MODERN SOLDIERY INTERROGATED: CATALOGUING THE LOCAL MILITARY’S TASKS AND THEIR PERCEPTION OF LOCAL CIVILIAN ACTORS

by

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In the years after 9/11, the Philippine military has seen profound changes in the way it does its business. Following renewed US military support under its “war on terror” platform, there has been a considerable widening and deepening of non-combat tasks by the Philippine armed forces—especially in Mindanao. Since 2002, joint activities between Philippine and US troops (under the Balikatan stream and Joint Special Operations Task Force or JSOTF) have moved beyond counter-terrorism to include disaster relief, reconstruction and civic action outside and within known conflict areas. While the Philippine military’s range of secondary tasks has been accruing with new mandates from civilian governments (e.g. environmental protection, assistance to the police for anti-crime, post-disaster rehabilitation), the re-tooling of its counterinsurgency repertoire to encompass community organizing, basic service delivery (e.g. education and health) and targeted (village-level) infrastructure projects has solidified the institution’s stake in local development activities. Its added focus on urban centers as area of operations (as opposed to the rural areas where traditionally counterinsurgency measures are directed at) also expanded their exposure to a wider set of civilian communities. Like their counterparts elsewhere, the Philippine military is at the cusp of re-defining what it means to be an “armed force”—embodying new skill sets that enable them to perform across multifarious missions be it humanitarian aid, disaster relief, stabilization and reconstruction, or peace support operations.

These changes raise important theoretical questions. First, it runs counter to the idea that democratic control of the military is best achieved where the military is confined to a limited set of tasks in line with their expertise (i.e. management of violence). Because the military’s primary training is associated with the use of force, they must be accordingly removed from functions not in consonant with these skills, damaging to their core competency, and better performed by civilian actors. There are also concerns that additional missions are being given to the armed forces without parallel initiatives at building civilian capacity for oversight, leading to serious imbalances in civil-military relations. Assigning the military to internal security tasks, which some scholars argue are better performed by a separate constabulary/police force, is also antithetical to the prescription that an external defense-oriented armed forces lends to better democratic governance (Huntington 1991; Welch 1976). Besides, as argued by Ágüero (1997) and Stepán (1986), the military’s prolonged exposure to internal security operations (including counterinsurgency) generates politicized mindsets.

The military’s forays into counterinsurgency and development tasks (whether for domestic or overseas deployment; new or a long-standing practice) also introduces new nuances. First, the military interfaces more with civilian populations and local groups to...
which they are not directly held accountable (Welch 2006). It is in this gray area that the dangers of abuse and military politicization can potentially arise as there are neither laws nor mechanisms granting local authorities supervisory powers over the troops deployed in their area. Second, the military is brought into competitive, complementary or collaborative relationships with civilian entities (governmental agencies and NGOs) (Berkle 2005). Because ground deployments embed the armed forces into communities, cultural sensitivity and good relations with local leaders are a premium.

This paper probes the consequences of military role expansion to the soldiers' perception of local civilian actors. Using two cases, a frontline army battalion and an urban-based civil-relations focused unit, the paper describes the different tasks the military is engaged in and the types of local civilian actors they interface with on a regular basis. Given the array of tasks performed by these two units, the paper explores whether soldiers deal and feel differently towards their local civilian hosts, depending on the type of activities they do in the field. The study also examines nuances in the way the military personnel regard various categories of civilian actors (elected civilian leaders, government bureaucrats/employees, civil society actors and state security forces which are “civilian” by nature, e.g. police and paramilitary).

The military’s expanded tasks at the local level do not necessarily lead to denser interface with local civilian actors. While military units collaborate more with civilian players in non-combat and non-counterinsurgency-related tasks, this does not translate to more meaningful engagements. More collaboration is recorded between the military and other state security forces, but premised on the idea that the military’s tasks differ from those of the local police. Among civilian actors, the military personnel have more positive views of local authorities and professionals than with civil society organizations and media. Soldiers on the ground overall are skeptical of the capacity for governance by local authorities and undervalue local security frameworks.

Military Tasks and Civilian Engagements

Whether by law or norm, that the Philippine military dabbles into a wide variety of counterinsurgency-related or unrelated tasks does not mean they are all equally welcome across the ranks and services. De la Cruz (2000) probed the receptivity of officers to non-traditional roles by examining its link to rank, branch of service and educational attainment. Among his findings are: (1) junior officers are more receptive to non-traditional tasks than senior officers but not significant; (2) non-ground forces registered a higher mean score than ground forces in terms of receptivity to non-traditional roles but this link is not significant; (3) education bears a positive and significant relationship to receptivity to non-traditional roles with those possessing higher educational attainment scoring higher than those with lower education; (4) of the various categories, officers are most receptive to rehabilitation and least receptive to law enforcement. The non-significant findings for rank and service branch is explained by the fact that all officers, regardless of rank, are exposed to non-traditional tasks and are given “civilian” responsibilities on their job. Furthermore, anti-insurgency operations involve all branches. Those who are better educated also tend to have greater appreciation of non-combat tasks and their usefulness in achieving military goals. Officers are also least

3 The two units are the 47th Infantry Battalion (IB) based in Calinog, Iloilo and the 32nd Civil Relations Unit (CRU) based in Iloilo City. The 47th IB is an army maneuver battalion deployed for anti-communist operations in rural areas throughout Panay Island while the 32nd CRU is a composite unit (personnel drawn from various AFP service branches) primarily directed at countering activities by communist “legal fronts” (i.e. unarmed organizations the military considers as directly providing support to the armed movement) in urban areas. The data was generated mainly from a survey questionnaire administered to 76 company level soldiers from the 42nd IB and the entire 32nd CRU personnel (17 total). The 76 soldiers included 67 enlisted men and 6 officers, who on average have served in the army for 8 years, 7 of which are with their current unit. The 17 soldiers in the 32nd CRU include 14 enlisted men and 3 officers drawn from detachments in Iloilo, Negros Occidental and Aklan. They have served in the military for 20 years on average, but only 5 years in their current unit. The author also conducted one focus group discussion with nine 47th IB line officers; interviewed the commanders for both units, and made field observations of two civic action activities undertaken by both units (medical/dental and disaster relief).
receptive to law enforcement arises because such task clearly is the functional responsibility of the police. The relatively high mean scores for search and rescue depict the officers’ understanding that they address a serious gap in civilian capability. Rehabilitation is also rated highly as such scores points in the effort to “win hearts and minds.”

Previous studies by Hall (2006) and Brillantes and Tanate (2008) empirically established the variety of non-traditional tasks performed by Philippine soldiers as part of their counterinsurgency repertoire and beyond. Hall (2006) pointed out that the army deployed in the frontline was more frequently involved in non-combat activities than combat, from community meetings (pulong-pulong), civic action, CAFGU creation and patrolling. Some units in the frontline are also involved in non-counterinsurgency matters such as law enforcement and policing at the barangay level. It is in these non-combat capacities that the frontline officer (usually a company lieutenant) engages local civilian authorities (barangay captains and mayors, most frequently)-- soliciting or disseminating information or obtaining financial or logistical support for their activities. Military-civilian engagements typically are mediated by: (1) type of activity and (2) the ideological credential of the local civilian authority. The military is seen to engage civilians more in civil-military operations rather than combat; and less so when the local civilian in question is deemed “left-leaning” (Brillantes and Tanate 2008, 71). In both studies, officer interface with local civilian authorities was neither robust nor meaningful. No civilian input make a difference in the COIN design, which for the most part remain military-fashioned.

However, there are also different levels of civil-military engagement depending on the nature of the military unit. Of the 2 units examined by Brillantes and Tanate (2008), the urban based unit appears to have more encounters with civilian leaders than the rural-based unit. While many respondents from both expressed a healthy skepticism over the civilian leaders’ ability to address the insurgency problem, the rural unit appeared generally more trusting of civilian contribution than the urban unit (Brillantes and Tanate 2008, 75).

Other studies have explored the military’s attitudes towards civilians across varying types of missions. In counterinsurgency, the military looks at the civilian population as subjects of persuasion-- that is, whose “hearts and minds” must be won over in order to cut their ties with the rebel groups. In addition, the civilian population also provide the manpower for local defense or home guards, which are seen as essential to the counterinsurgency strategy. In the recent re-design of US’s counterinsurgency strategy in Iraq, local warlords and armed groups have been co-opted into the state security apparatus.

The tendency to subsume civilian contributions under broader strategic military goals is not limited to counterinsurgency and counter-terror operations. The adoption of NATO’s civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) doctrine in Afghanistan has earned criticisms that humanitarian efforts have been “militarized” (Mandel 2002). Unlike humanitarian organizations conducting work under the principle of neutrality, the military is seen as serving the political ends of the state that sent them. Looking at parallel humanitarian efforts in Bosnia and Haiti, Muller (1999) also observed the serious gap between the US military and NGOs owing to differences in their organizational culture and profile of recruits. US soldiers saw NGO workers as a bunch of do-gooders who have little appreciation of the political exigencies in a conflict area. In his study of the Dutch Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan, Rietjens (2008) similarly found the soldiers to have a limited network of civilian contacts and oblivious to the provincial and national organizations doing parallel development work in their area of operations. In the 2004 tsunami response in Aceh, Hall (2009, 25-26; 54-55) argued that the Indonesian and foreign militaries predictably took lead roles vis-a-vis the NGOs as they had control over assets necessary for relief delivery in remote areas. In order to ensure that relief activities do not yield benefits to the insurgents, the Indonesian military controlled relief delivery by requiring civilian actors to register and to provide information on deliveries outside of the capital.
To summarize, there is sufficient empirical evidence that the military is engaged in non-traditional roles and tasks for which they interface with civilians. Philippine officers in particular are receptive to these non-traditional tasks indicating a nexus between doctrine and practice. Among these categories of non-traditional tasks, distinctions are made between those that directly contribute to the achievement of military goals and those that do not (e.g. law enforcement). Other national militaries also tend to view their engagements with local civilian authorities and NGOs along pragmatic lines— that is, within the lenses of security imperatives and strategic military goals. Across a variety of mission types, serious gaps remain between military and civilian actors due to differences in organizational cultures and mutual suspicion.

New Wine or Old Bottle? Changes in the Roles of the Philippine Military

The Philippine military is atypical of its counterparts in the Asian region because of its prolonged involvement in internal security operations (Hall 2004, 108). It was and continues to be routinely employed for a whole variety of tasks in conjunction with counterinsurgency (COIN). Their usual COIN repertoire, drawing inspiration from American strategies in fighting low intensity conflicts, feature non-combat elements designed to “win hearts and minds.” Included in these are civic action, infrastructure building and civil-military operations. It is embedded in army doctrine, for instance, that there is no purely military solution to insurgency; that military expertise must also be applied to deliver basic services and goods to insurgent-affected communities (whether medical service, vocational education, roads and other infrastructure). Civic action, in particular, is designed to shore up support for the government and public approval of military operations in communities. (Mandocdoc and Parisaba 2004, 11). In fact, Lim (2004) candidly mentions in one speech that the military tends to do more of this “winning hearts and minds” activities rather than combat. He even stressed that modern day soldiers to be effective requires mastery in dealing with a whole gamut of civilians he/she interacts on a daily basis— government officials, politicians, NGOs and media people.

Historically, the military took on other roles not related to fighting insurgents. Under the Marcos dictatorship, the military took on political and economic roles—governing in conflict-ridden areas in Mindanao in place of civilian authorities; administering government-owned and controlled corporations; and serving as a judiciary arm. The Aquino administration pared down the military’s roles after the transition in 1986 and also established constitutional mandates against the military’s involvement in politics and the business of running government enterprises. Under President Ramos, a serious attempt was made to re-orient the armed forces towards external defense under a modernization program. The program was later scuttled with the fiscal troubles following the 1997 Asian financial crisis, but nevertheless legitimized the military’s new environmental protection mandate. Under President Arroyo, the military’s involvement in development tasks deepened as they have been tasked to implement key development programs under the Office of the President. The Kalayaan sa Barangay program, which started in 2004, is one such effort targeting conflict-affected communities for infrastructure projects, with the military as implementor. Correspondingly, the military in 2007 reorganized its civil-military operations by creating the National Development Support Command, placing all engineering battalions under one umbrella.

Apart from internal security and external defense, there is a phalanx of “secondary” missions for which the Philippine soldiers may also be deployed. Such missions include

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4 The Kalayaan sa Barangay Program is aimed at “transforming communities previously affected by internal conflict into development areas through infrastructure projects and expeditious delivery of basic services” (Quilop 2007).

5 The NDSC’s purported mandate is to undertake infrastructure projects as directed by the national government in conflict and disaster affected barangays. ‘AFP to re-build war torn areas” http://www.gmanews.tv/story/57u11/AFO-to-rebuild-war-torn-areas. Accessed 24 August 2009.
peacekeeping operations, disaster relief and rehabilitation, environmental protection, assisting the police in law enforcement and election monitoring. These missions are often labelled “non-traditional” in that they depart significantly from those for which the military possess expertise (i.e. war fighting). The armed forces have participated in numerous peacekeeping operations in Asia and beyond as far back as 1950-53 during the Korean War to more recently, in East Timor (1999-2004) and Sudan (2005 to date) (Quilop 2008, 4). The military’s involvement in disaster response, meanwhile, is more historical and institutionalized. The AFP’s mandate draws from Presidential Decree 1566 (1978), which identifies their tasks as: (1) organization of evacuation teams in all military institutions; (2) establishment of communication linkages and their availability for disaster operations; (3) assistance to police in disaster area; (4) assistance in reconstruction of damaged roads, bridges, structures and facilities; and (5) providing transport facilities for relief supplies and personnel and for evacuation of victims. The Philippine the disaster coordinating framework recognizes the military as an actor and defines their parameters of involvement (logistics; evacuation; reconstruction) and dealings with the civilian authorities (receiving instructions from the local chief executive of the disaster area).

The armed forces’ expanded reach into non-traditional tasks carries some serious implications to civil-military relations. At its core is the poor understanding of the limits/boundaries of military presence in Philippine society. Because the Philippine military has been regularly deployed internally, Filipinos are very used to seeing the men-in-uniform in their midst. Ground deployment of government troops is so commonplace in many conflict areas (in many cases, the soldiers are the “lone” government institution present) that their presence and the variety of tasks they performed no longer invite questions from civilian hosts.

The military’s forays into “nation-building” even purportedly tied in with its counterinsurgency goals, nevertheless pose a serious question on civilian oversight. The civilian leadership appear no less keen in deploying the armed forces for these tasks despite their clear encroachment into areas of civil governance (Hall 2004, 124; Gloria 2008, 34). How the military could be held accountable for these tasks as well as the money they handle is not well established. This seeming confidence in the armed forces to fill in development gaps also bring them into closer interface with local civilian authorities and government line agencies with whom they have no defined institutional relationship. Incipient efforts are starting to bring the military and civilian players into one table, like the Regional Kalahi Convergence groups, which brings the local government units and the AFP with regional line agencies in anti-poverty initiatives centered at insurgent affected barangays. However, the record of such engagements are uneven, remaining contingent as it were on the the nature of personal relationship between officers and local government officials. The Department of National Defense (DND)’s purported lead in the Arroyo administration’s anti-poverty thrust (financially-supported by foreign aid) has been criticized as projecting the centrality of the government’s anti-insurgency agenda. Ibon (2006) points to the deployment of special AFP teams to implement these development projects as coinciding with alarming trends of human rights violations.

In recent years, there has also been a fundamental change in the military’s anti-communist insurgency strategy arising from an altered assumption about the nature of the communist enemy. There has been an increased focus in the military’s counterinsurgency plan towards so-called legal “fronts” of the armed movement-- leftist political parties and organizations deem taking advantage of the democratic legal space. Correspondingly, the military’s strategy encapsulated in Oplan Bantay Laya 1 and 2 calls for operations in the so-called “white areas,” which are urban places where government agencies are present but where front organizations freely operate and get support from the middle class, students and businessmen (Gloria 2008, 39). This has accordingly led the armed forces to direct their actions against personalities in leftist organizations deemed linked with the communist
movement. These actions range from innocuous public information drive against these organizations (e.g. what they are doing, where they get their funding, etc.), media monitoring and offensives (e.g. countering their allegations in print and in air), and campaigning against their local candidates during elections. There are allegations that the disappearances and extra judicial killings of many leftist personalities of recent is part of this counterinsurgency strategy (Gloria 2008, 36).

The armed forces' involvement in what otherwise are political activities targeting unarmed civilians is a cause for concern to many, particularly for human rights advocates. Given the relative freedom commanding officers have in the design and implementation of their respective operations on the ground, there's always the possibility that some may push the envelop too far. Although there are legal restrictions against abuse of human rights during the conduct of counterinsurgency operations, but a few cases against soldiers and officers for such offenses ever proceed to the civilian courts. Prior to the Supreme Court's affirmation of the writ of Amparo (requiring the military to submit to queries by the court) and the tenacious efforts of crusading human rights commissioner Leila de Lima, the military has never been candid nor open towards civilian questioning of the manner in which they conduct counterinsurgency operations.

Combat and Beyond: A Look at the Activity Profiles of Two Military Units

The stereotypical impression of the Philippine military as primarily a war fighting machine has little empirical basis. The profile of activities of the two military units in the study reveal that they are also equally immersed in non-combat and non-counterinsurgency related work. Parallel large numbers of 47th IB respondents claimed that they are doing counterinsurgency combat operations, counterinsurgency non-combat operations and non-COIN activities. In terms of volume of activities, majority described their work “mostly COIN combat, some COIN non-combat and little non-COIN” or “mostly COIN-non-combat, some COIN combat and little non-COIN.” By contrast, subjects from the 32nd CRU primarily do COIN non-combat operations. Fewer than 1/3 identified non-COIN activities as their task while none chose COIN combat. This suggests that non-combat activities are so mainstreamed in both units' repertoire.

When it comes to counterinsurgency combat tasks, the 47th IB soldiers collaborate the most with other state security forces (other army units, AFP units, CAFGU and local police) than with civilians. When ranked in terms of frequency of collaboration, the same security forces are also rated highly. Of the security forces, the CAFGU ranked second only to other army units the 47th IB personnel collaborate with on a sustained basis. This finding is in line with the nature of combat operations wherein CAFGU units (territorial paramilitary forces) are utilized alongside regular army personnel. Combat operations also require police involvement (COIN is also a mandate for the police); they are often deployed for “blocking.” From the focus group discussion, the officers pointed out that they have done joint operations not only with the town-based police but also with the mobile PNP Special Action Forces. They argue that the army, because they are the ground forces, ALWAYS has the lead role in combat, even in joint operations with the police or other AFP units, although lateral coordination with them is emphasized. Majority of the respondents also claim their unit solely provide the goods and services (food, transportation and logistics) necessary for the operations. This corresponds with the idea that the army operates as an independent, self-contained unit employing its own resources for combat activities. The military is given combat pay of 240 pesos a month (lower than those received by the Air Force). When the army goes to combat, each member is supposed to bring rice, canned goods, toilet paper, personal medicine, noodles, salt, cooking oil and soy sauce, along with a pot and a portable stove. If they are close to some houses during their operations, they may pool their money to buy fresh vegetables and native chicken. The army unit may also augment the CAFGUs
munitions supply when necessary. Sometimes, they enlist the municipal government’s help with logistics (e.g. borrowing the dump truck).

In terms of counterinsurgency non-combat activities, there are interesting parallels between the two units. An overwhelming number of 47th IB respondents and a majority of the 32nd CRU identified tree planting, pulong-pulong, civic action, clean-up drive, community organizing as key activities, also in terms of frequency. There is consistency in the types of COIN non-combat activities undertaken except for one item: propaganda. Propaganda is rated high by majority of the 32nd CRU respondents, compared to a low rating by majority of the 47th IB respondents. Both units rated intelligence gathering activities, CAFGU recruitment and seeking financial aid from LGUs as low. The range of activities whom both consider as “typical” COIN non-combat form the generally-accepted repertoire of activities approved by the military command and doctrinally-supported (e.g. civic action, administer Balik-Baril, pulong-pulong, tree planting, clean up drive).

Tree planting and clean-up drives are usually low-cost endeavors requiring only brawn power and are also quite popular among local chief executives as environmental projects. Civic action, in turn, usually require more contributions from other units and civilian actors, but carry the most mileage in terms of “winning hearts and minds.” It is a core element of the COIN non-combat repertoire. Implementing the BALIK BARIL is an army mandate, while community organizing and pulong-pulong are typical special operations activities of community mapping for the purpose of identifying supporters and non-supporters. Neither unit is engaged in CAFGU administration as other units specialize on this (e.g. cadre and engineering battalions).

In the focus group discussion, the officers identified a similar set of non-combat tasks, among these are “spotting” for prospective CAFGU recruits, repairs of schools and chapels, and provision of services such as circumcision and haircut. There usually are members of the unit with the corresponding skills, although a civilian doctor retained and dentist from other units are also involved. They pointed out that their role varies depending on whether the civic action activity is military or LGU-led. They mention that the GMA Kapuso Foundation and some NGOs have done such activities in their area during which they have provided some support. More typical activities are: clean-up after a local fiesta, after a disaster in their host community (that is where the troops are billeted; or have their camps).

In COIN non-combat activities, both units gave almost equal ratings to state security forces (other army/AFP units, CAFGU and police) and civilian actors. However, there are pronounced differences between the two units when it comes to civilian actors they collaborate more with. The 47th IB personnel collaborate more with elected civilian leaders and professionals but less with NGO and PO workers, local government employees, government agencies and the media. The 32nd CRU respondents meanwhile collaborated mostly with local elected leaders and local government employees, and least with professionals and the media. It is interesting that 2/3 of the 32nd CRU respondents say they do not work at all with NGOs and media. These survey results somewhat differ from the officers’ contentions. They acknowledge seeking permission from the barangay captain or council if the activity is LGU-initiated. Otherwise, they rarely approach the local government for help. In few instances, they did so to obtain limited support (e.g. cement and sand) for local development projects. In civic action activities, they have also requested medicines from doctors and pharmaceutical companies and limited money from politicians. But these requests were mostly done through personal connections (Marquez 2008).

Alongside, there is also greater cognizance of civilian contribution to COIN non-combat activities. While most respondents report that their unit provides most of the goods
and services for these activities, there is a larger number saying that other units and civilian partners also contribute, supplies in particular.

A comparison of the type of non-COIN activities pursued by the two units yield further differences. In addition to disaster relief, which is rated high by both units, the 47th IB also rated election deputy and peace and order as high in volume/frequency. Both units rated providing security to politicians and fighting crimes as “low”. But in addition, the 32nd CRU also rated monitoring protests and strikes as “low.” From this trend, one can glean that the military tries not to do too much “policing duties.” Historically, the military is also involved in disaster relief and is deputized to make sure the ballots are protected during elections. The officers’ views parallel the survey results. They said they are deputized by COMELEC (to protect the ballot) and by DENR (to apprehend illegal loggers). They also are tasked by NDCC to respond to disasters. They also routinely cooperate with the PNP on peace and order concerns. However, they rarely get involved in anti-criminal efforts as such is a PNP matter.

In assessing non-COIN partnerships, most of the respondents from both units acknowledge collaborations with civilian actors, notably with barangay captains and mayors. At the same time, the highest number of “no” responses were registered for local government employees, PO members and clients. This pattern follows largely the trend for COIN non-combat activities where some reported also collaborating most with local civil authorities. Civilian partners are recognized to be contributing most in terms of food, supplies and service. According to the officers, they receive contributions from the local government during disaster relief (particularly at the beginning; augmenting the soldiers’ food rations). As their gasoline allocation is primarily intended for combat operations, usually the requesting party (DSWD, local government or NGO that has to move the relief goods) provides for the gasoline if military vehicles were to be used for transport. The dynamics between the local military command and the civilian actors in the 2008 Typhoon Frank response illustrated this connection: civilian representatives from the disaster coordinating council and a DSWD employee were present throughout the military’s relief sorties using US air assets. Decisions as to where relief deliveries could be made were done in close consultation with local politicians (Pasion 2008).

From the aforementioned discussion, it is clear that the scope and nature of military interface with civilians exhibit tell-tale variations depending on the task involved. That said, it appears that such civil-military engagements are concrete at the tactical and local level, notably for COIN non-combat and non-COIN tasks. How these interfaces are mediated by the military’s perception of civilian actors is explored below.
## Table 1: Frequency Distribution of 47th IB Respondents’ Perception of Civilian and other Actors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>SA Count</th>
<th>A Count</th>
<th>N Count</th>
<th>D Count</th>
<th>SD Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barangay officials sympathetic communists not to be trusted</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POC are useful venues in responding to insurgency</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>need to inform Mayor and brgy captain of troop movement into their jurisdiction</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGU, not army, must implement foreign-funded development projects in the frontline</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAFGUs better for counterinsurgency than disaster relief</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Com on Human Rights investigations on alleged soldier violations welcome</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>70.8%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local media portrays a balanced view of military’s position on issue of leftist disappearances</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>61.6%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government agencies not interested in delivering services to frontline due to security concerns</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barangay captains and mayors in operation area not doing enough to address insurgency</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilians who file human rights complaints against the army prompted by leftists</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>43.1%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The police ignores/downplays rebel threat in barangays far from town</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 presents the distribution of responses by 47th IB personnel on various items measuring their perception of various civilian actors, frameworks and state security forces. Items 1, 3 9 and 17 pertain to local civilian authorities (elected); 2, 4 15 and 18 on local civilian security frameworks (LGU in general and the Peace and Order Council); 5 and 12 on CAFGU; 11 and 20 on the police; 10, 13 and 16 on civil society (POs and NGOs); 6 on the Commission on Human Rights; 7 on media; 8 on government agencies; 14 on politician/candidates; and 19 on ex-rebels.

Half of the 20 statements posed are worded negatively while the other half are expressed as positive statements. The positive items (agree/strongly agree responses indicate acceptance of civilian direction) are: 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 12, 17, 18, 19 and 20. The negative items (disagree or strongly disagree responses indicate acceptance of civilian control) are: 1, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15 and 16.

In most of the positively-worded statements, majority of the soldiers answered on the contrary (items 2,4, 6, 7, 17, 18, 19 and 20). Instead of agreeing/strongly agreeing with the said statement, majority disagreed/strongly disagreed instead. As to the cluster of negatively-worded statements, 4 items generated contrary responses in the majority (that is,
more disagree/strongly disagree rather than agree/strongly agree responses). Five negatively-worded statements generated split answers; three of which (items 10, 13 and 16) pertain to NGOs and POs.

The soldiers’ skepticism of elected local leaders, government agencies, local security frameworks and the media is evident. Majority agreed that left-leaning officials should not be trusted and that on the whole, their efforts at addressing the insurgency problem is insufficient. Majority also do not think the POC is a useful framework or that the LGU ought to be implementing development projects in the frontline. Other government actors are equally regarded with skepticism. Majority of the respondents (91.6%) disagreed about investigations of alleged soldiers’ violations by the Commission on Human Rights (item 6). A parallel majority (86.3%) also do not think the local media presents a balanced view in their accounts of the insurgency issue.

However, on the question of service delivery in general (not confined to the frontline), the respondents are split— a substantial number (27%) are undecided. The viability of service delivery by government agencies in the frontline given the security concerns is also questioned. Roughly equal number of respondents agree/strongly disagree versus disagree/strongly disagree with the statement about government agencies’ ability to do so under such condition (item 8). From these, it is suggested that the soldiers tend to inflate their importance in directly providing development assistance and service in the frontline, but only because the civilian actors are hampered from doing given the security risks.

An overwhelming majority are nevertheless cognizant of the need to observe protocols particularly when a contingent of armed soldiers move into a local area (item 3) and in requesting for assistance during disasters (item 17). Majority disagree that local chief executives defy the chain of command by directly approaching a local commander for assistance during disasters. While many are not too pleased with the local government’s performance in counterinsurgency, majority nevertheless do not expect for the LGU to shell out money and supplies directly to them to do the job (item 18). The same cannot be said of politicians and candidates; majority (61.1%) of the respondents agreed/strongly agreed that the army could deny requests for security. For the most part, the military thinks such task is not part of their mandate in the frontline.

The soldiers response to items pertaining to NGOs,POs and ex-rebels are worth noting. Almost equal number agree/strongly agree or undecided on the link between human rights complaints directed at them and leftist instigation (item 10). In the same manner, majority (54%) are also undecided over the communist credentials of NGOs and POs operating in the frontline (item 16). By contrast, majority of the soldiers (54.3%) are doubtful of amnestied rebels’ presence in the frontline (19). These responses suggest that the frontline soldiers have a healthier view of civil society actors in general than they do ex-rebels and elected government officials.

As to other state security forces, there appears to be a difference in the way the soldiers regard the police versus CAFGU. An overwhelming majority (97.2%) disagreed/strongly disagreed that intel sharing with the police yields better success in combat operations (item 20). In terms of the police’s response to rebel threat, the troops were ambivalent (item 11). However, majority (84.8%) agreed/strongly agreed that CAFGU units are better handled by them. Majority (65%) of the soldiers recognize CAFGU’s indispensability in counterinsurgency operations (item 5) compared to disaster relief (although under the law, they could also be deployed for emergency tasks).

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) results for the 47th IB unit and various functional subgroups indicate that there’s very little difference in the means (ranging from 0.3 to 0.7) of the entire group and the various subgroups. A slightly higher mean (61.0137) is recorded for
the entire group while the means for the subgroups (COIN combat, COIN non-combat and non-COIN) range from 60.4 to 60.8. These results suggest that there is little difference in the perception towards civilian actors across functional grouping. Members of the unit tend to share similar views towards civilian actors, regardless of the task they perform most.

Table 2 presents the responses of 32nd CRU personnel on statements pertaining to civilian actors and state security forces. It must be noted that none of the respondents answered “neither agree nor disagree” in any of the items and that the responses are generally uneven, with some items left unanswered.

Majority of the soldiers answered on the contrary (items 2, 4, 6, 7, 17, 18, 19 and 20) to 7 out of 10 positively-worded items. Instead of agreeing/strongly agreeing with the said statement, majority disagreed/strongly disagreed. By contrast, majority responded in the expected direction (towards disagree/strongly disagree) in 5 out of 10 negatively worded-items (1, 5, 13, 15 and 16). These items pertain to NGOs/POs, elected local leaders and local civilian frameworks for security.

Majority of the 32nd CRU soldiers are skeptical of left-leaning local leaders (item 1) and generally discount their efforts at solving the insurgency issue (item 9). While the respondents are split over the need to inform local authorities of troop movement (item 3), majority do not approve of leaders not following army protocol in requesting for disaster assistance from the military by directly appealing to local commanders (item 17). Almost all are equally critical of POC as a security framework (item 2) and LGUs capacity to implement development projects in the frontline (item 4). On government agencies’ intent to deliver services in frontline areas, the respondents are split (item 8). Yet, majority do not believe that the army is better at the job of service delivery than the LGUs (item 15) nor do they think the LGU should contribute provide direct payments in cash and in kind to the army for the purpose (item 18). Of the investigations by Commission on Human Rights, majority do not welcome them (item 6). Everyone also asserts that the military is right in disapproving requests for security by visiting political figures and candidates during the frontline (item 14).

The 32nd CRU respondents have differential perception of civil society players. All think that leftist organizations (what they consider as “communist fronts”) have a hand behind civilian human rights complaints against soldiers (item 10) but the NGOs and POs in the frontline (whom they consider doing actual development work for the local populace) are a different breed (items 13 and 16). They are less likely to impute a communist connection among the latter group. Majority (86%) likewise think the local media does not present a balance view between army and leftist positions on the insurgency issue (item 7). They are equally circumspect about ex-communist rebels whom they still consider threats (item 19).

Of the police, majority of the 32nd CRU personnel express disappointment. Many think the police discounts rebel threat in their area (item 11) and that cooperation with them in intel does not yield better results in combat operations (item 20). However, majority believe it’s a better setup for the CAFGU to be placed under the police (item 12). Majority do not agree that CAFGU is more suitable for counterinsurgency than other types of non-COIN activities (item 5).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>SA Count</th>
<th>A Count</th>
<th>D Count</th>
<th>SD Count</th>
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<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barangay officials sympathetic communists not to be trusted</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>POC are useful venues in responding to insurgency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>need to inform Mayor and barangay captain of troop movement into their jurisdiction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGU, not army, must implement foreign-funded development projects in the frontline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAFGUs better for counterinsurgency than disaster relief</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission on Human Rights investigations on alleged soldier violations welcome</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>76.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local media portrays a balanced view of military’s position on issue of leftist disappearances</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government agencies not interested in delivering services to frontline due to security concerns</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barangay captains and mayors in operation area not doing enough to address insurgency</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>92.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilians who file human rights complaints against the army prompted by leftists</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The police ignores/downplays rebel threat in barangays far from town</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAFGU units better under police than army</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs in the frontline are communist fronts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Army has right to deny requests for security by visiting politicians in frontline 9 69.2% 4 30.8%

Army better at service delivery than local government 2 13.3% 12 80.0% 1 6.7%

Farmer orgs, coops and women’s groups not organized by the military in frontline most likely linked to communists 1 6.7% 14 93.3%

Need for mayor to request local commander directly for deployment to help during disaster 4 26.7% 11 73.3%

Need for LGU to share burden of securing community from rebel threat by providing money or supplies to local army unit 10 66.7% 5 33.3%

Amnestied rebel returnees no threats in frontline 14 93.3% 1 6.7%

Intel sharing with police enhances success in combat operations 4 26.7% 11 73.3%

The analysis of variance results reveal that the mean for the entire unit is almost the same as for the COIN non-combat subgroup (66), while a slightly higher mean (66.8) is recorded for the non-COIN subgroup. Even given the very small population, it is suggested that the 32nd CRU respondents share similar perception towards civilian actors across functional distinctions.

Comparing the two units, we see patterns of consistency in the responses. Majority of the respondents consistently responded on the contrary to the same set of positively worded questions (items 2, 4, 6, 7, 17, 18, 19 and 20). These items pertain to local civil authorities, local civilian frameworks, the Commission on Human Rights, media, ex-rebels and the police. This pattern suggests that the units share the same ill-feeling towards these civilian actors and the tasks these civilian actors do that relate to counterinsurgency. By contrast, the direction of response toward negatively-worded questions diverge between the two units. While the 32nd CRU respondents appear to be more affirmative of local civilian actors and the job they do, the 47th IB respondents are ambivalent or have contrary feelings. Both units, however, are equally distrustful of elected civilian officials and critical of their counterinsurgency efforts and their capacity to implement development projects in the frontline. Both also do not think that the LGUs should provide direct monetary contributions to the military for counterinsurgency purposes. They also tend to discount peace and order councils (POCs) as frameworks for discussing and proposing solutions to a local counterinsurgency problem. They are equally dismissive of investigations done by the Commission of Human Rights and skeptical over the media’s ability to provide a balanced coverage of news on the insurgency issue. Both are also similarly distrustful of ex-rebels.
With regards to civil society actors, there is a difference between the two units. Majority of the 47th IB personnel exhibit ambivalence over NGOs and POs; they appear undecided whether the latter are friends or foe. By contrast, we see a more nuanced understanding of the differences between civil society actors among the 32nd CRU respondents. They appear to differentiate between civil society actors that are considered communist legal fronts and genuine, grassroots and service-oriented NGOs and POs. With respect to other state security forces, both units appear to discount the local police’s capability in terms of threat assessment and intelligence gathering; yet, intuitively understand that the paramilitary/CAFGU is better placed under the police’s administrative control than the army’s. The units have different views with regards to the CAFGU. While the 47th IB agrees that the CAFGU works primarily as a counterinsurgency force, for the 32nd unit, they also consider CAFGU to be useful in non-counterinsurgency related tasks such as disaster relief. This differential view of CAFGU is explained by the fact that the 47th IB works more closely with CAFGU in their COIN combat activities, while the 32nd CRU, owing to their placement and nature have had little or no occasion to work with CAFGU in a non-combat or non-COIN capacity.

Comparing ANOVA results, we note that the overall means recorded for the 32nd CRU is higher (66) than the 47th IB (61). The means for the COIN non-combat and non-COIN groups were also higher for the 32nd CRU. These results suggest that between the two units and across two functions (COIN non-combat and non-COIN), respondents from the 32nd CRU have a more favorable outlook towards civilian actors and frameworks than members of the 47th IB.

Analysis

This research project posed three questions at the onset: (1) what are the range of tasks the local military unit is involved in and the nature of their engagement with various actors (civilian and military) in undertaking these tasks?; (2) how do members of these local military unit regard civilian actors (direction and intensity)?; and (3) does this view of civilian actors vary depending on the type of task they conduct in the field? Specifically, the research project hypothesizes that this view of civilians will vary across task/functional distinctions (counterinsurgency combat, counterinsurgency non-combat and non-counterinsurgency) and across types of civilian actors/frameworks (elected civilian authorities, government agencies/bureaucrats and civil society groups). This variation is then used to infer possible modalities of interface between local military units and civilian actors.

COIN combat is a specialized task more readily assumed by the frontline unit in this study. However, both military units are equally engaged in COIN non-combat and non-COIN activities. However, clearly, non-COIN activities are “secondary” only to those tasks related to counterinsurgency operations. The non-COIN tasks included are in-line with the AFP’s mandate for secondary missions, of which disaster relief is most prominent. Of the COIN non-combat activities, the two units identify a parallel set of tasks; the only difference between them being the prominence of “propaganda” for the urban-based unit. There is also a clear understanding of the distinction between police/constabulary tasks (e.g. law enforcement; apprehension of criminals; monitoring protests/strikes) and those of the military (i.e. targeting armed insurgents and neutralizing their supporters).

These findings affirm what has been recorded elsewhere (Hall 2004; Hall 2006) that the military considers counterinsurgency and non-counterinsurgency as legitimate spheres of activities. The relative homogeneity of the answers also indicate a close proximation of doctrine and practice. This consistent pattern perhaps is not surprising given the military’s historical involvement in counterinsurgency operations and in disaster relief, as a particular type of non-COIN. A distinction between what the military does versus the local police is also maintained given the informal territorial/operational jurisdiction of the two forces– the police
usually stays in the town proper and within a defined radius whereas the local military is posted in remote areas (which are still part of the municipality).

In terms of engagements, the military personnel consistently ranked other state security forces (army, police, CAFGU) higher than civilian actors. Of civilian actors, most reported collaborations occur with elected civilian authorities and least with government bureaucrats and civil society groups. Between the types of functions, there is a slightly higher civilian ratings for collaboration in non-COIN activities (but of which, professionals are identified as key collaborator). In terms of material needs for activities, the results also confirm that the units are mostly “self-sufficing,” sourcing their own food, logistics and other needs by themselves or with the help of other military units. If and when civilian actors are identified as contributing something, often it’s non-material (expertise) or information dissemination.

What these findings reveal is that local military units do not have as robust engagements with civilian actors than with security forces. These connections are likewise selective-- happening more so for COIN non-combat and non-COIN activities-- and particularistic-- only with some civilian actors and not with others. On one hand, such is understandable given that, in the frontline, the success of any combat operations (and with minimal cost to the lives and physical well-being of the combatants) seriously depends on their ability to work well with other security forces. The nature of their job also puts them in closer ties with these other security apparatus, of which trust (that the other security forces are working on the “same side”) is a critical element. By contrast, the engagements between the military and civilian actors is mediated by the political credentials of the civilians (known or presumed). Prejudices about the civilian actors’ willingness to go out of their comfort zones and deliver services in the frontline abound, continue to color such interactions.

Why are there more reported collaborations with elected local civilians than other civilian actors? As local military units, the soldiers understand the operational necessity of “being nice” to local authorities. Barangay captains and mayors enjoy local support; it is axiomatic that any type of military activity to be successful involve at least them acquiescing (not causing any political noise) or with their full blessing. By contrast, POs, NGOs, media and local government bureaucrats have the least consequence to their operational activities. They are also not proximate-- hence their presence have little impact on the day-to-day activities of the unit.

Although both units reported greater dealings with elected civilian authorities, the soldiers remain distrustful of them and of so-called civilian frameworks (POC) supposedly addressing the insurgency issue. There is also a pronounced view that local government efforts, in terms of development projects, are sorely inadequate. Of the media (which the subjects reported to have the least dealings with), we find the same level of skepticism (view that media is biased and do not give the military a fair treatment in reporting about counterinsurgency). Of NGOs and POs, we find some key differences in the perspectives of the urban-based versus the frontline unit. While the 47th IB responses suggest “uncertainty”, the 32nd CRU respondents exhibit a more sophisticated understanding of the differences between them. This difference suggests that perhaps frontline units, whose encounters with POs and NGOs tend are few to begin with, to have fewer “experience” to balance the doctrinal supposition of leftists being in cahoots with the CPP-NPA. By contrast, their urban location and the nature of their job allows the 32nd CRU to be more familiar with POs and NGOs, many of which have offices in the urban center. Moreover, this finding contradicts what POs and NGOs often accuse the military with-- of “demonizing” them and lumping them together with armed insurgents as targets.

Both units interact with the police and CAFGU on a sustained basis. Of the two, the soldiers express skepticism over the police’s ability. There also appears to be some
ambivalence over what CAFGU’s tasks are, yet the opinion that CAFGU is better off under the police is shared across the military units. These ambivalence over police and CAFGU is suggestive of unresolved boundary issues and functional concerns between local state security forces.

In the end, we find greater group homogeneity in the soldiers’ views of civilian actors. There is little variations in the responses between specific sets of respondents (that is, those that chose COIN combat, non-COIN combat and non-COIN). Their views about civilian actors and the direction of these views (tending to be “negative” rather than “positive”) exhibit a great degree of similarity (as attested by the near equal mean scores). These findings suggest that soldiers think and act more alike.

The variety of tasks the military performs seem to offer little interface with civilian actors (less dense interactions compared to state security forces) and therefore fewer opportunities for meaningful engagement. Legitimate power by local elected officials is recognized only to the extent that it aids popular receptivity to military-initiated activities on the ground. The soldiers on the whole are critical of the shortcomings of the local authorities, the POCs and government agencies in addressing the root cause of the insurgency problem, constraining further possibilities of them becoming “equal” partners.

Conclusion

Philippine civil-military relations post-Marcos era have been described as problematic and challenging, in part due to the convoluted tasks and functions the armed forces have assumed throughout the years, which as pointed out by scholars ran counter to the ideal of an externally-oriented force. Decades of involvement in counterinsurgency operations have produced an armed forces that is more locally-immersed and exposed to the deficits of democratic governance at that level. It is a “do-it-all” military, accepting additional functional mandates concocted by the national government. The additional tasks bolster the military’s credentials but offer little marginal benefits in terms of their relationship with local civilian actors.

Local military outfits, regardless of their nature and location, exhibit a great deal of parallel thinking vis-a-vis civilian actors. They discount the importance of local authority and local frameworks; they are critical of government representatives; and they are unsure of the political leanings (pro or anti-insurgent) of civilian groups they encounter. In their realm of activities, engagements with local civilian actors are peripheral. There is a level of acceptance that one must work with local authorities (particularly COIN non-combat and non-COIN) but such is neither sufficient nor necessary to the success of activities, which they for the most part can independently carry out.

What do all of these bode for local democratic governance? The military is an institution that does very little with, has mostly negative views about and largely questioning of local civilian capacity for governance. Given these odds, any type of substantive engagement can only come about with “politically enterprising” local leaders and organizations able to shift the local armed forces away from this debilitating mode. It has been empirically established elsewhere (e.g. Bohol) that the local government could engage the military more constructively towards commonly-defined goals. That the military will continue to creep into functional areas where there are clear civilian gaps is a foregone conclusion. Whether such development will engender more substantive rather than passive or confrontational dealings with local players will depend a lot on the civilian side. The ball is in their court.
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