

Institutional Responses to Armed Conflict: The Armed Forces of the Philippines

By

CAROLINA G. HERNANDEZ, PhD¹

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¹ Professor of Political Science, University of the Philippines (Diliman); and Founding President and Chair, Board of Directors, Institute for Strategic and Development Studies, Inc.

I. Introduction

The military's response to armed conflict flows from a national security assessment made by the government, including the Department of National Defense (DND). At the same time its response must be put within the context of the transformation of the balance of power between the government and the military that occurred over time.² Prior to martial law, the 1935 Constitution put the military under an elected president who was also the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The principle of supremacy of civilian authority over the military at all times governed the relationship between the civilian authority and the military. Civilian control over the military was ensured through oversight institutions such as the civilian commander-in-chief and the legislature. They controlled the military's budget and high-ranking military promotion and assignment. A free press helped bring to the public domain allegations of anomalous acts involving the military, thereby creating strong public opinion to curb such acts, while regular elections obviated the need for military intervention in political succession.

From its establishment in 1936, the military mission has included external and internal defense, as well as peace and order. When it was reorganized in 1950 in response to the Huk insurgency, the Philippine Constabulary (PC) which was the country's national police force was integrated into the armed forces in order to enable the PC to access U.S. military assistance that was by agreement restricted to the military. During the anti-Huk campaigns with Ramon Magsaysay as Secretary of National Defense (SND), and later as President of the Philippines, the government adopted the two-pronged military approach against the Huks. The right hand represented the armed response, while the left hand represented socio-economic development also undertaken by soldiers. The latter included civic action through the provision of horticultural, medical, dental, and legal assistance to local communities where the Huks operated, the construction of roads, bridges, irrigation dams, school houses, and other physical infrastructure in these areas, and the Economic Development Corps (EDCOR) project that countered the Huk slogan of "land for the landless". EDCOR provided land to former Huk insurgents that laid down their arms and enlisted military personnel in various parts of the country, particularly in Mindanao. Its value was more political than a genuine response to the problem of landlessness among the country's peasantry.

Although the military's venture into non-military activities such as civic action and socio-economic development started during this period, it must be noted that this took place with the civilian oversight institutions still in place. However, this changed with martial law. Apart from the presidency, all the civilian oversight institutions in the country were destroyed: congress was disbanded, the judiciary lost its independence, political parties and media were banned, and elections and all political activities were suspended. In short, martial law violated civil and political rights. The military became the partner of Marcos in ruling the country; officers replaced politicians as dispensers of political patronage, at the same time assumed an expanded role in society and politics, including the management of sequestered companies. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) included the PC as a major service command with the PC Chief being also the Director General of the Integrated National Police (INP). By this act, Marcos put all the uniformed services, through the AFP Chief of Staff, under his control. And because the oversight institutions were destroyed, civilian control was exercised through the person of Marcos as commander-in-chief of the armed forces.³

It must also be noted that during the first term of office of Marcos, he adopted as a policy the partnership of the AFP with the government in national development. In this regard, the military was readied and trained for this task through a change in the career development pattern of AFP officers

² This phenomenon has been documented by the author's pioneering doctoral work "The Extent of Civilian Control of the Military in the Philippines: 1946-1976", State University of New York at Buffalo, 1979, and the comprehensive report of the Davide Commission that investigated the failed coup of December 1989, *The Final Report of the Fact-Finding Commission* (pursuant to R.A. No. 6832) (Makati: Bookmark, October 1990).

³ See Chapter 5 of Hernandez, "The Extent of Civilian Control of the Military", documenting the destruction of political institutions and the expansion of the military's role during martial law.

that required their acquisition of a graduate degree from civilian educational institutions in various social science fields such as political science, economics, history, and various management fields such as public administration and business administration. This managerial career pattern better prepared the officers for managing society and government - a principal task the military performed during martial law and authoritarian rule - than the heroic career pattern followed earlier.

The end of martial law in 1980 and the election of a national legislature did not put an end to the military's partnership in governance. The *Batasang Pambansa* was controlled by Marcos's political movement, the *Kilusang Bagong Lipunan* (KBL) because the electoral process, as in other authoritarian regimes was rigged in favor of the incumbent president. The ouster of Marcos through people power 1 in February 1986 did not lead to the restoration of the pre-martial law balance of power between the civilian authority and the military, despite the adoption of a liberal democratic constitution in 1987.

There are factors that continue to favor the retention of the military's power and influence in politics and society. First, the military continues to be the principal agency in combating communist insurgency and Moro separatism despite the 1990 PNP Law that separated the police from the AFP, disbanded the PC, and mandated the PNP to take over internal security and peace and order functions from the AFP. Domestic armed threats continue to be the principal security challenge facing the country and the government continues to depend on the AFP for their prosecution. Second, while civilian oversight institutions had been restored by the 1987 Constitution, these institutions remained weak and largely uninformed about defense and security issues. Politicians tend to exercise these powers irresponsibly and many continue to enlist the support of officers and soldiers in their personal and political agenda, particularly in conspiracies to destabilize the government.⁴ Third, political succession through people power in 1986 and 2001 gave the military a share in its success, tending to make power holders beholden to the AFP leadership who threw in their support behind the successor presidents. Fourth, there has been a general failure to make military wrongdoers accountable for their misdeeds, tending to reinforce a sense of power by the military as an institution and a sense of impunity among some officers. And fifth, the military remains the institution with the legitimate monopoly of the use of force which, combined with a misreading of the constitutional provision making the military "the protector of the people and the state" lead some officers to claim the AFP has a right to step in when in their view government has lost its legitimacy to rule.⁵

Thus, in dealing with the communist insurgency and Moro separatism, the military's institutional response has often showed the effects of a balance of power *vis-à-vis* the civilian authority continuing to tilt on its side. While the general security policy is decided by the executive branch with the support or concurrence of the legislature, actual implementation of the security policy rests in the hands of the military. In this process, its own institutional interest could get in the way of a more faithful implementation of the declared policy. For example, President Corazon C. Aquino's preference for the peaceful path to resolve the communist insurgency and Moro separatism was undermined by the military's preference for a military solution. This difference in preferences became one of the principal grievances of the rebel military that was used to justify coup attempts against the government during the 1980s.⁶ The military is generally averse to peace talks and amnesty for insurgents because of the loss of military lives and the personal sacrifices of soldiers to make the country safe against armed threats particularly from insurgents.

Moreover, critics decry the military's inability to defeat the insurgents and to deliberately allow the armed conflict to persist in order to perpetuate the military's role in internal security and the

⁴ See *The Report of the Fact-Finding Commission* (pursuant to Administrative Order No. 78 of the President of the Republic of the Philippines, dated 30 July 2003), 17 October 2003, pp.43, 133.

⁵ This interpretation finds support in Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J., *The 1987 Constitution: A Reviewer-Primer* (Manila: Rex Bookstore, 2002), p.16.

⁶ See *The Final Report of the Fact-Finding (Davide) Commission* for a detailed account of the causes of the coup attempts of the 1980s.

government's dependence on the AFP. Some even suspect that the persistence of these armed threats has provided the military with a *raison d'être* that enabled it to receive a defense budget not commensurate with its perceived unsatisfactory performance record.

These allegations are difficult to document. Military officers respond to them by arguing that they would not put their lives and those of their men in harm's way if they could help it. The campaign against insurgency and separatism has not succeeded because the civilian agencies that were tasked to join the AFP in the last two stages of the campaign (consolidation and development stages) have not been able to undertake their tasks. In many far-flung areas in the country, including those without armed conflict, local chief executives and civilian bureaucrats do not report to their offices regularly, leaving the areas of conflict to the military to consolidate and develop. In their view, this is not a task proper to the AFP for which it had not been trained to discharge. Consequently, the current five-year Internal Security Operation (ISO) plan *Bantay Laya* (2002-2006) has reflected this reality and lumped these two stages into a single phase where the AFP's role is simply to support civilian agencies tasked with consolidation and development activities.

This is the political context that helps frame the military's institutional response to communist insurgency and Moro separatism.

A. What the Paper is About

This background paper deals with the institutional response of the Armed Forces of the Philippines to the armed conflicts between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF) on the one hand, and the Muslim secessionist groups: the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), on the other. It focuses on the various operation plans (OPLANS) the military designed and implemented in response to the government's overall national security policy. The paper describes and assesses these responses and identifies areas where they might be improved in order to end present or prevent potential conflicts that would help to create the conditions necessary for human security and human development in the country.

Using the framework for analyzing the GRP's peace policy positions *vis-à-vis* Moro separatism developed by Paul Oquist of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the paper reviews the OPLANS as part of counterinsurgency measures adopted since the Marcos dictatorship until the present Arroyo administration. It concludes with an assessment of the military's institutional responses to armed conflict, where they failed, where they succeeded, and why. It also makes recommendations for policy intervention relevant to the military's role in armed conflict to enhance the process for sustainable peace, human security, and human development in the Philippines.

B. A Framework for Analyzing the Peace Policies of the Philippine Government

In its Fifth Assessment Mission Report dated 23 September 2002, the Multi-Donor Group Support for Peace and Development in Mindanao through Dr. Paul Oquist, UNDP Senior Regional Governance Adviser for Asia and Coordinator of the UNDP Paragon Regional Governance Programme for Asia observed that there has been an extreme protraction of the peace process in Mindanao causing a failure to realize a peace dividend, and argued that the human security option is a potential solution.⁷ Further, the existence of three competing policy positions of the GRP in part explains the extreme protraction of the peace process in Mindanao.

⁷ Paul Oquist, "Mindanao and Beyond: Competing Policies, Protracted Conflict, and Human Security", Fifth Assessment Mission Report, Multi-Donor Group Support for Peace and Development in Mindanao, 23 September 2002.

In analyzing the *pacification position*, Oquist makes the following points: (1) this position seeks a cessation of hostilities and demobilization of the insurgent force while making as few concessions as possible; (2) it may be accompanied by attempts to improve the military position in order to pressure towards cessation of hostilities and demobilization with even fewer concessions; (3) two corollaries are applicable to the military victory position, namely one, the most practical way to achieve pacification is by coopting Muslim leaders, and two, the application of the divide and rule dictum; (4) the timeframe is very flexible, as there is no sense of urgency as each side tries to strengthen its negotiating hand through events on the ground and the dynamics of the negotiation process; (5) the results are usually short-term, do not sufficiently address the root causes of armed conflict, none of the actors have the political will/capacity to solve the causes and construct long-term peace .⁸

The *victory position* is (1) extremely resilient; (2) hugely attractive in the early stages of the insurgency due to the hope of immediate end to conflict; (3) usually accompanied by highly repressive tactics that violate human rights; (4) able to make small insurgencies large and protracted; (5) tempting to undertake large scale military operations when stalemate situations occur to break the stalemate; (6) likely to increase in importance when other positions suffer setbacks; (7) susceptible to the adoption of events on the ground to advance the need to adopt the victory position because conflict creates situations favorable to militarize responses that would lead to a victory; and (8) is likely to become self-destructive behavior.⁹

On the other hand, the *institutional position* can be summarized as one in which the adoption and implementation of the policies necessary to achieve sustainable, long-term peace and the articulation of institutions to implement and consolidate those policies as central tasks. It requires (1) short, medium, and long-term actions on the economic, social, political, and administrative structures and processes; (2) the creation or strengthening of a culture of peace; (3) a policy framework to achieve the combinations of these elements and to maximize policy coherence, continuity, and sustainability; and involves (4) a conscious building and sustenance of a citizen's peace constituency to make all of the above politically viable. The results of these efforts can better secure peace because it satisfies a critical mass of key actors and stakeholders who feel ownership of the structures, process, and results that can construct peace over the short, medium, and long term.¹⁰

The signing of a peace agreement is seen differently by these policy positions: (1) as the culmination of their peace efforts by the pacification position; (2) as only a framework for subsequent processes of institutional transformation and development by the institutional position – for coherence, it is necessary that those who negotiate and sign a peace agreement are also the ones who would finance and implement them, especially if the latter are multiple actors. The institutional position takes longer, is more complex than the other options and often less politically attractive because of its costs and the long term nature of the results.

This broad analytical framework developed in analyzing the GRP's approach to Moro separatism is also suitable in analyzing communist insurgency, as well as in examining the military's institutional response to domestic armed conflicts as will be demonstrated below. When one looks into the various operation plans devised by the AFP in responding to communist insurgency and Moro separatism, one is able to identify elements of these operation plans reflecting the pacification, victory, and institutional policy positions.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

II. Communist Insurgency and Moro Separatism: Martial Law and Dictatorship

Martial law and dictatorship provided the context for the growth of communist insurgency and Moro separatism in the 1970s. The CPP-NPA grew from a small group of about 1,100 in 1971 prior to the declaration of martial law with an armed component of 310 in 1973¹¹. According to one source, the movement grew to 7,200 regular members and a mass base of 480,000 by 1983.¹² However, an AFP source has put the number to 10,660 by the same year.¹³ Moro separatism rose with Nur Misuari's MNLF going underground upon the declaration of martial law.¹⁴ With its Bangsa Moro Army, the strength of the MNLF was estimated at 16,900 in 1973.¹⁵ The MNLF challenge became the most serious armed threat to the Philippines in the 1970s, requiring by 1975 the deployment of more than 75 per cent of AFP troops in Mindanao.

Marcos saw the military as an indispensable tool to implement the specific requirements of martial law, at the same time that since 1965, it had already been a partner of the government in national development. His first State of the Nation address called for "increased training, new equipment, and heightened morale...the need for reforming the nation's police forces, activating a Philippine Coast Guard, and expanding the military's socio-economic development programs".¹⁶ And his Four-Year Economic Program said: "The Armed Forces of the Philippines with its manpower, material, and equipment resources plus its organizational cohesiveness and discipline possess a tremendous potential to participate in economic development which should be exploited to the maximum. Such participation becomes imperative considering that the problem besetting the country is socio-economic rather than military and that the resources available to solve this problem are scarce and limited."¹⁷ Apart from socio-economic development, the military, "more than any other body of the government, have been called upon to carry the great burden of suppressing the activities of men actively engaged in a criminal conspiracy and eradicating widespread lawlessness, anarchy, disorder, and wanton destruction of life and property that prevailed throughout the country."¹⁸

During this period, the AFP had four major service commands: the Philippine Army (PA), the Philippine Air Force (PAF), the Philippine Navy (PN), and the Philippine Constabulary (PC). As already noted, through the PC Chief who was also the head of the Integrated National Police (INP) from 1975 to 1991, all the uniformed services of the government were put under the centralized control of the Chief of Staff, AFP, and through him, the President as commander-in-chief of the armed forces. This allegedly altered the chain of command as the Minister of National Defense, a civilian political appointee, used to be the second layer of civilian control between the elected civilian commander-in-chief and the AFP chief of staff as the highest military authority.¹⁹ This bypassed Juan Ponce Enrile in the chain of command making the chain flow directly from Marcos as commander-in-

¹¹ From an AFP recapitulation of the CPP-NPA strength, February 2005.

¹² Cesar P. Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 2000), p. 576.

¹³ From an AFP recapitulation of CPP-NPA strength, February 2005.

¹⁴ On the origins of the CPP-NPA and the MNLF, see Francisco Nemenzo, Jr. "Rectification process in the Philippine communist movement", in Lim Joo-Jock and Vani S. (eds.), *Armed Communist Movements in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: ISEAS, 1984), and Eliseo R. Mercado, "Culture, economics, and revolt in Mindanao: The origins of the MNLF and the politics of Moro separatism," in Lim Joo-Jock and Vani S. (eds.), *Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: ISEAS, 1984).

¹⁵ Jose M. Crisol, *The Armed Forces and Martial Law* (Makati: Agro Publishing Inc., 1980), p. 19.

¹⁶ Cited in Hernandez, "The Extent of Civilian Control of the Military in the Philippines: 1946-1976", p. 206-207.

¹⁷ As cited in *ibid.*, p. 207.

¹⁸ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces*, p. 492.

¹⁹ Carolina G. Hernandez, "The Philippine Military and Civilian Control: Under Marcos and Beyond", *Third World Quarterly* (October 1985), p. 910.

chief to General Fabian C. Ver, the Chief of Staff of the armed forces. This break was in fact one of the grievances of the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM) against the Marcos regime leading them to conspire to bring it down in February 1986.²⁰

While the military was organized for external defense, Arcala observed that the armed forces (including the constabulary) performed only internal security operations during this period. She argued that this was due to the U.S. military shield that provided for the country's external defense. The AFP also became indispensable in dealing with security threats, as internal security was used to cover all the threats to the government – whether communist or separatist, armed or unarmed.²¹ As a matter of fact, from the time of its creation in 1936, the Philippine military had been tasked with the functions of internal defense and peace and order, blurring the distinction between military and police functions from its inception.²² This helps account for the military's vulnerability to the commission of human rights violations since the military's traditional role requires combat against foreign armies rather than domestic armed groups.

At the same time, the performance of an internal security role helps further military politicization since the counter-insurgency strategy requires the long presence of soldiers in the territories recovered from insurgent hands to prevent their return to insurgent control and to enable the consolidation and development phases of the strategy to be put in place. In this context, officers and soldiers obtain personal knowledge of poverty, social inequality, failure of the civilian government to deliver basic services, injustice, exclusion, and other social ills that fuel the process of military politicization (as they do social unrest and armed conflicts). These add to institutional military grievances against the AFP leadership and the civilian government.

By the mid-1970s, the MNLF became the principal threat to the country's security. Beginning with the MNLF attack of Marawi City in Lanao in October 1972 during which the airport, the PC headquarters, and the Mindanao State University campus were seized, to February 1973 when the first armed confrontation between the MNLF and government forces took place in South Cotabato, Moro separatism spread to parts of the Mindanao-Sulu-Palawan (MINSUPALA) region. The MNLF planned to use its Cotabato Command with 5,000 to 6,000 forces to be its logistics support base into which arms from abroad were to be smuggled to the MNLF.²³ Military intelligence indicated that after clearing Cotabato province of government forces, the MNLF planned to make it its base of operations and the Bangsa Moro Army would then spread to Davao, Agusan, and Surigao provinces.

To prepare for the conflict in the South the military budget was increased by 700 per cent from 1972 to 1976 (or PhP518 million to PhP3.5 billion) in a span of just four years. AFP personnel were also increased from 60,000 to 250,000.²⁴ To counter the MNLF offensive, the AFP created the Central Mindanao Command (CEMCOM) to undertake all the anti-MNLF operations in this area in close coordination with the provincial and local governments in Central Mindanao. Due to the partnership between the government and the AFP during martial law, the AFP fully supported the government's campaign against the MNLF and hewed its operations closely to the overall policy of the martial law regime.

²⁰ Cecilio T. Arillo, *Breakaway: The Inside Story of the Four-Day Revolution in the Philippines, February 22-25, 1986* (Mandaluyong: CTA and Associates, May 1986.)

²¹ Rosalie B. Arcala, "Democratization and the Philippine Military: A Comparison of the Approaches Used by the Aquino and Ramos Administrations in Re-Imposing Civilian Supremacy", Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Northeastern University, Boston, 2002, p. 146.

²² See Hernandez, "The Extent of Civilian Control of the Military in the Philippines".

²³ See also Francisco L. Gonzales, "Sultans of a Violent Land," in Kristina Gaerlan and Mara Stankovitch (eds.), *Rebels, Warlords and Ulama* (Quezon City: Institute for Popular Democracy, 1999), pp. 114-116.

²⁴ 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), p. 25.

A five-phase strategy, Campaign Plan *Bagong Buhay* was adopted against the MNLF. Combining the *victory* (see numbers 1 and 2) and *institutional* (see numbers 3-5) positions, the strategy consisted of (1) consolidation and build up of government forces in the area to conduct offensive operations against the MNLF; (2) offensive action and strike against the MNLF to recover MNLF-controlled territories, the conduct of relief and evacuation and psychological operations, breaking up/destroying MNLF forces, (3) reestablishment of civil authority including the restructuring and manning of local governments, reopening of schools, and strengthening of police forces, (4) reconstruction and rehabilitation of communications, industrial, agricultural, and other infrastructures to help in the recovery of war torn areas and to uplift the economic conditions of the people, and (5) reconciliation between Christian and Muslim communities, including a reorientation of values and norms and the removal of interfaith prejudices.²⁵ The victory position saw the military as the implementer, while the institutional position was primarily the task of civilian agencies with the military providing for the defense of the recovered territories.

Under this plan, the military carried out extensive operations against the MNLF throughout the affected provinces in Mindanao during the remainder of the 1970s.²⁶ These operations required sustained supplies of arms and ammunitions that at one point led the Defense Minister to request the U.S. to transfer M-16 bullets for use by the AFP. U.S. refusal to do so on the ground that the offensive against the MNLF was an internal problem of the Philippines and was beyond the purview of the bilateral military assistance pact led to the cooling of relations between Manila and Washington. The huge toll in life and property wrought by the armed confrontation between the government forces and the MNLF drained the resources and energies of both sides, while the local population became weary of the battles in their midst. According to Mercado, civilians, both Christian and Muslim, became the unfortunate casualties of the conflict.²⁷ Official government figures in October 1977 placed the number of displaced peoples between 500,000 and 1,000,000.²⁸ At the height of the conflict, the London-based magazine *Impact* produced a fact sheet that contained the following numbers: 50,000 killed, 2 million refugees, 200,000 houses burned, 535 mosques and 200 schools demolished, and 35 cities and towns wholly destroyed.²⁹

However, intense military campaigns successfully reduced the MNLF forces from 16,900 to 6,900 in 1976.³⁰ According to Ahmad, this was due to the systematic and massive deployment of aerial and naval bombardment missions coupled with the mobilization of ground troops and auxiliary forces. The MNLF also lacked sufficient combat training on unconventional warfare. While they had the advantage of numbers, this was countered by the military's superiority in weaponry and tactical operations.³¹ With its dwindling numbers, the decline in popular support, and the intermediation by the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in which Libya and Saudi Arabia played key roles, the MNLF was forced to the negotiating table. Thus, we see here the impact of the victory position that made possible the achievement of the pacification goal of a peace agreement.

Peace talks between the government and the MNLF started in 1975 in Jeddah and culminated with the Tripoli Agreement in 1976. Marcos also implemented an amnesty program to invite MNLF rebels to play an active role in post-conflict reconstruction by absorbing them either as AFP soldiers

²⁵ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces*, pp. 511-514.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 515-558.

²⁷ Mercado, "Culture, economics, and revolt in Mindanao". The protracted conflict also led to the loss of support for the MNLF among the Moros, according to a study conducted by Rhodora Bucoy, "The Moro National Liberation Front: An Empirical Study," Unpublished MA thesis, Department of Political Science, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City, 1984.

²⁸ According to Ahmad, this number does not take into account all those "invisible" refugees who sought refuge from friends and relatives instead of coming to the government. See Ahmad, "The War Against the Muslims", p. 26.

²⁹ Cited in *ibid.* See also Eric Gutierrez, "In the Battlefields of the Warlord," in Kristina Gaerlan and Mara Stankovitch (eds.), *Rebels, Warlords and Ulama*s (Quezon City: Institute for Popular Democracy, 1999), pp. 49-55.

³⁰ Crisol, *The Armed Forces*, p. 19.

³¹ Ahmad, "The War Against the Muslims", pp. 30-31.

or as local government officials.³² Among them was the 'Magic 8', former MNLF commanders used by the AFP to keep the local balance of power in their favor, particularly in Sulu province. Some members of the Magic 8 such as Mayor Bagis, remained allied with the military until the late 1990s. The military supplied them with arms and ammunitions. This practice led younger officers as late as 2003 to accuse their commanders of "selling arms and ammunitions to the enemies".³³

Similarly, the anti-communist strategy consisted of the right hand and left hand approaches (or the victory and institutional positions), a legacy of the anti-Huk campaigns of the 1950s. This meant that the military would use armed might to break the bone of the armed insurgency, while the civilian government agencies would bring in social services, livelihood, and other development projects in the territories recovered by the military from the insurgents to win the support of the local population from the rebels. In the 1950s the military implemented both the right and left hand approaches, unlike in the 1970s onwards, where the right hand consisted of military operations and the left hand of civic action and socio-economic development activities that involved both the military and civilian agencies of the government.

In addition, the AFP Home Defense Program was conceived and implemented on 23 February 1970. Its approach in dealing with insurgency and subversion was "humanistic and developmental", and attributed to the recognition of the military's special role in national development already noted above. In the end, the program aimed to "win the hearts and minds of the people, gain their support for the military, and persuade them to accept the military as partners in nation-building".³⁴

Together with the AFP Strategic Home Defense Program were the principal components of psychological operations (psyops) whose goals were contained in the acronym "PLEDGES". **P** stood for peace and order, **L** for land reform, **E** for economic development, **D** for development of moral values, **G** for government reorganization, **E** for educational reforms and employment, and **S** for social services. Propaganda, public information, cultural events, and others were used as vehicles for psyops.

Within this context, the military took part in literacy projects and the national livelihood programs as the government's partner in national development.³⁵ According to Danguilan, from 1973-1978, the various civil-military operations have benefited 246,000 people as they distributed 19,000 boxes of medicines, 664,000 boxes of food and relief goods, and 3,900 sacks of rice.³⁶ These radically affected popular support of insurgents. For example, an analyst claimed that civic action and socioeconomic programs contributed to the reduction of the NPA mass base of 65,000 in 1973 to 20,000 in 1978,³⁷ tending to show the institutional position's advantage over the pacification and victory positions.

During this period, the resilience of the communist insurgency saw its ebb after the capture of its key leaders, including Beranabe Buscayno (Kumander Dante) in 1976 and Jose Ma. Sison and Nilo Tayag in 1977. As in the case of the campaigns against the MNLF, superiority in the military's

³² Crisol, *The Armed Forces*, p. 19. Among the prominent members of the MNLF that were rewarded with political positions was Muhammad Ali Dimaporo, a landowner that Marcos appointed as governor of Lanao del Sur, one of the provinces of the then "Muslim Autonomous Zone" (MAZ). In Ahmad, "The War Against the Muslims", p. 36.

³³ Testimony of Capt. Danilo F. Luna to the Feliciano Commission, 25 August 2003, recounting the transfer of two truckloads of arms and ammunition from SouthCom to Mayor Bagis in Talipao, Sulu in December 1998 whom Luna knew was a former MNLF leader.

³⁴ Crisol, *The Armed Forces*, pp. 37-38.

³⁵ For a detailed analysis of the AFP's role in national development under Marcos, see Hernandez, "The Extent of Civilian Control of the Military", Chapter 5.

³⁶ Marilen T. Danguilan, "Bullets and Bandages: Public Health as a Tool of Engagement in the Philippines", Research Paper No. 161, Harvard School of Public Health, June 1999, p. 8.

³⁷ Roland E. Dolan, *Philippines: A Country Study* (Washington D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1991), pp. 251-252.

firepower was key to this “success”.³⁸ Military operations resulted in the communists’ loss of 10,421 combatants, the surrender, capture, or death of 1,927 leaders, and the armed forces’ recovery of more than 2,136 assorted firearms from the NPA.³⁹ Here, the victory and institutional positions worked to stem the rise of the insurgency, but the incoherent strategy did not lead to its resolution.

Under Rodolfo Salas in the 1980s, the communist insurgency resurged and spread beyond its traditional areas of operation in Northern and Central Luzon, the Bicol region, Negros, Samar, and Leyte; it spread to parts of Mindanao, particularly the Davao and Agusan provinces. The NPA regulars grew as noted above and the insurgency moved towards achieving a strategic stalemate with government forces, a prelude to the third stage of strategic offensive to take political power. By 1983, encounters between the insurgents and government forces numbered 2,385 during which 823 soldiers died and 1,313 firearms were lost to the NPA.⁴⁰ (See Table 1 and Graphs A and D)

To combat the growing insurgency, the military once again relied on the victory position by deploying the Army’s First Scout Ranger Regiment, crack units of the Philippine Marines, and police forces into insurgent areas. The offensive campaigns through “search and destroy” tactics included the use of small squad size units and paramilitary groups. Supplementing these efforts were food blockades which involved confiscation of excess food supply beyond what families needed, “zoning” or cordoning of the affected area whereby residents were assembled and interrogated to search for insurgent members and supporters, and “hamletting” or the forced relocation of villages controlled or threatened by the insurgents. These short term measures dominated by the military as implementers only exacerbated the problem, perhaps helping in the growth of communist insurgency during martial law and dictatorship.

At the same time, the institutional position could be seen in the military's engineering brigades undertaking civic action projects such as building roads, bridges, schools, wells, water pumps, and irrigation systems in insurgent influenced or infested rural areas. The military also provided relief activities as well as health and social services in these areas as part of its “winning the people's hearts and mind” (left hand or institutional position) strategy. However, the net effect of policy incoherence was the persistence of the armed conflict with the NPA.

From the perspective of some civilians, civic action could not compensate for the extent of human rights violations committed by the military during martial law. The systematic targeting of members of the CPP-NPA-NDF and those suspected of being associated with them led to arbitrary arrests, torture, and ‘salvaging’.⁴¹ Between 1977 and 1984, some 1,900 ‘salvaging’ cases were documented. This is regarded as a modest figure as the Aquino government (like most transition regimes elsewhere in the world) feared military reprisals⁴² if it were to pursue human rights violations by the military seriously. Together with corruption in the military, widening economic disparities, and the prevalence of social injustice, these human rights violations facilitated the people’s recruitment into the communist insurgency.

As counterinsurgency measures characterized by competing policy positions to curb the spread of the communist insurgency failed, the military changed its approach. In 1981, it adopted OPLAN *Katatagan* as its basic strategy. Unfortunately, the new strategy perpetuated the competing policy positions of earlier counterinsurgency measures. Correctly premised on the view that communist insurgency is caused by social inequities and other ills facing society, *Katatagan* was designed as a security-development response to this problem. Its security aspects, reflecting the *victory position* sought to (1) prevent the growth of the insurgency, (2) maintain the people’s support

³⁸ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces*, p. 508.

³⁹ Crisol, *The Armed Forces*, p. 20.

⁴⁰ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces*, p. 576.

⁴¹ “Salvaging” is a Filipino euphemism for extra-judicial execution.

⁴² Gareth Porter, “The Politics of Counterinsurgency in the Philippines: Military and Political Options” *Philippine Studies Occasional Paper No. 9*, pp. 21-22.

and involve them in anti-insurgency, (3) neutralize insurgent leadership and political organization, (4) deny access of insurgents to manpower and material resources, and (5) develop the AFP into a well-motivated and people-oriented counterinsurgency force. A mix of three important components, the triad concept that has persisted in the AFP's ISO plans – combat operations, intelligence work, and civil relations - would ensure the achievement of these aims.

OPLAN *Katatagan* called for implementation in four stages: clearing, holding, consolidation, and development of the areas recovered from the insurgents. It took away from the AFP the primary role in counterinsurgency operations and included the participation of the police, paramilitary forces, civilian voluntary organizations, and local development agencies that were assigned specific tasks in the process.⁴³ For Arcala, the inclusion of the police was significant in this new strategy as insurgency had persisted partly because of local support. Moreover, unlike the AFP, the members of the police came from the communities themselves and thus could “be more effective agents in identifying and apprehending insurgent supporters” from the community.⁴⁴

The increased role given to paramilitary forces⁴⁵ was seen in the organization of the Civilian Home Defense Forces (CHDF) in 1970 to replace the unarmed Barrio Self-Defense Units. According to estimates, this new group increased its number from 40,000 in 1971-1972 to about 70,000 in 1986. It was considered as a less costly alternative to further increasing the size of the armed forces.⁴⁶ However, the use of paramilitary forces created new problems including inadequate training, difficulties in command and control, and the notorious record of human rights violations by these forces.⁴⁷

As seen from the above discussion, OPLAN *Katatagan* remained wedded to the goal of the defense of the state instead of securing and caring for the people. It still resembled many of the features of the U.S.-influenced counterinsurgency strategy of the 1950s that the U.S. carried over into the Vietnam war. There were also problems of inefficiency as the use of AFP resources was not maximized and there was lack of appreciation of the root causes of the country's insurgency problem,⁴⁸ despite *Katatagan*'s correct premise that insurgency is caused by social inequities and other social ills.

The military's institutional response was closely associated with the institutional response of the executive department through the commander-in-chief as governing partners during martial law and dictatorship. Once again, the competing policy positions seen in the policy on Moro separatism plagued the military's response to communist insurgency. It is therefore not surprising that the communist insurgency like Muslim separatism survived the end of the Marcos era. The erosion of Moro support for the MNLF was more a function of the people's weariness over the protracted war in

⁴³ According to Ramos, specific agencies/groups were assigned responsibility at various stages. Under the “clearing” phase, Special Forces flushed the insurgents from the area. Under the “holding” phase, the police and paramilitary forces secured the area from insurgent re-infiltration. Under the “consolidation” phase, local government officials and civilian volunteer organizations restored confidence through delivery of basic services. Special Operations Teams of the armed forces joined civilian entities at this stage in undertaking psychological operations or propaganda work. At the “development stage”, government agencies and the private sector came into the community to undertake development projects. See Ramos, 1989, p. 66.

⁴⁴ Arcala, “Democratization and the Philippine Military”, p. 157.

⁴⁵ Paramilitary forces are composed of armed civilian volunteers drawn from the community who have formal links with the military but are recruited, trained, issued firearms and munitions by the military, and given nominal pay. Among their tasks were to gather intelligence and engage in combat alongside the military if their villages came under attack from insurgents. Included in this cluster are private armies of local political warlords, anti-communist civilian groups, and death squads composed of ex-criminals and ex-military officers (such as the Lost Command), in *ibid.*, p. 158.

⁴⁶ David Wurfel, *Filipino Politics: Development and Decay* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 141.

⁴⁷ Arcala, “Democratization and the Philippine Military”, p. 159.

⁴⁸ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces*, pp. 508-509.

Mindanao that dissipated the energies of the local population than a success of the military's response to it. The affected peoples of Mindanao wanted peace instead of war.

III. Military Responses to Communist Insurgency and Muslim Secessionism: 1986-2000

Years after the end of Marcos' rule, analysts continued to fault the Aquino presidency for having resurrected armed conflict with the CPP-NPA and the MNL/MILF. Unsheathing the sword of war after the attempted peace talks with the CPP-NPA-NDF failed and rescuing Nur Misuari from oblivion were a mistake they say. Aquino's principal policy *vis-à-vis* armed conflict was one of reconciliation with justice. But the defense and military establishment, under the control of those who broke away from Marcos in February 1986 sought a tougher stance against the communist insurgents and Muslim separatists. Due to the strong political influence exerted by the defense and military leadership over the government, competing policy positions continued to characterize the latter's policy on domestic armed conflict.

Unlike during the Marcos era, where the military and the government were partners, the Aquino presidency saw the initial attempts to restore the pre-martial law balance of power between the civilian authority and the military. It is in the policy area of domestic armed conflict where the struggle between the government and the military became most pronounced, according to Arcala. The military opposed the Aquino government's policy of negotiated settlement with the insurgent groups. Accommodations that included the release of communist political prisoners also did not sit well with the military. The armed forces also complained about the suspension of offensive operations in line with the ceasefire agreement forged by the government. The ceasefire and the directive for the military to assume a defensive (rather than an offensive) posture was thought to be ill-advised because the insurgents took advantage of it to regroup and therefore to prepare to mount stronger offensives against government troops.⁴⁹ This example illustrates the aversion of the military to ceasefire agreements and other policies seen as "being soft" to insurgents, an attitude that has persisted within the AFP.

It was also during the Aquino period that the long-term effects of military role expansion amidst the destruction of civilian oversight institutions over the AFP exacted its heavy toll on the political system.⁵⁰ The belief among the RAM officers that they were responsible for people power 1 and the ousting of Marcos remained deeply ingrained among them. They believed they had a right to govern the country. Hence, they expressed strong objections to the policy of national reconciliation, especially in the peace talks with both communist insurgents and Moro separatists. In combination with the destabilization efforts of the members of the AFP that remained loyal to Marcos, these dynamics helped fuel the series of coups against the Aquino government during the 1980s.

In April 1986, the AFP replaced OPLAN *Katatagan* with OPLAN *Mamamayan*. Instead of protecting the security of the state as before, *Mamamayan* focused on the protection of the people. It added the Aquino administration's mantra – national reconciliation with justice. It sought a speedy end to the insurgency to neutralize the insurgent concept of protracted war. In this regard, priority was put on the stronger communist guerilla fronts and through constriction, it planned to drive the insurgents to the core where they would be easier to defeat. Pursuant to this plan, the SND formulated in 1987 a counterinsurgency strategy that basically retained the right and left hand approaches of the past. The plan sought to (1) encourage the insurgents to return to the fold of the law, (2) institute rehabilitation programs for the surrenderees, and (3) encourage the rebels to turn in their firearms to

⁴⁹ Arcala, "Democratization and the Philippine Military" p. 185.

⁵⁰ There are many accounts of this transformation affecting the political role of the military. Among them in chronological order are those by Carolina G. Hernandez (1979), Cecilio Arillo (1986), Viberto Selochan (1989), Felipe B. Miranda (1992), and Alfred McCoy (1999).

the authorities. In exchange, they were extended loans with which to start their new life.⁵¹ These goals reflect the institutional policy position.

The establishment of Special Operations Teams (SOTs) was a major element of *Mamamayan*. This group survived three changes of government and continues to be operational under the AFP counterinsurgency strategy for 2002-2006. SOT had three teams in charge of psychological operations, security, and 'stay-behind'. The psyops team consisted of propagandists, interrogators, and order-of-battle (OB) specialists where OB would discover guerilla political organization and structures as well as their members. The security team provided safety of captured rebels, while the third team took care of *barangay* defense, the *Bantay-Bayan*, and intelligence gathering and social investigation that were required for undertaking development activities. The government also strengthened its armed capacity to meet the insurgent threat. It began to deploy more paramilitary units (the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Units or CAFGUs) to affected areas. These elements of *Mamamayan* reflect the victory position.

The military viewed the CAFGUs as an improved version of the Civilian Home Defense Forces of the Marcos regime as they were governed by a set of guidelines that underscored transparency and accountability as well as local participation in their recruitment, training, and operational activities. They were also envisioned as part of the reserves, which were activated to help the military in counterinsurgency operations within their respective localities. Under the strategy, the CAFGUs participated in the 'holding phase' or preventing the re-infiltration by insurgents of 'cleared' areas in their own communities. Their command and control was subject to military law and regulations and they could be held liable for violations of the civilian penal code. From an initial strength of 50,000 in 1987, their number peaked at 80,000 in 1990 but afterwards declined to 32,478 by 1997.⁵²

As already noted, OPLAN *Mamamayan* was once again a mixture of the victory and institutional policy positions. Like its predecessor strategies, it also failed to solve communist insurgency. This led to its replacement by *Lambat Bitag* on 16 September 1988. A further refinement of *Katatagan* and *Mamamayan*, *Lambat Bitag*'s long-term goal was to uproot the insurgency by addressing its political, economic, and social causes. However, its immediate aim was to "slash its growth through military means",⁵³ two goals that demonstrate the military's incoherent policy in dealing with armed conflict representing the institutional and victory positions. The immediate aim of slashing the growth of the insurgency through military means also clearly demonstrates the "unsheathing of the sword of war", a sign of the influence of the military in Aquino's policy regarding the insurgency. Following the August 1987 coup, a cabinet revamp took place where the so-called left-leaning members of the cabinet were removed in obvious accommodation to military demands. The new counterinsurgency plan was also part of this political accommodation to the military when peace talks with both the communist insurgents and the MNLF had failed.

Lambat Bitag was to be conducted according to the following guidelines: (1) wage a war of rapid conclusion, (2) prioritize target guerilla fronts, (3) destroy guerilla fronts using only one task force led by one commander to liquidate one guerilla front, (4) conduct simultaneous military offensives on a coordinated countrywide basis, (5) launch a relentless campaign against the targeted enemy front, (6) adhere to the concept of gradual constriction, (7) strictly observe human rights, (8) keep faith with the policy of national reconciliation, (9) involve civic and local government officials, and (10) harness people power by mobilizing the politically significant publics – labor, peasantry, clergy, professionals, media, etc.⁵⁴ Guidelines number 1 to 6 represent the victory position while number 7 to 10 the institutional position.

⁵¹ Pobre, *A History of the Armed Forces*, p. 596.

⁵² Arcala, "Democratization and the Philippine Military", pp. 160-162.

⁵³ Oquist, *Mindanao and Beyond*, pp. 6-10.

⁵⁴ Pobre, *A History of the Armed Forces*, p.600.

This plan was apparently more successful than *Mamamayan* as gleaned from the following statistics: (1) towards the end of 1988, rebel strength was reduced from 25,200 (December 1987) to 23,860 (December 1988); (2) in 1989, this was again reduced to 18,440; (3) in 1990, this was further reduced to 17,070; (4) by December 1991, only 14,800 CPP/NPA remained; (5) rebel firearms were reduced from 12,060 in 1989 to 10,510 in 1991; (6) rebel-infiltrated⁵⁵ *barangays* were reduced from 7,552 in 1988 to 3,623 in 1991; and (7) the number of communist guerilla fronts that reached a high of 72 in June 1988, was reduced to 47 by 1991 (See Table 1 and Graphs C and E). Moreover, in 1987 a number of high-ranking CPP leaders were captured or “neutralized”, including Alfonso Rivera, vice chairman of the CPP Central Committee. In March 1988, seven top leaders were captured, including Rafael Baylosis (CPP/NPA secretary-general) and Romulo Kintanar, the NPA head. The movement’s Metro Manila communications network and financial infrastructure and medical field facilities were also dismantled. The AFP was also able to discover the movement’s 3-year program and confirmed its efforts to solicit funds from abroad.⁵⁶ However, the communist insurgency survived, these statistics notwithstanding.

When Ramos assumed the Presidency, his policy *vis-à-vis* all the armed challenges to the government from leftists, separatists, and rightist was to forge a peace agreement with them. He declared that peace in Mindanao would be one of his top priorities. Cognizant of the importance of an enabling environment for economic recovery and growth, he pursued the policy of national reconciliation and unity, including making political accommodation to the coup plotters of the 1980s by extending them unconditional amnesty.

For this purpose, he set up the National Unification Commission (NUC) composed of representatives from the executive and legislative branches of government, as well as the private sector. After a nationwide consultation involving various social sectors to formulate a viable amnesty process and program, the National Program for Unification and Development (NPUD) was adopted in 1994 to implement the policy of reconciliation. Amnesty was offered to communist insurgents, Muslim separatists, and coup plotters. It offered the civilian rebels a chance to return to the fold of the law and for those in the military, reinstatement in the AFP. The National Amnesty Commission (NAC) oversaw the implementation of the amnesty program.

The peace strategy under Ramos consisted of six paths to peace and three principles governing the peace process. Oquist sees this strategy as representing the institutional position. The six paths are (1) economic, political, and social reforms; (2) consensus building and empowerment for peace; (3) negotiations with rebels; (4) addressing concerns arising from the continuation of armed hostilities; (5) programs for reconciliation, reintegration, and rehabilitation; and (6) climate conducive to peace. The three principles governing the peace process are: (1) it should be community-based; (2) based on a new compact for a just, equitable, humane, and pluralistic society; and (3) principled peace without blame and with dignity for all.

Towards this end, the government also repealed R.A. No. 1700, the Anti-Subversion Law, paving the way for the pursuit of the former subversive organizations’ political and social goals through parliamentary rather than armed struggle. However, the peace talks with the CPP-NPA-NDF did not go far, challenged as it were by the left’s insistence on being accorded a status of parity with the GRP. *Lambat Bitag* remained in force. The *Balik-Baril* program sought to have rebels surrender their arms to the government in exchange for cash worth P9, 000 and an equivalent in kind three months thereafter. These were to be used to start a livelihood program of the surrenderee’s choice. These responses enabled the reduction of communist infiltrated *barangays* from 8,496 in 1988 to 984 by 1993. “Reduction would be so steady in the following years that the AFP’s role in the anti-dissident campaign was scaled down [and] the primary responsibility for internal security for the

⁵⁵ According to the military, the term “barangay infiltrated” at present is no longer used and thus is nowhere found in their current data. Instead, they categorized barangays as either “influenced” or less influenced”. See Table 1 and Graph C in particular.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

whole country was transferred to the PNP, in accordance with R.A. 6975, except Mindanao, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, Bicol Region, southern Quezon, and the Cordillera Administrative Region”.⁵⁷

Learning from the mistakes of the Marcos regime, civil-military operations during the Ramos presidency was more holistic and developmental in nature as they became integrated into the Social Reform Agenda (SRA).⁵⁸ The responsibility to implement them rested with local government units, thus subsuming them within civilian direction and control. Among the specific programs were the modified SOTs, the Army Community Assistance and Rural Empowerment through Social Services (CARES), and the Army Concern on Community Organizing for Development (ACCORD). Modest gains were reported because of the implementation of these programs as 236 Moro rebels surrendered and gave 188 firearms to the government in 1998.⁵⁹ *Lambat Bitag* remained the military’s response to armed conflict until 1994.

In spite of the breakout of hostilities such as the MNLF raid on Ipil in Zamboanga del Sur, peace talks with the MNLF that started during the Aquino administration eventually led to a ceasefire and the signing of a peace agreement on 2 September 1996. The Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SDCPD) was established, selected Bangsa Moro Army members were integrated into the AFP, and Nur Misuari was elected Governor of the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) as well as appointed Chair of the SPCPD. Meanwhile, the splinter group, the MILF had also engaged in peace talks with the GRP in 1997.

When Estrada took power, he adopted a mailed fist policy *vis-à-vis* the MILF. In April 2000, with the military’s advice and support he launched an “all-out war” against the MILF forces in Central Mindanao after the MILF rejected his ultimatum for a peace agreement. At that time, the MILF regular forces were estimated at between 10,000 to 13,000 men,⁶⁰ or 12,570 by another source.⁶¹ The war was precipitated by the alleged refusal by the MILF to give up its checkpoints on the Narciso Ramos national highway leading to MILF’s Camp Abubakar, even as the MILF had agreed a day before the assault on the Camp to relinquish the national highway to the PNP. This event signaled a distinct policy shift from Ramos’s negotiated settlement to Estrada’s all-out war⁶², a policy shift much influenced by the AFP leadership.

The kidnapping spree by the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and the attacks against the U.S. on 11 September 2001 had complicated the conflict with the MILF. The military suspected collusion between the ASG and the MILF that had reportedly allowed the use of its camps, including Camp Abubakar and others in Central Mindanao as training ground for militant *mujahedins* affiliated with the Indonesian-based Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda.⁶³ According to Doronila, Estrada sought to defeat the MILF in order to be able to negotiate with it from a position of strength and determine the terms of the settlement.

By early July, the AFP had taken 49 MILF camps leading the government to claim victory. Insensitive to Muslim tradition and culture, Estrada celebrated the purported victory by eating *lechon*⁶⁴ and drinking beer in Camp Abubakar. Instead of capitulating, the MILF went to war and

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 641.

⁵⁸ The SRA is a comprehensive set of anti-poverty interventions directed primarily towards various sectors of society.

⁵⁹ Danguilan, “Bullets and Bandages”, pp. 29-31.

⁶⁰ Amando Doronila, *The Fall of Joseph Estrada: The Inside Story* (Paisg City: Anvil Publishing and Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2001), p. 70

⁶¹ From AFP recapitulation of MILF strength, February 2005.

⁶² Doronila, *The Fall of Joseph Estrada*, p. 70.

⁶³ Carolina G. Hernandez, “The Security Environment in ASEAN Since 9/11: An ASEAN Perspective”, a paper presented at the International Conference on “Reassessing Japan-ASEAN Relations: Between Expectations and Realities”, ISEAS, Singapore, 30 September-01 October 2003, forthcoming in an edited volume of the same title by Chin Kin Wah.

⁶⁴ Lechon is a whole roasted pig that is the center piece in large and important Filipino celebrations.

became unresponsive to negotiations.⁶⁵ There was a net increase in MILF strength from 10,855 armed forces in 1997 to 13,459 in 1998, to 15,693 in 1999, to 12,571 in 2000. Its firearms also increased from 8,115 in 1997 to 10,227 in 1998, to 11,279 in 1999, but declined somewhat in 2000 at 9,129 firearms.⁶⁶

Peace talks with the communist insurgents stalled due to the conclusion of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) with the U.S. to which the NDF objected. Aware of the split within the ranks of the communist movement, Estrada convened the National Peace Forum (NPF) in order to conduct separate peace talks with factions of the communist movement opposed to the NDF. Nilo de la Cruz and Arturo Tabara had agreed to participate in the NPF talks. In 2000, the *Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Manggagawa* (RPA) and the Alex Boncayao Brigade (ABB) concluded peace agreements with the government. However, the communist insurgency mainly by the Sison camp persisted with its strength estimated at 6,798 in 1997, 8,950 in 1998, 10,620 in 1999, 11,255 in 2000, 11,930 in 2001, and 11,930 in 2002. Firearms also increased from 5,408 in 1997 to 7,159 in 2002. Affected *barangays* rose from 642 in 1997 to 1,969 in 2002.⁶⁷ Another set of figures here from AFP? These figures show a progressive increase in various indicators of communist strength during the three-year tenure of Estrada. Failure to address the root causes and focusing instead on the victory position through the all-out war policy helped keep the insurgency alive.

IV. The Arroyo Administration's Approach to Armed Conflict

Since January 2001, the government's approach to armed conflict has been to pursue a negotiated settlement both with the communist insurgency and Muslim separatism. In this regard, despite the stalling of the peace talks with the NDF, back channel negotiations have helped keep the lines of communications with the Sison camp open. This approach was sustained despite the declaration by the U.S., Canada, and the European Union that the CPP-NPA-NDF is a foreign terrorist organization (FTO). This branding by Philippine allies in the global campaign against terrorism has not brought back channel talks between the two sides to a halt. However, it remained a stumbling block to the resumption of formal talks, even as third party Norway has urged their resumption.

In 2002, the military launched a five-year counterinsurgency program involving both the military and civilian agencies of the government. Called *Bantay Laya*, this Internal Security Operation plan is based on the National Internal Security Plan (NISP) formulated by the DND as well as the National Military Strategy developed and adopted by the General Headquarters (GHQ) of the AFP. *Bantay Laya's* strategic goal "is to decisively defeat the insurgents' armed groups in order to obtain and maintain peace for national development".⁶⁸ It applies to the CPP-NPA, the ASG, and the Southern Philippine Separatist Groups (SPSGs referring to the MNLF, the Misuari Breakaway Group or MBG, and the MILF). This goal reflects the victory and institutional positions rolled into one, with the logic that victory is necessary for national development to take place.

According to the plan, the AFP's mission is to continue to intensify its nationwide operations to destroy the ASG at the earliest time, decisively defeat the NPA, and contain the SPSGs thereby establishing a physically and psychologically secure environment favorable for national development. In pursuit of these goals, *Bantay Laya's* immediate, medium, and long term objectives were (1) to immediately defeat the ASG and other terrorist groups soonest, stop the growth of the CPP-NPA during 2002, and actively contain the SPSGs; (2) to preempt the ASG resurgence by maintaining troop presence, to reduce the CPP-NPA affected areas, manpower and firearms, and dismantle its

⁶⁵ Doronila, *The Fall of Joseph Estrada*, p.72.

⁶⁶ MILF Quick-Look Indicators, National Security Council Secretariat, from J-2 AFP data.

⁶⁷ CPP-NPA Quick-Look Indicators, National Security Council Secretariat, from J-2, AFP data. Another set of statistics coming from the AFP is provided in Table 1 and Graphs A, and C-F.

⁶⁸ The discussion of *Bantay Laya* is culled from AFP ISO Plan Bantay Laya, version 4 February 2005.

politico-military structures, and to degrade the military capability of the SPSGs in the medium term, and (3) among other long term goals, to prevent the resurgence of the ASG, to resolve the CPP-NPA threat, and compel the SPSGs to renounce their separatist goal.

Four strategic principles govern *Bantay Laya*: (1) the strategy of holistic approach (SHA) based on the NISP's grand strategy to defeat insurgency throughout the country consisting of four major components, namely:

- Political, legal, and diplomatic component seeking to tap the full cooperation of the local government units and civil society to promote good governance and the participation of citizens in the implementation of the NISP; highlighting legal and diplomatic responses; and vigorously implementing the government's comprehensive six paths to peace process with the DILG as the lead convenor and the DND/AFP, DOJ, DFA, OPAPP, and OPARD as partners;
- Socioeconomic/psychological component that devises innovative plans and programs to eradicate or alleviate poverty and meet development needs especially of areas in conflict; includes psychosocial interventions taking into consideration the cultural, ethno-linguistic, religious diversity and deep historical roots of armed conflicts with DSWD as the lead convenor, and the NAPC, OPARD, NEDA, DOH, DPED, DA, DAR, DPWH, DND/AFP, DILG/PNP, AND OPAPP as partners;
- Information component referring to the overall effort for peace advocacy, the promotion of public confidence in government and support for government efforts to overcome the insurgency by using tri-media and interpersonal approaches; including efforts to counter insurgent propaganda and other psychological actions with the OPS as the lead convenor and DND/AFP, DILG/PNP, OPAPP, NAPC, AND DSWD as partners; and
- Peace and order/security component consisting of responses aimed at protecting the people from the insurgents and providing a secure environment for national development; seeking to directly address the CPP-NPA and the armed conflict itself through clearing and holding operations, programs to defend communities, protect the people, and secure vital installations and national assets with the DND/AFP as lead convenor and the DILG/PNP and the National Security Adviser as partners.

(2) the strategy of Win Hold Win (WHW) that due to limited resources sets priority targets through the Unified Commands and focuses the AFP's combat power to win against the principal threat group identified while using minimum force to hold and contain the less priority targets. When priority targets are won, combat power is applied to the next priority target in line until all the sources of threats are removed. WHW allows for flexibility in that when the threat assessment and prioritization proves inaccurate, the AFP could focus its combat power on the more serious threat areas. This strategy entails the acceptance of some risks in the less priority target areas; (3) the strategy of sustained operations means that military campaigns against targets will be carried out without let up until they are decisively defeated; and (4) *Lambat Bitag* strategic precepts of rapid conclusion, gradual constriction, one-on-one, and keyhole approach were to be used in the conduct of operations under the new ISO *Bantay Laya*.

Although *Bantay Laya* is a continuation of *Lambat Bitag*, the new ISO has modified the traditional methodology of clear, hold, consolidate, and develop. Instead, the first of its three operational principles is a modified clear, hold, support methodology where the last two phases of consolidation and development are now combined into the support phase. This is an acceptance of the fact that the military, though not in charge of the consolidation and development phases has often found itself performing the tasks of civilian agencies for which the military has not received training. In the new ISO, the AFP is simply a support agent in the consolidation and development phases. The clear phase involves the conduct of combat, intelligence, and psychological (the so-called triad concept) operations to militarily defeat the insurgents and launch SOT operations to dismantle their politico-military structures. The hold phase involves the use of the territorial defense forces to limit the freedom of action and movement, resources, and mass base support of the insurgents to prevent

their incursion and resurgence in the *barangays* to protect the people, defend communities, and secure vital installations. The support phase is divided into two sub-phases where consolidation and development activities could be undertaken mainly by civilian agencies. The AFP's role, within the limits of its capability would be to strengthen government control and authority in the contested *barangays* and help develop local government capability during consolidation, and play a supportive role to the civilian government agencies during the development sub-phases.

Its second operational principle is the special operations team (SOT) doctrine of *Lambat Bitag*, which is the triad of combat, intelligence, and civil-military operations, while its third principle is the organization of the Integrated Territorial Defense System (ITDS) involving the use of civilian armed force geographical units active auxiliary (CAA, a carry over of the CAFGU concept), civilian volunteer organizations (CVOs), and other anti-communist *barangay*-based organizations. The PNP is responsible for the conduct of law enforcement operations.

The *Bantay Laya* pursues the institutional policy position premised on a prior attainment of victory against the insurgents. The continuing lack of policy coherence could explain the prevailing uncertain state of the peace processes with the NDF and the MILF. Violent encounters between government troops on the one hand, and communist insurgents or MILF forces on the other continued to take place, even as back channel negotiations were being carried out with the NDF and a ceasefire agreement was in effect with the MILF.

In the meantime, statistics on the armed conflicts suggest that the end of armed conflict may not yet be in sight. According to an official source, CPP-NPA strength has been reduced from 11,930 men in 2001, to 9,257 men in 2002, 8,892 men in 2003, and 8,240 men in 2004. There has also been a net decrease in the number of firearms it held from 7,159 in 2001, 6,126 in 2002, 6,133 in 2003, and 6,162 in 2004. However, there has been an increase in the number of influenced and less influenced *barangays*. In 2001, there were 215 influenced and 1,354 less influenced *barangays*. This increased to 501 influenced and 1,893 less influenced *barangays* in 2002, 542 influenced and 1,948 less influenced *barangays* in 2003, and 661 influenced and 1,849 less influenced *barangays* in 2004⁶⁹ (See Tables 1-3 and Graphs A-J for various statistics on the CPP-NPA, the MILF, and the ASG). A cursory look at these statistics would indicate that the fight over hearts and minds of communities does not depend on the number of armed forces and their firearms, but on other factors. Other statistics on the CPP-NPA are derived from newspaper reports culled over a two year period and are discussed below.⁷⁰

As of the end of December 2002, the AFP reported that the communist rebel strength nationwide was 9,257 members belonging to two factions. They had 6,126 firearms, maintained 105 guerilla fronts, and affected 2,394 *barangays* throughout the country. By mid-2003, the number of *barangays* infiltrated by the NPA and its front organizations had increased to 2,571 or 6 per cent of all the country's *barangays*. During troop visits conducted in 2004 prior to the May elections, this writer found an apparent increase of NPA infiltrated *barangays* in the Agusan provinces and those on Panay Island. Troops reported the collection of permit to campaign fees by the NPA in areas throughout the country had infiltrated, influenced, or controlled. Intelligence reports also indicated that left-wing party list members affiliated with the NDF were contributing part of their pork barrel funds to the NPA who in turn used their influence, including through the NPA to support NDF-affiliated parties during the 2004 elections.

There were also reports of the forging of a tactical alliance between the CPP-NPA in several places in Mindanao during 2003-2004. This was partly due to the military offensive launched by the AFP against the MILF in the 200-hectare Buliok complex in Pikit, Maguindanao in mid-February 2003. The NPA sought to relieve the intense military pressure on the MILF by launching attacks against government troops, military, police, and civilian installations in Central Mindanao. Officially

⁶⁹ From an AFP recapitulation of CPP-NPA strength, February 2005.

⁷⁰ These statistics were culled from various LEGSI Reports during 2002 and 2003 submitted by ISDS to Lehman Brothers-Eurasia Group, New York City.

billed as a campaign against the kidnap-for-ransom Pentagon Gang (PG) seeking refuge in the Buliok complex held by the MILF, the military operations proved to be directed against the MILF itself. Then Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes admitted that the real target of the offensive was the MILF. Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, Eduardo Ermita said the MILF violated the ceasefire agreement of August 2001 when it massed troops in the Pikit area. Suspected PG members and MILF forces reportedly ambushed a group of military engineers, killing one soldier and wounding six others, prompting the offensive in Pikit.

Lack of consensus within the Arroyo administration on the policy for meeting the MILF challenge was seen in the initial hesitation/confusion about the military offensive in Pikit. Arroyo called a halt to the operations that had already begun the day before, only to reverse her order soon after on the pretext that the ceasefire order of the previous day had lapsed without the MILF attending a ceasefire meeting she had called. The MILF spokesperson, Eid Kabalu alleged that despite Arroyo's ceasefire order, soldiers continued to attack rebel positions.

In this instance, Oquist's three policy positions appeared to compete or clash against each other: offer just enough concession to entice the opponents to sit down and talk peace; obtain military victory; and address the root causes of the problem through institutional development. In Pikit, the second option appeared to have gained ground. Defense Secretary Reyes, the chief architect of the Pikit policy seemed to have prevailed over others in the cabinet that took other positions. He ordered the soldiers "to capture and occupy" the Buliok compound where the MILF and PG members were holed up, claiming that the offensive to rout the MILF was what "the silent majority [of Christians, Muslims, and *lumads*] in Mindanao wanted". This is a classic victory policy position.

The campaign involved about 5,000 AFP troops and militia. Prior to the offensive, some 20,000 civilians fled the area for fear of being caught in the crossfire. The offensive resulted in the initial displacement of some 25,000 civilians according to the AFP. Other figures stood at 31,000 according to the responsible relief official, while the figures were 41,000 and 51,000 in other reports. The casualties were heavy, and the offensive spread to other places as the MILF attacked more villages elsewhere in Central Mindanao to relieve pressure from the AFP in the Buliok complex.

As the Pikit evacuees returned to their homes, some 78,000 people fled from theirs in Maguindanao as a result of the spill over of the war in Pikit into neighboring provinces. The weeks that followed saw the bombing of power plants and other facilities, at times plunging 90 per cent of Mindanao island in darkness. The Davao bombings and violent encounters between government troops and the MILF followed in rapid succession. In March 2003, it was estimated that some 42,000 families (and nearly 230,000 evacuees) were affected by the Buliok campaign and its aftermath. The military presence in Central Mindanao was strengthened, even as it vowed to abide by the government's pursuit of peace through the peace talks with the MILF. In April 2003, Arroyo launched the Mindanao National Initiative (*Mindanao Natin*), a measure that falls mainly under the institutional mode. Funded at P5.5 billion and covering over 5,000 *barangays* in the ARMM, *Mindanao Natin* "is a massive interrelated social, economic, and cultural program that will strike deep into the roots of the conflict", she said then.

MILF chief military officer, Mohamad al-Haj Murad Ibrahim from his base in Malaysia stressed that the MILF attacks were not against civilians, but the CAFGUs and the CVOs. The AFP however, claimed that the CAFGUs and CVOs were in the area to protect the communities from armed intruders who might sow terror among their members. The entry of third party mediators Malaysia and the OIC in June 2003 after a meeting between Arroyo and Malaysian Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir in Tokyo helped stabilize the situation. The creation of a monitoring team composed of OIC countries and its arrival on site to monitor the ceasefire was a further boost to the moderation of the otherwise violent situation in Mindanao. By the end of 2004, formal peace talks between the GRP and the MILF that had been planned to take place in Malaysia and brokered by the OIC as early as the

last quarter of 2002 has yet to take place. More importantly, the persistence of policy incoherence has also led to the persistence of “a distant peace”⁷¹ for the country.

V. Towards Policy Coherence in the Peace Process

The failure of the succession of counterinsurgency strategies applied to communist insurgency and Moro separatism since the Marcos administration could be traced to the lack of policy coherence. These strategies, while loaded either on the side of the pacification, victory, or institutional positions included elements of the other positions resulting in policy incoherence where the various agencies that were supposed to implement the components of the strategy failed to coordinate their activities. In many instances, there had been inordinate reliance on the military to implement even the components of the strategy earmarked for implementation by civilian agencies at various levels. Moreover, the actors that signed the peace agreement reached by the parties in the conflict were not the same as the ones that funded and implemented it. Policy incoherence resulted from the competing policy positions found in the strategy, as well as the actors involved in the signing, funding, and implementation of the peace agreement reached by the parties in the conflict.

At the same time, the implementation of the right and left hand approaches that combined military operations on the one hand, and social and economic development on the other did not have the necessary sort of coordination between the military and civilian implementers to ensure effectiveness. Both the military and civilian agencies remained wedded to their own framework, language and jargon, as well as tactics. The military continued to view the insurgents and separatist forces as “enemies” or “pests” that need to be defeated or weeded out. Observance and protection of human rights during military clearing and holding operations were held more in the breach by the armed forces, the police, and paramilitary organizations. The civilian agencies either failed to take over from the military or to ensure that the left hand approach would replace the right hand approach during the consolidation and development stages. The new ISO *Bantay Laya* is supposed to address some of these problems as it is hewed closely to the NISP. It identified the responsibilities of the DND/AFP, the DILG/PNP, and the main civilian government agencies in charge of various phases of the ISO plan, including the convenor agency at each phase.

Moreover, during 2004 the Arroyo administration established a National Task Force on Convergence Strategy to develop and adopt a common framework and language for the peace process to harmonize the right and left hand approaches in dealing with armed conflict. This is a response of the executive branch to armed conflict, although the task force is an interagency group. The task force has taken the position that not only would it be necessary to adopt a common framework and language for the two approaches, but it would also use the concept of human security as part of the common framework. It also argued that human security is part of and complementary to national security. Without human security, it would not be possible to achieve national security. Persuaded by the advantage of the institutional approach to address the root causes of armed conflict, an approach already in place through the six paths to peace and the three principles guiding the peace process, the task force is certain to uphold this approach. When adopted and its implementers readied to ensure its effective implementation, this common framework and language could resolve the problem of policy incoherence in the peace process. However, the need to develop a culture of peace among all the stakeholders must also be addressed, with the military whose mind set has been traditionally shaped by its mission being a priority area for retraining.

VI. Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Throughout more than three decades of armed communist insurgency and Muslim separatism, the government’s responses have been a compromise between civilian and military interpretations and perceptions of the armed threats and how best to respond to them. Moreover, this tension between

⁷¹ The term “a distant peace” is from a book authored by peace maker Ed Garcia of International Alert.

civilian and military authorities is reflected in the mix of government and military responses to these threats as seen in the right and left hand approaches to counterinsurgency from the 1950s onwards. The balance between the right hand (primarily the use of military force) and the left hand (socioeconomic and political measures to address the root causes and win the hearts and minds of the people) tilted in favor of one side, depending on the overall political, economic, and social environmental context, the strategic situation on the ground, and on the personality and policy preferences of political and military leaders.

Thus, we find the predominance of the military solution to these armed challenges during martial law and dictatorship because the military was a main partner of the civilian leader in governance. In this sense, the civilian leadership was dependent on the military for political survival, yet exercised influence over the AFP as the source of its increased role in society and politics in a scale not seen before. The military's influence in the counterinsurgency strategy was also determined by the rise of the CPP-NPA and the MNLF soon after the imposition of martial law and their growth during the rest of the Marcos era, as well as the growing opposition to his rule from the broader sociopolitical spectrum. Thus, OPLAN *Katagan* focused on the defense of the state, personified in Marcos.

Aquino's initial approach to these armed threats was informed by the nature of her coalition government that represented all shades of the political spectrum. However, the persistence of the military's political role, much boosted by the breakaway group's role in EDSA 1 and the AFP's neutralization of the coup threats against her administration led Aquino to unsheathe the sword of war as preferred by her defense and military associates. Also still handicapped by R.A. 1700, the failure by the left to become part of EDSA 1 did not give it the opportunity to become part of the political coalition. Thus, communist insurgency continued to be fought through armed struggle. Aquino's strategy against these armed groups was a combination of the right and left hand approaches as seen in the military's OPLANs *Mamamayan* and *Lambat Bitag*.

When Ramos came to power, his understanding of the importance of an enabling sociopolitical environment for economic recovery and growth, and his need to win support from a military institution in which he was not so popular led him to pursue the policy of national reconciliation and general amnesty for interested parties from the left, the Muslim separatist ranks, and the rebel military. National reconciliation was pursued while the AFP still implemented *Lambat Bitag*, a combination of the right hand and the left hand approaches. The left hand was also strengthened by the pursuit of negotiated peace with all the so-called enemies under the National Unification Commission and the offer of amnesty under the National Amnesty Commission. Peace with the MNLF and the quieting of military rebellion, even if temporary were his principal accomplishments in this field.

The three years of the Estrada presidency saw the rise in the strength both of the communist insurgency and the MILF. Failing in a negotiated settlement, he went for an all-out war against the MILF, taking its main stronghold Camp Abubakar and 48 other camps. The defense and military establishment pursued the policy of all-out war as it is consistent with its own interpretation of how the armed conflicts could be settled before national development could prosper. Stalled peace talks with the NDF reaffirmists in Utrecht led Estrada to convene the National Peace Forum that sought separate peace agreements with the rejectionist factions led by Nilo de la Cruz and Arturo Tabara. His persona and career as an actor that always won his battles must have led him to adopt a "macho" posture in fighting the MILF, a posture that reflects the military's own preferences.

President Arroyo pursues the right and left hand approaches in dealing with armed conflict. Peace talks with both the NDF and the MILF form part of counterinsurgency, at the same time that military operations - to prevent these groups to consolidate and increase their strength for sustained armed struggle - continue on the ground. Tension between the right and left hands continue and are being sorted out through the National Task Force on Convergence Strategy where a common

framework and language is sought to be formulated for adoption by the military and non-military agencies involved in the campaign for peace and reconciliation.

As in previous administrations, the Arroyo administration continues to be responsive to military views and perspectives, despite having earned political legitimacy through the May 2004 elections. Persistent rumors of destabilization by a multicolored group (retired generals, left wing leaders, political losers, frustrated business people, the urban poor, and others) would keep the military as an influential actor not only in the campaign against the NDF and MILF, but also on the broader political stage. Thus, the strategic goal of the new ISO *Bantay Laya* is to decisively defeat the armed insurgents in order to establish an environment conducive to national development – meaning, the adoption of the victory policy position before the implementation of the institutional policy position. To its credit, however, *Bantay Laya* understands the importance of a comprehensive approach to armed conflicts by also recognizing the need for a multi-dimensional approach, including addressing the root causes of armed conflicts. In this regard, it recognizes the distinctive roles to be played by civilian government agencies working together with the military and the police.

Beyond the adoption of a comprehensive approach to armed conflict and a common framework and language among the various government actors and stakeholders to meet armed challenges to the government, it is important for government itself to adopt a coherent policy in this area so that the military could be asked to follow suit. While government policy remains incoherent, it cannot ask the AFP to do otherwise. The periodic assessment of the peace process in Mindanao by the UNDP under Paul Oquist has stressed the importance of policy coherence in Mindanao. This might as well apply to the policy *vis-à-vis* the communist insurgency as well as to military responses to armed conflict. Oquist's categorization and analysis of three policy positions that do not meld together and in fact work at cross purposes, and how they have contributed to lack of significant progress in the peace process in Mindanao is compelling.

The first position Oquist calls the pacification and demobilization position (pacification position) consists in negotiating as few concessions as required to achieve the cessation of hostilities and a return by combatants to civilian life. The second is the military victory and return to normalcy position (victory position) seeking the military defeat of the MILF, the political defeat of the MNLF or its marginalization, the extermination of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and other terrorist and kidnap-for-ransom groups, and advocating a return to the *status quo ante bellum*. The third advocates the construction of institutions for peace in the ecological, economic, social, political, and cultural spheres over the short, medium, and long terms through consultative and participatory mechanisms. This is called the institutional peace building position (institutional position). Since the beginning of the Moro separatist conflict, the victory position has been applied to Mindanao. On the other hand, the institutional position is seen for example in the comprehensive, integral, and holistic peace policy of the Ramos and Arroyo administrations as well as the autonomy for peace concept of the GRP-MNLF agreement.⁷² It also finds expression in some aspects of *Bantay Laya*.

The pacification position seeks the cessation of hostilities and demobilization of the insurgent force through minimal concessions. It may be achieved through cooptation of the Moro leadership, or the application of the divide and rule principle. Each side tries to strengthen its negotiating position. The victory position yields short-term results and does not sufficiently address the root causes of armed conflict. Unless accompanied by other measures to make peace sustainable, peace will remain a distant goal.⁷³

On the other hand, the victory position is highly resilient and usually pursued during the early stages of armed conflict. However, large-scale military operations accompanied by human rights violation and repression can expand and protract small insurgencies, as they had done so in the Philippine context. Military stalemate could produce strong temptations to launch large military

⁷² Oquist, *Mindano and Beyond*, p. 6.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

operations to achieve victory. Addictive in effect, the victory position requires a crisis or external influence to make the parties realize that military victory is not possible, and other outcomes are inevitable and desirable.⁷⁴

The core of the institutional position is the adoption and implementation of policies for sustainable, long-term peace, including the articulation of institutions to implement and consolidate those policies. Apart from creating a culture of peace, it requires the institutionalization of economic, social, political, and administrative structures and processes across the short, medium, and long terms. Here, policy coherence is necessary, as well as a citizen's peace constituency sharing ownership of these structures, processes, and goals. A peace agreement - sought by the pacification position as an end goal - is seen as only a framework for subsequent institutional transformation and development by the institutional position. Its implementation requires multiple actors at both the domestic and international levels.⁷⁵

As noted above, the military's institutional response to armed conflict is also a mix of the three policy positions. It may be difficult and a major challenge to expect the AFP to immediately abandon the victory position that is organic to its mission and training. A window of opportunity could lie in the common framework and language to develop convergence between the right and the left hand approaches to armed conflict that could create spaces for confidence building among all the stakeholders, including the military. Such a convergence framework also requires capacity building for human security and sustainable peace for all stakeholders including the AFP.

A. Recommendations

1. Given the difficulties posed by lack of policy coherence, a first recommendation would be for government to make a clear choice of which option it would take. Once government makes this decision, the military would have to abide by it. Decades of armed conflict unresolved by government and military responses that were dominated by the pacification and victory positions point to the institutional policy option as the preferred option. Because it addresses the root causes, is comprehensive, holistic, and inclusive of stakeholders and ownership, puts a high value upon institutions and processes, in the institutional policy option could lie the solution to armed conflict.
2. It is clear that an approach that focuses on state or regime security rather than human security cannot yield sustainable peace. State security victories can sow the seeds for future conflicts, according to Oquist. Hence, the adoption of the human security framework is a necessary component of a policy to redress armed conflict, as it "could promote safety, well-being, dignity, rights, and justice for all".
3. The lessons from the Mindanao peace process point to the need for consistency among the actors where those who negotiate and forge a peace agreement should also finance and implement it. It is also important for the peace process to be put under the authority of a civilian leader of probity, integrity, independence, and competence, one that can mobilize all sectors to pull their weight behind the peace process.
4. Government must undertake measures that would make the expected utility of violence outweigh its opportunity cost by making it harder to gain by violence than by production.⁷⁶ This is because of the fact that the option for violence is taken by those who expect to profit more from it than from engaging in productive activities. It would not be surprising if it were

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

⁷⁶ Paul Collier and Anke Hoefler, "Greed and grievance in civil war", World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 2355, 2001.

established that many groups continue to gain from armed conflict in the country and would therefore not genuinely seek its resolution.

5. There is a need for greater civil society involvement in the peace process. They can serve as independent and non-partisan monitors to ensure that the process is on track and provide timely and accurate information about the situation on the ground to other actors. Partisan monitors can only exacerbate rather than alleviate armed conflict.
6. The output of the National Task Force on Convergence Strategy to harmonize the right and left hand approaches to armed conflict that would craft a common framework and language among those involved in the process, i.e., the civilian actors in and out of government, and the military, and all other stakeholders should be supported by all stakeholders. Training to change the mind set among all actors and stakeholders that would put the institutional policy position and human security at the center of the peace policy, as well as the building of mutual trust and confidence among them and their capacity for carrying out this task should be a critical component of the task force's output.
7. The military needs to be more effectively subordinated to civilian authority in order that its members do not undermine the policy option chosen by the government. Here, military reform of the sort recommended by both the Davide and Feliciano Commissions are necessary. In addition, the imposition of penalty for military insubordination that subverts the implementation of policies civilian authority has adopted must be made more swift and costly.
8. In this regard, politicians and other civilian actors need to understand the dynamics and context of the institutionalization of the supremacy of civilian authority within which the military's subordination to civilian authority can be effectively achieved. The exercise of oversight functions, however, must ensure that the institution it seeks to subordinate does not get destroyed in the process.

Appendix

Table 1 – CPP-NPA-NDF Statistics, 1968-2004 (Source: AFP)

YEAR	STRENGTH	FIREARMS	AFFECTED BARANGAYS			ARMED INC	NON-ARMED	GFs
			INFLU	LESS INFLU	TOTAL			
1968	95	35						
1969	155	-						
1970	650	-						
1971	1,100	-						
1972	1,320	1,520						
1973	1,900	1,510				310		
1974	1,800	1,600				391		
1975	1,800	1,620				478		
1976	1,200	1,000				401		
1977	2,300	1,700				353		
1978	2,760	1,900				515		
1979	4,900	1,960				697		
1980	5,600	2,640				880		
1981	6,010	2,540	1,173	2,147	3,320	1,195		17
1982	7,750	2,390	949	1,689	2,688	1,726		22
1983	10,600	4,620	1,588	3,075	4,663	2,430		38
1984	14,360	8,350	1,816	3,710	5,526	3,720		40
1985	22,500	11,250	2,360	4,659	7,019	3,877		44
1986	24,430	12,120	3,066	5,430	8,496	2,953		58
1987	25,200	15,500	3,066	4,993	8,059	3,118		61
1988	23,060	12,260	2,853	4,999	7,852	3,525		60
1989	18,640	12,060	2,141	4,398	6,539	3,597		58
1990	17,720	11,700	1,460	3,381	4,841	3,261		57
1991	14,800	10,510	1,000	2,625	3,625	3,272		47
1992	11,920	8,730	470	1,569	2,039	2,292	500	41
1993	8,350	7,600	266	718	984	1,517	690	46
1994	6,930	5,860	138	487	625	1,120	779	47
1995	6,025	5,298	44	401	445	891	2,338	48
1996	6,728	5,347	365	469	534	497	2,781	49
1997	6,806	5,402	69	573	642	460	2,403	57
1998	8,948	5,841	90	682	772	525	2,373	58
1999	16,616	6,212	150	834	984	630	2,749	71
2000	11,255	6,851	202	1,077	1,279	751	2,984	96
2001	11,930	7,159	215	1,354	1,569	802	3,443	100
2002	9,257	6,126	501	1,893	2,394	790	3,286	105
2003	8,892	6,133	542	1,948	2,490	817	3,453	106
2004	8,240	6,162	661	1,849	2,510	798	3,832	106

Legend:

INFLU – Influenced

INC – Incidents

GFs – Guerilla Fronts

Table 2 - Fatalities Resulting from AFP and NPA Armed Incidents (1984-2004)

YEAR	FATALITIES		
	AFP / PNP	NPA	Civilians
1984	1,115	1,321	1,100
1985	1,282	2,134	1,362
1986	1,008	1,245	944
1987	1,107	1,702	1,003
1988	946	1,964	1,006
1989	830	2,038	868
1990	792	1,710	632
1991	776	1,606	538
1992	600	1,233	288
1993	214	640	148
1994	146	313	153
1995	73	183	154
1996	45	121	99
1997	67	93	133
1998	72	114	142
1999	116	181	137
2000	217	225	169
2001	163	223	191
2002	164	179	165
2003	223	231	195
2004	184	207	177

Note: No available data from 1968-1983

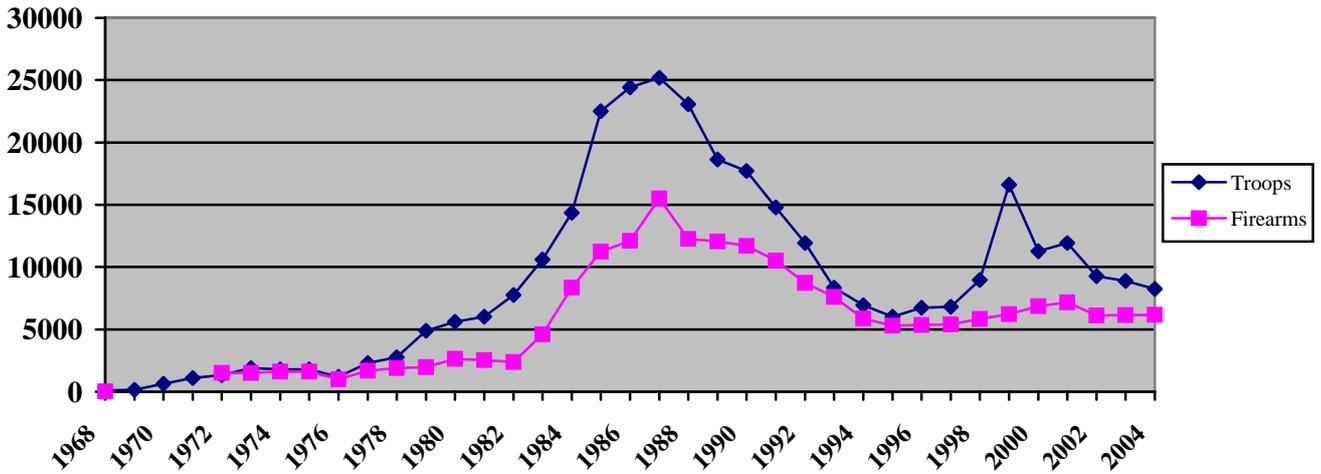
Table 3 – MILF Statistics (Source: AFP)

YEAR	STRENGTH	FAS	AFTD BRYS	VIOLENT INC
1992	5,660	3,570		23
1993	5,160	6,520		90
1994	5,980	7,730		269
1995	8,270	8,020		168
1996	8,000	6,960		323
1997	10,860	8,120		355
1998	13,460	10,230		354
1999	15,690	11,270		610
2000	12,570	9,130		1,303
2001	12,450	9,260		399
2002	12,240	8,910		372
2003	12,080	8,760	1,554	846
2004	11,099	8,166	1,680	122

Table 4 – ASG Statistics (Source: AFP)

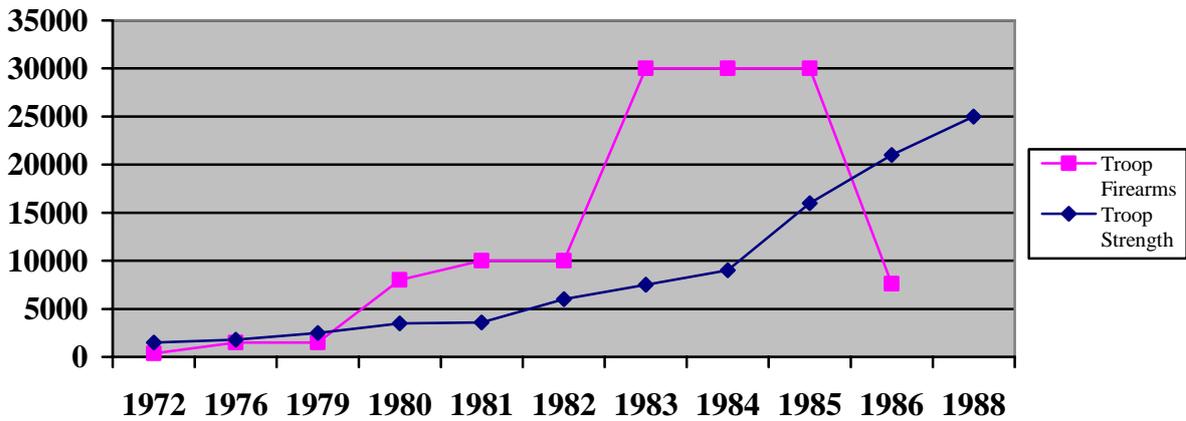
YEAR	STRENGTH	FAS	AFTD BRGYS	VIOLENT INC
1991				2
1992				18
1993	120			56
1994	580	230		52
1995	650	230		65
1996	895	265		100
1997	1,030	330		138
1998	1,150	390		82
1999	1,100	380		75
2000	1,270	390		240
2001	800	390		275
2002	460	360		167
2003	479	398	177	136
2004	425	378	177	83

Graph A: NPA Troops and Firearms Strength (1968-2004)



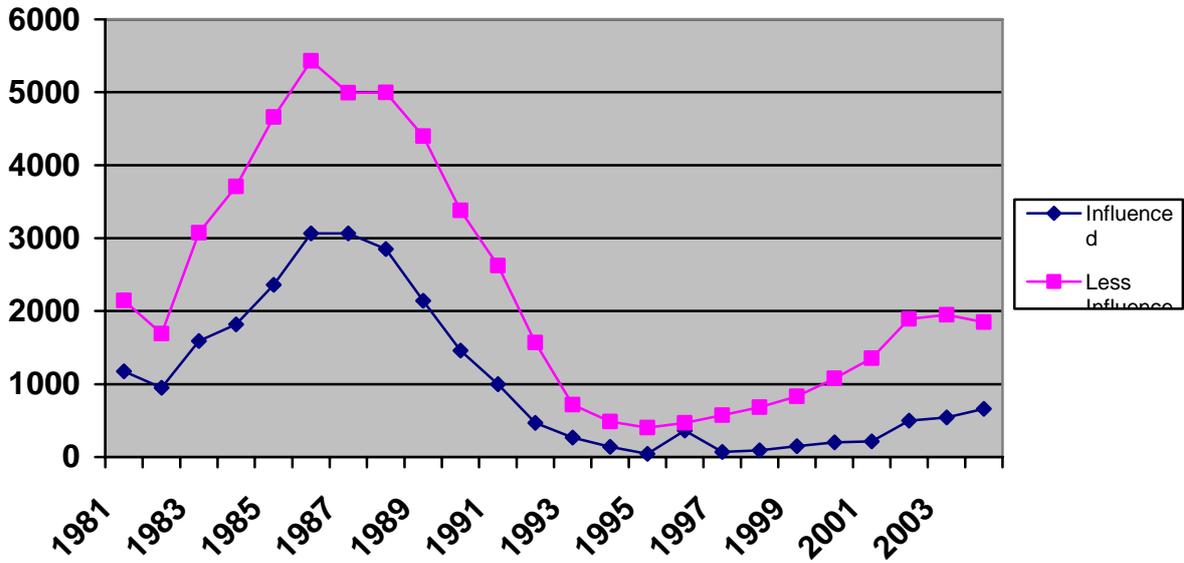
Source: AFP Statistics

Graph B: NPA Strength Estimates (1972-1988)



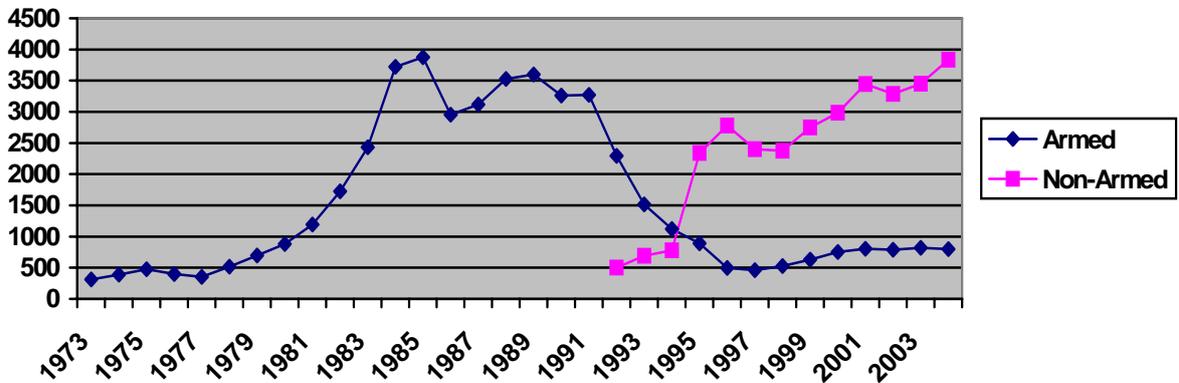
Note: These estimates were culled from official estimates given by the CPP-NPA-NDF through their publications (Liberation and Ang Bayan)

Graph C: NPA Affected Barangays (1981-2004)



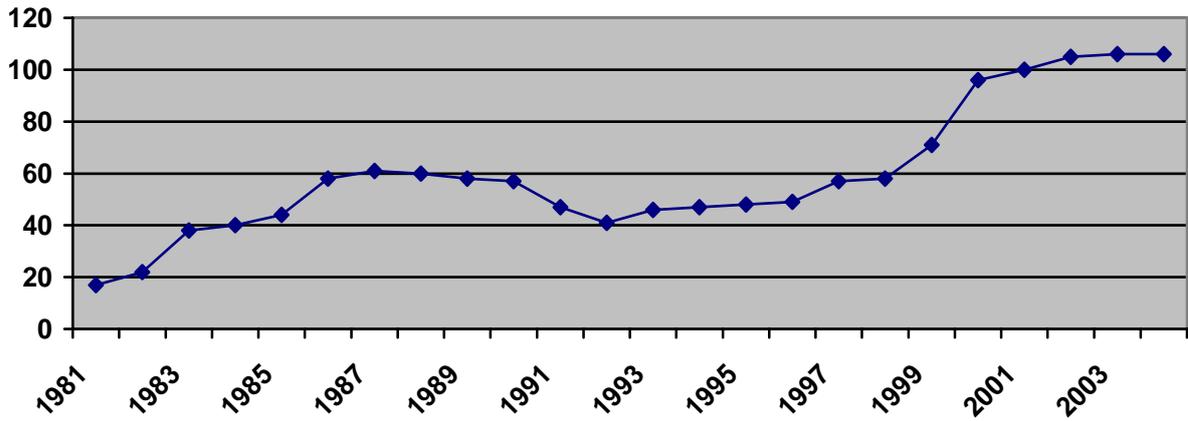
Source: AFP Statistics (No data available from 1968-1980)

Graph D: NPA and AFP Incidents (1973-2004)



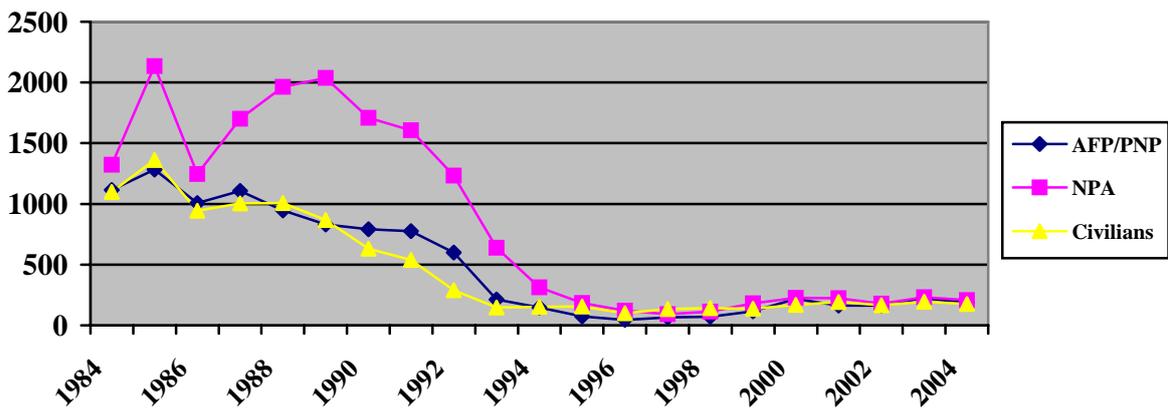
Source: AFP Statistics

Graph E: NPA Guerilla Fronts (1981-2004)



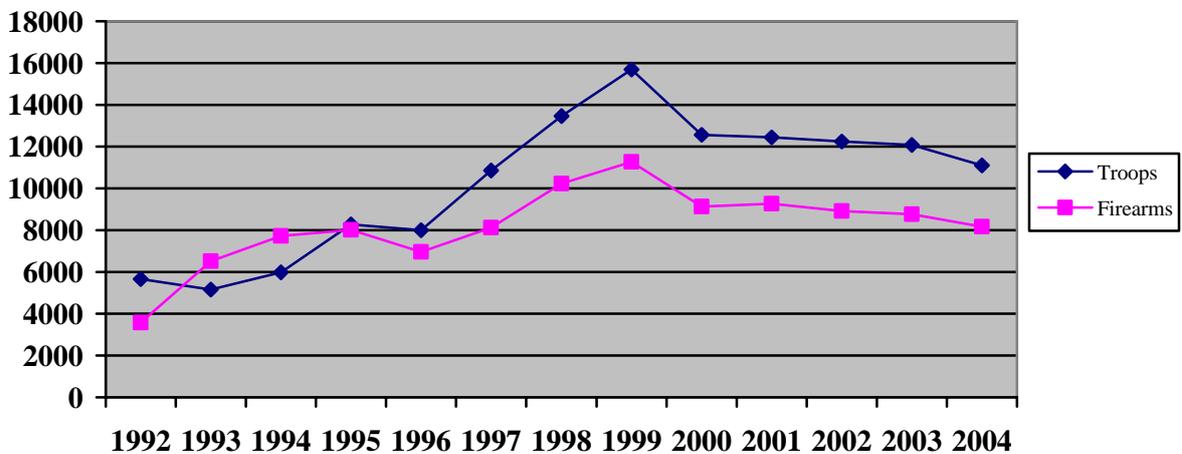
Source: AFP Statistics (No data from 1968-1979)

Graph F: Fatalities Resulting from AFP and NPA Armed Incidents (1984-2004)

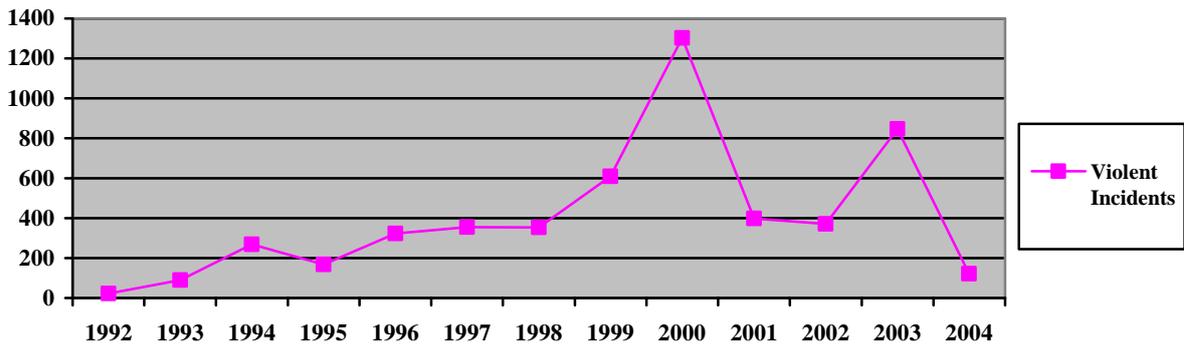


Source: AFP Statistics (No data from 1968-1983)

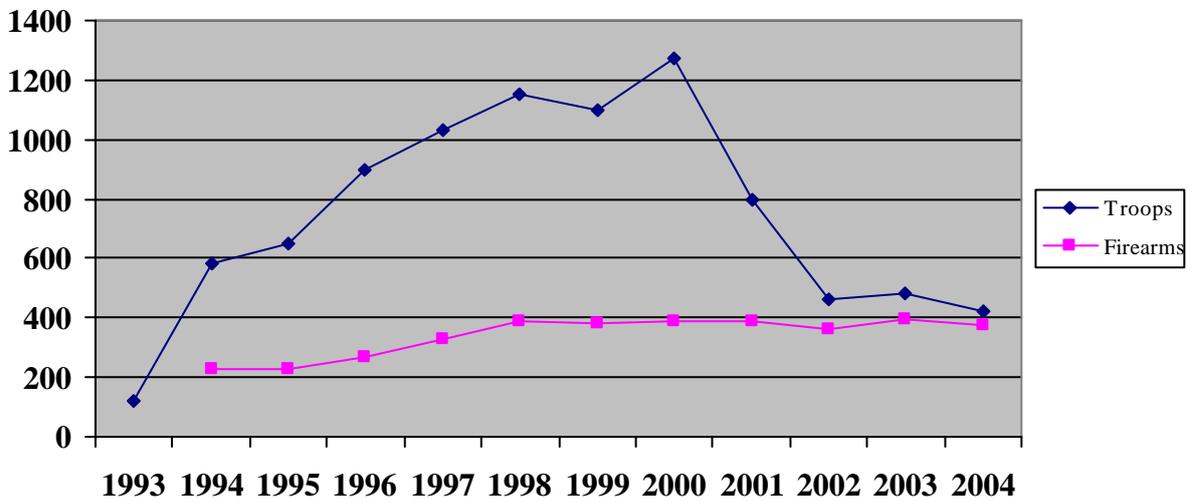
Graph G: MILF Troops and Firearms Strength (1992-2004)



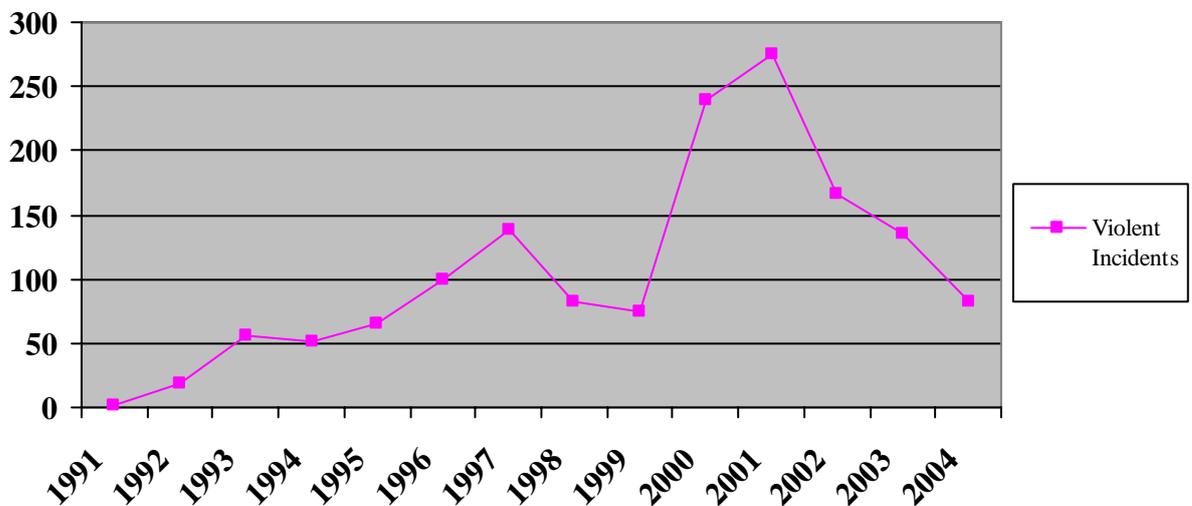
Graph H: MILF Violent Incidents with AFP (1992-2004)



Graph I: ASG Troops and Firearms Strength (1993-2004)



Graph J: ASG Violent Incidents with AFP (1991-2004)



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