The so-called Marawi crisis—which began with the Islamic State-inspired Maute Group takeover in 23 May 2017 and officially ended with Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana’s pronouncement of termination of all combat operations on 24 October 2017—has brought into the limelight the extent and limits of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP)’s warfighting capability to mount Military Operations on Urban Terrain (MOUT). Since its formal organization as a professional armed force in 1935, the AFP has been extensively engaged in jungle warfare mostly against Communist and Moro insurgents (and recently, Al-Qaeda affiliated extremist groups), and is relatively new to Islamic State-style urban warfare. Given the novelty, gravity and sophistication of the emerging security threat, the author deems it proper and fitting to trace the historical events leading to the Marawi conflict, critically assess the Philippine MOUT as counterterrorist response, and identify concrete ways forward that shall help enhance the capabilities of the AFP to win future wars in urban centers. In particular, the objectives of this paper are the following:

1. Come up with a comprehensive picture of the Philippine security landscape, taking into consideration the constellation of enabling factors on domestic, regional and global fronts which culminated in the militant takeover of Marawi;
2. Identify the challenges and constraints to the effective conduct of MOUT in Marawi;
3. Propose a set of policy recommendations for the appreciation of the Philippine defense and security establishment in general and the Philippine military in particular to enhance its combat readiness against future Marawi-style, territorial occupation of urban centers by Islamic State-inspired militants.
Domestic

The Politics of Rido and the Tale of the Warring Clans

The spark that set ablaze to Marawi may be traced back to what Wilfredo Magno Torres III dubs as rido, the Maranao term for clan feud or the “state of recurring hostilities between families and kinship groups characterized by a series of retaliatory acts of violence carried out to avenge a perceived affront or injustice”. The Maute clan—a rich and powerful political family in the southern region of Mindanao under the influence of matriarch and businesswoman Farhana Maute—got embroiled in a bitter dispute with Butig Mayor Dimnatang Pansar after the clan lost a bidding over civil contracts in the municipality. Joseph Franco narrates that, in order for the Mautes to avenge their loss and coerce the Pansars to grant the contracts, the former tactically adopted terrorist imagery and rebranded themselves as Islamic State-Ranao.

The feud between the Mautes and the Pansars of Lanao region may then be viewed as the latest—and arguably, one of the deadliest—in the long, tumultuous history of rido in select conflict-ridden areas of Mindanao. There were several cases in the past where a local rido set a chain of events leading to full-scale armed conflicts: These include the feuds in Dapiawan (2004) and Linantangan (2005) in Maguindanao which involved the AFP, the paramilitary Civilian Volunteer Organizations (CVO), and the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Another classic case is the Shariff Aguak incident (2006) which dragged paramilitary forces under a political clan and elements of the MILF into open hostilities.

Relative Stagnation of the Bangsamoro Peace Process

Aside from rido, the other layer in the complex web of violence in the Marawi crisis is Moro separatism vis-a-vis Islamist extremism as well as the oscillation of Moro rebels between these two poles of the political ideological spectrum. The Maute clan has deep ties with the MILF by blood and marriage: Military sources reveal that the patriarch and engineer Cayamora Maute used to be a senior official of the Moro insurgent group while Rommel Banlaoi cites that Farhana Maute was related to the former military head of the
The Maute brothers and their cohorts diverged from the MILF leadership over political ideology and criticized the latter for agreeing to enter into a peace agreement with the Philippine government under the administration of then President Benigno Aquino III. They decided to split from the mainstream rebel group in 2014 and pledged bay-ah or allegiance to Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi, the self-proclaimed emir of the Islamic State. This later on brought the Maute Group into the same extremist camp as the other small, breakaway groups which were also critical of the Bangsamoro peace process, such as the Abu Sayaf Group (ASG) – Isnilon Hapilon faction, the Ansarul Khilafah Philippines (AKP), and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), among others. The non-passage of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) during the 16th Congress justified their position on the alleged futility of the peace agreement and vindicated their schism with the MILF. Darryl Esguerra reports that the Mautes utilized the non-passage as strong rallying cause to lure civilians, mostly minors as child warriors and sought to expand their support base among disgruntled Moros.

To further complicate security matters in Mindanao, Islamic State terror cells proliferate in neighboring countries in Southeast Asia.

Regional

Proliferation of Islamic State Cells in Southeast Asia

To further complicate security matters in Mindanao, Islamic State terror cells proliferate in neighboring countries in Southeast Asia.

Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI) Chief Gatot Nurmantyo admitted that there are already Islamic State sleeper cells in all Indonesian provinces, except Papua. Malaysian Inspector General of Police Khalid Abu Bakar discovered the presence of a new Islamic State extremist cell that intended to transform Sabah as transit point for sending more Islamic State members to the Philippines. Then another cell of Islamic State militants based in the state of Kelantan has been found to be smuggling weapons from southern Thailand into Malaysia to prepare for terror attacks in Malaysia and abroad. Lastly, Malaysian police counter-terrorism division head Ayob Khan Mydin Pitchay told that Myanmar is likely to be the target of Islamic State terror attack (and possibly, even the new incubator for Islamic State militancy) in light of the alleged persecution of Muslim Rohingya in Rakhine state. These sporadic Islamic State terror cells served as additional sources of manpower, firearms and funding to the Maute Group and allies in Marawi.
Growing Uncertainty Over the Philippine-US Alliance

Formal counterterrorism cooperation between the Philippines and the United States, through Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTFP) has remained deactivated since 2015. This paved way to a downscaling of US involvement to counterterrorism operations in the Philippines from advising and assisting Filipino troops down to the tactical level to merely providing advice and assistance at the operational and strategic levels of command. In addition, President Rodrigo Duterte’s ambivalence towards the United States in pursuit of closer trade, commercial and defense ties with China and Russia cast doubt over the strategic utility of the annual PH-US Balikatan Exercises in the overall counterterrorism thrust given the heightened risk of further reduction of American (and other foreign allied) troops assisting the Filipino forces. Furthermore, Oliver Ward reports that US Non-Proliferation, Anti-Terrorism, Demining and Related Programs (NADR) funding for Philippine counterinsurgency operations shrank from US$ 6.1 million in 2015 to US$ 3.6 million in 2017. These security developments in the Philippine-US alliance reduced the level of material, financial, technical, logistical, and intelligence support to Manila’s counterterrorism efforts. To a certain degree, this affected the combat readiness of the AFP in quelling the Maute Group and allies at a critical juncture when the Islamic State is eyeing Mindanao as its primary operational base in Southeast Asia.
GLOBAL

Collapse of the Islamic State Central and the Rise of Wilayats

The significant development in the Middle East which has transformed Mindanao, particularly Marawi from backwater into one of the new frontlines of the international jihadist movement is the collapse of Al Baghdadi’s Islamic Caliphate carved out of key centers and peripheral regions of Iraq and Syria. Since 2014, US- and Russia-backed coalitions launched air strikes and ground combat operations which eventually pushed back the Islamic State militants, culminating in the recapture of Mosul, Iraq in 29 June 2017 and their de facto capital Raqqa, Syria in 17 October 2017.

According to senior US military officials, as many as 60,000 Islamic State fighters have perished since 2014 while their leadership/administrative structure, propaganda machine, and sources of revenue were almost completely destroyed.

The loss of territory of the Islamic Caliphate in the Sunni-dominated heartland prompted the Islamic State Central to decentralize the threat through strengthening its wilayats (provinces) while declaring new ones. In November 2016, Al-Baghdadi himself identified the Philippines as one of the so-called “Pillars of the Caliphate” or prospective site of a wilayat, along with Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, Libya, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Yemen, Somalia, and West Africa. The self-proclaimed emir envisioned distant wilayats such as the one in the Philippines to serve as bastions of Islamic State power and future launching pads for attacking enemies.

Ms. Laisa Alamia, argues that by historical accident, the enabling conditions that were present in other states that gave rise to the Islamic State were also present in Mindanao. In particular, the narrative of state brutality against Philippine Muslim minority, particularly during the Martial Law years of former President Ferdinand Marcos; decades of armed confrontation between the Philippine government and Moro separatist groups leading to the death of 120,000 lives and massive displacement of civilians; high poverty level and low levels of human development; and lack of education, scarce job opportunities, and inadequate social services render Mindanao fertile for violent extremism. Lastly, the symbolic value of Marawi cannot be overstated. Historically, it has been the center of Islam in Mindanao, the traditional heartland of violent resistance to authority since the Spanish colonial era. One may speculate that it is for these reasons that Marawi has been the militants’ choice for setting up the capital of future Islamic State wilayat.

THE ISLAMIC STATE THREAT IN THE PHILIPPINES AND THE ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES’ COUNTERTERRORIST RESPONSE

THE MIGILANTS TAKE OVER MARAWI

Consequently, Al-Baghdadi’s designation of the Philippines in general and Marawi in particular as the envisioned center of Islamic State in Southeast Asia “internationalized” the local Maute-Pansar rido and positioned the Maute Group and allies as the vanguards of caliphate-building in Southeast Asia. The consolidation of the Islamic State-inspired militants officially began when Abu Sayyaf – Basilan faction leader Isnilon Hapilon and his men swore allegiance or bayah to the Islamic State and its Caliph, Al-Baghdadi on 04 August 2016.
2014. Soon after the Islamic State Central recognized Hapilon as emir, the Maute Group began using the title, “IS-Ranao” to signify a division of the new as-yet-undeclared province of Islamic State and distinguish it from BIFF which became “IS-Maguindanao” and ASG – Hapilon faction as “IS-Basilan”.

After splitting from its mother organization, the MILF, in 2014, the Maute Group steadily grew in strength. The group tapped social media as the new machine to quickly spread the radical ideology, recruit militants, and rejuvenate Southeast Asia’s terror networks, thereby widening its domestic recruitment and support base in Central Mindanao. In the same year, it also established Ragayan, Poctan, Butig as its command and training base. Then from February to March 2016, it expanded its base and established three strongholds throughout Lanao del Sur, displacing nearly 30,000 people. Its sources of funding include narcotics trade, money from Islamic Central, private remittances, and money laundering activities. Lastly, military intelligence sources reveal that the Maute Group invited battle-hardened local and foreign jihadists to train new recruits, including orphaned children for modern urban warfare, such as use of sniper weapons and, allegedly, even suicide bomb jackets.

By virtue of its newfound allegiance to the Islamic State, particularly Al-Baghdadi as the caliph and Hapilon as the emir, the Maute Group became part of the umbrella organization dubbed as Daulah Islamiya Wilayatul Mashriq (DIWM) or Islamic State Province in East Asia. On the left is the presumed organizational structure of DIWM based on government intelligence. Below are the

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Note: The text above is a simplification of the complex structure and activities of the Maute Group and its allies under the umbrella of the Islamic State. The description is based on the provided context and may not capture the full extent of operations and affiliations. The organizational structure and activities are subject to change and may be evolving over time.
terrorist activities carried out by the Maute Group in preparation for the militant takeover of Marawi:

During an exclusive interview with Major General Restituto Padilla, Jr., he disclosed that former AFP Chief of Staff General Eduardo Año ordered the Philippine military to conduct focused military operations in Zamboanga—Basilan—Sulu—Tawi-Tawi (ZamBaSulTa) area in December 2016 as part of the decapitation strategy against Hapilon. To prevent assassination or arrest, Hapilon and some of his most trusted men secretly moved to Lanao del Sur. On 23 May 2017, Lieutenant Colonel Jo-ar Herrera told that upon learning about Hapilon's whereabouts, they sought to conduct law enforcement operations in partnership with police forces in order to arrest the emir who at that time was allegedly conducting community organizing among residents in Marawi. However, the Maute Group [together with ASG – Hapilon faction, BIFF, AKP and foreign jihadists] greeted state security forces with heavy gunfire in Basak Malutlut, thereby preventing the arrest of the emir. Soon thereafter, the militants simultaneously took control over Barangays Saber, Sarimanok, Mapandi, Amai Pakpak, the area near the provincial jail, Malutlut, and Calookan in downtown Marawi, setting up several checkpoints, damaging government and private facilities, and causing mass panic among the civilians. To symbolize their takeover of the city and intent to secede from the Philippine republic, the militants hoisted the black flag of the Islamic State inside Amai Pakpak Hospital. The battle for Marawi has begun.

### THE REPUBLIC STRIKES BACK

When the fateful siege of Marawi erupted, President Duterte immediately issued Proclamation No. 216 which has effectively placed Mindanao under Martial Law. The rationale of the proclamation is to suppress rebellion. Arguably, the primary response of the Philippine government to quell the threat from the Maute Group was to launch Military Operations on Urban Terrain (MOUT). The US Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 3-55.3 provides succinct definition of MOUT:

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**LIST OF TERRORIST ACTIVITIES OF MAUTE GROUP BEFORE THE MARAWI SIEGE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 2016</td>
<td>Facebook photos showed the group beheading 2 of 6 sawmill workers kidnapped in Butig. The two workers, wearing orange jumpsuits similar to the style of ISIS public executions, were killed allegedly because they were military informants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2016</td>
<td>50 men freed 8 Maute members and 20 others from a Lanao del Sur jail. An ISIS propaganda arm later claimed the foreign terror group was behind the prison raid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2016</td>
<td>3 members of the Maute group were arrested for allegedly carrying out the September bombing in a Davao City night market, the President's own hometown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2016</td>
<td>Members of the Maute group occupied the Butig Municipal Hall and raised ISIS' black flag. Government troops were able to retake control of the abandoned government building after weeks of military operations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain (MOUT) is defined as all military actions planned and conducted on a topographical complex and its adjacent terrain where manmade construction is the dominant feature. It includes combat in cities, which is that portion of MOUT involving house-to-house and street-by-street fighting in towns and cities. MOUT effects the tactical options available to a commander. A built-up area is a concentration of structures, facilities, and populations, such as villages, cities, and towns, that form the economic and cultural focus for the surrounding area.47

Notably, the AFP took a critical role in combating the Maute Group and allies in Marawi. It operationalized Development Support and Security Plan (DSSP) Kapayapaan as its counterterrorist campaign plan.48 From the sudden eruption of armed conflict on 23 May 2017 until the official cessation of combat operations on 23 October 2017, the AFP carried out sustained military operations—which Major General Padilla coins as “Locate-Degrade-Destroy”—in order to defeat the terrorist groups, deter other armed peace spoilers, and support law enforcement operations.49

The US-trained Light Reaction Regiment (LRR) is the specific unit of the Philippine military that is trained for urban warfare.50 “In principle, this positioned them to take the lead role in painstakingly flushing out the Maute Group and allies which were strategically located in key posts within the city, such as in Banggolo, Marawi’s financial district and site of the tallest and fortified buildings.51 Members of the elite unit are trained to become either as assaulters or snipers, and their skills are designed for urban combat, hostage rescue, and neutralization of high-value targets.52 They were originally trained by the Americans after the 11 September 2001 World Trade Center bombing.53 Army Chief Lieutenant General Noel Coballes told that after the Zamboanga Siege in September 2013, the AFP doubled its size from a battalion (3 companies or about 300 troops) to a regiment composed of 6 companies.54

In Marawi, however, the LRR experienced tactical and operational challenges owing to the vastness and complexity of the urban battlefield.55 This prompted the AFP to expand the scope of simultaneous combat, intelligence and interception operations. Reinforcements from Scout Rangers and the Marines were sent to provide support in clearing one house and building after another.56 However, since the bulk of these units have been mostly engaged in jungle warfare and recently pulled out of the forests of Bohol and Sulu, they encountered operational difficulties in Marawi, and hence, sustained heavy casualties.57 To further add muscle to military ground forces, 500 Philippine National Police-Special Action Force (PNP-SAF) troopers were deployed in the battle zone.58 Mechanized Infantry Division (MID) vehicles were sent to Marawi as well: four (4) mechanized battalions, one cavalry squadron and one light armored troop. According to Captain Emman Adriano, these units consist of more than 120 armored vehicles of various types, such as M-113A2 armored personnel carriers.59

Philippine Marines cross the Mapandi Bridge in Marawi City on 30 August 2017
Given the scarcity in AFP’s intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) assets, the Philippine military sought US and Australian technical assistance, such as the deployments of P3 Orion60 and AP-3C Orion,61 respectively. Moreover, the AFP called in the Philippine Air Force’s FA-50 fighter jets62 and OV-10 Bronco63 to conduct surgical air strikes. Finally, in order to contain Marawi and stave off the influx of reinforcements from other terror cells, the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia launched Triilateral Maritime Patrol on 19 June 201764 and Triilateral Air patrol on 12 October 2017.65 Maritime Command Centers (MCCs) were established in each participating country—Tarakan in Indonesia, Tawau in Malaysia and Bongao in the Philippines—to implement increased intelligence sharing and joint patrols in Sulu and Celebes Seas.66

After five grueling months, the Philippine state security forces—with the support of regional and extra-regional security partners—emerged victorious over the Maute Group and allies, thereby succeeded in thwarting the ambition of the Islamic State to establish the capital of its Wilayat in Marawi. On 24 October 2017, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana officially ended urban warfare in Marawi and announced the termination of all combat operations in the area.67 On the right are the quick figures on the casualties of war during the time of declaration:
President Duterte’s declaration of Martial Law is reflective of the Philippine government’s radical shift in its approach towards violent extremism and eventual acknowledgment of the existence and gravity of the Islamic State threat in Mindanao. Proclamation No. 216 provided the legal justification for the Philippine military to expand its room for maneuverability in warfighting, as shown in the widening of scope of operations (combat, intelligence, interception) to suppress the threat of rebellion by the Maute Group and allies. However, the relative novelty of Islamic State-style urban warfare vis-à-vis the AFP’s limited institutional memory on MOUT proved to be the single most formidable challenge that caused the war to drag on for five months and the state of emergency to remain in effect. Arguably, the 2013 Zamboanga Siege is the major incident in recent memory which can be categorically classified as “urban warfare”. However, the post-Zamboanga Siege reforms (i.e. expansion of LRB into LRR) would be proven relatively insufficient to address the myriad of threats posed by wider terrain of sprawling concrete structures with prepositioned, ideologically-motivated, and battle-hardened local and foreign militants.

Arguably, the delay in the passage of the National Security Act restrained to an extent the Commander-in-Chief through the National Security Council (NSC) to seamlessly integrate the doctrines, strategies, tactics, logistics, and operations of the assigned units for urban warfare prior to the Marawi siege. Furthermore, a military observer remarked that the AFP joint/combined arms manuals for intra- and inter-agency operations to address new urban warfare tactics may have contributed to incidents of poorly coordinated assaults and friendly fire, such as the 01 June 2017 incident wherein an air strike killed 11 soldiers and wounded seven others.

Furthermore, Article XVIII Section 25 of the 1987 Constitution severely constrained the Philippine government to request for direct military assistance or “boots on the ground” regional and extra-regional security partners, especially on combat operations at a critical juncture wherein the Maute Group and allies have diversified its pool of recruits, incorporated battle-hardened foreign jihadists within its ranks, and adopted more sophisticated technologies of violence for urban warfare perfected in the urban battlefields of Mosul and Raqqa. While the contributions of the US and Australian armed forces (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) and Indonesian and Malaysian armed forces (joint maritime and aerial patrols) were crucial in helping turn the tide of war towards government side, the author believes that these security allies and partners could have contributed more in preventing the prolongation of war if not for the constitutional restriction.

Lastly, the high cost of war prompts a critical revaluation not only of the existing policies, doctrines, strategies, tactics, logistics, and operations for MOUT but also the Philippine defense industrial and technological base to cater to the country’s specific national security requirements. The Marawi siege demonstrated the growing need for quality indigenous technology and reliable domestic production capability to support the requirements for waging modern urban warfare. Some of the “hard assets” that could have been used more extensively to alter the calculus for counterterrorism operations against the Maute Group and allies include high-precision unmanned aerial vehicles (i.e. drones) for reconnaissance and surgical strikes, long-range sniper rifles, automatic grenade launchers, and anti-infantry/anti-garrison tanks for clearing operations, among others. Meanwhile, “soft assets” such as enhanced Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (C4ISR) could have interlinked the soldiery amongst themselves and with their “hard assets” and provided a solid backbone for joint defense operations.

TOWARDS COMPREHENSIVE SECURITY: CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

The looming specter of the Islamic State in Southeast Asia, symbolized by the quest for transformation of Marawi City, Lanao
del Sur into the new capital of the envisioned Islamic State wilayat in the region reflects three new trends on violent extremism in the Philippines: First, it reveals the aspiration and capability of Maute Group together with elements of the ASG, AKP, BIFF, and other affiliates under DIWM to transform itself from a decentralized terrorist movement into a caliphate-building entity. Second, it signifies a new wave of “internationalization” of violent extremism in the Philippines through the transformation of a local rido into rebellion and establishment of direct linkage between the Islamic State central command and DIWM. This has rendered possible the influx of battle-hardened foreign jihadists, funds transfer, and importation of new technologies of violence perfected in the battlefields of Iraq and Syria. Third, it illustrates a radical departure from the traditional, jungle warfare and signals the dawn of modern urban warfare in the Philippines.

These emerging trends require the Philippine military to undergo critical introspection of its theoretical-conceptual foundation and practical application of MOUT. While it is laudable for the Philippine defense and security establishment to have defeated the Maute Group and allies in Marawi, it is equally important for it to internalize the lessons from the Marawi experience and take a more proactive approach in crippling the terror network, infrastructure and lifeline of other militant groups before they conduct another Marawi-style territorial occupation or launch other terrorist activities. With the Philippine military’s latest anti-terror campaign plan, the DSSP Kapayapaan, already in effect, the AFP ought to effectively carry out full-spectrum counterterrorism response, which includes enhancement of intelligence-gathering operations, disruption of flow of funds and ammunitions, interception of suspected terrorists, countering of Islamic State online propaganda, and sustainment of surgical strikes in order to deny the terrorists safe haven in Mindanao with the least possible civilian casualties and property damages.

In order to facilitate the implementation of such actions, the Duterte administration should prioritize the passage of the proposed National Security Act. This shall empower the Philippine President through the National Security Council (NSC) and aided by the Anti-Terrorism Council (ATC) to gain more effective command and control over the AFP as well as other law enforcement agencies, i.e. Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) in the fight against terrorism, and bestow upon him greater flexibility and autonomy to forge defense and security agreements with government and non-government stakeholders both locally and internationally.

In addition, given that the AFP has been extensively engaged in jungle warfare and is relatively new to Islamic State-style modern urban warfare, it is imperative for the Philippine military to take into consideration the militants’ new urban warfare tactics as it reorients its MOUT doctrine towards greater interoperability. Furthermore, it must strengthen its defense ties with countries that have relatively well-established doctrines, operational concepts, strategies/tactics and facilities for that purpose. Hence, it may opt to reactivate the JSOTFP and re-expand PH-US Balikatan Exercises for the US and Australian governments to be able to provide more extensive material, technical, logistical and intelligence support to Filipino troops on tactical, operational and strategic levels of command. To facilitate institutional learning in modern urban warfare against the Islamic State-inspired militants, the AFP may also opt to consider entering into formal cooperation with other countries with relatively rich corpus of knowledge and experience in counterterrorism, such as Israel and Singapore.

Furthermore, the proliferation of multinational Islamic State terror cells within the Philippines’ borders and across its neighboring countries in Southeast Asia necessitates the Philippine government to carefully reexamine Article XVIII Section 25 of the 1987 Constitution—which imposes constitutional restrictions to the entry of foreign troops. In line with this, the Philippine government should openly discuss with its ASEAN counterparts the possibility of putting more flesh to the bones of ASEAN commitment to comprehensive security by reviewing the 2001 ASEAN Declaration on Joint Action to Counter Terrorism framework as well as liberalizing the interpretation of “non-interference”—the fifth principle in the ASEAN Charter which could well become a legal, political and normative obstacle to regionalizing the Islamic State terror threat and adopting a more coordinated, effective and expedient counterterrorist response at the regional level. These radical steps will then enable special units of the AFP as well as
the PNP and PCG to upgrade their mode of conducting anti-terror operations with fellow ASEAN militaries and law enforcement agencies from mere intelligence sharing and joint maritime patrols to joint combat operations through the creation and deployment of a fully capable joint multinational force upon formal request of the Philippine government or any other ASEAN member-state in distress.

Finally, the Philippine defense and security establishment ought to beef up its Research and Development (R&D) component. On the departmental level, the Department of National Defense may opt to create a new R&D Center specializing in Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) that shall help further streamline the procurement process under Republic Act No. 10349 or the “Revised AFP Modernization Act”. The proposed center shall provide expert opinion to the Secretary of National Defense on the specific range of capabilities that ought to be procured and/or developed in relation to the existing and future capabilities of Islamic State-inspired militants. The policy recommendations of the center may then serve as bases for possible modifications to capability development programs of the AFP’s major service branches for internal security operations.

On the bureau level, the AFP should revitalize the Government Arsenal as its R&D Center and expand its role to include: a.) facilitation of technology transfer in partnership with the governments and private companies of security allies and partners; and b.) development of modest local production capability for light, medium and heavy materiel through the revival of the Self-Reliant Defense Posture program and proliferation of defense industrial zones in close coordination with the Philippine Economic Zone Authority and local and international investors.
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19. Ibid.


Intramurral socio-economic disenfranchisement contributes to radicalization of Muslim Filipinos. The Asia Foundation reports that out of the 20 poorest provinces in the Philippines, 11 are in Mindanao. Moreover, official statistics from the World Bank show that 48.2 percent of family in ARMM lived below the poverty line in 2015, compared with the national average of 16.5 percent. Also, data from the Philippines Statistics Authority show that the ARMM had the highest out-of-school population at 14.4 percent in comparison with the national average of 10.6 percent. (Ibid.)


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