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Internationalization of Terrorism and its Implications in the Philippines

Terrorism, once a localized threat, experienced a paradigmatic shift with the 9/11 Attacks, evolving into a global security menace. Al Qaeda, the orchestrator of 9/11, not only introduced unconventional tactics but also pioneered a strategically and hierarchically flexible form of terrorism. The global war on terror lasting two decades assured nothing but tactical victories. Despite the fall of prominent terrorist groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS in Syria and Iraq, the threat endures in diverse forms globally. The return of foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq further exacerbated the security challenges with implications extending not only to Western countries but also to Southeast Asia. This article aims to conceptualize and analyze the internationalization of terrorism. It explores the evolution of this phenomenon, emphasizing the methodology of religiously motivated international terrorism that transcends national borders. The implications are scrutinized within the context of the Battle of Marawi in the Philippines, a nation grappling with identity-building challenges, longstanding Islamist insurgency, and state control issues.

Keywords: International Terrorism, the Philippines, Jihad, Southeast Asia.

Uluslararasılaşan Terörizm ve Filipinler'deki Etkileri

Uzun bir süre yerel bir tehdit olarak kabul edilen terörizm, 11 Eylül Saldırılarıyla birlikte paradigmatik bir değişim yaşadı ve küresel bir güvenlik tehdidine dönüştü. 11 Eylül saldırılarının arkasındaki El Kaide yalnızca yeni taktikler uygulamakla kalmayıp, stratejik ve hiyerarşik olarak daha esnek bir terörizm formuna da öncülük etti. Bu nedenle, 20 yıl süren teröre karşı küresel taktiksel zaferlerden başka bir sonuç getirmedi. El Kaide ve IŞİD gibi grupların Irak ve Suriye'deki yenilgilerine rağmen terör tehdidi dünya çapında çeşitli şekillerde varlığını devam ettirdi. Yabancı savaşçıların Suriye ve Irak'tan geri dönüşü, yalnızca Batı ülkelerini değil aynı zamanda Güneydoğu Asya'yı da kapsayacak şekilde güvenlik sorunlarını derinleştirdi. Bu makale terörizmin uluslararasılaşmasını kavramsallaştırmayı ve analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu doğrultuda bu makale, ulusal sınırları aşan dini motivasyonlu uluslararası terörizmin metodolojisini vurgulayarak bu olgunun evrimini araştırmaktadır. Bunun etkileri, ulusal kimlik inşasında başarısız olan, uzun yıllardır İslamcı silahlı ayaklanmalarla mücadele eden ve ülke üzerinde etkin devlet kontrolünü sağlayamayan Filipinler'de, Marawi Savaşı özelinde incelenecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Uluslararası Terörizm, Filipinler, Cihat, Güneydoğu Asya.

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1. Introduction

The 9/11 attacks were one of the most significant milestones in terrorism because they represented an unconventional shift in many aspects. The masterminds of these attacks, perpetrators, and way of execution were so unconventional that no one had ever witnessed them before. When Philip Heymann (2000) praised the US commercial airline security, he could never predict anyone would use aircrafts as cruise missiles. The shift in terrorism orchestrated by Al Qaeda was not only at the tactical level but also at a strategic level. As a response to US-led global war on terrorism (GWOT), Al Qaeda reformed itself in an organizationally less strict and more flexible manner. To sustain the global terror campaign, Al Qaeda leadership intended to underscore the importance of methodology to mobilize people around the world. In this way, they made global Jihadi networks strategically undefeatable (Riedel, 2013). This argument was also consolidated by the US President Obama. On the day bin Laden was killed, he addressed the international community and underscored the continuing threat posed by Al Qaeda's affiliates across the world (Phillips, 2011).

The cost of GWOT lasting two decades was 8 trillion USD and more than 900.000 deaths (Kimball, 2023). To neutralize Al Qaeda leadership and eradicate the Jihadi networks, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and partly Pakistan have turned to a battlefield. Nevertheless, international terrorism shaped by Jihadi thoughts persisted in different forms and regions. On the 15th anniversary of GWOT, ISIS controlled a massive land in Iraq and Syria. Furthermore, this new form of terrorism orchestrated by ISIS was not only strong in Syria and Iraq but also, through self-radicalized individuals and homegrown terrorists, it extended its reach beyond the combat zone in the Middle East. In other words, terrorism has become more international and serious than ever before.

The fall of ISIS in Syria and Iraq has thrown another national security threat to the Europeans and Americans; returnees (Capone et al., 2023). To a recent report, between 2013 and 2019 53.000 men, women, and minors from 80 countries went to Syria and Iraq. Although most were from the Middle East, numerous Western citizens have been to the region (Mehra et al., 2023). These returnees were well-trained and well-indoctrinated; therefore, they may pose severe threats to the national security in their homelands. While the world was concerned about the returning fighters and their potential to inflict violence in Western countries, in 2017, the foreign fighters issue showed up in the Philippines. Abu Sayyaf (ASG) and Maute Groups along with hundreds of foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq, raided the city of Marawi. Heavy fighting between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the ASG-Maute front marked that decades-old Muslim-Christian conflict in the Southern Philippines has become a hotspot of international terrorism in the region.

Internationalization of terrorism was voiced by Former US President Bush, as he pointed to Southeast Asia as the second front of the GWOT in 2001 (Gershman, 2002). Although his statement sparked criticism, today international terrorism is a pressing challenge in global security. To assess this issue, this article primarily intends to conceptualize the internationalization of terrorism based on its methodological dimension. Secondly, it aims to analyze the implications of the internationalization of terrorism in Southeast Asia in the case of the Battle of Marawi. The Philippines provides a fruitful context for this study to assess the internationalization of terrorism as the country has failed national identity-building attempts, decades-old unresolved Islamist insurgency problems, and weak control of the state over the archipelagic country (Quimpo, 2016; Cruz de Castro, 2019).

2. Internationalization of Terrorism

International terrorism has transformed the global security landscape, with Al Qaeda playing a pivotal role in this evolution. This section explores how Al Qaeda's strategic adaptations have influenced the internationalization of terrorism. Examining the key shifts in Al Qaeda's

strategy is essential to comprehend international terrorism that shape the way terrorism transcends borders today and the challenges it poses to global security.

Although international terrorism has been in the literature since the 1980s, this concept has been semantically transformed since then. International terrorism in the US Air Force report prepared by Brian M. Jenkins was referred to as simply "cross-border terrorism" (Jenkins, 1985, p. 4). In parallel with the changes in terrorist tactics and technological advancements, the contemporary interpretation of international terrorism has emerged. By extension, globalization served as a substantial factor influencing the interpretation and scope of international terrorism. Keohane and Nye argued that globalization has not only expanded the global movement of capital, people, goods, and services but also ideas and crimes (Keohane & Nye, 2000). Thus, one may argue in addition to technological advancements, globalization has also played a pivotal role in the internationalization of terrorism.

David Rapoport's (2002) categorization of different waves of terrorism is a useful tool to understand the evolution of terrorism. He pointed out that terrorism may take different forms, organizational schemes, and ideological backgrounds in line with the global political atmosphere, and categorized terrorism into four major waves; the Anarchist, New-Left, Anti-Colonial, and finally the religious waves. In 2002, Rapoport predicted that the security paradigm in the following decade would be substantially shaped by a religious wave (Rapoport, 2002). In the wake of 9/11, international terrorism became associated with radical Islamist groups, particularly bin Laden-led Al Qaeda. In this sense, Al Qaeda represented the final wave of terrorism in Rapoport's formulation. Nevertheless, Al Qaeda was neither the first nor the only radical Islamist armed group resorting to terrorist tactics. What set Al Qaeda distinguished from other groups by resorting to all available means to launch and maintain the Jihadi fight (Scheuer, 2003). Bin Laden not only established a religiously motivated armed group but also created a methodology by revitalizing and reshaping the Islamic concept of Jihad. Another key figure, Abu Musab al-Suri later refined and reinforced the emphasis on the Jihadi methodology. As a result, Al Qaeda evolved beyond being a terror group; it became a methodology for Muslims who were discontent and in a rage against the existing system (Al-Suri, 2014). Bin Laden and other Al Qaeda strategists, cognizant of the impermanence of people and organizations, aimed to create an abstract notion of Jihad that united Muslims beyond political borders. With this franchise-like method, Al Qaeda has extended its reach and fortified its ties with established like-minded terrorist organizations (ICG, 2003; Fishman, 2008). This symbiotic relationship was beneficial for both parties because Al Qaeda could reach anywhere that normally it cannot, while local groups could extract financial and technical assistance, and attract more recruits by leveraging the Al Qaeda brand.

Emphasizing the methodological dimension helped overcome ideological barriers between different Jihadist groups and helped Al Qaeda evolve over three successive generations (Watts, 2013). The first generation, Al Qaeda 1.0, was founded in 1988 by bin Laden and Abdallah Azzam and lasted until 1996 when the second generation started. Throughout this generation, Al Qaeda has sought the reviving the Jihadi thoughts in Muslims' minds and has reemphasized the ultimate goal; Sharia-based world order. Although Al Qaeda was not the first and only armed organization with religious motives, it was different than others at the strategic level. For example, to reach their ultimate goal, Al Qaeda intended to attack the far enemy—the USA, whereas other religiously motivated groups were targeting the near enemy, their governments (Byman, 2015). In 1996, bin Laden officially declared war against the USA with the "Declaration of War Against Americans Occupying the Land of Two Holy Places" (bin Laden, 1996), and Al Qaeda 2.0 commenced. Two years after the war declaration Al Qaeda exercised simultaneous attacks on US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. These attacks demonstrated how international and severe the new threat was. Al Qaeda 2.0 commenced together with these attacks and lasted until Operation Iraqi Freedom. Until 2003, Al Qaeda fought for its safe havens in Afghanistan and Iraq, but the American invasion was the demise of Al Qaeda 2.0. As Al Qaeda's supremacy over other Jihadi groups faded, local Islamist groups such as Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb, Al Shabab, Al Qaeda in Iraq, and the Taliban began to rise. Under these circumstances, targeting the far enemy was not a feasible option for Al Qaeda, and Abu Musab al-Suri came up with a new strategy. In this new

strategy, hybrid warfare with individual fighters was promoted. The far enemy was no longer the top priority, rather near enemies were at the crosshair, as they were considered the proxies of the far enemy (Al-Suri, 2007). In addition, al-Suri was well aware that the world had changed after the Cold War, and they could not rely on the support from another state any longer. Therefore, effective use of the Internet and decentralization were the dominant features of this transitional period and represented another strategic shift in international terrorism. This convalescence lasted until 2011, the year of huge blazes in the Middle East and North Africa due to spillover effects of Arab Uprisings, and also bin Laden's death (Zimmerman, 2021).

The emerging global atmosphere together with the Arab Spring has created an opening for Al Qaeda-led international terrorist networks to thrive (Jones, 2012). The demonstrations were praised as the demise of fundamentalist opposition—due to the demand for democracy and liberalism (Holbrook, 2012). Nevertheless, the real consequences were quite challenging, because the fall of authoritarian governments, unfinished democratic revolutions, as well as ongoing conflicts have created a security vacuum for Al Qaeda and its regional associates to flourish. People participating in demonstrations were mostly ordinary citizens and had no long-term political revolutionary agenda. On the other hand, fundamentalist opposition had a decades-old revolutionary agenda and unsurprisingly they could be able to hijack ordinary people's revolution at the proper time (Coffey, 2015). In such a turbulent political atmosphere, Al Qaeda 3.0 was born and has risen on five main pillars. The first pillar was Zawahiri-led Al Qaeda Central (AQC)/Al Qaeda al Um/Al Qaeda Core/Al Qaeda Senior Leadership (AQSL) in charge of shaping Global Jihadi ideology. The second pillar consisted of affiliated groups like Al Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), Al Qaeda in Iraq (later ISIS), Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Al Shabab, Abu Sayyaf Group, and Boko Haram. The third pillar was largely allied groups such as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and Laskar-e-Tayyiba (LeT). Although these groups pursued similar Jihadi goals, they had relatively less association with Al Qaeda. The fourth pillar was allied networks, including remnants of the foreign Jihadi groups. The last pillar has consisted of inspired individuals such as those conducting terror attacks in Europe or the US (Munnich, 2014). This five-pillar structure was an important milestone in the process of internationalization of terrorism.

Al Qaeda strategists were aware that in the absence of attacking the far enemy, they would not advance in their Jihadi campaign, and they coped with this issue by reintroducing self-radicalized individuals. This was another serious contribution by al-Suri to further reinforce the internationalization of terrorism. In line with Ayman al-Zawahiri's vision in the early 2000s, the leader of Al Qaeda after bin Laden, al-Suri has promoted investments, particularly in online media. In this way, Al Qaeda could seek new pathways to fulfill their missions, without physical camps. By using online media effectively, Al Qaeda no longer needed to plan and execute attacks on near or far enemies by itself. Muslims all around the world were called to wage their Jihad individually wherever they were. The Earth was considered a Jihad Front and all Muslims would join because there is no border in the "World of Allah" (Al-Suri, 2014, pp. 182-190). Al-Suri's emphasis on using modern means to convey messages was further consolidated during the Syrian War, some Jihadi websites mentioned that "half of the Jihad is media" (Cockburn, 2015, p. 127). By exercising this strategy, Jihadi groups accessed recently converted Muslims in the Western world to influence them. Online radicalization made these people undetectable by security agencies. The rationale is seen in Crone and Harrow's description of homegrowns: "self-recruited, self-trained, self-radicalized, and self-started" (Crone & Harrow, 2011, p. 522).

The threat posed by Al Qaeda 3.0, notoriously known as ISIS, was far more diversified and destructive (Nelson, 2011, p. 23). Effective usage of online means and self-radicalized individuals emanated an ultimate terror environment in the world between 2014-2017. What was more concerning than the number of terror attacks mounted across the US and Europe, was the perpetrators' profile; they were not on the radar of security agencies as they had never been to any overseas terror camps or affiliated with any organizations. Consequently, terrorism has become fully international as nowhere was immune to Jihadist infiltration. In the collapse of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, these global Jihadi networks sought new places to flourish, and Southeast Asia could be one of the best places.

3. Terrorism in Southeast Asia

Terrorist violence has shaped the regional security landscape in Southeast Asia for decades. Particularly in Thailand and the Philippines, due to failed attempts to integrate ethnoreligious minorities into their societies, insurgent groups have repeatedly resorted to terrorist tactics (Majul, 1999; Milligan, 2001; Mishra, 2023). In addition, Indonesia and Malaysia also have serious imminent threats of domestic and transnational terrorism (Acharya, 2015, pp. 140-141). Shortly after the 9/11 attacks and the declaration of the GWOT, former US President George Bush named Southeast Asia as the second front of the war, due to the "Talibanization of Southeast Asia" (Acharya, 2015, p. 24).

Acharya (2015), on the other hand, argued that there has been no risk of state-sponsored terrorism in the region which may draw the US attention. According to him, in Southeast Asia, it was not possible to discuss the single, comprehensive Jihadi ideology due to ethnic, tribal, and even religious—in terms of practice and philosophy—diversity, contrary to Middle Eastern counterparts. Also, since Islamist movements in the region have been tolerated for a long time, these movements have not considered formal politics as a zero-sum game and they tended to reach an understanding with governments (Gershman, 2002, p. 65). Hence, countries with Muslim populations in the region, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia, were reluctant to support global efforts to eradicate terrorism. These countries preferred to use the term "domestic political violence with local implications" instead of the regional implications of international terrorism because local terror groups were neither capable of conducting large-scale attacks nor pledged allegiance to Global Jihad (Acharya, 2015, pp. 30-31).

On the other hand, Southeast Asian radical groups primarily have targeted near enemies to replace corrupted regimes with the Islamic government, instead of pursuing global political ends. Their focus was primarily on long-held regional sociopolitical crises, such as the Christian-Muslim conflict in the Philippines and Buddhist-Muslim antagonism in Thailand (Acharya, 2015, p. 42). However, some radical groups were pursuing transnational goals. For example, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) aimed to establish an Islamic State in the region stretching from Southern Thailand to Australia through the Jihadi struggle (Gershman, 2002).

These differences between Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian Islamist terror groups may stem from the different Islamization processes that these regions experienced. Clifford Geertz emphasized the conqueror-merchant dichotomy on diversified understandings of Islamic tradition and different socio-political developments. According to him, because the Middle East was the birthplace of Islam and believers had to fight the existing order to replace itself, and therefore Muslim conquerors have shaped the sociopolitical landscape. On the other hand, Southeast Asia's Islamization has been achieved largely through trade, naturally Muslim merchants have been more influential in shaping politics and society (Geertz, 1968). Furthermore, radical groups in both regions have been influenced by different Islamic scholars who had different thoughts on how to achieve Islamic order. In the Middle East, Jihadi scholars and pioneers such as Ibn Taymiyyah, Sayd Qutb, and Abdullah Azzam have been respected more. In Southeast Asia, Pakistani Islamic scholar and pioneer, Abul A'la al-Maududi has been praised and followed in terms of political struggle in an Islamic way. According to al-Maududi, the founding father of JI and the ideologue of Ikhwanul Muslimin, Islam is not the sum of rituals and spiritual values and cannot be shuttered into the walls of mosques (al-Maududi, 1979, pp. 37-39). Since Islam is an order rather than worship, believers have to launch a revolutionary struggle. However, this struggle does not necessarily have to be war by conventional means, instead, as he used the term struggle, it can also be pursued in peaceful terms within formal politics, such as participating in elections via political parties (al-Maududi, 1980).

Islamist armed groups engaging in political violence through terror tactics in the region have not pursued monolithic, Global Jihadi targets. Instead, they have pursued political ends such as independence or autonomy within the boundaries of their countries. However, its transnational links and capabilities distinguished JI from other regional Islamist armed groups. The origins of JI can be traced back to Darul Islam, a group intended to establish an Islamic state in Indonesia

(Banlaoi, 2009). During the 1990s, JI preferred to create its networks in Afghanistan and the Philippines, since both countries were partially weak, and their Muslim regions were ungoverned. In parallel with its transnational ideas and missions, JI organized four territorially based commands, Mantiqi cells. Mantiqi I was responsible for providing funding and senior leadership and was located in Singapore and Malaysia; Indonesia-based Mantiqi II was in charge of recruitments; Mantiqi III was responsible for sourcing weapons and explosives and located in Sulawesi, Sabah, and Mindanao; and Mantiqi IV was located in Australia and was responsible for establishing sub-cells and affiliated individuals in the country (Harris-Hogan & Zammit, 2014, p. 319). JI associates were in close contact with all Southeast Asian Islamist armed groups, especially MILF in the Philippines. Both groups benefitted from these mutual relations; JI associates or fugitive members could find shelter whereas MILF was improving its tactics from guerilla warfare to hybrid warfare (Acharya, 2015, pp. 32-37).

In terms of JI-Al Qaeda relations, it was an undeniable fact that JI was not an integral part of Al Qaeda (Ramakrishna & Seng Tan, 2003). However, both of them set targets of creating an Islamic state, and this common goal was enough for Al Qaeda to support JI as its regional franchise. The analogy proposed by the International Crisis Group may help to understand the relation between the two; similar to that of an NGO with a funding agency. The NGO exists as a completely independent entity but submits proposals to the funding agency and gets a grant when the proposal is accepted. In these circumstances, Al Qaeda may help fund specific JI programs, but it neither directs nor controls JI (ICG, 2003).

The Philippines stands out in the region with its long-standing exposure to terrorist violence. As described by an American diplomat, "chronic insurgency is the most visible symptom of the state failure in Mindanao" (Collier, 2006, p. 30). Terrorist safe-heavens in the southern Philippines remain the weakest link in the entire regional counter-terrorism chain (p. 34). MNLF and MILF have been seeking autonomy in Mindanao for a long time. Also, in the same territories, radical Islamist groups which have been inspired by Global Jihadi ideas, are advocating the creation of the Islamic State. At this point, it is essential to ask what made the Philippines fertile ground for these radical groups.

4. What Made Philippines Fertile Ground?

Some regions are fertile grounds for terrorist groups to establish their cells, plan their operations, and if possible, train their recruits. The Philippines was one of the most fertile grounds for international terror networks in the region thanks to its geographical conditions, religion, and identity-based rifts, intensive and excessive clientelist political culture based on clan-family emphasis, and also relatively weak state control. Although the Muslim region in the country could be prosperous in many aspects, such as natural resources and located outside of tropical typhoon zone, much of its capacities have failed to be realized due to the centuries-old Muslim-Christian tension (Turner et al., 1992). Therefore, Muslim-populated regions have been the center of the worst poverty, health, and education levels in the entire Philippines. Manila's failure to meet people's basic needs has created a backdoor for radical groups and ideologies to exploit people's frustration (Gershman, 2002).

The root causes of the Muslim-Christian tension date back to the Spanish colonial administration in the 16th century. Muslims in the region launched resistance against Spanish rule, as a response to their Christianization and subjugation policies (Majul, 1999).

Despite Spanish expansion toward the Muslim region, effective administrative control over the region could not be achieved (Milligan, 2001, p. 437). Following the end of Spanish colonialism, Filipino Muslims have not given up their resistance, rather they fought against American colonial rule and Japanese occupation until the end of WWII. To achieve economic and social development in Mindanao, American rule in the Philippines encouraged Christian Filipinos to immigrate to Mindanao, which led Muslims to consider it as an assimilation plan (McKenna, 1998). Since the government, after independence, has maintained the same migration policies, the balance of the population has drastically changed, and this was one of the reasons why there are

ongoing inter-communal conflicts in the region. In addition to this, Manila's attempts to integrate Muslims into society through public schools have failed and deepened the ethno-religious rift. The members of the Muslim community were highly reluctant to enroll their children in public schools due to the suspicion about the intentions of the government. Instead, they established their own schools and educated their children in line with their religion, culture, and identity. As a result, the *madaris*, religious schools were established by Muslims, and this choice was the representation of rejection of the Filipino identity (Milligan, 2001, p. 443). On the other hand, according to Milligan, the main reason why Manila governments have not been able to exercise effective control in Muslim regions since the independence was not only the ethnoreligious rift (Milligan, 2001) but the privatization of security (Bates, 2010).

5. Privatization of Security and Filipino Society

Under normal circumstances, the state provides security and insurance of property rights through its credible capacity for deterrence and retaliation (Bates, 2010, p. 45). Effective exercise of the threat of retaliation brings about peace and prosperity. However, before the modern state agrarian societies had another insurance mechanism, families. In family and kinship-based societies people relied on their families as the source of security and protection. In other words, in agrarian societies, coercion and the use of violence were privately supplied. Nevertheless, the privatization of security comes with a cost; potential retaliation. In an environment where security is privately supplied and there is no, as John J. Mearsheimer said, "nightwatchman", use of force might trigger the other families' retaliation (Mearsheimer, 2010). Since this security mechanism provides fragile peace, the state of peace may easily be disrupted (Bates, 2010, p. 47). Thus, people in these societies often prefer to live in poverty to avoid others' attention (p. 48). In sum, poverty becomes the price of peace in such societies, where security is privately supplied.

One of the main reasons why the privatization of security in the Philippines is regional fragmentation and political disputes have been part of the Philippines' history. The archipelagic landscape caused considerable isolation among different groups and reduced the opportunities to interact between different communities. In this regard, Banlaoi argued that these waters only serve as channels of transportation facilitating inter-island commerce and migration, rather than transmitters of national unity and conveyors of national consciousness (Banlaoi, 2010, p. 31). Fragmentation in Filipino society may be observed within the same ethnoreligious communities. For example, although southern provinces are home to Muslim minorities, the number of Islamist groups in the region demonstrates a profound conflict of interest among them. Apart from the largest groups such as MNLF and MILF, more groups are fighting for various purposes. They are also divided into ISIS-linked and non-ISIS-linked. ASG, Tanum Group, ASG's Urban, Ansar al-Khilafah Philippines, (IS-Maguindanao), Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters-BIFF (IS-Zamboanga), Maute Group (IS-Ranao) are affiliated with ISIS. On the other hand, ASG-Jolo, Abu Sofia Group, and Rajah Solaiman Movement are not affiliated with ISIS (McKirdy & Watson, 2017). In addition to those, according to AFP, there are two main factions within ASG: Basilan-based and Sulu-based. Basilan-based faction of the ASG consists of the following groups: Ampul, Apting, Danggatil, Hapilon, Isnilon, Jainuddin, Janjalani, Kaw Jaljalis, Salagin, Masiraji Sali. Sulu-based faction comes into existence in a combination of these groups; Robot, Amil, Asiri, Badja, Bauddin, Hayudini, Hadji Radzpal, Irijani, Jamal, Kalim, Landi, Mali, Saabdula, Sahiron, Sali, Sahiron, Shariff (Banlaoi, 2010, pp. 60-61). In other words, fragmentation in the country is not limited to Muslims-Christian's rift, also among Muslim groups there are profound disagreements, as evidenced by the number of different factions of the same group. This divided socio-political atmosphere of the Philippines and Mindanao's geographical and political isolation provides fertile grounds for radical thoughts. Therefore, disagreements between political and armed factions have entailed separately conducted bombings, kidnapping, and other sorts of criminal activities in the region.

Privatization of security in the Philippines naturally made patron-client relations one of the main characteristics of the sociopolitical landscape. In this regard, the president is controlling the allocation of resources in line with clientelist patterns (Banlaoi, 2010). Manila governments had to compromise with local land elites and different ethnic and religious groups who had their

own militias and business interests. Although the country has a long free election experience, local landlords are still key players in domestic politics (White, 2009, p. 8). Privatization of security along with patron-client relation patterns in the political realm naturally curbs the Manila government's effective controls over its territories. When independence was declared in 1946, the state apparatuses in the country were divided among dominant social classes, powerful clans, land elites, and wealthy businessmen, in addition, Marxist and Islamist separatists have been challenging the legitimacy of the state of the Philippines (Rivera, 1994). Hutchcroft called this shattered socioeconomic and political system in the Philippines booty capitalism where private interests are pursued using public resources, and economic and political oligarchs possess the state apparatuses, and this undoubtedly affects national security (Hutchcroft, 1998).

6. Terrorism in the Philippines

Given the fragmented socioeconomic and political characteristics of the Philippines, the Philippines has never been immune to non-state violence in the form of terrorism throughout its history. Unlike other neighboring states, the Philippines faces a dual terrorist threat. The first one is Marxist terrorism led by the Communist Party of the Philippines pursuing the Marxist People's War and the second one is separatist/autonomist religiously motivated terrorism in the southern part of the country. It is important to note that Islamist terrorist groups in the Philippines have significantly distinguished themselves from their Middle Eastern counterparts. Until the mid-2010s Islamists in the Philippines, and even in the region, have not been fueled and inspired by global Jihadi thoughts. Instead, ethnoreligious incentives stemming from their minority status under the Catholic state motivated the armed resistance (Chalk et al., 2009).

The armed resistance in Southern Philippines commenced when Nur Misuari founded the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) with the purpose of self-determination in 1972. It lasted until 1996 when the Davao Consensus provided the proclamation of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) (Chalk et al., 2009, p. 34). The Davao Consensus also represented the first strategic split within the Islamist movement. The establishment of the ARMM meant a shift from seeking independence to autonomy in the Muslim south, thus some local Islamist groups expressed their discontent, which led to the shattering of the Islamist movement. As a result, three competing blocs emerged and pursued different goals with different strategies and tactics. MNLF was already in the process of engaging the formal Filipino politics, while the other two refused to integrate into the existing order. The second group was the Salamat Hashim-led MILF claiming to be the vanguard of the Islamic movement in Mindanao. Although its discourse was more religiously determined than MNLF's, MILF gradually softened its stance and involved in peace talks for autonomy. The last one was the ASG which rejected any solution or deal outside of the establishment of the Islamic State in Mindanao (p. 35). Although since 2002 MILF and ASG relations have been developing (Vaughn et al., 2009), MILF has stated its rigid opposition to transnational radical groups and has portrayed itself as a tolerant entity that is ready to coexist with members of other religious faiths (Abuza, 2003, p. 91).

On the other hand, MILF's potential was important for Al Qaeda. To exploit the Philippines' ethnoreligiously divided political environment, bin Laden sent his brother-in-law Jamal Khalifa to the Philippines, to create Islamic charity foundations that were employed in fundraising for Muslim insurgents in the country. Once he reinforced Jihadi networks and conscious in the region, he began providing assistance to MILF which was particularly chosen among other Islamist groups, because MNLF was too mainstream and engaged in peace talks and ASG was too weak and found antipathetic even by some Muslims (Abuza, 2003, p. 95). By extension, Al Qaeda's financial and material support was excessively critical for MILF, because Libya's support has been diminishing at that time due to Gaddafi's plan to increase Libya's international reputation. Despite such close relations, later MILF has denied that its members have been trained by Al Qaeda. In addition to relations with Al Qaeda, under the leadership of Salamat Hashim, MILF-JI links have been created through the approval of the relocation of JI camps from Afghanistan to Mindanao in 1994 (Collier, 2006, p. 31).

MILF has strayed into Al Qaeda-led Global Jihad with Hashim Salamat, largely because of failed peace talks. When the peace talks between the Muslim groups and the government were prolonged, the violence spiral intensified. Similarly, Al Haj Murad Ebrahim, leader of the MILF, underscored the fact that failed peace talks are the main culprits of the rise of radical groups. When peace talks were going in the right direction they remained less connected to Al Qaeda (Acharya, 2015, pp. 85-86; Gotinga, 2017). As evidenced in historical records of the violence, as long as peace talks and deals present fruitful results for both sides, the trend in violence is reduced and fewer people are radicalized (GTD, 2020). Prolonged negotiations between Manila and Muslim groups increase the risk of violence metastasizing or even it may cause the re-radicalization of parties as was observed in MNLF's taking on a more Islamist stance. Pennekamp (2016) predicted that ISIS may benefit from the breakaway factions' allegiances in the Philippines, and ASG's latest attempt to declare an Islamic State in Marawi confirmed his prediction.

7. Battle of Marawi

The battle of Marawi was one of the most striking reminders of the internationalization of terrorism in Southeast Asia. For decades, Islamist armed groups in the Philippines have distinguished themselves from international terror networks at the strategic level, despite some temporary tactical alignments. However, prolonged and often failed peace talks have created optimal conditions for groups seeking radical solutions to the Muslim minority question in the country. In addition, the fall of ISIS in the Middle East pushed global Jihadi networks to seek new safe havens. With this regard, the Southern Philippines has emerged as the nexus of local radical Islamist groups seeking support from global Jihadi networks and ISIS eyeing new bases. The siege of Marawi was the incarnation of this emerging nexus.

Clashes between government forces and ISIS-affiliated groups ASG and the Maute started on May 23, 2017, as a response to the AFP's offense. The target of the military operation was to capture Isnilon Hapilon, the leader of ISIS-linked ASG. However, Hapilon was protected by Abdullah and Omar Maute who reportedly had thousands of well-trained fighters reinforced by foreign fighters coming from Yemen, Malaysia, Chechnya, and Indonesia. The Catholic church, the city prison, schools, and main bridges were destroyed, and residents were taken hostage on the same day. This outrage eventually entailed the declaration of martial law in the Island of Mindanao, and an all-out war that brought along the involvement of air and land forces (Betteridge-Moes, 2017). In the interviews, combatant members of the armed forces stated that ASG fighters were as well armed as the army during the siege (McKirdy & Watson, 2017). ASG fighters in Marawi allegedly used identical tactics as ISIS had used in Syria. This has proved that following the fall of ISIS in Syria, the influx of well-armed, well-trained, well-motivated foreign fighters seeking a new battlefield have been encouraged to go to the Philippines due to optimal conditions for Jihad. Geographically divided, politically isolated, and religiously fragmented conditions of the Philippines have fostered both local and foreign fighters to transfer weapons and ammunitions, recruits, and bomb-making devices, as well as the ideology of Global Jihad to the region (Hart, 2018). Although this was not the first Islamist armed groups' attempt to take over a city(in In 2014, Zamboanga City was targeted and sieged by 400 militants for 20 days. see Liljas, 2016), the battle of Marawi has set a milestone in the radicalism problem in the Philippines (Chao, 2017).

The clashes have demonstrated the incapability of AFP in urban warfare. Intense months-long clashes have resulted in the deaths of 920 insurgent fighters, 165 members of the AFP, and at least 45 civilians. The estimated cost of the conflict was around 1.1 billion USD for only rebuilding the city of Marawi (Betteridge-Moes, 2017), excluding the expenses of the military forces during the battle as well as humanitarian costs. As the AFP and the government struggled to suppress the radical Islamist uprising in Marawi, it caused deep and urgent concerns across the region. Thus, regional powers—the US, Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and China—to an extent assisted the Philippines such as technical and material support, intelligence-surveillance-reconnaissance, joint patrol missions in the Sulu Sea, and evacuating civilians (Cook, 2017).

On the other hand, this siege was not unexpected for many. In an interview, Al Haj Murad Ebrahim, the leader of MILF stated that the attacks on Marawi should not have been surprising because pro-ISIS groups have already been publishing propaganda documents about their plans of declaring a caliphate in the Philippines (Gotinga, 2017). Another interview made by Steve Chao proved that ISIS' activities were known by local people. One of the child fighters of ISIS in Marawi, Abdul, claimed that local religious schoolteachers have taken them to ISIS camps as school field trips, although his school later denied any sort of links with ISIS. There were also many foreign recruits in those training camps as the interviewee stated (Chao, 2017).

The correlation between rising radicalism and government failure in peace talks was underlined by Aga Khan Sharif the leader of the Muslim community in Marawi. He asserted that the Maute brothers, since he knew them while they were children, were harmless, what triggered them was the failure of the government. According to him, prolonged and failed peace talks left no choice to the Maute brothers but to join ISIS (Chao, 2017). People of Marawi claimed that if historical injustices against the disadvantaged Muslim communities in the Philippines are not solved, the crisis will persist (Aljazeera, 2017). The reason behind this statement is not unfounded. Six of the 11 largest Islamist groups in the Philippines; ASG, Tanum, ASG's Urban, Ansharul Khilafah Philippines, BIFF, and Maute officially pledged allegiance to ISIS after peace talks failed and formed an umbrella group named Daulah Islamiyah Wilayatul Mashriq, the Eastern Province of Islamic State (McKirdy & Watson, 2017).

Another dimension of the Battle of Marawi which was expected to be over within a few weeks is related to a humanitarian crisis. During the clashes, hundreds of thousands of people were forced to be displaced from their homes to temporary camps out of Marawi. According to news sources, within these temporary camps, contagious waterborne diseases are spread due to the lack of medical care and supplies, as well as the outnumbered residents (Alindogan, 2017; Taylor, 2017). Even after one and a half years, the humanitarian situation was still not promising; as the report prepared by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) demonstrated that the recovery process is ongoing and over 73.000 people remain displaced (UNOCHA, 2018). According to the recent Mindanao Displacement Bulletin, from January to September 2023, there were 317.250 displaced people for various reasons (UNHCR, 2023), and the majority of them were victims of armed conflicts.

8. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In association with advancements in transportation and communication, terrorism has evolved in a more international direction. Contrary to the past, where terrorist organizations thrived and organized under the sponsorship of competing states, new international terrorism operates beyond the borders of state sponsorship. Since the cost of terrorism sponsorship increased following the end of the Cold War, modern terrorists, particularly those religiously motivated, have begun relying on cell-based, decentralized organizational structures. These self-reliant terrorists operate globally, attacking both their host countries and others, transcending traditional boundaries.

In other words, the internationalization of terrorism extends beyond the internationally organized terrorist groups. Rather, it hinges on terrorist groups' propensity to conduct attacks on international targets, irrespective of their organizational framework. Although some terrorist organizations may establish branches in multiple countries under different guises, they may not be acknowledged as international terrorist organizations. This understanding underscores the global scope of these groups' activities and targets.

The infiltration of ISIS-led international terror networks into the Southern Philippines pointed out a significant dimension of international terrorism. Although local groups like ASG and Maute have not demonstrated a willingness to organize beyond regional borders, long-paused peace talks and enduring sociopolitical tensions in the Southern Philippines have created optimal conditions for international terror networks to infiltrate the region. In this sense, the internationalization of terrorism in the Philippines' context exemplifies how global terror

networks, leveraging existing local grievances and vulnerabilities, penetrate the region to pursue their political agenda.

Fukuyama underscored the correlation between sociopolitical instability, state fragility, and terrorism, contending that instability fosters terrorism (Fukuyama, 2004). The Arab Spring served as a stark reminder that fragile states and sociopolitical crises paved the way for a new wave of terrorism mastered by ISIS. With the collapse of ISIS dominance in Iraq and Syria, Southeast Asia emerged as a potential new safe haven for international terror networks to advance their objectives. Particularly the Philippines stands out in this regard due to several factors such as weak state control, corruption, economic challenges, and failed nation-building efforts. Additionally, social divisions along religious, linguistic, and ethnic lines exacerbate tensions, particularly in Mindanao, where Muslim minorities identify more closely with their distinct cultural identity as Bangsamoro or Moro rather than as Filipino. This fragile combination creates fertile ground for exploitation by international terror networks, potentially triggering ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic conflicts in the region (Banlaoi, 2010). Hence, the siege of Marawi presented that the infiltration and proliferation of extremist thoughts and groups in the region pose destructive security threats.

The Southeast Asian franchises of ISIS may have faltered in their attempts to establish an Islamic State, yet the siege of Marawi underscored their significant influence. This conflict stands for a crucial turning point in the internationalization of terrorism within the Philippines. Firstly, local groups, spurred by ISIS involvement, found a common cause and reinforced it with material and training support. This collaboration furthered their objectives of establishing an Islamic State under the ISIS banner. Secondly, by pledging allegiance to ISIS, these local groups extended their reach globally, effectively becoming affiliated entities of the jihadist network. In addition, the involvement of American support during the Marawi siege, alongside enhanced counterterrorism cooperation, demonstrated the heightened international attention garnered by these groups. Despite the apparent containment of immediate threats posed by factions like Maute and ASG after the recapture of Marawi, the international spotlight on the siege could inadvertently fuel fresh recruitment drives. Given the Philippines' fractured societal landscape and porous borders, the ongoing trend of terrorism internationalization suggests a persistent influx of foreign terrorists into the region. While the Philippine Armed Forces have made significant advancements in training, equipment, and deployment, the evolving nature of terrorism and the proliferation of threats may curb their capacity to address all challenges effectively. Terrorism's ability to adapt to local dynamics was evident in Marawi, where it facilitated the unity of disparate Islamist factions. The struggle against international terrorism in Southeast Asia remains an ongoing and multifaceted endeavor. By implementing these policy recommendations, the Philippines can enhance its resilience against the evolving threat of international terrorism and contribute to regional and global security.

To address the destructive effects of internationalized terrorism in the Philippines, several policy measures are recommended. The protracted Christian-Muslim conflict and disputes must be urgently addressed. Failure to resolve these conflicts could lead to a permanent establishment of jihadi networks in the region. To restore and strengthen order in the region, the Manila government should promote inter-communal dialogue, peacebuilding programs, and socioeconomic development plans to foster mutual understanding and cooperation. Restoring the governmental capacity in conflict-stricken areas is essential to address the lack of basic services. Hence, to handle asymmetric threats like terrorism, it is a must to provide adequate training and equipment to local security forces and to enhance intelligence-sharing capacities.

Given the societal aspect of the conflict, executing community-based programs countering the spread of radical ideologies is crucial. These programs should be planned to involve local leaders, scholars, and non-governmental organizations in promoting narratives of peaceful coexistence. These plans should be as inclusive and comprehensive as possible so that successful integration of former combatants, including returning fighters from Syria and Iraq. Without psychological support, vocational training, and opportunities for productive engagement in society, re-radicalization will likely remain a significant threat to sustainable peace. On the

international front, strengthening regional cooperation with Southeast Asian neighbors and international partners to cope with the internationalized nature of terrorism is necessary.

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