



Bilateral Cooperation between Philippines and the United States of America in Counterterrorism against ISIS and Abu Sayyaf Group

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Abstract

Philippines is confronted with a number of security challenges that pose a threat to the country and its inhabitants. Among these challenges are the threat of terrorism. The objective of this research is to ascertain the manner in which the government responds to the ISIS movement within its territory, specifically through the bai'at relationship with the Abu Sayyaf group in Philippines. The liberal rationale of Immanuel Kant and the methods of counterterrorism and multilateralism inform the counterterrorism effort, which is designed to address and overcome terrorist disruptions from separatist groups and to prevent and respond to further terrorist attacks in order to fulfill the obligation to maintain the security of its people. As a member of the United Nations (UN), Philippines reaffirms its commitment to prevent, suppress, and counter all forms of terrorism under the UN Charter, Declarations, and relevant international laws. The Philippine government's efforts, policies, and programs demonstrate that achieving counterterrorism objectives will be challenging due to the lack of a deterrent effect on perpetrators. This is because the criminalization of terrorism perpetrators is often associated with human rights, which has been a topic of discussion among people and communities who believe that the punishment given to terrorism perpetrators should also be based on the values of human rights.

Keywords: Philippines, Terrorism, Policy, Counterterrorism, Terror.

Introduction

The Republic of the Philippines, or the Republika ng Pilipinas in Filipino, is a republic in Southeast Asia situated to the north of Malaysia and Indonesia. The Republic of the Philippines achieved independence on June 12, 1898, and became independent on July 4, 1946. The Philippines is an archipelago of 7,107 islands in the Western Pacific Rim, physically characterized by an irregular archipelago configuration with 36,290 km of coastline (Michael Cullinane, 1999). The country is divided into three island groups: Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. The name "Philippines" is derived from Prince Philip II, the Spanish king who ruled the Philippines in the 16th century (Scott, 1992). At the zenith of the Philippine Revolution, on June 12, 1898, the Philippines achieved independence from the Spanish Empire (Official Gazette).

Like other countries around the globe, the Philippines is grappling with a multitude of challenges. The Philippines also faces numerous challenges, with the most significant being those related to security. These challenges directly impact the country's stability and the well-being of its citizens. The most significant challenge currently facing the Philippines is the threat

of terrorism. The Philippines has been subjected to terrorist activities by various groups, including Islamic separatists, for over two decades. Terrorism has emerged as a significant challenge in the Philippines, with the country ranking 16th in the world in terms of its vulnerability to terrorism in 2022 (Ronald U. Mendoza, 2021). The protracted issue of terrorism in the Philippines has resulted in the country becoming a nation with a lengthy history of terrorism.

The issue of terrorism in the Philippines first manifested in the Southern Philippines region, which has the largest Muslim population. The population in the region has historically faced various forms of discrimination from the government and society. This treatment can be traced back to Spanish colonization in the 16th century. Spain disseminated Christianity throughout the Philippines and treated the Muslim community in the Philippines as a despised minority group (Sullivan, 2014). Separatist groups in the Philippines were established to separate themselves from the Republic of the Philippines. Philippine separatist groups began with the emergence of the Moro Muslim movement in the 1970s under the name Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). In the following decade, precisely in the 1980s, the Moro Muslim movement was dominated by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which is a fraction of MNLF that is more radical. Subsequently, separatist or terrorist groups in the Philippines proliferated, reaching a zenith in the 1990s with the emergence of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). Currently, the ASG is a radical group and a significant criminal entity for the Philippine government (Larasati, 2015).

Since 1989, the radical Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) has been operating in the Philippines. Abu Sayyaf is known to engage in acts of terrorism, including the use of explosives, the hijacking of foreign vessels, the abduction of individuals, and the execution of prisoners. Abu Sayyaf is the most feared Muslim terrorist group in the Philippines. Concerning the name, "Abu Sayyaf" means "father of men with swords" in Arabic (Wijaya, 2016). Moreover, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) has publicly declared its allegiance to the leader of ISIS, as evidenced by a YouTube video uploaded in July 2014 under the leadership of Isnilon Hapilon (Habulan, 2016). A year later, in December 2015, IS released a video demonstrating that various battalions under Hapilon's command had pledged allegiance (Apriani, 2018). In April 2015, the Maute group stated allegiance to IS via a video post (Franco, 2017).

Conceptual Framework

This article employs three theoretical frameworks: liberalism, counterterrorism, and bilateral counterterrorism. The following section provides an explication of these three theories.

1. Liberalism

Liberalism is a political and economic doctrine emphasizing individual autonomy, equal opportunity equality, and protecting individual rights. Liberalism is also a political doctrine that places the issue of individual freedom as a central issue in politics. According to liberals, the government should protect people from being harmed by others. However, they also recognize that the government can threaten their freedom (Kenneth Minogue, 2023). As articulated by Mark D. White (2016), classical liberalism is informed by the perspectives of Immanuel Kant, who underscored the significance of fostering peace, safeguarding individual autonomy, and constraining governmental authority. Kant's perspectives on individual liberty,

global peace, and the state's role assist in comprehending his perspective on liberalism. Kant advanced the concept of international peace by positing that war should not be a rationale for opposing liberal principles. Given that the majority of people are averse to war, liberal governments believe that the greater the number of liberal countries, the more peaceful the world will be. According to the liberal view, peace is a possibility. Kant's theory has influenced the democratic peace theory, which posits that democracies do not engage in warfare with one another. This theory is consistent with Kant's assertion that liberal governments have a greater tendency to cooperate and resolve disputes peacefully because of their shared values and institutions (Stephen McGlinchey, 2022). Overall, Kant's view of liberalism can be described as supporting freedom, peace, individual liberty, and limited government influence. Various liberal thinkers engaged in debate about Kant's ideas, which had an impact on the development of liberal theories of international relations.

2. CounterTerrorism

The term "counterterrorism" is used to describe the efforts to prevent and control terrorism. One method of combating terrorism is to deradicalize and avoid engagement. By modifying the conceptualization of phenomena that may potentially become radicalized, such as Jihad and radical and inflexible ideologies, the deradicalization approach can facilitate psychological healing. Nevertheless, the cessation approach, which is a more nuanced approach, does not prioritize enhancing the ex-offender's social interaction with the terrorist network group. Terminating aims to preclude the individual from returning to the same community or network and prevent them from committing the same crime again (Ulfah Khaerunisa Yanuarti, 2014). Counterterrorism refers to the efforts of the government and other organizations to implement preventive measures and to detect and respond to acts of terrorism. Counterterrorism is a multifaceted approach encompassing various strategies and tactics (Homeland Security, 2019). Governments and other organizations employ a variety of tools to combat terrorism, including military force, intelligence gathering, law enforcement, and diplomacy. Counterterrorism efforts must be balanced with the imperative to protect civil liberties and human rights (Campbell, 2014). In order to achieve lasting peace and security, counterterrorism efforts must address the root causes of terrorism, such as poverty and discrimination (Jebb, 2003). An effective counterterrorism strategy necessitates a coordinated and integrated approach involving a multitude of institutions and stakeholders (Campbell, 2014).

3. Bilateral Cooperation

Bilateral cooperation is the collaborative efforts between two countries to achieve a common goal or address a shared challenge. In counterterrorism, bilateral cooperation refers to the joint efforts of two countries to combat terrorism and prevent the emergence of violent extremism. This cooperation may take various forms, including:

Intelligence sharing is a form of bilateral cooperation involving exchanging information between two countries. Countries exchange information regarding terrorist organizations, their activities, and their plans to disrupt and prevent attacks. Joint operations are another form of bilateral cooperation. In order to target terrorist groups and disrupt their networks, countries engage in joint military and law enforcement operations. Capacity building is a process whereby a country assists another country to enhance its ability to combat terrorism. In order to enhance their collective capacity for counterterrorism, countries provide training, equipment, and financial support to one another. Policy Coordination: To address the root

causes of terrorism and prevent the spread of terrorist ideologies, countries coordinate their policies and strategies.

Bilateral counterterrorism cooperation is of paramount importance in the global fight against terrorism. It allows countries to leverage each other's strengths and expertise to combat this complex and evolving threat (The United States and The Republic of the Philippines Bilateral Defense Guidelines).

Method

In this article, the author employs a descriptive research method, which is a research method designed to describe the population or phenomenon under study. Nasaji (2015) defines descriptive research as a method of inquiry that describes events and their characteristics. Consequently, the principal objective of this research method is to elucidate the object of research (Salma, 2023). This type of descriptive research aims to collect comprehensive information that accurately describes the current symptoms and examines the conditions of relevant practices.

Finding and Discussion

Terrorism in Filipina

Indonesia and the Philippines are countries comprised of numerous islands or archipelagos. This results in the proliferation of terrorism in both Indonesia and the Philippines. However, as the Philippines is relatively homogeneous, there is considerable diversity in ethnicity, race, culture, and religion. The majority of Filipinos adhere to the Roman Catholic faith. For decades, the southern Philippines has been the site of insurgency and terror perpetrated by the Moro Nation, which is predominantly Muslim. The Philippines has experienced a series of internal conflicts, which have given rise to various domestic terror groups. These groups have subsequently developed links with international terror organizations such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda.

In his work from 2017, Sullivan identifies the southern Philippines, where the Muslim population is concentrated, as the site of the initial outbreak of security concerns within the country. Subsequently, in the sixteenth century, Spanish colonialists disseminated Christianity and treated Muslims as a despised minority, which precipitated a spate of violence in the region (Sullivan, 2014). Until the Moro Muslim movement emerged in the southern Philippines, seeking independence from the Philippines. In the 1970s, the separatist movement in the Philippines was led by the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), while in the 1980s, it was dominated by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Nevertheless, the MILF is perceived to be a more radical faction of the MNLF (Larasati, 2015). Subsequently, the development of separatist or terrorist groups in the Philippines continued with the emergence of the radical Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), which is currently considered a significant terrorist and criminal threat to the Philippine government. The ASG group emerged and began to develop in the 1990s. The security challenges posed by separatist groups in the Philippines have led to the country becoming the region's most affected by terrorism, with over 600 incidents

reported between 1969 and 2009. These attacks have been domestic and international (Angel Rabasa, 2012).

Terrorism Group (Abu Sayyaf Group)

The most violent Islamic separatist group in the southern Philippines is the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). The Abu Sayyaf group first emerged in the early 1990s and was founded by Abdurajak Abubakar Janjalani, a former Islamic cleric who had traveled to Afghanistan in the 1980s. Abu Sayyaf is regarded as one of the most violent jihadist militant groups in the southern Philippines region (Sullivan, 2014). The Abu Sayyaf group has gained notoriety for its involvement in some high-profile incidents, including the kidnapping of individuals, attacks on both civilian and military targets, and the subsequent ransom demand. As stated by the National Counterterrorism Center (2014), the ASG asserts and advocates for the establishment of an autonomous Islamic state in the western Mindanao and Sulu Islands regions. The ASG has been linked with other Islamic separatist groups, including Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and other organizations. The ASG maintains a presence in various locations across the Sulu Archipelago, including Mindanao, Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi Provinces. Additionally, the ASG frequently visits Manila (National Counterterrorism Center, 2014).

The ASG members terror as a tactic to advance an agenda that it refers to as Jihad. The ASG was established to advocate for all Muslims' rights, with a particular focus on those residing in the southern Philippines region (I Made Adi Lesmana, 2017). The ASG espouses the goal of establishing an independent state based on Sharia law that encompasses all Filipino Muslims. In addition, the ASG has perpetrated several attacks against Christian Filipinos engaged in criminal activities, particularly kidnappings. Nevertheless, the ASG's acts of kidnapping appear to be motivated more by material desires than by principles. The number of kidnappings perpetrated by Abu Sayyaf increased significantly during the late 1990s (Sullivan, 2014).

In July 2014, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) declared its allegiance to the Islamic State (IS) leader, Isnilon Hapilon, through videos uploaded to Facebook and YouTube. In December 2015, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) received responses from various battalions under the leadership of Isnilon Hapilon, as evidenced by a video released by the Islamic State (IS). In 2016, IS leader Isnilon Hapilon acknowledged the relationship as that of Emir of Southeast Asia (Apriani, 2018). In the summer of 2014, a group of guerrillas compelled Isnilon Hapilon, the leader of the Basilan-based ASG faction, to swear allegiance to Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, the leader of IS (FlorCruz, 2014). In a video uploaded to the internet, senior leader Isnilon Hapilon and other members of the group swore allegiance to the IS caliph, also known as "bay'ah." In a combination of Yakan (a local dialect) and Arabic, Hapilon stated, "We promise to obey him in everything your heart desires or not and to cherish him more than anyone else." A video of an individual purporting to be a member of Abu Sayyaf appeared on a Facebook page, speaking in Arabic and stating, "Sincerely supporting our ISIS mujahideen brothers" and "Extending our right hand when their left hand is missing" (FlorCruz, 2014).

Nevertheless, as of February 2017, the Islamic State has not publicly declared which provinces or territories are included within the region. Nevertheless, in June 2016, it was reported that the group had endorsed Hapilon as emir for Southeast Asia (IPAC, 2016). In a video, fighters from Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines recognized Hapilon as the head of IS in Southeast Asia. In December 2016, the Philippine Secretary of National Defense stated

that IS was in direct contact with Hapilon and requested that he seek territory in Mindanao to establish a caliphate (Counter Extremism Project, 2023).

Terrorism Group (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria)

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), originally known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL), is a Sunni insurgent group that operates in western Iraq and eastern Syria. The group operates in various regions of both countries (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2014). ISIL/ISIS is a terrorist organization that exploited the conflict in Syria and sectarian tensions in Iraq to gain a foothold in both countries. The group's objective is to consolidate and expand its territories under the principles of early Muslim caliphates and to implement a rigorous interpretation of sharia (National Counterterrorism Center, 2013). The ISIS terrorist group originated from Al-Qaeda's branches in Iraq and Syria. Since its inception in 2013, IS has sought to establish its caliphate in eastern Syria and western Iraq. In essence, the group's ultimate objective is to establish a unique caliphate on a global scale. To this end, it has initiated establishing satellite operations in nine countries. Initially, IS garnered support in Iraq as an insurgent group engaged in combat with the country's government, which some Sunnis perceive as Shia. Subsequently, as a consequence of the civil war in Syria, the group gained further momentum and recruited up to 33,000 soldiers from across the globe. It is estimated that thousands of IS fighters have also died in the war, while some have returned or are reportedly planning to return to their home countries (Counter Extremism Project, 2023).

ISIS response to separatist groups in the Philippines

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has responded to the actions of separatist groups in the Philippines, including the Abu Sayyaf Group and the Maute Group, through the distribution of propaganda videos on its online media. Additionally, statements issued by IS to reinforce its presence in the southern Philippines are depicted in videos released by IS about the conflict in Marawi, Lanao del Sur. The Islamic State's growth strategy is to expand its network by forming alliances or soliciting cooperation from separatist groups. The Islamic State (IS) has set forth a plan to establish a global congregation as an alternative to demonstrate its rejection of the global system. A United Nations report indicates that the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (IS) has established 34 new affiliates, including countries such as Libya, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Indonesia. This figure does not include affiliate groups in the Southern Philippines (Willem Theo Oosteveld, 2017). The heightened level of allegiance activity following the Marawi tragedy provides IS with a valuable opportunity to achieve its ultimate goal of establishing a territorial presence in Southeast Asia.

Philippine Government Response to Terrorism Movements in the Region

The Philippine government has implemented several initiatives to address the threat of separatist terrorism. The Macapagal-Arroyo administration enacted a national policy to combat terrorism as part of its obligation to safeguard the well-being of its citizens. Conversely, as a member of the United Nations, the Philippine government is bound by international treaties on terrorism and is obliged to prevent, suppress, and counter all forms of terrorism under the resolutions or declarations of the UN Charter and other relevant international laws. In order to enhance global cooperation in the fight against terrorism, the

Philippine government also seeks to cooperate with regional and international groups such as ASEAN, the United States, and other allies (Manalo, 2004).

Philippine Government Counterterrorism Policy

The Philippine Handbook defines terrorism as "the intentional use or threatened use of violence or destructive means perpetrated against innocent civilians or non-combatants, or the destruction of civilian and government property generally with the intent to influence the public." This definition encompasses a range of techniques, including hostage-taking, hijacking or sabotage, assassination, threats, the dissemination of false information, and bombings or shootings (Manalo, 2004). The Philippine government's policy on terrorism is outlined in the "Fourteen Pillars of Policy and Action Against Terrorism," which consists of the following: The first pillar of the Philippine government's policy against terrorism is: The government's policy and action against terrorism is overseen and implemented. Intelligence coordination is also a vital aspect of this policy. Furthermore, the government is focused on countering terrorism from within. Accountability of private companies and individuals is also a priority. The government is committed to synchronizing its internal efforts with a global outlook. Finally, legal measures are also a vital aspect of this policy—the promotion of Christian and Muslim solidarity.

Furthermore, Memorandum Order Number 37 further clarifies the government's commitment to collaborate with other nations in the global effort to combat terrorism (Manalo, 2004). It is recommended that countries join the international coalition against terrorism and cooperate with the United Nations (UN) on intelligence and security issues related to terrorism. Furthermore, it is suggested that countries provide areas where terrorism can be fought and assistance.

Deradicalization

In 2014, the Philippine government proposed legislation known as the "Bangsamoro Basic/Organic Law". The law intends to establish a new autonomous administration in the Philippines' southern area by the Deep Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB). The MILF agreed to and signed this agreement to limit activity and population density in the southern zone. Furthermore, this choice was made to placate regional residents and lessen the influence of radicalization by extremist organizations still active in the area (United States Department of State, 2015). However, these measures did not begin immediately when Aquino's administration ended, but rather when Duterte entered power in 2016. Duterte devised a proposal focusing on regional autonomy, revising the constitution to a federal model, and attempting to engage with the MNLF (Vinanda, 2021).

Deradicalization attempts frequently involve collaboration among the government, security services, educational institutions, communities, and religious organizations. The ultimate goal is to prevent the development of extremist doctrines, diminish the threat of terrorism, and build a more secure, tolerant, and open society (John Horgan, 2011).

Bilateral Counterterrorism Cooperation

Bilateral counterterrorism cooperation is defined as the collaborative efforts between two countries to combat terrorism. Such collaboration can manifest in several ways, including intelligence sharing, which is a form of bilateral counterterrorism cooperation in which two

countries exchange information about terrorist organizations, their activities, and their plans to disrupt and prevent attacks. Countries exchange information regarding terrorist organizations, their activities, and their plans to disrupt and prevent attacks. Joint operations are another form of bilateral counterterrorism cooperation. In order to target terrorist groups and disrupt their networks, countries conduct joint military or law enforcement operations. Capacity building is a process whereby a country assists another country to enhance its ability to combat terrorism. In order to enhance their collective capacity for counterterrorism, countries provide training, equipment, and financial support to one another. Policy Coordination: To address the root causes of terrorism and prevent the spread of terrorist ideologies, countries coordinate their policies and strategies. Bilateral counterterrorism cooperation is of paramount importance in the global fight against terrorism. It allows countries to leverage each other's strengths and expertise to combat this complex and evolving threat (Bidisha Biswas, 2009).

Bilateral Cooperation between the Philippines and the United States of America

The Philippine and US governments have condemned the Abu Sayyaf Group's actions within Philippine territory, characterizing the ASG's actions as terrorism that must be combatted (AsSakir, 2017). Since the Second World War, the Philippines and the United States have maintained a military relationship. This relation occurred during the Philippine Army's assistance to the United States in the Pacific Theater of Operations. Since then, the two countries have agreed to cooperate in the military field. The signing of various military agreements, including the Military Base Agreement (MBA), Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement (MDT), Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), and Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), exemplifies the extent of military cooperation in the field (Nurhakim, 2017). These agreements pertain to the United States' collaboration with the Philippines in the struggle against terrorism. To combat terrorism, the Philippines and the United States implement military and non-military cooperation through planned programs, such as the Joint Special Operation Task Forces Philippines (JSOTF-P), which provides training to the AFP (Armed Forces Philippines), PNP (Philippine National Police), SAF (Special Action Force), and ATA (Anti-Terrorism Assistance) (Wardani, 2018). The following strategies and cooperation programs are carried out between the Philippines and the United States, among others:

1. Social and Cultural Approach Cooperation

The decision by the United States to collaborate with the Philippine government is motivated by the shared interests of both countries in combating terrorist organizations. Consequently, the bilateral collaboration between the two countries primarily focuses on security concerns and regards terrorism as a pressing issue that requires immediate attention. In 2001, the United States established the Light Reaction Company (LRC) to counter terrorism in the Philippines. Concurrently, both countries conducted joint military exercises (AsSakir, 2017).

2. Provision of Troop Support to the Philippine Government

The United States provided the Philippines with military training and equipment to enhance mobility. During President Bush's tenure, the United States pledged millions of dollars in military aid, including C-139 cargo planes and approximately 30,000 M16 rifles (AsSakir, 2017).

3. *Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT)*

The Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) is a bilateral defense agreement between the governments of the Philippines and the United States. The Mutual Defense Treaty was signed in Washington, D.C., on August 30, 1951, and subsequently approved by the Senate on May 12, 1952, in Senate Resolution (SR) No. 84. The President of the Philippines duly signed and enacted the instrument of ratification on August 27, 1952. The President announced the exchange of ratifications between the parties through Product No. 341, S. 1952 (House of Representatives, Legislative Library, 1951). The MDT has been the foundation for close security cooperation between the two countries. The 2014 Letter of Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) and the 1998 Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) further enhanced the MDT (United States Department of State, 2022).

4. *Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA)*

The Philippines and the United States may conduct joint military operations. The Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), signed in 1998 by both countries and ratified by the Philippine Senate in 1999, outlines the terms of the United States' military presence in the Philippines. The VFA stipulates that US military forces are not permitted to establish permanent operating bases in the Philippines and that they should perform non-combat duties (Lum, 2012). The agreement is designed to enhance joint planning, strike readiness, and interoperability between the Republic of the Philippines and the United States while simultaneously strengthening security relations. Moreover, the treaty serves as part of the legal framework and as an essential guideline for establishing standards that will govern the relationship between the armed forces of the United States and the Philippines. Moreover, the agreement delineates the respective obligations of the parties during the term of the agreement (Velasco, 2015).

5. *Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA)*

The Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) was signed in 2014. The EDCA allows the Philippines and the United States militaries to engage in joint training, pursue modernization objectives, and address natural and humanitarian crises. As the host country and territory owner, the Philippines has sovereignty and control over the designated and approved EDCA sites. The Philippines and the United States jointly determine the locations of the EDCA sites, with final approval granted by the Philippine leadership. The United States government has provided approximately \$82 million in funding for projects at the five designated EDCA sites (U.S. Embassy Manila, 2023).

6. *Balikatan Exercise (BALEX)*

Per the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT), Exercise Balikatan (Balex), and Exercise Balikatan, a series of annual exercises is conducted to enhance the skills of the armed forces of the Philippines and the United States. The Balex program's exercises fulfill the requirements of Article II of the MDT, which states that they should be conducted "separately and jointly through self-help and mutual assistance." The objective is to maintain and develop the individual and collective capacity to counter armed attacks. Following the MDT and the principle of shared responsibility, the exercises mentioned above assist the AFP in fulfilling their obligations and engaging in combat related to attacks on United States property or territory (Radics, 2004).

7. *The Joint Special Operation Task Force – Philippines (JSOTF-P)*

JSOTF-P provides guidance and assistance to the AFP in achieving four primary objectives in the fight against terrorism. These objectives are to close sanctuaries to terrorist or insurgent

groups, to impede access to resources for these groups, to hinder the mobility of these groups, and to separate the population from these groups. Furthermore, to achieve these objectives, JSOTF-P executed its plan based on the "Four Key Lines of Operations," which included capacity building of the Philippine Army (AFP), civil-military operations with the objective of intelligence operations, and information operations. With funding from the United States. The combined operations of JSOTF-P were successful in reducing the strength and presence of Abu Sayyaf significantly. Lum (2012) reported that almost all faction leaders have been killed or captured.

8. Civil Military Operation (CMO),

Initially, a significant proportion of the Basilan islanders were discontented with the Balikatan Exercise programs. Many of them perceived that the Philippine government was failing to address their concerns. The Abu Sayyaf Group also employed intimidation tactics intending to instill a sense of distrust in the AFP. Subsequently, the AFP and the Philippine government devised the Civil Military Operation (CMO) program, which sought to diminish community support for the ASG by providing services to the community (Gumilar, 2013).

9. Information Operation.

The Philippine government and the US Embassy in the Philippines implemented information operations through the Joint Task Force 510 program. The objective of this operation was to enhance operational efficacy and provide assistance to the Philippine government. The most challenging aspect of implementing the Balex program was the information operation, given the Filipino people's and media's inherent suspicion of foreign military operations within their country. Nevertheless, despite the challenges, JTF 510 could effectively utilize various forms of media, including print, oral, and text, to facilitate tactical operations and establish the legitimacy of the Balex program (Gumilar, 2013).

Conclusion

The research conducted by the author indicates that the Philippines has employed a multifaceted approach to counterterrorism, encompassing political, economic, and military strategies. The structure of the Philippine government and its entire system is paramount in the fight against terrorism. A comprehensive examination of the Philippines' anti-terrorism policy is essential to inform the campaign's strategy. Many initiatives have been undertaken to address this policy, encompassing inter-agency coordination, multilateral cooperation, intelligence sharing, and enhancing and improving military capabilities. The Philippines' primary national security objective is to eradicate terrorism and prevent its resurgence.

Furthermore, the number of Abu Sayyaf's armed members has been diminished, though not entirely. Therefore, the Philippine government should develop a more comprehensive national strategic plan that incorporates the social, economic, political, and military dimensions. In order to respond to terrorism with greater determination, broader consensus, and more comprehensive support, it is essential that the government possesses robust capabilities and implements a unified strategy.



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