EVOLUTION OF THE ARMED CONFLICT
ON THE COMMUNIST FRONT

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I.   Introduction

The armed conflict on the Communist front, i.e. between the Philippine government and the Communist rebel forces, mainly the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP)-New People's Army (NPA)-National Democratic Front (NDF) but also its breakaway factions, has spanned more than 35 years counting from the CPP and NPA founding years of 1968 and 1969, respectively. It is contemporaneous with the armed conflict on the Moro front which reckons its struggle from the triggering event known as the Jabidah Massacre in 1968. There was no such corresponding triggering event on the Communist front. The closest to a signal event, not really a triggering event, was the First Quarter Storm (FQS) of 1970, a CPP-led series of big, mainly student demonstrations in the capital Manila against the Marcos administration which, partly due to police brutality against these demonstrations, drew public attention to the national-democratic movement and its issues.

But this new beginning for the CPP-led movement was actually only the culmination of more than a decade of its gestation and the rekindling of a progressive mass movement since 1959, practically the whole decade of the 1960s which witnessed "student power" globally. This "student power" was in fact a common experience of the first line of leaders of both the CPP and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), even crossing paths in such hotbeds of student activism as the University of the Philippines (UP). But while some Moro student activists would draw inspiration from Islamic revival in Cairo, those who would found the CPP drew theirs from the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China.   In both cases, however, the main historical terms of reference were local. For the MNLF, it was the several centuries of Moro resistance against Spanish colonialism since the 16th Century. For the CPP, it was the "unfinished" Philippine Revolution of 1896 against Spanish colonialism.

In the current form of these two armed conflicts, one seeks independence or better autonomy for Moro areas in southwestern and central Mindanao vis-a-vis the Philippine republic, the other seeks the overthrow of the existing national ruling system and its radical replacement through the armed seizure of central political power. So much so that while one may be characterized as a clash between two imagined nations, Filipino and Moro, the other may be characterized as *a clash between "two Filipino governments," the established official government and the shadow underground " government," competing for the allegiance, hearts and minds of the Filipino people*. The CPP-led "People's Democratic Government" offers them the alternative of a national-democratic society with a socialist perspective. The Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) perceives this as a threat to national security which includes the people's way of life and institutions which must be protected by overcoming the insurgency nationwide. This clash between "two Filipino governments" has largely taken the form of a protracted people's war and a counter-insurgency war.

We present first a brief survey of the root causes of this internal armed conflict, or of contemporary rebellion in the Philippines, as part of its social basis or context. To further contextualize the conflict, we also present its periodization and brief history which is necessary to get a better sense of its evolution.   Then, we go into the dynamics of the protracted people's war and counter-insurgency war since 1969. Although a military struggle in its sharpest form, political changes at various conjunctures have had a major impact on the war. One political mechanism of particular interest regarding this war, in terms of possibly resolving it or at least reducing abuses and atrocities, is the peace negotiations in 1986-87 and on-and-off since 1992: what is its role in the overall strategy of the parties?   In recent years since 9/11, the U.S.-led "global war on terror" has impinged on these negotiations and of course the armed conflict itself.

Still, the CPP-led armed revolutionary movement persists, even regaining lost ground from 1996 onward after a big and sudden decline in 1988 from its peak strength in 1987. In attempting to explain

this persistence, we first go back to the root causes, particularly the "taproot" agrarian problem, and what both sides have done (or not done) to address this in terms of reform and revolution, respectively. We then go to other dimensions, reasons and factors for the persistence of the movement despite major setbacks in its internal growth and external influence. The CPP major split between "reaffirmist" and "rejectionist" factions mainly on questions of strategy in 1992-93 meant, among others, that sections of the Communist Left have explored other (than protracted people's war) paths to progressive social and political change. These other paths necessarily have some bearing on the evolution of the conflict on the Communist front. In concluding this whole discussion, we try to draw some insights and implications for human security and development as well as democracy in the Philippines. The ultimate questions are: can the armed conflict be resolved peacefully? What would it take, if ever?

II.   Root Causes of Rebellion

The National Unification Commission (NUC) Report to President Fidel V. Ramos in 1993, the result of nationwide consultations especially at the provincial and regional levels in 1992-93, identified the root causes of Philippine internal armed conflicts and classified them under five categories, as follows:

1.   Massive and abject poverty and economic inequity, particularly in the distribution of wealth and control over the resource base for livelihood

2. Poor governance, including lack of basic social services, absenteeism of elected local officials, corruption and inefficiency in government bureaucracy, and poor implementation of laws, including those that should protect the environment

3. Injustice, abuse of those in authority and power, violations of human rights, and inequity, corruption and delays in the administration of justice

4. Structural inequities in our political system, including control by an elite minority, traditional politicians and political dynasties, and enforcement of such control through private armies

5. Exploitation and marginalization of indigenous cultural communities, including lack of respect and recognition of ancestral domain and indigenous legal and political systems

Other identified causes were ideological differences between conflicting parties that include, on one side, the belief in armed struggle as the means to achieve political goals; perceived foreign intervention in domestic affairs; and degeneration of moral values. *Serious concerns were also expressed about* the destruction of the natural environment, *the conduct of the counter-insurgency campaign, and the continuing hardships experienced by communities in the midst of armed conflict.*[2]

The government's National Peace and Development Plan of 2000 even more graphically depicts the insurgency as a tree whose "taproot" is maldistribution of the fruits of the land because of the concentration of wealth, especially land ownership, in the hands of a few. This "taproot" has several "lateral roots": economic power to an elite which in turn begets political power in a plutocracy. Plutocracy breeds patronage politics, graft and corruption, government inefficiency, poor delivery of basic services, and human rights abuses. Economic inequity leads to mass poverty which in turn results in a whole lot of social ills like ignorance, disease, criminality, urban blight, squatting, drugs, low

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[2] National Unification Commission, *NUC Report to PRES. FIDEL V. RAMOS on the Pursuit of a Comprehensive Peace Process* (Quezon City, 1 July 1993) 27.

productivity, low purchasing power, lack of economic development, double standard of justice, marginalization, land conflicts, and exclusion of Muslims and other cultural communities from the socio-economic-political mainstream.[3]

This "taproot" analysis actually comes from Gen. Victor N. Corpus, someone who has seen or come from both sides of the conflict, as NPA and as AFP, and he emphasizes the agrarian issue of the peasant farmers as the "taproot" which must be dug out to find a lasting solution to the insurgency problem. It is this more difficult digging out of the root causes which he calls the "silent war" aspect of counter-insurgency.[4]

Indeed, in the literature of the CPP-led national-democratic revolution, like its 1970 "Bible" *Philippine Society and Revolution* (PSR),[5] the land problem of the peasantry is the main problem of the national-democratic revolution. Stated otherwise, the revolutionary struggle for land is the main democratic content of the Philippine revolution to seize political power and consolidate it. Feudalism is actually one of the three basic problems of the Filipino people, the other two being U.S. imperialism and bureaucrat-capitalism. These basic problems account for the semi-colonial and semi-feudal character of Philippine society dominated by the few of the landlord class and the comprador big bourgeoisie which exploit mainly the majority peasantry and the proletariat. The latter are the main and leading forces, respectively, of the national-democratic revolution to establish a national-democratic society with a socialist perspective.

A relatively recent study applying multivariate statistical techniques to draw up a vulnerability index of the country's 75 provinces to CPP-NPA-NDF insurgency,[6] the main components, in effect factors or causes for the insurgency are (1) endemic poverty, (2) educational deprivation, (3) ill health, (4) social injustice, (5) socio-economic deprivation, and (6) geographic isolation. At the same time, *a process of political warfare of the insurgent organization* intervenes with the end effect of developing a thriving insurgency and its mass base.

A longtime observer of Maoist insurgency since the Vietnam War, albeit from a counter-insurgency perspective, argues that the "causes" of an insurgency must be viewed carefully. He points to "the tension between the goals of the leadership – in the CPP's case these are generally alienated intellectuals who are strongly committed to Marxism-Leninism – and its foot soldiers – who are primarily estranged peasants committed to armed struggle as the means to obtain a degree of social justice… Put another way, the Philippine case is part insurgency – here, an ideologically motivated armed effort to make revolution – and part peasant/worker rebellion. The balance between the two components in any area is fundamental to predicting the impact of government reform efforts."[7] There is basis to his view that the CPP's national-democratic revolution is *more a political revolution to seize political power than it is a social revolution to solve certain social grievances* related to structural disparities. Therefore, "political change is as basic to successful resolution of an insurgency as is socio-economic development."[8]

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[3] Office of the President, *National Peace & Development Plan* (Malacanang Palace, Manila, 21 January 2000).
[4] Victor N. Corpus, *Silent War* (Quezon City: VNC Enterprises, 1989) 181-87.
[5] Amado Guerrero, *Philippine Society and Revolution* (Oakland, CA: International Association of Filipino Patriots, 4th ed., 1979).
[6] Cyril P. Cusi, *The Vulnerability Index of the Country's 75 Provinces to CPP-NPS-NDF Insurgency: An Application of Multivariate Statistical Techniques* (Master of Statistics thesis, University of the Philippines, June 1996).
[7] Thomas A. Marks, *Maoist Insurgency Since Vietnam* (London: Frank Cass, 1996) 144.
[8] Ibid.

In fine, the causes and roots of the conflict are both social or socio-economic (existing conditions) and ideological-political (two competing governments). In CPP parlance, these would be referred to as objective and subjective factors, respectively. The subjective is significant because of the CPP's Maoist ethos of *voluntarism* - "a strong belief in the capacity of organized and consciously-motivated subjective forces to attain victory against all odds (geographic, historical, cultural, social)."[9] This can be seen in the brief history of the conflict.

III.   Periodization and Brief History of the Conflict

The armed conflict on the Communist front may be periodized as follows, based on qualitative changes in the situation, key issues, decisions and developments, including unavoidably Philippine presidential administrations and CPP turning points, in the history of this conflict:[10]

A. Formative Years (1968-72)

This period saw the founding by university intellectual Jose Maria Sison (as "Amado Guerrero") of the CPP and the NPA, the latter through peasant rebel Bernabe Buscayno (as "Commander Dante"), in close succession on 26 December 1968 and 29 March 1969, respectively. The CPP was had split from the old *Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas* (PKP) in April 1967, as what it now calls the "First Great Rectification Movement" under the guidance of Marxism-Leninism- Mao Zedong Thought (later Maoism). Silently at first, a guerrilla (and counter-guerrilla) war shortly ensued, starting with its first peasant mass base in the Second District of Tarlac, then expanding to Isabela and subsequently to other regions nationwide. The national-democratic revolution, however, burst into the open with the CPP-led "First Quarter Storm" (FQS) of big student demonstrations against the Marcos administration in January-March 1970 and the release of Sison's PSR book in July 1970. With these, the CPP laid down and propagated the national-democratic (nat-dem, ND) line, and completed the "collective action frame" (vanguard party, guerrilla

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[9] Armando Malay, Jr., "Some Random Reflections on Marxism and Maoism in the Philippines" in Third World Studies (ed.), *Marxism in the Philippines: Marx Centennial Lectures* (Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1984) 66.

[10] For a critical overview and analysis of CPP history, this paper relied much on the latest academic work on the subject: Dominique Caouette, *Persevering Revolutionaries: Armed Struggle in the 21st Century, Exploring the Revolution of the Communist Party of the Philippines* (Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, January 2004) which reviews most of the related literature on the subject even as it is based mainly on primary sources like documents and interviews. A Filipino academic who himself has written extensively on the CPP describes the dissertation as "the most solid and substantive study of the CPP so far." For the official CPP perspective itself on its history, the main references were the latest book of Jose Maria Sison with Ninotchka Rosca, *Jose Maria Sison: At Home in the World: Portrait of a Revolutionary* (Greensboro, North Carolina: Open Hand Publishing, LLC, 2004); the earlier Jose Maria Sison with Rainer Werning, *The Philippine Revolution: The Leaders View* (New York: Crane Russak, 1989); and the CPP historical anniversary statements on 26 December 1988 (20th), 1993 (25th) and 2003 (35th) as well as six-part paper "Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought as Guide to the Philippine Revolution" (Contribution to the International Seminar on Mao Zedong Thought, 6-7 November 1993).   All these CPP papers were written or drafted by Sison as "Armando Liwanag, Chairman, Central Committee, CPP."   Some other books of note among the voluminous related literature on the CPP-NPA-NDF are Joel Rocamora, *Breaking Through: The Struggle within the Communist Party of the Philippines* (Manila: Anvil Publishing Co., Inc., 1994); Patricio N. Abinales, *Fellow Traveller: Essays on Filipino Communism* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2001); Kathleen Weekley, *The Communist Party of the Philippines 1968-1993: A Story of its Theory and Practice* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2001); Ben Reid, *Philippine Left: Political Crisis and Social Change* (Manila: Journal of Contemporary Asia Publishers, 2000); Gregg R. Jones, *Red Revolution: Inside the Philippine Guerrilla Movement* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1989); and William Chapman, *Inside the Philippine Revolution* (New York and London: W.W. Norton Company, 1987).

army, and mass movements) of the revolutionary movement. Marcos responded with increasing repression. The Plaza Miranda bombing and ensuing suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus on 21 August 1971 were seen as part of Marcos' moves to cling to power, although there is also the account of Sison/CPP responsibility for the bombing to induce a revolutionary situation.

B. Early Martial Law/Marcos Dictatorship (1972-77)

The 21 September 1972 proclamation of martial law mainly targeted the CPP-NPA. It marked the start of the Marcos dictatorship with a blatantly fascist form of rule, a new political situation characterized by polarization and numerous human rights violations. Aside from "saving the republic" from the Communist threat, Marcos also sought to "reform society" dominated by an oligarchy by instituting redistributive reforms like land reform in rice and corn lands. The first two years of martial law was a period of adjustment for the CPP. By critically assessing its own experience, it was able to systematize and "codify" revolutionary work through such key guiding documents as "Specific Characteristics of People's War in the Philippines" (1974) and "Our Urgent Tasks" (1976). But martial law eventually caught up with most of the first line of the CPP Central Committee, including the captures of Buscayno in 1976 and Sison in 1977. Leadership of the CPP passed on to its cadres from the FQS generation of student activists.

C. CPP-NPA-NDF Recovery and Advance (1978-83)

This period, especially 1980-83, saw the recovery and then accelerated advance of the revolutionary movement, which would basically continue until 1987. These were considered "golden days" of the Philippine revolution when the movement had hegemony in the anti-dictatorship struggle. There was large-scale mass organizing and an increasing pace of popular protest. The movement also expanded its international solidarity work. There was intensification of guerrilla warfare through more widespread and more frequent tactical offensives, including company-size ones. The CPP assessed that the protracted people's war was moving beyond the "early substage of the strategic defensive" and entering the "advanced substage." These substages, including a third one of "strategic counter-offensive," were conceptualized around 1980-81. Earlier, however, in 1978, the CPP had its first major internal debate on participation in that year's interim parliamentary elections, the harbinger of future disunities within the CPP, especially on the question of elections. Starting 1981 up to the end of the Marcos regime, the AFP employed Oplan *Katatagan* as its basic strategy against the NPA and subsequently effected massive redeployment of troops from MNLF areas as the CPP-NPA became the major threat to national security in the 1980s (compared to the MNLF in the 1970s). On the political front, Marcos initiated some political "normalization," some say as early as the 1978 interim parliamentary elections and more definitely with the formal lifting of martial law in September 1980 and the holding of farcical presidential elections in June 1981.

D. Ninoy Aquino Assassination up to EDSA I (1983-86)

Any pretense at "normalization" was shattered with the 21 August 1983 assassination of Ninoy Aquino, chief political rival of Marcos. Almost immediately, this generated an unprecedentedly broad anti-Marcos dictatorship mass protest movement which continued up to 1985, with national-democratic forces playing a leading role for the most part as a factor for radicalization. This may be considered a continuation of the "golden days" of the Philippine revolution. On the protracted people's war front, a program for advance to the "strategic counter-offensive" (SCO) was drawn up, though the concept and broad strokes for this were already drawn up in 1981-82. But the revolutionary movement would also encounter some problems and setbacks: the internal debate on an alternative insurrectionary or "political-military" ("pol-mil") strategy of the Vietnamese model; the falling out with allies in the formation of the "broad legal alliance" *Bagong Alyansang Makabayan* (BAYAN); the *Kampanyang Ahos* anti-infiltration

campaign against "deep penetration agents" in Mindanao; the "tactical blunder" of the decision to boycott the snap presidential election called by a politically and physically weakened Marcos under U.S. pressure; and the consequent marginalization at the 22-25 February 1986 EDSA "People Power" Revolution which ousted Marcos.

E. Cory Aquino Administration (1986-92)

The assumption of Cory Aquino to the presidency on 25 February 1986 signaled the restoration of elite democracy.   One early post-EDSA feature was some "democratic space," highlighted by the release of political prisoners including Sison and Buscayno in March 1986. But in April 1986, its AFP adopted a new Oplan *Mamamayan* strategy against the NPA. It then held the first peace talks with the NDF from August 1986 to February 1987, including a 60-day ceasefire. But after the talks collapsed with the 22 January 1987 Mendiola massacre of peasants demonstrating for land reform, it unleashed a "total war" against the NPA by March 1987. Early on, but most seriously in August 1987 and December 1989, President Aquino would be rocked by about seven military coup attempts which had the effect of pushing her government to the Right (e.g. staunch anti-communism).   In July 1988, its new Congress would pass the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).   By September 1988, its AFP would have its best so far Oplan *Lambat Bitag* strategy against the NPA. From 1986 to 1989, the CPP leadership seemed quite disarticulated, starting with its discernment of the character of the Aquino administration. It undertook several initiatives and engagements (e.g. peace talks and ceasefire, and *Partido ng Bayan* participation in the May 1987 Congressional elections) without a clear sense of where these would lead or how these should be handled.   Of course, the continued momentum of the earlier "golden days" of the Philippine revolution would carry it to its peak armed strength in 1987. But 1988 was the start of a big and sudden decline of the revolutionary forces in the whole country. In 1990, the CPP scrapped the SCO program for its protracted people's war. Then, in the international scene, came the crisis of socialism of 1989-91. There were some local "*perestroika* and *glasnost*" efforts to revitalize and seek out a new momentum for the movement after the difficult years of 1986-89. In the national scene, the U.S. military bases were voted out by the Philippine Senate in September 1991, with the support of a broad anti-bases campaign and capped by an NDF unilateral ceasefire. But the revolutionary movement was coming to an ineluctable crossroad between a push for a fundamental change in the CPP's orientation and the a reaffirming of the original party dogma.

F. Ramos Administration (1992-98)

The new Ramos administration took the initiative to develop a comprehensive peace process to accompany the now prioritized economic development, after military threats from both the Right and Left had subsided towards the end of the previous administration. This would lead to the second (and still current) series of GRP-NDF peace talks signaled by their *Hague Joint Declaration* of 1 September 1992, setting the framework for peace negotiations without an interim ceasefire. But towards the end of 1992, a big split or "Great Schism" in the CPP between "reaffirmists" (RA) and "rejectionists" (RJ) of the original party line centered on the protracted people's war strategy came out in the open. The RJ factions break away and go their own paths, some still in armed struggle, others no longer. The RAs led by Sison launched what he called the "Second Great Rectification Movement," especially against "urban insurrectionism" and "military adventurism" as the main deviations from the established strategy. The "reaffirmist" CPP redeployed the NPA mainly for mass work to recover the mass base. In the meantime, from 1992 to 1995, NPA strength and tactical offensives continued to decline. By 1995, the AFP's *Lambat-Bitag* claimed to have drastically reduced NPA strength and so the Oplan was terminated, and the AFP shifted its focus to external defense and the Moro front.   But from 1996 onward, the NPA strength, high-powered firearms and number of guerrilla fronts steadily increased.   Towards the end of the Ramos administration, in March 1998, the peace negotiations produced its first substantive agreement, the

Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL).

G. Estrada Administration (1998-2001)

It was President Estrada who, in August 1998, actually approved the CARHRIHL but subject to implementation in accordance with Philippine constitutional and legal processes, resulting in an impasse on the modalities for the implementation of the CARHRIHL   The GRP-NDF peace negotiations were also suspended several times on side issues like the NPA capture of an AFP general in February 1999 and the government's ratification of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) with the U.S. in May 1999. Estrada then opts for the localization of peace efforts to address the communist insurgency in June 1999. His impeachment process in 2000 leading to his ouster through "People Power"/EDSA II in January 2001 was participated in prominently by BAYAN and allied national-democratic forces.

H. Arroyo Administration (2001-04)

The nat-dems' prominent role in EDSA II marked the revolutionary movement's resurgence on several fronts during this period. In the second party-list elections in May 2001, nat-dem party-list group *Bayan Muna* topped the list to get the maximum three seats on its first try. With two more allied party-list groups in the third party-list elections in May 2004, the nat-dem bloc doubles its number of seats to six, the biggest party-list bloc. The NDF also got a boost when the resumed GRP-NDF peace negotiations were hosted by Norway in 2001 and then facilitated by it in 2004.   In the CPP 35th anniversary statement of 26 December 2003, it assessed that it has "by and large developed the early phase of the strategic defensive and is now in the process of developing the middle phase." According to the CPP message to NPA on its 36th anniversary on 29 March 2005, the NPA operates in 130 guerrilla fronts in nearly 8,000 barangays, in substantial portions of around 800 municipalities in nearly 70 (out of 79) provinces. The CPP-NPA and also Sison himself's main setback post-9/11 was their "terrorist" listing by the U.S., The Netherlands (where he is based), U.K., Canada, Australia and the European Union in August-October 2002. In August 2002, President Arroyo issued "Nine-Point Guidelines on the CPP" which welcomed that "terrorist" listing, and ordered the AFP to redeploy its troops to NPA areas. Earlier, in January 2002, a new AFP Internal Security Operation (ISO) Plan *Bantay-Laya* and Campaign Plan *Balangai* took effect for the next five years (up to 2007). **The war goes on.**

IV. Protracted People's War and Counter-Insurgency War

Unlike the conflict on the Moro front in which the main forms of struggle or strategy alternated among armed struggle, Islamic diplomacy and peace negotiations, the main form of struggle and strategy on the Communist front *all the way* has been protracted people's war (PPW) where the principal stress is on revolutionary struggle in the countryside through armed struggle, land reform and base-building. This notwithstanding several major political changes along the way. This shows the particularly strong role of ideological framework (e.g. Marxism-Leninism-Maoism) in this case.

PPW has been conceptualized (and accomplished by Mao in China in 22 years from 1927 to 1949) with three major stages: the strategic defensive, the strategic stalemate and the strategic offensive. The CPP-led PPW of now 36 years from 1969 to the present has so far been in the strategic defensive stage. Pursuant to Maoist dictum, the NPA's optimum mode is for tactical offensives within the strategic defensive. But the general war pattern for this stage takes the form of AFP campaign offensives in NPA areas and NPA efforts to break such offensives through its own counter-campaigns.[11]

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[11] Corpus, *Silent War* 27-28.

While armed struggle in the form of rural guerrilla warfare is the principal form of struggle in PPW, the key requirement for this is mass base-building which takes the form of guerrilla fronts which would encircle the cities from the countryside. This mass base-building involves more political and organizational, rather than, military work. In the earlier stages of mass base-building, the NPA in fact plays more the role of a shield, rather than a sword or spear, to enable the CPP to painstakingly construct a political infrastructure of mass organizations and local organs of political power.[12] All these require TIME or *protracted* work, thus the *protracted* characteristic of this people's war. This war cannot be sustained without mass support, thus it must be a *people's* war.[13]

The CPP political infrastructure, with its local organs of political power at the barangay level (Barangay Organizing Committees and Barangay Revolutionary Committees) at the base, is what it treats as its nascent "People's Democratic Government." This has been the framework from the very start, more so at present, as the CPP asserts that "Two governments exist in the Philippines."[14]

Again, while rural armed struggle is the principal form of struggle in PPW, it also engages in other *supporting* forms of struggle especially in *urban* areas – legal struggle, mass movement, coalition work, elections, parliamentary work, peace negotiations, and international solidarity work. All these involve political and organizational, rather than military, work. But the important thing is how they serve the armed or military struggle. So there is also an urban counterpart to the rural infrastructure.[15]

The protracted armed conflict in the Philippines of more than 35 years has tremendous accumulated human, economic and environmental costs in terms of human security and human development, but for Sison and the CPP, "The costs of keeping the reactionary ruling system are far higher than the costs of waging armed revolution. Exploitation and oppression exact a terrible toll on the people and are precisely what drive people to wage armed revolution. We should be able to see the high cost of the violence of daily exploitation to recognize the necessity and lower cost of armed revolution."[16]

There are **some factors or reasons for the relative success, resilience or staying power of the PPW**. *First*, there is the perseverance, determination and commitment, "voluntarist" spirit, if you will of CPP cadres coupled with good organizational skills. *Second* was the good early guidance in 1974-76 from "Specific Characteristics of People's War in the Philippines" (e.g. multiple guerrilla zones, decentralized operations) and "Our Urgent Tasks" (e.g. political requirements, painstaking mass work and solid mass organizing). These were among the basics that the CPP would go back to and reaffirm in its post-split rectification campaign from 1992 to 1998.

Third, there have been weaknesses in the AFP counter-insurgency strategies and table of organization and equipment, including a "strategic blunder" of terminating the effective Oplan *Lambat Bitag* in 1995.[17] There were several fundamental defects in the AFP overall strategy up to 1988: (1) It was a mere replica of the "search and destroy" strategy used by the U.S. in the Vietnam war it lost. This strategy itself had its own fundamental weaknesses such as troop vulnerability, lack of combat intelligence, campaigns of short duration, and lack of proper mass approach. Troop vulnerability arose

[12] Marks, *Maoist Insurgency Since Vietnam* 98-105.
[13] Corpus, *Silent War* 25-57.
[14] Jose Maria Sison, NDFP Chief Political Consultant, "Two Governments Exist in the Philippines: One is Revolutionary, the Other Counterrevolutionary," 21 August 2004.
[15] Marks, *Maoist Insurgency Since Vietnam* 105-06.
[16] Jose Maria Sison with Ninotchka Rosca, *Jose Maria Sison: At Home in the World: Portrait of a Revolutionary* (Greensboro, North Carolina: Open Hand Publishing, LLC, 2004) 201.
[17] Office of the President, *National Peace & Development Plan*.

from dispersal into detachments which were open to such vulnerabilities as defeat in detail, loss of maneuverability, and defensive rather than offensive. (2) The organization and equipment used in implementing this strategy, which are basically conventionally in character, are totally unsuitable and ineffective in dealing with the guerrilla warfare waged by the NPA. There was a lack of combat units engaging them as the AFP was a "top heavy" organization. There was also lack of unity of command and of troop discipline outside camp. Then also the incorrect choice of personnel or "square pegs in round holes." (3) The AFP offensive campaigns were sporadic and piecemeal, lacking in coordination on a nationwide scale.[18]

Still on the AFP organization, it was relatively small at the time of the martial law declaration but was quickly forced to expand drastically, resulting in its own host of problems. The deterioration of the security forces was such that the upper echelons were increasingly used for the exercise of patronage regardless of the security needs on the Communist and Moro fronts. There was a growing estrangement between combat formations and the higher headquarters. The assignment of upper-level functional positions to those little capable or inclined to perform necessary military tasks resulted in a near-complete breakdown in the security force manpower, training and supply systems.[19]

The relative success, however, of *Lambat-Bitag* from 1988 to 1995 lulled the AFP into complacency until this was prematurely terminated. ISO responsibility was transferred from the AFP to the PNP. And a number of Citizen Armed Force Geographical Units (CAFGUs), which are used to "hold" areas which have been "cleared" by the AFP maneuver battalions, were deactivated.[20]

Fourth, there was the AFP concentration in or redeployment to Moro areas in the 1970s and in 1996-2002, thereby easing the military pressure on the NPA.[21]   And *fifth*, there are two factors which *can work either way* for the NPA and the AFP tactically and strategically – small archipelagic country, and uneven development of base areas. For the NPA, these result in the advantages of dispersing the AFP forces deployed against it and of operating in or expanding into areas not covered by the AFP. The disadvantages for the NPA are the difficulties of arms support from abroad, that it allows the AFP to use strategic massing against priority target guerrilla fronts, and prevents the NPA from strategic naval transport and concentration of forces for a final offensive on the seat of power.[22]

Then, of course, there have been **some factors or reasons for the setbacks, decline and slow down of the PPW**. *First* were the internal problems of the CPP – major errors of deviation from the PPW strategy (this is the official/RA view; the RJ view is that the PPW strategy itself is the problem); self-destructing anti-infiltration campaigns; the big split and consequent focus on consolidation/rectification.

Second, was the leadership abilities and efforts of AFP field commanders (especially battalion level) who were militarily proficient and followed a professional code of the officer corps. Ironically, the deterioration of the security forces described earlier had the impact of making the situation more difficult for the NPA because it strengthened the AFP as an opponent in the field, with combat units often led by veteran commanders. The hardships visited upon these units tended to foster unity. Even the lack of weapons and equipment had the unexpected impact of improving the counterinsurgency because this

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[18] Corpus, *Silent War* 107-35.   See also Cesar P. Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 2000).

[19] Marks, *Maoist Insurgency Since Vietnam* 117, 120-24.

[20] Col. Isabelo G. Barabicho III (JSC) PA, *The Resurgence of the Local Communist Movement: A Study* (Masters in National Security Administration thesis, National Defense College of the Philippines, August 2003) 5-7.

[21] Marks, *Maoist Insurgency Since Vietnam* 118-20.

[22] Corpus, *Silent War* 31.

ensured that the military operations were in the main small unit actions. The 70 or so AFP battalions became the critical foundation upon which government survival depended. Thus, a war of battalions. It was the strengths and weaknesses of any battalion that influenced the situation in its area of operations nearly as much as the objective conditions there which feed rebellion. At no time was the NPA able to achieve a concentration of strength such that the AFP could not appear at will. The result was that, even in NPA strongholds, the CPP could not develop a viable societal alternative to that which was existing. These had the effect of keeping the military aspects of the conflict salient, where the government had the advantage of greater resources.[23]

Third, has been informed reworking of AFP counter-insurgency strategies, particularly with the *Lambat Bitag* series, around a general strategy of "war of quick decision" and campaign strategy of "gradual constriction" (with the usual four basic phases of "clear, hold, consolidate, and develop") in a kind of *reversed people's war*. Other related strategic precepts are prioritization of target guerrilla fronts (the one-third most strategic), concept of one-on-one (one task unit against one guerrilla front), simultaneous campaign offensives coordinated nationwide, and sustained/protracted campaigns. Politically, the idea is to harness "people's power" in the total counter-insurgency effort, into a broad united front for a "People's War for Democracy."[24]

There is also a new approach anchored on democratic institutions/ political processes even as the CPP took a more militarist approach. The restoration of democracy, albeit elite, after the ouster of the Marcos dictatorship, led to the government's embrace of the primacy of political factors. The only way to get to the root causes of the rebellion was through mechanisms which allowed people's participation in their own socio-economic development. This is where democratic mechanisms come in. So, in more recent years the CPP has returned to its roots of political organizing, after a period of pushing to the fore military considerations in what was, after all, a political war.[25] And it has regained ground, if the increased number of guerrilla fronts is any indication.

The CPP's claim of belligerency status or that it leads another state seems to be the source of a lot of violence or coercion being committed in its name. This has been manifested in its enforcement of "revolutionary taxation" and even "permits to campaign" in its areas for candidates in elections. The "two state" claim has led to some insensitivity on its part to popular sentiments and civil pursuits. When it tends to be more militarist, the danger that it may lose the moorings which it had in dealing with civilian and non-combatant elements in areas of civil strife increases.[26]

There is always the question of "who is winning?" But how do we measure this when it is the political organization of the mass base which is critical? How do we measure the influence of a political movement whose power is not primarily reckoned in terms of votes?[27] *Or should we go into this "who is winning?" question?* Should we instead look at the war from a human security and development frame because there are no real winners in war?

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[23] Marks, *Maoist Insurgency Since Vietnam* 123-26.
[24] Corpus, *Silent War* 137-79.
[25] Marks, *Maoist Insurgency Since Vietnam* 126-43.
[26] Manuel P. Quiambao, "Use of Landmines in the Philippines: Context, Cost and Calls to Action" (Paper presented at the Workshop on "The Role of States in the Universal Abolition of Anti-Personnel Landmines in Intra-State Conflicts: Expert Workshop on Bringing Armed Groups into an Ottawa-like Process," 30 October 2004, Montreux, Switzerland).
[27] Marks, *Maoist Insurgency Since Vietnam* 145-46.

V.   Impact of Political Changes on the War

In this continuing war of more than 35 years, the major political periods have been really just two: the martial law *dictatorship* (1972-86) and the restored elite *democracy* (1986-present).
One might also a bit simplistically characterize these two periods as representing the mainly military and mainly political approaches, respectively, to the communist insurgency. Ironically or perhaps not, the former has been less effective than the latter. It is already clear that the martial law dictatorship was a tactical setback for the CPP-NPA-NDF in the short run but a strategic boost for it in the long run. The blatantly fascist form of rule was the best argument for armed struggle against it. As was often said during those years, the dictator Marcos was the best recruiter for the NPA.   This is not to say that the mainly military approach was not employed post-Marcos. It still was, during some of the subsequent administrations like those of Presidents Aquino and Estrada, but within an overall political context of elite democracy.

The martial law dictatorship brought in a phenomenon called militarization which has, however, had effects beyond the Marcos years, in fact its lingering influence still felt up to the present. Militarization has been defined or described as "the process whereby military values, ideology and patterns of behavior achieve a dominating influence on the political, social and economic, and external affairs of the State and as a consequence the structural ideological and behavioral patterns of both society and government are militarized."[28] This has accounted for what has been described as the "militarization of politics" as well as the "politicization of the military." Interestingly, the AFP's opponent, the NPA, describes itself in Maoist terms as not only a fighting force but also, in fact more importantly, a political force.

Soon after the Aquino administration took over from the Marcos dictatorship, the new "democratic space" in the political field was soon complemented by a more sophisticated counter-insurgency doctrine known as "low intensity conflict" (LIC), which was developed based on both Philippine experience and U.S. influence. The term "low intensity" is misleading, as it describes the level of violence strictly from a military viewpoint, when in fact it involves "political, economic, and psychological warfare, with the military being a distant fourth in many cases." A U.S. commander said "It is total war at the grassroots level."[29]   And indeed, it was "total war" which President Aquino declared against the NPA after the collapse of peace talks in early 1987.

But *it was the new political context of restored elite democracy which allowed for a more politically (and militarily) sophisticated counter-insurgency*. The early years of this new political situation from 1986 to 1989, as mentioned earlier, saw the CPP leadership as seemingly disarticulated, including in its discernment of the character of the Aquino administration with its liberal democratic trappings. It engaged in several arenas like the 1986-87 ceasefire-peace negotiations and the 1987 Congressional elections without a clear sense of where these would lead. In short, there was confusion and difficult adjustment for the CPP. Recruitment of new members to the CPP-led movement had

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[28] Ecumenical Movement for Justice and Peace, *Iron Hand, Velvet Glove: Studies on Militarization in Five Critical Areas in the Philippines* (Geneva: Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, World Council of Churches, 1980) 1, citing the Glion Consultation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) on Militarism.   See also Ecumenical Movement for Justice and Peace, *Primer on Militarization* (Manila: Ecumenical Movement for Justice and Peace, 1988).

[29] Sara Miles and Paul Martin, "The Low Intensity Conflict: U.S. New Strategy in the Third World," *Socio Pastoral Institute Series*, Special Issue, Series 5, Year 5 (n.d.), p. 2, citing Col. John Waghelstein, then commander of the U.S. Army 7th Special Forces. See also Barry Carr and Elaine McKay (eds.), *Low Intensity Conflict: Theory and Practice in Central America and South-East Asia* (Melbourne: La Trobe University Institute of Latin American Studies and Monash University Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, n.d. but not earlier than 1988).

significantly declined.[30] From another perspective, it is explained that such recruitment becomes difficult without the engine of repression like that of the Marcos dictatorship to drive the alienated into the movement fold. Why should prospective recruits risk death in the movement when there may be a chance to change things through the democratic system?[31]

Of course, the political (and economic) situation during the early Aquino years did not remain static, and neither did the CPP. The CPP, through its combination of three "institution-like" components (vanguard party, guerrilla army, and mass movements), has generally been able to adjust and adapt to changes in the strategic context of the international and domestic environments.   One sees this with regards to the 1972 martial law declaration, the 1983 Ninoy Aquino assassination, and much later the 2001 EDSA/"People Power" II ouster of President Estrada. But the CPP faltered with what it admitted to be a "tactical blunder" in its decision to boycott the January 1986 snap presidential election, which corner the dictator Marcos had painted himself into. The stolen election became the catalyst for a popular civil disobedience campaign, then a military coup attempt which had to be protected by "People Power" initially called for by the Catholic Church leadership. All these, and also U.S. diplomatic pressure, eventually caused the ouster of Marcos.

The boycott position had significantly marginalized the CPP-led movement from this final drive, resulting in its missing a key opportunity to share political power.   Most critical analysts attribute the boycott error, and other significant political errors of the CPP for that matter, to the overriding strength of the "PPW discourse" within the CPP and its failure to see the need to change strategy as called for by certain changes in the strategic context.[32] The boycott decision was made from the frame of a PPW strategy, which is guided by Marxist-Leninist-Maoist thinking that it takes an armed revolution, not elections, to topple bourgeois state power since "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." It is this strategy and this thinking, however, which has remained static with the CPP.

The CPP leader's view about the 1986 boycott is somewhat different. While acknowledging it was "a major tactical error," he said it "took effect only for the duration of the election campaign period. It was not a strategic error that caused a permanent or long-term 'marginalization' of the legal and illegal forces of the national-democratic movement. Immediately after the elections, [the CPP-led 'broad legal alliance'] BAYAN was able to take the initiative in calling for a people's uprising to oust Marcos and played the major and decisive role in the process of overthrowing Marcos."[33]

It was mentioned earlier that "Political change is as basic to successful resolution of an insurgency as is socio-economic development."[34] There other examples of the impact of particular political changes, or changes in the "political opportunity structure" (POS), on evolution of the conflict on the Communist front. POS operationalizes the changing strategic context, disaggregating it into four components: increasing access to power, changes in the ruling elites' alignments, the possibility of establishing linkages with influential allies, and the existence of divisions within and between the elites. Aside from these, there are also changes in the international context.[35]   Key examples of the latter are the 1989-91 crisis of socialism and the post-9/11 U.S.-led "global war on terror."

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[30] Dominique Caouette, *Persevering Revolutionaries: Armed Struggle in the 21st Century, Exploring the Revolution of the Communist Party of the Philippines* (Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, January 2004).
[31] Marks, *Maoist Insurgency Since Vietnam* 143.
[32] Caouette, *Persevering Revolutionaries*.
[33] Sison, *At Home in the World* 115.
[34] Marks, *Maoist Insurgency Since Vietnam* 144.
[35] Caouette, *Persevering Revolutionaries*.

All these changes in the POS impacted not only on the state-CPP conflict but also on the CPP's own internal debates and adjustments. These debates covered a wide range of issues – analysis of Philippine society and mode of production, revolutionary strategy and tactics, vision of an alternative society, international line, democracy within the party, the role of the NDF, peace negotiations, crisis of socialism, and so on.[36] For example, debates on strategy and tactics significantly included the question of elections which is the regular democratic process or institution for effecting political change. And on the vision of an alternative society or democracy, the debate was between the Maoist "people's democractic dictatorship" with the CPP as the designated ruling party and notions of "pluralist democracy" or "democratic pluralism."[37] The Maoist vision of an alternative society, aside from its PPW strategy, in turn had a bearing on the CPP's attitude towards peace negotiations and peace as a whole. Such *evolution* of theory and theoretical debates within the CPP would help to explain the CPP's behavior, even as those theoretical aspects are not the main concern of this paper.

Eventually these internal debates would come to a head in 1992 in the big split in the CPP between the "reaffirmists" (RAs) of the original party line centered on the PPW strategy and the "rejectionists" (RJs) of this who were for a fundamental change of orientation. To a certain extent, this has reshaped the evolution of the conflict on the communist front because the latter is no longer limited to the form of struggle and strategy of PPW though this is still the mainstream represented by the "reaffirmist" CPP. The "rejectionist" and other Left paths of still armed but increasingly unarmed struggle will be discussed in a later section of this paper.

Suffice it to highlight for now, *again the role or question of democracy as the key political change vis-à-vis the insurgency*. In fact, former NPA then AFP official Victor N. Corpus once observed, "If we can maintain the democratic system, the CPP is indeed a spent force."[38] Of course, easier said than done. Among the RAs and RJs, there might said to be an external debate on the discernment of the character of Philippine democracy as it is evolving. One view is to reject it and boycott its institutions and processes such as elections as constituting a tool and façade for bourgeois class rule and sham democracy which must be exposed and opposed. A second view, the "instrumental view," is to utilize the democratic institutions and processes as mere instruments for tactical gains, such as for propaganda, resources and legal cover, which serve the strategic agenda of armed revolution. The RAs and some RJs hew closer to these two views.

A third view coming from the emergent democratic Left, including some RJs, is the "integral view" of democracy which recognizes and accepts the intrinsic value of formal democratic institutions as more than merely formal because they at least make free and open debate possible and can be deepened to become more participatory and egalitarian.[39] In fine, *the evolution of the armed conflict on the Communist front will depend much on the evolution of Philippine democracy itself. Political conditions have to change but there is a difference between political change for counter-insurgency and political change to address the people's needs.*

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[36] Nathan Gilbert Quimpo, "CPP-NDF Members in Western Europe: Travails in Pursuing International Relations Work" (n.d.).

[37] Nathan Gilbert Quimpo, *Contested Democracy and the Left in the Philippines After Marcos* (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Political and Social Change, Australian National University, 2004).

[38] Marks, *Maoist Insurgency Since Vietnam* 136, citing an interview with Corpus on 22 July 1990 in Manila.

[39] Quimpo, *Contested Democracy and the Left*.

VI.   Peace Negotiations and its Role in Overall Strategy

This area is related to the key question, what would it take to peacefully resolve the conflict?   Are there *ideological* requirements for this?[40] What are the prospects with the GRP-NDF peace negotiations, a particularly relevant *political* engagement/arena of the parties?

It doesn't look too good because of both parties' tactical or instrumental frameworks or approaches to the peace negotiations. For the GRP, the policy is mixed or incoherent because, on one hand, "peaceful negotiated settlement with the different rebel groups" is one of the official "Six Paths to Peace,"[41] but on the other hand the pursuit of a "multi-track peace process" is also subsumed under the national internal security plan and strategy to overcome insurgency nationwide.[42] There is also a strong policy position or tendency towards "pacification and demobilization" of, if not "military victory," over the NPA   The "pacification and demobilization" position consists of negotiating concessions (maximum from adversary, minimum from one's side) necessary to achieve the cessation of hostilities and demobilization of rebel combatants, basically to end the insurgency.   The "military victory" position seeks the military defeat of the adversary without concessions.[43]

For the CPP, the peace negotiations are clearly subordinate to the PPW strategy and is only of at most tertiary importance as a form of struggle. There has been no strategic decision (unlike the cases of the MNLF and MILF) to give peace negotiations a real chance for a negotiated political settlement. There are only tactical objectives: international diplomatic recognition of belligerency status; propaganda; prisoner releases; and more recently to help secure the legitimacy of the CPP, NPA and Sison internationally in view of their "terrorist" listing.[44] Some critics, from the Left at that, even say that CPP leader Sison, as chief political consultant of the NDF for the talks, is fashioning protracted peace talks to be a form of struggle within the PPW.

The CPP engagement in peace negotiations through its NDF was actually an ingenious way out of a diplomatic bind of dwindling international support the CPP found itself in from the fall of Marcos in 1986 up to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. By getting Western European governments and parties to support peace negotiations, they would in effect accord the NDF implicit recognition as a force representing a significant section of the Filipino people, and treat the GRP and the NDF as negotiating co-

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[40] Isagani R. Serrano, Vice President, Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement, phone interview by the author (Quezon City, 9 January 2005).
[41] As institutionalized in Executive Order (EO) No. 125 of President Ramos dated 15 September 1993 and EO 3 of President Arroyo dated 28 February 2001, which both deal with the approach/policy and (administrative) structure for government's comprehensive peace process/efforts. The "Six Paths to Peace" are: (1) pursuit of social, economic and political reforms; (2) consensus-building and empowerment for peace; (3) peaceful, negotiated settlement with the different rebel groups; (4) programs for reconciliation, reintegration into mainstream society, and rehabilitation; (5) addressing concerns arising from the continuing armed hostilities; and (6) building and nurturing a climate conducive to peace.
[42] See e.g. "Strategic Precepts of the National Peace and Development Plan," Annex D of Office of the President, *National Peace & Development Plan*.
[43] See Dr. Paul Oquist, "Mindanao and Beyond: Competing Policies, Protracted Peace Process and Human Security" (Fifth Assessment Mission Report, Multi-Donor Programme for Peace and Development in Mindanao, UNDP Manila, Philippines, 23 October 2002).   See also along similar but more concise and updated lines, Dr. Paul Oquist, "From National Security to Human Security in Mindanao: Protracted Armed Conflict in National and Regional Policy Perspectives" (Paper presented at the 27th General Assembly and Annual Meeting of the Catholic Bishops Conference for Human Development, Taguig, Metro Manila, 8 July 2003). A major part of the analysis on the Philippines is a result of intensive work undertaken jointly with Alma R. Evangelista, UNDP Philippines Peace and Development Advisor.
[44] Sison, *At Home in the World* 97, 101, 140, 177, 204-06.

equals. By drawing more governments and parties, especially the involvement of a third-party facilitator or mediator, the NDF in its thinking would be able to achieve "belligerency status" eventually.[45]

Actually, it is the mutually antagonistic frameworks of the parties which account for the protraction of the peace negotiations. And so we have had this historical situation of PPW (36 years from 1969 to the present) and protracted peace talks (19 years from 1986 to the present but more off than on). These two tracks have run simultaneously since 1986 without an interim general ceasefire except for a brief 60-day period in 1986-87, thus constituting a mode of "talking while fighting," though it has been much more fighting than talking. This of course creates its own dynamic, with developments in the field like arrests, captures and killings often impinging on the talks.

There have been two series of peace talks. The first was a one shot affair from August 1986 to February 1987 during the Aquino administration which collapsed because, among others, the parties could not even agree on a framework for the talks, as in fact each side did not have a clear framework or game plan of its own. The second in the series started in September 1992 during the Ramos administration with an agreed framework in the *Hague Joint Declaration* which provided for mutually acceptable principles and for a four-point substantive agenda. Since then up to present, there have been many rounds of talks but most of these were on preliminary and peripheral matters or side issues, aside from there having been long suspensions and impasses.

Be that as it may, the peace negotiations on its sixth year (1998) produced its first substantive comprehensive agreement on human rights and international humanitarian law[46] (CARHRIHL), and continues to hold the promise of socio-economic, political and constitutional reforms next on the agenda[47] (which reforms are also supposed to address the root causes of the conflict under the "Six Paths" framework).   On the other hand, the reform agenda in the peace negotiations may not progress much further without a framework or paradigm shift at the strategic level on both sides. Otherwise, maximizing the CARHRIHL through implementation, or the framework of human rights and IHL, might be the best we can hope for (especially in a scenario of intensified armed conflict) until there is some kind of breakthrough, aside also from pursuing the reform agenda on its own merits *outside* the peace negotiations but which can still be seen as part of a broader peace process.

The GRP's recent attempt this early 2005 at a paradigm shift of sorts is to break the "talk and fight" mode by demanding an interim ceasefire for a limited period of say six months of intensive talks focusing on the substantive agenda towards hopefully a final peace agreement.[48] The NDF has outrightly rejected this, not surprisingly because of its well known aversion to what it considers long ceasefires like six months. This is now part of the current impasse in the talks, perhaps the most serious or critical all these years because of the likely shift from "talk and fight" to "fighting without talking." With due respect to the GRP, it is hard to see how this can be better. It is simply not true that "talking while fighting" is untenable "talking for the sake of talking" which has not brought any results, including some reduction in the level of violence.
People forget that the "talk and fight" mode at least produced the CARHRIHL and other agreements, the groundwork for the next substantive negotiations, and maintained lines of communication and discussion

[45] Quimpo, "CPP-NDF Members in Western Europe."
[46] *Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines* dated 16 March 1998, popularly known as the CARHRIHL.
[47] Government of the Republic of the Philippines and National Democratic Front of the Philippines, *Joint Declaration*, 1 September 1992, The Hague, The Netherlands., particularly paragraph 5(b).
[48] Sec. Teresita Quintos-Deles, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, at a meeting with peace advocates on 16 February 2005 in Quezon City.

on certain issues even if peripheral but still relevant to some reduction in the level of violence. The substantive talks should not be held hostage even by the valid desire, including of the people, for a ceasefire – especially since this lately "seems to be the hardest word" on both the Communist and Moro fronts.

On the other hand, neither should the substantive talks be held hostage by the likewise valid demand by the NDF for more effective GRP action on the lifting of the foreign "terrorist" listing of the CPP, NPA and Sison. This was the cause of the current suspension of the talks by the NDF in August 2004. This is of course directly related to the post-9/11 U.S.-led "global war on terror" to be discussed in the next section. There are all indications that the GRP has taken advantage of this to keep the diplomatic pressure on the CPP, NPA and especially Sison in his place of self-exile, The Netherlands. This appears to be part of what the GRP likes to describe as a "multi-track process," including military and diplomatic components, in dealing with insurgencies, whether on the Communist or the Moro front.[49] Unfortunately, some so-called progressives seem to welcome and even coach such an approach on the military and diplomatic fronts, by saying "There is, understandably, considerable government frustration with a situation where the CPP derives propaganda mileage from peace talks while militarily and politically intensifying its attacks on the government."[50] The government cannot seem to develop a bolder, more imaginative and coherent plan of dealing with the CPP-NPA-NDF that puts the main premium on a negotiated political settlement.

Here in the GRP-NDF peace negotiations is most true the observation, albeit made in the Moro context, that "If war, as once aptly put, is an extension of politics, and negotiation is an aspect of war, then negotiation is war in another form."[51]

VII. Impact of the Post-9/11 U.S.-led "Global War on Terror"

The post-9/11 (2001) U.S.-led "global war on terror" has added fuel to the local war situation, both the PPW and the counter-insurgency war. The latter has a tendency to be framed as a counter-terrorist war with the U.S.-led "terrorist" listing of the CPP, NPA and Sison. The Arroyo administration has welcomed and taken advantage of this listing, as shown soon thereafter by the "Nine-Point Guidelines Issued by the President Re: the CPP"[52] and by her order for redeployment of the AFP against the NPA in August 2002.[53] Among the guidelines were:

2. The CPP-NPA has engaged in terrorist acts against civilian targets… as part of the overall aim to overthrow the duly constituted government and the democratic system;

4. The government welcomes the action of the U.S. declaring the CPP-NPA as a terrorist organization; this is not interference in the internal affairs of the Philippines;

6. The government will maintain open lines of communication with the CPP-NPA in the hope of ending the employment of violence and terrorism as a means to attain political ends, and to achieve national unity and reconciliation under the Constitution;

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[49] Ibid.
[50] Joel Rocamora, "War and Peace: The government cannot go on with its 'talk and fight' stance with the NDF," *Newsbreak*, 14 March 2005, p. 30.
[51] Salah Jubair, *Bangsamoro: A Nation Under Endless Tyranny* (Kuala Lumpur: IQ Marin SDN BHD, 3rd ed., 1999) 172.
[52] As published in the *Philippine Star*, 14 August 2002.
[53] Press Briefing of Secretary Ignacio Bunye, 5 August 2002, from the Office of the Press Secretary.

7. There is no ceasefire between the government and the CPP-NPA; military and police operations will continue;

8. The government calls on other communist organizations that are not engaged in unlawful acts to condemn the violence and terrorism being perpetrated by the CPP-NPA;

9. The government calls upon the entire citizenry to get involved in the fight against the CPP-NPA…

Sison then instantly reciprocated in kind with a call for "all-out resistance" against the "U.S.-directed Macapagal-Arroyo regime," and for strengthening "all types of alliances to isolate and remove the Macapagal-Arroyo ruling clique."[54] The "terrorist" tagging seems to have had the effect of some kind of siege mentality on the NDF side, especially as far as Sison himself is concerned.[55] And in an irony of sorts, the latest (36th) CPP anniversary statement of 26 December 2004, he said the NPA "is now trying to develop the ability to make and use the weapons that the Iraqi resistance is now using… rocket-propelled grenades, improvised explosive devices, mortars and other close range weapons."[56]

It was clear from the "Nine-Point Guidelines Issued by the President Re: the CPP" that the Arroyo government was putting military action over peace negotiations in dealing with the CPP-NPA which it treats more as "terrorist" than as "communist." And while it "will maintain open lines of communication with the CPP-NPA," there was no more even mention of peace negotiations.

In fairness to the overall historical record of the CPP-NPA in its conduct of armed struggle, they have not as a policy and have not generally in practice engaged in terrorism or acts of terrorism by deliberately targeting civilians.[57] Unlike with the *Abu Sayyaf* or the MILF, the CPP-NPA has no Islamic connection that could possibly put it in the network of *Al-Qaeda* or *Jemaah Islamiyah*. The CPP-NPA, and for that matter the MILF through its antecedent the MNLF, have pre-dated *Al-Qaeda*-type terrorism by several decades, having instead come from the tradition of national liberation movements of the 1960s.

The U.S.-led campaign against terrorism reflects a drift toward the militarization of the response to terrorism,[58] and predominance of the military and military solutions in addressing not only terrorism but also rebellion and internal armed conflict. At another, more comprehensive or encompassing level, it has reinforced an already dominant or hegemonic ideology of national security, particularly its thrust of counter-insurgency as the framework to address insurgency or rebellion. Even the peace process has become subsumed under a national or internal security framework. The peace negotiations in particular, through the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (PAPP), have been subject to the Cabinet

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[54] Jose Maria Sison, NDFP Chief Political Consultant, "The People's All-Out Resistance Will Defeat the All-Out War of the Enemy," Press Statement, 6 August 2002.

[55] See e.g. Jose Maria Sison, *U.S. Terrorism & War in the Philippines* (Philippines: Aklat ng Bayan, Inc., 2003); and Public Interest Law Center, "Laws, Labels and Liberation: The Case of Jose Maria Sison" (n.d.).

[56] Central Committee, Communist Party of the Philippines, "Avail of the Worsening Crisis and Intensify the Guerrilla Offensives to Advance the New Democratic Revolution," 26 December 2004 [36th Anniversary Statement].

[57] See Soliman M. Santos, Jr., "Terrorism: Toward a Legal Definition," *Philippines Free Press*, December 28, 2002, pp. 28-29, with a proposed legal definition: "the systematic employment by states, groups or individuals of acts or threats of violence or use of weapons deliberately targeting the civilian population, individuals or infrastructure for the primary purpose of spreading terror or extreme fear among the civilian population in relation to some political or quasi-political objective and undertaken with an intended audience."

[58] See Nick Howen, "Military Force and Criminal Justice: The U.S. Response to 11 September & International Law" (Paper prepared for the International Council on Human Rights Policy, International Meeting on Global Trends and Human Rights – Before and After September 11th, Geneva, January 10-12, 2002).

Oversight Committee (COC) on Internal Security created by Executive Order No. 21 with a counter-insurgency "Strategy of Holistic Approach."[59]

The Arroyo government's objective for the peace process is no longer so much addressing the root causes of rebellion as it is demobilizing the rebel forces. And even before Arroyo, there has been the persistent militarist mentality of degrading the military capability of the rebels in order to be able to impose a peace settlement on them. And now there is the temptation to try to even finish them off with U.S. anti-terrorist logistics support which also funds the AFP's modernization aspirations. More than 35 years of armed conflict should have shown to both sides now the futility, illusion, and great cost of aspiring for a military victory over the other side.

VIII. Reviewing Agrarian Reform and Revolution

Going back to the root causes of the conflict, if the "taproot" is the land problem of the pesantry, then what both sides have done (or not done) to address this in terms of agrarian reform and agrarian revolution, respectively, should have a bearing on the evolution of the conflict. *Or does it?*

Let us take first the latest independent critical assessment of the government agrarian reform program from 1972 to 2002. The redistributive reform attained so far through the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) process has been *significant in scale*. From nationally aggregated data to start with but subject to further inquiry into the disaggregated parts of the official data, a number of observations have been drawn in the latest (2004) comprehensive academic work on redistributive land reform. First, nearly three-fourths of CARP's total working scope has apparently been redistributed to peasant beneficiaries. The number of beneficiary households is some 2.5 million (or about 15 million individuals at an average of six members per household). The total redistributed land accounts for a little more than 50 percent of the total farm land, while the number of household beneficiaries account for 47 percent of the total rural population (some 5.2 million households, or about 31 million individuals). The leasehold accomplishment is substantial at 1.5 million hectares that could be benefiting some half million tenant households. Second, the bulk (about two-thirds accounting for 3.9 million hectares) of the accomplishment is in public lands, accounting for a total of 3.9 million hectares, or two-thirds of the total CARP output. The rate of implementation of accomplishment here is much faster than in private lands. Third, the bulk of DAR's balance is mainly in private lands outside of Operation Land Transfer (OLT) coverage of rice and corn land.[60] [Compare the beneficiary figures with the Sison's claim that at its peak in early 1988 the NPA mass base was more than 11 million people in rural and urban areas.[61] The CPP had an official figure of ten million, broken down to seven million in the countryside and three million in the urban areas.][62]

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[59] President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Executive Order No. 21, "Creating a Coordinative and Integrative System on Internal Security," 19 June 2001.

[60] Saturnino M. Borras, Jr., *Rethinking Redistributive Land Reform: Struggles for Land and Power in the Philippines* (Ph.D. in Development Studies thesis, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, The Netherlands, 2004) 104-07, 214. For a CPP-influenced contrary view, see *IBON Facts & Figures*, Vol. 16, No. 20, 31 October 1993, "Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law: Nothing to Show For, to Hope For;" and Vol. 21, No. 9, 15 May 1998, "CARP Extension: Perpetuating Deceit Amidst Landgrabbing."

[61] Jose Maria Sison with Rainer Werning, *The Philippine Revolution: The Leaders View* (New York: Crane Russak, 1989) 163.

[62] Central Committee, Communist Party of the Philippines, "Onward to Total Victory! Brief Review of the History of the Communist Party of the Philippines, on the Occasion of the 20th Anniversary of its Reestablishment," 26 December 1988.

The source of the foregoing independent critical assessment of the government agrarian reform program cautions though that the official government data is contested.   For example, the actual leasehold accomplishment data is much lower than 1.5 million hectares. There is also fake land reform via voluntary land transfer in some 300,000 hectares. Nevertheless, despite the problems in implementation, including problematic cases such as Hacienda Luisita, the assessment is still that the CARP's land redistribution achievement is "modest but significant," especially because it covers many upland public lands where poverty incidence is usually high and which are the usual base areas of the NPA.[63]

One might look also at the Agrarian Reform Communities (ARCs), the development program for which was launched only in 1993. An ARC was a barangay or cluster of barangays where a critical mass of farmers and farm workers were awaiting the full implementation of agrarian reform and would anchor the full socio-economic development of the areas through various projects and programs. The ARC strategy has contributed to the cause of agrarian reform in at least three ways. First, it was partly responsible for reinvigorating the interest of foreign donors in CARP. Second, it partly shielded CARP from attacks of the anti-land reform forces that contended that lands awarded to peasants became unproductive. The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) under Sec. Ernesto Garilao in particular was able to produce empirical evidence that agrarian reform actually works, especially when systematic support services are delivered to the reform sector. And third, the ARC strategy can be seen as a training ground for pro-reform forces within the state and in society for capacity-building and skills training related to rural development.[64] As of September 2004, there were a total of 1,664 ARCs found in 6,135 barangays in 1,137 municipalities nationwide.[65] [Compare with the CPP's latest claim of 130 guerrilla fronts in more than 9,000 barangays in substantial portions of around 800 municipalities and cities in nearly 70 (out of 79) provinces.][66]

Again, the source of the foregoing independent critical assessment of the government agrarian reform program cautions about the inherent limitation of ARCs – their nature and coverage – vis-à-vis the total number of agricultural households that should benefit from favorable state policies and support. It is possible that majority of these officially declared ARCs are in fact "ARCs in paper" – they do not have concrete projects and even have pending problems with land redistribution. And land redistribution does not automatically translate to poverty reduction. It is the question of poverty that concerns the "taproot" of peasant rebellion. Recent findings are that the relatively significant outcome in land redistribution has not resulted in an equally significant degree of rural poverty reduction for a variety of reasons, including the promotion of neo-liberal policies affecting agriculture.[67]

On the other hand, the recently controversial case of Hacienda Luisita, the vast sugar estate of former President Aquino's Cojuangco side family, is often cited as a case in point in evasion of land reform, particularly through stock distribution option (SDO) under CARP. If Hacienda Luisita was supposed to be "the centerpiece of agrarian reform," then that also says a lot about the government's agrarian reform program, the hear and soul of which should be land transfer.[68] It will be recalled that

[63] Saturnino M. Borras, Jr., email to the author (The Hague to Quezon City, 28 March 2005).
[64] Borras, *Rethinking Redistributive Land Reform* 262-64. For a CPP-influenced contrary view, see *IBON Facts & Figures*, Vol. 19, No. 19, 15 October 1996, "Realities of Agrarian Reform Communities."
[65] Department of Land Reform, ARC Development, As of September 2004.
[66] Central Committee, Communist Party of the Philippines, "Raise the people's war to a new and higher level against U.S. imperialism and the Arroyo puppet regime: Message to the New People's Army," 29 March 2005 [NPA 36th Anniversary Statement].
[67] Borras, email to author. See also Saturnino M. Borras, Jr., Ricardo B. Reyes and Danilo T. Carranza, "Land, Poverty, and State-Society Interaction in the Philippines," Institute of Social Studies (The Hague)/United Nations Development Programme *Land, Poverty and Public Action Policy Paper No. 5*, March 2005.
[68] Ed Tadem, "Stock distribution evades land transfer," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 28 November 2004, p. A16.

Corpus suggested in 1989, in the context of digging out the "taproot" of the insurgency, for then President Aquino to lead by example by starting a pilot agrarian reform program in Hacienda Luisita.[69]

What about the CPP's revolutionary land reform program? Here are some findings and observations from the same scholar who did the afore-cited independent critical assessment of the government's agrarian reform program. The CPP's maximum program of land confiscation and free redistribution is to be implemented only after victory of the revolution. While this is being waged, the minimum program of land rent reduction, elimination of usury, raising of farm wages, improving prices of produce, raising production and rudimentary cooperatives is carried out. Some initial and partial gains for the peasants were made, as some lands were redistributed to landless peasants while land rents and loan interests were reduced in areas where the NPA was strong. But as soon as the general politico-military condition became unfavorable to the NPA in the late 1980s, most of these partial gains were rolled back as landlords later violently took back their lands. The campaign to eradicate usury was contentious because it tended to stop local money-lending which was still needed to finance production.[70] A former CPP insider in charge of peasant work says the rent reduction is still in the framework of share tenancy and therefore even inferior to the government's leasehold program . He says there has also been some CPP opposition to peasant acquisition of some big landholdings under CARP because these belong to landlords who are allies of the NPA.[71]

From the foregoing, it would seem that for the progress of peasant mass base-building of the CPP, agrarian reform and agrarian revolution are not the crucial factors. The CPP's peasant mass base (or at least its guerrilla fronts) appears to be increasing despite the significant redistributive outcome of CARP and the relatively low level of revolutionary land reform. The persistence or strength of the NPA has some other stronger basis or source. According to a former CPP insider, it is the NPA itself's function as a "social police" in the countryside where the state has no presence.[72] Stated otherwise, "the insurgency survives because it is an alternative political movement supported by force."[73] In short, *another state structure*.[74]

IX.   Explaining the Persistence of the Movement

The "most solid and substantive study of the CPP so far" posed this interesting question of explaining the persistence of an armed revolutionary communist movement in the Philippines, which may appear as a historical anachronism, the exception that confirms the rule. Such persistence is all the more puzzling given that the movement missed a key opportunity to seize or share in power towards the end of Marcos rule in 1986, underwent traumatic internal purges in the second half of the 1980s, and survived a major split in the early 1990s, any of which would have irremediably shattered a weaker movement.[75] The CPP was in the doldrums for most of the 1990s but has recovered to a significant extent. How explain this?

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[69] Corpus, *Silent War* 185-87.
[70] Saturnino M. Borras, Jr., *The Bibingka Strategy in Land Reform Implementation: Autonomous Peasant Movements and State Reformists in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Institute for Popular Democracy, 1998) 53, 56-57. For another critical view, see James Putzel, "Managing the 'Main Force': The Communist Party and Peasantry in the Philippines," *Kasarinlan*, Vol. 11 Nos. 3 & 4, 1st & 2nd Quarters 1996, pp. 135-66. For an earlier view favorable to the agrarian revolution, see Sabino Garcia Padilla, Jr., *Agrarian Revolution: Peasant Radicalization and Social Change in Bicol* (Manila: Kalikasan Press, 1990).
[71] Manuel P. Quiambao, President, Philippine Ecumenical Action for Community Empowerment (PEACE) Foundation, Inc., interview by the author on 17 January 2005 in Quezon City.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Marks, *Maoist Insurgency Since Vietnam* 144.
[74] Serrano, phone interview by author.
[75] Caouette, *Persevering Revolutionaries*.

We survey here several explanations not so much from the protagonists themselves, the CPP and the government, as from the perspective of independent scholars and the critical Left.

One is that the Philippine revolutionary collective action frame gives meaning to action and rebellion, it has the capacity to organize reality, it helps people understand or rationalize why they engage in such high risk activism, it makes "sense" given everything else.[76] A related explanation is that people in dire straights, especially in the countryside, crave simple answers to their problems.[77] The national-democratic argument about Philippine society and revolution, with its consolidated, clear-cut and confident explanations and answers for everything, has a certain compelling appeal. Sison himself explained it this way:

> The CPP attracted young men and women because it showed the revolutionary way out of the oppressive and exploitative system. When people recognize a just revolutionary cause and the way to carry it forward, they become dauntless and consider it a duty to work hard and struggle, make sacrifices and overcome the odds.
>
> They become unafraid of the high risks and adverse personal consequences. They become more resolute and militant as they become part of a growing movement, in which more and more people are being aroused, organized and mobilized. Their lives become meaningful and fruitful through the struggle for national liberation, democracy, social justice and other lofty goals.[78]

Another, as already noted above, is the movement's particular form that combines the three components of vanguard party, guerrilla army and social movements has allowed it to adjust and adapt to changes in the national and international situation, or to respond to political opportunities, in a way that ensures its survival.[79] This is part of or reflective of the more sophisticated character of the CPP, even while being able to provide what may seem to be simple answers to complex social questions. Unlike its fraternal communist parties in the region, the CPP has not limited itself to just waging a rural insurgency nor to engaging in purely parliamentary struggle. While constantly avowing the primacy of armed struggle in the countryside over legal, political struggle in the urban arena, the CPP in its actual practice has given the latter equal or higher priority than the former.[80]

Following this is the more controversial or contestable is the explanation that some of the CPP's recent resurgence or gains are attributable not to a reaffirmation of Maoist principles but to a departure from them. The fact that NPA activity has remained stuck at the level of small guerrilla actions despite an increase in tactical offensives indicates that in actual practice the political struggle has been given greater attention and prominence than the armed or military struggle in the past few years.[81] This is controversial particularly to the CPP because it attributes its recent resurgence to its rectification movement which featured notably the redeployment of NPA forces mainly for mass work to recover the mass base and secondarily for military work.

And then, of course, there are many potential recruits, mostly in rural areas.[82] For many of them, there is no other alternative to survive or get away from economic deprivation. Field reports then to show

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[76] Ibid.
[77] Putzel, "Managing the Main Force" 158.
[78] Sison, *At Home in the World* 108.
[79] Caouette, *Persevering Revolutionaries*.
[80] Quimpo, *Contested Democracy and the Left*.
[81] Quimpo, "CPP-NDF Members in Western Europe."
[82] Caouette, *Persevering Revolutionaries*.

that many countryside recruits of the NPA join not so much due to political consciousness or commitment but for economic survival. Sison says, however, that "they join the revolutionary movement in order to struggle for their own national and social liberation… The toiling masses of workers and peasants are the most oppressed and exploited. They have been the most interested in joining the movement… they know that the movement can succeed only with their resolute and militant mass struggle."[83]

Finally, related to those subjective forces of the revolution are the objective conditions. Capitalism (or semi-feudalism in the CPP's view of the mode of production) has not been much of a success in the country. Over the past few decades, the Philippines has lagged behind its neighbors in economic growth. Massive and abject poverty and economic inequity, No. 1 in the NUC list of root causes of the conflict, continues to be there, if not worsen. On the political side, there is revulsion against traditional elite politics. Philippine democracy has remained largely formal and truncated and not deepened into a more participatory and egalitarian one.[84] The oligarchic elite has become more predatory, plunderous, and has engaged in much more corruption, rent-seeking and violence in maintaining its economic and political power.

Beyond the regime change in 1986, various social and political scientists point to the persistence of "local political bosses," "caciques" or "local authoritarian enclaves," especially in rural areas. In these enclaves, the martial law regime has not ended: despotic local elites, whether inside or outside the state apparatus, and whether connected or not to national elites, have continued to rule ruthlessly. They impose their own "law" in governing the poor peasants in their territory. For the poor peasants, these despotic elites represent the system that needs to be overthrown.[85] It is *both a wonder and no wonder* then that, every year for several decades now, Sison has proclaimed that "the objective conditions for revolution are better than ever before."

X.   "Rejectionist" and Other Left Paths

These other Left paths are important because they can help shape the future evolution of the conflict away from the war mode while still working for and achieving progressive social and political change. Over armed struggle, these "rejectionist" factions variably put a premium on the mass movement, trade unionism, peace negotiations, development work, elections, and parliamentary work.

One paradigm shift here for Left groups is an integral conception of democracy, recognizing the intrinsic value of formal democratic institutions and processes, even with their imperfections, to effect a gradual transformation of the power relationships in society or, if you will, a protracted process of social and political change. The current elite democracy must itself be transformed into a more participatory and egalitarian democracy from below, thereby deepening democracy.[86] Some of the Left groups we survey below have adopted or are moving toward an integral view of democracy while old habits of an instrumental view of democracy die hard with some.

The brief survey which follows is limited to Left groups with national-democratic (as distinguished from "social-democratic") origins or links. While the mainstream "reaffirmist" CPP represents a "unified orthodoxy," the "rejectionist" and other Left paths since 1992 represent "divided pluralism."[87]

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[83] Sison, *At Home in the World* 76.
[84] Quimpo, *Contested Democracy and the Left*.
[85] Borras, email to author.
[86] Quimpo, *Contested Democracy and the Left*.
[87] Caouette, *Persevering Revolutionaries*.

- *Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Manggagawa ng Pilipinas* (RPM-P)
  - mainly in Western Visayas & Manila, though claiming a Luzon-Visayas-Mindanao presence
  - Marxist-Leninist with a socialist orientation
  - adopted the politico-military (pol-mil) concept as strategy, rejecting a war strategy as the principal means, subordination of armed struggle to the mass movement
  - has an *armed wing* Revolutionary Proletarian Army-Alex Boncayao Brigade (RPA-ABB) but not actively engaged in armed struggle due to an *interim peace agreement* with the GRP, has had armed encounters with the NPA
  - has a *party-list group* Alab Katipunan but failed to get elected

- *Partido ng Manggagawang Pilipino* (PMP)
[merger of the original PMP with the *Sosyalistang Partido ng Paggawa* (SPP) & the *Partido Proletaryo Demokratiko* (PPD)]
  - mainly in Manila-Rizal but also with a Luzon-Visayas-Mindanao presence
  - Marxist-Leninist, esp. Leninist, with a socialist orientation
  - accent on the mass movement, esp. trade unionism
  - has an *armed city partisan* wing *Armadong Partisanong Panlungsod* (APP)
  - has two *party-list groups* *Partido ng Manggagawa* and *Sanlakas* which have gotten elected

- *Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Manggagawa ng Mindanao* (RPM-M)
  - mainly in Central Mindanao & more recently other parts of Mindanao
  - Marxist-Leninist with a socialist orientation & a Mindanao tri-people (Christians, Moros & Lumads) approach
  - multi-form struggle but gives paramount importance to peace-building & development work at this time because of the adverse effect of the war situation on the tri-peoples of Mindanao
  - has an *armed wing* Revolutionary People's Army (RPA) but not actively engaged in armed struggle due to engagement in *peace negotiations* with the GRP
  - has a *party-list group* Anak Mindanao (AMIN) which has gotten elected

- *Marxista-Leninistang Partido ng Pilipinas* (MLPP)
  - mainly in Central Luzon & Manila
  - originally a "reaffirmist" faction which was more "reaffirmist" than the mainstream CPP
  - has an *armed wing* & is *actively engaged in armed struggle*, both with the AFP & the NPA

- *Akbayan!* Citizens Action Party
  - *a party-list group* project of the independent socialist *Bukluran para sa Ikauunlad ng Sosyalistang Isip at Gawa* (BISIG), the rejectionist faction *Padayon*, the democratic socialist *Pandayan para sa Sosyalistang Pilipinas* (Pandayan), and ex-popular democrats
  - said to have fully taken an "integral view" of democracy, as distinguished from the "instrumentalist view" of the CPP and possibly some of the "rejectionist" Marxist-Leninist parties

- Movement for Popular Democracy (MPD)
  [formed post-EDSA 1986 well before the 1992 split but effectively dissolved in 1999]
  - promoted popular democracy (people's empowerment & political pluralism) initially as a development of & then later a possible alternative to national democracy
  - emphasized the role of *non-party political formations* (NPPFs) and civil society in changing society from below

XI. Conclusion

The protracted people's war and counter-insurgency war seems destined to go on for the foreseeable future unless there is some kind of a breakthrough like a paradigm shift in both parties frameworks on war and peace. This is very hard to see happening because of the contending ideological visions. The rebellion has its root structural causes but it is also very clearly ideologically driven.

There doesn't appear much that can be done to change ideology or even strategy as far as the CPP is concerned (that has been tried through internal and external debate). One can at most find mutually acceptable terms of reference and the most promising for now is human rights, "the full scope of human rights and fundamental freedoms," to use the wording of CARHRIHL. Together with international humanitarian law, these can alleviate to some, if limited, extent the threats to personal, community and political security even as the war goes on.

Of course, that would not be enough to address the full scope of human security and human development which the people need. For this, socio-economic, political and even constitutional reforms are needed. It would be ideal to achieve these through the peace negotiations, perhaps additionally informed by the frameworks of human security and human development. But they can and should also be pursued on their own merits *outside* the peace negotiations and still be treated as part of a broader peace process. In other words, they should be pursued *not* with a counter-insurgency frame, not to overcome the insurgency, but to meet the needs of the people, to "serve the people."

The people's war from both sides of the conflict is purportedly waged for and even by the people. It is about time that the people be empowered to freely decide, express and act about where they want this war to go. This itself may occasion some breakthrough. This in turn needs another breakthrough in terms of political reform for a more participatory and egalitarian democracy with mechanisms to address the root causes. Democracy, after all, is one of the mutually acceptable principles of the GRP-NDF peace negotiations. In its true or best sense, democracy might also be a framework for the attainment of a just and lasting peace.[88]

If it is to be a people's war to dig out the root causes, then let it really be the people's. This is where independent civil society, exemplified by people's organizations and NGOs, can and should play a role, including in mediating the conflict between the Philippine government and Communist rebel forces and in pushing for substantive reforms inside and outside their peace processes.

Such other paths in the direction of social change should be allowed and encouraged. As even Mao said, "let a hundred flowers bloom."   In the final analysis, all sides would agree, only TIME, practice and the people will resolve the issue.

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[88] See e.g. Ramon C. Casiple, "Undertaking Political Reforms Towards a Sustainable Peace Regime" (Outline presentation prepared for the "Waging Peace in the Philippines: Roundtable on Good Governance for Sustainable Peace" on 9 December 2005 at the Ateneo Professional Schools, Makati City).