN efforts. It was in this stage that the conceptualization of CMO was picked up from where it was left off at the end of the Marcos era and implemented more effectively.

4.5.2 Background: Early Years of the Aquino Administration

The EDSA people uprising in February 25, 1986 effectively dislodged Marcos from dictatorial power and installed Corazon Aquino as the new president. As the bereaved widow of the late Marcos-critic, Senator Benigno Aquino, Jr., she glided into power by overwhelming support from the Filipino masses. The people were under high expectations that she would restore democracy, turn around the economy, and peacefully end the insurgencies.

However under the veneer of public jubilancy, Aquino and her cabinet were beset with a host of problems, the most immediate concern coming from the military. Aquino was bequeathed with “a bloated and seriously decayed military led by an officer corps that, under Marcos, was accustomed to playing an influential role in national affairs.” For years, the military had been involved in activities outside the scope of defense, especially in development and administering martial law, which subsequently “politicized” a segment of the officers. This experience made them feel justified in challenging Aquino’s cabinet if it could not fulfill its responsibilities of governance. At the same time the “decay” that set in within the military was not only from its abuse of power which was demonstrated in human rights violations and corruption, but also by the overstretch of its responsibilities which ultimately weakened its abilities to tend to its main business of defense.

The impulse to shun the military by the new administration did not come as a surprise. Aquino, having little knowledge over defense matters, surrounded herself with like-minded political advisors who consisted of technocrats and human rights lawyers. Some of them even served jail time as political dissidents under martial law, which explained their visible contempt and suspicions towards the military.

472 Former Senator Aquino, an opposition rival to Marcos was gunned down by elements of the AFP on August 21, 1983 upon returning from exile in the United States. Suspicions immediately fell General Fabian Ver who was closely associated to Marcos and this incident was one factor that deepened the political crisis in the last few years of the Marcos regime. See Timberman, A Changeless Land, pp. 125-129.

473 Idem., p. 247.


Rather than engaging the military officers, the new administration chose to have this troublesome military simply “return to the barracks” without clarifying their new roles under a democracy. As a result, the military officers were shut out of their accustomed role in decision-making, and their feelings of alienation were further exacerbated when they were excluded in determining policy in matters related to national security. This growing fissure between the military and the Aquino cabinet developed into an intense civil-military tug-of-war, one that would be punctuated by at least 7 coup attempts between July 1986 and December 1989.

4.5.3 CMO in Phase One: National Reconciliation

4.5.3.1 Operation Plan Mamamayan: Adding the National Reconciliation Element

Contrary to public expectations, the transition to a democratic government did not immediately turn around the security situation. When Aquino assumed presidency in 1986, the Muslim separatism movement continued to simmer in the South. While this front was more or less contained, the more disturbing developments came from the armed communist movement. In 1986, the New People’s Army (NPA) regulars amounted to 24,430 with 64 guerrilla fronts scattered across the country. Despite peace overtures made by the new administration, their ranks swelled to 25,200 members with 72 guerrilla fronts in the following year. Furthermore, the years they spent on developing a political infrastructure especially in the countryside, allowed them to gain a mass base of 1 million people, and it was also estimated that in this period, that they had influence, if not control over, at least 20 per cent of the nation’s barangays.

A new COIN plan called Oplan Mamamayan (people) was made official as soon as Aquino stepped into office in 1986. It simultaneously targeted threats from both the Muslim and communist fronts but its primary focus fell on the communists. The new operation plan closely resembled Marcos’ Oplan Katatagan, which was supposed to take a people-centric approach by addressing their socio-economic grievances in order to cut the insurgents’ hold over them. Despite the validity in the ideas embodied in Marcos’ first comprehensive COIN strategy, it ended up serving the protection of the regime rather than protect the people. This time around, Oplan Mamamayan would try to ensure that Katatagan’s clear, hold, consolidate, and development formula would be implemented to help the people. In fact this operation plan was already prepared and made ready in the last year of Marcos’ reign with CMO playing a more


478 President Aquino attempted to secure peace with the Muslim separatists with the restoration of democracy. A ceasefire was secured with the MNLF in 1986 but broke down the following year. Nevertheless, she did include in her talks provisions for a Muslim autonomy and established the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao in 1989. Four provinces were included as a result of a plebicite held in provinces and cities with a sizable Muslim population.


significant role in COIN but was postponed by sudden political developments.\textsuperscript{482} With Aquino in power, the only difference she added was the reconciliation element. This was in step with Aquino’s National Reconciliation and Development Program (NRDP), which was a policy based on having rebel surrenderees return to the folds of the law through state-sponsored incentives that extended amnesty, cash for surrendered arms, and livelihood support.\textsuperscript{483} In sum, Mamayan had three main objectives:

1. Develop the AFP and other security forces (police and militia) into an effective force that can effectively protect the people.
2. Promote and implement the new administration’s policy of national reconciliation and unification.
3. Strengthen and transmit the spirit of nationhood amongst the people.\textsuperscript{484}

On the ground, in conjunction with combat operations, CMO continued to play a central role in removing the political hold of the communists in communities and/or securing communities from the infiltration of insurgents.\textsuperscript{485} Much of the developmental orientation of CMO remained unchanged, as its civic action programs were still expected to tackle the socio-economic roots of insurgency and spur development in the countryside.

\textbf{4.5.3.2 CMO and Re-indoctrinating the Soldier with Moral Values}

The transition to a democracy was an opportune time for the ill-reputed military to redeem themselves in the eyes of the citizen by transforming themselves into a professional force that was capable of serving the people and submitting to civilian supremacy. CMO thus assumed two more functions that were one, to indoctrinate the soldiers with a set of values and moral obligations as defenders of the people and two, to improve the morale and discipline of the soldiers.\textsuperscript{486} With the two included, CMO was reorganized under the following pillars which remained in effect until 1988.

1. Value Orientation Indoctrination and Continuing Education (VOICE)
2. Military Economic Welfare Program
3. Public Affairs and Interagency Coordination (PAIC)
4. Civil Affairs
5. Manpower, Reserve, and Reserve Affairs Administrations.\textsuperscript{487}

\textsuperscript{483} Ligot, “Communist Insurgency in the Philippines,” pp. 49-50.
\textsuperscript{485} Espino, “Counterinsurgency: The Role of Paramilitaries,” p. 28.
\textsuperscript{486} Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, pp. 588-589.
\textsuperscript{487} Lt. Col. Ferozaldo Paul T. Regencia, Philippine Army, interview with author, October 8, 2007
The Value Orientation Indoctrination and Continuing Education (VOICE) played a focal role in attempts to have the military “reconcile” with society after the pain and suffering they had imposed on the people during the Marcos period, and instill discipline within the ranks. The AFP had soldiers undergo indoctrination on the principles of national reconciliation and national unity. Soldiers were also expected to understand Aquino’s initiative to have them withdraw from national affairs and return to their defense roles. There was also a religious element to this program where value-building would be based on Christian or Muslim beliefs. In other words, the VOICE pillar was supposed to provide the moral and spiritual rebirth of the AFP. 

On the other hand, there was an urgent need to boost the sagging morale of the soldier especially since their unfavorable working conditions were adversely impacting the fight against the insurgency, not to mention, a cause of friction between the central government and the military. Thus, the Military Economic Welfare Program was established to address the basic needs of the soldier by improving pay and allowance, healthcare, housing, and field medical support on the front lines.

The remaining three pillars were carry-overs from the Marcos period. Aside from the normal functions in conducting public information programs, coordinating with the other agencies in civic action, and developing the reserve force of the AFP, there was an added emphasis on promoting the National Reconciliation drive which targeted not only the insurgents to elicit surrender, but also towards the public. In regards to civic action programs, they were expanded for the first time to involve non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the civil-military partnership.

4.5.3.3 Assessing Oplan Mamamayan and the Positioning of CMO

4.5.3.3.1 The Political Dimensions

Undeniably, one sticking point in the effective implementation of Mamamayan was that the Aquino administration and the military could not agree on an overarching security policy. On one hand, Aquino wanted to pursue a reconciliation policy with the insurgents but on the other hand, the military rejected these accommodating measures, and sought a hard-line approach.

Though Aquino and her cabinet had admirable intentions to remove repressive elements from the Marcos period that included having the military return to the barracks, the new administration lacked the political experience and strong leadership to go through with their policies. In regards to the internal security situation, she could not get a good grasp over the social, economic, political, and military dimensions of the insurgency and subsequently could not clarify the role of the military in it. It was evident


\[\text{489} \text{ Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, pp. 588-589.}\]

\[\text{490} \text{ Hernandez and Ubarra, “Restoring and Strengthening Civilian Control: Best Practices in Civil-Military Relations in the Philippines,” pp. 9-10 as printed out.}\]

\[\text{491} \text{ Timberman, A Changeless Land, pp. 174-175.}\]
that Aquino “confused” counterinsurgency and reconciliation.  

These were made apparent by the responses that she got from the communists. Despite the peace overtures by the president, the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA) did not reciprocate readily. The communists had already built an extensive political infrastructure in the countryside and were not prepared to cede this control with minimal political enticements. Rather, in their negotiations with the new government, they demanded a coalition government, which Aquino did not intend to give in to. Furthermore, during the 60-day ceasefire, the National Democratic Front (NDF), the umbrella organization of the CPP, capitalized on the downtime to step-up its propaganda efforts and politically mobilize. While the NPA generally complied with the ceasefire, certain elements still blatantly violated the agreement. These elements were becoming more brazen as they continued to raid heavy equipment plants, vital communication installations such as roads and bridges, agro-industrial facilities, military and militia outposts, and also used threats and force to extract revolutionary taxes from local businesses and individuals. They not only maintained and continued setting up political organs in remote areas but were also rapidly expanding in the cities by organizing left-leaning groups.

At the same time, Aquino’s well-intended efforts to disband the CHDF, the civilian militia, notorious for their excesses, backfired. In areas such as Mindanao where there was a breakdown in law and order, the people found Aquino’s new COIN program unreliable and formed their own vigilante groups to protect themselves from the increasing attacks by the NPA. Often backed by the military, these groups were one factor behind the uptick of violence as suspected communists and their sympathizers were killed. Human rights violations retained a high, comparable to the Marco years, with 93 disappearances and 439 extrajudicial killings in the years between 1986 and 1987.

Finally, the new government could not hammer out a comprehensive plan to tackle the roots of socio-economic discontent. Land reform was a central issue but Aquino could not commit to producing legislation that could effectively break up large landholdings for distribution. The Mendiola Incident in January 1987 was a huge set back in attempts to reach out to the agrarian poor. The Marines fired upon a


498 Timberman, A Changeless Land, pp. 184; 278-279.


500 Timberman, A Changeless Land, pp. 351-364.
crowd of farmers staging a demonstration against the stalled progress on land distribution, which resulted in the death of 19 people, with scores being wounded. The incident not only dampened initial enthusiasm by the public for meaningful agrarian reform, but it appeared that the Aquino government was returning to pre-Marcos days in unleashing force to quell discontent. As for the CPP-NPA who already had doubts over the government’s sincerity in coming to a political settlement, used this unfortunate massacre as a pretext to terminate talks with the government.501

4.5.3.3.2 The Military Dimensions

Following the August Coup in 1987, intelligence reports submitted to the new Chief of Staff, de Villa relayed some disturbing news. The AFP had made no progress in their fight against the communist and their military capabilities were just as poor. In short, nothing had changed since the last years of the Marcos regime.502

On the military side, there were numerous obstacles besides Aquino’s lackluster policies in economic and political reform that prevented the AFP from implementing Mamamayan effectively. The main being that the AFP could not reverse the “decay” that set into their institution under Marco quickly enough to build a strong COIN force.503 They were beset with a host of problems including the low morale of the soldiers, insufficient logistical support, an over-reliance on American aging equipment, and the dogged faith in the American COIN approach, which did not match Filipino conditions.504

Another problem, in which the military preferred to see as the source of its woes, was the government’s handling of the COIN problem. While it was true that Aquino lacked a coherent national strategy to defeat the insurgencies, the fundamental mistake she made was shutting out the military from COIN policymaking. By leaving the military under the impression that its ability to fight the insurgency was constrained or compromised by Aquino’s reconciliatory measures towards the communists, she not only deepened the civil-military fault-lines, but created discord within the military.505 As one coup attempt was yet followed by another, both parties became more preoccupied with the civil-military tension, rather than tend to the bigger picture of the insurgency at hand.

Under these circumstances, it was no surprise that Mamamayan made little headway. With a divided leadership, even the best local commanders out on the frontlines were left without clear direction on how to pursue their fight against the communists.506 Therefore, the AFP still conducted what they knew best which was making occasional sweeps in rebel strongholds, and devoting the rest of the time, to protecting their bases, government installations, businesses, and roads.507

501 Ibid., p. 182.
505 Timberman, A Changeless Land, Ch. 8.
The same could be said for CMO, which was supposed to be the central fixture of the COIN program in reversing the insurgents’ hold over the population. It had difficulty in propagating its use within the ranks of the military. The truth of the matter was that, there were only a limited number of military officers that understood the political dimension of an insurgency and devise COIN programs accordingly. But for the majority of soldiers, their understanding of CMO did not go beyond gaining the goodwill of the population through socio-economic activities. The integration of CMO, intelligence, and combat in a military operation was a steep learning curve for soldiers who did not graduate from the academy, and in effect, was too abstract for the average soldier to implement.508

4.5.4 CMO in Phase Two: Improving its COIN Function

4.5.4.1 Background: Coups and the Increasing Influence of the AFP in COIN Policies

The coup phenomenon had an inadvertent but significant impact on the development of CMO, which eventually led to its improved application in insurgent battlespace. Though none of the coups achieved military control over the government, it did weaken Aquino’s position, especially over defense issues. As a result, the military was able to throw more weight around in the formulation of COIN measures that ultimately allowed CMO to take a more pronounced role in COIN. The section will cover the background to the coups and the gradual erosion of Aquino’s will to resist AFP demands, which ultimately altered her security policy in the AFP’s favor.

The main factor behind the string of coup attempts was basically tied into the military’s disagreement over Aquino’s lenient posture on the communists. One of the first acts that Aquino passed upon becoming president, despite protests from the military, was the release of all political prisoners. 500 of them were jailed under Marcos. Additionally, Jose Sison, CPP chairman and NPA commander Bernabe Buscayno were also released.509 Other decisions followed such as the setting up of a Human Rights Commission to investigate the alleged abuses of the soldiers, the appointment of left-leaning members in her cabinet, and like-wise, at the local government level, a reconciliation plan for the rebels that included amnesty and livelihood assistance,510 and initiating talks with the CPP-NPA that led to a 60-day ceasefire in 1987.511

All these measures were conducted without consultation with the military, which infuriated the AFP.512 Moreover, they were also upset in what they perceived to be a biased concern by Aquino and her


508 Yabes, The Boys from the Barracks, pp. 121-122. The majority of AFP officers (90 percent) was from the reserve officers training program and did not have the training to understand the complex nuances of COIN principles and implementation. See Far Eastern Economic Review, November 26, 1987, p. 37 in Timberman, A Changeless Land, p. 307.


510 This was called National Reconciliation and Development Program (NRDP) issued through an executive order by Aquino in 1986. It was program to encourage rebels to give up their armed struggle and reintegrate into society through incentives such as livelihood support. See Ligot, “Communist Insurgency in the Philippines.” pp. 49-50.

511 Timberman, A Changeless Land, pp. 175; 180-181; 252.

512 Ibid, p. 175.
coterie of “left-leaning” cabinet members on the welfare the communists rather than on the predicament of their under-paid and ill-equipped soldiers who were putting their lives at stake in the front lines against the communists.  

Interestingly enough, CMO was one of the first gambits that the APF used in attempts to secure influence over security policymaking. In 1986, both Secretary of National Defense Ponce Enrile and AFP Chief of Staff, Fidel Ramos tried to pressure Aquino into replacing her reconciliatory stance towards the communists with a CMO program that would use a more holistic approach and a collaborative relationship with civilian agencies and government officials at a local level to “defeat” the insurgents. If this could be realized, the AFP officers could at least exercise influence in formulating their own COIN policies at a local level and secure a larger COIN budget, even if they were shut out of defense decision-making at the central government level. Despite the enlarged civilian participation in the proposal, Aquino deemed it too risky to employ, as she feared that the communists would view it as backtracking from her peace initiatives, and she turned down this demand. However in 1987, it appeared that she gave in some inches to this demand when she set up the Peace and Order Council (POC). The POC was a coordinating body for various government agencies, inclusive of the military, to develop a concerted effort to deal with internal security threats.

Still these grievances may had been reduced to grumblings, had it not have been for the development of powerful cliques within the military that had refused to supinely submit to the new civilian authority. Those factions included the Marcos loyalists who tried to usurp Aquino of her position and restore Marcos as leader in a coup attempt under Arturo Tolentino, former vice-presidential running mate of Marcos. Interestingly enough, the threat did not really come emanate from Marcos loyalists per se, but rather the support the coup got from soldiers that were disenchanted with Aquino’s stance on the communists. These grievances became the focal rallying point of other powerful military cliques that sought to increase their influence over her.

A more powerful clique came into the picture with Aquino’s Secretary of National Defense, Juan Ponce Enrile and his “RAM boys.” RAM was the Reform the Armed Forces Movement that was established at the end of the Marcos regime with Colonel Gregorio (Gringo) Honasan as its central figure. In rhetoric they wanted to reform the putrefying military, but in sub-rosa, they were planning to oust Marcos and take over the government. Enrile and RAM had a symbiotic relationship based on furthering

their respective interests. Enrile, also Secretary of National Defense during the Marcos period formed an alliance with RAM to block the anticipated takeover by the AFP Chief of Staff, General Fabian Ver and the First Lady, Imelda in the advent of the leader’s death. RAM soldiers also benefited from their association with Enrile who generously gave them comfortable positions both within the military and corporate worlds, opportunities to study abroad, and higher pay. Though their plans for a takeover of the Marcos regime were derailed by the unexpected turn of events at EDSA and had to initially rally behind the new president,\textsuperscript{517} they did not discard their original ambitions to take over the government. Under Aquino, they gained support from soldiers who were disenchanted with their ill-defined role under the new government. Even when Enrile was forced out of the limelight when he was removed from his post as Secretary of National Defense over his plan to take over the government in the 1987 God-Save-the-Queen incident, RAM continued to engineer the coups that followed.\textsuperscript{518}

At the same time, there existed another group of soldiers that adhered to civilian supremacy. The most influential of these “constitutionalists” was Fidel V. Ramos, a West Point graduate and former chief of the Philippines Constabulary. When Aquino came to power, he was appointed Chief of Staff of the AFP and played an instrumental role in crushing the coups instigated by the rebel camps. Although he maintained his loyalties to the president, he shared views with the cross-section of the AFP that the new government was inept in governing, especially in regards to the internal security situation. Nonetheless, he disdained the adventurism within the rebellious factions of the AFP. Instead, he increased the AFP’s power within the scope of defense policymaking by cultivating Aquino’s dependency on him to protect her from a military takeover.\textsuperscript{519}

In retracing the timeline of the coups (see appendix A for the list of coups), it can be observed that Aquino was walking down a treacherous road to secure her political survival. Though Ramos helped Aquino to assert her control over the politicized military, it was increasingly becoming clear with each passing coup, her resistance towards the AFP’s demands for a larger role in COIN and political treatment of the leftist movement was eroding. It began with piecemeal concessions such as increasing pay and promotions for the soldiers.\textsuperscript{520} Aquino gave way bit by bit because she did not want to jeopardize her plans for a political settlement with the armed communists.\textsuperscript{521} Nevertheless, she was desperate to bring the military behind her. At the timing of the formal end of the cease-fire with the CPP-NPA, there was a third coup attempt on Jan 1987 (Channel-7 television station). With no signs from the communists to re-launch talks and 40 per cent of the military rejecting her new constitution that overwhelmingly got the approval of

\textsuperscript{517} Enrile and RAM were hailed as heroes by the public, when they decided to throw in their backing for the people during EDSA.
\textsuperscript{518} See Alfred W. McCoy, \textit{Closer than Brothers: Manhood at the Philippine Military Academy}, Manila: Anvil Publishing, Inc., 1999, ch. 7 “Mutiny” for a detailed account on the rise of various cliques within the AFP.
\textsuperscript{519} Timberman, \textit{A Changeless Land}, pp. 175; 181; 197; 254; Selochan, “The Armed Forces of the Philippines: Its Perceptions on Governing and the Prospects for the Future.”
\textsuperscript{521} Timberman, \textit{A Changeless Land}, pp. 252-253.
the people in a plebiscite, she tried to mend the rift by initiating dialogue with the military. Even though she still maintained a reconciliatory posture with the communists, she also gave the AFP the green light to resume some fighting.\textsuperscript{522} There were other compromises such as increasing the military budget, convening the National Security Council to allow military officers voice their opinion, among others, but in the end they did not sufficiently appease the military.\textsuperscript{523}

It was the August Coup that dramatically reversed Aquino’s reconciliatory posture toward the communists.\textsuperscript{524} Shortly after 1 am on August 28, 1987, RAM leader, Gringo Honasan and his 200 rebel soldiers began attacking the presidential palace. Other rebel troops surrounded Camp Aguinaldo, the AFP’s GHQ at 3 am, while soldiers who threw in support for Honasan occupied a number of sites and military camps not only in Manila but also in areas as far as Pampanga and Cebu. It took Ramos and other commanders more than 10 hours to find enough loyal troops to repel the attack. Though the coup ended in failure a day and half later, rebel troops were reported to have occupied all their intended targets aside from the Palace and the mutiny left 53 people dead with more than 200 wounded.\textsuperscript{525} On September 1, 1987, Ramos submitted a report to Aquino outlining the details of the coup. At the end of it, Ramos assured Aquino of his loyalty, but he also strongly urged her to convene the National Security Council. While he stressed the importance of preventing future occurrences, he also reminded her without going into detail, that there were deeper issues at hand concerning the military situation. In other words, Ramos used the opportunity to apply stronger pressure on Aquino to retract her policies that were alienating the military.\textsuperscript{526}

For Aquino, the coup was by far the closest it came to toppling her. Once again, Ramos stepped in to save the day. To survive politically, she had no other choice but to concede to Ramos’ demands. This time around, there was a cabinet shake-up and she was forced to oust her closest advisor, Joker Arroyo, a vocal opponent of the AFP. Also in order for Ramos to have complete reins over the AFP, she appointed him as the new Secretary of National Defense. There was also a 60 per cent pay raise for the military and she also submitted to Ramos plans to revive paramilitary groups that she initially planned to disband. However, the largest sacrifice she made was giving up her reconciliatory approach to the communists. She abruptly ended talks with the CPP-NPA and allowed the military to launch an all-out-war.\textsuperscript{527} What this meant was that Aquino gave the AFP under Ramos full control over internal security policymaking.

### 4.5.4.2 Formulating Operation Plan Lambat Bitag (1988)

During the wrangling between the military and the Aquino cabinet over the role of the AFP under

\textsuperscript{522} Yabes, *The Boys from the Barracks*, pp. 62-63.

\textsuperscript{523} See Casper, *Fragile Democracies: The Legacies of Authoritarian Rule*, pp. 141-145 for a round-up of the coups and the corresponding concessions made by Aquino; Timberman, *A Changeless Land*, pp. 252-256


\textsuperscript{525} See Yabes, *The Boys from the Barracks*, pp. 74-94 for a detailed account on the movements of the rebel soldiers on August 28th and 29th; Fernandez, pp. 41-41.


the new government, COIN was left in a limbo. It was only after Ramos protected Aquino from the August Coup (1987) that any constructive steps were made in the war against the communists. As a reward to Ramos in bringing the military behind her, Aquino elevated him to the position of Secretary of National Defense and subsequently allowed the AFP to take full control over decisions related to internal security. With the AFP under his reins, Ramos endorsed Renato de Villa, his close ally from his Philippine Constabulary days, to take over his former position as Chief of Staff and take lead in the COIN operations.

Upon assuming the position of Chief of Staff, de Villa promptly took action in sending out a clear message to the communists that he meant business. He had already arrested several senior members of the communist party in a series of sweeps, inflicting some serious blows on the CPP-NPA. But he also knew that to make any strategic inroads, the current COIN plan, Mamamayan had to be completely revamped. Therefore, he assigned the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations (J3), to craft a new and more aggressive COIN plan.

It was no coincidence that a number of the AFP officers involved in the formulation of the new plan at J3 had experience working in Special Operation Teams (SOT) at the end of the Marco era. Still, it was Victor Corpus who became the key architect in the development of the new plan.

Victor Corpus was a constabulary soldier who defected to the communist side in 1970. After becoming a rebel commander, he made his way up the party ranks to become a member of the Central Committee. Experiencing disillusionment, he surrendered to the AFP 1978. After serving jail time for more than 10 years, he was reinstated in the AFP as lieutenant colonel. When the J3 office designated to produce a new COIN plan, he was asked the join the team. It was based on his experiences with the CPP-NPA that gave the AFP valuable insight on how the communists operated in both the military and political dimensions. Thus, the culmination of Corpus’ input and other counterinsurgency officer’s contributions resulted in the unveiling of the COIN plan named Lambat Bitag (Fishnet Entrapment) in September 1988. Lambat Bitag in part was developed in part to wean the AFP off of its reliance on the American doctrine used in Vietnam. There was too much focus on search and destroy tactics which not only alienated the population but turned the AFP into a reactive and a stationary force. In order to reverse this debilitating tendency, efforts were made to build a more indigenous doctrine that took into account the character of the Filipino security environment.

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528 Ramos was a specialist in civilian-military affairs and psywar. He had training with the Special Forces at Fort Bragg, a military academy and served in Vietnam as a member of the Philippine Civic Action Groups (PHILCAG).
529 De Villa was an intelligence office of the presidential guards under President Diosdado Macapagal. Like Ramos, he also gained experience in psywar and CMO by serving in Vietnam as a PHILCAG member.
531 Ibid., pp. 115; 117.
532 Ibid., pp. 117; 119; 121.
533 Ibid., p. 117.
4.5.4.3 Lambat Bitag: Strategy and Tactics

The main operating principle behind Lambat Bitag was based on beating the insurgents at their own game.534 This meant denying the advantages that the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA) had, involving factors such as time, mobility over difficult terrain, and population support. Based on Corpus’ observations, it could be understood that the CPP-NPA followed Mao’s strategy of protracted war, which capitalized on time to build from a small and insignificant force to one that had control over large portions of the countryside. While they were numerically weak, they avoided military engagements to attract the least possible attention from the government forces, and devoted their attention to strengthening their armed component. The objective was to build a force strong to reach closer parity with the government forces, so that they could engage in a full scale offensive. For party building, they conducted mass work to gain the support of the people to help expand and consolidate their base areas.535

For the AFP, a long, drawn-out war was something they wanted to avoid. It not only drained government resources, but it also had the pernicious effect of wearing down the military and sapping the morale of the soldiers.536 Therefore, any success from a campaign hinged on bringing an end to the war as quickly as possible. Known at the “war of quick decision,” this became the guiding strategy of Lambat Bitag.537

Having said this, how to go about ending the war quickly was another issue. One of the daunting challenges that faced the AFP was its inability to maneuver in the depth or deep area of the enemy battlespace. Unlike a conventional military, where the depth constitutes the rear support which is more directly linked to the frontlines through fixed installations such as control centers, supply depots, and lines of communication,538 the CPP-NPA’s rear posed a more perplexing problem. Though the rear was necessary for the survival of any armed movement, they were not as easy to scope out for the conventional forces since the insurgents’ rear was located in the deep areas of the battlespace that included remote tracts of land with difficult terrain (dense forests and mountains) and in human settlements that had limited government presence. The guerrillas attained this by setting up numerous bases embedded in these areas. Their methodology was such that they did not have to physically hold these spaces. Rather an emphasis was placed on gaining the freedom of movement over the difficult terrain, which is an advantage against a conventional force that is adjusted to movement in open space and accessible roads with its large equipment (tanks, armored vehicles, armaments) and troop formations.539

Furthermore, the physical control over a defined geographic area was not as important as having control over the population. The population was what could provide them with recruits, sanctuary,

535 Corpus, *Silent War*, pp. 25-30; 75.
537 Corpus, *Silent War*, p. 139.
539 Corpus, *Silent War*, pp. 38; 78-79.
intelligence or communications, supplies, and freedom of movement. The CPP-NPA achieved this by devoting much of the building-phase to mass work. Through mass work, the communists were able to gain the people’s recognition on the legitimacy of their movement, which allowed them to build a political infrastructure. This was done through propaganda and activities to win the people’s support. Once there were enough bases in the countryside, they could be strung together and consolidated for the final offensive, which was to take over the central seats of power in the cities. Otherwise captured in the slogan: “encirclement of the cities from the countryside.”

Therefore, the AFP had to re-orient its forces to allow for its improved mobility in these types of terrain. This meant the AFP could no longer remain in a defensive and static posture, which centered on guarding key roads, government infrastructure, and military bases and outposts, but had to fan out in guerrilla areas in small and mobile units. At the same time, the soldiers had to undo the communist influence over populated communities. With all this being said, these units, no matter how stripped down and compact, had to maintain combat capabilities.

Taking these factors into consideration, the AFP built a campaign strategy called “gradual constriction” which was built on a systematic method to roll back the expansion of the CPP-NPA bases. As its name suggested, Lambat Bitag or “Fishnet Entrapment” evoked the image of draining the pond to force the fish to seek refuge in the center where the water was deepest, and ultimately netting the fish trapped there. In other words, government forces would seek to deny the water (depth) that allowed the insurgents to swim (maneuver) in. The AFP would begin by deploying mobile units to the outer-fringe of guerrilla zone and gradually working their way into their stronghold. The outer-fringe was where the insurgents’ control over the population was the weakest. Here, the terrain was more accessible being located at the base of mountains. It was in this location that the AFP could capitalize on the existing road networks to secure its lines of communication before advancing to the center. The center, in contrast with the outer-fringe of the area of influence for the insurgents was ideal for their sanctuary and warfare. The center was the base command that typically straddled several provinces and where the population support was the strongest. The AFP mobile units would be deployed in a manner that could approach the central base from the outer-rings, regaining control of the insurgent-influenced or controlled barangays on their way, graduallycornering the insurgents into the center, and thereby allowing the AFP to make a decisive blow. By “tightening the ring of encirclement” the AFP was limiting “the insurgents’ room for maneuver, rendering his forces less and less mobile.” With less mobility, the insurgents could not amass or disperse their forces, choose their time and place for battle, and thus ceding the battlespace initiative to the AFP (See appendix B for image).

540 Ibid., pp. 33-34;39.
542 Corpus, Silent War, pp. 167-169; 179.
543 Corpus, Silent War, pp. 140; Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, p. 598.
544 Corpus, Silent War, pp. 177; 179.
4.5.4.4. Special Operations Teams (SOT): the Role of CMO in Lambat Bitag

Lambat Bitag’s success depended on sustaining gains that the AFP made in their advance to the center of the insurgents’ stronghold. Unlike previous military operations that deployed troops for the duration that was needed to physically clear the insurgents off the enemy-influenced area, Lambat Bitag sought to consolidate the gains made in the forward advance of the AFP mobile units.  

The Special Operations Teams (SOT) was the main weapon used in the strategy of “gradual constriction.” The concept was drawing together the operational and tactical effects of employing small unit action for the prime objective of neutralizing guerrilla fronts and dismantling their political infrastructure in the rural barangays.

The SOT consisted of 21 soldiers which was comprised of three interlocking teams: CMO, intelligence, and combat. Though they were differentiated by role and function, they played a complimentary role to each other.

While these teams were used experimentally during the Marcos period with some success, the component that encountered the most challenges when it came to propagating the concept to the majority of soldiers was CMO. The general understanding of “winning hearts and minds” did not go beyond conducting civic action and propaganda and the SOT operational principles of reversing the communists’ hold over the population was too abstract for widespread application. Thus, under Lambat Bitag, the prime concern of the AFP was to direct the effective deployment of SOTs in the human terrain that could engage both the population and the enemy at a tactical level.

The SOT was geared towards addressing the communists’ mass base approach which was largely made successful through the NPA’s strict adherence to discipline in their dealings with civilians, political activities to vocalize the people’s sentiments, siding with the rural people against ruthless landlords, and other activities to help the impoverished villages. In a nutshell, the CMO component of SOTs focused on “mirroring” the activities of the CPP-NPA’s armed propaganda teams known as Sandatahang Yunit Pampropaganda (Armed Propaganda Unit). These were in fact expansion teams deployed by the CPP-NPA to consolidate political control over communities on the outer-rim of their base areas through a series of mass work. Therefore, the actual reversal of the communist influence was entrusted to the CMO team. The CMO team engaged in activities that included dismantling the communist infrastructure,

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545 Ibid., pp. 168-169.
546 Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, p. 598.
547 The SOT was closer to a platoon in size. A platoon in the Philippine Army typically consists of 30 soldiers. An actual team consists anywhere between 7 to 11 soldiers.
548 In addition to the main SOT, two other platoons (also referred to as SOTs) accompanied the team to provide protection from enemy harassment. See Special Operations Team Manual, Headquarters Philippine Army, Manila, 1989, pp. 3-6 in Ligot, “Communist Insurgency in the Philippines,” pp. 51-52.
549 Yabes, The Boys from the Barracks, pp. 117- 119.
550 Corpus, Silent War, p. 42.
552 Corpus, Silent War, p. 34.
conducting civic action, and broadcasting counter-propaganda. CMO was also used interchangeably with
PYSOPS since the tactical objectives of its activities were to deny the insurgents their base of support by
influencing the minds and attitudes of the people. They also did not neglect to consolidate their gains and
follow-up activities were conducted by setting up counter-organizations such as village defense (CHDF)
and sectoral groups for the youth and the peasants. The AFP also took into consideration; the best
propaganda depended on the soldier being on his best behavior with the people.\textsuperscript{553}

CMO also worked closely with intelligence and combat teams. CMO teams depended heavily on
intelligence teams to provide them with the vital information about a barangay such as its demographics,
socio-economic aspects, and the sources of discontent amongst the people, along with intelligence about
the enemy’s organization presence and its membership. It was based on this information, that CMO could
arrange activities for the purpose of winning hearts and minds. In other words, the intelligence teams were
coloring Social Investigation (SI) which was a methodology used by the CPP-NPA to acquaint
themselves with a new barangay they were planning to penetrate.\textsuperscript{554}

Intelligence was critical for combat teams as well. One huge disadvantage for the AFP was that
they were greatly inferior to the access of combat intelligence in comparison with the NPA. The NPA had
the support of the population to provide them with key information about AFP movements. Thus, as soon
as support was built up for the AFP, intelligence teams worked on establishing a clandestine intelligence
network in the barangays with informants to deliver information to the AFP.\textsuperscript{555}

Combat units were organized to address the previous drawbacks of the AFP’s COIN which was
grounded in static defense, periodic forays into communist strongholds, and working in large formations.
This gave the rebels almost unrestricted mobility in their areas of influence, making the AFP more
vulnerable to hit-and-run attacks. Combat teams within the SOTs were expected to shed their heavy
equipment, avoid main transport arteries, and rely less rear support, to aggressively seek out the enemy, and
keeping the insurgents constantly on the move through foot patrols. Having said this, the combat team was
largely operating in unfamiliar terrain, and it was paramount that the CMO team built a close relationship
with communities so that the intelligence team could feed the combat troops on the whereabouts of the
insurgent.\textsuperscript{556}

In the campaign of gradual constriction, the six steps that the SOTs were tasked to follow are
listed below:

1. Improving the situational awareness of the target areas. These involve gathering intelligence about the
   enemy situation and understanding the socioeconomic, demographic, and geographic features of the
   battlespace (see Appendix D for a sample of an area study).
2. Conducting psychological operations through dialogues with community members, having the soldiers

\textsuperscript{553} Ibid., pp. 119; 125; 151.
\textsuperscript{554} Corpus, Silent War, pp. 151-152; Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, p. 598.
\textsuperscript{555} Corpus, Silent War, pp. 153-154; Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, p. 599.
\textsuperscript{556} Corpus, Silent War, pp. 112; 117-118; 127-128; 146.
immerse themselves in the communities to understand the needs of the people, and also extract intelligence about rebel presence.

3. Neutralizing the enemy in conjunction with promoting amnesty and helping them re-integrate into society.

4. Mobilizing the community members and local government officials in developing a committee similar to the CPP-NPA’s revolutionary committee for intelligence collection and security.

5. Organizing a village defense system where inhabitants are trained to defend their villages.

6. Developing the community by assuring the delivery of basic government services and promoting socio-economic activities with local government agencies taking the lead.\textsuperscript{557}

### 4.5.4.5 Assessing Lambat Bitag

There is a general consensus that the SOT approached embodied in Lambat Bitag reduced the communist threat considerably.\textsuperscript{558} Within three months of its launch, rebel strength was reduced from 25,000 to 22,860. By the end of 1989, rebel strength totaled 18,440. In December 1991, the number of NPA combatants plunged to 14,800. The SOTs were also successful in dismantling the political organs of the communists. Whereas there were 7,552 influenced barangays in 1988, there were only 3,623 in 1991. Furthermore, the CPP-NPA was known to have 72 guerrilla fronts in 1989, but this was reduced to 47 in 1991.\textsuperscript{559}

Nevertheless, Lambat Bitag was not without its drawbacks. On the ground, some field commanders could not entirely grasp the concept of “gradual constriction” where units were supposed to clear and hold rebel-influences areas through a combination of intelligence, combat, and CMO. Some still resorted to the old tactics of “search and destroy” which was accompanied by forced relocation of villagers which defeated the purpose of winning hearts and minds. Yet, the most serious problem stemming from Lambat Bitag was that most of the socio-economic and political dimensions of the insurgency were left up to the military.\textsuperscript{560} As Corpus pointed out, no matter how much the AFP engaged in civic action, nothing could remove the fundamentals of the people’s frustration unless these initiatives are backed by robust government response in areas such as land reform to uplift the lives of the impoverished people.\textsuperscript{561}

Another problem in relation to CMO was that it inadvertently politicized the soldiers. The soldiers who engaged in SOTs witnessed at first-hand, the impact of poverty in the communist-infiltrated barangays. This in effect, made the soldiers ruminate on the inadequacies of the government in addressing these socio-economic issues. Many of the soldiers came to realize that they did not have a message to compete with the CPP-NPA’s attractive ideology that provided better answers to the economically marginalized people. These circumstances placed the soldiers in a quandary. In order to counter the

\textsuperscript{557} Pobre, \textit{History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People}, p. 599.


\textsuperscript{559} Pobre, \textit{History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People}, p. 600.

\textsuperscript{560} Yabes, \textit{The Boys from the Barracks}, p. 125.

\textsuperscript{561} Corpus, \textit{Silent War}, p. 109.
propaganda of the communists, a national ideology was necessary. Nevertheless, without the government following through with its policies to back up the AFP’s CMO initiatives, any counter-propaganda could not convince the people. Resultantly, the soldiers themselves began to harbor doubts on their role in addressing insurgency.

Politization of the soldiers became more acutely felt especially in the remote areas where the government lacked the resources and manpower to fill in the political vacuum in communities that had shadow governments. In these areas, AFP officers often assumed the role as de facto mayors and with little guidance on how to maintain their distance from political affairs, the experience strengthened their feelings that they had the right to govern. AFP factions that were still intent on overthrowing the government manipulated these sentiments. The group that became most susceptible to these radical ideas in the military was the Scout Rangers. This was an elite group that played a significant role in the SOTs that were deployed to the communist hotbeds. Due to their successes, they became the main force in the COIN campaign.

Within the Scout Rangers, there was a growing feeling that the central government could only blame themselves for the conditions that spawned violent unrest and insurgency. In their view, the government was inefficient and lacked credibility. They believed that unless the military could build a political organization that could operate as effectively as the communists, there was no lasting solution. As it turned out, their grievances were played out in the December 1989 coup.

This failed coup evidently revealed that factionalism was rampant and there were elements within the military that were not ready to submit to civilian control. But the seeds of the coup lay in the weak legitimacy and credibility of the government that invited military intervention. These were felt down to the ground level of military operations. It was apparent that a lasting solution to insurgency could not be attained if left to military devices alone, even if they were equipped with some ability to deliver socio-economic relief of the people. There was a growing sentiment within the AFP circles that the bulk of development should be left up to civilian agencies. In the case that military was to be deployed for

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563 Yabes, The Boys from the Barracks, pp. 132-133.
564 Ibid., p. 199.
565 Once again the instigators of the coup were Honasan-lead RAM and Marcos loyalists. Out of all coups launched in the nation, especially under President Aquino, the December Coup was considered to be the most threatening. The battle raged on from November 29 – December 9 resulting in 669 casualties. Malacañang Palace, the seat of government, also came under bombing and strafing. It came so close to toppling Aquino from power, that upon the president’s request, the United States sent Phantom F-4 jets to fly over the capital. On the final day, the coup was squashed and the rebel soldiers and the government reached a ceasefire agreement. See Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, pp. 619 – 632 for details on the December 1989 coup.
566 Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, pp. 631-632. Some scholars believe that when soldiers are placed purely in a nation-building role, it does not lead to the politicization of the soldier. Rather, when soldiers conduct socio-economic activities within the scope of counterinsurgency, is when they become subject to politicization. This is engendered because under the grueling conditions of war, the soldiers become acutely aware of the limitations of the central government in tending to the socio-economic ills of the society. See Dencio A. Acop, “Assessing the Expanded Role of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in Nation-Building, “Asia-Pacific Social Science Review,” Vol. 6 (2), 2006, p. 144.
socio-economic projects, they were to be done *selectively* with a clear tactical objective on *who* was to be won over and *what* resources were needed to achieve these gains.\(^{567}\) In short, this period demonstrated that CMO as a military operation enabled the soldiers to operate in the depth of enemy battlespace which resulted in tactical and operational success in the military dimension. Nonetheless, it still highlighted that the military could not completely resolve the roots of insurgency at hand without proper government backing.

### 4.5.5 Summary

CMO during the Aquino administration was marked by the military’s continuing quest to improve its COIN capabilities. Rather than go through Aquino’s initial drives to align its CMO activities with her plan for national reconciliation, a series of coups landed CMO in a focal point in the AFP’s newly established control over counterinsurgency measures.

What was conceptualized in the 1985 was actualized in Lambat Bitag. CMO shed its developmental orientation\(^ {568}\) and vague understanding of “winning hearts and minds” component to become integrated in counterinsurgency operations that could better penetrate the depth of insurgent battlespace. Subsequently, CMO demonstrated its effects at an operation and tactical level by managing to clear barangays one by one and integrating CMO into intelligence and combat operations. Fused into a composite team, it helped soldiers to maneuver over human terrain and reach enemy strongholds though a process of constriction.

Nonetheless, at a national strategic level, the ineptitude of the government in following though with socio-economic reforms in the impoverished barangays, highlighted the fact that operational and tactical successes in the military dimension were not enough to remove the armed threat all together.

### 4.6 Synopsis of Events during the Ramos Administration (1992-1998): CMO Returns to its Developmental Role

In 1991, Lambat Bitag II was launched to address the drawbacks of its predecessor. It sought to alleviate the COIN burden on the AFP and spread out its responsibilities to other agencies. To assist the security effort, the Philippine National Police became more involved. Territorial defense was strengthened to help communities withstand enemy attacks and prevent the re-infiltrations of the communists. In areas related to CMO, the AFP formed better partnerships with other government agencies and local government officials to conduct socio-economic work. Yet, this did not mean there was a let up in offensive operations. The integrated approach of combat, intelligence, and CMO were intensified which lead to further dismantling of communist fronts along with the capture and surrender of its members. As a result, by 1992, AFP was able to neutralize 26 CPP-NPA guerrilla fronts.\(^ {569}\)

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\(^{569}\) Ligot, “Communist Insurgency in the Philippines,” pp. 52-53; “31st Infantry (Charge) Battalion, 9ID, PA,”
One year after Lambat Bitag II was launched, Fidel Ramos assumed presidency. Once a military man, who knew the ins and outs of the military, he understood that the civilian government had to be strong enough to lead the military in fighting the insurgencies. Unless the government set into motion the wheels of socio-economic reform, it would invite further military intervention and any military gains in its fight against insurgency could not be sustained.

Within two years of Ramos’ presidency, the military arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA) was considered to be strategically defeated. Their numbers sank from their peak of 25,200 in 1987 to 6,930 in 1994.570 The CPP-NPA was also having their problems. They were not able to adapt to the currents of the time. Their political appeal was beginning to dampen beginning with the return of democracy with Aquino. Furthermore they made a political blunder by boycotting elections. Factional in-fighting also erupted and with the disclosure that there were government operatives within their ranks, the CPP-NPA began as series of massive purges (1985-1988) which disillusioned many of its members.571 Still there could be no denying that SOTs under Lambat Bitag I and II made it difficult for the communists to expand their bases further while the AFP chipped away at their military capabilities in conducting guerrilla warfare.

Ramos also displayed determination in following up on the military successes of the AFP’s COIN program by aggressively pursuing a national policy of reconciliation and development. He organized amnesty programs for the rebels to re-enter society.572 Ramos also did not ignore the military, and the same treatment was extended to those soldiers that mutinied, allowing them to be reinstated into the military.573

In the political dimension, he repealed the Anti-Subversion law, which in effect, gave the CPP legal political recognition. Peace talks were also pursued with both the communists and the Muslim separatist group, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). Though not as threatening as in the early Marcos years, they continued their armed activity. While the CPP-NPA peace talks still faced hurdles, the avenues for talks remained open. Ramos had more success with the MNLF, as he was able to forge a Final Peace Agreement in 1996. Though independence was not recognized, the agreement did allow the Muslims improved political representation and participation in the conduct of their affairs.574

Ramos was also determined to turn around the economy. Among his many initiatives to reform

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573 Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, p. 638.
574 Pobre, History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People, pp. 639-641.
the economy and industrialize the country, he revived the AFP’s developmental role. In 1994, when the numbers of communist armed rebels were reduced to fewer than 7,000, the AFP launched a campaign plan called “Unlad Bayan” (National Development) which underlined the shift in priorities from COIN to peace and development efforts. It was premised on using the AFP’s available resources in activities reminiscent of the Marcos period, which included infrastructure building, food production, and delivery of government services to remote areas. To dovetail this new campaign plan, CMO shed its COIN orientation and increased community outreach programs that included civic action, literacy programs, and the delivery of dental and medical care. As Pobre said, “Unlad Bayan was actually a more ambitious version of Lambat Bitag, which aimed at winning people’s hearts and minds through community development.”

The return of CMO to its developmental role spelled out an era of relative peace. Internal security problems still persisted but they were downgraded to a law and order issue which belonged to the domains of the police. Once again, CMO followed a cyclical pattern where the dramatic drop in the internal security levels shifted its role back to development. Even though, CMO helped the internal security plans to secure success through its improved understanding and effective implementation within the context of COIN, it fell short of the official recognition needed to establish formal guidelines. With improved internal security conditions, political stability, and the prospects of economic growth under Ramos, CMO was placed on the back burner of military.

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575 Ramos did succeed in bringing some economic growth and stability to the Philippines.
577 Philippines – 1998 Defense Policy Paper, Ch. 2; Ch. 6. Under Unlad Bayan, the AFP was assigned to the following developmental or non-combat activities:
- Infrastructure development
- Rescue and relief operations
- Resettlement and rehabilitation operations
- Protection and preservation of the environment
- Safety of life at sea
- Sealift and airlift of civilians passengers and cargoes
- Delivery of government services to remote areas
- Food production
- Assistance to law enforcement
Chapter 5. Tracking CMO’s Path to Institutionalization

5.1 Background: Relative Peace and the Resurgence of Threats in the 1990s

5.1.1 Introduction

In the 1990s, CMO began to lose its utility as a component of counterinsurgency (COIN) in what appeared to be a decline in insurgencies. At the same time, the end of the Cold War also had implications for the Philippines’ defense priorities. The pullout of American bases in 1992 propelled the AFP to move towards a self-reliant posture. In 1995, the Philippine Congress passed the AFP Modernization Act, which was intended to transform the AFP into a conventional military force with capabilities to repel an external attack.¹ In the 1998 Defense Policy Paper, the Philippine Department of Defense outlined policy objectives that reflected a shift in security concerns from internal security to the changing geopolitical climate.² As attention went into the AFP’s new defense priorities, CMO was consigned to the backseat of military affairs. While it was retained for its developmental utility, there was limited activity in regards to codifying its practices.

Nonetheless, in the years marching to the new millennium, relative peace, secured through intensive COIN operations, and bound by progress in peace talks, began to unravel when President Joseph Estrada (1998-2001) broke from his predecessor, Fidel Ramos’ reconciliatory position towards the Muslim separatists and the armed communists. In place, he initiated his own security policy that took a hard stance against armed dissent.³ The following section provides a cursory overview on the three major threat groups that emerged during his tenure and went on to dominate the security agenda of Estrada’s successor, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (2001-2010). This section is deemed necessary to provide the background that led to the revival of CMO under the administration of Arroyo.

5.1.2 The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)

Estrada’s tenure in office was marked by a particularly bloody war with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The MILF was led by Ustadaz Salamat Hashim, a former vice chairman of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), who split from the original separatist movement over ideological differences in 1977. The militant group formally declared its existence in 1984. The MILF espoused an Islamic ideology that dictated its quest to establish a separate homeland for the Muslim Filipinos and based on the Islamic way of life. This was in contrast to the MNLF’s “secular-nationalist” movement.⁴ They began their quiet build-up during the Aquino years while the administration was kept busy fighting the

communists and subduing rebellious elements within the military. Under Ramos, less attention was paid to the MILF since Ramos directed his energies into forging a peace agreement with the main separatist group, the MNLF, which was finalized in 1996. Though the MILF refused to join in signing this peace agreement, the MILF did reciprocate to Ramos’ peace overtures with a ceasefire agreement in 1997 that remained largely intact until March 2000.5

Estrada, in contrast with Ramos who as much as possible, avoided instigating an adverse reaction from the MILF,6 did not want to back down from a splinter Muslim separatist group that was rapidly growing in strength. In 1999, they were estimated to have 15,690 fighters, equipped with 11,280 firearms.7 Some years earlier in 1996, they had already secured control over one-tenth of Mindanao8 through the presence of their known 46 camps in the central portions of the island. The camps have always remained a contentious issue, since it was within these sprawling camps that the rebel group exercised their de facto sovereignty. Though 7 of these camps were recognized as a result of negotiations between the Ramos government and the MILF, including the MILF’s main bases of Camp Abubakar and Camp Bushra,9 Estrada began to view them as a threat not only because they covered large tracts of land, but because they were active recruiting and training grounds.10 However, Estrada did what Ramos avoided, which was ordering the AFP to launch attacks on MILF camps in March 2000. This became to be known as his policy of “all-out-war.”11

The war that followed in Central Mindanao was short in duration but the intensity of the war was reminiscent of the campaigns that the AFP launched against the MNLF in the 1970s. The AFP’s objective was to recover key territory and infrastructure occupied by the rebels and to destroy their bases. They took

5 In July 1997, the Agreement on General Cessation of Hostilities (AGCH) was signed between the Philippine government and the MILF. Four months later, the Coordinating Committee for Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) was established to provide ceasefire guidelines. Ramos did not entirely neglect the MILF but chose to maintain the status quo with them in order to not jeopardize the peace process in Mindanao. Nevertheless, he did release funds for developmental projects that would benefit the MILF as a good-will gesture. See Zachary Abuza, Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003, pp. 45-46. Hereafter cited as Abuza, Militant Islam in Southeast Asia; Marites Danguilan Vitug and Glenda M. Gloria, Under the Crescent Moon: Rebellion in Mindanao, Ateneo Center for Social Policy and Public Affairs, 2000, pp. 113; 150. Hereafter cited as Vitug and Gloria, Under the Crescent Moon.
6 Abuza, Militant Islam in Southeast Asia, pp. 45-46; Vitug and Gloria, Under the Crescent Moon, pp. 113; 150.
7 Ben Cal, Gallantry in Mindanao: Preserving the Republic, Quezon City, Mabuhay Communications Service, 2000, p. 25. Hereafter cited as Cal, Gallantry in Mindanao.
8 Abuza, Militant Islam in Southeast Asia, pp. 40; 45.
9 The government recognized Camp Abubakar and Camp Bushra, designating them as protected zones. This meant the AFP was not allowed to extend their operations into these camps. Since 1992, the AFP has been ordered to stay clear of these areas. See Vitug and Gloria, Under the Crescent Moon, pp. 110-111.
11 Estrada justified his declaration to go to war with the MILF on the basis that the Muslim separatist group occupied several towns and took control over the national highway linking the cities of Marawi and Cotabato. See Raymund Jose Quilop, “Waltzing with the Army: From Marcos to Arroyo,” Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies, Volume 16 (2), p. 97.
an attritional approach that relied on heavy artillery and aerial bombing.\textsuperscript{12} It was a war that imposed much hardship on the civilians as they were forced to flee their homes. The estimated number of internally displaced people was approximately 750,000, with a portion of them not being able to return home for more than 2 years.\textsuperscript{13} In the end, the AFP secured its military objective of flushing the rebels out of most of their bases and this campaign ended with the fall of Camp Abubakar in July 2000.\textsuperscript{14} The military success did not translate into a victory that compelled the MILF to surrender and enter negotiations as Estrada thought it would. Instead, armed activity continued, albeit at reduced intensity, and the government was faced with having to deal with the deeper issues of the Muslim problem, especially in relation to their sovereignty and economic development.\textsuperscript{15}

5.1.3 The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)

Concerning the armed Muslim front, Estrada also faced the growing threat from a radical Islamic group, the Abu Sayyaf Group (the Bearer of the Sword). This was another spin-off group of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). It was established in the early 1990s by Abdurajak Janjanlani, a veteran of the Afghan war who fought the Soviet occupation. The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) originally waged war against the government forces for the purpose of establishing an Islamic state in the Southern Philippines. The group recruited former MNLF members and other young men in their area of operations (Basilan and Sulu). In contrast with the MILF, which has maintained off and on communications with the government, the government has never entered into negotiations with the ASG, branding them as a lawless group/terrorist group. Even though the ASG are currently considered to be criminal opportunists, with a flare for extreme violence, in the early stages, they were relatively centralized in leadership and bound by a mystical ideology. The demise of its founder, Janjanlani in a 1998 firefight with government forces, did not eliminate the organization. Rather, the group rapidly devolved into a loosely knit organization that resembled a criminal organization more than a group with separatist aspirations. Their modus operandi also settled into a routine of kidnappings, extortion, and terror attacks.\textsuperscript{16} Events took a sinister turn in March 2000, when they kidnapped 58 students and teachers from two schools off the island of Basilan in Southwestern Mindanao.\textsuperscript{17} This was followed by an even more brazen abduction that took place on a Malaysian resort island. The kidnapped people were mostly foreign vacationers who were brought to the ASG base in Jolo, Sulu in April 2000. As a result, Estrada ordered the military to step up their operations

\textsuperscript{12} Read Cal, 	extit{Gallantry in Mindanao}, for more information about the various campaigns during the 2000 war in Mindanao.


\textsuperscript{15} See commentaries on the failure of the government to deal with the conflict comprehensively in Patricio P. Diaz, 	extit{Understanding Mindanao Conflict}, Davao City: MindaNews Publication, 2003, pp. 206-207; 228.

\textsuperscript{16} Abuza, 	extit{Militant Islam in Southeast Asia}, pp. 99-110; Vitug and Gloria, 	extit{Under the Crescent Moon}, pp. 204-205.

\textsuperscript{17} The story of the kidnapping is depicted in Jose Torres Jr., 	extit{Into the Mountain: hostaged by the Abu Sayyaf}, Quezon City, Claretian Publications, 2001.
against the ASG in the Basilan and Sulu area. The ASG never fielded armed fighters to the degree that the MNLF had or the MILF has. It was estimated that during this period they had a mere 500 fighters. But they were considered to be a serious threat due to their connections with international terror groups: Al Qaeda and later the Indonesian-based jihadist group, the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). The ASG’s growth into a potent force was in part, due to the support they gained from providing Al Qaeda a potential base of operations in the southern Philippines. The types of support that came from Al Qaeda included funding, jihadi indoctrination, and training (bomb making and developing urban commando skills). Known Al Qaeda operatives working in the Philippines were also responsible for a bomb explosion on a Philippines Airlines flight in 1994, killing one Japanese passenger. They were also behind a failed assassination attempt against Pope Paul John II and plans to bomb a dozen U.S. airliners.

The response to the ASG was primarily a military one. They involved large-scale pursuit operations, and often at the expense of civilians living in the area (forced evacuation and collateral damage). Operations were not only hampered by the ASG’s remote hideouts, but also because they were not completely independent from the MILF and the remnants of MNLF. Linked by family ties, religion, and to some degree, sympathy for each other’s causes, these organizations were known to have colluded when practicality called for it. In short, the main challenges the Estrada administration faced in this battlespace was the ASG’s ability to manipulate the deep depth to secure their sanctuaries and concealment.

5.1.4 The Communist Party of the Philippines- the New People’s Army (CPP-NPA)

The communist armed movement, which occupied most of the government’s COIN program from the Marcos period until the beginning of the Ramos presidency, remained relatively quiet in the interim years. That was until Joseph Estrada became president. The effects of the military operations during Lambat Bitag I and II had taken a toll on the movement. The effects of the military operations during Lambat Bitag I and II had taken a toll on the movement. Furthermore, factional fighting over the direction of the movement within the CPP-NPP in the early 1990s stalled any further progress in helping the movement from recuperating and regaining its original strength. On the peace front, Ramos allowed the CPP to legally pursue political representation in 1992 and he did accept their demands to abide by international humanitarian law and recognizing human rights in 1998. Nevertheless, such steps forward

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21 Larry Niksch, Abu Sayaf: Target of Philippine-U.S. Anti-Terrorism Cooperation, CRS Report RL31263, updated April 8, 2003, pp. 7; 9. In 2000, Estrada ordered an AFP offensive in Jolo, which resulted in civilian casualties and displaced 600,000 people.
experienced a setback when Estrada became president. He angered the communists when he ratified the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA)\(^{24}\) with the United States in 1999, which could not have avoided stinging invectives by the CPP-NPA that were adamantly against any agreement deemed to compromise Philippine sovereignty. A series of events ensued which led to the resumption of war. Even though Estrada proceeded later with peace talks, he chose not to negotiate with their umbrella organization, the National Democratic Front (NDF), and instead initiated talks with groups that split from the core organization in 1992 and legally entered politics. Not surprisingly, little headway was made since these groups did not have control over the military arm of the communist organization.\(^{25}\)

### 5.1.5 CMO: a Forgotten Relic of the Past

Estrada’s security policy was dominated by a military solution in order to end the resurgence of armed groups as quickly and decisively as possible. While the existing CMO office, the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Civil Military Operations, J7, was retained, it played a minimal role during this period. There was more focus on the combat aspect, which was in-line with the “all-out-war” policy.\(^{26}\) What was retained from the peak of the insurgency during the Aquino administration was only the developmental aspect of CMO. Once the CPP-NPA strength was dramatically reduced in the early 1990s, Ramos also decreased the number of COIN operations. This had the effect of shifting CMO’s role in COIN to one that was oriented towards development, especially in regards to communist areas.\(^{27}\) Thus, what was conceptualized during the previous COIN campaign plans did not experience any further development until Arroyo came to power. Nevertheless, the Estrada period is a subject of interest because the inability of the country to stem the resurgence of the threat groups through military means would propel the next president to take a more comprehensive role in dealing with the internal security problem.

### 5.2 The Revival of CMO under the Arroyo Administration

#### 5.2.1 Introduction

When President Gloria Arroyo-Macapagal stepped into office in 2001, she was facing a rapidly deteriorating security situation. The communists had gained a second wind after what was thought to be a decline in their movement from the early 1990s. The communist cadres had engaged in successful

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\(^{24}\) The Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) is a bilateral agreement signed between the Philippines and the United States. It is primarily concerned with the legal issues associated with military personnel stationed in a host country. The communists have always maintained their opposition toward the presence of American troops calling it a manifestation of American imperialism.


socio-political activities in urban centers that had helped to swell their ranks while they increased their armed attacks in the countryside. By 2001, they were reported to have close to 12,000 fighters, almost double of what they had during the mid-1990s.\(^\text{28}\) On the Muslim front, the all-out-war with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) exacerbated the volatile situation in Mindanao. To add to the region’s security woes, there was no let up in the bombings and kidnappings conducted by the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). Even before the ascendency of Arroyo, the Department of National Defense in 2000 was compelled to shift the AFP’s priorities from external defense back to internal security concerns.\(^\text{29}\)

Under these circumstances, President Arroyo took initiatives to increase the tempo of military operations and at the same time take a “soft” or a developmental approach towards insurgency and terrorism. On June 19, 2001, the President signed Executive Order No. 21 which highlighted the urgency to deal with internal security problems and ordered government agencies to play their part in a concerted effort to deal with the political, economic, psycho-social and security components of the armed conflict.\(^\text{30}\) CMO was the military’s response to the president’s national strategy in taking a holistic approach to the insurgency problem. This involved building partnerships with other civilian agencies for the purpose of conducting socio-economic assistance programs in conflict areas.

It was against this backdrop that CMO was once again revived. The only difference this time around was that it led to its formal recognition as a distinct military operation through institutionalization. That being said, the event did not spell out a dramatic departure from the existing CMO practices, which drew its roots from the past. Rather, the event marked the process of translating these accumulated experiences into a doctrine that would establish a better understanding on its positioning and utility in COIN warfare.\(^\text{31}\)

The section thus proceeds to track its path to institutionalization. They are categorized under the following themes. The first is that at a national strategic level, CMO was revived to support what the government termed as a holistic approach to the insurgency problem. This entailed the tapping of the AFP’s engineering capabilities to initiate development in security-compromised areas. The second lies in improving the military’s capabilities to maneuver in insurgent battlespace at an operational and tactical level. The third deals with Muslim threat groups. CMO gradually began to be tailored to address the needs of the Muslim communities. Under this category, the American dimension is explored in detail.

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\(^{31}\) This refers to the Armed Forces of the Philippines Doctrine for Civil Military Operations (AFPM 2-7), which was published in 2006.
5.2.2 The Reinvigoration of CMO as Part of the National Security Strategy to Deal with the Socio-economic Aspects of Insurgencies

Under Arroyo, the old practice of utilizing CMO to target the socio-economic roots of armed unrest were resurrected as part of the nation’s strategy to mobilize existing government resources to take a comprehensive approach to the insurgency problem. When President Arroyo issued EO No. 21 in 2001, she ordered the creation of the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security (COC-IS), composed of representatives from various government agencies, including the Department of Defense. The committee was tasked to formulate a National Internal Security Plan (NISP) for the main purpose of implementing the “Strategy of Holistic Approach.”

The policy document was eventually completed in 2004. It encapsulated the administration’s thrusts to holistically address the security problem from the dimensions of one: political, legal, and diplomatic; two: information; three: socio-economic and psychological; and four: security. The broad objectives of the NISP were as follows:

1. Defeat the armed groups.
2. Dismantle the political-infrastructure of the armed group.
3. Protect the people and vital installations.
4. Reestablish government control in insurgent-influenced/controlled areas.
5. Reduce the root causes of insurgency.
6. De-link the insurgents from their base of support (population) and deny them of recruits, equipment, and other materials to sustain their operations.
7. Win the people over to the government side.

Broadly speaking, the NISP was the grand strategy that provided guidelines on establishing a coordinating mechanism for government agencies, in efforts to contribute to the overall effort of reestablishing peace and order. This was bolstered by the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan 2004-2010 (MTPDP), a national development agenda that laid down the framework and roadmap for the Philippines to achieve poverty reduction. In the MTPDP, security concerns were also addressed, underlying the importance of ending the insurgencies to create a stable environment conducive for economic growth. The security component of the MTPDP called for strengthened peace talks and rehabilitation and

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32 Soliman M. Santos, Jr. expressed that in the first few years of the Arroyo tenure, her intentions to target the roots of the insurgencies remained with a military solution, but with the cooperation of other agencies to work on the socio-economic aspects of the problem. In other words, less attention was paid to strengthening national consensus and mechanisms to seek a political settlement. See Soliman M. Santos, Jr. “Delays in the Peace Negotiations between the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front: Causes and Prescriptions,” working paper, East-West Center Washington, No. 3, January 2005, pp. 11-12; 16.
33 See Executive Order. No. 21-S-2001.
development of conflict areas through a convergence of government agencies and grassroots’ organization. It also stated that in order for the military to fulfill their role in spurring development, the AFP’s capability to conduct CMO was to be enhanced in a collaborative relationship with other government departments and agencies.  

An AFP-CMO program, which was established to support the NISP and MTPDP initiatives for a coordinated developmental approach to the insurgency problem, was the Kalayaan Barangay Program (KBP) or Freedom Village Program. It was implemented as early as 2002. This was a nation-wide program that sought to end the insurgency problem by transforming conflict areas into areas of peace and development, using a combination of the “right-hand” and the “left-hand” approach.

In the “right-hand” approach, the AFP and the police were tasked with the role of clearing and stabilizing conflict areas. The AFP’s engineering brigades were then deployed to undertake the construction of large infrastructure works, such as access roads, portable water systems, school buildings, electrification, and health facilities. This was followed by a “left-hand” which involved a convergence of civilian agencies and local stakeholders for the purpose of reforming and strengthening local governance structures and addresses the roots of conflict through confidence-building measures, dialogues, peace education and peace-building. The program was overseen by the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), a government agency tasked to direct the peace process and help select barangays for the program. Civilian agencies involved were the Department of Public Works and Highways, Department of Agriculture, Department of Health, Department of Education, Department of Social Welfare and Development, and the National Anti-Poverty Commission.

Even though the KBP was mandated to address all threat groups, in actual practice it was geared towards reverting CPP-NPA controlled or influenced areas back to government control. Thus, at the beginning of Arroyo’s term, CMO capabilities of the AFP were resurrected to pursue a developmental approach in countering communist influence in depressed barangays.

36 National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan 2004-2010. National Economic Development Authority, Manila, Philippines, 2004, Ch. XIV; Ch. XXIII.
37 Undated documents received on March 27, 2007 from the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Civil Military Operations, J7, GHQ titled AFP Report, Kalayaan Barangays Programs. KBP was formerly known as “KALAHI (Kapit Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan) para sa Kalayaan.” It was initially launched in the Bicol region in 2002 to deliver basic government services backed by 20 government agencies in impoverished areas. See “Kalahi Projects Cover 89 Barangays in Bicol,” Bicol Mail, April 14, 2005. Available online at http://www.bicolmail.com/issue/2005/april14/kalahi.html. Accessed March 18, 2012.
38 The “right-hand approach” and the “left-hand approach” are terminologies coined during the Magsaysay period to spell-out the thrusts of his counterinsurgency program against the Huks.
39 The OPAPP is a government office that oversees, coordinates, and integrate the implementation of the peace process. It has established peace panels to speed up the peace process with the MILF and the CPP-NPA. Its complimentary track involves overseeing development in conflict areas. See OPAPP’s official website: http://opapp.gov.ph/.
40 Undated documents received on March 27, 2007 from the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Civil Military Operations, J7, GHQ titled “The “Kalayaan Barangay” Program and AFP Report, Kalayaan Barangays Programs.
5.2.3 COIN Plan: Targeting the CPP-NPA

5.2.3.1 Oplan Bantay Laya (2002-2006)

As soon as Arroyo issued EO 21, the AFP crafted a security document called the *AFP 2001 National Military Strategy*. From the document, it revealed the AFP’s challenges in simultaneously dealing with various armed fronts: namely the communist movement and the Muslim threat groups. The entire AFP inclusive of paramilitary and the police amounted to 120,000 personnel while the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA) consisted of 9,500 armed regulars, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) between 10,000 and 15,000, and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) 1,500, which demonstrated a force-to-space ratio dilemma. The AFP learned from their experience in their all-out-war with the MILF in 2000, that the redeployment of forces to Mindanao from other parts of the country left a vacuum in areas they were deployed from. The communists seized the opportunity to increase their influence in these areas. Therefore, in order to maximize the effectiveness of their limited manpower, it was decided that the AFP would increase military offensives in priority areas while using minimal forces to contain threats from spilling over into other areas. This was also known as the “focus and contain” strategy.

The so-called priority areas were initially determined to be the communist strongholds. Unlike the Muslim armed groups that were restricted geographically to the Southern Philippines, the communists were known to be operating in numerous provinces that covered the entire Philippines. Furthermore, the AFP maintains that the CPP-NPA remains the largest threat to the stability of the country because of the group’s objectives in taking over the government. To drive home the message that Arroyo meant business, she ordered the AFP to eliminate the communist threat and dismantle their political organizations by 2006.

How to implement the “focus and contain” concept was fleshed out in the AFP’s new COIN plan released in December 2002. Oplan Bantay Laya I (Operation Plan Freedom Watch) narrowed its mission to deal with the communists first before dealing with other threat groups. Many of its principles date back to

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Oplans formulated under Marcos, Aquino, and Ramos administrations.\(^{48}\) It was based on the all-too-familiar operational methodology that hinged on sustaining military victories by coordinating with other civilian agencies to deliver basic services to the people in the post-conflict stage. CMO is included in each step. In the entry phase, CMO prepares for a possible encounter or battle. CMO operators interact with the population to gain a situational awareness on both the needs of the people and enemy activities. During military operations, initial CMO work such as information campaigns, if successful, can gain the support of the people, and help the military maneuver in battlespace through intelligence. When insurgents are cleared, CMO is geared towards establishing an environment where other civilian agencies can enter and resume services for the people. By the time troops pullout, these agencies will take lead.\(^{49}\) The following fleshes out the Clear-Hold-Consolidate-Develop (C-H-C-D) methodology:

1. **Clear** – neutralize the insurgent (Main actor: military, inclusive of CMO)
2. **Hold** – prevent the return of the insurgent (Main actor: military, inclusive of CMO)
3. **Consolidate** – sustain the gains of the military by initiating development (Main actor: civilian agencies. Supporting role: military, inclusive of CMO)
4. **Develop** – spur economic development (Main actor: civilian agencies. Supporting role: military, inclusive of CMO).\(^{50}\)

5.2.3.2 Understanding the AFP’s Perceptions on the CPP-NPA Battlespace: Establishing the Groundwork for the Application of CMO

5.2.3.2.1 Background to “Knowing the Enemy”

While the developmental component of CMO was revived to support the nation’s holistic strategy towards insurgency and the subsequent release of Oplan Bantay Laya I revealed operational procedures for the military to follow, it was more difficult to discern how CMO was going to play out on the ground. A clearer understanding on the factors that necessitated CMO was demonstrated in a PowerPoint presentation dubbed “Knowing the Enemy.” In 2005, the General Headquarters of the AFP made this presentation available to the public. This 335-slide show was intended to brief the military audience on the strategy and tactics of the communist movement, its disposition, its political organization, the prevailing conditions on the ground, and to furnish the AFP leadership with recommendations on how to carry out a successful COIN operation.\(^{51}\) While CMO was not explicitly referred to in the presentation, it did underline the


complexities of the battlespace that could not be resolved entirely with standard combat operations. Listed below are the main challenges the AFP faces in defeating the insurgents, and draws attention to areas that suggests the need for CMO.

5.2.3.2 Geography and Topology

The first challenge the AFP faces in defeating the insurgency lies in the geographic configuration of the islands. The Philippines is an island-nation, consisting of 7,107 islands and islets, of which approximately 1,000 islands are inhabitable. The Philippines shares no land borders with other nations. In terms of length, its coastline is ranked third in the world, with a combined length of some 36,289 km. The Philippines has 3 major island groups: Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. Of the 88,574,614 Filipinos, more than half are concentrated in the largest island, Luzon which houses the nation’s capital, Manila.

The composition of the Philippine archipelago works both in favor and disfavor for the insurgents. On one hand, the dispersed islands have hampered the communist rebels’ ability to amass their forces to defeat the government forces in their planned final offensive. Lacking naval transport, the sea is one natural barrier, which has kept them cloistered in their respective island-strongholds.52

On the other hand, the remoteness of many areas in the Philippines has allowed the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA) to build their semi-independent bases that are located throughout the archipelago. Combined with a lack of government presence and difficult accessibility from outsiders, the CPP-NPA has been able to develop base areas with limited interference. The CPP-NPA has deliberately scattered its bases across the islands so that the AFP forces would be spread out thinly, preventing the government forces from decisively defeating them.53 The black dotted areas on the map show the disposition54 of the communist guerrilla fronts produced from AFP intelligence.

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52 Victor N. Corpus, Silent War, Quezon City: VNC Enterprises, 1989, p. 31. Hereafter cited as Corpus, Silent War.
54 In military jargon, disposition refers to stationing, arrangement, or positioning of troops/combatants to prepare for military action (defense and attack).
In other words, the disposition of CPP-NPA bases in remote areas is the physical depth of the battlespace that the AFP has to contend with. The depth here is considered to be areas that are difficult to access by government forces but ideal for the communists to build sanctuaries and engage in guerrilla warfare. To add to the difficulties in penetrating the depth, the Philippines has a rugged topography consisting of active volcanoes, mountain ranges, dense forests, jungles, swamps, hills, and burols. The

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55 “Knowing the Enemy,” PowerPoint presentation, 2005, slides 43-44.
longest mountain range in the country is the Sierra Madre, located on the largest island of Luzon, which extends from Cagayan province in northern Luzon down to Aurora Province in Southern Tagalog. Mountain ranges such as these and other topographic configurations such as volcanic craters have long been ideal base locations for the communists since many parts remain inaccessible to outsiders due to its tortuous terrain of steep ravines, dense forests, and overall isolation. Thus, any operations in the physical depth require the AFP to operate in smaller and more mobile units.

5.2.3.2.3 Managing the Human Terrain: the Countryside

On top of the geographic and topographic factors, the CPP-NPA also takes into consideration the human terrain when selecting their base areas. Their choice communities are usually situated in the mountainous interior and other remote locations where limited accessibility makes it difficult for the government to extend its presence. As these communities are typically lacking in basic services, the CPP-NPA is able to capitalize on the community’s socio-economic woes to build their support. For instance, communities that are comprised of the indigenous people of the Philippines known as the lumads are ideal locations. Lumads belong to a marginalized minority that has plenty of grievances the communists can direct their political activities towards. Furthermore, these resource-endowed regions attract mining and logging companies that provide the following merits for the communists: one, exploitive business practices makes the communist ideology attractive for the lumads; two, a source of financing for the CPP-NPA. The NPA can extract “revolutionary taxes” from these big businesses through acts or threats of terror; and three, the availability of existing local organs of political power (unions and cooperatives). As these organizations are already in existence for the purpose of protecting people from exploitive business practices, it saved the CPP-NPA time and energy of building support infrastructure from scratch, if they

56 During the Revolutionary Period, the Filipino rebels used the mountains as their hideouts and were able to gain ample water and food from the natural environs.
57 Another example of a mountain range is the Zambales mountain range located in Western Luzon. The New People’s Army was founded in 1969 in Capas. Assisted by mountainous surroundings; the location has been the traditional maneuver space for the guerrillas. Though the AFP says the movement has splintered since 2007, there are still 20 barangays in Capas that are under enemy influence. Gilbert Gapay, “Preserving the Gains of ISO through Bayanihan: A Concept Paper on 3MIB Bayanihan Operations,” Philippine Army Journal, 4th Quarter, October-December 2007, pp. 33-38.
58 In Northern Mindanao, in the sitio of Lantad, is yet another example where the communists mastered a treacherous terrain. Once a hotbed of the communist activity in the 1980s, it is now considered to be a cleared area. Still, it represents an ideal guerrilla base, being located in the crater of a volcano. Its deep ravines and sharp slopes serve as natural barriers from external attackers, not to mention the rugged configuration also limit the number of entry and exit points. Furthermore, the natural cover serves as a perfect staging area for ambushes and sniper fire. See “A New Sunrise,” Army Troopers – The Philippine Army News Magazine, June 2008, p. 17.
59 AFP, “Knowing the Enemy,” manuscript version, p. 15.
60 AFP, “Knowing the Enemy,” manuscript version, pp. 13-15. Military operations in lumad areas were also complicated by the fact that certain areas were recognized as legitimate ancestral domains by the government and subsequently designated as Zones of Peace. This meant that armed encounters could not occur within the established perimeters. While it was supposed to protect people from military operations, it hampered the AFP from hunting down the communists who had built their bases within these zones. AFP, “Knowing the Enemy,” manuscript version, pp. 17-19.
could convert them to the communist cause.\textsuperscript{61}

It was revealed from the presentation that the AFP was acutely aware that it was not just the physical terrain that allows the communists to engage in effective guerrilla warfare but also their ability to manipulate the human depth. Based on these observations, the AFP latched onto the correlation between government neglect of these communities and the support the communists gained from the people. In order to reverse this situation, the AFP expressed the need to strengthen the existing clear-hold-consolidate-development (C-H-C-D) methodology.\textsuperscript{62} In it, the development stage was seen as a means to divert the people’s attention from the lures of communism and instead, have them focus on securing better economic opportunities with government support. From the military operational standpoint, this was one way to insulate the community from the re-entry of insurgents.\textsuperscript{63} Though not specified in the presentation, the AFP was already leaving behind soldiers to conduct CMO activities (medical outreach and civil engineering) in cooperation with other civilian agencies.\textsuperscript{64}

At the same time, it strongly suggests that this was a partial solution to the force-space ratio problem. The CPP-NPA deliberately scatters their bases to prevent the AFP from applying decisive force on a concentration of their armed elements. Furthermore, it has the effect of overstretching the government forces. Once the AFP clears a communist area, they cannot stay long with their limited resources. As soon as the AFP withdraws, the communists can reenter. Therefore this AFP methodology is also seen for its utility in delegating the post-clearing stage to other government agencies. A government presence with the improved delivery of basic services in a community would help repel any returning communists by providing a better economic alternative to the people.

5.2.3.2.4 Managing the Human Terrain: Urban Sector

The CPP-NPA engages in intensive and widespread political activities. Communist cadres are dispatched to communities to mobilize the agricultural workers (inclusive of the indigenous people), industrial workers, youth, women, the urban poor, and the middle forces.\textsuperscript{65} In particular, the AFP takes a particular interest in the youth and student sector, since the communists prey on impressionable youth for recruits and subsequently rely on their “articulate, dynamic, and liberal-minded” traits to form the propaganda machinery of the party.\textsuperscript{66}

The following identifies the percentage makeup of the CPP-NPA’s support base:

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\textsuperscript{61} AFP, “Knowing the Enemy,” manuscript version, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{62} AFP, “Knowing the Enemy,” PowerPoint presentation, 2005, slide no. 24.
\textsuperscript{65} In the Philippines, the middle forces constitute the middle and upper class, private sector, and the church; “Knowing the Enemy, manuscript version, pp. 6-7. Middle forces include religious workers, professionals, teachers, local politicians, and small entrepreneurs.
\textsuperscript{66} AFP, “Knowing the Enemy,” manuscript version, p. 17.
While the AFP views rural areas as the recruiting grounds for foot soldiers to support the armed component of the CPP-NPA, the AFP sees equally threatening, the underground political movement by sectoral groups in urban areas. The urban to rural ratio of political work in this period was determined by the AFP to be 60:40. As the CPP-NPA’s strategy is to encircle the city from the countryside, when the time is ripe, a general offensive would be led from rural areas while the communist urbanites would orchestrate the popular uprising from the cities. When the two converged, a takeover of the government could be realized. These were the political dimensions that came into play in the overall AFP’s threat perceptions. This PowerPoint presentation brought to light the AFP’s interest in operating in urban areas. Though the presentation does not make explicit references to CMO as a means for the soldier to operate in urban areas, the awareness has helped develop a course of action that the AFP would take in approaching the urban depth of the battlespace. This became more visibly apparent after CMO was institutionalized when soldiers began to be frequently deployed to urban centers to conduct community outreach programs and information campaigns.

5.2.3.2.5 Expanding the Role of the Soldier to Meet the Needs of the CPP-NPA Battlespace

“Knowing the Enemy” also drew attention to the inadequacies of the soldier in dealing with the political-socio-economic context of the insurgency. The method that the AFP uses in highlighting the existing gap is through a comparison made between a typical AFP infantryman and a NPA combatant. Whilst in terms of initial combat training, both are coequal, the NPA cadre is considered to be superior in his interaction with people, as he devotes much attention to propaganda work and party organizing. The NPA literally spends longer periods in a community, “eating, sleeping, working, and working” with the people while conducting social investigation, organizing party organs, holding lectures, recruiting, and providing support for people through rudimentary medical and para-legal assistance. Per contra, the AFP soldier only stays in the field for a limited time and activities involving socio-economic assistance and

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67 “Knowing the Enemy,” presentation, slide no. 29. National Bourgeoisie referred to the educated and skilled workers. E.g. doctors, lawyers, and professors. The middle forces constitute the left-leaning political/advocacy groups.
68 Sectoral groups include organized labor, peasant, urban poor, indigenous cultural communities, women, and youth groups.
69 “Knowing the Enemy,” manuscript version, p. 5. The national bourgeoisie sector is composed of national politicians, business leaders, and big compradors.
70 “Knowing the Enemy,” manuscript version, pp. 6; 12.
information activities are for the short-term. In sum, the presentation underlined the need for the AFP to actively enhance their skills in interacting with the people on a long-term basis.

5.2.3.2.6 Summary

Though the presentation does not furnish the military audience with specifics on CMO per se, it did point out how the CPP-NPA was able to dominate the human terrain through its extensive and sophisticated political activities. In other words, the AFP was facing a task that required more than combat skills to defend the country from the growing menace of communism. This perception was reinforced in other publication that came up with specifics on how the military’s non-combatant roles can make a difference in staving-off the communist threat. For instance the DND 2004 Accomplishment Report cites that the re-introduction of Special Operations Teams (SOT) had improved the COIN campaign against the CPP-NPA. The SOTs were the main weapon of Oplan Lambat Bitag I and II, which were aimed at dismantling communist political infrastructure in the countryside through a combination of CMO, intelligence, and combat (see chapter four). The SOTs in this period were accredited for stemming its growth and ultimately reducing them to insignificant numbers. According to the accomplishment report, there were 282 SOT sorties to win the people’s support for the government in CPP-NPA affected barangays, with 236 ongoing. Similarly, in alleviating the socio-economic plight of the marginalized people, the Philippine Army conducted 347 Community Assistance and Rural Empowerment for Social Services (CARES) activities. Therefore, the shift in attention to methods to deal with the population was bearing some results. By June 2004, the NPA strength was shown to have dropped from 8,892 to 8,534.

5.2.4 A Critical Look in the Way the AFP Approached the Human Terrain: Human Rights

While it appeared that the National Internal Security Plan (NISP), Oplan Bantay Layla I (2002-2006), and “Knowing the Enemy” presentation was preparing the AFP towards a more sophisticated approach to the communist insurgency that relied on providing clearer guidelines in approaching the human terrain, in retrospect, in the immediate years before institutionalization, the AFP was still undergoing the same problems they experienced in the past. In the process of relearning the tenets of CMO, the AFP still had a tendency to resort to indiscriminate COIN measures that were alienating the population.

Contrary to perceptions that the communist threat was decreasing, with the reduction of armed fighters, by the end of Arroyo’s first term in 2006, an American embassy cable revealed that communist-affected barangays role from 1,969 in 2001 to 2,129 in 2006, confirming that the communists were gaining ground in extending their political reach in communities.

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71 AFP, “Knowing the Enemy,” manuscript version, pp. 34-35.
One of the tell-tale signs that the population approach was not working was that Oplan Bantay Laya I, was accompanied with a sharp rise in political killings, reaching almost half of what it was during the period when political repressions was strongest under Marcos (1972-1986).

**Table 5.1:** Political Killings (2001-2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Political Killings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>111</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>128</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>98 (As of June 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>690</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Therefore, it was no surprise when human rights organizations and other activists gave the AFP’s presentation, “Knowing the Enemy” a stinging reception. The bulk of the criticism was aimed at the AFP’s blacklisting of legal associations, party-list groups, and other sectoral organizations. They lambasted the AFP’s COIN stance that was bent on destroying the “political infrastructure” without properly differentiating NPA combatants from legal democratic organizations. In their own words, they called the AFP’s methodology as a “Psychological Warfare (PSYWAR) program.”

Thus AFP’s 2005 presentation, “Knowing the Enemy” only reinforced perceptions by activists that Arroyo was on a crusade to crack down on any form of political dissidence and this brought back painful memories of Martial Law. Notwithstanding, the PowerPoint presentation was removed from public eye by then-Defense Secretary, Avelino Cruz.

Nevertheless, the PowerPoint presentation represented a critical juncture in the way the AFP approached insurgencies. First of all, it provides an insight into the AFP’s mindset concerning the complex

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75 Slide no. 228-279 from “Knowing the Enemy” are devoted to listing organizations deemed to be front organizations of the CPP-NPA.
battlespace that the communists operated in. This laid down the groundwork for the AFP to devise and implement operations that would allow the AFP to maneuver in the human terrain.

Second of all, this approach also uncovered the problematic side of the AFP’s COIN program, especially in the realm of human rights. The military was seen to be overstepping their boundaries by entering civilian spheres. As they did not have strict guidelines on how to differentiate combatants from civilians, and differentiating legal activists from the armed component of the CPP-NPA, it culminated into serious human rights violations. By the time, CMO was institutionalized in 2006; more efforts were made to clean up the act of abusive soldiers. CMO officers interviewed admitted that the behavior of errant soldiers and their human rights violations were prolonging insurgencies.\(^{78}\) Thus, more focus was placed on making the soldiers aware that behavior towards the people also plays into the outcome of a military mission.

In sum, in the years preceding the institutionalization of CMO, the AFP was grappling with ways to improve their maneuverability over the insurgent battlespace. As the human dimension was once again recognized to be a key variable in conducting a successful military operation, efforts were made to determine methods to overcome their deficiencies in dealing with people.

5.3 Tailoring CMO to Target the Muslim Battlespace

5.3.1 Overview

In dealing with the Muslim threat groups, fine-tuning CMO to match this particular theater only began in earnest around 2000, albeit slowly at first, and then accelerating in pace. It began with the formation of the Special Advocacy on Literacy/Livelihood and Advancement for Muslims (SALAAM) units, composed of Muslim soldiers (see Chapter 6).\(^{79}\) These units entered impoverished Muslim communities for the purpose of winning the hearts and minds of the people through literacy programs and small-scale socio-economic assistance. Larger projects dealing with infrastructure-building and medical services also began to appear around the same time. There are several factors perceived to be behind these developments in regards to this theater. They are listed below:

5.3.2 Lack of Resources

In retrospect, one of the factors behind the emergence of CMO on the Muslim front was because practicalities called for it. The AFP was faced with battling both the communists and Muslim rebels and as amplified in the AFP’s 2001 National Military Strategy, the AFP was left without choice but to economize their allocation of combat power due to budgetary constraints and limited manpower. Therefore, the focus of intense military operations was directed towards priority threats, while a policy of containment was used for lesser threats.\(^{80}\)

The Muslim front, aside from the war in the early 1970s, has generally been considered far less


\(^{80}\) Cruz de Castro, “Abstract of Counter-Insurgency in the Philippines and the Global War on Terror,” p. 147.
threatening than the armed communists. While it remains true, the largest Muslim group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has quasi-conventional strength, being equipped with high-power firearms and capabilities to amass their forces unlike the communists (NPA fighters do not carry sophisticated weapon-systems and face challenges in concentrating their forces as they are geographically dispersed), the Muslim front is restricted geographically to the Southern Philippines, at least 800 km away from the capital. The distance from the central government minimizes concerns over the possibility that the conflict would spillover. These are likely reasons for the AFP’s choice in containing the Muslim threat, which was clarified with the second COIN plan (Oplan Bantay Laya II) launched in 2006 under President Arroyo.

Nonetheless, periodically, a military solution to the problem has been attempted. These entailed full-scale offensives that resulted in the capture of key base camps of the MILF. While some circles within the government and military preferred this approach, it was not feasible, since these resource-intensive military operations could not be sustained over long stretches of time. Therefore, an alternative to a costly heavy-on-guns approach was to mobilize soldiers for “winning hearts and minds” projects that not only secured the presence of the soldiers in security-compromised areas, but it had the supposed effect of allowing the AFP to administer costly combat power selectively on critical enemy vulnerabilities, while using friendly persuasion on non-combatants.

5.3.3 Shift in Warfare

Another factor that underlined the necessity of CMO was the shift in how the battles were fought. The wars that took place in the Mindanao region beginning with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and then followed by its breakaway group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), were fought along conventional lines. Battlespace management on the side of the Muslim insurgents was dictated more by territorial control, which reflected their aspirations to seek broader autonomy, if not complete separation from the state. This was in sharp contrast with the armed communist movement that pursued a mobile warfare, depending more on the support of the population in their areas of operations rather than physical control.

After the peace agreement signed with the MNLF in 1996, the MILF emerged to become the largest Muslim rebel force with numbers hovering in the 12,000-range. The MILF built its strategy on

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83 These offensives refer to ones launched in 2000 and another in 2003.
85 While CMO officers did not directly bring up the topic of the AFP’s lack in equipment and funding, they generally concur on that CMO is a cost-effective way to deal with insurgencies and security problems that draws its roots from socio-economic grievances. Major General Reynald D. Sealana, Deputy Chief of Staff and Chairman, GRP-CCCH, interview with author, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for CMO, J7, Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City, August 3, 2009.
defending its sprawling camps, which not only served as the base of its operations and housed communities, but were also located in areas that were claimed to be rightfully belonging to the Muslims. Therefore, the AFP responded differently to the Muslim front, applying the advantage they had in firepower and conventional capabilities to administer force on the fixed targets that the MILF provided.\(^7\) Most intense of these campaigns were those launched in 2000 and 2003.

Consequently, the offensives resulted in the loss of its major base camps, and the MILF switched from a fixed positional warfare to one that relied more on classic guerrilla tactics. These involved small-unit action that sought to harass government forces through raids and ambushes and avoided a head-on conventional clash with government forces. They also resorted to increasing mobility over the battlespace and concealing their field commands in populated areas.\(^8\)

In response, the AFP had to shift their ground tactics to adjust to this type of mobile warfare, which required a more sophisticated form of maneuver warfare that would allow the soldiers to enter the depth that the MILF had retreated to.

5.3.4 MILF Base Camps and the Peace Process

Since 1996, the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) have engaged in on-and-off peace talks. While the government views their grievances are legitimate, especially since the Muslim Filipinos have been victims of neglect by the central government, the most contentious issue has been the degree of autonomy that could be given to the Muslims without impinging on the territorial integrity of the Philippines.\(^9\)

One controversial step for the government in moving the peace process forward was the recognition of the MILF camps. The MILF insisted that any ceasefire could not be implemented without its recognition. These bases not only served military purposes but also symbolized the political and religious aspirations of their movement.\(^10\) Beginning from 1997, in attempts to move the peace process forward, the Philippine government and the MILF signed an “Agreement for General Cessation of Hostilities.” A ceasefire ensued and the government recognized 7 out of the 46 known MILF bases.\(^11\) Nevertheless,


\(^11\) Details on the agreement is provided by Abhoud Syed M. Lingga, “Peace Process in Mindanao, The MILF-GRP Negotiations,” paper delivered during the Round Table Discussion on Updates on Muslims in Mindanao, sponsored by the Institute of Islamic Studies, University of the Philippines on February 7, 2002 at Romulo Hall, UP Diliman, Quezon City. Available at:
following administrations deemed these as a threat and launched full-scale offensives in two separate occasions. The first was in 2000, when then-President Joseph Estrada launched an all-out-war against the MILF. This resulted in the fall of Camp Abubakr, the MILF’s headquarters, and a base compound covering 100km, along with other MILF installations (13 major camps and 43 minor camps). In 2003, under President Arroyo, another AFP offensive was launched against the MILF, resulting in the capture of its new military headquarters, the Buliok Compound in 2003.

It was only at the beginning of 2005, when peace talks resumed with the MILF that once again, the government agreed to recognize some of their bases. As of 2005, the MILF had 14 guerrilla base commands, located mostly in Central Mindanao. The on-going peace process and the acknowledgement and verification of certain MILF bases had implications on how the AFP could manage the battlespace.

These base commands are referred to by the AFP as “areas of temporal stay” and due to the ceasefire agreement and peace talks, they are off-limits to the AFP. This works both to the advantage and disadvantage to the AFP. On one hand, these recognized base commands are in fixed geographical areas, making it easier for the AFP to monitor their activities and prevent them from expanding. On the other hand, there were concerns that the MILF were using these bases to quietly train their members and build up their forces, using the ceasefire agreement to their advantage. To add to their concerns, there were reports that these bases were serving as sanctuaries for militant groups, not recognized by the government (i.e. the ASG, remnants of the MNLF, and Jemaah Islamiyah). Though the MILF maintains they are separate from these other organizations, they are linked to each other through kinship or ethno-linguistic ties. Elements of the MILF that harbor sympathy of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), have allowed them to seek refuge in the ceasefire compliant base areas. The same has been said for the remnants of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) as well as foreign terror groups. This tangled web of relations has frustrated the AFP’s efforts in conducting military operations.

With a ceasefire in effect, and to avoid jeopardizing the peace talks through unexpected military encounters, CMO became a means for the AFP to extend their presence in a friendly manner in the environs...
outside of the camps. From the findings made in a case study conducted on Zamboanga Peninsula, it appeared the AFP could simultaneously demonstrate their support for the peace process by extending socio-economic assistance to the Muslims and at the same time, making sure the MILF remains contained in their base areas (see Chapter 7).99

5.3.5 Multiple Threat Groups

The AFP not only has to contend with the MILF but other threat groups as well. They include the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), the remnants of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF),100 and the presence of foreign terror groups. The ASG in particular has added a complex variable to the battlespace. Even though their numbers are small, complete eradication remains elusive, as the group has devolved into a network of lawless elements, which is bound more by financial gain rather than religious or separatist ideology. Additionally, the ASG is also known to support the presence of foreign terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda, especially in the late 1990s and the beginning of the millennium, and later the Jemaah Islamiyah by providing them sanctuaries in return for training and funding.101

The ASG modus operandi is based on kidnappings where the ransom money collected has secured them with a steady flow of funding. Their hostages are typically transported to their strongholds in Basilan and Sulu, or in remote islands nearby. The AFP has responded with pursuit operations that require the use of Special Forces and intelligence, because the ASG is adept in concealing themselves in the jungle terrain and remote communities.102

Concerning the latter, the population is considered to be the key element behind the support of the ASG. Though lacking in the political appeal that the MILF has, the ransom-money collected from their kidnappings, not only finance their operations, but is used to enrich their families, communities, and pay-off so-called subcontractors that help them with the operations.103

It was primarily based on these concerns that SALAAM units were deployed to remote Muslim communities. As CMO officer, Major Batara explained, the remoteness of these areas made the people susceptible to the lures of the ASG and by having Muslim soldiers initiating the first contact from the government side, the AFP could simultaneously demonstrate the concerns for the community and provide the residents with information on how “dangerous” the ASG are.104

99 Even under President Ramos, developmental activities conducted around the MILF bases as a strategy to prevent the expansion of MILF control. See Vitug and Gloria, Under the Crescent Moon, pp. 149-150.
100 The MNLF is considered to be a latent threat. By 2010, their numbers were thought to be in the 600-range, and are not expected to increase. Col. Wilson O. Mitra, CMO officer, interview with author, Camp Don Basilio Navarro, Western Mindanao Command, Calarian, Zamboanga City, Philippines, October 27, 2010. Hereafter cited as Col. Mitra, interview, October 27, 2010.
103 Edgar Araojo, Professor of Political Science at Western Mindanao State University, interview with author, Baliwasan Central School (Elementary School), Baliwasan Barangay, Zamboanga City, Philippines, October 25, 2010; Bong Garcia, interview with author, Zamboanga City, October 26, 2010.
5.3.6 The Entry of American Forces

5.3.6.1 Background to the Entry of American Forces

Upon further examination on existing pieces of information available and with the benefit of hindsight, it can be argued that CMO initiatives directed towards the Muslim theater would have remained piece-meal if it not have been for the entry of American forces, especially since much of the CMO remained focused on countering the communist threat and tailoring CMO to the Muslims was still in its embryonic stage. Though there is limited information on the American role in the institutionalization of CMO if any, at least it is evident that they helped laid down groundwork to increase and accelerate CMO activities in the Muslim South.

The background to this development came unexpectedly with the simultaneous attacks launched by Al Qaeda on American soil in 2001. The shock and horror of the September 11th attacks reverberated to the far corners of the world. The Philippines was one of the first countries to declare support for the United States and joined the coalition of foreign countries supporting the United States in what became known as the Global War on Terror (GWOT).105

Consequently, the Philippines became the United States’ second front in fighting international terror. As most of the attention went into to the unfolding war in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Philippines remained a sidelight. But in actuality, at its peak, the United Stated deployed over 1,300 troops to the Philippines for the main purpose of eradicating its homegrown terrorist group located in the Southern-most region of the Philippines.106

American security concerns in the Southern Philippines emerged even before September 11th. The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) was involved in a series of high-profile kidnappings that included American citizens in 2000 and 2001.107 In response to the second kidnapping, the United States sent military advisors to assist the AFP in recovering the hostages by providing intelligence in 2002 but maintained an extremely low profile.108 But with the September 11th terror attacks, the United States fixated their concerns on the links that the ASG had with Al Qaeda and the Jemaah Islamiyah.109

On the side of the Philippines, September 11th presented an opportunity for the president to revive the weakened military alliance with the Philippines and gain access to the much needed security assistance.

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105 For further details on reasons behind president Arroyo’s support see Zachary, Militant Islam in Southeast Asia, p. 202.
107 One of the most attention-grabbing kidnapping incidents was the Sipadan Hostage Crisis in 2000. 21 hostages were kidnapped from a Malaysian resort island and delivered in high-speed boats to their base in Jolo, Philippines. Involving American citizens, an American citizen who had converted to Islam, kidnapped in 2000 and another was the Dos Palmas Kidnappings in 2001, where 20 people were kidnapped from a resort on the Philippines island of Palawan. Amongst the hostages were an American missionary couple and a Peruvian-American.
109 Jemaah Islamiyah, is an Indonesian-based Islamic militant group, most notorious for the 2002 Bali hotel bombing resulting in over 200 deaths.
to bolster the AFP’s counterinsurgency (COIN) and counter-terror capabilities.\textsuperscript{110}

5.3.6.2 Debating the Legality of American Military Presence

Philippine-American relations go back over a century, with the entry of American soldiers after the Spanish-American War. After independence, the two countries formed a military alliance bound by the Mutual Defense Treaty (1951). Throughout the following decades, the United States was instrumental in providing military assistance to the Philippines in the form of hardware, logistics, and training. This was reciprocated by the Philippines in large part by the 1947 Philippines-U.S. Military Bases Agreement, which allowed the United States maintain its military presence in Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{111} Nevertheless, this was all to change when the Philippine Senate voted down by a margin of 1, the extension of the base leases in 1991.\textsuperscript{112} While the alliance was still intact, the pullout of American soldiers dramatically reduced American military funding for the Philippines. Without the extra-support, most of the nation’s generated funds for the AFP was absorbed by personnel costs, leaving very little to maintain or upgrade the aging military equipment, thereby impacting the AFP’s capabilities to fight insurgencies.\textsuperscript{113}

After the September 11\textsuperscript{th} attacks, President Arroyo seized the chance to resurrect the faltering military alliance. As a result of her support for the GWOT, she was rewarded USD 93 million in November 2001 in order to fight the ASG. From October 2001, the U.S. began to send military observers to assess AFP capabilities in fighting the ASG.\textsuperscript{114} This was followed by American military personnel being sent to train their Filipino counterparts in counter-terrorism, equipping them, as well as assisting them in intelligence acquisition.\textsuperscript{115}

Nevertheless, having ground support was a contentious issue. Even before the September 11\textsuperscript{th} attacks, George W. Bush pushed for a more direct role for the American forces (involving combat) in


\textsuperscript{112} See more on the post-September 11\textsuperscript{th} attacks on the Philippine-U.S. security alliance in Renato Cruz de Castro, “The Revitalized Philippine-U.S. Security Relations: A Ghost from the Cold War or an Alliance for the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century?”, Asian Survey, 43:6, November/December 2003, pp. 971-988;


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fighting the ASG that had kidnapped American citizens. Arroyo was no less eager to welcome American soldiers, but she remained adamant in drawing the line between advisory and assistance roles and their direct role in military action.\(^{116}\)

The main reason behind this was that Arroyo wanted to deflect any criticism on what appeared to compromise Philippine sovereignty. Without the base agreement, the legality of allowing American troops to enter the Philippines basically depended on the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) - forged by Arroyo’s predecessor, President Joseph Estrada with the United States in 1999.\(^ {117}\)

Still, the “popular” interpretation of the 1987 Philippine Constitution does not allow the presence of foreign troops on its soil to conduct combat operations\(^ {118}\) and it was decided that the best way to serve both American and Philippines security interests was to avoid operations that could be seen as impinging on Filipino sovereignty.\(^ {119}\) As it turned out, the two sides would work around this problem by having U.S. forces in the Philippines on a rotational basis and limiting their role to advising.

5.3.6.3 U.S. Forces Operating on the Ground and the Significance of CMO

How CMO fits into the scheme of things appears to be linked with the outcome of negotiations that played out between the two countries in deciding the degree of military support that the American military could provide on the ground. As the U.S. forces could not participate in combat, any direct operations on the ground were to be restricted to CMO and/or humanitarian assistance.

Balikatan (shoulder-to-shoulder) 2002 helped determine the “character” of American support for the AFP. In February 2002, 1,300 American troops were deployed to the island of Basilan, with 300 of them designated to do civic action (coming primarily from Navy engineers), alongside with 1,200 of their Filipino counterparts in this joint military exercise.\(^ {120}\) In previous joint-military exercises, the focus was on enhancing AFP combat readiness and interoperability between the two countries in case of an external attack. While some CMO activities were conducted, they remained more of a gesture of goodwill.\(^ {121}\) With


\(^{119}\) This approach was mutually agreed upon even though it was pointed out from the American side that there was nowhere to be found in the constitution, a clause that specifically banned foreign troops in conducting combat operations on Philippine soil. Major Stuart L. Farris, “Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines,” monograph, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: School of Advanced Military Studies, United States Army Command and General Staff College, 2009, pp. 29-31 for a summary on the constitution issue.

\(^{120}\) Larry Niksch, *Abu Sayyaf: Target of Philippine-U.S. Anti-Terrorism Cooperations*, CRS Report RL31265, updated January 24, 2007, p.10. Balikatan 2002 was the first annul joint exercise held between the two countries after September 11\(^ {11}\). It focused on expanding counter-terrorism cooperation with the Philippines. Balikatan was first established in 1981 and held annually until 1991. It was resumed in 2000 after the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) was ratified.

\(^{121}\) These CMO activities took place on the main island of Luzon.
Balikatan 2002, the nature of the joint-military exercise operations shifted to a COIN approach, geared more towards eradicating homegrown terror groups terror groups in the Philippines, with a stronger focus on activities to win over the population.\textsuperscript{122}

The CMO aspect, particularly civic action projects related to infrastructure building in Balikatan was especially successful in getting positive media reviews and improving the perceptions of the Muslim Filipinos towards the Americans.\textsuperscript{123} For at least the first few years, it was considered to have brought a sense of normalcy to the island by flushing the ASG out. Civic action is also thought to have jump-started economic development, or at least create an environment secure enough for more businesses to enter.\textsuperscript{124}

The success of Balikatan 2002 set a precedent for both militaries to concentrate on the human terrain of the battlespace. This meant the key objectives were to gain the popular support of the people so that it would ultimately deny the terrorists sanctuary, mobility, and resources. To win this support, CMO activities such as Engineering Civic Action Program (ENCAP), Medical Civic Action Programs (MEDCAP) and Dental Civic Action (DENCAP) were organized and implemented.\textsuperscript{125} And to reassure the Filipino audience that the United States was committed but only from the sidelines, any CMO activity was done in partnership with the AFP, with the latter taking lead.\textsuperscript{126}

Such CMO activities increased in numbers as both forces sought to replicate the success of Basilan in Jolo and other parts of the Sulu Island chain. As these activities went beyond the rules of engagement of the Balikatan exercise, tough negotiations on its continuation ensued between the two countries.\textsuperscript{127}

In July 2002, the Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF-P) was established under the United States Pacific Command (PACOM) in order to retain the presence of American forces on a rotational basis.\textsuperscript{128} Its mission was to support the Philippines in fighting terrorists, eliminating terrorist havens, and building conditions for peace.\textsuperscript{129} The U.S. forces continued to respect Arroyo’s requests to remain on the sidelines, and did not directly inject themselves in any fighting.\textsuperscript{130} The lines of operations

\textsuperscript{123} Larry Niksch, Abu Sayyaf: Target of Philippine-U.S. Anti-Terrorism Cooperations, CRS Report RL31265, updated April 8, 2003, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{126} Major Tyler Wilson (Civil Military Operations Planner Civil Affairs, U.S. Army) and SSG Calen A. Bullard (JSPTF-P), interview with author, Camp Navarro, Western Mindanao Command, Camp Navarro, Zamboanga City, Philippines, July 28, 2009.
culminated into the following:

1. Building the capacity of the AFP through training, advice, and assistance.
2. Conducting CMO (civic action and humanitarian assistance) to help uplift the lives of people in economically depressed areas.
3. Information operations as a means to improve the legitimacy of the Filipino government in the region.\(^{131}\)

To add further legal basis for existing activities of the U.S. forces, the concept of Kapit Bisig (Linking Arms) strategic framework was proposed by the AFP in 2004 to PACOM\(^ {132}\) and formally agreed upon in July 2006.\(^ {133}\) As Balikatan was originally established to assist the AFP in preparing for external contingencies, critics questioned the legality of shifting this to internal security threats.\(^ {134}\) Therefore, Kapit Bisig became the new framework that would allow the U.S. forces to provide the AFP with the assistance they needed in tackling terror. In it, a particular focus on CMO or humanitarian assistance was added.\(^ {135}\) In short, this new framework allowed the U.S. forces to extend their presence beyond what was stipulated in the joint-military exercises of Balikatan, and humanitarian assistance would help justify their extended presence.\(^ {136}\)

Another development, which led to the strengthening of the AFP’s CMO by American intervention, is found in the Philippines Defense Reform (PDR) in 2003. This was the outcome of a joint Philippine-American defense assessment made over the capabilities of the AFP. The objective of this Joint Defense Assessment (JDA) was to find deficiencies within the Philippine military establishment, and provide the assistance required to improve these areas. In one of the 10 key areas of reform, CMO was pointed out to be a critical component in addressing the socio-economic roots of insurgencies and thereby requiring improved mechanisms for the AFP to work jointly with other civilian agencies, to bolster its COIN campaigns.\(^ {137}\)


5.3.6.4 Summary on the American Dimension

In walking the legal tightrope, the Americans had to find ways to fulfill their mission to counter global terrorism, while maintaining their respect towards Philippine sovereignty. As they could not directly participate in combat operations, having being limited to an advisory role, CMO became the one option that allowed the Americans to directly inject themselves in operations on the ground; giving them more control over the battlespace. At the same time, in trying to justify a prolonged presence on Philippine soil, the humanitarian aspect of CMO was another way to overcome this problem. As CMO, image-wise, had less to do with guns, and had more to do with good works, it generated less criticism concerning the presence of the American military.138

While the above generally gives the American-side to the story, it has also worked in the security interests of the AFP. The AFP has been able to regain the much-needed support to bolster its COIN capabilities through American assistance. With the focal point being placed on CMO, this has expanded the possibilities and potential of using this approach in the Muslim battlespace. Consequently, by 2006, when the AFP institutionalized CMO, the American forces had already begun to help the AFP in engaging in CMO on a wider-scale. With the Americans covering a greater part of these costs,139 the AFP has been able to accelerate and improvise CMO to better meet the needs of the Muslim audience (See chapter 7 for details).

5.4 Conclusion

In tracking the immediate events to CMO’s institutionalization, it can be determined that the major factor in its revival and subsequent recognition as a valid military operation, was primarily due to the deteriorating security situation and the quandary that the AFP was placed in, in having to deal with multiple fronts at once. At a strategic level, President Arroyo attempted to deal with the problem holistically, by gaining the support of all government agencies as a means to tackle the socio-economic roots of the problem. Within the military, there was a renewed attention on the way communists operated in battlespace, especially in the human terrain. From the AFP presentation referred to in the chapter, it revealed that the AFP was aware of their deficiencies in maneuvering over the population, signifying a need to integrate CMO effectively in military operations. In regards to the Muslim front the emergence of the ASG and the MILF that were engaging in guerrilla tactics, was a major factor in developing CMO for the Muslim theater. Additionally, the United States’ entry into the Southern Philippines has also helped the AFP expand the CMO-alternative in dealing with the Muslim theater.

Map 5.2: JSOTF-P Designated Area of Operation

Source: Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines, official website: http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_TsXXhqhJjos/SmlnM14_dCI/AAAAAAAAAHQ/BmVLBWRd9VU/s1600-h/map-philippines.png
CHAPTER 6. CIVIL MILITARY OPERATIONS (CMO)

6.1 Overview

Steps towards the institutionalization of CMO began within the Philippine Army. On December 2000, military officers with CMO expertise were gathered by the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Civil-Military Operations to produce a CMO vision that could better support the army mission. Several months later in early 2001, a CMO workshop-seminar was held to translate concepts into concrete guidelines. The culmination of these efforts resulted in the publication of the Civil-Military Operations Manual in 2002. This was the first field manual of its kind to “provide commanders and operators in the field a clear outline of what to do in conducting CMO based on the standards set with the changing times and the current trends in warfare.”

In actuality, the CMO office (J7) was already in existence at the beginning of Arroyo’s first term but it was deactivated on January 1, 2005 and its operations, training, and on-going doctrine development functions were transferred to the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations (J3). J3 is the office responsible for executing military operations on the ground. Little can be gathered concerning its loss of its independent status in 2005, aside from official statements made to the effect that organizational changes were necessary to make the military more responsive to the security environment. Nonetheless, it appears it was not so much of a move to downplay its importance, as it was to better integrate CMO within the scope of the military mission.

Nevertheless, within a year and half, it was decided that CMO was too much work for the J3 office to handle and on July 1, 2006, an independent CMO office (J7) was re-established at the AFP Deputy Chief of Staff. This event marked its institutionalization. CMO was now officially recognized as a distinct military operation, applicable to all three services (the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force). In the same month, on July 13, 2006, the AFP Doctrine for Civil Military Operations (AFPM 2-7) was published, providing a set of guidelines for soldiers and CMO operators out on the field.

In analyzing the change and continuity that came with institutionalization, it can be determined for the most part there were no significant differences in the contents of its activities. These activities were still maintained under the categories of civic action, information campaigns, and psychological operations.

1 Philippine Army, Civil-Military Operations Manual (PAM 7-00), Makati: The Philippine Army, 2002, pp. 1; 15. Hereafter cited as PAM-7-00.
4 At the AFP’s General Headquarters, the chief of staff (rank of a general) exercises command over the AFP’s services. The headquarters is staffed with coordinating staff offices numbered J1 through J10. They include personnel, intelligence, operations, logistics, plans, comptrollership, education and training, material development, and retirees and reserve affairs. CMO is the J-7 office. See organizational structure of Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) at: http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/philippines/afp.htm. Accessed November 6, 2012.
Furthermore these projects were designed for the same objectives of boosting government legitimacy and shaping the perceptions of the target audiences (the people and the threat groups) in favor of the military mission.

But when drawing out the differences, the most important came from the publication of a doctrine. As AFP officers profess, the difference that came with institutionalization was not so much in the nature of its activities, but providing soldiers out on the field clear guidelines rather than rely on common sense as was done before. Under “common sense,” CMO lacked a codified set of instructions that normally guides other military operations. But with institutionalization, a newly published doctrine filled in gaps concerning the know-how in one, producing an area assessment; two, producing a planning estimate; three, developing an operational plan; four, developing communication products; five, planning for its distribution; and six, studying the effects of its actions. In other words, efforts had been made to subject CMO to intellectual rigor, internalizing lessons derived from the AFP’s past experience, and thereby ensuring the military audience directed these efforts not arbitrarily, but with a clear guide to its action.

Another difference was that the scope of CMO was widened. This involved strengthening partnerships with not just government agencies and units (both at the national and local level), but also involved NGOs as well. And in regards to developing CMO in response to various threat groups, what was originally created to deal with the mass base support of the communists was also expanded to specifically target the human terrain in which the Muslim armed groups operated in.

The following section provides its definition, operational components, principles, the organizational structure, and other related topics. As the actual doctrine, AFPM 2-7 could not be accessed, information primarily comes from interviews and briefings provided by AFP officers, the 2002 Army CMO manual (PAM 7-00), and other AFP publications.

6.2 AFP-CMO Definition
The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) defines Civil Military Operations (CMO) as planned activities undertaken independently or in coordination with civilian entities in support to the accomplishment of AFP mission to gain popular support and weaken the will of the enemy to fight. It is characterized by activities that influence the beliefs, emotion, behaviors, attitudes and opinions of selected target audience; it establishes and maintains good relations between military forces, civil authorities and the civilian populace to facilitate military operations in support to the accomplishment of the AFP mission.

8 Headquarters of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Internal Peace and Security Plan: Bayanihan, Quezon City: Armed Forces of the Philippines, 2010, B-4. In the Philippine Army’s manual doctrine published in 2002, PAM 7-00, CMO is defined as activities undertaken independent of or in coordination with civilian entities to gain popular support, to strengthen the will of the soldiers to fight, and weaken the will of the enemy to resist in
Broadly speaking, CMO is differentiated from other military activities because it has a pronounced civilian association. CMO encompasses activities that are mostly non-combatant in nature and are also undertaken in close collaboration with government agencies, local government units (LGUs), civil society, religious organizations, and to some extent business groups. Broad objectives are to win popular support for the government, help tackle the root causes of insurgencies and help spur development in economically depressed areas, and act as a force multiplier for existing military operations. While it is an integral part of combat operations occurring prior to, during, and after military operations, CMO can also take place in conflict-free zones.

In terms of its contents, CMO runs the full gamut of activities at the non-combatant end of the spectrum of operations. It can range from heavy construction works undertaken by military engineers to small-scale information and community assistance programs conducted by CMO specialists. Nonetheless, it involves psychological operations and to some extent, combat. But aside from activities directed towards the population and the enemy, CMO also involves driving the concept within the ranks of the AFP for the purpose of instilling discipline. The slogan “Every soldier is a CMO man” is a strong reminder that that each soldier is expected to demonstrate exemplary conduct in the community he or she operates in.9

6.3 The Operational Components of CMO: The Three Pillars

CMO consists of 3 pillars: Civil Affairs (CA), Public Affairs (PA), and Psychological Operations (PSYOPS), each targeting their respective audiences. The first pillar, Civil Affairs (CA) targets the community. These activities involve military civic action in areas of engineering, health, education, and disaster relief. CMO units often partner with Local Government Units (LGU), national government agencies, and other civilian organization for the purpose of one, securing the environment so that other government agencies can function and provide services in the community and second, to strengthen the bond between the community and the AFP and government.

Public Affairs (PA) targets the public at large. It is centered on the timely dissemination of information to the public, typically through the media or can take place in the form of information campaigns where soldiers are deployed to the community to increase awareness on government programs and threat groups. PA also includes building community relations in the form of dialogues and symposiums

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9 Maj. Eugenio S. Batara, Assistant Chief of Unified Command Staff for CMO, U7, interview with author, Camp Don Basilio Navarro, Zamboanga City, Philippines, October 3, 2007. Hereafter cited as Maj. Batara and date of interview. “Every soldier is a CMO man” is reminiscent of the Magsaysay Era in the 1950s, when the “Every soldier is a Psywar man” was propagated to the internal audience. See Valeriano and Boahannan, *Counter-Guerrilla Operations*, pp. 175-177.
organized in communities.\textsuperscript{10}

PA often works together with the AFP Civil-Relations Service (CRS), which is the primary arm of PA.\textsuperscript{11} CRS is a military support unit with offices nationwide that serves as the interface between the military and the public. Tasks include the printing of posters and leaflets, publishing newspaper articles, and providing material for radio broadcasts. In short, they take the lead responsibility in disseminating information to the public.\textsuperscript{12}

Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) are conducted to influence the beliefs, emotions, attitudes, opinion and ultimately the behavior of both the enemy and the people. This is the only pillar, which includes combat operations. PSYOPS is divided into two categories. The first is \textit{words PSYOPS}, which is media-related and deals with psychological materials (PSYMAT). PSYMAT involves the distribution of printed material in communities that call for the surrender of rebels. \textit{Deeds PSYOPS} are conducted in guerrilla theater operations. In combat operations they are integrated in raids and patrols. In deception operations: ruse, decoy, and diversionary tactics are used to mislead the enemy, thus contributing to the demoralization of the enemy.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{Figure 6.1}: CMO Pillar and its Target Audiences

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{fig6.png}
\end{center}

\textbf{Source}: \textit{PAM 7-00}; Col. Regencia, October 8, 2007.

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\textsuperscript{12} Major Gamal Hayuduni, Civil Relations officer, interview with author, CRS-AFP Office, Camp Don Basilio Navarro, Western Mindanao Command, Zamboanga City, Philippines, July 29, 2008. The Civil Relations Service website states that its mission is “to conduct public information and community relations in order to create a favorable atmosphere between the community and the AFP.” Available online at: www.crsafp.ph

\textsuperscript{13} Lt. Col. Regencia, October 8, 2007.
6.4  **Lines of Operations**

By 2010, the AFP had altogether 250 CMO activities.\(^{14}\) Many of these activities have overlapping functions and target audiences. For instance, a civic action project intended to win hearts and minds of a community belongs to Civil Affairs but the publicity gained from this, also falls within the purview of Public Affairs. If a common denominator needs to be extracted from for the listed activities, PSYOPS can be named since all CMO activities have the ultimate purpose of influencing the minds of the target audience.\(^{15}\) Nevertheless, for the sake of categorization, CMO activities are listed below in its respective areas of CA, PA, and PSYOPS.

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\(^{14}\) Lt. Col. Regencia, November 4, 2010.

\(^{15}\) The overlapping nature of CMO activities was noted by Lieutenant Colonel Rodrigo T. Gregorio, Assistant Chief of Staff for CMO, in an interview with author, Headquarters 1st Infantry (Tabak) Division, Philippine Army, Zamboanga del Sur, Philippines, October 29, 2010. Hereafter cited as Lt. Col. Gregorio, October 29, 2010.
### Table 6.1: Lines of Operations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lines of Operations</th>
<th>Civil Affairs</th>
<th>Public Affairs</th>
<th>PSYOPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engineering Civic Action</td>
<td>Donation of clothes and school supplies</td>
<td>Media-Related</td>
<td>Words (counter-propaganda)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road building/ rehabilitation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Radio/TV</td>
<td>Distribution of material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School building/ repair</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Photo video coverage</td>
<td>Radio broadcast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flood control projects</td>
<td>Adult Literacy Program</td>
<td>Press conference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portable water systems</td>
<td>Humanitarian Assistance</td>
<td>Internet websites, and</td>
<td>Symposums/Lectures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrification</td>
<td>Disaster relief</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Assistance</td>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>Symposiums</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Civic Action Programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(MEDCAP)</td>
<td>Coastal cleanup</td>
<td>Anti-drug information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental Civic Action Programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(DENCAP)</td>
<td>Tree planting</td>
<td>Fun games</td>
<td>Deeds (Combat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optical Civic Action Programs (OPCAP)</td>
<td>Cleanliness drives</td>
<td>Information drives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumcision &quot;Operation Tuli&quot;</td>
<td>Beautification projects</td>
<td>Interagency coordination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Community Service</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sporting events</td>
<td>Deception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livelihood training</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cleanliness drives</td>
<td>Special Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloodletting (soldiers donating blood)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Beauty contests</td>
<td>SOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeding mission</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SALAAM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Compiled from briefing material and interviews provided by the AFP-CMO but primarily drawn from documents provided by Major Eugenio S. Batara, Asst. Chief of Unified Command for CMO, U7, Camp Don Basilio Navarro, Western Mindanao Command, Zamboanga City, Philippines, October 4, 2007.

### 6.5 The National Development Support Command (NADESCOM)

The National Development Support Command (NADESCOM)\(^\text{16}\) was activated pursuant to the

Department of the Defense (DND) Department Order NR 238, dated October 30, 2007, roughly a year after the creation of an independent CMO office at the GHQ. NADESCOM is the engineering arm of CMO which handles large construction projects such as roads, bridges, school buildings, and electrical and water systems. Its objectives are to “undertake developmental programs nationwide to establish a physically and psychologically secure environment conducive to socio-economic growth in support of the AFP mission.”

The rationale behind the creation of an entirely new command devoted to infrastructure projects was in line with President Arroyo’s “humanitarian offensive” of transforming conflict-affected communities into areas of peace and development. It was also established to help unload the developmental burden of the AFP when pursuing its COIN tasks. Previously, large infrastructure work was left up to area commands, but with their focus on security operations, it was very difficult to attend to development properly. Therefore, a command was established to take lead responsibility in orchestrating and synchronizing developmental projects. Similarly, NADESCOM was also created to assist the AFP in overcoming challenges in consolidating its gains after clearing areas of enemy-presence.

NADESCOM has the same status as the 7 area-based unified commands situated throughout the archipelago. The only difference with other area commands is that it does not have an area of responsibility (AOR) and is instead assigned on a project-basis to geographic areas. In short, it is a functional command that centers on engineering work. While the number of personnel under this command was not made public, it was by far the largest command, with operations covering the entire nation. And aside from the usual military funding, it had access to a yearly budget amounting to approximately P1 billion.

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2012.
17 Presentation manuscript titled “AFP National Development Support Command” provided to author by Major Julius A. Cabarloc, NDSC, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Philippines, July 25, 2008.
21 Espuelas Jr., Philippines Army, “Examining the Capacity of the Philippine Army’s Enlisted Corps To Accomplish the Government’s Counterinsurgency Strategy: Sharpening the Tool, p. 83. Additionally, the creation of an independent command for development was perceived to be one way to raise motivation for soldiers by giving the overseeing organ a status equal to a unified command.
22 Presentation manuscript titled “AFP National Development Support Command” provided to author by Major Julius A. Cabarloc, NDSC, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Philippines, July 25, 2008. AFP Unified Commands are regional commands that are composed of the three services (Army, Navy, and Air Force) and are located in 7 different locations in the Philippines. As of July 2012, 7 unified commands were reduced to 6.
following military units come under NADESCOM.  

Table 6.2: NADESCOM Units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service/Support Units</th>
<th>NADESCOM Units</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>51st Engineering Brigade</td>
<td>Brigade Libis, Quezon City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>52nd Engineering Brigade</td>
<td>Malaybalay, Bukidnon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53rd Engineering Brigade</td>
<td>Cebu City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54th Engineering Brigade</td>
<td>Manaaoq, Pangasinan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55th Engineering Brigade</td>
<td>Davao City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>356th Aviation Engineering Group</td>
<td>Masbate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>1st Naval Mobile Coast Battalion</td>
<td>Basilan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil-Relations Service</td>
<td>8th Civil Relations Group</td>
<td>Quezon City</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The 8th Civil Relations Groups was created in 2007 to support NADESCOM.  
**Source:** Briefing made by NADESCOM headquarters, AFP Headquarters, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Philippines, October 8, 2007.

Figure 6.2: NADESCOM in the AFP’s Basic Organizational Structure

Kalayaan Barangay Program (KBP)

The largest project undertaken by NADESCOM is the Kalayaan Barangay Program (KBP) or freedom villages. The project largely deals with communist-influenced areas. Military engineers are deployed to these areas that are usually remote and have limited or no government presence. The military

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does not work unilaterally but collaborates with other government agencies such as the Department of Public Works and Highways, the Department of Health, and the Department of Education. Activities include the construction of farm-to-market roads, schools, water systems, electrification, and services related to health (see Appendix E for a sample of a medical outreach program by NADESCOM).  

Communities are selected based on whether the barangay hold the existence of a communist shadow government, legal fronts, and/or have armed components of the threat group. Threat assessments are first made by the AFP’s field units. Based upon these findings, areas eligible for KBP are designated by the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process (OPAPP), a government office responsible for overseeing the peace process vis-à-vis armed groups.

Table 6.3 reveal the number of projects planned and the number completed. Table 6.4 shows the amount of funds released for these projects. Table 6.5 is also included to show the breakdown of the projects.

**Table 6.3: Number of Projects under NADESCOM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FY</th>
<th>Total Projects</th>
<th>Finished Projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005-2007</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>658</td>
<td>642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>546</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6.4: Funds for NADESCOM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FY</th>
<th>Funds Released (in millions)</th>
<th>Number of barangays</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005-2007</td>
<td>439.7 pesos (USD 10,030,103.92)</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>985.00 pesos (USD 22,503,999.38)</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1,000.00 pesos (USD 22,846,698.71)</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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27 Lt. Col. Regencia, August 3, 2009. In 2008, priority areas were listed as follows: Region 3 (Central Luzon), Region 4 (Calabarzon and Mimaropa), Region 5 (Bicol Region), Region 8 (Eastern Visayas), Region 12(SOCCSKSARGEN: South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, and General Santos City), Region 13 (Caraga Region).


29 Based on currency exchange rates from November 17, 2010.
Table 6.5: Breakdown of Projects as of 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,491.33 km farm-to-market roads</td>
<td>171 health centers, toilets, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160 electrification projects</td>
<td>528 school buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 bridges</td>
<td>10 daycare centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>365 water system projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


6.6 The Special Operations Team (SOT) and the Special Advocacy and Livelihood Assistance for the Advancement Among Muslims (SALAAM)

6.6.1 Overview
The Special Operation Team (SOTs) and Special Advocacy and Livelihood Assistance for the Advancement Among Muslims (SALAAM) are the only CMO activities that do not come under the direct administrative and operational control of the CMO office (J7) at the AFP GHQ. Since these operations also involve combat and intelligence, they are headed by the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations (J3). The J3 office is in charge of the planning of military operations, and the assignment and deployment of troops throughout the country. SOT and SALAAM are teams that embody the AFP’s efforts to strike at the depth of the enemy battlespace.

6.6.2 The Special Operations Teams (SOTs)
The Special Operations Teams (SOTs) practiced today owe its existence to the experimental efforts made in the early-1980s and refined in the late 1980s (see chapter 4). Due to its success in reducing the communist armed strength in the late 1980s, it continues to be a major tool for the AFP in dealing with the local communist movement.

SOTs originally had three built-in capabilities: combat, intelligence, and CMO (sometimes referred to as PYSOPS). The overall objectives of the SOTs are to neutralize the communist armed movement, dismantle its political infrastructure, and shift the community’s support/attention away from the communists and re-orient the community’s efforts towards economic growth. SOT action plans have guidelines but leave enough room for innovation by local ground commanders. To give one example of its methodology, the section below examines the SOT phases conducted by an army battalion in 2005. SOTs were deemed necessary in this unspecified locality in Luzon because most of the barangays were under the shadow government of the communists. These SOT units targeted sitios, or hamlets located far from the

31 PAM 7-00, p. 10.
barangays center.\textsuperscript{32} This SOT plan came in three phases:

1. **Planning, Neutralization and Immersion Mode**
   - Intelligence work is done to identify key enemy personalities and structures.
   - SOTs are deployed in “combat mode” meaning their presence is not announced to the community and no courtesy calls are made to barangay captains. At this stage, no permanent military presence is set up in the community.
   - Neutralization of the enemy is done through stealth, feint, and deception.

2. **Implementation Phase**
   - SOT teams begin to operate openly. Contact is made with local government executives and residents are organized into counter-insurgent defensive structures.
   - SOTs explore and develop plans to assist in community development.
   - Dialogues are conducted with the youth, local government officials, and residents.

3. **Mobilization, Empowerment, and Maintenance Phase**
   - Further community organization work is conducted with local government leaders, but with the latter taking lead.
   - Further assessment is made to verify that existing livelihood and other socio-economic assistance matches the needs of the barangay.
   - SOTs organize barangay defense units and place them in strategic locations to defend their communities from the re-entry of communists.\textsuperscript{33}

The above describes the operational methodology of a SOT that involves soldiers operating in the field sub rosa in the early phases, which is a tactic used to gain intelligence for the purpose of pinpointing communist rebels for neutralization and finding out the political sympathies and socio-economic issues of the community.

The SOTs in general, target remote areas where there is limited government presence and has problems with security.\textsuperscript{34} SOTs also operate in urban areas. Here, the SOT is tailored to meet the needs of the urban setting. Since city residents are better informed about the government and have better access to government services, SOTs focus on targeting the political fronts of the communist movement.\textsuperscript{35}

The duration of one SOT mission is 3 months. In some cases, they can be as short as 1 month or

\textsuperscript{32} A loose translation of barangay is village. It is the smallest administrative division in the Philippines. A sitio is a hamlet or a territorial enclave that forms part of a barangay. Sitios are typically located in rural areas and are distant from the barangay center.
\textsuperscript{33} Research and Doctrine Development Branch, OG3, PA, “Community Organizing Towards Economic Development,” *Philippine Army Journal*, (2\textsuperscript{nd} Quarter) 2007, pp. 6-14.
\textsuperscript{34} Maj. Batara, October 3, 2010.
\textsuperscript{35} Maj. Batara, July 31, 2008.
as long as 6 months. During the mission, SOT soldiers immerse themselves in a community. However the media and leftist groups have pointed out this operation has led to human rights violations and extrajudicial killings of community organizers, student leaders, and union organizers who are linked to the leftist movement. They are particularly wary of the SOT’s function in intelligence gathering and ruse.

To improve their image, beginning from around 2010, SOTs attempted to shed their sinister image by focusing more on development and fast tracking the delivery of basic services to impoverished barangays. Renamed Peace and Development Teams (PDT) to provide a more “pleasing name” to the public, these new SOTs do not allow to soldiers immerse themselves in a community in a civilian disguise and are required to identify themselves to barangay authorities. The secretive nature of SOTs has been discarded so that SOT soldiers can be presented as good-will ambassadors to the community.

SOTs consist of soldiers from regular Infantry Battalions of the Philippine Army. SOTs work in small numbers. There are no fixed SOTs and teams specializing in their respective areas of expertise are combined and orchestrated to achieve a mission. Once the mission is completed, the teams are dissolved. Each team consists between 1 to 3 members. Three teams form a squad or the SOT in its complete form. The teams are now composed of CA, PA, PSYOPS rather than Intelligence, Combat, and CMO. Each SOT “squad” averages between 5 and 8 soldiers.

Figure 6.3: SOT Squad Formation

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38 Lt. Col. Gregorio. October 29, 2010. The term SOT is retained within the military.
The early stages deal with intelligence gathering conducted by the PSYOPS team. These soldiers make a rapid assessment of the target community and gather data on existing security problems and what kind of CMO projects are needed (see Appendix D for a complete list) and plan action accordingly. For instance if a community lacks schools, schools will be constructed or teachers are sent. The CA teams often coordinate with LGUs to plan and implement socio-economic projects. Information campaigns are conducted by the PA team to influence the attitudes of a target community in favor of the government. They are as follows:

1. Explaining the communist threat
2. Explaining the CPP-NPA's ideology and principles
3. Explaining available government programs
4. Provide basic education (reading/writing) especially in far-flung areas that do not have schools.

6.6.3 Special Advocacy and Livelihood Assistance for the Advancement among Muslims (SALAAM)

SALAAM which means “peace” in Arabic is the acronym for the Special Advocacy and Livelihood Assistance for the Advancement among Muslims. SALAAM is the SOT counterpart for Muslims. It began operations sometime after 2000, to specifically address the problems Muslims faced in poor communities. This is altogether a different theater and deals with different concepts and culture from the communists. The concern with Muslims and the security element differ in the locality but the AFP mostly points to the dangers of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). But in actual practice, the AFP’s focus is placed more on trying to represent the good intentions of the government and regain back the trust of the Muslim people, who have been marginalized and neglected by the central government for decades. In the year following the institutionalization of CMO, a SALAAM manual (2007) was published by the AFP headquarters.

SALAAM teams were originally composed of Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) or Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) integrees, but now include Muslim soldiers and those who have the linguistic ability to speak the dialect of the community they are deployed to. They are sent to poor barangays both in rural and urban areas in the Mindanao region, with the exception of areas inside MILF

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camps. Nonetheless, SALAAM units are sent to areas where the military arm of the MILF, the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF) has influence in central Mindanao. Like SOTs, SALAAM soldiers must immerse themselves in target communities, typically a month at time. Through mingling with the community for a prolonged period, soldiers can build relationships with the people, deliver socio-economic assistance, and help win back the faith of the Muslim people.

6.7 Partnering with other Entities

6.7.1 Overview

A large part of CMO depends on forging partnerships wherever possible with other civilian agencies and organizations. This is aligned with the nation’s strategy of the “total approach” where the insurgency problem is addressed in a concerted effort by various stakeholders and not just with the military taking lead. There are also practical reasons behind this. First, a multi-agency cooperation can help share costs, resources, and expertise. For instance in building roads, the AFP can provide engineers, machinery, and security. Actual cost and supply of materials can be covered by other government agencies. Partnering with NGOs is also beneficial since the AFP can tap into the expertise of NGOs in acquiring a basic understanding on the needs and issues of a community.

Partnerships are formed either in an ad hoc manner or through established channels that are backed by memorandums or decisions made by Peace and Order Councils (POC). Nevertheless, from information gathered by interviews, when individual requests are made by a local barangays or NGOs, the decision to give the green light, ultimately lies with the military.

Other partnerships include national government agencies, local government agencies, local government units, international donor agencies, civil society, business groups, the police, and in the Mindanao region (the Southern Philippines), the U.S. forces.

6.7.2 NADESCOM Partnerships

NADESCOM, the engineering arm of CMO, responsible for large infrastructure projects, has also expanded the scope and enhanced the effectiveness of their projects primarily through partnerships.

Public-Private Partnership (PPP)

NADESCOM in the advent of their 3rd anniversary since founding in 2007 sought more

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49 Major General Jaime Buenaflo, interview with author, Officer of the Deputy Chief of Staff for CMO, J7, GHQ, Quezon City, Philippines, March 27, 2007.
52 Ibid.
cooperation with not only government agencies and NGOs but with business sectors as well. The command established the public and private partnership (PPP), which is a “contractual agreement between governments, private sector organizations, and civil society players in the provision of services and products that traditionally have been provided by the public sector alone.” In short, this is a way to involve the private sector in sharing expertise and shoulder some of the cost burden for the purpose of optimizing the delivery of public services to people in need.\(^{53}\) For the business sector, the AFP aligns their Military Social Responsibility (MSR) to the CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility). As of October 2010, NADESCOM has forged a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with groups such as:

- Philippine Chamber of Commerce (PCCI)
- Foreign Buyers Association of the Philippines
- Universities
- Environmental groups
- Garment Manufacturers Association of the Philippines\(^{54}\)

Most recently, Cisco System Inc, a US-based IT company signed a MOU with NADESCOM on November 3, 2010 to provide scholarship grants to individuals between the ages 15 and 60 in impoverished communities. NADESCOM says CISCO approached them to form a partnership upon hearing that the military has the resources to find prospective scholars in the communities that they work in.\(^{55}\)

**Value-Added-Projects for Peace and Development (VAP-4-PaD)**

The VAP-4-PaD operates under the “doing the extra-mile” principle. This is a new concept generated from trial and error. One striking example of a problem that NADESCOM encountered was in school construction. After a building was turned over to the community, the school sometimes was turned into a goat pen or a stockpile site. To prevent the misuse or unintended usage of a project outcome, NADESCOM as much as possible, avoids giving just the “shell.” To ensure that the school is utilized for its original purpose, the constructed school is turned over as a complete package with textbooks, blackboards, curtains, landscaping, computers, etc. This operation is known as “Bayanihan sa Barangay” or helping the village. NADESCOM accomplishes this by partnering with different agencies and business groups to secure funds and material. In the case of the Philippines Chamber of Commerce, NADESCOM was able to have the Chamber of Commerce cover for a teacher’ first year salary. This is important because under government regulations, a teacher could only start working after the Department of Education (DOE) has passed the year’s budget. As a result, a school would have to wait for a year to fill in the teaching vacancy. But with funding from the private sector, this has allowed teachers to start immediately.


\(^{54}\) With the garment association, NADESCOM projects provide livelihood support through training and ready markets for finished products.

\(^{55}\) Lt. Col. Regencia, November 4, 2010.
In conjunction with “Bayanihan sa Barangay” and doing the extra-mile, there are programs called “Hire for Peace” and “Hire for Development.” “Hire for Peace” involves the use of rebel returnees to provide the manpower for NADESCOM projects and at the same give former rebels a chance to develop job-skills. “Hire for Development” seeks to empower the community by building the community’s sense of ownership over the project through the hiring of local workers.56

6.7.3 Peace and Order Councils (POC)

In a move to give more decision-making powers to local stakeholders, a council was set up. At a national level, the Philippines has a National Security Council, which is the policy-making and advisory body for issues related to defense. The council is composed of the president and commander in chief who acts as the chairperson, the vice-president, senate president, speaker of the House of Representatives, the national security advisor, the Secretary of National Defense, and other secretaries from foreign affairs, Interior and Local Government, and Labor and Employment. The chief of staff for the AFP also attends council meetings and may advise or assist in the deliberations.57

On August 19, 2008, President Gloria Arroyo issued Executive Order (EO) 739 for the purpose of bolstering COIN efforts through the strengthening of security policy-making at a local level. Simply put, this was an EO issued to help relieve the AFP’s responsibility in taking the front lead in COIN by transferring this role to Local Government Units (LGU). Known as the Peace and Order Council, its composition and functions are similar to the National Security Council except for the chairmanship and membership, which corresponds to the government/administrative level of their respective districts. They include councils starting from the national level down to the city or municipal level. In the sub-national levels, councils are given authority to convene meetings, recommend measures to improve the security situation, and initiate and oversee the convergence and orchestration of internal security operations that involve civil authorities and agencies, the military, and the police.58

On January 5, 2009, another Executive Order was issued (EO 773) to further reorganize the POC and strengthen its mechanisms to ensure convergence can be achieved through a multi-stakeholder and cultural partnership.59

The composition is basically commensurate with their respective administrative levels. For

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instance at a provincial level, the governor acts as chairperson and members from government departments, offices, and agencies are the provincial counterparts. From the military, a commander of an infantry division, battalion commander, or in some cases, the commander of an area command is its representative. From the police, its regional director is their representative. And applicable to any level, 3 representatives of the private sector are selected by the chairperson.60

The POCs provide a venue where representatives from the local government, government agencies, religious groups, NGOs, and private organizations, and the AFP and Philippine National Police (PNP) can convene to discuss peace and order issues. This allows more sectors to take ownership over security problems which was traditionally reserved for the AFP and PNP.

From the perspective of the AFP, with the existence of POCs, there is a better implementing mechanism to jointly decide on what kind of CMOs to conduct and discuss responsibility and resource sharing among participants. Focus areas can also be decided and on-going socio-economic projects can be monitored to ensure its full realization. Additionally, the AFP and the PNP can provide the security component for each CMO project.61

Table 6.6: Peace and Order Council

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peace and Order Council</th>
<th>Chairperson</th>
<th>Military Counterpart</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Governor *62</td>
<td>Division Commander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>Brigade Commander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
<td>Battalion Commander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barangay</td>
<td>Barangay Chief</td>
<td>Company Commander</td>
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6.8 CMO Schooling and the Cultivating of CMO Officers

Before the institutionalization of CMO, activities undertaken by soldiers in this area drew personnel primarily from the army and expertise from Corps of Engineers, Civil Relations Service, Intelligence units, and the Special Forces. A CMO school was in place by 1985 but it was reserved for Army engineers since CMO is inherently a ground operation. In short, CMO was an army specialty.63

In 2006, following the formal recognition that CMO is a key variable in the success in internal security operations (ISO), a CMO school was established at Fort Bonfacio in Metro Manila. The new

60 EO No. 773.
62 At the regional level, the chairman and vice chairman is appointed from amongst the membership of the council by the Secretary of the Interior and Local Government (SILG) and must be approved by the president.
school caters to all three services: Army, Air Force and Navy (inclusive of Marines). Training is not mandatory, but highly encouraged for both officers and enlisted personnel. To maximize training, the AFP has set up on-line correspondence schools and deployable mobile training units that can train soldiers assigned to remote areas.

CMO training typically runs 3 months for each CMO component and requires immersion or hands-on training in a community. The Civil Affairs course is designed to help soldiers interact with civilians and learn methodologies in understanding the sociological and developmental aspects of a community. There is no engineering course per se but soldiers acquire skills related to inter-agency coordination and community organizing.

In the Public Affairs course, soldiers study mass media and the skills needed in communicating with the general public. Courses include speaking to the media, managing press conferences, responding to media queries, producing press releases and other information pieces, and basic public speaking skills.

In Psychological Operations, students acquire skills in influencing the behavior of the target audience. Soldiers study how to create and design posters, leaflets, billboards, and documentaries. Additionally, students also receive lectures on human rights and international law, how to gather and access data from a community, and occasionally, have the opportunity to attend lectures conducted by university professors on the subject of socio-anthropology, so as to familiarize themselves on the diverse tribes that exist in the Philippines. In dealing with different tribes, there is an advocacy program within the CMO School that encourages soldiers to learn dialects in the areas they would be operating in.

The CMO Battalion located in Manila also sends soldiers for a hands-on-training in barangays in the capital. The duration lasts up to a month and soldiers can test and practice their skills in coordinating with community stakeholders.

In terms of specialization, there are CMO career courses that are now equivalent to a normal military course. Furthermore, it has become an occupational specialty where soldiers can earn promotions based on achievements in this area.

6.9 Conduct of the Soldier

CMO operates on the principle of “winning hearts and minds.” A military that is treated with suspicion and feared by the population only alienates the citizens from the government. CMO is seen as a way to re-build the image of the AFP tarnished by poor human rights records by doing good works for the community. It is also perceived for its effect in changing the mindset of the military from pure warriors to

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65 Lt. Col. Regencia, October 8, 2010
The conduct of the soldier does not fall under any CMO pillars but soldiers are strongly encouraged to follow a code of conduct that shows respect to people they meet in the course of their operations. This extends to behavior of all soldiers working in their respective fields, meaning they must conduct themselves in a courteous manner and observe regulations. Therefore, CMO slogans such as “a disciplined soldier is the best CMO” are intended to ensure that the effects of a CMO project are not undone by the misconduct of one undisciplined soldier.

6.10 CMO in Three Levels of Warfare

The information above lists a basic overview of its operations. A further analysis on the positioning and intended effects of CMO in COIN warfare can be made when examined from its implementation in the three levels of warfare: strategic, operational, and tactical levels.

The level is determined by the type and size of the target audience, the area of operations (AO), the media used, and the timeframe as well. All levels are mutually supportive and integrative, and therefore the lines of distinction between the levels are not always clear.

6.10.1 Strategic Level

At the strategic level, the Commander-in-chief, policy makers from the service commands, the AFP GHQ, the Department of National Defense, and other government agencies establish CMO guidelines to support the long-term and broad objectives in the strategic prosecution of war.

In 2006, more focus was placed on CMO to help the AFP reach the 2010 deadline set by President Arroyo to strategically defeat the communist armed rebellion, eradicate the Abu Sayyaff (ASG) and other terrorist groups, and contain the Muslim secessionist movement.

From the view of national strategy, CMO is considered to be the catalyst in allowing the government to take a “total government approach” to the insurgency problem. Otherwise known as the Strategy of the Holistic Approach (SHA), the concept is enshrined in the set of guidelines called the National Internal Security Plan (NISP) produced in 2001. It calls for the complete mobilization of all government agencies to tackle the root causes of insurgencies. While the military still take lead in the

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70 Maj. Batara, October 7, 2010; PAM 7-00, 2002.
72 PAM 7-00, p. 19.
73 PAM 7-00, p. 19.
security realm, they are also mandated to play a supporting role in the socio-economic dimension.

Not surprisingly, CMO retains a pronounced developmental orientation, a characteristic which can be traced to the AFP’s long tradition in mobilizing their forces for nation-building. This reflects the Philippines’ deeply rooted belief that the well being of the nation is anchored on security and development.\(^77\) NADESCOM, the engineering arm of CMO, is tasked to apply a coordinated and integrative response with other civilian agencies in matters related to economic development. Nonetheless, NADESCOM is treated somewhat separately from the military’s core operations in COIN. NADESCOM officials maintain they are not a COIN unit and support solely development.\(^78\)

Therefore, aside from NADESOM and despite the fact that CMO is for the most part is non-coercive and is involved in activities related to socio-economic development, it is essentially a COIN operation. Activities are designed to act as force multiplier to existing military operations to direct precision-based assaults, limit collateral damage, and manipulate the psychological environment that the insurgents operate in.

This leaves the AFP with a military strategy, which supports the nation’s holistic approach, but at the same time, tackles the combat dimension. The military component of the NISP is crystallized in Operation Plan Bantay Laya II (Operations Plan Guard Freedom 2006-2010). The strategic goal of Oplan Bantay Laya is to defeat all groups posing a threat to national security, enhance the security situation and peace and order condition in the country to establish a physically and psychologically secured environment conducive to national development.\(^79\)

CMO’s role in Bantay Laya is to eliminate the armed threat through the minimum use of force. In essence, it is a force multiplier that seeks to apply precision-based attacks through a methodology that seeks to constrict enemy movements by gaining support of the people. By 2008, the AFP-GHQ directed that military operations should be broken down as follows:\(^80\)

\textbf{70 percent CMO} – Launch activities centered on “winning the hearts and minds” of the population to ensure their support for the government and prevent them from siding with the insurgents.

\textbf{20 percent combat} – The neutralization of the armed components of internal threats.

\textbf{10 percent intelligence} – Identifying strengths and weaknesses of the enemy based on the analysis and assessment of the terrain to help ground commanders execute a doable plan to defeat the enemy force.


\(^78\) Colonel Rodolfo Santiago (Philippine Army), Chief of Staff of CMO, interview with author, NADESCOM headquarters, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Philippines, November 4, 2010.


6.10.2 Operational Level

This is the level that links strategic CMO and tactical CMO. Operational CMO seeks to achieve mid-level objectives in support of major military campaigns. CMO is encompassed in military operations conducted by unified regional commands and divisions.\(^{81}\)

Translating national policy goals at an operational-level is encompassed in the “Clear-Hold-Consolidate-Develop” methodology (See section 5.2.3.1).\(^{82}\) These are undertaken by area commands in their respective AOR. It is a multi-step process that seeks to clear areas of insurgent presence and follow-up with socio-economic activities that focus on preventing the return of the enemy.\(^{83}\)

The 4-step operational methodology reveals that CMO plays an integral part in creating conditions favorable to the military in pursuing standard military operations and sustaining their gains. It is a method that places the population at the center of gravity (COG) or the key vulnerability of the insurgents. Gaining the support of the people is a means to create and exploit opportunities to isolate the insurgents or cut them off of their support. Critical information shared by the people to the military prevents the insurgents the mobility they need over the human terrain, and therefore corner them into locations that is easier for the military to launch precision-attacks. The civil-military partnership also underlines the importance of the unity of effort in ensuring that an affected community does not revert back to insurgent control through the strengthening of governance and the basic delivery of service.

The operational-level is also important in dealing with respective theaters. Each regional command deals with different threat groups and/or level of threat in their Area of Responsibility (AOR). For instance, the commands located in Luzon and the Visayas deal primarily with the communists. Whereas the regional commands in Mindanao, face a mixture of both the Muslim separatists and the communists. Therefore military operations, including CMO are shaped at the operational level to target the specific conditions of the region. The maneuver utility of CMO begins with its role in “shaping” the particular battlespace in favor of the military.

6.10.3 Tactical Level

These encompass CMO activities conducted on the ground and are implemented by brigades (BDE), battalions (BN), companies (COY), platoons (PLTN) and squads, i.e. SOTs and SALAAM. It serves short-term objectives and requires soldiers to come into direct contact with the people and the enemy. The AO is limited to a community or a segment of a battle zone. Decidedly, this is one of the most complex undertakings since it seeks to directly change the attitudes of the people in favor of the military. It ranges from the orderly conduct of the soldier to one engaging in activities to shape the perceptions of the people.

\(^{81}\) PAM 7-00, p.19.


\(^{83}\) From briefing slides provided to the author by Lieutenant Colonel Ferozaldo Paul T. Regencia, PA, AFP National Development Support Command, Camp General Emilio Aquinaldo, Quezon City, Philippines, October 8, 2007; Devesa, “An Assessment of the Philippine Counterinsurgency Operational Methodology,” pp. 40-42.
The next chapter uses a case study to elaborate further on the tactical and operational application of CMO.

**Figure 6.4:** Levels of CMO

Chapter 7. Case Study of CMO in Western Mindanao

7.1 Introduction

The institutionalization of CMO in 2006 was followed by an increase and acceleration of CMO activities across the country. A case study was conducted to determine whether the event marked a renewed understanding on the utility of CMO, especially in allowing the soldiers to maneuver in the depth of insurgent battlespace. As the case study seeks to examine CMO on the ground, it covers for the most part, its effects at an operational and tactical level.

Due to the widespread mobilization of CMO nationwide, the research was narrowed down to one region, Western Mindanao. The region falls under the Area of Responsibility (AOR) of the AFP’s Western Mindanao Command (WestMinCom). The factors that were taken into consideration when selecting this AOR for the case study was one, it is the only command that targets all threat groups: terrorist organizations, namely the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG); followed by the Muslim separatists: the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MLF) and remnants of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF); and the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA). This provides a clearer insight on how CMO operates in a battlespace occupied by different armed groups. Two, the increased presence of American forces in the Southern Philippines as a result of the September 11th attacks has helped expand CMO programs in the region. Three, the region originally headquartered the Southern Command (SouthCom) that led the largest military offensive to date against the Muslim rebellion in the 1970s. Consequently, the impact of the war has left not only emotional scars on the people, but a deep-rooted distrust towards the military and the central government. Fourth, contrary to popular perceptions that CMO activities are mainly directed towards communities in remote and/or conflict areas, there are numerous CMO activities conducted in urbanized locations that do not face an immediate threat from any armed group. This in turn sheds light on the AFP’s understanding of battlespace, which is not limited to war zones.

7.2 Methodology

In order to build this case study, research trips were made to the Philippines on an annual basis starting from 2007 and ending in 2010. A substantial portion of these trips was devoted to collecting primary sources by employing the methodology of face-to-face interviews. These interviews were conducted in Manila, the nation’s capital, and Zamboanga City in the Southern Philippines. In 2010, additional visits were paid to two other provinces in the South: Basilan and Zamboanga Del Norte. The interviews did not strictly adhere to one structure and were adjusted accordingly to serve different objectives and to match the type of response that could be expected beforehand from the informants. The interviewees are broadly divided into five groups.

The first group of interviewees is officers from the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). The objective was to collect information and raw data that was not readily made available to the civilian

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1 Pre-determined geographic areas assigned to area commands throughout the country. Area commanders are given authority to plan and conduct operations within these physical boundaries.
audience. Especially when CMO was first institutionalized in 2006, little could be drawn from existing research papers or official government publications. Therefore, some of the interview sessions began with briefings made by the military and followed by questions concerning the contents of the information provided. At the beginning, the interviews took an unstructured format for the main purpose of getting acquainted with the subject. In follow-up interviews, a focused (semi-structured) approach was taken where specific questions were prepared beforehand. It is important to add that with the military, a number of officers were interviewed more than once over the course of the years, allowing for additional probes into the individual soldier’s insights and personal experiences related to the topic.

The second group of interviewees include agencies that partner with the AFP in CMO programs. They include security forces such as the U.S. forces, the Philippines National Police (PNP), as well as NGOs, government agencies, and local government officials. A similar approach was taken with this group, where they provided the author with an overview of the organization, followed by a semi-structured interview. The objectives here were to gain an understanding of the organization, their stance on working with the military, and views on the effects of completed or on-going CMO projects.

The third group of interviewees is the CMO beneficiaries themselves. The objectives here are to collect responses on their perceptions on the military, and ultimately gauge the effect that CMO has on communities. A hired interpreter\(^2\) accompanied these interview sessions since some community members felt more comfortable speaking in their own local dialect (mainly Chavacano) or Filipino. In the communities visited, there was only one occasion in which the military accompanied the author (Limpapa Barangay). The remaining visits were done independently and locations picked out were based on information made available by the local press.

The visits to these beneficiaries originally took the form of a structured interview where a list of predetermined questions were prepared and were subsequently intended to be re-used in other communities. As it became apparent early on in the research that this short-answer survey would produce limited variation in response, largely due to the fact they were conducted in non-conflict areas, the questions were altered to serve as mere prompts or signposts when the key informants were asked to recount their experiences in the form or a mini-narrative. The modification was made to add further depth to responses that for the most part were uniform, when collected in a short-answer survey.

In regards to handling the results of this group, it was taken into consideration that the dynamics of the relationship between the military and the people are fundamentally different in non-conflict areas as opposed to conflict areas. Since trips for the most part were not paid to communities in security-compromised areas, other informants were necessary to gauge the impact of CMO in different environs to provide a comparison. In attempts to expand on the differences and similarities, interviews were conducted with local government officials, NGOs, and soldiers who have experience or are currently working in security compromised areas. These took place in the form of focused and in-depth interviews.

The fourth group of interviewees includes informants coming from advocacy groups, religious

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\(^2\) Interviews with beneficiaries interpreted by Bong Garcia.
personalities, and academia that have specialized knowledge about conflict issues but were not involved in linking-up with the military on CMO projects. These took place in the form of in-depth interviews and the objectives here were to seek an outside opinion for the purpose of integrating more of a balanced view in the process of analyzing the overall findings.

It is also important to note that wherever deemed necessary, interview findings were backed and corroborated with information from government and organizational publications, media reports, and material produced by civilian and military scholars.

7.3 An Overview of the Western Mindanao Command (WestMinCom)

7.3.1 Background to the Creation of WestMinCom and its Battlespace

The chapter will begin with a general overview on the operations of WestMinCom and the incorporation of CMO in their internal security operations. WestMinCom is one of the 7 unified area commands that cover the Philippine Archipelago. It is the largest area command in the country, holding 15,000 military personnel. Under its command, it has one infantry (TABAK) division, three Marine Battalions, a Naval Force, and an Air Division. Its headquarters, Camp Don Basilio Navarro was the seat of the former Southern Command (SouthCom) that covered the entire Mindanao region. In August 2006, as part of the efforts to improve the effectiveness of the counterinsurgency (COIN) operations at an operational and tactical level, SouthCom was split into two. The Eastern Mindanao Command (EastMinCom) established its headquarters in Davao city, and covers Northern Mindanao, Southeastern and Southwestern Mindanao, and the Caraga region. The Western Mindanao Command (WestMinCom), retained its former SouthCom headquarters in Zamboanga City, but its area of responsibility (AOR) was reduced to a total of 8 provinces: Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga Sibugay, Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, and the island provinces of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi and also its charter city, Zamboanga City (see map 7.1).

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Map 7.1: Map of the Philippines with the AOR of WestMinCom


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The split in SouthCom, allowed the two new commands to focus on priority threats in their newly designated AORs. While EastMinCom is geared towards tackling the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), WestMinCom focuses primarily on the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and other international terror groups. Nonetheless, WestMinCom is the only area command that targets all armed fronts including the CPP-NPA, MILF, remnants of the MNLF, otherwise known as the Misuari Breakaway Group, and other lawless groups. In its AOR, the CPP-NPA has the weakest front in the entire region of Mindanao. They are located the provinces of Lanao, Zamboanga del Norte, and Sibugay. The active MNLF faction operates in 24 barangays in Sulu, Basilan, and Zamboanga del Norte. They are estimated to have 580 regular fighters, 2,050-armed reserves, and a mass base of 19,800.

Concerning the Muslim armed front in WestMinCom’s AOR, the MILF is situated in Lanao, Basilan, and more recently in Northern parts of Zamboanga peninsula; and the ASG, in Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi. The Muslim armed front poses a different set of problems because it constrains the AFP. The MILF occupies swaths of land recognized by the government under the terms of the cease-fire agreement (2003). As of 2007, the AFP refers to these lands as “areas of temporal stay” meaning the military is prohibited from conducting military operations within these parameters, dictated by the government’s interim arrangement with the MILF. This complicates the AFP’s operations against the ASG, since the ASG rely on sympathetic members of the MILF to find refuge in these MILF bases. There have been some instances when soldiers were met with armed resistance from the MILF when pursuing the ASG within the vicinity of the MILF camps.

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7 Elements of the MNLF group, headed by original leader, Nur Misuari. They continue to fight the Philippine government.
Map 7.2: Enemy Disposition in the AFP’s AOR

Source: 1st Infantry (TABAK) Division, Philippine Army, official website (MNLF-Moro National Liberation Front, LCM-Local Communist Movement, ASG-Abu Sayyaf Group, MILF-Moro Islamic Liberation Front, ID-Infantry Division, PA-Philippine Army, and AOR-Area of Responsibility). Note: The area shaded by a box is the AOR of WestMinCom.

Thus, WesMinCom has to contend with a mixed battlespace that holds the presence of various armed groups, and some even operating in each other’s area of influence. Conducting military operations have been challenging in this environment not only because the AFP has limited resources to battle all fronts with the same intensity simultaneously, but also because each group requires a different response. They depend on the manner of warfare the armed groups engage in, the physical and human terrain they operate in, their objectives, their armed strength, the degree of control they have over territory or political apparatuses, and also their status with the government, meaning whether or not there is an on-going peace process.

Further complicating the situation is that the battlespace is crowded with different actors. Aside from the belligerents (the threat groups, the military and other security forces such as the police, U.S. forces, and civilian militia), there are also civilian agencies and the population the AFP has to deal with. Local government units and agencies, international aid agencies, and NGOs also work under their respective mandates, which inevitably blur the lines between military and civilian spheres. And in regards to the population, threat groups often rely on their support or at least their acquiescence so that they could move unrestricted, using the population as concealment and a source of sustenance. Therefore, even the AFP sees that relying on military solutions alone are impractical on a battlespace that is teeming with diverse actors.

attempt to rescue an Italian priest held by the ASG. Similarly, in another operation to recover ASG hostages, an encounter with the MILF led to the death of 19 Special Forces in October 2011 on the same island. In both cases, the local military commanders did not properly coordinate with the MILF before entering the vicinity of MILF camps.
With the official recognition of CMO as a valid military operation in 2006, it gave more impetus for WestMinCom to shift its operations from a combat-heavy approach to one that exercises more lateral thinking in tackling the complex battlespace. As findings from the case study show, the human terrain has become the key battleground in which the Filipino troops seek to improve maneuverability over.

7.3.2 Tackling the Human Terrain in Western Mindanao

The guiding principles of CMO under WestMinCom is building the image of the soldier and subsequently bringing the people closer to the AFP. The command faces a specific set of challenges in the regional context of Mindanao. The area has been the tragic setting for government neglect, misplaced policies, and conflict, leaving the region, one of the most impoverished places in the country. As of 2009, 3 provinces (Tawi-Tawi, Zamboanga del Norte, and Lanao del Sur) out of the 8 provinces falling within the jurisdiction of WestMinCom’s AOR, belong to the top ten poorest provinces in terms of the poverty incidence. The province of Tawi-Tawi was ranked number one (see Appendix F).

Furthermore, Muslim secessionist wars in the 1970s accounted for numerous civilian displacements, casualties and human rights abuses caused by both sides: the government forces and the rebel groups. In particular, the marked brutality of the AFP in quelling these rebellions has left emotional scars on the psyche of the people, leaving communities in the region with an instinctive distrust towards the military.

From the point-of-view of WesMinCom, their poor image, coupled with basic government neglect in the most impoverished areas, have bolstered the popular support of the threat groups. Therefore the military objective here is “looking for a civilian response that will weaken the enemy.” The “civilian response” that the AFP is looking for is one that shifts the people’s allegiance from the enemy to the government, or even just simply deterring the people from supporting and/or joining the enemy. Based on the viewpoint, this response can only be elicited if the people can feel that the government cares for them and at the same time, raise the level of awareness concerning the threat groups.

Broadly speaking, there are two methods to elicit such a response from the population. The first

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is physically addressing the needs of the community, which falls under the CMO pillar of Civil Affairs (CA) and the second, providing information to the community, which falls under the CMO pillar of Public Affairs (PA).

**Civil Affairs: Community Outreach Programs**

Civil Affairs (CA) organizes and implements civic action in communities. To the public, they are known as *community outreach programs*. These activities vary in duration and activity. For short-term missions, the military launches outreach programs that are high-impact or are considered to be the quickest way to gain the appreciation of the people. These typically fall under the category of medical assistance. Medical missions can be more easily organized and launched because the AFP has its own group of medical specialists. They target poorer barangays (villages) that lack health facilities and medicine. Services provided include minor surgery such as removing cataracts and circumcision, and the distribution of medicine such as paracetamols (pain killers and fever reducers) and vitamin supplements. Military dentists conduct tooth extraction and provide toothpaste and tooth brushes. Medical consultations are held and referrals are made to larger hospitals for those patients that need further treatment.

The sheer amount of medical missions conducted was already on the rise since CMO’s institutionalization. For instance in 2006 alone, WesMinCom conducted 1,831 medical missions benefiting 31,630 people, and 2,365 dental missions reaching 10,500 people.¹⁸ The advantages of medical missions are that they usually take place within one or two days and have the advantage of covering a succession of barangays in a short period of time. For instance in 2012, Operation Tuli (Operation Circumcision) was held in Zamboanga City, covering 7 villages in the coastal region and in one village alone, more than 100 boys benefited.¹⁹

Other short-term community outreach programs include the distribution of goods such as clothing, diapers, veterinary assistance for livestock animals, and cleanliness drives.²⁰ There are also longer-term CMO activities that seek to tackle lack development and poverty. The AFP continues to see poverty combined with a lack of government services, the very conditions that armed groups exploit to fan the flames of anti-government feelings and draw support to their cause. WestMinCom engages in larger and resource-intensive projects in remote and conflict areas where it is more difficult for Local Government Units (LGU) and other government agencies to enter.²¹

In a nutshell, such activities fall under Clear-Hold-Sustain-Develop (CHSD) methodology that draws its roots from earlier COIN plans where the AFP is tasked to clear a remote area of armed threat

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¹⁸ CMO Annual Accomplishment Report, January to July 2006, and June to December 2006, Western Mindanao Command, Afp, Office of the Assistant Chief Unified Command Staff for CMO, U7, Camp Navarro, Calarian, Zamboanga City.


while providing limited developmental assistance until the community is secure enough to allow the entry of other government agencies. The CMO projects conducted are centered on infrastructure projects, electrification, building portable water systems, healthcare delivery providing educational and livelihood assistance. In the AOR of WestMinCom, such activities are particularly visible in the remote island provinces of Basilan and Sulu, where the ASG and other armed groups are active. Infrastructure work is done in earnest because it not only supports the needs of the community but at the same time, facilitates the movement of troops, vehicles, and material in times of contingencies.

**Public Affairs (Information Campaigns)**

WesMinCom also devotes much energy into disseminating information about the AFP, promoting government programs, and increasing awareness of the enemy so that people are not “misled” by enemy propaganda. Various mediums are used to get the AFP message out to the public. They include the use of the media (radio, TV, print journalism), organization of symposiums and dialogues in communities, and activities as simple as removing enemy posters. Information drives frequently accompany medical and/or dental missions in barangays since the AFP finds it an opportune time to give out information to a large gathering of people.

The youth sector is given special attention since they are considered to be most impressionable and idealistic, and therefore the most susceptible to the ideological and sometimes the financial lure of the threat groups. For instance, in the first quarter of 2007 (January to March), there were 62 symposiums held in high schools and colleges in the AOR or WestMinCom.

Yet at another level, these information drives are one way to elicit information about enemy movements. They are aimed at orientating the residents, the barangays (village) council on what to do if they spot any suspicious activities. In 2009, the AFP established a “text hotline” so that the public could report “the presence of any suspicious people in a particular place.” The campaign was called “I-text Mo Ang Terrorista Kay Sarge,” Roughly translated, it means “Text your Sergeant concerning terrorists.”

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27 Maj. Hayudini, July 29, 2008. According to Maj. Hayudini, the communists infiltrate schools by organizing parties, gatherings, outings, or clubs that promote rock-singing or dancing. They also entice youth with promises to pay their tuition.
29 Bong Garcia, “Wesmincom to open text hotlines,” Sunstar; July 22, 2009. Available at:
7.3.3 Naval Forces Western Mindanao

While the Army was traditionally on the forefront in implementing CMO activities, upon institutionalization, the AFP has also bolstered the role of CMO within the Navy and to a certain extent, the Air Force. The Naval Forces Western Mindanao (WestMinCom) also plays a significant part, especially in taking a multi-sectoral approach in establishing security in the region.

In Western Mindanao, the Navy has carved out their own specialty in CMO. In addition to the three pillars (Civil Affairs, Public Affairs, and Psychological Operations), the Navy actively engages in environmental protection. It involves a CMO and Environmental Management Staff that coordinates and organizes activities to enhance the protection of the environment.30

Since the maritime environment is expansive in the area, the navy is active in environmental activities that include mangrove planting, coastal cleanup, along with law enforcement functions to apprehend violators. They are particularly concerned with the depletion of fish, rapid disappearance of coral, and mangrove clearing. Patrols are conducted to monitor illegal fishing, dynamite fishing, and the transport of mangrove and other endangered forestry products. For instance, the Navy maintains detachments such as on Santa Cruz island, a 15-20 minute boat ride from the downtown district of Zamboanga City31 which is supposed to serve as a deterrent for these activities.32 Though the Navy did not elaborate on any specific threat groups operating in the region, coastal areas are a large security concern. Kidnapping attributed to the ASG or wayward MILF members, not to mention lawless groups have skirted authorities by means of island-hopping. The Army does not have enough personnel to man all these scattered islands, leaving the Navy with this responsibility.33

The promotion of environmental protection is also seen to make in-roads in the tourism sector. For instance, the 11-Island Group (see map 7.3), a group of islands off the coast of Zamboanga City has pristine white beaches and oceans ideal for scuba diving. The Navy conducts medical and dental services on these islands, which have improved the working relationship with the regional tourism office and the city police station. Such efforts are seen to be ways to transform these areas into potential tourist attractions.

While the Navy maintains that the Army remains on the forefront of CMO, they have seen their own contribution to the civil-military cooperation. Similar to the Army, the Navy underlines the importance of improving relations with the people. As Rear Adm. Emilio C. Marayag Jr, expresses, “we are trying our best to be with the people and to let them feel secure, and to let them know that we are also human beings

31 The population includes only three families. The navy has removed illegal dwellers from the island since establishing its detachment.
33 Bong Garcia, interview with author, Zamboanga City, July 31, 2008.
and we are not just fighters or warriors." Since 2007, the Naval Forces Western Mindanao has provided a venue for civilian agencies and other stakeholders to gather and share ideas on how to help communities. Based on the input, the Navy decides on which locations and what resources they can provide in the realization of these projects.

However, all in all, the region’s Navy comment that they do not have sufficient funds to conduct CMO at the level they want to, and primarily depend on resource sharing with other agencies to implement projects. The Navy states that their main contribution is providing logistics, expertise such as in medical areas, and manpower. But in other areas, they depend on NGOs and local government agencies to provide the material to distribute to a community. In regards to financial contributions, the U.S. forces are without a doubt, the largest budget-holders. Many large-scale community outreach programs are done in partnership with the American soldiers, who are accompanied with assistance from their aid agency (USAID) to cover the bulk of the cost.34

In summary, the institutionalization of CMO (2006) has paved way for other military services other than the Army to participate in. It appears that the Navy, after the Army, is the second most important contributor to CMO. And within the AOR of WestMinCom, they have also carved out their role in maritime environmental protection.

7.3.4 The Philippine National Police (PNP)

A brief look at the Philippine National Police (PNP) reveals that they also join the AFP on numerous CMO projects. The PNP is the law enforcement body of the nation. Originally one of the services belonging to the AFP, it has a history of being on the forefront of fighting insurgencies. Though the PNP is no longer under the AFP (the PNP was officially transferred to the Department of the Interior and Local Government in 1998),35 they are also tasked to launch operations jointly or independently with the military against threat groups that go beyond their usual law enforcement functions.36

Like WesMinCom, the regional PNP in the region also faces challenges in developing a relationship of trust with the communities due to a poor track record on human rights. Their own equivalent of the CMO is the Police-Community Relations.37 Its mission is to “to cooperate with various sectors of the community and impel their continuing collaboration and support to the police programs and activities; educate and inform the public on the Criminal Justice System; and undertake such other community-oriented activities essential for an effective and efficient police service.”38

34 Rear Adm. Marayag, July 31, 2008.
35 Republic Act No. 6975 “An Act Establishing the Philippine National Police under a reorganized Department of the Interior and Local Government and Other Purposes as amended by RA 8551 Philippine National Police Reform and Reorganization Act of 1998 and further amended by RA 9708.”
36 For instance in Zamboanga City, when there is a security problem such as a bombing, the security force, closest to the scene, is called upon, be it the AFP or the PNP.
Though they do not have the civil engineering capabilities of the military, they have the ability to organize, collect donations, deliver basic medical care to communities, as well as providing logistics, manpower and security when working co-jointly with NGOs and government agencies. For large-scale programs, they also work with the AFP and the U.S. Forces. Similar to the AFP, they engage in community outreach programs and information campaigns.

Before they conduct their community outreach programs, the police conduct research and gather statistics from barangays. They prioritize barangays with the most needs. For medical missions, the medicine and funds come primarily from donations, sometimes coming from the police themselves. Actual medical experts that are deployed are PNP doctors and nurses. This medical mission spans between 1 to 3 days, depending on the volume. In areas where there is a security problem, the PNP clears out the area first and provides protection for NGOs and civilian agencies entering.

Additionally, such activities are perceived to be one way to elicit the trust of the people and gain their cooperation. In conducting overall law enforcement, a cooperative community translates into “feedback” about criminal and terrorist activities, which is helpful in maintaining law and order.39

7.3.5 The American Forces

The Joint Special Operations Task Force – Philippines (JSOTF-P) are the contingent of American forces deployed to the Philippines after the September 11th attacks. They are headquartered within the compounds of the WestMinCom, Camp Navarro in Zamboanga City. At any given time, their numbers range from 500 and 600 U.S. military personnel. Its AOR is mainly restricted to the Mindanao region, inclusive of the outlying islands of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi (see map 5.2. in chapter 5).40

The ultimate goal of the American forces is to neutralize “high-value” targets or core members of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and other terrorist groups in cooperation with the Filipino forces.41 The means to achieve this are done by advising and training their Filipino counterparts in counter-terrorism, rendering engineering and medical assistance (combat injuries), provide hardware, and conducting CMO activities.42

The JSOTF-P began shifting their focus to CMO after the success of the Balikatan exercises in 2002. It was determined that CMO played a significant role in eroding the support of the ASG by providing for the basic needs of the people and thus paving way for a formula that could defeat insurgences.43 Once

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42 Medical training is aimed to increase the chances of survival for AFP personnel wounded in combat. “Subject matter expert exchange” is often used in place for training as both sides gain from the experience. The Americans also learn from their Filipino counterparts, especially in working in a jungle environment. Lieutenant Commander Fred Kuebler, JSOTF-P, U.S. Forces, interview with author, Camp Navarro, Calarian, Zamboanga City, Philippines, October 3, 2007. Hereafter cited as Lt. Cmdr. Kuebler, October 3, 2007.
CMO became institutionalized in the Philippines in 2006, the U.S. forces also followed track, and increased support for CMO programs. According to the JSOTF-P fact sheet, between October 2007 and June 2011, JSOTF-P provided more than USD24 million in humanitarian projects to communities in need in Mindanao. And in partnership with the Philippine military, they conducted more than 500 civic action projects alongside the provision of medical and dental care, in which beneficiaries amounted to 104,600 people.\(^{44}\)

CMO is seen by the U.S. forces as a constructive way to shape the battlespace that is composed of communities that provide the ASG their safe havens or more broadly speaking room to maneuver.\(^{45}\) CMO is used as a tool to remove the conditions that make the ASG-alternative attractive for the people, which are considered to be poverty and lack of government presence.\(^{46}\) CMO is not just limited to persuading the populace to support the Filipino government and themselves. Large infrastructure projects such as extending airport runway, road up-keep, and construction of piers and jetties serve the purpose of allowing for the physical mobility of the troops, securing lines of communications, and also to protect troops.\(^{47}\)

CMO activities conducted in Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, and Basilan jointly with the AFP include road projects, water improvement facilities, construction and building improvements on mosques, schools, and Area Coordinating Centers (ACCs).\(^{48}\) More short-term activities such as medical and dental missions, school refurbishment, doing book reading in elementary schools are also organized in urban centers as well.\(^{49}\)

The U.S. forces state that “CMO is applied in a combined and coordinated effort between the AFP, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), NGOs, and the Philippine government” underlying the fact that the U.S. forces do not conduct CMO unilaterally and make sure the AFP takes lead. Additionally, advice is sought from local governments and traditional leaders on the best ways to meet the needs of the community.\(^{50}\) In a CMO project, U.S. forces contribute resources and involve themselves in the planning, but ultimately the ownership of the project goes to the AFP and the local government.\(^{51}\)

For WestMinCom, the presence of the American military in the region has significantly opened

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\(^{49}\) Area Coordinating Centers (ACCs) serves as a central government office, administrative office, open-air market, town assembly hall, and storage-facility.


up further possibilities in the manner and scope of conducting community outreach programs, especially
due to their resources. While the American military has limited funding, its financial strength lies in its
support from the State Department, and links to aid agencies and NGOs. In particular, the U.S. forces
work closely with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), a government agency
responsible for providing foreign aid. In regards to funding to the Philippines, USAID has centered many
of its programs in Mindanao. Between 1996 and 2009, the agency provided nearly USD500 million to the
region to help with the construction of roads, bridges, ports, and promoting microenterprises. But it was
after the September 11th attacks that USAID began maximizing the military-civilian cooperation in order to
remove the sources of terrorism in the Southern Philippines. Thus, for an under-resourced AFP,
partnering with the American military has become a key factor in expanding CMO in the region.

7.4 CMO in Zamboanga City

7.4.1 Background to Zamboanga City

CMO activities are conducted year-round in Zamboanga City. The city is located on the southern
tip of Zamboanga peninsula in Mindanao, more than 860 km from Manila. The port city is also known as
the sardines’ capital of the Philippines, with an economy heavily based on agri-fisheries along with trade,
tourism, and manufacturing. The city in itself is sprawling, being the third largest city in the nation in terms
of area size, and covering some 1,500 sq. km. The city consists of 98 barangays, of which 31 are island
barangays. Most of the city is rural and only a mere 29 out of the total barangays are considered to be
urban. According to the August 2007 census, the population of Zamboanga City was 774,407 and it
continues to experience a rapid population growth especially in urban areas. In 2010, it was estimated to
have 807,129 people. The factors behind the rise is one, the Philippine government’s campaign to
promote the region as a place for economic opportunity to attract businesses and job-seekers and two, the
armed conflict in surrounding regions had added to the influx of migrants, fleeing from the strife. The
city-dwellers are mostly Christian but approximately 36 percent of the population is composed of “cultural
minorities,’ which are generally classified as belonging to the Muslim faith. Banners fluttering in the

52 Command Sgt. Major William Eckert, JSTOF-P, “Defeating the idea: Unconventional Warfare in southern
54 See “Military Coordination” on USAID official website available at:
55 National Statistical Coordination Board, Available at:
November 7, 2011.
57 Madge Kho, “A Conflict That Won’t Go Away,” PhilippineUpdate.com, undated. Available at:
58 The cultural minority groups include the Tausugs, Yakans, Badjaos, Samals, and the Subanens. The Subanens
are considered to be the indigenous people or the lumads. See City Government of Zamboanga official website
wind read “Asia’s Latin City” and the language spoken by the majority of the residents, Chavacano, provide a distant but lingering reminder of its colonial past under the Spaniards.

The history of the city plays into the military dimension of the city. Being located at the tip of the peninsula, it has always provided a strategic location for any military garrisoned there. During the Spanish period, the Spaniards built Fort Pillar in 1635 to provide a defense system against external attacks, which came from the British, the Dutch, and the Portuguese. It also provided a staging ground to launch attacks against the Moros.

It was with the entry of the Americans that the Muslim South was ceded to the United States by a treaty drawn up at the end of the Spanish-American War, but the Americans also encountered countless challenges in putting down the Muslim uprisings. While the rest of the Philippines came under the control of the American civilian government in 1902, the American military continued to administer control over the “Moro Province” from its army headquarters in Zamboanga City until 1913. As a testament to the American presence, a plaza located at the heart of the city center is named after John J. Pershing, an American general who ran the province as governor from 1908-1913.

After independence, the Philippine military also situated its regional command there. In the 1970s, the largest area command known as Southern Command (SouthCom) was established in Zamboanga City and led operations against the Muslims secessionist wars. Since then, a new generation of Muslim threat groups has emerged and the current command, WestMinCom, organized in 2006, is tasked to focus particularly on the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) based in the outlying islands of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-tawi.

The city today continues to hold a heavy military presence. It includes Camp General Basilio Navarro (the seat of the Western Mindanao Command located in Calarian), Camp General Arturo T. Enrile (headquarters of the military’s maneuver force - Task Force Zamboanga located in Malagutay), Edwin Andrews Air Base (Philippine Air Force located near Zamboanga International Airport), Naval Forces Western Mindanao (Philippine Navy located in Bagong Calarian), and Marine Base Zamboanga (Marine Forces South located in Cabatangan). The American forces are camped at Camp Navarro and the Police Regional Office 9 is located in Mercedes. In short, the city, maintains an important command center that organizes and deploys soldiers to battle zones or rebel-influenced areas in the nearby islands and to neighboring provinces on the peninsula. The city is generally free of large-scale military operations but faces periodic bombings allegedly by the ASG. The latest and most serious incident happening in 2011 when 3 people were killed in a hotel explosion. Additionally, the city itself is more than twice the size of Metro Manila which makes it difficult for the undermanned police force to cover the vast area, and in

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59 A Spanish-based Creole language. A distinctive feature of the Chavacano language is that there is no verb conjugation and all nouns are expressed in the masculine form.

60 Zamboanga City was as far as the Spaniards could get in maintaining a semi-permanent location in the Muslim South, as they were beaten back by the Muslims in the region.

particular, the huge coastline. Consequently, there are periodic kidnappings where victims are whisked from the city and transported to ASG lairs located in Basilan and Sulu. The segmentation or the kidnapping business makes it a perennial headache for the security forces. Subcontractors for the ASG are divided into spotters (people who find potential targets), strikers (people who abduct the victims), and transporters (people who transport the victims) to ASG hideouts in the nearby islands. Many of those involved in the kidnapping enterprise are not core ASG members but are friends or relatives of the ASG that are in for financial reward rather than any ideological conviction. As their involvement may be for a one-time deal, they are more difficult to trace.

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62 Edgar Araojo, Professor of Political Science, Western Mindanao State University, interview with author, Baliwasan Central School, October 25, 2010. Hereafter cited as Araojo and date of interview.
63 Araojo, October 25, 2010.
64 Araojo, October 25, 2010.
7.4.2 Differentiating the Targets

While the majority of CMO activities target the public at large, CMO is also tailored to adjust to a community, depending on which armed group they can be most susceptible to. The driving force behind the differentiation is to reach the deep depth of the respective threat groups. Since there is no overt presence
of armed groups in Zamboanga City, the depth constitutes the psychological domain in which the threat groups can manipulate to their advantage and eventually gain support. Therefore, one of the key methods in preventing the effects of enemy propaganda on reaching the population was to shape CMO activities based on the religious and/or ethnic affiliations, and political leanings of the people.

Concerning the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA), the majority of armed encounters occur within the AOR of the Eastern Mindanao Command (EastMinCom), the area command that covers Central and Northeastern Mindanao. In the AOR of WestMinCom, their presence is smaller, being limited to the hinterlands in the northern portion of Zamboanga peninsula. While Special Operations Teams (SOTs) are deployed to these communist-affected areas, usually in remote areas within the city, the primarily concern is with their political activities conducted within the confines of the city.

AFP officials admit that by law, the communist party has a right to exist legally; but their problem with the movement is that these legal fronts are connected to the underground movement. The underground movement is perceived to be inter-connected with the armed component. According to their intelligence reports, this underground movement in the peninsula has shifted from armed operations to infiltrating sectoral organizations in white areas (urban).

Therefore, the main thrust of CMO in regards to the communists in the city is to reach their political “rear” through activities categorized under the Public Affairs (PA) pillar. The AFP actively conducts information campaigns to raise the level of awareness concerning the activities of communists to the people. The focal concern of the AFP is the youth sector, since they are the traditional recruiting ground for the CPP-NPA. CMO and civil relations officers organize forums in school campuses (university and high schools) to instruct students on the recruiting methods of the communists and the dangers of joining the movement.

This also applies to SOT operations. In contrast to the typical triad concept (combat, intelligence, and CMO) where SOTs are used to clear communist presence in rural areas, SOTs have to deal with city dwellers that are better informed and have more access to government services. Therefore, SOTs in the city are basically trained to counter the legal fronts that the communists have set up in the city.

Concerning the Muslims, the memories of the conflict in the 1970s and the lack of government services and low educational rates have created an ideal recruiting ground for the communists. Moreover, local government units have been unable to enter due to security concerns. To overcome these problems, SOTs, in coordination with local government units (LGU), enter these barangays to help with the delivery of basic services, provide livelihood programs, and launch information campaigns.

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66 The concern with these far-flung barangays is that the overall lack of government services and low educational rates have created an ideal recruiting ground for the communists. Moreover, local government units have been unable to enter due to security concerns. To overcome these problems, SOTs, in coordination with local government units (LGU), enter these barangays to help with the delivery of basic services, provide livelihood programs, and launch information campaigns. Maj. Batara, October 3, 2007.
71 According to Major Hayudini, the communists infiltrate schools by setting up clubs such as rock-singing or dancing and organizing other social functions. To entice the student, the CPP-NPA may promise to sponsor tuition fees, livelihood benefits, or medical benefits. Maj. Hayudini, July 29, 2008.
initiatives to help the Muslim poor, have made them particularly suspicious and distrustful of the military. To breakdown these barriers, Zamboanga city has one Special Advocacy for the Livelihood and Advancement of Muslims (SALAAM) team. Members that were selected for the mission originally were MNLF or MILF integrees but now are selected on the basis of their Muslim faith and ability to speak the language of a target community. The SALAAM team in the city consists mostly of Muslim soldiers. Prerequisites for Salaam soldiers include CMO training and also a good understanding of the language and culture of the community they are entering in. Many of the SALAAM soldiers, especially of the Muslim faith volunteer, “to help their Muslim brothers and sisters.” The makeup of SALAAM units is intended to dispel distrust of these target communities and help soldiers exercise cultural and religious sensitivities.

The SALAAM team is deployed to poor Muslim communities in the urban areas of the city. The main objective of SALAAM in the city is to prevent the community from supporting the ASG. As of July 2008, 9 barangays were covered by SALAAM. These missions typically involve soldiers mingling and living with the community over a span of 45-days. In the process, the soldiers conduct studies on the community in order to acquire an understanding on their needs and upon analysis, assistance is provided through livelihood training, education, medicinal distribution, and small-scale infrastructure projects. At the same time, information is given out about government services, with a special emphasis on the point that the government is not neglecting them. In fact, the SALAAM concept has been so successful that a counterpart has been set up by the PNP in the city. The SALAAM police focus on addressing terrorism (ASG) and other law and order issues while ensuring the rights of the Muslim people are respected.

73 The SALAAM team is based in Task Force Zamboanga, the AFP’s maneuver unit in Zamboanga City. The number of military personnel were not given for confidential reasons. 2nd Lieutenant Maria Lourdes P. Manandeg, SALAAM team leader, interview with author, Camp General Arturo Enrile, Task Group Zamboanga, Zamboanga City, Philippines, July 31, 2008. Hereafter cited as 2nd. Lt. Manandeg and date of interview.
74 These are fighters that either surrendered to the AFP or were absorbed by the AFP after the MNLF signed the final peace agreement with the Philippine government in 1996.
78 Barangays were not named.
79 Unlike the SOTs, SALAAM units have the capability to do small-scale construction. I.e. water wells and basketball courts. Major General Reynald D. Sealana, Deputy Chief of Staff and Chairman, GRP-CCCH, interview with author, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for CMO, J7, Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Philippines, August 3, 2009. Hereafter cited as Maj. Gen. Sealana and date of interview.
7.4.3 Partnering with Civilian Agencies: Sharing the Burden

7.4.3.1 Introduction

CMO in Zamboanga City provides an insight on how the AFP engages other civilian actors in gaining mobility over the population in the city (analysis provided in section 7.4.5). Many of these community outreach or civic action programs are done in coordination and in partnership with local government agencies (LGA), local government units (LGU), NGOs, and aid agencies. The driving principle behind this relationship is to involve as many stakeholders as possible in tackling the insurgency and/or terrorism problem. There are also practical reasons for the AFP to seek partnerships. The first is resource-sharing. WestMinCom has limited funds and capacity to conduct all projects alone. Working with other agencies help alleviate the burden. The second is tapping into the expertise of these agencies to provide services that best fit the communities’ needs. The following examines the viewpoint of civilian partners in the AFP’s CMO projects.

7.4.3.2 Partnering with NGOs

The Philippines has a vibrant NGO sector. According to the Philippine Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), there are approximately 60,000 non-stock, nongovernmental institutions registered in the country and they are considered to be indispensable in assisting the state in delivering socio-economic assistance and empowering the disadvantaged. Zamboanga City is a hub for NGO activity, largely due to its strategic location. The particular circumstances surrounding the history of the region and the ongoing conflict play into the type of activities that are organized. Numerous NGOs seek to improve relations between Christians and Muslims that were damaged during the secessionist wars in the 1970s. For instance, the Silsilah Foundation, Inc., established in 1984, seeks to mend relations by bridging the divide between the two groups by promoting an understanding on the respective groups’ religious beliefs, lifestyles, and attitudes. Activities involve dialogues that take place in the form of workshops and seminars. They also have established living spaces called “Harmony Zones” where Muslims and Christians can live together, under the spirit of understanding and commitment to peace.

Similarly, Peace Advocates Zamboanga Foundation, Inc. (PAZ) is a Catholic NGO that works towards similar goals but with the main difference being, they involve the military in their initiatives. PAZ is active in peace education and organizing conferences, seminars, and assemblies to promote dialogues or a healthy exchange of ideas between various religious groups. Its main mandate is to involve all stakeholders in the peace-building efforts of Mindanao. Rather than distancing themselves from the AFP,

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84 For more information on Peace Advocates Zamboanga, refer to their website: http://zabida.com.ph/peace-advocates-zamboanga/paz.html#.UMAr1WdEXKQ.
PAZ believes that the military cannot be detached from the peace building process.\textsuperscript{85}

From the perspective of PAZ, the military is both part of the problem and part of the solution in the on-going conflict with Muslim threat groups. Sr. Emma Delgado, a staff member of PAZ, discussed that the secessionist wars in the 1970s not only divided the Muslim and Christians, but also left an invisible scar on the psyche of people, which has been transferred through generations. There were massive human rights violations, which were perpetrated by the AFP, civilian militia, rebels, and the Christians and Muslims alike. She too was trapped in a strong bias, especially towards the AFP, stemming from her past growing up in Basilan.\textsuperscript{86} Her experience is also shared with Father Angel Calvo, the president of PAZ and heads other organizations that form part of the broad coalition of NGOs working on peacebuilding. Fr. Calvo is a Spanish priest that came to Zamboanga City during martial law and subsequently opened a school in Basilan. He recalls the 1970s as the “worst period of militarization.” The massive human rights violations, and the killing and threatening of civilians in the area, created an intense hatred towards the military that led to their loss of credibility. Even the priest himself was accused by the military of collaborating with the Moro National Liberations Front (MNLF) as he was involved in a program to help displaced civilians in Basilan.\textsuperscript{87} But over the years, PAZ believes that a concerted effort is needed to break down the structural biases that exist between the people and the military and also between the Muslims and Christians.\textsuperscript{88} Such initiatives are important in the city, not only because of the concentration of mixed communities, but also because there are people living in the city who have fled from military operations from nearby conflict zones.\textsuperscript{89}

In regards to the military, they are invited to forums as one of the stakeholders to peace. An example of such meeting took place in November 2006. The objective of this interfaith, multi-sectoral dialogue was for soldiers to develop cultural sensitivities in the context of the ongoing conflict with the Muslim rebels and also help them to change their mindset from a combat-oriented one to exploring peaceful alternatives. Issues were raised over the intense military operations conducted in the outlying island provinces of Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, and Sulu that were resulting in collateral damage. During the dialogue, Lt. Gen. Nelson N. Allaga, then-commander of WesMinCom, revealed that the military was making efforts to transform soldiers from a warrior-ethos dominated mindset to one of a peacebuilder.\textsuperscript{90}

PAZ also partners with the military in community outreach programs. Nevertheless they are

\textsuperscript{85} Sr. Delgado, July 28, 2008.
\textsuperscript{86} Sr. Delgado, October 2, 2007; July 29, 2008.
\textsuperscript{87} Fr. Calvo admitted that he still had 6 pending cases against him for activities of dissent from martial law. Father Angel Calvo, President of Peace Advocates Zamboanga, chairman of Nagdilaab Foundation, Inc., and regional head of the Zamboanga-Basilan Development Alliance, interview with author, Lantaka Hotel, Zamboanga City, July 28, 2008. Hereafter cited as Fr. Calvo and date of interview.
\textsuperscript{88} Sr. Delgado, July 28, 2008. Lumads or the indigenous people are included. In the city, they consist of the Subanons. They are considered to be the first settlers on the Zamboanga peninsula.
\textsuperscript{89} Fr. Calvo, July 28, 2008.
\textsuperscript{90} Darwin Wally Wee, “AFP forsaking guns increasingly for the bow and arrow of peace-making,” \textit{PeaceWorks}, Vol. VI No. 11, December 2007, p.4. A typical agenda of such meetings include 1) Culture of Peace 2) Conflict transformation 3) Analyzing the causes of conflict 4) Going beyond military solutions 5) Understanding the culture of various religious and ethnic groups.
particularly sensitive in working with uniformed personnel because certain communities harbor deep-rooted grievances or distrust towards the AFP. Whenever the target beneficiaries indicate such sentiments, they ensure that the military is not included.\textsuperscript{91} On the positive side, collaborating with the military has provided them with assurance on their safety, some transportation help, equipment, and manpower.\textsuperscript{92} On the downside, PAZ complains that the military’s outreach programs are done “randomly” and for the short-term. As Sr. Delagado expressed, these initiatives should be done in “journey with the people,” meaning the AFP needs to spend more time in developing programs that address the deeper issues of conflict and poverty.\textsuperscript{93}

Kiwanis Club of Metro Zamboanga has been in existence for over two decades. It is an NGO that extends assistance to poor communities, with a particular focus on vulnerable sectors such as women, youth, and children. For women, they provide classes for expecting mothers, distribute baby diapers, bottled water, sanitation napkins, and hand sanitizers. For child and youth, they provide sessions on spiritual growth. With small children, they provided immunization and tuition especially for disabled children. For the youth, they provide school scholarships and drug prevention programs. Many of its members are from the business community that help with the fund raising by holding events like government tournaments and making personal donations.

Kiwanis partners with the AFP, PNP, and the American forces in a variety of community outreach programs. According to the president of Kiwanis, Frencie L. Carren, there are advantages and disadvantages to partnering with the security forces. In regards to the advantages, the first is that the military and the police can provide security. This is something that other NGOs concur on.\textsuperscript{94} Coordination with the police is especially critical in working along coast on the Western side of peninsula, since this is where lawless groups or ASG operate in. The second advantage is logistics, which comes mostly from the U.S. forces and the PNP. The third is that with the AFP, military doctors and dentists are provided.

On the downside, there are issues mostly related to working with the AFP. The first is that there is too much bureaucracy, which stymies the ability for projects to move forward smoothly. The second is that since AFP officers are rotated on a frequent-basis, the officials they meet and coordinate with one year are not there the next. It is a problem because as the president Kiwanis brings up; the spirit of cooperation does not run through the command. While lauding AFP soldiers on an individual-basis, she admitted that certain officers were more difficult to work with than others. Thus, a smoother implementation or realization of a joint project depended on who was in charge. The third is that sometimes their club ends up helping the AFP more than they help them. This is especially pronounced in the area of logistics. The AFP is sorely lacking in logistical capabilities and has to depend on its partners for this support.

For the AFP, U.S. forces, and the PNP, working with Kiwanis is beneficial. The organization

\textsuperscript{91} Sr. Delgado, July 28, 2008.
\textsuperscript{92} Sr. Delgado, July 28, 2008; July 31, 2009.
\textsuperscript{93} Sr. Delgado, July 28, 2008.
\textsuperscript{94} Prof. Edgar Araojo, Professor of Political Science, interview with author, Western Mindanao University, Zamboanga City, Philippines, July 31, 2009. According to Prof. Araojo, when planning for outreach programs in far-flung communities, coordination has to be done with the military due to the security problems.
helps the soldiers and police identify the needs of the community and provide CMO accordingly. They also give them pointers on how to deal respectfully with the local people. For instance, they orient the PNP about mannerisms in doing CMO in Muslim communities. In working with the American soldiers, they tell them to appear in “civvies” rather than in uniform when conducting activities for children, such as in school-related projects.  

In drawing together the commonalities expressed in the views of the NGOs interviewed, it can be gathered that the NGO in the city are relatively open to working with the military. Part of it comes from the necessity of seeking protection in dangerous areas, and another is maximizing the socio-economic assistance that can be given to people by sharing resources. At the same time, some of the NGOs recognize that the military is an important stakeholder to peace as well. While the relationship is a two-way street with both sides pooling their resources to achieve their mandate, the increased interaction can also be viewed as a step forward for the AFP in improving relations not only with CMO beneficiaries but their civilian partners as well.

7.4.3.3 Local Government Units and Local Government Agencies

The institutionalization of CMO has also helped the AFP to expand its activities with local government units (LGUs) and local government agencies (LGAs). With the further reorganization of peace and order councils (POC) under Executive Order (EO) 771 (2009), it has facilitated the convergence and coordination between the multiple actors involved in community outreach programs and in areas related to security. It has also helped civilian partners to step up their responsibilities in dealing with the on-going conflict.

At the city-level, the POC of Zamboanga City convenes several times a year at city hall. Their crisis management committee is an integral part of the POC, which takes care of specifics related to disease outbreaks, man-made situations (conflict), and natural disasters.

The city also has an Area Coordinating Center (ACC), or the security nerve center, already established under the former regional command (SouthCom) in the late 1990s. This center has helped strengthen the relationship between the city government and the military, especially in areas regarding tackling terrorism and other law and order issues. Mayor Celsio Lobregat comments that no other city has such a concentrated number of military bases and camps, so it is imperative to have a close relationship with the military. Turning to matters related to CMO, he believes that the military does not have to limit

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95 Frencie L. Carren, President of the Kiwanis Club of Metro Zamboanga, interview with author, Mein Technological College, San Jose, Zamboanga City, Philippines, July 27, 2009. Hereafter cited as Carren and date of interview.
97 Mayor Celsio Lobregat, Zamboanga City mayor, interview with author, Zamboanga City Hall, Zamboanga City, Philippines, October 27, 2010. Hereafter cited as Mayor Lobregat and date of interview.
99 Mayor Lobregat, October 2, 2007.
their roles to defense, but can also play an important role in taking a holistic approach to the conflict problem. Nonetheless, he states that the main issue related to the rise in community outreach programs is that there are a myriad number of NGOs and other partners involved, and to avoid confusion, they should coordinate with the city government first.

Concerning the military’s relationship with local government agencies (LGA), it appears that one of the largest drivers behind the partnership is resource sharing and security assurance. Similar to the partnership with NGOs, local governments pool their expertise, financing, and material with other agencies, including the military. For instance, the city’s housing management office, the main support center for people who have lost their homes in calamities, cannot depend on their own resources, due to limited funding. Therefore they seek cooperation from NGOs and the military. The military from time to time send their soldiers to help in the construction of houses and other structures.

Another government agency that frequently works with the military is the regional Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH). In conflict areas such as Basilan and Sulu, the AFP’s engineering brigades work together with the DPWH and its contractors to build roads and bridges. Nevertheless in the city, the DPWH coordinates with military authorities to seek protection for their construction workers and equipment. This is particularly critical in remote areas of the city where construction equipment are frequent targets of sabotage by armed groups.

7.4.4 CMO Beneficiaries

The following examines communities that were beneficiaries of the AFP-CMO programs. The selection of these communities by the author was based on accessibility and information gathered from the local media. The purpose of this section is to sketch out how a military outreach program was conducted in the communities and schools from the perspectives of the beneficiaries and also gauge their feelings about these military endeavors (see Appendix H for the list of questions addressed to community members).

**Culianan Barangay**

Culianan Barangay is located 14 km away from Zamboanga City proper. It is considered to be urban with a population consisting of 7,607 people, amounting approximately to 2,000 households. The majority of the residents are Christian. Compared to the hinterlands, this barangay is far from being in dire need of government services. Nevertheless, there is still a lack of basic assistance to the residents, particularly in the provision of medicine and simple medical treatment.

At the time of the interview in late 2007, the barangay had already experienced several CMO

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100 Mayor Lobregat, October 27, 2010.
101 Mayor Lobregat, October 2, 2007.
102 Rodrigo Pagotaisidro, Zamboanga City Management Office official, interview with author, Zamboanga City Management Office, Zamboanga City, Philippines, July 28, 2009.
103 Regional Office (XI), Department of Public Works and Highways, in response to written questions submitted by the author to the Public Relations Officer, July 29, 2009.
missions including the joint Philippine-American military exercise, Balikatan in 2005, which was followed
by a Medical Civic Action (MEDCAP) in 2006 conducted by the Philippine Army and Philippine Air
Force.

Anabella Salazar (aged 49) is a beneficiary of a medical check-up conducted under Balikatan
(2005). Salazar said she is generally happy with the existing government services in her community.
Nevertheless, due to her meager income, she was unable to get the medical attention that she needed for her
heart ailment. When the soldiers came in, she was able to receive medicine and she feels that her condition
has dramatically improved. She also recalled the deployment of USNS Mercy, an American Naval hospital
ship that made a stop in Zamboanga City to provide city residents with medical assistance in 2006.105
Combined with this experience, she has learned to trust both the Americans and Filipinos soldiers and has
no hesitation in having the military visit her community. When asked if she had any idea on why the
military was conducting these missions, she shrugged and said she was not particularly interested or cared
about their agenda.106

Pablo Manalo (aged 65) and his wife, Satupinina Manalo (aged 59) are both farmers. Mr.
Manalo has not been able to find a full-time job due to his frail health and ekes out a living by growing fruit,
vegetables, and rice in his backyard. Though enough to get by, seeking any medical attention was a luxury.
Therefore, they say the community outreach programs conducted by both the American and
Filipino soldiers have been beneficial to them, especially due to their meager income.

Mr. Manalo explained roughly on how CMO played out in his barangay. In the planning stage,
soldiers consulted the barangay officials, health workers, and the residents on what kind of services they
needed. Upon their recommendations, a one-day MEDCAP program was conducted. The first one was
under Balikatan 2005. They were given basins, shorts, underpants, and some free glasses. An eye
examination was done during the day and glasses were later claimed at a general hospital for free. Another
community outreach program was conducted by the AFP (Army and Air Force). A free medical clinic was
set up for a day at their basketball court. Medicine such as antibiotics and anesthesia was provided for.
Simple procedures such as the removal of cysts were done on the spot and with patients suffering from
more serious problems, were treated in a general hospital, free-of-charge.

The couple both admitted that medical assistance is especially appreciated by the people

105 USNS Mercy is a hospital ship belonging to the American Navy that is deployed overseas for humanitarian
missions. For instance in 2005, the ship was deployed to Asia, stopping at Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and
East Timor to provide medical and dental assistance to people in wake of the 2004 Tsunami disaster. In 2006, it
made a month-long stop in Zamboanga City, Jolo, and Tawi-Tawi as part of the United States non-combative
efforts to fight terror in the Southern Philippines. Selected medical patients from the city could avail themselves
to free medical operations on the ship. On board were American and Canadian military doctors and dentists;
volunteer civilian specialists working alongside their local counterparts that included medical personnel from the
AFP; volunteer civilian doctors and other medical specialists, and NGOs. Additionally, American naval
engineers were dispatched to conduct small-scale construction along the coast of Zamboanga City. See “USNS
Mercy Arrives in Southern Philippines,” The Mindanao Examiner, May 26, 2006. Available at:

106 Anabella Salazar, resident of Culianan Barangay, interview with author (interpreter: Bong Garcia), Culianan
Barangay, Zamboanga City, Philippines, October 3, 2007
belonging to the low-income bracket since existing health services rendered by the government is insufficient and often times, medicinal supplies run out. They both agreed that that the experience has improved their image of the AFP. Though they have not experienced any problems with the military in the past, they have heard about the atrocities that the AFP has committed, which had made them distrustful of the soldiers. Upon being asked if there were any security problems in their barangay they laughingly replied, “There are no terrorists here and the community has never had a security problem. But either way, we feel safer with the presence of the military.”

A female resident interviewed Rosana Alfaro (aged 29), the mother of two children and the owner of small shop similarly expressed happiness for being able to receive free medicine. However in contrast with other interviewees, she did not want to reply to the question on how she felt about the military before they entered her community. Nevertheless she mentioned that her current impressions on the AFP were okay.

Barangay Malagutay

Malagutay is a barangay located near Camp Enrile. According to the 2007 census, the barangay holds roughly 5,600 people or 939 households. It is considered to be urban but has limited transportation. There are only two jeepneys per day to ferry people in and out of the barangays to the center of the city.

The barangay council members shared their experiences with the military. According to them, as of October 2007, they had received assistance from the U.S. forces and the AFP jointly on four separate occasions, the earliest one going back to 2003. Malagutay’s chairwoman commented that they did not approach the AFP but rather it was a small group of U.S. military officers who initiated the first contact by making a courtesy call to their barangay after Balikatan 2002. When the Americans came, she complained to them that it was unfair that the island province of Basilan was getting all the benefits from the military’s community outreach programs and that none were being extended to Zamboanga City. The culmination of this first meeting led to a medical mission launched by the U.S. forces in 2003, which was followed by several others.

A mixture of complaints and gratitude were revealed in the course of the discussion towards the American presence. They were particularly appreciative towards the American in constructing a deep well (a small community water system) for a neighborhood of 20 households and a basketball court that was constructed mostly by the Americans.

However, the councilwoman expressed indignation at the 2nd and 3rd batch of American soldiers

108 Rosana Alfaro, resident of Culianan Barangay, interview with author (interpreter: Bong Garcia), Culianan Barangay, Zamboanga City, Philippines, October 3, 2007. Note: Interviews were conducted in interviewees’ respective homes or front yards with the assistance of June C. Ramacho, a barangay health worker from Culianan Rural Service Center.
that came after 2003 because as the military camp was located nearby, they were impacted by the live fire drills conducted. Since there was no notification to the barangays, the drills created panic the village. In fact it created so much commotion that villagers were running, some urinating in fear, thinking that there was an actual military operation. One house was even hit by stray bullet. The chairwomen complained immediately to the city mayor, and since then she commented that her village has not experienced similar problems.

Regarding the military’s entry, the council chairwoman admitted that it was still unclear why her barangay was singled out for these military-led medical missions, as they were not the first to initiate the contact. The Americans, she said, just showed up one day, and asked her questions about possible community needs. And in regards to security, she said her community was extremely vigilante. If there was a group of people they did not know entering the barangay, the inhabitants would let her know. She said the closest experience she had with a security problem was when a group of policemen or whom she suspected were posing as law enforcement came to her house. She immediately asked for their IDs and that sent them running. Therefore, if there were any infiltration by the communists or the ASG for that matter, it would be brought to attention by the community members and subsequently be reported to security forces.110

Carlos Remoto (aged 49) is an example of a CMO beneficiary who received extended treatment for a serious injury sustained in a work-related accident. He and his wife, Gliceria (aged 50) live as tenants on a small plot of land in Malagutay. He was a carpenter for 17 years until the day of his accident in 2002. At the time he was the lead-man on a construction project when he noticed smoke coming from a warehouse. Afraid that the paint in the warehouse would ignite and cause an explosion, he ran in to remove the paint. In the process, he sustained serious burns to his right leg. The building contractor provided him 7,000 pesos which was barely enough to cover his ambulance ride and first trip to the hospital. Not having enough money to get the right medical attention, he was forced to quit from his job and rely on his grown children for support.

On February 2, 2004, a MEDCAP was held jointly between the AFP and U.S. forces. Medical consultation booths were set up in the local school and villagers were also able to receive medicine, multi-vitamins, and bandages. One of the legislative members of the barangay council worked it out so that Mr. Remoto could seek further medical attention. He was given a card in advance, qualifying him for serious or enhanced medical attention. On the day of the civic action, he went to the school where the villagers had gathered. After being examined by a team of military doctors, he went to Camp Enrile (the headquarters of WestMinCom) and received medical attention by American doctors. The treatment lasted for 8 months.

He said he was extremely lucky to get the medical attention at that timing because his burns had become infected with gangrene, and would have been amputated within a week if it had not been for the MEDCAP. He admitted that the experience has greatly changed his impressions on the military, especially towards the AFP. Before the treatment, he and his wife had no interaction with the military. To him they

appeared to be “in a different world, very forbidding and a world you can only see from peeping through the (military camp’s) gates.” Now, he sees the divide has been narrowed and that they actually help the people. He added further that other members of the community have also warmed up to both the AFP and the U.S. forces.

Concerning basic government services, Mr. Remoto complained that he seldom saw any developmental works extended by the government. Even if there were any community assistance programs provided by the LGUs, he explained that the barangay officials and their family and friends often monopolized them. Other villagers were often excluded and not informed about the event. A wealthy Chinese monopolized even the water system that was connected to the existing source, forcing villagers living in the vicinity to walk distances to get their water. The Americans, he recalls, on the day of the civic action, attached a hose to this water source so residents could get their water directly.111

**Bolong Barangay**

Bolong is a coastal barangay on the Eastern side of Zamboanga City. Coastal barangays are a particular concern for the AFP since this geographic configuration and access to the sea makes it an easy getaway for kidnapping groups. In the June of 2010, a Chinese-Filipino trader was kidnapped by armed men, believed to be led by a Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) member who was running a kidnapping-for-ransom and piracy operation, operating in the neighboring province of Zamboanga Sibugay.112

Bolong is located 33 km east of the city proper. The population is 5,691 inclusive 1,027 households.113 The composition of the barangay is roughly made up of 80 percent Christian and 20 percent Muslim. The barangay chief, Tony Evangelista was interviewed about his experiences with the military.

Mr. Evangelista explained briefly the conditions of his barangay. He said due to its remoteness from the city proper, basic services were limited. Even though they have a health center, overall medical and dental services were insufficient. To add to the difficulty of his residents, Bolong, is located close to the provincial border and for many of the residents, paying for the public transportation to seek medical attention in downtown Zamboanga was a financial burden.

He said he was the first to initiate contact with the AFP. The Naval Forces finally accepted his request and on September 15, 2010, a single-day MEDCAP, DENCAP, and VETCAP (Veterinary Civic Action Program) was held in his barangay. The operation was jointly led by the Filipino Navy and U.S. forces, while involving other participants such as the Philippine National Police (PNP), other members of

111 Carlos Remoto, resident of Malagutay barangay, interview with author (interpreter: Bong Garcia), Remoto residence, Malagutay, Zamboanga City, Philippines, October 4, 2007.
the AFP, the Department of Health (DOH), and NGOs. \textsuperscript{114}

The barangay chief said that this medical mission was greatly appreciated by the people and he believes that this has helped to build up the trust between the population and the AFP. He felt that especially in the last 10 years or so, WestMinCom had made efforts to reach out to the people and noted that the behavior of the AFP was much improved. “They are more respectful and more disciplined.” He contrasted this behavior with the soldiers back in the 1970s that acted “crazy” and basically both sides (the civilians and the military) didn’t trust each other.

In response to the question about the security situation of the barangay, he stated that there were no security problems aside from the recent kidnapping. Nevertheless, he did add that the 11 Island Group, the barangay-island group just off the coast of Bolong was dangerous because this was one of the staging areas of the kidnapping groups. When asked further if the military had any information campaigns to orient the residents on such security concerns, he answered that on the day of the medical mission, an information campaign was held but rather than discuss threat groups, the information delivered was based on orienting the residents on existing government programs. \textsuperscript{115}

**Resettlement Project in Tulungatung Barangay**

A re-housing project is an example of how WestMinCom supports programs led by other civilian agencies. A Catholic NGO called Gawad Kalinga (GK) spearheaded a humanitarian measure to re-settle illegal dwellers (squatters) from different barangays, some including fire victims, in a barangay called Tulungatung. This was supported and coordinated by the Zamboanga City Office. The project involved the building of 60 new houses (duplex-houses that could accommodate two households) that came complete with a water system and electricity. The land in which the houses were built on belongs to the government but was to be turned over to the squatters. At the time of the interview, GK had helped resettle 80 families and the city government, 420 families.

The city office said it was part of their efforts to provide assistance to underprivileged families. Though they did not go into details, it was mentioned that the city also wanted to contribute to the security. These housing projects are one way to keep tabs on residents and to monitor the movement of people coming in and out of the city. \textsuperscript{116} A beneficiary interviewed later said that if any newcomer enters the housing site, they had to report it to the city housing office. In principle, they were only allowed to accommodate visitors for several nights. And if any visitor was going to stay for over a month, they had to submit their pictures and provide the number of occupants and names. \textsuperscript{117}


\textsuperscript{115} Bolong was not personally visited by the author. The interview with Tony Evangelista, barangay chief of the Bolong Barangay was held at the Zamboanga City Hall, October 27, 2010.

\textsuperscript{116} Rodrigo Pagotaisidro, representative of City Housing Management Office, interview with author, City Housing Management Office, Zamboanga City, Philippines, July 28, 2012.

\textsuperscript{117} Rosalina, Salazar, carpenter, interview with author, housing (GK) site, Tulungatung, Zamboanga City,
The city management housing office, due to its limited resources seeks help not only from NGOs but the military as well. According to Rodrigo Pagotaisidro, the housing office representative, the office approached WestMinCom and asked for their assistance. After sending a letter of request to the commanding officers on how much manpower they needed, the AFP send them a group of soldiers to work on the construction of the houses.

**Alex Lagling (aged 43)** said he was able to become a beneficiary after he obtained a fire victim certificate from the urban poor office. He said the city provided land; GK, the housing material; and the settlers like him provided the “sweat equity” or labor. The agreement with the city government was that the settlers would pay for the land after a grace period of a year. Mr. Lagling recalled that the PNP and the AFP engineers from the army, navy, and air force came in after a few months to work on one portion of the housing complex. The soldiers worked half of the time in uniform and the other half of the time in “civvies” (civilian clothes).  

The president of the neighborhood association also came to the settlement under similar circumstances. He was also a squatter on a piece of land that he had been living on for over 40 years. When a fire destroyed his home and along with his neighbors’, the landowners expelled them from the land. He sought assistance from the social welfare office, and he was directed to the housing office. He too gained a favorable impression of the soldiers. Serving as a construction foreman on the site, he said it was the first time he had any interaction with the military. He said the soldiers were obedient to his instructions and were impressed with the work the soldiers did. In regards to security, he said there were no security problems but they were advised by the village officials, the AFP, and the PNP to report of any suspicious activity.

**Limpapa Barangay**

Similar to Bolong, Limpapa is also a coastal village, which is located in the hinterlands. It is also the last barangay on the Western Side of Zamboanga City. In July 2008, military intelligence produced reports that the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) had established a training camp somewhere on the border between the city and the neighboring province of Zamboanga Del Norte. According to the reports, armed men were fanning out into the areas to recruit and train locals. At the time of the incident, two CMO missions were conducted in the same month the reports came out, with another conducted in the following year.

The barangay has a population of 4,916 people in which the majority makes a living off of fishing and farming. There are both Christians and Muslims living in the community. The military first

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118 Alex Lagling, resident of Tulungatung barangay and beneficiary of the GK housing project, interview with author, Tulungatung barangay, Zamboanga City, Philippines, July 28, 2009.
119 Neighborhood association president of the GK housing unit, interview with author (interpreter: Bong Garcia), Tulungatung, Zamboanga City, Philippines, July 28, 2009.
entered on a CMO mission on July 17, 2008. They included the AFP, the PNP, and volunteer civilian doctors. Soon after, on July 20, 2008, WestMinCom conducted another one-day medical mission in partnership with more than 20 government agencies, which included the Department of Health, Department of Public Works, and the city government. U.S. forces also entered the barangay on April 19, 2009 under Balikatan to conduct MEDCAP and DENCAP and also distributed school supplies. In all three missions, the AFP was primarily responsible for providing tooth extraction, circumcision, medical check-ups, and the distribution of free medicine.

Alongside these missions, the AFP oriented the people on security. According to the barangay kagawad, all residents were briefed on the procedures to take when they encountered any security problems. They were told to immediately inform the PNP or AFP by text-messaging or visiting the nearest police station or barangay hall.

Before the military came in 2008, the residents did not have any interaction with the AFP aside from weekly patrols. The barangay kagawad explained that it came as a surprise when the AFP came in, some even panicking, as military entry was often associated with trouble. Nevertheless, due to the barangay’s remoteness and insufficient government services, the residents were grateful for the health assistance given. They now personally feel closer to the government and the AFP.

Individuals were also asked about their experiences. For instance Jumaatiya Muztapha (aged 27), a Muslim woman with three children was interviewed at the Feeding Center. Her husband works as a fisherman, but she said his job was unstable. Before the entry or the AFP, she mentioned she had no interaction with them, so it was difficult to describe her impressions about them prior to the medical missions. To her, their sudden entry came as a surprise but she was glad she was able to get some medicine and a check-up. When asked about her worries about the security situation, she said she was afraid of the rebels even though she has never encountered one. She said there were rumors circulating around her community about their possible presence, which scared her.

Impressions about the medical missions were also gathered from high school students. Mae Anne Esperat Dela Cruz (aged 16), a 4th year high school student. She remembered the medical outreach that organized by the AFP and the American forces. For her, the experience was personal because with so many soldiers helping the people, it strengthened her resolve to become a nurse. She further recalled that the AFP had a symposium, provided free medical consulting, and gave out pap smears. The Americans also gave out backpacks. Her final comment about the soldiers was that she was really excited about seeing them and she was also proud of her country’s soldiers.

Ariel D. Ebol (aged 12), a first year high school student also shared his experience. He

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121 An elected member of the barangays council. Also known as the barangay councilor.
123 Jumaatiya Muztapha, resident of Limpapa barangay, interview with author, Limpapa, Zamboanga City, Philippines, July 20, 2009. A community mid-wife, who went by her first name, Jenny, explained the Mrs. Muztapha was one of the eight mal-nourished mothers visiting the feeding-center. She added that Limpapa had the highest number of malnourished children. In 2008, there were over 100 malnourished children.
remembered in particular, the American soldiers. They were always smiling and that they talked to him in a friendly manner. He was also very happy with the T-shirt he got but for him personally, the best thing about the whole experience was the dental assistance. He said there were no dentists in the barangay, and when he got a cavity, it just rotted. But when the soldier-dentists came, he was able to get his tooth extracted. When asked about any worries about armed men and kidnapping, he said he only saw the MILF and ASG on T.V.124

Elementary Schools

Public schools, especially elementary schools have also been beneficiaries to numerous CMO programs. A visit was paid to Boalan Elementary School in Boalan barangay. The school consists roughly of 1,400 students. Under Balikatan, both American and Filipino soldiers entered the school to do repairs on the buildings and the Americans donated some textbooks, books, shoes, clothing, and notebooks for the children.

According to Edwina S. Apolinario, one of the administrators of the school, the soldiers visited the school in advance to ask for their needs. Based on the school’s requests, they came in one week before classes began during the holidays to paint walls, repair rooms, and also to convert a stockroom into a classroom. Once the school term began, the American soldiers visited the classes to do some teaching and reading. They did not bring up any security problems.

A group of children of 10 and 11-year olds were asked about their experiences with the American soldiers. They said the Americans read out loud stories like “The Milky Way,” “The Red Riding Hood,” and “The First Santa Clause.” Soldiers individually talked about their pets, children, and their lives back at home. One boy excitedly talked about a soldier’s story about icebergs in his home state of Alaska. When asked if the soldiers explained to them why they were there, one boy replied that the soldiers told them they were there to help their schools. When asked if they were afraid of having soldiers entering their schools, the group replied they were not scared at all and were very excited about meeting the soldiers. They added further that they helped make the school more beautiful and that they wanted them to come again and bring more textbooks, provide new drum sets, and renovate the school stage.125

The school administrator said that the U.S. forces were very cooperative, approachable, and generous. She added that her impressions on the U.S. were very good stating that, “We Filipinos, love the Americans.” The grade 6 subject teacher, Norito D. Castromayor also held the same opinion about the Americans. He also explained that public schools are in dire need for supplies. According to him, it take anywhere between 5 to 6 years for a request go through. Aligned with the administrator’s viewpoint, basically any form of assistance from any group is appreciated.126

124 Interviews with the students were conducted by the author at Limpapa National High School, Limpapa Barangay, Zamboanga City.
125 Nathalia M. de Vera (aged 10), Aiten Marie Y. Lumanta (aged 10), Gelbert E. Perez (aged 11), and Franz Edrien J. Ong (aged 11), group interview with author, 6th grade homeroom, Boalan Elementary School, Zamboanga Elementary School, Zamboanga City, Philippines, July 28, 2008.
126 Interviews conducted by the author at Boalan Elementary School, Boalan Barangay, Zamboanga City,
To elaborate on this issue, a visit was also paid to an elementary school in Culianan that was still waiting for assistance from U.S. forces. At the time of the interview, U.S. forces had already met with the school officials to make assessments on their needs. Librarian and subject teacher, Leonopia Layonera revealed why public schools depended so much on any outside help. She explained that the school had 1,173 students from grade one through six. There were only 30 teachers including the principle, making the teacher-student ratio at about 1:50. Understaffed, the school also suffers from a shortage of basic teaching and learning material. The central government she added only pays for the teachers’ salaries and everything else, including chairs, desks, and books are donated. Therefore, any assistance be it from the military or donors are greatly appreciated.127

Going back to the Boalan School, it was interesting to note that while Filipino soldiers also participated in the school projects, the children did not mention them and from the teachers, more praise was delivered to the Americans. When asked about this, Mr. Castromayor answered that though the Filipino soldiers accompanied the U.S. troops, he mentioned that they came only once in a while, especially during the school holidays to work on building renovation and “kept a very low-profile.”128

7.4.5 Analysis of CMO in Zamboanga City
7.4.5.1 Overview: City vs. Remote Areas

In assessing the effects of CMO in Zamboanga City, there are several points that need to be taken into consideration beforehand. The first is that, for the most part, security is stable in the city,129 which is in contrast to neighboring islands under the Area of Responsibility (AOR) of WestMinCom such as Basilan and Sulu where battles between the government forces and armed groups occur frequently. Thus, any findings from Zamboanga City cannot be wholly applied to these areas, where fighting directly impacts the lives of civilians. The second it that, in comparison to remote areas, there is a functioning local government and the active presence of NGOs, meaning there is a better availability of services for the people. This also underlines a difference in how CMO transpires. Unlike in remote and insurgent-influenced areas where there is limited or no government presence and the military often end up taking over the role of the civilian agency in delivering basic services; in the city, the military-civilian partnership is mutually reinforcing. The third is that the city holds a concentration of media, allowing for the maximum coverage of CMO efforts, not to mention, better accessibility to information regarding military operations, which is hard to get by in conflict areas.

127 Leonopia Lagonera, library and subject teacher, interview with author, Culianan Elementary School, Zamboanga City, October 3, 2007.
129 In recent decades, the most serious ASG incident was on June 10, 1994, when bomb attacks in Zamboanga City left at least 71 people dead.
7.4.5.2 Military Objectives behind the Selection of CMO Beneficiaries

WestMinCom officials maintain that CMO in the city is to gain the good will of the people and at the same time, target the roots of insurgency, which is perceived to be coming from socio-economic deprivation.\(^\text{130}\) Nevertheless, they did not go into details about their selection process.\(^\text{131}\) One of the most perplexing questions about CMO conducted in Zamboanga City concerns what sort of factors helped single out communities for CMO projects, especially since many of them have no overt security concerns. For instance, none of the beneficiaries interviewed felt threatened or encountered any presence of terrorist groups. This seemingly goes against the objectives of CMO, which is to cut existing links between the insurgents and the people. Another question concerns why CMO was extended to areas where the availability of government services is far better than those communities in the hinterlands.\(^\text{132}\) This is not to say that CMO is not conducted in remote areas but it appeared the bulk of CMO is conducted along the primary road, the main artery that travels around the coast of the peninsula; and its secondary roads. Therefore, gaining an understanding on the military’s objectives behind their CMO selection is key to reconstructing the AFP’s perceptions on battlespace and its subsequent management.

Upon asking NGOs, academia, journalists, and the beneficiaries about the selection process, they too were left scratching their heads over WestMinCom’s intentions as it is difficult to read the minds of the military.\(^\text{133}\) Some perceive CMO activities in the city as pure assistance for the needy.\(^\text{134}\) Others expressed, it was a subtle way to ward off lawless elements.\(^\text{135}\) One of the most penetrating insights on the AFP’s choice came from Sr. Delgado. She observed that the AFP’s choice in barangays are one, areas covering ancestral domain or pieces of territory declared by the MILF as rightfully belonging to the Muslim or indigenous people (e.g. Limpapa barangays),\(^\text{136}\) two, holds a mixed community (Muslims, Christians, as


\(^{131}\) The barangays officials and NGOs interviewed said the realization of a CMO project was reached by either the military approaching them or the civilian-side making a request. Nevertheless, at the end of the day, it was the military that decided on which projects to converge on with their civilian counterparts. Sr. Delgado, July 31, 2009; Emerita C. Carlingal, barangays chairwoman of Malagutay, interview with author, October 4, 2007, residence of Ms. Carlingal, Malagutay, Zamboanga City, Philippines, October 4, 2007; Frenchie L. Carren, July 27, 2009; Tony Evangelista, October 27, 2010.

\(^{132}\) Sr. Delgado, July 31, 2009.


\(^{134}\) Zamboanga City-based journalist, interview with author, Pangalian, Zamboanga del Sur, Philippines, October 28, 2010.


\(^{136}\) Ancestral domain is the term that the MILF uses to refer to land and bodies of water that rightfully belong to ancestors of the Bangsamore (Muslim Filipino). The areas that are recognized to fall under ancestral domain are those where a tribe has had occupancy between 1898-1939 before being uprooted. It also involves having had a sultanate reign over the tribe that occupied the islands. See Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain Aspect of the GRP-MILF Tripoli Agreement on Peace of 2001. Available at: http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B%28httpDocuments%29/5487E98B62DA0FD1C1C1D5756700307D5DF%3Fpdf%3EMemorandum%2B%2BAncestral%2BDomain%3B%3BAugust%2B2008.pdf. This has been one of the obstacles to the progress in peace talks between the MILF and the Philippine government until a breakthrough was made in 2012 when the government and the MILF agreed on a peace framework. Zamboanga City’s mayor continues to be strongly opposed to the national government’s issuance of the certification of ancestral domain title (CADT) to 7,850 hectares of land within the barangays of Limpapa, Labuan, and Patalon and more than
well as non-Islamized indigenous people); and three, are located on the shoreline. Her opinion encompasses WestMinCom’s concerns on the possible link that these communities may or may not have with armed groups. In regards to the ancestral domain, the military have traditionally sought to gain favorable attitudes from the Muslim population, and thereby prevent the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) from expanding its area of influence. Similarly, mixed communities hold minority groups, especially the Muslim and indigenous people that are most marginalized, and therefore can be attracted to separatist or extremist ideology. And regarding the third factor, coastal areas have always been a security concern because it is difficult to regulate the movement of people, including the ASG and other armed groups.

Based on further examination on the points raised above and with other existing information, it can be gleaned that extensive CMO operations are conducted in Zamboanga City, so that WestMinCom can secure their rear or the area furthest from the frontlines. Zamboanga City holds numerous military bases, which are important launch pads for operations in Western Mindanao. For security reasons, the areas surrounding the military/police bases or detachments need to be clear of any infiltration by threat groups. Most likely security concerns can be possible attacks on major camps or raids on smaller and undermanned detachments that are located in the remote corners of the sprawling city. Raids are particularly difficult to deal with. These are attacks conducted in secrecy and surprise followed by a quick withdrawal. The objectives are to capture intelligence and weapons, harass the troops, destroy equipment, and kill personnel manning those posts. The disadvantage the military has in regards to raids is that their installations are stationary, making it a fixed target for armed groups. One method in countering this disadvantage is


137 Sr. Delgado, July 31, 2009.
138 While the AFP recognizes MILF camps, settlements covering ancestral domain is a more complex issue. First, Zamboanga City government is opposed to recognizing any of them on the mainland (see footnote 1057), and secondly, it can be speculated based on the AFP’s traditional approach to MILF bases and its environs, that in areas where the MILF champion the cause of their Muslim brethren, such as through the reclaiming of their ancestral land, they have influence in. Though ancestral domain is scattered and spread out in the Mindanao region, the AFP may perceive them as pockets of “depth” in the battlespace that allow the MILF to have positional advantage over the military and that they can operate with less restrictions. For information about how the AFP dealt with areas outside of MILF camps in the past see Vitug and Gloria, Under the Crescent Moon, p.149-150.
139 The rear in military jargon occupies the battlespace which is furthest from the front-lines. The rear provides the support for military units engaging in action.
140 The most serious raid by the ASG took place on April 4, 1995. The ASG raided the town of Ipi in Zamboanga del Sur (now Zamboanga Sibugay). The ASG attacked and ransacked the police station. They cut off all communications at the station, which led to a delayed response by the military. The attack left at least 53 people dead and wounded 48 others.
mentioned in Maj. Bunayog’s article. He strongly urges local commanders to initiate CMO activities in the surrounding vicinity of a detachment to develop a “harmonious relationship” with the community. A cooperative population can deter or help the military preempt enemy attacks. While raids are regular occurrences on Basilan, and communist strongholds, the city itself needs be vigilant from these attacks that could sow seeds of confusion and impact overall operation. Ensuring security and control over the rear of the battlespace could be supported by some evidence that along with CMO projects conducted in a barangay, a communication-link was also set up with the people, where the military provided hotline numbers for the people to call or text to, in case of any suspicion activity. Similarly, local barangays officials are also known to exchange personal cellular phone numbers with military personnel.

If Zamboanga City provides the rear for the military, it also constitutes the depth for the armed groups operating in at a more clandestine level. These include political activities by the CPP-NPA, and for the ASG and rogue elements or the MILF or MILF-posers, establishing the sub-contracting network for the kidnapping business. The city holds a sizable population and certain communities linked to the armed group through kinship and other associations provide a good source of recruits, supplies, and information. Thus the vastness of the city and concentration of people, allow members of the armed groups mobility over the city. Therefore, the military’s entry into population zones is supposed to serve as a deterrent and/or deny the enemy of moving freely within the population.

Nonetheless, it cannot be forgotten, that without any overt security concerns, the military are constrained from entering communities aside from conducting periodic patrols. In other words, the military cannot just enter a community without raising fear and suspicion from the residents. Consequently, to help soldiers extend their presence in the barangays, CMO is one way for them to enter communities without upsetting the people. By gaining the good will of the population, the soldiers can improve their mobility over the population, and thereby limit or deter armed elements from securing a vantage point against the soldiers in the populated depth of the battlespace.

7.4.5.3 Reaching the Effects

1. Winning hearts and minds: People

As military objectives are to secure their rear, and gain psychological advantage over the

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142 Maj. Ricky P. Bunayog (INF) Philippine Army, “The Raid of a CAA Detachment: Lessons learned, Foresight and Call to Action,” Army Journal, January –March 2007, pp. 1-4. In communist-influenced areas, the CPP-NPA is known to collude with local government officials and seek the support of the population in blocking the timely passage of intelligence concerning the NPA’s activities.

143 Exchange of cell numbers between military and barangays officials witnessed in Limpapa barangays. With better coordination between NGOS, city government, AFP, and village administrators, contact can be more easily made between these respective parties. Additionally, signs in the city which say “I-text Sarge mo” or “Text your sergeant”, solicit the cooperation of the public in the case of suspicious activity.

population against threat groups, this leaves us with the question, whether CMO has been able to reach their intended effects of producing good relations with the people to serve as a basis for cooperation. From the responses gathered in the city, in general, all parties interviewed had a favorable impression on the military’s community outreach programs. In particular, the beneficiaries themselves were almost uniform on their perceptions on the military. They expressed gratitude for the medicine, medical consultations, glasses, and community improvements made. While it appears that they are obligated to give positive responses to the military’s initiative, NGOs concur on the fact that they are genuinely appreciative.145

Before a further analysis can be made about these responses, it is important to note that these residents said they had never encountered or felt threatened by any threat group. At the same time, they had no contact with the military prior to CMO activities conducted in their barangays. Nevertheless, they said their image of the AFP had improved; suggesting that their initial perceptions were shaped by the military’s ill-reputed past. People who remember the soldiers from the 1970s Muslim separatist conflict, have expressed the soldiers are now more professional, well behaved, and disciplined.146 As a result, an increased interaction between the military and the people through social assistance, has at one level, narrowed the military-civilian divide from one of suspicion and indifference to one of familiarity and improved trust.

2. Impressions from Civilian Partners and Outside Opinion

Perspectives gathered from those groups that have partnered with the military or have observed the military’s actions over the last few years, have also expressed a positive view on the military’s CMO. The largest advantage brought up by both sides (the military and its civilian partners) is resource sharing. For a cash-strapped military, engaging in extensive CMO is beyond their budget, and collaboration with civilian agencies has helped overcome this.147 At the same time, NGOs have also benefited from more resources, especially from the U.S. forces, an assurance on their safety when traveling to security-compromised areas, transportation, and expertise in fields such as medicine and dentistry.148 This is in contrast with views from organizations outside of Zamboanga City who have had more experience or knowledge about military operations occurring in communist strongholds. For instance, a senior researcher at IBON Foundation, a non-profit research and education organization that has documented enforced disappearances and extra-judicial killings of leftist individuals under President Arroyo,149 takes a long and hard look at the AFP’s CMO program. Arnold Padilla says, “Once you put poverty reduction within a military framework, then the ultimate goal is not really poverty reduction, but the goal is to crush insurgency and in the process, you commit human rights violations.” He believes that the military should

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145 Prof. Edagar Araojo, Professor of Political Science, Western Mindanao University, interview with author, Western Mindanao University, July 31, 2009; Sr. Delgado, July 29, 2008.
not be engaging in community outreach programs because they are participants in an on-going war. His largest concern is that development money (including foreign aid) is channeled through the military, which defeats the purpose of poverty reduction, because it ultimately aids the military in fighting the war.\textsuperscript{150} Karapatan, a human rights organization, also shares his view. A spokeswoman for the organization also adds that the military should stay out of civilian affairs, because entering a community and working with village officials means that they are undermining the latter’s authority. Some officials she believes cooperate with the military out of fear. It is also serves as a cover for surveillance and intelligence gathering amongst the people. An example of this is in Negros, where there is an on-going war against the communist rebels. She strongly remarked that the military should stick to their roles of defense, and at most, extend assistance in the case of natural disasters.\textsuperscript{151}

NGO members interviewed in Zamboanga City, in contrast, take a more reconciliatory approach to the military. Their mandate is to involve all stakeholders, inclusive of the military to promote peace. CMO, they believe is a step forward in bridging the divide between the people and the military.\textsuperscript{152} Even Prof. Edgar Araojo, one of the founding members of the left-leaning party, Akbayan\textsuperscript{153} who was on the military’s order of battle (hit-list) during martial law, says it’s a welcome sight to witness the military engage in activities to help the people. He expresses that the “military is now doing double-time” through CMO to makeup for their past atrocities and gain credibility in the eyes of the people.\textsuperscript{154} Though these groups concur that activities related to socio-economic assistance, have very little impact on poverty alleviation,\textsuperscript{155} it’s symbolic that the AFP sees the “militarization” or a combat-centered approach is not the solution.\textsuperscript{156}

\textsuperscript{150} Arnold Padilla, senior researcher, Reality of Aid/Ibon Foundations, interview with the author, IBON office, Manila. Philippines, September 11, 2006.
\textsuperscript{151} Public Information Officer, Karapatan, interview with author, Citadel Inn, Manila, Philippines, July 24, 2008.
\textsuperscript{152} Fr. Calvo, July 28, 2008; Sr. Delgado, October 2, 2007.
\textsuperscript{153} Akbayan was established in 1988. It is a party-list group whose mandate is to help the marginalized and the poor. They are known to be “progressive” in the sense that they oppose both HR violations by the military and the CPP-NPA. Despite their track record in supporting measures for land-reform and other areas to help the disadvantaged, they are labeled as “fake socialists” by the far-left. Prof. Araojo, July 31, 2009.
\textsuperscript{154} Prof. Araojo, July 31, 2009.
\textsuperscript{155} “Ben,” local journalist, interview with author, Orchard Hotel, Zamboanga City, Philippines, October 2, 2007; Fr. Calvo, July 28, 2008; Sr. Delgado, July 29, 2008.
\textsuperscript{156} Failures in addressing poverty are attributed to the local government. Prof. Araojo points out that the city does not spread out the wealth evenly. The city he says is “awash with money” with more than P2 billion savings in banks. Nonetheless, they do not reach the poorest of the poor. Tax money is spent more on beautification projects or paving existing main roads and not on farm-to-market roads.” In particular Muslim enclaves are left out of the essential government services. They depend on foreign aid for basics such as water and electricity. The U.S. forces and U.S. aid agencies are the ones who provide the bulk of electrification, medical assistance, and infrastructure. See Al Jacinto, “Zambo Christians told to fight Muslim ancestral domain deal,” GMA News Online, August 3, 2008. Available at: http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/111170/news_regions/zambo-christians-told-to-fight-muslim-ancestral-domain-deal. Accessed December 10, 2012.
\textsuperscript{157} Fr. Calvo, July 28, 2008; Prof. Edgar Araojo, professso at Western Mindanao State University, interview with author, Baliwasan Central School, Baliwan, Zamboanga City, Philippines, October 25, 2010; Attorney Manual S. Mamaug MNSA, Regional Human Rights Director, Western Zamboanga regional office of the Human Rights Commission, interview with author, regional office, Zamboanga City, July 28, 2008.
This is not to say, the CMO program is without its criticism. While WestMinCom’s CMO seeks to improve the image of the soldier in the eyes of the people by making sure their soldiers “toe the line” in regards to discipline and conduct with civilians,\textsuperscript{157} the human rights (HR) aspect is treated differently by non-military circles in Zamboanga City. For instance, the regional HR director of the nation’s Commission on Human Rights professed, “HR violations by the military occur with or without CMO.” Though he did not downplay the significance of CMO programs to help the poor, it is a separate matter from the fact that the AFP was not aggressively pursuing convictions for their errant members.\textsuperscript{158} Though in 2007, the AFP established their first independent HR office to monitor HR cases and coordinate with the CMO office,\textsuperscript{159} it is still a small setup staffed with officers who are not trained to be HR workers.\textsuperscript{160} Though HR violations occur generally in remote and insurgent areas, media coverage of this continue to make people suspicious of the military. Ultimately, CMO has to compliment other aspects such as HR education for the soldiers. A CMO project just cannot be conducted and then allow a military bombing. Otherwise, it negates the soldiers’ efforts to win hearts and minds.\textsuperscript{161}

Another problem that CMO faces in the city is collusion between local government officials and the AFP. Before elections, local officials seek the cooperation of the AFP to conduct civic action in their constituency to win support.\textsuperscript{162} Yet another problem stems from the make-up of the Peace and Order Council (POC). The POC, which is chaired by the city mayor, is selective in the participation of NGOs. Those who do not see eye-to-eye with the mayor and are critical over his policies are deliberately shutout, making it less inclusive than what it appears to be.\textsuperscript{163}

More complaints are centered on the corruption within the AFP. The media came out with reports that certain members of the AFP were colluding with the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) through secret arms trading, which is paid for by the ASG with ransom money. Equally serious, were reports that the AFP informed the ASG in advance of a military operation, allowing the latter to escape.\textsuperscript{164} A journalist interviewed said there are stories circulating, which make some people suspect that the ASG does not even exist, but rather are a collection of armed groups run and supervised by the military.\textsuperscript{165} Though there is no clear-hand evidence on this, the spread of such rumors indicates that people are not wholly convinced of AFP’s integrity or at worst, see them as the roots of the violence.

Despite such criticism, at least within the operational area of Zamboanga City, civilians have

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\textsuperscript{157} Maj. Batara, October 3, 2007; Lt.. Col. Gregorio, October 29, 2010.
\textsuperscript{159} Upon its establishment, the AFP-HR office consisted of 5 officers and 9 enlisted personnel. 1st. Lt. Adelfo S. Marasigan, Philippine Army, interview with author, AFP-HR office, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Philippines, July 25, 2008.
\textsuperscript{160} Atty. Mamauag, July 28, 2008.
\textsuperscript{161} Prof. Araojo, July 31, 2009.
\textsuperscript{162} Prof. Araojo, October 25, 2010; Sr. Delgado, July 31, 2009.
\textsuperscript{163} Prof. Araojo, October 25, 2010.
\textsuperscript{165} Local journalist, interview with author, Zamboanga del Sur, Philippines, October 28, 2010.
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noted that the soldiers were behaving better, and CMO was a factor in building improved relations with the public. A symbolic as the AFP’s efforts are, there is a general consensus that the AFP is moving towards the right direction. In sum, the net effect of CMO’s objectives to win hearts and minds has allowed the AFP to interact more positively with the communities, and has broadened the relationship with NGOs, opening up further possibilities in the way the military can manage battlespace in the city.

3. Building Legitimacy through American Presence

The entry of American troops in the region and their involvement in CMO has contributed in the management of battlespace in Zamboanga City. One of the observations made through interviews with the CMO beneficiaries is that the American soldiers etched a strong impression on the minds of people. The first most likely reason is that the city does not enjoy a stream of foreign visitors nor has many foreign residents. Exposure to foreigners, especially from the West is a rarity. Another reason is that in some CMO missions, the Americans are visibly on the forefront, with the Filipino soldiers lingering in the back. This was especially evident in CMO activities that centered on school refurbishing and improvement. The children interviewed at Boalan elementary school, only remember seeing the American soldiers who joined them in fun-related activities during school hours. According to school administrators, the Filipino soldiers had no contact with the children, since their efforts were limited to working on building repairs during off-school hours.

At first glance, it seemingly appears to contradict the principles on having the AFP take lead in CMO projects. Yet, these impressions made by the people reveal the ongoing challenges the AFP faces in entering communities. The AFP is aware that they do not enjoy good relations with the public and even though CMO is a good way to initiate the contact, the people still regard AFP entry with suspicion. Therefore, by allowing the American soldiers enter first and conduct community assistance, it has helped reduce the tension and mistrust of the community, and thereby allowing the AFP to enter more smoothly. In other words, the U.S. forces have played a bridging role between the AFP with the community.

Upon further examination on why communities are more accepting of American soldiers than their Filipino counterparts, the underlying reason appears to lie in the perception that they belong to a third-party. Though they are not entirely perceived to be neutral, with some suspicions that the Americans have a hidden agenda of trying to establish a permanent foothold in the Southern Philippines, there is a

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170 Sr. Delgado, July 28, 2008;
172 Sr. Delgado July 27, 2009; Prof. Shariff M. Julabbi, Moro Islamic Liberations Front/Bangsamoro
general feeling that Americans have the effect of ensuring that the AFP toe the line. Even an American officer stated that he has never seen the AFP violating human rights.\textsuperscript{173}

It is also noted that since independence, American soldiers have not been deployed for combat in the Philippines. Even though antagonistic relations with the Philippine public because apparent with rape cases involving American soldiers,\textsuperscript{174} and in communist strongholds, the communists air views that American military presence is unacceptable,\textsuperscript{175} Western Mindanao has been relatively free of such attitudes namely because it has not traditionally held any U.S. bases and also, there is limited communist presence in the AOR of WesMinCom.

Another point that cannot be missed is that the Americans have been successful in cultivating their image as the friendly soldier, ready to help with the needs of the people. The Balikatan exercises in 2002 in particular helped the U.S. forces to secure this image with the public in the region. Furthermore, they have taken steps to prevent possible public backlash by staying out of combat and limiting their interaction with the locals through CMO. In other words, locals do not see soldiers when they are off-duty, because they are strictly prohibited from leaving their military compounds.\textsuperscript{176}

\section*{7.5 CMO in Basilan and Sulu}

As findings from Zamboanga City is shaped by its circumstances particular to a non-conflict area and its urban setting, a brief look is also made on areas in the AOR of WestMinCom where there are ongoing military operations. Basilan and Sulu were selected because they are the AFP’s focal point in their war against terror groups.

\subsection*{7.5.1 Basilan}

Basilan is an island province, which is just 53 km from Zamboanga city and it takes approximately 2 hours by ferry or one hour by high-speed boat from the city. The economy is largely dependent on agriculture and fisheries. As of 2010, the population of Basilan was at 408,520\textsuperscript{177} with the majority of the population consisting of Muslims at 65 per cent and Christians at 33 per cent. It has an aggregate land area of 1,379 square kilometers.\textsuperscript{178}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{173} Mujahideen Alliance, interview with author, Guiwan, Zamboanga City, October 4, 2007.
\textsuperscript{177} The Provincial Government of Basilan. Available at: http://www.basilan.gov.ph/index.php/land-area
\end{footnotesize}
Basilan has been referred to as the “microcosm” of Mindanao. It depicts all the complexities that the region has endured in its history of the marginalization of the Muslim people through Christian migrations, land-grabbing, and exploitation of resources by foreign corporation. The original settlers of the islands, a Muslim group called the Yakans, were largely displaced by invasions from neighboring Muslim group in Sulu, the Tausug, and Christians from Zamboanga peninsula that came to acquire land. Plantation-running by foreigners began during the American period. Even to this day, there are 15 large corporations, mostly run by foreigners, tapping into the rubber, coffee, and African palm that the island provides. In the 1950s, the Chinese began controlling the businesses and agriculture.179 While the Muslims are the majority group, 90 percent of the agriculturally productive lands are owned mostly by Christian residents in Isabela, the provincial capital located in the North.180 Consequently, the most developed portions of the island (inclusive of government services and infrastructure) are located on this portion of the island. The least developed areas are located on the Eastern and Southern portions of the island, where the majority of Muslims live.181

A Catholic priest who experienced living on the island in the early 1970s recalls that before martial law, there was no military presence and peace and order was basically enforced by a few Philippine National Police (PNP) detachments. When martial law was declared, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) started to take over villages and properties and at one point controlling 70 percent of the island. This led to the entry of the AFP and fighting erupted. “This was the worst period of militarization,” he comments. The AFP had to expand so quickly, that the frontlines were filling up with soldiers still in their late teens that were badly trained and some so scared they were crying. There were rampages, human rights violations, the killing and threatening of civilians, and villagers fleeing. Hatred towards the military was intense and ultimately the AFP lost their credibility in the eyes of the people.”182

After the peace agreement was signed with the MNLF in 1996, a radical spin-off of the group, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), was established on the island by Abdurajik Abubakar Janjalani, following his stint in the Afghan wars. It pulled parts of the island in pockets of lawlessness and terror. Even with the death of its leader in the late 1990s, Basilan remained the stronghold of the ASG, as they mutated into a loose network of criminal elements, bound more by financial gain than ideology, but still maintaining tenuous links with international jihadist groups such as Al Qaeda and the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). By 2000, Basilan harbored over a 1,000 ASG and JI, with some reports saying that 40 per cent of the 9/11 operatives having some form of links to the region.183

The ASG have molded their operations on a “water lily” strategy, which is based on the tenets of

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179 Father Calvo, July 28, 2008.
guerrilla warfare. At the core of it, is avoiding direct military contact, relying on knowledge over the battlespace to achieve mobility in both complex physical terrain and human terrain. Their attacks are based on a sophisticated form of concentration and dispersal. In recent years, they have settled into a mode of conducting kidnappings, and attacking security outposts and other civilian installations and ambushing soldiers and civilians alike. They are not only protected by population, either through a policy of attraction or coercion, but their links to elements of the MILF and MNLF, have provided them with refuge in their areas.184 While it was reported that international terror groups such as the Al Qaeda had a hand in their financing in the late 1990s, they now rely on generating their own funds through kidnapping and extortion. The latter is similar to the “revolutionary taxes” that the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA) imposes on local business and people. The ASG extracts such “taxes” from local businesses and plantation cooperatives.185

For the AFP, since the mid-1990s, operating in the core battlespace of the ASG has been a particularly complex one. In regards to the physical area, they are “the masters of the terrain” where they know their physical environs well enough to secure shelter and concealment.186 The ASG has a particularly “small landmass” in which they operate in but their knowledge of the triple-canopy jungles and forests, marshes, mountains, waterways, and plantations, have allowed them to survive countless military operations.187 The AFP has largely responded with pursuit operations. In the early 1990s, when the ASG began kidnappings, the AFP had to ferret out ASG positions to rescue hostages. The terrain concealed the location of the camps, and there was very little intelligence to work off of. Furthermore, the AFP was hampered by poor logistics and equipment such a night-vision goggles to secure physical mobility over the space.188

Additionally, the ASG enjoys some support from the population. Though their ideological-attraction is limited to a small segment of the population, they mostly maintain their influence over the population through coercion and financial lures. A number of ASG-affiliates are farmers-by-day


186 Bong Garcia, October 26, 2012.

187 This concept of space applied to the ASG battlespace is drawn from Maj. Tiernan’s observations on the MILF area of operations. He points out that unlike the CPP-NPA that is scatter across the country, the MILF is fighting for not just political control, but physical control over a “smaller landmass” which makes them very acquainted within the geographic boundaries that they work in. Thus, it gives the MILF operational advantage over the Philippine soldiers. Maj. Christopher E. Tiernan (USMC), “Revolution in the Philippines: Comparing the Communist and Muslim Insurgencies,” paper, Newport, RI: Naval War College, p. 14.

who are linked to the group through kinship or community-ties.189

Targeting the ASG has also been problematic because they share the battlespace with the MILF and the Misuari Breakaway Group (the rogue faction of the MNLF that remain belligerent), not to mention the foreign jihadist terrors cells, primarily the JI that are embedded to varying degrees in the respective groups’ strongholds. The island holds MILF camps, the largest being the 114th Base Command located in Al-Barka, a municipality on the east side of the island. Additionally, the MNLF are also known to have influence in 7 of Basilan’s barangays.190 Both U.S. forces and the AFP do not want to incite hostilities with the MNFL and MILF since these groups are considered to fall within the spectrum of insurgency with legitimate grievances and therefore present a politically negotiable alternative.191 While the MILF officially denies links to the ASG,192 all groups are allegedly linked to each other through its members who are sympathetic to the terrorist cause.193 In this aspect, the largest impediment to AFP operations are the MILF because have harbored the ASG in their bases, which are determined to be no-entry zones for the military.194 Major incidents unfolded when the AFP entered or neared MILF territory, in pursuit of the ASG, resulting in clashes between the AFP and the MILF in 2007 and 2011.195

As early as 2001, the AFP recognized that a military solution could not wipe out the ASG on Basilan and operations necessitated an integration of efforts by the local government and civilian agencies to promote better governance backed by political and legal reform, and socio-economic improvement.196 The military was also called upon to help create conditions for such endeavor through an improved provision of security and participating in socio-economic assistance to the people. On one hand, CMO was the means to help the government with the holistic approach, but on the other hand, it fell within the scope

193 Ibid., p. i.
195 In 2007, 23 Marines were killed and 14 of them beheaded in Al-Barka municipality in Basilan. The marines were on a mission to rescue a kidnapped Italian priest from the ASG when they entered the vicinity of the 114th MILF Base command. The pursuit operation ended in an intense battle between the soldiers and the ASG and members of the MILF. In October 2011, Special Forces soldiers operating in Al-Barka based on tips on the presence of the ASG and kidnap victims. There are conflicting reports on where the government forces were operating in. The AFP says they were 4 km away from the MILF camp, but the MILF say that the soldiers had entered their territory. As a result of the bloody encounter, 19 soldiers were killed and the MILF lost 5 men. Problems cited in both incidents were that the AFP did not follow procedures and failed to coordinate with the MILF before the operations against the ASG. Nevertheless, these incidents reflect the complexity of dealing with multiple threat groups in one battlespace. See Jojo Malig, “Al-Barka: How villagers killed Marines, Special Forces troops,” ABS-CBN news, October 19, 2011. Available at: http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/-depth/10/19/11/al-barka-how-villagers-killed-marines-special-forces-troops/ Accessed December 20, 2012.
196 Banlaoi, “Maritime Terrorism in Southeast Asia,” pp. 74-75. This falls under the Arroyo administration’s Strategy of the Holistic Approach (SHA).
of military operations which sought to reduce the uncertainties of the complex terrain\textsuperscript{197} and allow the AFP maneuver over a battlespace occupied by a mix of civilians and different armed groups, all requiring a different response.

The turning point came with the increased American presence in the region triggered by the September 11\textsuperscript{th} attacks, which played a large factor in the acceleration of CMO. In 2002, the American and Filipino forces on the island of Basilan held a military exercise. It was the operational constraints the Philippine government imposed on the U.S. forces that helped expand CMO. Furthermore, an assessment by the American-side also determined the underlying causes of insurgency was weak governance and lack of basic government services for the impoverished people, not to mention the lack of economic opportunity, which attracted young men to join or cooperate with the ASG.\textsuperscript{198}

**The Effects**

Balikatan 2002 is often referred to as a model for counterinsurgency. The ASG, by some reports was estimated to be as high as 1,000 as of 2002, but was reduced to the 200-400-range by 2005.\textsuperscript{199} Many of the key ASG leaders and operatives had been killed or captured, with 24 remaining at large by 2012. The success is attributed to the combined operations of the Philippine and American military.

In terms of basic military operations, intelligence gathering was greatly improved.\textsuperscript{200} From the American side, sophisticated grid coordinates provided to the AFP, helped the soldiers locate ASG lairs in the triple-canopy jungle areas.\textsuperscript{201} The United States has also shared their inventory of unmanned spy planes and smart bombs to help the AFP direct precision attacks.\textsuperscript{202}

Nonetheless, much of the success could not have been achieved without CMO. Concerning activities in dealing with the human terrain, much more emphasis was placed on outreach programs which have helped the communities warm up to the presence of the military in their communities.\textsuperscript{203} Human intelligence became forthcoming as residents began to alert the AFP and U.S. forces of rebel and lawless activities.\textsuperscript{204} For instance at the end of July 2008, an attack by MILF elements in Basilan was preempted when community members alerted the PNP and the AFP. This resulted in the dispersal of these armed men.\textsuperscript{205}

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\item[197] Bong Garcia, October 25, 2010.
\item[204] Lt. Cnmdr. Fred Kuebler (JSTOF-P), October 3, 2007.
\item[205] Al Jacinto, local journalist, interview with author, Zamboanga City, Philippines, July 30, 2008.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Success from Balikatan 2002 has also helped paved way for the active participation of local government units. By the time CMO was institutionalized, local government officials have openly welcomed the entry of the military in their jurisdictions and furthermore, have passed unanimous resolutions supporting the deployment of US forces. For instance in the city of Lamitan, Mayor Roderick Furigay expressed that he approves of military interventions, provided that it is related to improving security and conducting development projects. Contributing to this positive reception was that the military always works through the local government, i.e. the Peace and Order Council and align themselves with their internal defense and development plan. The military are also respectful to the wishes of the council of elders, or the non-elected traditional leaders, and listen to their recommendations as well. He added that both the AFP and U.S. forces have contributed to the island. With the AFP, he said they have increased their presence positively in communities through medical and dental civic action and livelihood projects. He recognized that the culmination of their activities has helped improve the AFP’s image. He also noted that the U.S. forces were also constructive in helping the people with their large infrastructure projects such as the construction of farm-to-market roads and the rebuilding of dilapidated schools.

These developments have worked in favor for the AFP in entering both the physical and psychological depth of the battlespace. Prior to American entry, the AFP had a very poor relationship with the populace. With the American soldiers providing the bulk of the CMO resources, it has been easier for the AFP to engage in CMO. Furthermore, the American presence, as was similarly noted in Zamboanga City, became a factor in easing the local people’s suspicions on the Philippine military and thereby allowing the AFP to gradually win back some trust. Development projects were also viewed as a success in penetrating the physical depth of the battlespace. This is exemplified in the construction of the circumferential road, an all-weather road extending some 135 km, encircling the entire island. It is funded both by the Saudi Fund for Development and the Philippine government through its DPWH. As of 2008, 3 AFP engineering battalions: the Naval Construction Brigade, Air Force Engineering Battalion and Army Engineer Battalion have contributed to building and protecting segments of the road. The U.S.

207 City of Lamitan is the second most populated area in the region after the capital, Isabel, holding 20.1 percent of the provincial total. Lamitan has a population of 82,074. The religious make-up is 55 percent Christians and 40-45 percent Muslims. Lamitan is the center of trade and commerce for this part of the island.
208 Mayor Roderick Furigay, Lamitan City mayor, interview with author, Lamitan City Hall, Maganda Barnagay, Basilan, Philippines, October 26, 2010.
211 The Saudi Fund for Development loaned the Philippine government 20million USD in 2005.
212 Major Gamal Hayudini, Civil Relations officer, interview with author, CRS-AFP office, Camp Navarro,
forces have also provided their engineers from their Naval Construction Task Force to work on its rehabilitation and construction. According to an AFP civil relations official, farmers have benefited from the road because it has allowed them to bring fresh produce to markets in a timely manner and reduce travel time.

The road represents the fundamentals of CMO because it not only won over the population and subsequently demoralized the ASG, but it has speeded up the transport of troops to ASG battle zones. In fact these effects were so significant that the ASG, concerned about the debilitating effects of the road on their ability to continue their operations, began to harass private contractors working on road construction.

Another contributing factor of CMO was that it became easier for the military to maintain some sort of presence within the Muslims communities and in populated areas surrounding Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) camps. The MILF, unlike the ASG do not object to the developmental initiatives of the AFP and welcome them. In fact the positive feedback that these projects received from the people, prompted the MILF to create their own CMO or community outreach programs in Central Mindanao. They too recognized that winning hearts and minds were just as important in promoting their legitimacy. As Col. Gregario remarked, like the ASG, the MILF had to give back something to the community by “cultivating a Robin Hood image.” If the ASG attracted people with cash, the MILF also had to add development on top of their ideology.

While the net effect of the military’s CMO activities in Basilan is positive, the downsides cannot be ignored. The first is sustainability. The AFP heavily depends on the U.S. forces for the numerous CMO projects, depending on their resources and capabilities, not to mention the indirect support they get for core military operations such as training and equipment. During the Balikatan exercises in 2002, the influx of U.S. forces has helped reduce the number of ASG and improve security on the island temporarily, but this could not be sustained at the levels they hoped for. Col. Tylor Wilson explains what happened. He said that with the large number of U.S. forces (1,300 U.S. troops including 160 special operations forces), the ASG was pushed out. Determined a success, most of the U.S. troops pulled out, leaving a vacuum. With the people still not having socio-economic development, it was easy for the ASG to return. Furthermore, the Philippine forces did not have enough fuel, ammunition, equipment, and logistical capabilities to mobilize

WestMinCom, Zamboanga City, Philippines, July 29, 2012.
Bong Garcia, interview with author, Basilan, Philippines, October 26, 2010
faster; it was difficult for them to sustain the effects of the Balikatan exercise.219

NGOs working on the grassroot-level in Basilan are more openly critical about the military’s CMO projects in Basilan in contrast with those in Zamboanga City, which leads to the second problem that concerns its limitations in tackling the deeper roots of the security, governance, and socio-economic problems. The endless cycle of violence on the island has made the people inherently suspicious of the military. They still see the government forces working in the interests of the central government and Christians. According to a NGO worker on the island, people are generally afraid of people with guns, be it the ASG or the AFP or the militia. A commonly heard complaint about the military, which is not restricted to Basilan, but to other areas that constitute the MILF strongholds, is that the AFP does not do enough to intervene on the behalf of the people during a military operation. Armed confrontations leave hundreds of people displaced and the destruction that accompanies military operations makes it difficult for people to return to their old lives. Therefore, her take on CMO is that it should be geared more towards protecting the people during ongoing military operations, and provide them with relief and rehabilitation in the aftermath.220

In regards to the developmental effects of CMO in alleviating the conditions of the poor, she feels that they are only for the short-term, and does not address examine the deeper dynamics (politics and socio-economics) that traps people in poverty and exacerbates the already volatile situation. The NGO worker remarked that the best indicator of progress in Basilan is not military statistics of body counts but the presence of an effective and credible local government. For this to be realized, it is the government not the military that has to step in to implement meaningful reform.221

Despite these drawbacks, it was pointed out, NGOs see Basilan as the first place in the region where the AFP has developed a concrete partnership with NGOs. This relationship has been beneficial because one it has allowed NGOs to gain access to remote and dangerous areas, and two, it has set a path for the military to involve themselves as one of the stakeholders for peace. While the change has not been sweeping, they observe that the new paradigm WesMinCom operates under, has changed the mindset of soldiers from battle-seekers to demonstrate more concern for the people.222

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220 Sr. Delgado July 27, 2009; Anonymous member of a Basilan-based NGO, interview with the author, PAZ office, Zamboanga City, Philippines, July 27, 2009. The AFP Headquarters on the other hand say an inherent part of CMO is to help internally displaced people (IDP). Gen. Sealeana explains that “we do help to alleviate the suffering of these people. We help them by transport, telling them where to go and not to go, and sharing food, medicine, resources, etc. Some people cannot return, so we keep them in IDP camps. That’s where relief agencies come in. The military helps with the security and protects people in these areas.” Gen. Sealana, August 3, 2009.
222 Sr. Emma; Anonymous member of a Basilan-based NGO, interview with the author, PAZ office, Zamboanga City, Philippines, July 27, 2009. The AFP also says Basilan and additionally Sulu, where the soldiers were able to develop interagency coordination and understand that support from the LGUs and NGOs were indispensable in bringing peace. Lieut. Col. Regencia, October 8, 2007.
7.5.2 Sulu

The success or at least the initial success of the Basilan model, led the combined forces to apply the same model in Sulu. This region was formally the stronghold of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), but its remnants are known to have presence in 12 of its barangays. But military operations currently are geared towards the ASG.

Sulu is a province located further Southwest of Basilan. The distance from Zamboanga City to Sulu’s provincial capital, Jolo is 150km. Its economy is mostly agricultural. The dominant Muslim ethno-linguist group is the Tausug, which is the ethnic group that the MNLF is composed of. In 2006, the poverty incidence of Sulu was at 46.5 percent, which is almost double the national average at 26.9 per cent and ranks no. 14 among the top 20 poorest provinces. Only 59 percent of the barangays have electricity. The literacy rate is 61.72 percent. Out of the 410 barangays, there are 119 barangays without any schools.

The Balikatan exercises have helped flush out large elements of the ASG and some JI members from Basilan but at the same time, the ASG has shifted its operations to Sulu. The AFP and U.S. forces therefore turned their attention to this island chain. But approaching this new area posed different challenges. The main being, the sentiment of the population towards the Americans was more sensitive, stemming from the bloody operations that the Americans conducted in the region during the American colonial period. At the same time, perceptions towards the AFP was not much better since the area was also the scene of heavy fighting between the MNLF and the government forces during the 1970s.

The people’s reception of the American forces is a complex one. It cannot be denied that the Americans have the strongest impact on the people, primarily because little is known about other countries. The United States have left a strong imprint from the colonial times, commonwealth period, and the entry of their plantation businesses. Before the war in the early 1970s, the Americans had their peace corps stationed in Sulu. On one hand “There is a fawning awe but at the same time they repel the Americans.” Socio-economic assistance is for the most part appreciated by the people. Nevertheless, suspicions persist that the Americans have a self-serving agenda. NGOs articulating these views stem from the concern that the Americans are trying to “buy off people” for the purpose of establishing permanent foothold in the Mindanao region. Additionally there is an apprehension that the Americans have a vested interest in

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225 National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB), 2006.


227 Hastings and Mortela, “The Strategy-Legitimacy Paradigm,” pp.79-80; 82

228 Freelance journalist and former consultant to the government during the Sipadan hostage crisis, interview with author, Orchard Hotel, Zamboanga City, Philippines, October 2, 2007.

229 Sr. Delgado, July 31, 2009; Prof. Edgar Araojo, July 31, 2009; Prof. Shariff M. Julabbi, Moro Islamic Liberations Front/Bangsamoro Mujahideen Alliance, interview with author, Guiwan, Zamboanga City, October 4, 2007.
exploiting business opportunities in the resource-rich region.\textsuperscript{231}

As these sentiments were especially pronounced in Sulu, the initial American contingent sent was smaller and began with a focus on CMO activities to break down suspicions from the people.\textsuperscript{232}

Though initially the people were wary of the military, it was the local government that helped pave way for the AFP and American forces to enter. The former provincial governor, Benjamin T. Loong, well aware of their track record in Basilan, sought their assistance, seeing CMO as a means to help alleviate poverty and prevent people from being recruited by the terrorists.\textsuperscript{233} His successor, Gov. Abdusakar Tan who was elected in 2007, also supports the AFP and U.S force presence. Their entry has opened up more opportunities with the presence of foreign assistance such as from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Australian Agency for International Development (AUSAID), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and the European Union (EU) development agency. He comments that the security situation has much improved and violence has been much reduced. The AFP has also left a favorable impression on the people in their efforts to organize CMO in their communities.\textsuperscript{234} The AFP and U.S. forces jointly worked on road projects, water improvement facilities, construction of Area Coordinating Centers (ACCs), building improvements on mosques and schools.\textsuperscript{235} A change was also noted in the attitudes of the people towards the military. Before the influx of CMO, people were more aloof and distant in their dealings with the military. But now more citizens are cooperating with both forces.\textsuperscript{236} In one such incident, a renegade MNLF rebel, Ustadz Hubier Malik who was known to team up with the ASG, attacked an AFP camp containing American soldiers in February 2007. Initially the people had supported Malik, but fed up with the violence, two months later, when he attacked a Marine detachment, the people began supporting the AFP and U.S. forces by distancing themselves from Malik.\textsuperscript{237}

In fact the success of CMO in Sulu in helping the military step up pressure on renegade MNLF commanders and capturing key ASG personnel and armaments has played a significant factor in shifting the bulk of WestMinCom’s operations to CMO. In 2009, when Gen. Benjamin Dolorfino took the helm of the area command, he declared that the military in the AOR of WestMinCom would work under the paradigm of 80 percent CMO and 20 percent combat.\textsuperscript{238} Dolorfino states that the turning point for CMO in

\textsuperscript{231} Prof. Edgar Araojo, July 31, 2009.
\textsuperscript{232} Hastings and Mortela, “The Strategy-Legitimacy Paradigm,” pp. 79-80; 82
\textsuperscript{233} Hastings and Mortela, “The Strategy-Legitimacy Paradigm,” p. 78; “Welcome to Sulu,” Facebook. Available at:
\textsuperscript{234} Governor Abdusakur Tan, interview with author, Tan residence in Zamboanga City, Philippines, July 30, 2008.
\textsuperscript{236} Governor Abdusakur Tan, interview with author, Tan residence in Zamboanga City, Philippines, July 30, 2008.
\textsuperscript{237} Lt. Cmdr. Fred Kuebler, (JSOTF-P), October 3, 2007; “Philippine Military Put Up P1-M bounty for MNLF Commander Ustadz Habier Malik in Sulu,” AJLPP-USA, April 18, 2007. Available at:
the AOR of WestMinCom from the AFP-side can be attributed to the work of Maj. Gen. Juancho Sabban, then-commander of Joint Task Force Comet (February 28, 2007 to July 13, 2009). The task force were comprised mostly of Marines and tasked to oversee counter-offensive operations in Jolo, Sulu. Sabban’s method was based on relentlessly pursuing the ASG and simultaneously integrating CMO with other military operations.  

From what has been gathered, Maj. Gen. Sabban’s methodology of striking the balance between CMO and combat, has improved the ability of the soldiers to maneuver in the depth of the enemy battlespace through CMO. Sabban, in partnership with his American counterpart, Task Force Sulu, was able to gain the people’s cooperation of hunting down the ASG. The socio-economic projects implemented by both militaries helped improved the standing of the AFP in the eyes of the local populace. In return, the population became cooperative in sharing information about the location and activities of the ASG. Thus, it was reported that the ASG was being effectively cut off from the population, and thereby making it exceedingly difficult for them to even access the basics such as food and water. Furthermore, with the disclosure of their whereabouts, the ASG could not move with the same mobility over the battlespace. Consequently, Sabban was accredited for the neutralization of 7 ASG sub-leaders, the apprehension of its 23 members and supporters, and the surrender of 5 ASGs and 1 MILF rogue member, not to mention the capturing of arms and explosive.

The AFP with the help of its U.S. counterparts was in fact, applying the principles of maneuver. Considerable weight was placed CMO because these activities helped shape the battlespace in favor of the AFP. By securing the support of the people, the AFP was able to seize vantage points over the enemy


Maj. Gen. Dolorfino, interview conducted in place of the author by Bong Garcia, responds to questions e-mailed to author on August 20, 2009. In a report produced by the AFP, “Major General Juancho M. Sabban 0-7709,” July 7, 2009, from the period of February 2008 to July 17, 2009, Gen. Sabban oversaw the completion of 14 Area Coordination Centers (ACCs), initiated livelihood projects such as livestock raising, seaweed cultivation, and cassava farming in collaboration with the business sector, completed 22 water system projects, constructed 57 water well, renovated 47 Madrasa mosques and school buildings, initiated 150km of farm-to-market roads, and other CMO projects over 128 occasions for the benefit of the population. Maj. Gen. Sabban also led a task force in Basilan earlier, and combined CMO and offensives targeting the ASG.

General Sabban is quoted as follows: “I have told my commanders that all military operations should be intelligence-driven and surgical. How do we do this? Through intelligence enhanced by civil-military operations. We do civil-military operations to get people onto our side. More people on your side will produce more and better intelligence, and if you have better intelligence you'll have more successful operations that are precise and surgical and that don't hurt innocent civilians. Thus we will get more support from the people and you will be denying the enemy resources and space to operate. People will drive them from their own areas. So now their space is getting smaller and smaller, until we can pinpoint them with information coming from the people themselves.” See Max Boot, Jean J. Kirkpatrick, and Richard Bennet, “Treading Softly in the Philippines,” Weekly Standard, Vol. 014, Issue 6. Available at: http://www.cfr.org/philippines/treading-softly-philippines/p18079. Accessed November 13, 2012.

Task Force Sulu is one of the three subordinate regional task forces under JSOTF-P, which operates in Mindanao in partnership with the AFP. It is headquartered in Based at Camp Bautista, Jolo Island, Sulu Province.


especially in gaining intelligence to launch precision or surgical operations.\textsuperscript{244} Still, the increased role of CMO did not mean a letup in the tempo of combat operations. In fact they were intensified as major offensives against the ASG continued, in pursuing the goal of completely eradicating them.\textsuperscript{245}

7.5.3 An Analysis on Basilan and Sulu

An analysis on military operations that has transpired on the islands of Basilan and Sulu points out to a campaign strategy known as “gradual constriction.” Its fundamentals lie in gaining mobile parity with the opposing force through a series of small-unit action, improved intelligence, and securing the human terrain. Once the counterinsurgent begins to gain mobility, the insurgent is gradually denied of their room to maneuver over the battlespace, and ultimately lose their freedom of action.\textsuperscript{246} It is an adaptation of what has been developed by Special Operation Teams (SOTs) against the communist strongholds that involved the use of CMO to remove communist control over the villages incrementally, and gradually tightening the ring of encirclement around the enemy strongholds.

In the case of Basilan and Sulu, the combined forces of the AFP and U.S. forces have increasingly constricted the ASG, with the success outcome of many of their CMO projects. An improved partnership with the local government units and civilian agencies has helped the military to tailor programs that better fit the needs of the target community. Consequently, the severance of ties between the population and the ASG has had the effect of flushing the ASG out of these settlements. With fewer areas that the ASG could freely operate in, it has helped the military to pinpoint the enemy and apply precision-based and surgical strikes.\textsuperscript{247}

In both these cases, the AFP was effectively able to use CMO as a form of maneuver to penetrate the depth of the battlespace. At a tactical level, CMO operations on the ground had the effect of not so much spurring development, but reaching military objectives in changing the perceptions of the people. At the operational level, the successful sequencing of these actions in conjunction with security operations shaped the battlespace so that it denied the ASG of their original vantage points. A reflection on the activities that transpired in these provinces, revealed that the AFP’s efforts of institutionalizing CMO has helped the AFP to effectively use lessons from its past and adapt CMO to the contemporary security environment.

7.6 Summary

Chapter seven uses a case study to provide insight on how CMO has transpired on the ground upon institutionalization and whether institutionalization has helped the AFP absorb lessons from its past in

\textsuperscript{244} Col. Mitra, October 27, 2010.
helping the soldiers bolster COIN operations.

In drawing together the findings, it can be determined that at least within the AOR of WestMinCom, institutionalization has one, helped propagate CMO’s principles to the military audience. This was largely reflected in the perceptions of the beneficiaries and civilian partners who have noted the overall improvement in troop behavior. It shows that the command has been quite successful in transmitting through the chain of command, that proper conduct towards the people is important in achieving mission success. From another level of understanding, it can be said that some of the best practices stemming from the Magsaysay era, where the importance of the left-hand approach was instilled in the minds of the soldiers, was more effectively replicated than in any other period in AFP history.

Two, findings from both conflict and non-conflict areas brought to light that CMO was not simply about doing “good works” for the sake of “good works.” These activities were carefully calibrated to manage battlespace. In effect, the plan and implementation of CMO was based on the tenets of maneuver, where soldiers were able secure mobility and presence over the human terrain. In the city, this has worked as a deterrent and in conflict areas; it has helped to constrict the space the threat groups could operate in by winning over the communities. And these ideas have been drawn from the “Campaign of Gradual Constriction” developed during the Corazon Aquino administration.

And third, an unexpected factor came from the entry of the U.S. forces. The Philippine government and the United States were able to set strict terms for their role, which has helped limit public backlash. Their efforts on the ground, mainly through CMO have in turn boosted the AFP’s capabilities in reaching more communities. In effect, the AFP was adept in making use of American presence to facilitate their entry into communities.

In sum, a basic overview on the development of CMO in Western Mindanao has reinforced the view that institutionalization has helped laid down the groundwork for an improved application of CMO.
Chapter 8. Conclusion and Findings

8.1 Re-examining the Objectives

The central objectives of the thesis were one, tracing the evolvement of CMO in Philippine military history. At the same time, while tracking its development, the study sought to assess the role of CMO in the AFP’s campaigns. It aimed at looking into factors that brought about its success in bolstering COIN operations and vice versa. The conceptual framework used to study its effects on the ground drew theories from maneuver warfare where CMO plays a critical role in allowing soldiers to penetrate and subsequently manage the depth of insurgent battlespace. Two, as the institutionalization of CMO in 2006 was considered to mark a new turning point for its operations, a case study was used to determine whether the event has been successful in internalizing its past lessons and laying down the groundwork for an improved application of CMO.

8.2 Summarizing Findings

8.2.1 Historical Analysis: Tracing CMO’s Development

The history of CMO dates back to the American colonial period. American soldiers used civic action to legitimize colonial control over the Philippines and facilitate military operations by winning over the population. In the process, native auxiliary forces became acquainted to such practices. These forces consisted of Filipino soldiers that joined the officer corps of the newly established Philippine Army in 1936. Therefore, it was no coincidence that the type of civic action work carried out later drew from these experiences. In the post-independence era, Secretary of National Defense, Ramon Magsaysay developed the left-hand approach (friendly persuasion through CMO) and the right-hand approach (lethal force), which remain the guiding principles for internal security operations today. Under President Ferdinand Marcos, soldiers became exposed to extra-military activities to unprecedented levels. At this stage, CMO was largely shaped by a developmental orientation that continues to characterize an aspect of current CMO. Nonetheless, in the last years of his regime, CMO switched gears and became more focused on maximizing its utility in COIN operations. A clear-hold-consolidate-develop methodology was established in order to sustain military gains. By promoting the entry of government agencies with the assistance of CMO in an insurgent-cleared area, it was hoped that communities would not revert back to insurgent control. Though largely ineffective because of declining military capabilities and the poor legitimacy of the government, the idea was still carried over to succeeding generations. Under the administration of Corazon Aquino, further improvisation on CMO was made to deal more effectively in the remote strongholds of the communists. Here, CMO was geared towards “mirroring” the activities of the communists. These tactics have been preserved within the continuing existence of the Special Operations Teams (SOT), organized to penetrate the depth of communist-controlled areas. By the time the AFP came out with its first doctrine in 2006, operational principles and practices of these periods have been revived and incorporated within its lines of operation.

A point that can be overlooked when examining its history is that CMO did not emerge from the context of conventional war. Rather, it was developed in response to guerrillas that were fighting a mobile
For the AFP, their advantage in conventional capabilities could not obtain results against an enemy that prioritized freedom of movement over defending a fixed territory. In particular, the population was a significant enabler for the insurgents to survive and sustain their military operations; and the group that was most adept in mobilizing the population was the communist armed movement. Thereupon, the AFP developed CMO in response to the way the communists managed the populated depth of the battlespace. It was only at the turn of the millennium, when various Muslim armed groups began to shift to mobile warfare, that CMO was modified to match this theater.

8.2.2 Historical Analysis: Contributing Factors behind CMO Success

Successful Factors

In assessing CMO in its history, the first and foremost factor behind the cases where it demonstrated the most success came with strong leadership (civilian and/or military). Good leadership has a combination of different elements. The first element lies in the ability of the leader to demonstrate political will. Even though, in an insurgency in the Philippines, the AFP is used as an “instrument for securing the support of their people for their government,” it has to be backed by strong intent by the government. This intent or will is demonstrated by the leader mobilizing the nation’s resources to fight the threat group, tackle the roots of armed dissent by instituting reform, and if threat groups are considered to have legitimate grievances, promote a political solution to the conflict. Without political will, it is far more challenging to implement CMO effectively or even have any of its success registered at the operational and tactical levels reverberate to the strategic level. This problem was especially pronounced in the last years of Marcos’ reign. Though a COIN plan with CMO as its central fixture was developed, Marcos did not have the political will to devote the nation’s resources accordingly. In contrast, the periods that were marked with strong political will came from the American and the Magsaysay Period. Civic action did help improve the legitimacy of American control over the Philippine Islands. It was largely successful because the colonial power assured the people through action that they were preparing the Philippines for eventual statehood. American soldiers working on civic action projects were on in the forefront in demonstrating government intentions in their civic action projects. The left-hand approach under Magsaysay was also successful because it was backed by government intent to alleviate the lives of the agrarian poor.

Another element in determining good leadership is having a sound understanding of military affairs, especially in comprehending the complexities of waging COIN warfare. Interestingly enough, even if the civilian executive did not have such expertise, it was important that they appoint qualified people to military leadership positions. Those examples are found in instances when President Quirino appointed Magsaysay as Secretary of National Defense and when President Aquino, appointed Ramos as Chief of Staff, and later as Secretary of National Defense. The significance in having qualified leaders to oversee military operations is one, ensuring the military is behind the civilian government. This is particularly important in the context of the Philippines since the military has been prone to step out of the boundaries of

1 Valeriano and Bohannan, *Counter-Guerrilla Operations*, p. 190.
civilian control when the executive was perceived to be inept or weak. Two, something seen as abstract and falling outside of the usual remit of military responsibilities which needed a leader that could propagate the validity of CMO in a top-down approach.

Strong leadership is followed by the second factor, which lies in its implementation. From the findings, CMO achieved the most success when it was incorporated into the military campaign based on the principles of warfare. An understanding of its utility as a form of maneuver to operate in the depth of insurgent battlespace was evident in the American era, the Ramon Magsaysay period, and the Corazon Aquino administration. In all three periods, the military downsized their units and abandoned static defense in place of gaining mobility over the physical terrain. Nonetheless, maneuver limited in the physical sense could not have achieved the same level of success without the population being taken into consideration. As the insurgents’ survival hinged on a sympathetic population, CMO was devised to deny the enemy their vantage points generated from population support. In the American period, constables were able to negate the armed groups’ ability to continue unhampered over the battlespace by initiating activities to foster friendly relations with the people. The people reciprocated with information regarding enemy movements. In the Magsaysay period, the left-hand approach had the psychological effect of dislodging the Huks from their pedestal of moral superiority over their base of support (the agrarian poor). Finally, during the Aquino administration, CMO was effectively used to deny the space (remote communities) in which the Communist Party of the Philippines – New People’s Army (CPP-NPA) could freely operate. This was a method where CMO played a key role in removing communist political infrastructure and filling the void with counter-organizations and jump-starting government services (See graph 8.1, graph 8.2, and graph 8.3 for the drop in CPP-NPA strength after CMO was integrated in the Campaign of Gradual Constriction in 1988).

The third factor is having qualified midlevel officers to implement CMO on the ground. This can either be achieved through one, CMO specialists that can guide commanders in their areas of responsibilities in the planning and execution of such operations or two, developing small unit leadership that has the capabilities to respond to the unique challenges of COIN and use CMO accordingly. In the former, Magsaysay had at his disposal 200 Civil Affairs officers to dispense advice to local commanders. In the latter, select but experienced COIN officers tackling a growing communist presence in the early 1980s, were able to absorb and understand the way the communists managed the battlespace and used lateral thinking to develop a type of CMO that could counter communist advantages over the rural population. It took into account that no single military operation (combat, intelligence, and CMO) could achieve effects without them being fused into a whole.

The fourth factor is avoiding as much as possible, the negative impact military operations has on the population. Even though, there is an undeniably a normative element to this approach, where soldiers are expected to follow rules of engagement and tend to humanitarian concerns, it also serves military interests. CMO is based on seeking a civilian response that denies the insurgents their source of power. Therefore, when the military uses indiscriminate firepower and engages in abusive behavior towards the people, as seen during the early phases of the Huk rebellion, Marcos period, and in the first few years of
both the Aquino and Arroyo administration, it only adds fuel to the insurgents’ cause.

The fifth factor involves civilian-military efforts. Cooperation with the civilian sector dramatically increased, inclusive of government agencies, NGOs, aid agencies, and the business sector under President Arroyo, but this is not entirely a new endeavor. The American period demonstrated a close relationship between the military and civilian authorities (inclusive of Filipino administrators) that helped stabilize American control. During Magsaysay’s tenure as Secretary of National Defense, he involved other government agencies in promoting socio-economic works. And in the Aquino administration, her efforts in drawing out the potential of NGOs to assist the welfare of the nation laid down the track for including NGOs in civil-military cooperation. Civilian partnership is a necessity for the following reasons: one, to avoid over-burdening the military with socio-economic tasks; two, civilian partners are better equipped to understand the needs of the population and advise the military accordingly; and three, to ensure a smooth transfer of responsibilities to the civilian sector after an area is stabilized; and finally, fighting an insurgency registers little success if it only serves one party’s interests. Rather, it has to be conducted in a combined effort that allows all stakeholders to take ownership of the problem.

**Graph 8.1: Estimated CPP-NPA Strength (1977-2011)**

see footnote.²

Graph 8.2: CPP-NPA Affected Barangays (1981-2011)³


³ Affected barangays are areas where the CPP-NPA has established influence through the organization of their own political units. Col. Roy Devesa, “An Assessment of the Philippine Counterinsurgency Operational Methodology,” MMAS thesis, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2005, p. 9. It is also important to note that “affected” can range from where the CPP-NPA have minimal influence to one where a CPP-NPA political structure has been established and operates like a shadow government. See Maj. Adolfo B. Espuela, Jr. “Examining the Capacity of the Philippine Army’s Enlisted Corps to Accomplish the Government’s Counterinsurgency Strategy: Sharpening the Tool,” MMAS theses. Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2008, p. 96.

Graph 8.3: CPP-NPA Guerrilla Fronts (1981-2011)5


A guerrilla front for the CPP-NPA covers a physical area, usually in remote areas that is located along provincial boundaries and forested and mountainous areas. In the fronts, there is a political and military organization. Col. Roy Devesa, “An Assessment of the Philippine Counterinsurgency Operational Methodology,” MMAS thesis, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2005, p. 9.

Delimiting Factors

In turning to the delimiting factors, CMO has also experienced major challenges in its implementation. The first is the military’s preference to conduct what they know best, which is relying on conventional fire power to produce immediate results. The second is, due to its abstract nature, CMO has presented a steep learning curve for the average soldier.

This begs the question: how these obstacles can be overcome? In the previous section, a list of factors contributing to its success in history was drawn up. While it appears good leadership from the top played a determining role in its successful outcome, they came with exceptional leadership. Having said that, not all administrations can produce leaders of that caliber. What has typically been seen in its history was that by the time the security situation has returned to a certain level of stability, these leaders have retired from the scene. Consequently, CMO was brushed aside, usually under the domain of developmental assistance. As it lacked the same recognition as other military operations, its lessons were not internalized and studied to the extent where they could be applied effectively when a situation called for it. Therefore, the AFP had to undergo a painful relearning process, and CMO was only adopted in earnest when conventional military methods failed to make inroads. Thus, CMO has had an uneven track record in its history, where the smooth transfer of its best practices was hampered because there was no doctrine or formalization of CMO.

A doctrine is critical for a military organization to preserve and internalize its lessons from the past and prepare for the future by subjecting CMO to intellectual rigor. It also ensures that the entire military audience has a common understanding on its principles and practices, which is supported by official guidelines and training. In other words, even though good leadership is a key factor in realizing effective COIN, the existence of a doctrine can assist the implementation of these operations. In this aspect, the thesis sees the 2006 institutionalization as a significant event for CMO.

8.2.3 Case Study Findings: CMO after Institutionalization in 2006

In what strongly suggests as attempts by the military establishment to deal with the issues listed in the preceding section, CMO was institutionalized for the first time in 2006. Generally speaking, one of the main catalysts in prompting its institutionalization came with President Arroyo’s security policy that called for a “holistic” approach to the insurgencies. At the same time she stepped-up military operations, she also encouraged the expansion of the left-hand approach or persuasive measures to target the roots of insurgencies. In close line with the president’s initiatives, the AFP built a COIN plan that included CMO as

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7 The American period produced stellar generals, one even frequenting the top 10 American generals’ list (Gen. John Pershing who was noted for his role as commander and governor of the Moro Provinces). Ramon Magsaysay was an excellent guerrilla leader during the Japanese occupation. He gained so much popularity during the Huk campaign that he went on to become the next president of the Philippines. Fidel Ramos was the first person to be promoted to a 5-star general. He also went on to become president and negotiated a peace agreement with the main Muslim separatist movement of this period.
an inseparable component of military action.

Against the backdrop of these events, the final question to this thesis was whether institutionalization has improved its overall implementation on the ground. A case study on Western Mindanao was used to probe for answers.

The main finding extracted from an in-depth look on its ground operations was that CMO drew its best lessons from its past military campaigns and implemented them within the scheme of maneuver warfare. CMO was carefully calibrated to help shape conditions in the insurgent depth, in particular the human terrain, for the purpose of securing positional advantages over the threat groups.

In the case of Western Mindanao, an examination was made on both non-conflict and conflict areas. In regards to the former, the research revealed that the AFP treated a relatively insurgent-free zone such as Zamboanga City, as an extension of the battlespace. In the city, CMO was utilized for the purpose of deterring the entry of threat groups in populated areas, which could potentially compromise the security of existing military bases. Moreover, it was to ensure that any sort of enticements by the threat groups would not influence the city dwellers. In the process, the AFP also made serious note that their ill-reputed past made them unwelcome in the communities. Therefore, CMO became a tool in making the first step to bridge the rift between themselves and the people. The demonstration of good will through community outreach programs has helped improve trust and has allowed the soldiers to maneuver in the populated portions of a non-conflict zone.

Concerning whether CMO has prevented the infiltration of the communities by threat groups is difficult to measure. For the most part, the security remains unchanged, signifying either CMO has helped prevent the armed movements from setting up a significant presence in Zamboanga City, or more simply, the presence of military bases in the area, has been sufficient in providing deterrence (see Graph 8.6).

In conflict areas such as Basilan and Sulu, CMO is fused with standard military operations to deny threat groups mobility over the battlespace and constrict them. What was applied in these provinces were the operational and tactical maneuvers developed in response to the communist threat in the late 1980s. CMO once again played a central role in denying the space in which the insurgents could move freely. CMO was geared towards winning the hearts and minds of the people for the purpose of flushing out armed elements in their communities and gaining intelligence from the residents. This form of cooperation has been instrumental in ferreting out obscure enemy positions hidden in jungle terrain and remote communities. Concurrently, human intelligence has also allowed the AFP to switch from directing wide-scale sweeps to surgical strikes on ASG concentrations. This has proved to be more resource-efficient, less destructive on civilians and their property, and effective in attacking core ASG fighters.8 Evidence also shows that CMO has helped to deny the ASG the freedom of movement, and thereby has effectively constricted the areas in which they could operate in freely.

The graph below (graph 8.4) shows the drop in ASG numbers. The downward trend begins in 2001. This can be imputed largely to the increased American presence and the culmination of the Balikatan

Exercise in 2002 in Basilan which has helped flush the ASG out of their original strongholds on the island. Continued and combined efforts by the AFP and U.S. forces have managed to keep the numbers down. The focal point of these efforts lay in CMO activities as a means to deny the ASG and other terror groups the operational environment that have allowed them to thrive which primarily stems from government neglect in areas to provide security and basic services to the people.

It is also important to note during this period, the AFP was intensifying efforts to institutionalize CMO, meaning these activities did not suddenly reappear with the entry of the Americans. In 2002, a CMO field manual for the Philippine Army had already been published. Furthermore, an assessment on existing AFP capabilities produced jointly by the Philippines and the United States revealed that CMO was one of the components that needed strengthening in (Philippine Defense Reform 2003). Therefore, it can be determined, that by the time Balikatan 2002 was launched, the AFP was already on track in attaching more importance to CMO.

**Graph 8.4:** Estimated ASG Strength (1993-2012)


The graph below shows the number of violent incidents in the areas researched for the case study. While violent incidents in Zamboanga City maintained a steady low, there has been a sharp drop in violent incidents starting from 2006 in Sulu. This has been attributed to the success of CMO in securing the cooperation of the people, especially in collecting intelligence about the ASG. In the case of Basilan, there has been a small rebound in numbers, as the AFP and U.S. forces have had difficulty in sustaining their gains from the Balikatan Exercises (2002) after the pullout of the troops. Nonetheless, the continued efforts by both militaries have managed to stave off the ASG and keep them within the 400-member range.

**Graph 8.5:** Frequency of Conflict-Related Violent Incidents in Zamboanga City, Basilan, and Sulu from January 2005 to August 2008.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location / Year</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zamboanga City</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basilan</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulu</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly enough, CMO has also helped the AFP to maneuver in the battlespace that has an assortment of threat groups, all requiring a different response. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has posed a different set of challenges especially since both the government and this armed group have been preparing the groundwork for a final peace agreement. As a result, it has complicated the military approach. Under the terms of the ceasefire, the AFP is not allowed to enter MILF camps even when pursuing the ASG. Nevertheless, it appears that CMO has provided the military with a method to work around this problem. The main method being that it has allowed the AFP to maintain some sort of presence in the vicinity surrounding MILF camps through CMO. By organizing outreach programs to the Muslim people, the extension of goodwill by the military was something that the MILF could not entirely brush off.

In other words, it demonstrated to the MILF, up to a certain degree, that the AFP was supporting the government’s efforts to bring forth a peaceful resolution to the Muslim aspirations. Graph 8.6 provides the number of armed skirmishes in the years leading up to a peace deal. Though it does not directly corroborate the theory that CMO was instrumental in reducing these armed encounters, as other factors, such as ceasefire mechanisms, international support in monitoring the peace process, and peace talks moving forward at the national level with the MILF, have played a bigger role; it does reflect an improving security situation. 2003 was the last incident in which the government forces launched an offensive on a MILF camp but it did not completely detract the two parties from re-launching peace talks. In the years that followed, though marred by periodic accusations of truce violations on both sides, the number of skirmishes declined dramatically until 2008. In this year, the MILF launched simultaneous attacks across Mindanao that left about 750,000 people displaced and nearly 400 dead on both sides. The trigger that led to this outbreak came when the Supreme Court declared a draft agreement between the MILF and the government as unconstitutional, basically stemming from its interpretation of the Muslim homeland. This led to renewed fighting. Nonetheless, despite such setbacks, both parties remained steadfast in pursuing peace, which finally led to a breakthrough in 2012 when an agreement on the framework of peace was signed. In sum, CMO registered some success in this aspect because it has helped the AFP to manage a battlespace with various threat groups, each requiring a different response and at the same time, demonstrate government intent in pursuing peace with a threat group seen to have legitimate grievances.

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10 This concerned the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA). This was an agreement, which was supposed to set the track for the signing of a final peace treaty with the MILF. The contention was over the clause that recognized the ancestral domain of the Muslim people. This angered local politicians since these domains included their lands recognizing the homeland for the Muslim people. See Group Asia Briefing No. 83, *The Philippines: The Collapse of Peace in Mindanao*, October 23, 2008; “Philippines: Government, Muslim rebels move closer to peace deal,” *IRIN, Humanitarian News and Analysis*, May 8, 2012. Available at: http://www.irinnews.org/Report/95419/PHILIPPINES-Government-Muslim-rebels-move-closer-to-peace-deal/ Accessed May 30, 2012.
The above findings reveal that institutionalization of CMO has helped the AFP to internalize lessons from its past in using CMO as a form of maneuver warfare, and improvising them to match the current realities of the battlespace.

Nonetheless, other factors cannot be overlooked, when considering its overall effect. The first is that the institutionalization process kicked in with President Arroyo’s declaration to end the insurgency problem using both the right-hand and the left-hand approach. She also helped promote the military-civilian partnership with an executive order (EO) to engage all government agencies in working in a concerted effort to re-establishing security in the nation. Mechanisms such as the Peace and Order Council, further helped establish a framework to involve multiple agencies (local government, government agencies, police, NGOs, and the military) in making decisions over local security concerns.

Another factor was the AFP leadership’s steps to promote its importance within its establishment. These have led to formal CMO guidelines for the soldiers, an expanded training course in the military curriculum, motivating soldiers in this field by giving promotions based on merit earned in this field, and securing increased funding (see table 8.1). By also turning CMO into an occupational specialty, military units in the chain of command (from headquarters down to the company-level) benefited from having CMO specialists assist them in organizing CMO activities.

Thus, the success of CMO operations in the Western Mindanao Command can be attributed to the factors listed above. Even though it would be far-fetched to say strategic victory is near, especially since the
country has passed its second deadline that it had set itself (for the complete eradication of all threat groups by 2010), military operations have experienced some localized success indicated by the gradual drop in enemy strength for all threat groups.\textsuperscript{11} There is also the argument that the effects of CMO cannot be felt overnight. It is not easy to measure within a short-time span, and numerical strengths can only reflect a trend. CMO is really directed towards seeking an attitudinal change, which is generally perceived to be more difficult to gauge, especially in determining its impact on deterring people from throwing in their support for the insurgents.\textsuperscript{12} Therefore, more time is needed to determine the full effects of CMO by following the outcome of government initiatives and military operations against threat groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8.1: Budget Appropriations for CMO and National Development 2003-2010 (Pesos)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total for 3 services as % of DND appropriations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DND total appropriations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### 8.3 Challenges and Limitations to CMO

#### 8.3.1 Operations on the Ground: Maneuvering over Human Terrain

One of the largest challenges in fighting guerrilla warfare from the side of the government forces is maneuvering over the populated depth of the insurgent battlespace. Insurgents blend in with civilians that inevitably invite military presence. Even if there are no overt clashes between the opposing forces, the mere presence of the military encroaches on the everyday space of the civilians. And when full-scale military

\textsuperscript{11} “AFP: Weaker NPA, ASG; MILF contained in 2010,” *ABS-CBN News*, December 31, 2010. Available at: [http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/nation/12/31/10/afp-weaker-npa-asg-milf-contained-2010](http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/nation/12/31/10/afp-weaker-npa-asg-milf-contained-2010). Accessed January 27, 2011. Despite the fact that Oplan Bantay Laya II did not reach government-set deadlines to eradicate the internal security problem by 2010, the AFP claim that all threat groups have been contained or have decreased to manageable numbers.

\textsuperscript{12} Col. Regencia, October 8, 2007.

In regards to the Muslim armed groups, military operations tend to culminate into large-scale military confrontations as the Muslim fighters fight to defend fixed positions. AFP operations are frequently accompanied by air strikes, bombings, and artillery bombardments. As a consequence, Mindanao suffers from a higher number of displacements than any other region. Between January 2012 and October 2012, conflict and other forms of violence have displaced a total of 164,228 people in Mindanao.\footnote{“At least 7,000 people remain displaced in Mindanao due to armed conflict and clan violence (9 November 2012),” Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, November 9, 2012. Available at: http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/%28httpEnvelopes%29/A01DB3AC980C9A22C125772600312329?OpenDocument. Accessed December 18, 2012.}

Having suffered from a cycle of military disruptions, the people cannot entirely be won over even with extensive CMO unless the AFP intervenes on behalf of the population during a military operation. These typically require protection, evacuation, and also rehabilitation in the post-conflict stage.

In dealing with the communist front, armed clashes tend to be shorter in duration since the insurgents engage in hit and run tactics. Though they do not evolve into large land battles, they are no less destructive. The AFP has often used “violent efforts…to undermine or discourage civilian support for the NPA,”\footnote{“Uncounted Lives: Children, Women and Conflict in the Philippines,” pp. 34-35.} underlining the difficulty the AFP has in differentiating the core combatants from non-combatants. One such reason is because the insurgents are adept in blending in with the population. The second reason is that the AFP retains a fixed mindset on the “left,”\footnote{Prof. Edgar Araojo, faculty of political science, Western Mindanao University and member of party-list group, Akbayan, interview with author, Baliwasan Central School, Zamboanga City, Philippines, October 25, 2010. Hereafter cited as Araojo and date of interview.} where they “lump” together all left-leaning groups\footnote{Prof. Edgar Araojo, faculty of political science, Western Mindanao University and member of party-list group, Akbayan, interview with author, Western Mindanao State University, Zamboanga City, Philippines, July 31, 2009. Hereafter cited as Araojo and date of interview.} (peasant associations, labor groups, and student groups), and perceiving them to be interconnected with the armed component of the communist party.\footnote{“Uncounted Lives: Children, Women and Conflict in the Philippines,” p. 35; Spokeswoman for Karapatan, July 24, 2008.} A serious downside to the latter reason is that any individual or group suspected to have leftist-leaning could be subjected to harassment from the military, or even worse, experience detention, torture, and extrajudicial killings.\footnote{An IBON study criticized the AFP for not having directives in their field manuals or doctrines to help soldiers differentiate combatants from non-combatants “Uncounted Lives: Children, Women and Conflict in the Philippines,” p. 35.} Even an AFP official admits the difficulty of having people freely expressing left-leaning views. He said, “We as much as possible tell the people not
to get involved in the communist movement so that they do not get themselves caught in the danger.”

This leaves the AFP with the limited option of using information campaigns, a component of CMO, to dissuade people from getting involved in the communist movement.”

Another difficulty regarding the use of CMO in de-linking the people from the communists is competition. The communists have their own version of CMO, which has been instrumental in developing their support base. In a study produced by IBON Foundation, a non-profit development organization, it was revealed that women and children in certain communist-influenced zones, tended to favor the presence of armed groups despite the chances of attracting the AFP into their communities. The reason not only stems from perceptions that insurgents were far more disciplined and better behaved than the AFP, but because the communists took action in showing their genuine concern for the plight of the impoverished people. For instance, the CPP-NPA provided rudimentary medical services and livelihood assistance, helped vocalize the grievances of the poor, and shared similar sentiments in fighting exploitive practices by powerful businesses and landowners.

In contrast, the people view the AFP’s CMO as more self-serving than truly working for the interests of the people. As one researcher noted that the fundamental problem with the AFP’s CMO is that it is geared towards neutralizing the armed communist movement. As a result, the AFP’s CMO is perceived to be more disruptive than helpful. In one such case, residents in a remote locality in Mindoro, a traditional hotbed of armed communist activity, expressed distress over the AFP’s CMO activities. The dialogue or consultation meetings that the AFP set up were endless. To make things worse, attendance was taken. Relief goods were doled out but only under the condition that villagers submitted themselves to interviews conducted by the AFP, upon which they were questioned about whether they had any affiliations to the NPA. Other complaints that accompanied the AFP’s CMO projects were that the soldiers took food from community, demanded shelter, and delegated work to civilians, such as manning sentry posts.

Such problems were more visible during the first term of President Arroyo (2001-2006) when COIN operations were particularly intensive in communist strongholds and it highlighted many of the issues that the AFP attempted to clear up with the institutionalization of CMO. These involved exercising more sensitivity to civilians, improving discipline within the ranks, human rights awareness, and bringing their own supplies into communities so as not to antagonize relations with the people. Nonetheless, as recent as 2012, some problems were carried over. The AFP was still helping themselves to community resources, especially in using public faculties. Even though the AFP maintains that it strictly prohibits

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24 Ibid., pp. 157; 159.
25 Ibid., pp. 157; 178;
soldiers from encamping in public spaces such as schools and barangays halls, it has been reported from
time to time, that adherence to this directive has been spotty. For instance, soldiers under the pretext of
conducting structural repairs of a school were using its facilities as barracks during their deployment in
remote barangays.26

Despite attempts to deal with the challenges given in the previous paragraphs, the overall nature
of COIN alienates the population, since the military entry into a community is frequently associated with
trouble. This brings to light that CMO has to come hand in hand with the soldiers’ adherence to rules of
engagement, inclusive of human rights. Concurrently, it is also necessary for the government to
constructively deal with leftist opposition and their legitimate grievances, and not categorize them under
groups with extremist/revolutionary tendencies. Otherwise, under these circumstances, there are always
limitations imposed on the AFP in trying to shape people’s perceptions in the favor of the military and the
government.

8.3.2 Striking the Balance between Combat and Persuasive Measures

While the AFP has made efforts to make CMO an integral part of its COIN program by giving it
official recognition through institutionalization and increasing training modules for this particular operation,
it is still not without its opponents from military circles. In July 2012, an article titled “Militum Phasellus:
Developing an outlook of professionalism in the AFP”27 was published in The Air Force Way 2012, a
Philippine Air Force journal. In this un-authored article, a critical look is made on the current state of affairs
concerning the AFP’s approach to internal security. Without making any explicit references to President
Aquino’s Bayanihan strategy, an extension of former president, Arroyo’s COIN plan (Oplan Bantay Laya
II) that was designed to defeat insurgency with a stronger emphasis on CMO and development projects, it
laments this shift in operations has weakened the AFP’s “critical combat capabilities.” Resources that
should have gone into training and combat preparedness have been utilized to support the AFP’s secondary
function of supporting other government agencies. It states that soldiers now “perceive themselves as
policemen, relief workers, educators, builders, health care providers, politicians – everything but
war-fighters.” Tied into the problem of the military’s sub-standard combat abilities, the article also blames
that the very nature the COIN program inevitably places the AFP in civilian roles, largely due to the
inability of civilian agencies to perform their expected mandate.28

Available at: http://opinion.inquirer.net/27467/some-things-don%e2%80%99t-mix. Accessed April 25, 2012;
27 Articles concerning this Air Force journal submission have not been able to find the literal translation of
“Militum Phasellus.”
were distributed at the 65th anniversary of the Air Force. As the original could not be retrieved, the
summary of contents extracted from the following newspaper articles: Mario J. Mallari, “Role shift upsetting
military combat power – PAF paper,” The Daily Tribune, July 10, 2012. Available at:
http://www.tribune.net.ph/index.php/headlines/item/1356-role-shift-upsetting-military-combat-power-%E2%80
Detailed indices on the decline in combat capabilities were not offered in the article, but there are several incidents that reveal the complexity of striking the balance between friendly persuasive measures and combat. Soldiers conducting CMO in rural areas influenced by communists have been the frequent targets of attacks by the NPA. It is possible that when soldiers are not in combat-mode, they are easier to launch ambushes against. In March 2007, an army officer was killed in an encounter when the platoon he was traveling in was attacked en route to a remote area in Negros Occidental to conduct CMO. In October 2012, heavy fighting erupted in Compostela Valley (Mindanao) when the NPA fired upon a Peace and Development Team (PDT) conducting a dialogue with villagers. As a result, 7 soldiers and 2 civilians were wounded. In the same period, 4 more soldiers were killed in NPA attacks in Samar, when conducting CMO activities.

In response to the attention the article received, the AFP headquarters strongly defended its role in civilian functions, stating that it is within their mandate to serve people, which include helping the government deliver basic services. Moreover, it was stated that when the soldiers are not involved in combat, they should not “sit and remain idle” and that there is no better way for soldiers to make themselves busy but by helping the people.

From what can be gathered from the article, it appears the bulk of criticism is directed towards overburdening the AFP with developmental work. Once again, it brings to light the problems that CMO has repeatedly faced in its long history. Even with institutionalization, the non-combat aspects of the operation still make CMO contentious within the military. Its strong association with developmental work obscures its more complex function in COIN and underlines the remaining challenges in propagating its function and importance due to this mindset.

8.3.3 Translating the Effects of CMO into Strategic Success: the Peace Process

Another challenge in CMO-integrated military operations is making sure that it reverberates at the strategic level. CMO ultimately has to be linked coherently with national policies. Achieving success in an operational and tactical level can achieve some gains as a COIN measure, but it cannot be sustained...

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indefinitely without proper backing by government initiatives, especially since a final resolution to the conflict is difficult to achieve purely through military means. Achieving strategic defeat per se, involves many factors such as the nation’s commitment for peace (inclusive of workable mechanisms for peace talks and providing a political solution to those groups with legitimate grievances), improving governance, the efficient delivery of government services to the disaffected people, and security sector reform.

Therefore, along with military operations, a mutually reinforcing peace process is needed to reach a resolution with armed groups that have a legitimate cause. Concerning the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), prospects are more positive with the signing of the Framework Agreement, which sets the stage for the creation of a Bangsamoro region.

Nevertheless, the government still faces political and military obstacles in dealing with the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army. The CPP claims that they are operating on 100 guerrilla fronts, with plans to increase it to 180 by 2015. They have also expressed their determination to raise their armed fighters to the 25,000 levels. At the moment, they also claim that their fighters have the ability to move freely in 90 percent of the Philippines. The communist movement has dragged on for 44 years with no let up to the armed component of the struggle. While the integration of CMO in the ground-level in campaign plans (especially during Lambat Bitag I and II and Oplan Bantay Laya II) has reduced their numbers considerably, and recent arrests have been made of high-level NPA commanders with the cooperation of civilians, political talks have stalemated. In December 2012, informal peace talks were held in the Netherlands where both sides agreed to a 26-day nationwide Christmas ceasefire and scheduled talks for peace, human rights, land reform, and national industrialization. Nonetheless, the main sticking point appears to be that the government cannot give into the demands of the communist party, which seeks a power-sharing arrangement with the government.

8.4 Following Trends and Prospects for the Future

At the close of the investigation into CMO in 2010, it appeared that the military remained divided over the long-term retention of CMO. On the one hand, some military officers expressed that CMO will lose its relevancy once the internal security order is under control. On the other hand, other officers see retention on a permanent basis where CMO expertise can be used in overseas peacekeeping operations.

On June 2010, Benigno Aquino III assumed presidency. President Aquino’s approach to internal security problems did not depart far from his predecessor, where many of the concepts of integrating CMO

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with standard military operations remain in place. CMO still plays a role in shaping the battlespace through winning hearts and minds of the people, gaining intelligence, and catalyzing development, in order to achieve an end state of creating a physically and psychologically secure environment.\textsuperscript{38}

Nonetheless, to mark a difference with Arroyo, who sought to “make communities peaceful to spur development,” and peace was seen as part of the intermediary process to achieve development, Aquino has set his goals on achieving peace as the end-state, and the intermediary process to be measured through developmental progress. The new internal security plan named Bayanihan (national or communal spirit) has four key components:

1. Good governance
2. Delivery of basic services
3. Economic reconstruction and sustainable development
4. Security Sector Reform.\textsuperscript{39}

To put it another way, Aquino is trying to mark his difference from his predecessor, by shifting from a COIN-oriented approach to one that places more emphasis on mobilizing soldiers for peace and development activities.\textsuperscript{40} In the same year, Aquino assumed presidency, CMO evolved to guide soldiers in multiple sectors (See table below).

\textsuperscript{38} Subramunya Das.“Revisiting the Code Team Concept.” \textit{Army Troopers Magazine}, March 2011, p.27.
### Table 8.2: Whole Mission Approach – 6 Lines of Operations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combat 20%</th>
<th>Civil Military Operations 80%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Military operations to promote peace and order.</td>
<td>CMO to facilitate good governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMO to promote socio-economic well-being.</td>
<td>CMO to promote cultural cohesiveness and harmony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMO for sustainable environment</td>
<td>CMO for prompt delivery of truthful information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Military</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Socio-Economic</th>
<th>Cultural</th>
<th>Environmental</th>
<th>Informational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Misapplication of force results in collateral damage, displaced civilians, abuses, and HR violations.</td>
<td>-Poor governance</td>
<td>-Poverty</td>
<td>-Lack of cultural cohesion and harmony</td>
<td>-Dwindling Resources</td>
<td>-Ignorance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Corruption</td>
<td>-Lack of education</td>
<td>-No delivery of basic services</td>
<td>-Cultural responsibility</td>
<td>-Poor waste management</td>
<td>-Misinformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Absence of rule of law</td>
<td>-Ethnocentrism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Disinformation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The dimensions are numerous, demanding multiple roles from the soldier. It was stated in a press release that General Dolorfino wanted the AFP soldier to not only have skills in soldierly, but also “bridge leadership, facilitate good governance and socio-economic development,” and assume roles as “conflict manager, environmentalist and information specialist.” At the same time, it can also be discerned that these efforts would be conducted in close collaboration with other civilian agencies. CMO would be expanded to establish stronger collaborations with the local government units and other civilian agencies, in an act to involve all stakeholders in achieving peace.

The shift is open to several possible interpretations in the direction that CMO is headed. The first is that it may be a factor in the AFP’s transformation. Under the new administration of Aquino, the Philippine Army unveiled the Army Transformation Roadmap (ATR) that sets the strategic direction for the

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42 Major General Ben Mohammad Doloifino, interview conducted by Bong Garcia in place of author, response to questions e-mailed to author on August 20, 2009.
next 18 years. Instead of using the wording such as “the strategic defeat of insurgencies,” it uses slogans such as “winning the peace through economic development” underlining that the Army plans to transform with peacebuilding and peace-keeping at its core. In regards to its implications for the rest of the AFP, CMO is seen for its potential in allowing the military to contribute in the regional and/or international context, thus, paving way for its relevancy in international missions.

Having said that, a more realistic take on the trend leads to a second possible interpretation. With the easing of internal security threats, the AFP is ready to wean itself from its responsibilities in internal security operations, and move towards building its conventional capabilities. This has long been an elusive goal for the AFP, especially since it has always been occupied with the protracted internal security problems. In 2012, Chinese marine surveillance ships entered the waters around a disputed South China Sea shoal, ringing alarm bells for the Philippines. At the end of December 2012, the president signed into law a revised modernization act to help upgrade the capabilities of the military to defend the nation from external threats.

Based on these events, it is more likely that defense priorities related to external contingencies will outweigh AFP ideals to transform into a military with CMO playing a significant role. Some evidence pointing to this trend has been discovered in the AFP’s attempts to reduce their overall internal security obligations. For instance, the developmental work is gradually been transferred to military reservists and militia. On May 2012, the AFP created the 1st Territorial Battalion which is composed of regular troops from the Army’s 24th Infantry Battalion (IB), Army reservists and members of the civilian armed auxiliary (CAA) in Zambales, known to be a former communist stronghold. The main purpose of this battalion is to bolster personnel for Aquino’s Internal Peace and Security Plan (NISP) and actively engage reservists and CAA in stabilized communities to prevent the re-infiltration of communists. As part of its operations, the reservists and the CAA are tasked to conduct CMO activities. Such movements in this direction reveal that the military is reducing the socio-economic aspect of their operations to military-trained personnel, so that soldiers can concentrate on the security component of the operations.

Another telltale sign that the AFP was ready to unload its civilian-like responsibilities came with the decision to deactivate National Development Support Command (NADESOM), even though the command had aspirations to transform their command into a regional force, capable of conducting international missions by the end of 2020 (see appendix G for the original roadmap). With its

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deactivation, the existing engineering units were transferred back to the Army Chief of Engineers and the remaining community development functions were transferred to the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), a government office in charge of the peace process.

While no clear explanations were given to this sudden disbandment other than statements to the effect that the AFP was trimming costs in low-priority areas, it also coincides with the timing of a renewed emphasis at the AFP’s modernization program. The most likely explanation is that one, the AFP and the government sees the threat levels are under control, and two, this was an opportune time for the AFP to boost their conventional capabilities.

8.5 Remaining Issues and Recommendations for Further Research

This section will go into elaborating some issues in regards to this research and provide it with recommendations for further study. While it was hoped to shed more light on its obscure orientation and trace its evolvement in Philippine history, more work could have been done on detailing other factors that can boost the effects of CMO. Resolving a conflict does not exclusively belong to the remit of the military and this begs the question, how such operations can be integrated within the whole government approach.

Another challenge was measuring the effects of CMO. Outside of directly linking CMO outcomes with the reduction of enemy strength and their presence in communities, it is difficult to quantify the impact CMO has had on helping the military reach its objectives. Moreover, it is difficult to measure whether people’s change in perceptions towards the military translates into military success. Even though attempts were made through interviews with CMO beneficiaries, for a more comprehensive understanding, expanded population samples, reflecting a better cross-section of Filipino society in various conflict areas and in conjunction with other statistics (unemployment rates, number of surrenderees, poverty incidence, rate of development, number of unlicensed firearms, rate of convictions towards errant members of the government forces, human rights violations, number of rebel surrenderees, etc.) is needed.

Another drawback to the research was that, findings from the Western Mindanao Command could not be directly transplanted to other areas in the country. This is because each area command faces a different set of threat dynamics and socio-economic, cultural, historical, and political factors that have fueled unrest.

With these drawbacks to the research in mind, for those researchers and military practitioners having interest in the subject the following can be recommended. This research was largely confined to the study of CMO within the context of counterinsurgency, but it can be enlarged or shifted to peace studies. The timing is appropriate also because the Philippine Army have articulated their aspirations to transform themselves into “Peace Builders” in their ARMY Transformation Roadmap 2010. Here, a different set of dynamics come into play where the focus shifts from a strongly military-oriented approach to one that

48 Alexis Romero, “Military abolishes development arm,” PhilStar, May 4, 2012. Available at: http://www.philstar.com/metro/803028/military-abolishes-development-arm. Accessed January 8, 2013. It was also stated in the article that President Aquino could have wanted to disassociate his internal security plan with those of his predecessor.
involves the entire nation’s efforts to reform the security sector and deal with the threat comprehensively.

Another recommendation is applying a “design” methodology that can help commanders to identify and frame complex variables emerging from cultural, historical, religious, and political aspects of insurgencies, thereby allowing the military to design and plan for military missions more effectively.49

And finally, conducting comparative studies can enlarge the study. For instance, Thailand and Indonesia also have a wealth of experiences in activities that are related to CMO. They share some resemblances, especially since they are directed towards their own internal security problems. Nonetheless, their version of such operations is also shaped by their military tradition and unique circumstances. Therefore, a comparison can place CMO within the broader concept of the regional studies.

8.6 Concluding Remarks

As views for retaining CMO remain divided, the issue over CMO’s relevancy in military operations comes to light once again. Unarguably, CMO needs to be dynamic and evolve to meet different security needs and to match the different phases in a conflict. With prospects of peace, especially towards the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), it is natural that CMO shifts from its utility in COIN warfare and be included in peacebuilding, especially in regards to this front. Still, it appears that with the military assuming too many roles outside of its core capabilities, it has the negative effect of distracting the military from its main focus of defense. At the same time, the military has also made clear its intentions to modernize by placing more focus on building conventional capabilities. As history has shown repeatedly, once internal security problems were considered to be under control, CMO was the first to be downgraded, leaving little room to instill further intellectual rigor. While this would be not a problem if the internal security problems cease to be a threat, it does not appear likely that a final resolution to the protracted nature of the communist front and the continuing existence of other Muslim groups that do not identify with the MILF, will come anytime soon. Therefore, it is hoped that the institutionalization of CMO has left a mark in allowing the AFP to recognize the importance of preserving and enhancing its operational rigor, so that CMO can be called upon and used effectively in times of contingencies.

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   2DA0FD1C125756700307D5D/$file/Memorandum+of+Ancestral+Domain+-+August+2008.pdf.
### Appendix A

#### Coup Attempts 1986-1987

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coup Attempt</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Grievances</th>
<th>Concessions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Manila Hotel Incident</td>
<td>AFP Marcos Loyalists</td>
<td>Reinstall Marcos as President</td>
<td>1. Human Rights Probe</td>
<td>1. Pay raise for military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 6, 1986</td>
<td></td>
<td>with Arturo Tolentino as interim</td>
<td>2. Inclusion of left-leaning members in the cabinet</td>
<td>2. Promotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Promotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God Save the Queen</td>
<td>Juan Ponce Enrile,</td>
<td>To reduce Aquino’s position to a</td>
<td>The government’s soft</td>
<td>Aquino fires Enrile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 22–23, 1986</td>
<td>the Defense Minister</td>
<td>nominal position</td>
<td>position on the</td>
<td>but also removes two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and RAM, led by</td>
<td>head while military</td>
<td>communists</td>
<td>leftist members in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Col. Gregorio</td>
<td>takes full control</td>
<td></td>
<td>her cabinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channel 7 TV Incidents</td>
<td>Honasan, RAM, and</td>
<td>Government takeover</td>
<td>1. Leftists still remaining within the govern</td>
<td>Ceasefire ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or GMA–7 Incident</td>
<td>Marcos loyalists</td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Aquino ignoring the</td>
<td>with NPA and fighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 27, 1987</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>advice of military over</td>
<td>resumes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>government affairs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Saturday Incident</td>
<td>Army rebels led by Col.</td>
<td>To free rebels detained in previous</td>
<td>Government’s poor</td>
<td>1.15 per cent pay raise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 18, 1987</td>
<td>Cabauatan</td>
<td>coup</td>
<td>performance in sectors such as economy and security</td>
<td>2. Promotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIA Takeover Plot</td>
<td>Plot linked to Enrile</td>
<td>To reinstall Marcos as</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1987</td>
<td>and Marcos loyalists</td>
<td>President</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August Coup</td>
<td>Led by Col. Gregorio and</td>
<td>To overthrow the Aquino Government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 28, 1987</td>
<td>Honasan and his RAM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>officers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Honasan and RAM</td>
<td></td>
<td>government in addressing</td>
<td>causes of the coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 29 to December 7, 1989</td>
<td>officers/Marco loyalists</td>
<td></td>
<td>socio-economic issues of the nation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Sample of a Task Unit Disposition in Campaigns of “Gradual Constriction.”

**Phase One:** AFP mobile infantry units (Special Operations Teams) are deployed to the perimeter of the CPP-NPA area of influence (guerrilla zone). Advances are made only when barangays are cleared of the enemy and their political infrastructure is removed.

**Phase Two:** The advance is made to the base area after clearing the perimeter. It should be
noted that it is not a “continuous advance” since units move back and forth, ensuring the outer rings remain consolidated, while the advance is made in a series of waves. Consolidation involves CMO and intelligence units to establish friendly relations with the people, and setting up counter-organizations and barangays-level intelligence networks.

Phase three: The center of the CPP-NPA rebel bases is concentrated in mountainous areas.
Once the AFP mobile units reach the center, the enemy forces are “constricted” or denied of maneuver room. Enemy units are believed to be concentrated here, making it easier for the AFP to deliver a decisive blow.

Glossary

- Infantry
- Regiment
- Battalion
- Company, Troop
- Platoon
- Section
- Squad

RES STRIKE COY  Reserve Strike Company
SOT  Special Operations Teams
BN Battalion

**Guerrilla Base Area:** The most consolidated and stable area in the guerrilla front.

**Guerrilla Zone:** The less consolidated area of the guerrilla front. While infiltration has begun, capability to influence people is still weak.

Appendix C

Military Units in the Philippine Army

Team (TM)  
7 to 11 soldiers

Platoon (PLTN)  
3 to 4 teams consisting of approximately 30 soldiers

Company (COY)  
3 to 4 platoons consisting of approximately 100 soldiers

Battalion (BN)  
4 or 5 companies consisting of soldiers between 400 and 600 men

Brigade (BDE)  
3 battalions consisting of approximately 2,000 soldiers

Division  
3 to 4 brigades consisting of approximately 6,000 soldiers.

APPENDIX D

THE CMO AREA STUDY

I. History
   a. Legend – Study the local legend and beliefs which have been handed down from general to generation in the community. Identify heroes and significant events in the legend. This is useful in understanding the local cultures’ themes and symbols.
   b. Actual – Study the actual historical background of the community. This can be found in official government records and interviews with elders or knowledgeable people. Note prominent character and events which can be useful in understanding as what the community is about today.

II. Geography
    a. Topography – the physical feature for the area include:
       1. Features – location, shape, size, of area
       2. Physical Layout – residential, commercial, industrial areas
       3. Relief – mountains, lowlands, valley
       4. Drainages – swamps, rivers, lakes
       5. Vegetation – forested area, barren and agriculture land
       6. Coasts and beaches
       7. Soil
    b. Weather – season, temperature, ranges, rainfall.

III. Security and Law Enforcement Situation
    a. Friendly Forces
       1. Location and disposition of troops
       2. Size of force
       3. Profile of commanders, staff and troops
       4. Type of unit (Philippines Army, Philippines Navy, Philippine Air Force, Philippine National Police)
       5. Areas of Responsibility
       6. Activities/missions of units
       7. Discipline and morale of troops
       8. Weapons and equipments
       9. Strength and weakness
    b. Enemy Forces
1. Location and disposition
2. Profile of commanders, staff, and troops
3. Areas of responsibility
4. Type of unit
5. Tactical and propaganda activities
6. Source of financial and material support
7. Discipline and morale of troops
8. Weapons and equipment
9. Strength and weakness

C. Law Enforcement and Justice
   1. Location and disposition of police units
   2. Profile of police commanders, staff, and police
   3. “Tanod Bayan” groups (village guards)
   4. Police activities/programs
   5. Crime situation
      a. Illegal drugs/drug addiction
      b. Terrorism
      c. Kidnapping
      d. Other crimes
      e. Gangs and groups
   6. Profile of judicial personalities
      a. Judges
      b. Lawyers
      c. Prosecutors
      d. Clerks
   7. Local courts
   8. Prisons
   9. Law enforcement strength and weaknesses
 10. Problems concerning justice/judicial system

IV. Religious Factors
   a. Different religions in the area
   b. Religious organizations
   c. Profile of people in each religion/organization
   d. Beliefs and differences among religions
   e. Churches and houses of worship
   f. Religious leaders (pastor, parish priest, etc.)
   g. Schedule of worship/masses
h. Political affiliation of religious groups
i. Religious personalities (priest, nuns, lay people)
j. Projects and activities of religious groups

V. Economic Factor
a. Income level of the people
b. Forms of livelihood in the area
c. Factories and industrial plants
   1. Management staff
   2. Products and processes
   3. Size of labor/profile
   4. Location
d. Investment (local and foreign)
e. Labor force (Employment, unemployed)
f. Effects of natural calamities
g. Logging concessions
h. Mining groups
i. Department stores/shopping malls
j. Labor unions
k. Progressive taxation on the people
l. Government agencies
m. Infrastructure (roads and bridges)
n. Real estate
o. Water sources
p. Electricity
q. Transportation (land, water, air)
r. Economic problems
s. Banks and sources of loans
t. Cooperatives
u. Land ownership (public, private, titled, mortgaged)
v. Rice, corn, sugar, mills to include schedule and fee

VI. Social Factors
a. Population
b. Caste system or social stratification (according to origin of birth, economic status, family background, etc.)
c. Family relations
   1. Influential families
2. Relationship among family members
3. Family feuds/affiliation
d. Household ownership and management (patriarchal or matriarchal)
e. Places of origin and people
f. Ethnic organization and diversities
g. Language/dialects spoken
h. Organizations (Parent-Teachers Association, Parents Homeroom, Kabataang (Youth) Barangay and others)
   1. Purpose/Objectives of the Organizations
   2. Leadership/Management staff and profile
   3. Membership/Composition
   4. Fees and dues
   5. Projects/programs/activities
   6. Sources of support (financial material)
   7. Attitude towards of government/AFP
   8. Relations between groups
i. Places of gathering (Public parks, sari-sari stores, beerhouse, nightclubs, restaurants, etc.)
j. Hotels and inns
k. Forms of entertainment (drinking, gambling, cockfighting)
l.

VII. Political Factors
   a. Profile of local leaders
      1. Personal data (names, family, educational background, occupation, etc.)
      2. Political affiliation
      3. Projects/activities
      4. Membership in political and non-political organizations
   b. Profile of political parties
      1. Leadership
      2. Membership
      3. Dues and fees
      4. Political ideology/beliefs
      5. Plans and programs/activities
   c. Number of voters and voter’s profile (number of youth, male or female voters, etc.)
   d. Attitude/Opinion of the populace towards the political parties and local leaders
   e. Government and non-government agencies
      1. Leadership/staff profile
      2. Past, ongoing and future projects
3. Sources of support
f. Land reform and related programs

VIII. Educational Factors

a. School in the area
   1. Levels of education
   2. Ownership and management
   3. Campus location
   4. Educational standard
   5. Facilities

b. Organizations in the school (Student Council, Student Catholic Action, Science Clubs, etc.)
   1. Leadership and management profile
   2. Membership profile
   3. Sources of Support
   4. Plan programs
   5. Political affiliation

c. Teachers and school personnel
   1. Personal data
   2. Political affiliation
   3. Educational attainments

d. Educational Facilities (Community Library, reading rooms)

e.

IX. Culture/Lifestyle Factors

a. Daily routine in various occupations
   1. Waking, working and sleeping hours
   2. Me/cooking times
   3. Recreation
   4. Washing clothes
   5. House cleaning

b. Customs and traditions

c. Cuisine

d. Fiesta and celebrations

e. Peculiar gesture/practices

f. Etiquette (forms of address, table manners, hospitality, salutations)

g. Marriage practices

h. Courtship

i. Sexual norms
j. Local heroes
k. Arts
l. Music
m. Death and mourning rites

X. Health and Sanitation
a. Prevalent diseases
b. Sanitation facilities (toilets, canals, bathing area, water pumps)
c. Health center/hospital
   1. Location
   2. Services rendered
   3. Ownership and management
d. Doctors/nurses/midwives
   1. Profile
   2. Qualifications
e. Birthrate rate/ death rates
f. Availability of medicines
g. Pregnancy and childbirth
h. Local health practices
i. Family planning
j. Health and sanitation problems

XI. Media and Communication Factors
a. Printed materials (newspapers, comics, magazines, etc.)
   1. Number of circulation
   2. Publisher/owner/editorial staff
   3. Languages/dialect used
   4. Pries/subscription
   5. Readers profile
   6. Location of selling areas
b. Television and radio
   1. Network, frequency, channel, power
   2. Area serviced or broadcast reach
   3. Ownership/management profile (including political affiliation)
   4. Format of programs
   5. Operating hours
   6. Language/dialect used
   7. Location studio and transmitters
8. Listeners or viewers
9. Market share of broadcast
10. Broadcast personalities (newscasters and commentators)
11. Commercial and rates for advertising
   a. Movie houses
   b. Telephone
   c. Telegraph
   d. Postal system
   e. Fax facilities
   f. Video and photo services
   g. Printing presses

XII. Others

Any piece of information that helps to understand the target community and help the military address issues in the area.

Source: PAM 7-00, pp. iii-ix.
APPENDIX E

A NADESCOM Medical Outreach Program

Location: Caloocan, National Capital Region of Metro Manila.
Target barangays: Barangay Tala and Barangay Sila
Expected number of beneficiaries: 1,200 people (600 per barangay)
Date: Planned for November 2010

Proposed Schedule
6:30am
◆ Soldiers participate in a cleanup drive
◆ Immediately followed by bamboo-planting
8:00am
◆ Medical Mission-NADESCOM partnering with other military doctors and nurses.
◆ Ophthalmology – i.e. administering eye drops
◆ Dental – i.e. tooth extraction
◆ De-worming for 30 children
◆ Feeding – information giving, follow-up session plans for 50 most undernourished children
Simultaneously Conducted
◆ Distribution of wheelchairs
◆ Games
◆ Exhibition of basketball
◆ Donations
◆ Information Drives
◆ Livelihood information
◆ Inspection of sites that require engineering intervention. If construction materials are available, the military can do the construction.

2:30pm Culmination of activities
3:30pm Termination and pullout

NOTE: Military personnel from the National Capital Region Command (NCRCOM) conduct a security survey prior to the outreach program.

Appendix F


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Poverty Incidence of families</th>
<th>Falling within The AOR of WestMinCOM</th>
<th>RANK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tawi-tawi, Mindanao</td>
<td>78.9 %</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Zamboanga del Norte, Mindanao</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Magunidanao, Mindanao</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Apayao, Northern Luzon</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Surigao del Norte, Mindanao</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Lanao del Sur, Mindanao</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Northern Samar, Visayas</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Masbate, Southern Luzon</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Abra, Northern Luzon</td>
<td>50.1 %</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Misamis Occidental, Mindanao</td>
<td>48.8 %</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix G

“NADECOM ROADMAP 2010-2020”¹

Short-term Goals 2010
- Presentation of AFP-NADECOM Doctrine
- Communication of AFP-NADECOM in AFP
- Establishment of AFP-NADECOM in AFP

Medium-term Goals 2010-2014
- Expand the AFP-NADECOM organizational structure based on the revised TOE
- Establish extension offices located strategically in different places in the Philippine Islands
- Strengthen the role of the AFP-NADECOM in AFP operations
- Institutionalize the regional force development plan
- Produce capable personnel

Long-term Goals 2011-2020
- Enhance operational capability as a regional force
- Modern equipage for regional operations
- Develop a capability on international legal affairs
- Acquire air and sea transport capability

Appendix H

Questions asked to CMO beneficiaries in Zamboanga City (2007-2010)

1. Can you introduce yourself to me?

2. Can you tell when the military appeared in your community to provide a community outreach program?

3. Can you recount to me your experiences with the military during the outreach program?

4. In which areas do you think your barangays services do not suffice?

5. What was your impression of the AFP and/or U.S.Forces when they entered your community?

6. Do you know of any armed presence in your community?

7. Do you think the ASG or other groups are an immediate threat to you?

8. What was your image of the AFP before their entry? After their entry, how do you feel about the military?

9. Do you know why your community was selected for an outreach program?

10. Has the military “humanitarian” intervention helped improve your lives?

11. Would you like the soldiers to come back again?

12. Are there any other thoughts or comments you would like to share?