Aum Shinrikyo's Rise, Fall and Revival
Rohan Gunaratna

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EBSCO HOST

Building a Global Network for Security

Religiously Motivated Terrorism and Preventing Violent Extremism

This issue focuses on two key themes in research on terrorism and violent extremism: non-Islamist religious-political terrorism and strategies for preventing violent extremism (PVE). First, the issue observes Aum Shinrikyo in Japan and Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) in Sri Lanka, both Buddhist groups that have drawn on extremist misinterpretations of the religion. While Aum Shinrikyo and BBS challenged the state's political ideology, BBS has engaged in attacks against minorities and disseminated violent and extremist propaganda. This issue showcases the diversity of terrorist groups in terms of ideological and religious influences, rooted in the domestic context, that could also motivate hate speech and attacks against Muslims (a religious minority in the case of Sri Lanka).

Second, the issue focuses on PVE strategies in Southeast Asia, with the Philippines as the key case study. The article discusses the importance of moving beyond countering violent extremism (CVE) to PVE as long-term efforts to prevent terrorist groups from recruiting and gaining traction. To this end, it is proposed that communal harmony and peacebuilding measures incorporating the local communities should lie at the core of all PVE strategies.

Rohan Gunaratna's contribution looks at the Japanese terrorist group, Aum Shinrikyo, which perpetrated the 1995 Tokyo Subway Sarin attack. The article analyses the group's ideology and looks at its revival through various splinter organisations, specifically Aleph, which is focusing on recruitment through social media. It also looks at the

historical development of Aum Shinrikyo, in particular, the leadership of Shoko Asahara (ideological and personal ambitions), international networks (Russia, United States and Australia) and attempts to acquire Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) technologies.

Amresh Gunasingham focuses on religious extremism in Sri Lanka against the backdrop of Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara, a hardline cleric's arrest in June 2018. The article discusses the role of Buddhist extremist Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) group that has exploited ethnic and religious divisions, often targeting the minority Muslim community. Despite the rise of right-wing Buddhist extremists, the peaceful majority has staged demonstrations against targeting the Muslims. The article also notes the inability of authorities to take action against members of the right-wing Buddhist clergy that has incited ethno-religious violence and highlights a need for long-term policies to counter religious extremism.

Ricardo F. De Leon, **Marlon V. Rufo** and **Mark Davis M. Pablo** discuss the twin threats of the terrorist group Islamic State (IS) and the insurgent group New People's Army (NPA) to the Philippines, while proposing a need for robust grassroots initiatives that incorporate the barangays (local villages). The piece highlights a need for holistic PVE approaches while discussing the work of the Integrated Community Action against Radicalisation and Extremism (i CARE) & Whole-of-Community Approach (WOCA) in the aftermath of IS' attempted takeover of Marawi. It highlights the idea that empowering

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the barangays as the bulwark against violent extremism, will make the local communities more resilient against terrorist groups. Lastly, it proposes that a stronger homeland security infrastructure with the barangays as the first line of defense will strengthen preemptive responses to violent extremism by the IS and NPA.

Aum Shinrikyo's Rise, Fall and Revival

Rohan Gunaratna

In March 1995, the Tokyo subway attack by Aum Shinrikyo signaled the emergence of a new global trend in chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear terrorism. In July 2018, Japan executed the group's leadership, but it is reemerging both in Japan and overseas. Japan should criminalise Aum Shinrikyo as an organisation and its affiliated entities and continue to work with partners to dismantle the group's structures overseas.

Introduction

On 6 and 26 July, the leadership of the Aum Shinrikyo group was executed for involvement in terrorist crimes. The founder of the group, Shoko Asahara and 12 other leaders and members were transported to several facilities and hanged, representing the largest execution in Japan's modern history.[1] The Tokyo Subway Sarin attack by Aum Shinrikyo in 1995 is labelled as the most significant terrorist attack in Japan's modern history. It has played a key role in influencing other terrorist groups to seek technology and expertise to conduct Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) attacks.[2]

Aum Shinrikyo is one of the most violent groups that emerged before the rise of Al-Qaeda and the so-called Islamic State (IS). The group had long-term goals that included building conventional military strength and recruiting youth from universities and industries working on technical subjects. Even though Aum Shinrikyo killed 27 people in its attacks, the group was feared because its chemical attacks injured and indirectly affected over 6,000 civilians.[3] The biological warfare program of Aum Shinrikyo was a failure, but its scientists secretly manufactured and successfully delivered nerve agents. VX was used to kill dissidents and Sarin was employed to kill judges and the public. From 1990 to 1995, the group initiated 17 attacks, which included 10 chemical and 7 biological attacks to target civilians and officials.[4]

Investigations have confirmed that four biological attacks used anthrax and three used botulinum, while four chemical attacks used Sarin; four other attacks used VX, one attack used Phosgene and another used Hydrogen Cyanide.[5] Aum Shinrikyo managed to evade scrutiny by using the cover of religion in support of its activities.

Both state and non-state actors have learnt from Aum Shinrikyo's extensive biological and chemical programs. Aum Shinrikyo's attacks have also provided governments with a template on responding to the CBRN threat posed by groups such as IS and Al-Qaeda.

Origins and Genesis of Aum Shinrikyo

Since the beginning of the contemporary wave of terrorism in 1968, the world witnessed

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[1] Refer to Appendix 1 for details of the leaders and members who were executed.
[2] Rohan Gunaratna. "Managing the Microbe." Lecture, Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Boston, April 25, 2017.
3 Alex Martin, "1995 Aum Sarin Attack on Tokyo Subway Still Haunts, Leaving Questions Unanswered," *Japan Times*, March 19, 2018, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/03/19/national/crime-legal/1995-aum-sarin-attack-tokyo-subway-still-haunts-leaving-questions-unanswered/#.W2KBMTozbIV; "Police Final Tally Confirms 6,583 Fell Victim to 8 Aum-related Crimes," *Kyodo News Service*, December 20, 2010).
4 Tim Ballard, Jason Pate, Gary Ackerman, Diana McCauley, and Sean Lawson, "Chronology of Aum

Shinrikyo's CBW Activities," James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Middlebury Institute of International Studies, 2001, http://www.nonproliferation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/aum_chrn.pdf.
5 Jonathan Tucker, *Toxic Terror: Assessing Terrorist Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000); Tim Ballard, Jason Pate, Gary Ackerman, Diana McCauley, and Sean Lawson*,* "Chronology of Aum Shinrikyo's CBW Activities," James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Middlebury Institute of International Studies, 2001, http://www.nonproliferation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/aum_chrn.pdf.

the rise of left and right-wing, ethno-political and politico-religious extremist groups. The post-war political and security environment in Japan enabled Aum Shinrikyo to register as a religious organisation and discretely build its military capabilities. There are three key dimensions to understanding Aum Shinrikyo: the leader's personal experiences, ideological inclinations and international networks.

In March 1955, Asahara was born to an impoverished family of seven children in Chizuo Matsumoto Kumamoto Prefecture. He had suffered from congenital glaucoma with no sight in one eye and severe impairment in the other.[6] He later became an acupuncturist and a masseur in Kumamoto after attending a school for the blind. In 1977 he moved to Tokyo for further education, but failed to gain university admission. Asahara studied traditional Chinese medicine and developed an interest in astrology after 1978. In 1982, he was fined for violating the Drug, Cosmetics, and Medical Instruments Act for practicing pharmacy without a license. Reports have mentioned that Asahara turned to religion after these incidents in his life, which furthered his extremist views.

Asahara embraced Agon Shū, a Japanese Buddhist sect that brings together three major currents of Buddhist thought: Northern Buddhism (Mahayana), Southern Buddhism (Theravada/Hinayana) and Tibetan Buddhism (Vajirayanism). Asahara conducted yoga and meditation sessions from his one-bedroom apartment in Tokyo's Shibuya ward.[7] He claimed to have attained enlightenment (Nirvana), and released images of himself levitating and discussed the acquisition of psychic powers in public.

In July 1987, the group was renamed from Aum to Aum Shinrikyo (the Supreme Truth) and had a membership of 1,300. Asahara developed his unique doctrine by drawing selectively from Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity. He claimed to be Buddha, a reincarnation of Shiva (the Hindu god of destroying evil) and a Christ Messiah (messenger of God). One of his stated aims was to build the mythical kingdom of Shambhala or the utopian state. He had also created Lotus Villages, indoctrinating male monks and female nuns, who lived isolated lives with the hope of becoming future Buddhas.

In August 1989, with religious legalisation, the group's membership rose dramatically from 4,000 members to 10,000 by 1992 and 50,000 by 1995.[8] In parallel, Aum Shinrikyo's net worth doubled from nearly USD$500 million in 1990 to USD$1 billion by 1995.[9] The activities of the group had also prompted an anti-Aum Shinrikyo movement with Tsutsumi Sakamoto, a lawyer planning a class action lawsuit against Aum Shinrikyo. In November 1989, Sakamoto, his wife and their infant son were killed by members of the group in Yokohama.[10]

The group harnessed extensive capital to expand its operations beyond Japan, starting with New York in 1987. The group was listed in New York as AUM U.S.A. Co. Ltd., a non-profit tax and charitable religious organisation focusing on recruitment and translating and selling books, but its support base remained below 200 members.

In comparison, the group's branch in Russia, became the largest arm of the group outside Japan. The Russian Security Committee

[6] Richard Danzig, Marc Sageman, Terrance Leighton, Lloyd Hough, Hidemi Yiki, Rui Kotani and Zachary M. Hosfotd, "Aum Shinryikyo: Insights Into How Terrorists Develop Biological and Chemical Weapons," Center for a New American Security, July 2011, https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/attach/60/60468_CNAS_AumShinrikyo_Danzig_1.pdf.

[7] Anson D Supe, *Wolves Within the Fold: Religious Leadership and Abuses of Power* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1998), p. 34.

[8] Saad Alqithami, Jennifer Haegele and Henry Hexmoor, "Conceptual Modeling of Networked Organisations: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo," in *Case Studies in Intelligent Computing: Achievements and Trends*, ed. Biju Isaac, Nauman Israr (Boca Raton, Florida: CRC Press, 2015), 391-406.

[9] US Senate Government Affairs Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, *Global proliferation of weapons of mass destruction: A case study on the Aum Shinrikyo*. October 31, 1995; Judith Miller, "Some in Japan Fear Authors of Subway Attack Are Regaining Ground", *The New York Times*, October 11, 1998 https://www.nytimes.com/1998/10/11/world/some-in-japan-fear-authors-of-subway-attack-are-regaining-ground.html.

[10] Andrew Pollack, "Japanese Police find Body of a Lawyer Believer Killed by Cult," *The New York Times,* September 7, 1995, https://www.nytimes.com/1995/09/07/world/japanese-police-find-body-of-a-lawyer-believed-killed-by-cult.html.

stated that, "Aum's followers numbered 35,000, with up to 55,000 laymen visiting the sect's seminars sporadically."[11] The group spread with seven branches inside and eleven outside Moscow. Aum Shinrikyo also established networks in Australia, Germany, Indonesia Taiwan, and expanded into the United Kingdom, Canada, Israel, Sri Lanka, former Yugoslavia, Belarus, Ukraine, Ghana and Nigeria. However, the security and intelligence community was not able to detect and disrupt Aum Shinrikyo until the group conducted attacks.

From a Non-Violent to Violent Group

Aum Shinrikyo's failure in electoral politics and its recruitment of scientists susceptible to Asahara's ideology influenced the direction of the group. The ambitious scientists of Aum Shinrikyo gradually dominated the group's upper echelon. Asahara wanted to transform his religious movement into a militarised organisation after 1989. Although Aum Shinrikyo transited from being a religious to a militarised entity, most of its followers had limited or no knowledge of conducting violent attacks. In 1990, Asahara saw an opportunity for the group to capture power through electoral politics. In February that year, after establishing the Shinrito Party, Asahara and 24 other members ran in a House of Representatives election. They all lost and the results led Asahara to decide on using violence as a means to capture state power. Asahara indoctrinated followers based on religious logic and argued that global war was imminent. Asahara also prophesied a conflict between the US and Japan that would l lead to the end of the world. He stated that only Aum Shinrikyo's members would survive the apocalypse.

Efforts to Develop CBRN and Other Technologies

In order to support its militarisation program in Japan, Aum Shinrikyo built state-of-the-art national and international procurement networks. The group built a stronghold close to Mount Fuji and other smaller factories to produce special weapons and create a chemical stockpile. The group built its biological and chemical warfare program by recruiting 300 qualified and trained Japanese scientists and engineers. The program started with Seiichi Endo, a virologist trained at Kyoto University, harvesting botulinum bacterium from the Ishikarigawa Basin in Hokkaido Prefecture in 1989.[12] Aum Shinrikyo also attempted to acquire agents from overseas to build its biological warfare program. In October 1992, Aum Shinrikyo dispatched a medical mission led by Asahara to Zaire to provide aid during an Ebola outbreak, but its motive was to obtain the Ebola virus.[13] The group procured vaccines and pathogens from Japanese universities and through followers who purchased them overseas.

The Aum Shinrikyo branch in New York attempted to obtain high technology equipment, computer software, hardware and military items. In order to handle chemical and biological agents in their 'clean rooms' in Tokyo, the group purchased air filtration media from a company in New Hampshire in 1994.[14] In January 1995, the group's members also purchased molecular modeling software in Oregon. Some of the products purchased had enabled a chemist to synthesise molecular experimentation on a computer screen instead of in a laboratory. The downloads from other databanks were used for analysis and data modeling. Aum Shinrikyo members negotiated the purchase of a sophisticated computer hardware system to use the software for USD$47,000 in February and March 1995.[15] Although the group returned the computer hardware after the Tokyo attack, the software was missing

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[11] US Senate Government Affairs Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, *Global proliferation of weapons of mass destruction: A case study on the Aum Shinrikyo*. October 31, 1995, https://fas.org/irp/congress/1995_rpt/aum/, Chapter 6.
[12] Richard Danzig, Marc Sageman, Terrance Leighton, Lloyd Hough, Hidemi Yuki, Rui Kotani and Zachary M. Hosfotd, "Aum Shinryiko: Insights Into How Terrorists Develop Biological and Chemical Weapons," Center for a New American Security, July 2011,

https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/attach/60/60468_CNAS_AumShinrikyo_Danzig_1.pdf.
[13] Milton Leitenberg, "Aum Shinrikyo's Efforts to Produce Biological Weapons: A Case Study in the Serial Propagation of Misinformation," *Terrorism and Political Violence [Special Issue on the Future of Terrorism]* 11:4 (Winter 1999), 149-158.
[14] US Senate Government Affairs Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, *Global proliferation of weapons of mass destruction: A case study on the Aum Shinrikyo*. October 31, 1995, https://fas.org/irp/congress/1995_rpt/aum/
[15] Ibid.

from the drive. In February 1995, the group's members purchased 200 military style knives and Russian and US gas masks in violation of US state department rules.

Kiyohide Hakawa, a prominent leader, visited Russia 21 times from 1992 to 1995; Asahara also visited Russia in 1992 and a military base there in 1993. The group's members underwent military training in Russia. After completing flying training in Florida in 1993, they purchased a Soviet-made MI-17 helicopter and transported it to Japan.[16] It is likely that that the group's leadership wanted to use the helicopter to disperse gas. Reports revealed that some Russians had trained Aum Shinrikyo members, with a few Russians visiting Japan as well. However, Russia later criminalised the group after the Tokyo attack in 1995, but that did not affect its network in the country to a large extent.

In Australia, Aum Shinrikyo established an infrastructure from April 1993 to October 1994 and acquired a 500,000-acre sheep farm to mine uranium and test chemical weapons.[17] In September 1993, the group also purchased eight mining leases from the Western Australia Department of Minerals and Energy. According to Australian Federal Police, Asahara arrived in Perth with 24 members and focused on acquiring chemical and mining equipment. Australia was also used by Aum Shinrikyo to test Sarin. Overall, the group's interests in acquiring a nuclear arsenal persisted even after it was dismantled.[18]

Aum Shinrikyo scientists also studied the work of Nikola Tesia, a scientist who experimented in the fields of atmospherics, electromagnetics, fluid dynamics, and geodynamics in the early 1900s. The group

members understood that Tesia had developed a ray gun in the 1930s, with a particle beam accelerator, capable of shooting down an airplane 200 miles away. In addition, six members traveled to the Tesia Museum in Belgrade to research Tesia Coil, a coil used for alternating current. They studied Tesia's work on high energy voltage transmission and on wave amplification, which could have been used to create seismological disturbances.[19]

Revival of Aum Shinrikyo

Aum Shinrikyo openly built its religious, social, political and financial networks. The group also rapidly developed an underground network to continue its operations and evade the authorities. After the Tokyo subway attack, Japan prosecuted Aum Shinrikyo members who engaged in violence, but failed to counter the ideology of the group. In 1999, Japan had altered its legal framework to conduct surveillance and search without a warrant, focusing on any group that had engaged in violence. However, Japan still does not have a mechanism to designate and list their affiliates as terrorist organisations.

Beyond the Tokyo Subway attack, Aum Shinrikyo members planned to conduct other attacks to rescue Asahara and had used the internet to gather information on nuclear facilities in Russia, China and South Korea.[20] In order to raise public awareness, the Public Security Intelligence Agency of Japan (PSIA) built a website in the Japanese language about Aum Shinrikyo and included court testimonies.[21] Victims of the group's violence also shared their suffering, including copies of medical treatment records and personal trauma stories in the aftermath of the Tokyo attack.[22]

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Andrea A. Nehorayoff, Benjamin Ash, and Daniel S. Smith, "Aum Shinrikyo's Nuclear and Chemical Weapons Development Efforts," *Journal of Strategic Security* 9, no. 1 (2016): 35-48.

[18] "Cult Siphoned Nuclear Data: Police Say Aum Shinrikyo–Related Software Developers Build Dossiers on Researchers," *Asahi Shimbun*, March 29, 2000.

[19] US Senate Government Affairs Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, *Global proliferation of weapons of mass destruction: A case study on the Aum Shinrikyo*. October 31, 1995, https://fas.org/irp/congress/1995_rpt/aum/

[20] Sara Daly, John Parachini and William Rosenau, "Aum Shinrikyo, Al Qaeda, and the Kinshasa Reactor

Implications of Three Case Studies for Combating Nuclear Terrorism," *Rand Corporation*, 2005, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/documented_briefings/2005/RAND_DB458.pdf.

[21] Ministry of Japan (Public Security Intelligence Agency). "Subway Sarin Incident," March 23, 2018, http://www.moj.go.jp/psia/aum-23nen.html.

[22] Kyodo News, "Japan Launches Website On Aum Cult In Bid To Raise Public Awareness Of Splinter Groups," *Japan Times*, February 27, 2018 https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/02/27/national/japan-launches-website-aum-cult-bid-raise-public-awareness-splinter-groups/#.W0K5OmIRWaM.

Aum Shinrikyo's footprint in Japan and overseas has shrunk but it is beginning to emerge in different forms after a long hiatus. The core group has changed its name to Aleph and is now approaching vulnerable youth through 'study groups'.[23] Despite pressure from police investigations and its own dissident members, Aleph has used social media to recruit. In November 2017, the Hokkaido Prefectural Police recovered Aum Shinrikyo literature and guidelines on social media recruitment from Aleph's hideouts in Sapporo and Fukuoka. Some of the guidelines on social media recruitment included focusing on young people and not those over 50.[24] Aleph is following the recruitment platforms and methodologies for revival similar to groups such as IS. The group's central membership is strong, but certain reports have indicated that there is a following of 1,500 members and supporters.

In 2007, Asahara's successor, Fumihiro Joyu created a splinter group called, Hikari no Wa (Circle of Rainbow Light)..[25] Joyu, the former head of Aum Shinrikyo operations in Russia, was an engineer with the Japanese space program and specialised in artificial intelligence. Even though Joyu opposes the violence-oriented tactics of Aum Shinrikyo, his organisation does follow its ideology.

Conclusion

Aum Shrinrikyo is growing in the form of multiple splinter organisations and is resilient to disruption. Every year, they recruit close to 200 people, largely youth.[26] Japanese intelligence has estimated that the numerical strength of the splinter groups is 1,650 in Japan and 460 in Russia, with assets standing at USD$9 million.[27] The members of some

related groups could become a threat to Japan in the near future. Since these groups are predominantly targeting the youth, the country needs a strong multi-generational policy to counter such recruitment and related propaganda.

Even though the criminal justice system of Japan has effectively eliminated the core leadership of Aum Shinrikyo it is essential to review the long-term strategic threat to the country. Presently, Japan lacks the legal framework to fight the revival of Aum Shinrikyo. For Japan to remain one of the safest countries in the world, Tokyo has to weaken not only the military capabilities of the group, but its capacity to radicalise and recruit the next generation of Japan. Although Japan has built one of the world's best capabilities against chemical and biological terrorism, Tokyo also needs to develop a robust legal framework to criminalise Aum Shinrikyo and its successors. As such, there is a need for policies on the dissemination of Asahara's teachings and related propaganda. Overall, the rise of Asahara and the development of Aum Shinrikyo demonstrate the need for regulation of religious spaces and public awareness of extremist groups distorting mainstream religions to advance their interests.

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[23] Osaki, Tomohiro, "Aum Cultists Inspire a New Generation of Admirers," *Japan Times,* March 20, 2014, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/03/20/national/social-issues/aum-cultists-inspire-a-new-generation-of-admirers/#.W2KWRjozbIU; Young People Easily Get Sucked Into Aum Shinrikyo Spinoff Aleph. Japan Today. 28 August 2012. https://japantoday.com/category/features/kuchikomi/young-people-easily-get-sucked-into-aum-shinrikyo-spinoff-aleph.
[24] Kyodo News, "Guru's Life Shrouded In Mystery As Gallows Loom," *Japan Times,* January 25, 2018, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/01/25/national/crime-legal/gurus-life-shrouded-mystery-gallows-loom/#.W0AgDWIRWaM.

[25] "Aum Shinrikyo: The Japanese Cult behind the Tokyo Sarin Attack," *BBC News,* July 6, 2018, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35975069.
[26] "Young People Easily Get Sucked into Aum Shinrikyo Spinoff Aleph," *Japan Today*, August 28, 2012, https://japantoday.com/category/features/kuchikomi/young-people-easily-get-sucked-into-aum-shinrikyo-spinoff-aleph.
[27] Kyodo News, "Ex-Aum Executive Joyu Offers Apology To Cult's Victims On Day Of Asahara's Execution," *Japan Times,* July 6, 2018, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/07/06/national/crime-legal/ex-aum-executive-joyu-offers-apology-cults-victims-day-asaharas-execution/#.W0LBy2IRWaM.

Appendix I

AUM SHINRIKYO LEADERS AND MEMBERS EXECUTED

LEGEND:
EXECUTED ON 6 JUL 2018
EXECUTED ON 26 JUL 2018

SHOKO ASAHARA

YOSHIHIRO INOUE
TOMOMITSU NIIMI
TOMOMASA NAKAGAWA
MASAMI TSUCHIYA
KIYOHIDE HAYAKAWA
SEIICHI ENDO

YASUO HAYASHI
KENICHI HIROSE
TORU TOYODA
MASATO YOKOYAMA
KAZUAKI OKAZAKI
SATORU HASHIMOTO

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Arrest of Influential Religious Hardliner and Religious Extremism in Sri Lanka

Amresh Gunasingham

The prosecution of Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara, a hardline Sri Lankan cleric, in June, is significant for a country often criticised for failing to contain religiously-motivated extremists who promote violence.

Background

On August 8, a Sri Lankan court sentenced an influential Buddhist monk, Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara, to six years' imprisonment after finding him guilty of contempt of court.[1] Gnanasara had intimidated a woman who was in court for proceedings concerning her husband, a prominent missing journalist. The judgment has prompted cautious optimism that radical activists in Sri Lanka are no longer considered above the law.

The sentencing is significant as Sri Lanka has rarely convicted monks who are a venerated group in the society. In this instance, Gnanasara, the secretary general of the hardline group Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), or 'Buddhist Power Force', had reportedly barged into the court while in session and threatened and accused the woman of supporting ethnic minority extremists and tarnishing the reputation of soldiers who fought during the civil war.[2] The BBS is known for its vigorous assertion of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism. Gnanasara's prosecution has attracted widespread attention as the monk is a leading member of the powerful Buddhist clergy.

The episode has highlighted the role of organised radical groups in Sri Lanka, who in recent years have exploited the country's combustible ethnic, religious and socio-economic fault lines to instigate violence, often targeting minority groups. The government has taken a tough stance, arresting a number of agitators, mostly civilians, imposing curfews and deploying the military to assist police patrols in volatile areas. But in the long term, the country needs an effective counter narrative to the radical ethno-religious ideals promoted by extremist groups, if nation building efforts, a key electoral pledge of the current administration, are to take a significant step forward.

Religion and Society

Buddhist monks have always held a prominent role in Sri Lanka, a country where politics, ethnicity and religion are tightly interwoven. The clergy wields a lot of influence over the majority Buddhist population, which makes up 70 percent of the 21 million inhabitants.[3] This has enabled them to enjoy a political role similar to their counterparts in countries such as Myanmar.

While many monks uphold values of inclusivism, peace and non-violence, a more radical group became increasingly influential with the electoral victory of a Sinhala nationalist government in the 1950s. This group sought to claim a preeminent place for the majority Sinhalese ethnic group, which contributed to the Sinhala-Tamil ethnic tensions that gripped the country in a civil war for over three decades.

The appeal of ultra nationalist groups such as the BBS, while predominantly operating on the fringes of Sri Lankan society, lies in their vociferous promotion of themselves as

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[1] He was previously sentenced to six months in prison on June 14, 2018. Gnanasara's lawyers have indicated they will appeal the latest judgement, amidst calls for a presidential pardon to exonerate the monk.

[2] Sri Lanka's civil war lasted for 27 years starting in 1983 and ending in 2009.

[3] "Sri Lanka Shops, Mosque Damaged In Buddhist-Muslim Clash," *Reuters*, February 27, 2018, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-sri-lanka-attacks/sri-lanka-shops-mosque-damaged-in-buddhist-muslim-clash-idUSKCN1GB16N.

guardians of Buddhism and the distinct Sinhala identity. BBS is accused of stirring up violence against Muslims and Christians, mainly in Buddhist-dominated parts of Sri Lanka. Radical monks have consistently denied the accusations that range from violent assaults to hate speech and defaming the Quran.[4]

Rise of Violence

Since 2012, anti-Muslim sentiment has been on the rise in Sri Lanka, with Muslims viewed as coming under the increasing influence of the fundamentalist Salafi and Wahhabi Islam.[5] This view has drawn from the global spread of Islamophobia and long-standing stereotypes of the Muslim community in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan hardliners have stoked fears of a Muslim takeover of the country. Muslims, who are the fastest growing segment of the population, have a strong entrepreneurial bent, finding commercial success in a range of industries. BBS has partially succeeded in fearmongering among the masses perpetuating a perception of Muslim dominance over the economic and demographic spheres.

In March 2018, President Maithripala Sirisena declared a ten-day state of emergency as communal riots, the most serious witnessed since the end of the civil war, erupted following a traffic accident in which four Muslim youths attacked a Sinhala driver in Kandy on 22 February 2018.[6] The driver was seriously injured and died in the hospital shortly after. The police detained 14 suspects, including the four youths who attacked the driver. The volatile situation led the government to take the unprecedented step of shutting down social media platforms such as Facebook, which were effectively being used by radical groups to stoke negative sentiments and spread hate propaganda.

Political and human rights observers have noted that radical members of the clergy have rarely been remanded for allegedly inciting ethno-religious tensions. Previously in 2014, they were accused of advocating an attack on Muslims and their property in southwestern parts of the country (a Buddhist-dominated area), which left at least four dead and 80 injured. Some politicians, who often play up their Buddhist allegiances to appeal to the strong religious convictions of the people, and the police have been criticised for not doing enough to prevent communal tensions and violence.

Spread of Ethno-Religious Violence

By and large the majority of the Buddhist population in Sri Lanka has rejected the provocations of the rabble rousing few. Following the riots earlier this year, hundreds of Buddhist monks and members of civil society staged silent protests against the targeting of Muslims. Government leaders have also condemned these acts in the media. Still, the response in some quarters to Gnanasara's prosecution requires close monitoring. Hundreds of radical monks and agitators held a number of protests demanding his release, while black flags and posters were hoisted in several parts of Colombo, to protest the threat to Buddhism. One of the grievances is over the use of criminal law against a religious figure with the popular sentiment being that monks should only be tried by a specially convened religious court.

Going Forward

The current coalition government, which came to power in 2015 with the promise of sweeping reforms, has experienced public criticism over its handling of ethnic violence. There is a danger that the exclusivist and extremist narratives used by powerful forces such as BBS, seeking to divide rather than unite people, could have serious long term implications for peace and order in Sri Lanka. Given the history of ethnic and terrorist violence, it is imperative that the government and community and religious leaders devise

[4] "Controversial Sri Lankan Monk Found Guilty Of Intimidation," *The New Straits Times,* May 24, 2018, https://www.nst.com.my/world/2018/05/372929/controversial-sri-lanka-monk-found-guilty-intimidation.
[5] Kashmira Gander, "Sri Lanka Riots: US Condemns Anti-Muslim Violence," *The Independent*, June 17, 2014, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/sri-lanka-riots-us-condemns-anti-muslim-violence-after-three-died-and-almost-100-injured-9544643.html.
[6] "Sri Lanka Declares State Of Emergency," *The Hindu*, March 6, 2018, https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/sri-lanka-declares-state-of-emergency-amid-violence/article22954574.ece.

policy measures for countering religious agitation and militancy.

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Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in the Philippines: Grassroots Empowerment and Development of Homeland Security Framework

Ricardo F. De Leon
Marlon V. Rufo
Mark Davis M. Pablo

The Philippines is currently facing active threats from sympathisers of the terrorist group Islamic State (IS) and the insurgent group New People's Army (NPA) that threaten public safety and security. By empowering the barangays (villages) through community-oriented policing, the Duterte administration hopes that it could act as a bulwark against violent extremism. In order to sustain these grassroots initiatives, the article advocates for structural reforms in the public safety and security sectors that lead to a new homeland security architecture in the Philippines.

Introduction

The Philippines announced a decisive victory of the joint and combined forces of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), Philippine National Police-Special Action Force (PNP-SAF) and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) against the self-styled IS in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur in 2017. The security forces had inflicted a setback to the group's aspiration to establish a wilayah (province) in the heart of Southern Philippines. Concurrently, sustained military combat and related law enforcement operations against members and supporters of the New People's Army (NPA) throughout the country have led to the arrests of high-value targets and mass surrender among the rebels in recent months. This has kept the decades-old insurgent movement stuck in a strategic defensive posture.

Despite the success of the state security forces, structural vulnerabilities such as weak governance in parts of the Southern Philippines and beyond remain a cause for concern. Maoist and IS-inspired terrorists may exploit such vulnerabilities to achieve ideological primacy, regain combat strength, rebuild international support and engage in terrorist activities in the future. This factor among others has prompted the Duterte administration to critically reevaluate its current approach and look for alternative strategies to enhance the resilience of local communities against the evolving threat of violent extremism.

Twin Threats to Public Security and Safety

The National Security Policy 2017-2022 states that the Philippines faces an active threat from the Communist rebellion, Moro separatism (Moro Islamic Liberation Front/MILF), and IS-inspired extremism (Abu Sayyaf Group, Maute Group, Ansar al-Khilafah Philippines, Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters). In March 2014, the government signed a peace agreement with the MILF and the draft of the Bangsamoro Basic Law. In July 2018, this law which was later renamed as Bangsamoro Organic Law was signed by President Rodrigo Duterte and effectively created the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.[1] As such, the more pertinent internal threats would be the Communist rebellion and IS-

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[1] "The Bangsamoro Organic Law," *CNN Philippines*, July 24, 2018, http://cnnphilippines.com/news/2018/07/24/bangsam

oro-organic-law-primer-everything-you-need-to-know-bbl.html.

linked groups. These groups represent a two-front threat in the form of criminal acts and violence with goals of establishing an alternate political, social and economic order.

(I) Islamic State (IS) East Asia

The Daulah Islamiyah Wilayatul Mashriq (DIWM) also known as IS East Asia is an umbrella terrorist organisation that comprises the Maute Group, Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) – Hapilon faction, Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and Ansar al-Khilafah Philippines (AKP). These groups from the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia had unified under the self-proclaimed leader, Isnilon Hapilon who was killed by Philippines security forces in October 2017. Hapilon had pledged allegiance to the IS' leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. In order to reach its strategic objective of establishing an Islamic state under Shariah Law in the Philippines and beyond[2], IS militants have conducted terrorist attacks which includes armed assaults, target killings and bombings against state security forces and civilians in the Philippines.[3]

Close to 165 soldiers and policemen, 47 civilians and 919 terrorists were killed whereas 1,700 security personnel were wounded [4] in the Marawi Siege that took place on 23 May and lasted till 23 October 2017. Since the end of the siege, the government has gradually moved from full-scale military combat and law enforcement operations to post-conflict reconstruction and development. Based on the Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) report, the total number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has reached 353,921.[5] To address this crisis, 69 evacuation centres have been established in municipalities throughout the provinces of Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur.[6]

As part of its response, the government will focus on providing financial support to IDPs and their families under two reintegration schemes, the 'Adopt a Family' and the 'Send a Family Home' programme.[7] In addition, the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) has confirmed that clearing operations within the main battle zone in Marawi would be completed by June 2018, paving the way for the commencement of rehabilitation works and IDPs' return to their homes.[8]

Colonel Romeo Brawner has acknowledged that after the siege, IS-inspired militants have resumed recruitment and radicalisation activities in other parts of Mindanao.[9] He cited poverty, elusiveness of a long-term political solution to end Moro separatist movements and the poor supervision of Islamic schools as enabling factors that render Mindanao as the most fertile ground for violent extremism.[10] In addition, the militants were even able to train 200 new fighters responsible for sporadic skirmishes with security forces in 2018[11] after the recapture of Marawi. Four key figures who had survived the Marawi Siege play a critical role in the possible planning of future terrorist attacks:

a. Abu Dar - the alleged new leader of IS Southeast Asia who replaced Isnilon Hapilon;
b. Abu Turaifie - leader of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF);
c. Mauwiyah - a Singaporean-Indian known to be one of the longest staying foreign terrorists in Mindanao
d. Amin Baco (now dead) - the Malaysian who worked with the Abu Sayyaf Group and high-value target terrorists, such as Zulkifli Bin Hir alias Marwan.

Ebrahim Murad, head of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), has revealed that IS foreign and Filipino fighters have travelled from the Middle East through the porous borders of Mindanao and may have plans to

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[2] The Australian Government, *Islamic State East Asia*, https://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Islamic-State-East-Asia.aspx (accessed July 10, 2018)
[3] Ibid.
[4] Tonette Orejas et al, "All Quiet In Marawi; 42 Terrorists Dead," *Inquirer.net*, October 24, 2017, http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/940135/all-quiet-in-marawi-42-terrorists-dead (accessed November 22, 2017).

[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] "Fresh Clashes As Marawi Gunmen Seek New Base In Mindanao," *The Straits Times*, February 24, 2018, http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/fresh-clashes-as-marawi-gunmen-seek-new-base-in-mindanao (accessed March 01, 2018)
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.

capture two urban centres, Iligan and Cotabato, in the region.[12]

(II) New People's Army (NPA)

The NPA is the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the National Democratic Front (NDF). It was formed on 29 March 1969 and has since then been waging a protracted insurgency campaign aimed to overthrow the Philippine government and establish a 'national democratic' system based on Marxist-Leninist philosophy.[13] To achieve its goal, the NPA has complemented armed struggle with mass base and land reforms. As such, the NPA has set up barangay (village) organising committees and revolutionary committees, particularly in the rural areas. It has also laid out public support infrastructure in its bid to gradually advance into strategic stalemate, the second stage of the protracted war wherein the communist rebels are able to achieve relative parity with the Philippine military in terms of combat strength and influence. The strategic stalemate would then eventually turn into a strategic offensive, which is the final stage where rebels gain enough combat strength and influence to engage the military in direct armed confrontations.[14]

Despite the resumption of the Oslo Peace Talks with the Philippine government in 2016 with the hope of arriving at a political settlement[15], the NPA has continued to commit atrocities. These activities include the ambushing and kidnapping of police officers, attacks on members of the Philippine Army and other extortion activities.[16] This has led President Duterte to terminate the peace talks with the Communist insurgents[17] and the CPP-NPA-NDF has since been declared as a terrorist organisation.[18]

Political and legal overtures were soon backed by intensified law enforcement, military combat and psychological operations that were aimed at degrading and destroying the decentralised Communist terrorist network. High-value targets such as Rafael Baylosis, NDF Consultant and his companion, Guillermo Guerrero and Leonida Guao, the alleged officer of the CPP-NPA Komisyon Mindanao responsible for the synchronisation of the collection and distribution of extortion money in Mindanao were arrested on separate occasions by joint security forces in February.[19]

Since then, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has observed an increase in the number of Communist rebels yielding to state security forces and expressing support for the Philippine government from January to February 2018 alone. Since March 2018, 607 regular members of the NPA and 1,656 surrendering members from Militia ng Bayan (MB), Underground Mass Organisations (UGMO), and mass support groups gave up their armed struggle.[20] The recent spike in the number of NPAs and supporters laying down

[12] Manuel Mogato, "Foreign Fighters May Be Planning To Take Iligan, Cotabato, Says MILF Chief," *ABS-CBN News*, February 20, 2018, http://news.abs-cbn.com/news/02/20/18/foreign-fighters-may-be-planning-to-take-iligan-cotabato-says-milf-chief (accessed March 01, 2018)

[13] Paz Verdades M. Santos, "The Communist Front: Protracted People's War and Counter-Insurgency In The Philippines (Overview)," in *Primed and Purposeful: Armed Groups and Human Security Efforts in the Philippines*, ed. Diana Rodriquez (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, 2010), 17.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Katerina Francisco, "Fast Facts: The CPP-NPA-NDF And The Oslo Talks." *Rappler*, August 22, 2016, https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/iq/143551-cpp-npa-ndf-peace-talks (accessed January 22, 2018).

[16] Nestor Corrales, "Duterte Signs Proclamation No. 360 Terminating Peace Talks With NPA," *Inquirer.net*, November 23, 2017, http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/947228/duterte-signs-proclamation-no-360-terminating-peace-talks-with-

npa-duterte-peace-talks-termination-npa (accessed January 22, 2018).

[17] Ibid.

[18] Nicole Anne C. Lagrima, "DOJ Asks Manila Court To Declare CPP-NPA As Terror Group," *GMA News Online*, February 21, 2018, http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/644149/doj-asks-manila-court-to-declare-cpp-npa-as-terror-group/story/ (accessed March 01, 2018).

[19] Roy Narra, "NDF Consultant In Peace Talks With Government Arrested," *Manila Times*, February 02, 2018, http://www.manilatimes.net/ndf-consultant-peace-talks-govt-arrested/377677/ (accessed March 01, 2018). Merlyn Manos, "Suspected CPP-NPA Official Arrested In Butuan City," *GMA News Online*, February 03, 2018, http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/regions/642011/suspected-cpp-npa-official-arrested-in-butuan-city/story/ (accessed March 01, 2018).

[20] Juliet C. Revita, "2,263 Rebels Surrender In January-February 2018," *SunStar Davao*, March 06, 2018, http://www.sunstar.com.ph/davao/local-news/2018/03/06/2263-rebels-surrender-january-february-2018-592265 (accessed March 19, 2018).

their arms is due to the recent government-led interventions. These include focused military operations, intelligence efforts, reintegration efforts and peace and development programs of the AFP, PNP and local government units.[21]

Nonetheless, the status quo remains a cause of serious concern. According to the Philippine Army, there is still a significant number of combatants that may continue to operate specifically in the rural communities.[22] Pacific Strategies and Assessments, a country risk firm, has recorded an increase in the frequency of violent NPA activities (extortion, ambush, arson, bombing) in Luzon since the end of the government's unilateral ceasefire in January 2017.[23] These include disarming the guards and the torching an office at Pico de Loro Resort, Batangas in January, the bombing of a substation of a hydroelectric power plant in Mountain Province in October, and the exchange of gunfire with soldiers and displacement of families in Nueva Vizcaya in November.[24] The Communist rebels are still continuing to exploit unresolved community-based conflicts, such as land disputes between local populations and businesses in order to draw popular support and recruit combatants.[25]

Responses to the Twin Threats

Integrated Community Action against Radicalisation and Extremism (i CARE) & Whole-of-Community Approach (WOCA)

A new movement has emerged within the Philippine public security and safety establishment to empower the local communities or barangay as the bulwark against violent extremism. On 29 August 2017, the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) released a Memorandum Circular that promotes synergy between the state and private sector in fighting criminal activities, corruption, illegal drugs and violent extremism. In line with the Memorandum Circular, the Philippine Public Safety College (PPSC) was assigned a leading role in

formulating programmes and projects for preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE).

In order to improve capacity building of civilian law enforcers, government bureaucrats and elected officials on P/CVE, the PPSC had conducted a course on Training of the Trainers on P/CVE in Mandaluyong City, November 2017 to deepen their understanding of the consequences of violent extremism. Participants of the seminar-workshop included regional training directors, Philippine National Police Academy (PNPA) and representatives from the DILG and the barangays.

The consolidation of inputs from participants and consultations with select subject matter experts (SMEs) later on became the basis for the Whole-of-Community Approach (WOCA) in P/CVE with its slogan, Integrated Community Action against Radicalisation and Extremism (i CARE). WOCA is a people-centric template for intervention that enhances the resilience of local communities in the country against the forces of Islamist and Communist-based violent extremism.

As shown in Figure 1 below, WOCA seeks to empower the villages by enhancing the material capability and interoperability of three local institutions, namely, the Barangay Information Network (BIN), Barangay Peace and Order Council (BPOC) and the Barangay Peacekeeping Action Team (BPAT). Taking into account the unique conditions and dynamics of each barangay, WOCA anchors upon community-oriented policing - a "philosophy that promotes organisational strategies, which support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues, such as crime, social disorder and fear of crime."[26] The objective is to curb and deter violent extremist activities at the grassroots level.

[21] Francis Wakefield, "AFP: 2,263 Regular NPA Members, Supporters Surrendered Nationwide," *Manila Bulletin*, March 05, 2018, https://news.mb.com.ph/2018/03/05/afp-2263-regular-npa-members-supporters-surrendered-nationwide/ (accessed July 11, 2018)

[22] "Philippines' Communist Insurgency Heats Up," *Asia Sentinel*, November 28, 2017, https://www.asiasentinel.com/politics/philippines-

communist-insurgency-heats-up/ (accessed March 01, 2018)

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Philippine National Police, *Revised Police Community Relations Manual 2012*, Philippine Government.
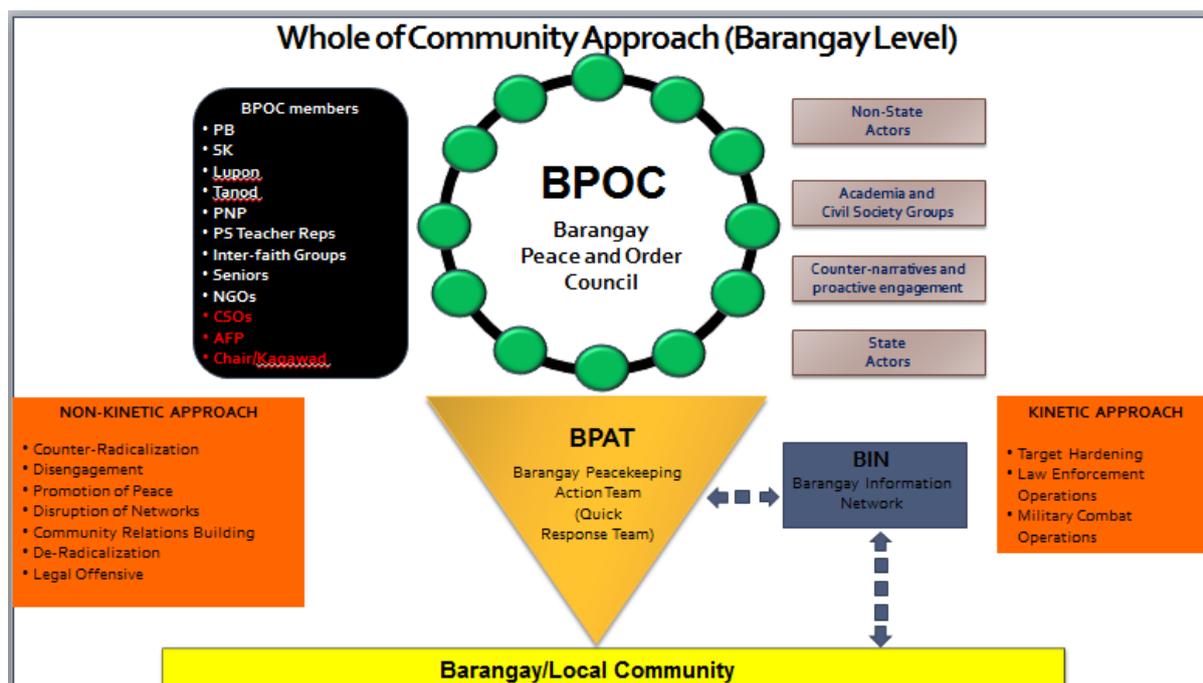
Figure 1: Whole-of-Community Approach Conceptual Framework

Barangay Information Network (BIN)

The Barangay Information Network or BIN (The Eyes) intends to serve as the force multiplier, with field researchers and/or auxiliaries of the barangay officials and police officers closely monitoring the barangay for suspected terrorist individuals and activities. BIN is further divided into three sub-groups: (i) Operational (village peacekeepers or 'tanods', traffic, security guard, market security, company guard, subdivision security); (ii) Support (tricycle drivers' association, radio group, jeepney drivers' association, Sangguniang Kabataan, and Reserve Officers Training Corps); and (iii) United Front (vendors' association, Parents-Teachers Association, non-government organisations, religious groups, media, and civic organisations).

There are four existing grievance platforms that the BIN and ordinary citizens may tap into in order to report suspicious individuals and activities to the barangay and/or police station. These include, (i) face-to-face barangay complaint desk; (ii) text messages (iii) enhanced PNP website and (iv) national emergency hotlines. Both the PPSC and DILG hope to launch a fifth grievance platform, the i

CARE mobile phone application that would integrate the contact numbers of existing grievance platforms for more seamless and prompt terrorist incident reporting and field research.

Notably, the i CARE app would include additional environmental scanning features such as field research and barangay mapping to determine the level of resilience or vulnerability of barangays and generate big data on the key drivers of violent extremism in the affected communities. The big data would contribute to research and policy papers that aid in the decision-making processes of the DILG-National Barangay Operations Office for strategic intervention in local communities that face violent extremism.

Barangay Peace and Order Council (BPOC)

Meanwhile, the Barangay Peace and Order Council or BPOC (The Brain) would be enhanced as the decision-making body primarily responsible for addressing reported incidents of terrorism at the local level. It is tasked to validate the reports sent by field researchers and citizens and address the terror threat. The members of the BPOC

would comprise the barangay chairman, Philippine National Police Chief, Sangguniang Kabataan, tanods (barangay peacekeeping and security officers), lupon tagapamayapa (pacification committees), public school teachers, inter-faith groups, seniors, non-government organisations, civil service officers, Armed Forces of the Philippines (if available) and kagawads (councilors).

If a terrorist is suspected of conducting radicalisation activities (indoctrination, propagation of extremist themes and messages in social media) that target vulnerable sectors of the society, such as women and children, then BPOC would focus on expelling the recruiter from the barangay, counter-radicalisation, disengagement, promotion of peace, and the disruption of terror networks. The three-pronged Radicalisation Dynamics diagram created by the US National Counterterrorism Centre was used as a reference. There are also other broad courses of action such as fostering dialogue among constituents, strengthening institutions, empowering youth, engaging the community, promoting gender equality, education and skill development and launching strategic communications in the mainstream and social media.

However, if a group of terrorists has begun carrying out mobilisation activities (establishing militant camps and sleeper cells, mass recruitment and combat training exercises), then BPOC would focus on target hardening through barangay mapping, employment of deployment shield concept (prophylactic patrol, visibility patrol, combat ops, raid, deployment of police in high-value targets and critical infrastructures), establish 'panatag na barangay' (safety zones) and conduct law enforcement operations.

If all means of prevention have been exhausted and the terrorists are still able to launch terror attacks and/or conduct territorial occupation of a city/town similar to the Marawi Siege, then the PNP would refer to the latest Letter of Instruction (LOI) Katatagan for proper law enforcement operations. Other master plans may be utilised as well. This

includes the SANDIGAN Master Plan for Anti-Criminality Campaign and the SANDUGO Counter Insurgency Master Plan. If the scale of the terrorist operation is immense and the AFP needs to step in, then the military may operationalise its latest campaign plan- the AFP Development Support and Security Plan (DSSP) Kapayapaan in coordination with law enforcement agencies.

Barangay Peacekeeping Action Team (BPAT)

Lastly, the Barangay Peacekeeping Action Team or BPAT ('The Fist') shall function as the Quick Response Team to implement BPOC decisions and avert possible attacks. BPAT members include the tanods, Philippine National Police (PNP), Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) and other related public safety agencies. In the event of territorial occupation by terrorists, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) personnel would be included in the BPAT.

Way Forward: Laying the Foundations for Homeland Security Architecture

Strengthening the barangay or the first line of defense must be complemented with overarching structural reforms in the public safety and security establishment to sustain the country's gains against violent extremism. This is so as terrorists seek to exploit loopholes in order to continue illicit activities. The delay in the passage of the proposed National Security Act continues to deprive the Philippine President of an effective command-and-control mechanism over the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (PNP) in launching large-scale counterterrorism operations.[27] Furthermore, the lack of clear parameters in defining common crimes as acts of terrorism under the Human Security Act of 2007 or the Republic Act No. 9372[28] would provide terrorists room for legal maneuvers.

Finally, doctrinal, policy, intelligence, and operational disjuncture within the relevant

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[27] Mark Davis M. Pablo. "Frontline Marawi", *Stratbase – Albert del Rosario Institute Occasional Paper*, Issue 10.1 (November 2017): 12.

[28] Chester Cabalza. "Marawi Siege: Testing the Philippines' Anti-Terror Law." *The Diplomat*, June 02,

2017, https://thediplomat.com/2017/06/marawi-siege-testing-the-philippines-anti-terror-law/ (accessed March 20, 2018)

agencies and bureaus related to homeland security would provide the terrorists with relative freedom to move and act, especially in cities and villages with weak security and governance apparatuses. The abovementioned agencies would refer to agencies engaging in border and transportation security, emergency preparedness, response information analysis and critical infrastructure protection[29]

Given the depth and breadth of violent extremist threats in the Philippines, the authors are proposing a new comprehensive homeland security architecture that would integrate all related government agencies and bureaus under a unified department, harmonise all intra- and inter-agency programmes, plans and activities ranging from counter-radicalisation to counter-terrorism, in order to also provide strong foundational and institutional support for the initiatives in the barangays.

Under such a framework, there are six key areas for expanded public safety for peace and security in the homeland. These include (i) curbing illegal drugs and other illicit networks of crime and corruption (ii) countering radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorism (iii) maintaining order and keeping the peace in cities, communities and the countryside (iv) responding to, mitigating and managing disasters, emergencies and pandemics (v) protecting cyber networks and other critical infrastructures and (vi) safeguarding roads, railways, airports, seaports, coasts and territorial seas.[30]

There is also a need to create and pass a Homeland Security Act that would cover key strategic actors and sectors in the public safety system and bring them into a single agency that could be labelled as the Department of Homeland Security. As shown in Figure 2, this department could be primarily dedicated to the crafting and implementation of policies and strategies for internal security. It would also establish international partnerships with foreign counterparts for a

more robust intelligence sharing, personnel training and exchange. It would also be a distinct entity from the Department of National Defence whose original mandate is external/territorial defense.

Figure 2: A Framework for Homeland Strategy

In particular, P/CVE-related functions of the four existing councils, namely the Anti-Terrorism Council (ATC), the National Peace and Order Council (NPOC), the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) and the Justice Sector Coordinating Council (JSCC) could be integrated under the Department of Homeland Security. This would clarify mandates, consolidate existing programmes, plans and activities, and streamline the systems, processes and procedures under P/CVE.

Conclusion

Despite gains made by the Philippine security forces, the threat of violent extremism remains high in the Philippines. The Marawi Siege was a watershed moment for the Philippines which had prompted a critical examination of the nation's public security and safety apparatus. Furthermore, the recurrence of sporadic terrorist incidents indicates that as long as the structural (social, economic and political) and psychosocial drivers of terrorism exist, the

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[29] Based on the June 2002 draft of former United States President George W. Bush for the envisioned Department of Homeland Security, the organisational structure of the department would contain four divisions: border and transportation security; emergency preparedness and response; chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear

countermeasures, information analysis and infrastructure protection.

[30] PDDG Ricardo F De Leon. "A Framework for Homeland Strategy: Building Internal Capacity and Broadening Public Safety and Security." *Philippine Public Safety Review* 2, no. 2 (2016): 7-9.

country would still remain as a fertile ground for violent extremism.

In order to overcome the cycle of violence driven by ideology, the very first line of defense would have to be the local community or 'barangay'. This focus would increase the local community's sense of involvement and ownership over the mechanisms of combating terror. Boosting the internal capacities and seamlessly integrating the operations of the three institutions, namely Barangay Information Network (BIN), Barangay Peace and Order Council (BPOC), and Barangay Peacekeeping Action Team (BPAT) would give the barangay more autonomy, dexterity and the flexibility required to respond to terror threats.

To complement and sustain the gains of such ground initiatives, it is imperative for the Philippine government to consider the restructuring of the homeland security architecture from above. Given the growing complexity of threats, the Homeland Security Act would be a critical addition that would provide the much-needed technical, legal, political, administrative and financial backbone for efforts on P/CVE. As such, grassroots empowerment which is backed by structural reforms in the public security and safety sector would contribute to weakened violent extremist movements, preservation of peace and order and the facilitation of inclusive socio-economic development in the Philippines.

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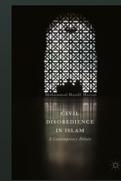
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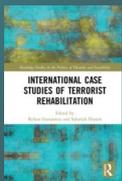
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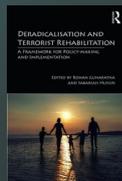
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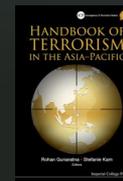
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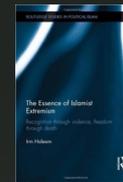Rohan Gunaratna and Stefanie Kam (eds) (Imperial College Press, 2016)
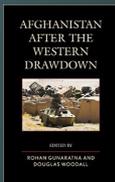
Afghanistan After The Western Drawdawn
Rohan Gunaratna and Douglas Woodall (eds) (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2015)

Resilience and Resolve
Jolene Jerard and Salim Mohamed Nasir (Imperial College Press, 2015)
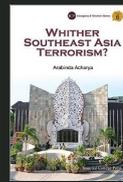
Whither Southeast Asia Terrorism
Arabinda Acharya (Imperial College Press, 2015)

The Essence of Islamist Extremism
Irm Haleem (Routledge, 2011)

ICPVTR'S GLOBAL PATHFINDER

Global Pathfinder is a one-stop repository for information on current and emerging terrorist threats from the major terrorism affected regions of the world. It is an integrated database containing comprehensive profiles of terrorist groups, terrorist personalities, terrorist and counter-terrorist incidents as well as terrorist training camps. This includes profiles from emerging hubs of global terrorism affecting the security of the world, as well as the deadliest threat groups in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Caucasus. The database also contains analyses of significant terrorist attacks in the form of terrorist attack profiles. For further inquiries regarding subscription and access to Global Pathfinder, please contact Jolene Jerard at isjolene@ntu.edu.sg.

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