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SUSTAINING THE LIFESPAN OF INSURGENT GROUPS; THREE CRITICAL INDICATORS TO CONSIDER

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**SUSTAINING THE LIFESPAN OF INSURGENT GROUPS: THREE CRITICAL
INDICATORS TO CONSIDER**

by

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February 2014

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ABSTRACT

Armed insurgent groups (AIGs) generally see the state as their adversary, and rely on violence to get their demands. Insurgencies are not a new phenomenon, and though they may come and go, they should not be seen as a temporary threat. In fact, they are lasting longer, and governments are hard put to control these groups. These conflicts can also spill over to neighboring countries. The fear of losing control of national borders is a palpable one for governments. Therefore, it is important to understand why these armed groups take root, and fester, in their host countries. This paper examines the impact of three critical conditions, ungoverned spaces, weak domestic conditions, and local support systems, on the longevity of three armed groups: al-Qaeda of Islamic Maghreb based in Mali, Boko Haram of Nigeria and Abu Sayyaf of the Philippines. For comparative purposes, this paper also studies the impact of these indicators on two older AIGs, Sendero Luminoso of Peru and the Liberation Tigers of Sri Lanka. Except for a few caveats, such as Boko Haram operating from a “closed” city space instead of a harsh and open terrain, and the use of coercive force by some AIGs to “enlist” local support, I conclude that there is a general positive correlation between the selected conditions and the lifespan of these armed groups. Since a forceful response has rarely helped to entirely resolve these insurgencies, I recommend that the international community securitize “insurgencies” so a repertoire of international and regional responses is readily available. In the final analysis, however, the solution to these conflicts rests with governments, which must solve the root causes of conflicts, that is, poor socio-economic conditions. An optimistic start has already been launched with the creation of the Millennium Development Goals.

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Chapter 1

Rationale

War and security issues in international relations (IR) have been traditionally analyzed at the state level. As a sovereign power, a state has legitimate use of force and coercion to implement its policies. Understanding a state's behavior vis-à-vis other states is the foundation of IR studies. Today, however, the increasing influence of non-state actors (NSAs) within states is reshaping the framework of analysis that is generally used to study IR, that is, a framework dominated by realism or liberalism. NSAs are not integral units of a state's structure, and, therefore, their activities are generally independent of the state's control. Their world is large, complex and diverse; they range from private, multinational and public institutions to militants and terrorists. In recent years, the growing visibility of non-state actors using violence as a strategy to realize political goals is presenting a new type of security dilemma within the international community – a dilemma that poses threats from below. Such conflicts are a recurring phenomenon,¹ and they are, arguably, "...responsible for the largest number of deaths in contemporary conflict."² Their challenge to the state's legitimacy by competing over power and position within the state is marking a new trend in international relations, and requires a reexamination of security policies and goals.

¹ There were 25 total armed [civil] conflicts between 2002-2005 – 14 in 2005 alone; with 535,890 civilian deaths between 1989-2005. "Human Security Brief," *Human Security Report Project*, (2006), accessed December 2, 2012, <http://hsrgroup.org/human-security-reports/2006/overview.aspx>.

² Isabelle Duyvesteyn, "Non-state actors and the resort to violence: Terrorism and insurgency strategies compared," *Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research* (2007): 2, accessed January 10, 2013, http://www.humansecuritygateway.com/documents/TAGS_nonstateactorsresorttoviolence.pdf.

IR literature since the early 1990s has dealt with the impact of armed non-state actors on domestic and international politics, but research explaining the persistence of such groups is still rare. My intention, therefore, is to show that armed groups can persist because of environmental conditions that enable them to survive attempts to eradicate them. Using three armed groups as examples, this thesis will study how these groups profit by settling in convenient locations, by taking advantage of failing governments and by gaining local support. This research is intended to contribute to ongoing IR research on armed groups.

IR research has disproportionately focused on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) in the post-Cold-War period given the ubiquitous movement toward globalization. The numerical increase in non-state actors has led to research on what Sikkink and Keck identify as “transnational advocacy networks.”³ These networks construct “spaces” within which non-state actors negotiate on a presumed system of shared values. While these organizations advocated for basic needs and human rights, among other things, there are also militant, criminal and terrorist networks that also want to create their own spaces within states. By operating below the state level, these armed groups are also leaving an indelible impact on both state and international relations. Localized conflicts have now replaced traditional large-scale wars. In addition, the scale of violence seen in the September 11, 2001, attack in New York furthered interest in the power of groups. The event left a lasting impression, which has guided future security policies. Although terrorist acts were not a new phenomenon in countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and

³ Kathryn Sikkink & Margaret E. Keck, “Transnational advocacy networks in international and regional politics,” *International Social Science Journal* 159 (1999): 89.

Development (OECD),⁴ this blatant attack in the most powerful country in the world set off a new trajectory in policy-making. Refocusing on terrorism as a major security issue became “globalization’s first war.”⁵

It is important to identify the diversity that exists even within armed non-state insurgent groups (hereafter referred to as AIGs). These may vary in organization, reach, explicit goals, and many other factors. Schultz identifies four types of armed groups, which overlap in structure, strategies and goals:⁶ a) militias are similar to an organized military force that challenges the regular army; b) insurgents engage in armed resistance to a sitting government; c) terrorists primarily use acts of terror against specific targets; and, d) criminal organizations are those that participate in organized extra-legal activities. In a sense, these groups can all be seen as insurgents since they engage in active resistance against forms of state structures. In support of this view, Hofmann and Schneckener define insurgent groups as those that “are willing and able to use violence to pursue their objectives; and are not integrated into formal institutions.”⁷ They seek to enhance their power and legitimacy at the expense of the state’s own power and legitimacy. Tactically, these groups are involved in asymmetric conflicts, and will resort to any means to change the balance in their favor – whether through terrorist acts, guerilla

⁴ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development consists of 34 advanced and emerging economies that are dedicated to global development.

⁵ Kurt M. Campbell, “Globalization's First War?” *The Washington Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (2002): 7.

⁶ Richard H. Shultz, “Global Insurgency Strategy and the Salafi Jihad Movement,” *USAF Institute for National Security Studies* (2008): 3-4, accessed December 13, 2012, <http://www.usafa.edu/df/inss/docs/OCP%2066%20Global%20Insurgency%20and%20Salafi%20Jihad%20Movement.pdf>.

⁷ Claudia Hofmann and Ulrich Schneckener, “NGOs and Nonstate Armed Actors,” *United States Institute of Peace* (2011): 1, accessed December 13, 2012, <http://www.usip.org/files/resources/sr284.pdf>.

operations or violent crimes. Andreopoulos supports this by claiming that such groups will use armed violence against governments and institutions in an atmosphere of weakening or collapsing state institutions.⁸ Their goals are varied and include secession, replacement of the status quo, autonomy or freedom to engage in criminal activities.⁹ As another academic sees it, insurgent-sponsored conflicts or insurgencies are really a “struggle to control a contested political space, between a state ... and one or more popularly based, non-state challengers.”¹⁰

Other analysts have argued that there is a predictable set of factors that can facilitate the rise of armed insurgent groups. The literature on rebellions is large, but according to Thomas and Casebeer, if certain socio-economic and political factors, such as corruption, identity crises, population pressures or resource scarcity, are met with government non-action, then these grievances become the basis of a collective form of resistance by militant religious movements, warlords, ethno-political groups or criminal organizations.¹¹ Additionally, they claim that the “loss in regime legitimacy undermines attempts to constitute a ‘citizenry,’ allowing existing identity cleavages ... [which provide the] embryonic growth factors for gestating VNSA [violent non-state actors].”¹²

⁸ George J. Andreopoulos, “On the Accountability of Non-State Armed Groups,” in *Non-State Actors in the Human Rights Universe*, ed. George J. Andreopoulos et al. (Virginia: Kumarian Press, 2006), 157.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ David Kilcullen, “Counter-insurgency Redux,” *Survival* 48, no. 4 (2006): 112.

¹¹ Troy S. Thomas and William D. Casebeer, “Violent Systems: Defeating Terrorists, Insurgents, and Other Non-State Adversaries,” *USAF Institute for National Security Studies* (2004): 8, accessed December 14, 2012, <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usafa/ocp52.pdf>.

¹² Ibid., p. 11.

The resilience of armed non-state actors has frustrated the international community's attempts to address this security issue. They have tried, according to Hofmann, policies of counterinsurgency, containment, negotiation and mediation, and state-sponsored integration, which, in the absence of state commitment, have all failed.¹³ Armed insurgent groups will continue to violate international law and norms, as there is no consensus within the international community on specific enforcement policies. States think any form of negotiation with armed groups would grant them legitimate recognition. With no real solution at hand within the international community, armed insurgent groups (AIGs) will continue to act with impunity from within the "spaces" they have created. To change this, it is thus important to clarify both the reasons for the rise of these groups as well as their persistence. This thesis focuses on the second aspect. In the next chapter, the research design will outline the structure of the thesis, and will also include current IR findings on the themes developed in this thesis.

¹³ Claudia Hofmann & Ulrich Schneckener, "NGOs and Nonstate Armed Actors: Improving compliance with international norms," *United States Institute of Peace Report 284*, (2011): 2.

Chapter 2

Research Design

Armed insurgent groups (AIGs) are not limited to just being participants in conflicts; their influence extends beyond conflict areas, and into all spheres of daily life that civilians inhabit. While the states impose their power from above, these AIGs are exerting power from within state structures, which makes it harder to uproot them. Predictably, this can become a lasting security issue. Many political theorists have attributed the rise of AIGs to a host of factors – including, but not exclusive to, poverty, ethnic differences, and, most notably, failed and/or failing states. While these factors may have some impact on the rise of these groups, they do not provide sufficient explanations for why AIGs persist even after conflicts have seemingly ended. Drawing from the literature, I will argue that three conditions must be met in order for armed group conflicts to be transformed into protracted struggles.

1) Ungoverned Space: Although the term is used interchangeably with “safe havens,” the definition used here of a safe haven is not the one that means “protected” areas during armed conflicts. I will use the definition that has been presented in a U.S. Defense Policy Report, which states that a safe haven is a place that “enables illicit actors to operate while evading detection or capture, including ungoverned ... areas where [they] can organize, plan ... operate in relative security.”¹ On the other side of the coin, ungoverned areas are locations where “the central government is unable or unwilling to extend control, effectively govern, or influence the local population ... due to inadequate

¹ Robert D. Lamb, “Ungoverned Areas and Threats from Safe Havens,” *Ungoverned Areas Project Report for Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Planning* (2008): 6, accessed on December 17, 2012, http://www.cissm.umd.edu/papers/files/ugash_report_final.pdf.

governance capacity ...” According to the Report, all ungoverned areas can potentially become safe havens of this kind.² Studying ungoverned spaces has become very useful because they are predictors of failing or failed states.

A sovereign state by its very definition is a territorial space bounded by clearly demarcated borders or boundaries. The Peace of Westphalia in 1648 was the first formal attempt to separate nation-states using physical “space.” The creation of “borders” to divide and categorize our realities into meaningful spaces is a natural thing for humans. Because such spaces are socially constructed, their boundaries are not immutable. Our daily life is spent passing through such “spaces” – home and workplaces, for example – that are all created to be functional. We also structure spaces according to our belief systems, affecting our political or socio-cultural identities.

All actors or players with political aspirations think of a territorial space as necessary to starting a movement. Armed insurgent groups today are learning how to operate from within both strong and/or weak states. It would be too simplistic to think that ungoverned space is limited to lawless, isolated areas in weak, failing states (a good example is the tribal adjoining areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan). Indeed, they can exist also, for example, in border areas and even within capital cities in strong states, where there are always vacuums of power to be exploited.³ As movements expand, however, it becomes necessary to locate a convenient, physical space to exploit. In relatively weak states, there are enough pockets of “vacant spaces” that armed insurgent groups can occupy as power bases. These areas are usually far removed from the

² Robert Lamb, “Ungoverned Areas.”

³ “Fragile States and Ungoverned Spaces,” *Global Strategic Assessment Report* (2009): 101, accessed December 5, 2012, http://www.ndu.edu/inss/docuploaded/09-GSA2009_Chpt%205.pdf.

core/centralized seat of power, with low population densities, and limited or no government authority.

2) Weak Domestic Institutions: The second factor that transforms armed group conflicts into protracted struggles is the weakness of domestic institutions. Many political scientists and international organizations have come to equate strong states with good governance.⁴ This presumes that such states have the capacity and the necessary infrastructure to deliver “public goods” – for example, guarantee human security and rule of law, end poverty, and facilitate political participation.⁵ However, in the absence of effective institutions, many countries could easily fail in their sovereign responsibilities. On the 2013 Failed States Index, twenty countries were considered “critical” and nineteen were “in danger.”⁶ This report uses twelve indicators as measures, among which are economic decline, number of refugees, group grievances, uneven development, provision of public services and human rights.⁷ A major symptom of a failing government is the level of corruption and lack of transparency that is perceived by its citizens. States that adopt extractive practices – onerous and arbitrary tax policies and bribery of officials are examples – set a course for future economic disasters and social discontent. Clearly, weak states face many constraints. In varying combinations, these indicators provide perfect settings for conflicts.

⁴ They have recognized “governance” as a global issue that should ensure “transparency, security, participation and fundamental freedoms.” “Governance,” *United Nations Report*, accessed January 3, 2013, <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/governance/index.shtml>.

⁵ Robert I. Rotberg, “Failed States in a World of Terror,” *Council on Foreign Relations* (2002): 2-3.

⁶ “The Failed States Index,” *Foreign Policy Report* (2013), accessed February 6, 2013, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/06/17/2011_failed_states_index_interactive_map_and_rankings.

⁷ *Ibid.*

The link between failing states and small armed conflicts has been established by both scholars, such as Robert Rotberg, and research institutes like the Fund for Peace. The security threats of armed conflicts to both domestic and international stability cannot be minimized. Such conflicts, in the past two decades, “in and among failed states have killed about eight million people, most of them civilians, and displaced another four million.”⁸ According to Rotberg, it is not “the absolute intensity of violence that identifies a failed state ...[but] the enduring character of that violence ...” against the government.⁹ Faced with such persistent conflicts, states remain embattled for long periods of time, which can frustrate any attempts to reestablish control. A weakening central authority could even relinquish control in outlying areas or border areas. Moreover, when centralized rule is weak, political leaders may rely on existing systems of patronage, using traditional ties of kinship and local religious leaders to assert “authority” in these areas. Good governance must be inclusive of all areas and local communities in order for governments to function well.

3) Local Support Networks: The third factor is the pull/push factor that keeps insurgent groups within a specific location. In their formative stages, armed groups generally set out to establish links with the local communities in order to build local bases of support. This is a prerequisite to becoming an effective insurgent group, according to a 2009 Report published by the Federation of American Scientists.¹⁰ Successful insurgencies usually have a loyal following of sympathizers, and strong

⁸ Rotberg, “Failed States in a World of Terror,” p. 1.

⁹ Robert I. Rotberg ed, *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), 5.

¹⁰ “Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency,” *Federation of American Scientists Report* (2009): 10, accessed February 5, 2013, <http://www.fas.org/irp/cia/product/insurgency.pdf>.

supporters. According to this Report, both state and insurgencies will vie for the allegiance of this sector of the population, who may support insurgent groups because the governments have failed to provide them the necessary public goods. Simon and Tucker call these disenfranchised groups “lumpen” classes, who live in marginal areas and are “ignored and denied.”¹¹ They discuss the paradox of insurgents “hiding” so as to not be detected by authorities, but yet “hiding” with the knowledge of the locals. Occupying such “hidden” spaces often assumes that there are existing ties based on socio-cultural affinities around religion, mores and traditions. In some cultures (notably Middle Eastern and animist), tribal/group honor trumps the Eurocentric focus on individuality. It is therefore valid to explore culture, as well as socio-economic factors, when looking at the puzzling fear/attraction dichotomy that defines the relationship between those in control and those being controlled. Having local support is crucial to the survival rate of insurgent movements, and local silence is complicit. It offers the kind of “stability” that insurgents need to establish themselves.

To assess if these three conditions positively correlate with the persistence of AIGs, I will look at three such groups: Al-Qaeda of Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Boko Haram (BH) and Abu Sayyaf (ASG). These groups were deliberately selected from different geographical areas, respectively from North Africa (Mali/Algeria), West Africa (Nigeria), and Asia (the Philippines) to see if there are varying effects of these conditions on armed groups in different environments. AIGs without question present a major security threat. Relevant security literature will be examined in the next section.

¹¹ David Tucker and Anna Simons, “The Misleading Problem of Failed States: a ‘socio-geography’ of terrorism in the post-9/11 era,” *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (2007): 394.

International Relations (IR) Literature on the Concept of Security

“Security” is a contested concept since it has evolved in a rapidly changing political world that witnessed world wars, competition between superpowers, the rise of post-colonial developing countries, and, generally, shifting alliances within a changing international community. Traditionally, security studies as a field was analyzed at the nation-state level, and security meant the protection of state sovereignty, primarily based on the strength of the military sector. Security analysis tended to focus on the state as there was a constant fear of external military threats from other states, which therefore dictated national and defense policies. Before World War II, security studies was restricted to the professional military and diplomatic sectors of the state, but the involvement of civilians in policy making during World War II triggered a broader interest in security studies.¹²

The horrors of two world wars, and the resulting international consensus on the need to avoid any such occurrences in the future, made it urgent to find solutions to war. This set the stage for security studies as an academic field. In its early stages, mid 1940s to the 1960s, Stephen Walt claims, academics preferred to “ignore nonmilitary sources of international tension and to focus solely on military balances.”¹³ They also advocated deterrence theory, a popular concept at this time, which assumes that there will always be aggressive states so retaliation can be justified in kind. This type of preventive measure was seen as more effective than questioning the aggressor’s motives for attacking in the first place. However, a shift toward non-military solutions was taking root within the

¹² Stephen M. Walt, “The Renaissance of Security Studies,” *International Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (1991): 214.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

discourses of security studies in the pursuit of “world peace.” Moreover, the increasing exposure to UN-sponsored international norms and non-governmental institutions helped reinforce the non-military focus in security studies. States could now use these norms and regimes to arbitrate their conflicts,¹⁴ since these norms extend “security” to include the human condition.

In 1994, the United Nations Development program (UNDP), stated that “[h]uman security can be said to have two main aspects. It means, first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. And second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life—whether in homes, in jobs or in communities.”¹⁵ The report went on to identify seven specific areas of human security: a) economic security from poverty, b) food security or access to food, c) healthy security or access to health care, d) environmental security or protection from pollution or depletion of resources, e) personal security or physical safety from wars, violence, torture, for example, f) community security or freedom from ethnic conflicts or destruction of local cultures, and g) political security or protection from abuses of civil, political rights and oppression.¹⁶ While this definition was all encompassing, it clearly showed how the expanded concept of security had acquired legitimacy within the UN. This view imparted on states and the international community a moral responsibility to protect

¹⁴ “Notions of Security: Shifting Concepts and Perspectives,” *European Commission Project Report on Transnational Terrorism* (2007): 6.

¹⁵ Roland Paris, “Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?” *International Security* 26, no. 2 (2001): 89.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

individuals, reinforcing the idea that “human beings, not states, have an intrinsic value and should be protected.”¹⁷

Thus the concept of security has evolved over the years, initiating changes in attitudes and behavior. Within the academic world, security studies had to also undergo its own evolution. The classical IR theorists believed that states will act selfishly because in an anarchical system (in the absence of any centralized international power), states must engage in wars for reasons of self-interest, security and the need to survive. The state’s pursuit of power is an important goal, and preserving military strength to ensure a state’s position and prestige is necessary. Classical realists believed that conflict stems from an imperfect human nature. The newer neorealists did not focus on human nature, but supported the idea that states are rational and autonomous, and will counter any security threats in order to survive, and protect their self-interests. To them, anarchy is what drives states’ behavior. Since to the neorealist, states will preserve and maximize their power through enhancing their military capabilities in order to ensure their security, this inadvertently creates a security dilemma with other states. A security dilemma is caused by any action of a strong or weak state, which can be interpreted as either a threat or a provocation that could potentially destabilize the balance of security within the international system.¹⁸ Neorealists did not consider that domestic political structures can affect a state’s behavior.

¹⁷ Christopher Daase, “‘National, Societal’ and ‘Human Security’: On the Transformation of Political Language,” *Historical Social Research* 35, no. 4 (2010): 28.

¹⁸ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), 63.

The end of the Cold War signaled a resurgence of smaller-scale conflicts, mainly ethno-nationalist, within states. With this change in political reality, there was a conscious move within academic circles to develop a balanced discourse that looked at security threats and risks at both international and domestic levels. As mentioned, the concept of security had become multidimensional, analyzing threats, not only to states *per se*, but to their peoples.¹⁹ The literature that explored the causes and effects of intra-state conflicts looked mainly at structural factors. The reasons for the origins of conflicts varied from ethnic and religious differences, to failed states, from competition for limited resources to socio-political repression, from marginalization and poverty to nationalism. While ethno-political conflict are not an entirely new phenomenon, the emphasis on “ethnicity” as a causative factor was now stronger, whether due to the savagery of inter-group or intra-group “ethnic-cleansing,” as seen in the Bosnian and Kosovan wars during the 1990s, or the resulting disruptions to the lives of numerous non-combatant civilians.

Rather than rely on structural theories to explain causes, some political theorists have used psychocultural interpretations to show that such conflicts were specific to customs, religion, and language.²⁰ It is thought that people’s perceptions of the external world and motives for action are based on their individual belief systems, which, in turn, inform their behavior in a conflict situation.²¹ Any form of conflict will invoke security fears, and if perceived to threaten group identities will be sufficient to initiate a violent reaction. In this vein, social identity theory argues that groups will engage in collective

¹⁹ “Notions of security,” p. 45.

²⁰ For example, see Marc Howard Ross, “Psychocultural Interpretation Theory and Peacemaking in Ethnic Conflicts,” *Political Psychology* 16, no. 3 (1995): 524.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 525.

action through “ingroup bias,” the ability to use positive cultural cues to build a cohesive group identity in opposition to an outgroup.²² As Ted Gurr claims, a group could be mobilized for action if all the conditions are met: collective grievances, group identity and cohesion.²³ Such an opportunity could be exploited by extremist leaders, as Slobodan Milosevic did in Serbia. He provoked domestic strife by “forcing” a “rally around the flag” because of his perceived political weakness.²⁴ In fact, these leaders perpetuate the group identity by “invoking historical memories and cultural symbols.”²⁵ Such actions could create a security dilemma as we saw in the Serbian wars of the 1990s, which precipitated large-scale intergroup conflict, and invited external states to intervene. This was a clear example of domestic conflict developing into an international dispute.

The shift from state to societal security has been the focus of many social constructivist theorists. A relative new strand of IR analysis, constructivism came into its own between the late 1980s to early 1990s with the failure of neorealist and neoliberal theories to predict the collapse of the Cold War. Constructivism offered alternative ways to interpret changes in world politics by focusing on state identity and interests. Looking at state identity in particular, Ted Hopf claims that understanding this could predict behavior. Relationships between states are determined by how states are perceived by the other. In other words, “constructivism treats identity as an empirical question to be

²² Leonie Huddy, “Contrasting Theoretical Approaches to Intergroup Relations,” *Political Psychology* 25, no. 6 (2004): 956.

²³ Ted Robert Gurr, “Minorities, Nationalities, and Ethnopolitical Conflict,” in *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict*, ed. Chester A. Crocker et al. (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996): 66-67.

²⁴ David A. Lake, “International Relations Theory and Internal Conflict: Insights from the Interstices,” *International Studies Review* 5, no. 4 (2003): 86.

²⁵ Gurr, p. 66.

theorized within a historical context ...” whereas realism thinks all states are in and of themselves self-interested actors.²⁶ Perceptions of states are socially constructed, and are shaped by immaterial aspects of our lives such as culture, ideas and social practices. Likewise, states’ interests and behavior will evolve as the context changes. The impact of ideas on beliefs and behavior is revealed more within the society, so constructivists explain changes by looking within societies.

Ole Wæver and Barry Buzan are two constructivist theorists from the Copenhagen School of IR, which claims that identity is a constitutive element of societal security just as sovereignty is for the state.²⁷ The concept of societal security is a cornerstone for the Copenhagen School so for them identity plays a large role in shaping the direction of security issues. The study of “identity” is not new; it was a sub-field of social psychology during the 1970s that focused on group formation and social identification. Social psychologists looked at how an individual develops a sense of belonging vis-à-vis other group members within a specific group, and how that person organizes the external world into meaningful categories.²⁸ In this way, we can further explore the relevance of societal security from a group level, according to Theiler, who sees social identity theory and societal security as not being mutually exclusive.²⁹ He interprets societal security as any social formation or grouping having the capacity or

²⁶ Ted Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” *International Security* 23, no. 1 (1998): 174-75.

²⁷ Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, “Slippery? Contradictory? Sociologically Untenable? The Copenhagen School Replies,” *Review of International Studies* 23, no. 2 (1997): 242.

²⁸ Tobias Theiler, “Societal Security and Social psychology,” *Review of International Studies* 29, no. 2 (2003): 259-260.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

perceived ability to survive existential threats. This has now been extended to ethnic-religious groups, women and Marxists, and others.³⁰ Similarly, Waever et al. show that existential threats could target the sovereignty of states. In other words, if a state loses its sovereignty it is no longer a state, and similarly with identity which defines society. To them, it is important to create a “new kind of unit in order to grasp the way other things than states [have] become referent objects for security discourse.”³¹ They acknowledge that while “identity” is a socially constructed concept, it does not remain in a permanent state of mutability, but can be “solidly sedimented,” thus acquiring a form of stableness.³² Buzan and Waever note that all identities are inevitably shaped by politics, and even traditional realists have used “identity” when analyzing states’ motives or trying to understand how states “construct their conception of security.”³³

This departure from the realist and liberal strands of IR theory makes society an “independent object,” as opposed to a state-centric unit in IR analysis, because “[s]ociety is about identity, about the self conception of communities and of individuals identifying themselves as members of a community.”³⁴ However, Bill McSweeney questions this approach in arguing that the definitional complexities of these concepts defy application to policies and effective security responses.³⁵ Such terms are fluid, and IR theorists

³⁰ Buzan and Waever, p. 251.

³¹ Ibid., p. 242.

³² Ibid., p. 244.

³³ Ibid., p. 247.

³⁴ Bill McSweeney, “Identity and Security: Buzan and the Copenhagen School,” *Review of International Studies* 22, no. 1 (1996): 83.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 84-5.

cannot assume that they already exist as “entities” or social facts when, in actuality, a “society” and an “identity” are results of processes and “negotiation among people and interest groups.”³⁶ Implicit in such concepts are elements of change according to the socio-cultural contexts so it would be difficult to use them empirically.³⁷ McSweeney sees the agent of change as coming from the state level, and dismisses the idea that sub-state actors have the capacity to change state dynamics – in that case the state could descend into anarchy.³⁸ Only a secured state is able to protect all levels below it.

Understanding how something becomes a threat is significant to security studies. States usually “construct” their threats in terms of their perception of other states’ motives, and in the context of their capabilities. This attitude is what informs security policies and states’ behavior. While it is true that states can be hyper-vigilant and paranoid or, on the other hand, nonchalant in their treatment of perceived threats, their decision to securitize an issue can set the ball rolling to further actions. The Copenhagen School introduced the concept of securitization, which identifies specific threats as urgent, which, in turn, can lead to defensive measures taken by the state. It is important to know that the process of securitizing an issue requires an interpretation of an alleged threat, based on belief systems, ideas, impressions, and perceptions. There are no set indicators to identify potential threats. With this in mind, Barry Buzan uses the threat of terrorism as an example. He claims that terrorism has become a securitized issue in the

³⁶ Sweeney, p. 84-85.

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 90-91.

³⁸ Ibid., 92-3.

21st century, which could “structure global security for some decades.”³⁹ Such potential threats can also target societal identities, since terrorism can threaten the survival of a community. So, in a way, there is a linkage between terrorism and an identity crisis. There are many global threats that can be securitized: international crime, drug and arms trafficking, and terrorism are a few. To what extent they become urgent issues that require immediate action is a decision that states and the international community have to make. According to Buzan, a low-priority issue can become a macro-securitized one once it achieves global recognition, a commitment to action, and an expected long-term duration.⁴⁰

In previous years, as Buzan claims, security was “dominated by the highly militarized and highly polarized ideological confrontation between the superpowers,”⁴¹ but in a new multipolar system, security issues are more fluid, though still centrally-controlled. He thinks that the prominent security issue in the 21st century will be societal security, which revolves around migration between strong core states and weaker, underdeveloped ones, as well as “civilizational identities.”⁴² In the context of the latter, given the rising number of insurgencies or small-scale civil conflicts today, many based on ethnic identities or socio-economic grievances, one can logically conclude that “insurgencies” have become a securitized issue. Armed insurgent groups (AIGS), operating as primary actors in such conflicts, can have a major impact on both the state in

³⁹ Barry Buzan, “Will the ‘Global War on Terrorism’ Be the New Cold War?” *International Affairs* 82, no. 6 (2006): 1102.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1102.

⁴¹ Barry Buzan, “New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-First Century,” *International Affairs* 67, no. 3 (1991): 433.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 447.

conflict and other states with interests in that conflict. If societal security is now a major component in IR research, then studying the genesis and impact of AIGs, which impede such security, is relevant. The next chapter will provide some background on three such examples of AIGs located in three distinct geographical locations.

Chapter 3

Case Studies: Background on Three Armed Insurgent Groups (AIGs)

This chapter will provide background on three AIGs, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and Boko Haram, which I have selected in order to show how specific conditions abet their growth and ability to resist attempts to dislodge them from their “spaces.” Chapter 4 will look closely at each condition, and will argue that without these conditions, the settings will not be opportune for these movements to take off, and take root.

Al-Qaeda of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)

AQIM attracted the world’s attention when they blatantly proclaimed an “independent state” within the state of Mali in March 2012. However, according to an Al-Jazeera report, they were operating behind the scenes in Mali since 2003.¹ The article stated that “[h]ostage ransom money from European governments was allegedly spread around to Malian officials while AQIM was given free rein in Tuareg areas, with a wink and a nod from the Malian Army.”² Apparently, AQIM had amassed a huge fortune, mostly from ransoms and drug trafficking between Mali and Europe, making payouts to Malian high officials, including the leader.³ Moreover, the Malian government allowed

¹ Al-Jazeera has identified connections between AQIM and Malian officials, including the Malian leader, Amadou Toumani Toure, before he was deposed in the 2012 coup. May Ying Welsh, “Making sense of Mali’s armed groups,” *aljazeera.com*, Jan 17, 2013, accessed March 5, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/01/20131139522812326.html>.

² *Ibid.*

³ This information has been also supported by Wikileaks, according to Aljazeera. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) also suggests the “drug trafficking corridor” of Mali nets about \$1.8bn to \$2bn. May Ying Welsh, “Mali: The ‘gentle’ face of al-Qaeda,” *aljazeera*, Dec. 30, 3012.

AQIM as early as 2002-2003 to “roam among the camps and villages, to build relationships with the people.”⁴

AQIM’s geopolitical influence is now growing rapidly within North Africa’s Saharan and the Sahelian areas. Since establishing itself as part of the insurgent movement in this region, it has either marginalized local resistance Tuareg groups fighting for independence or coopted other radical militant groups, all of whose influence extends over the territories of Algeria, Mauritania, Mali, and parts of Niger. These groups are a combination of different ethnic groups (Fulani, Songhai, Arabs and Tuaregs), each with its own religious and political grievances. A January 2013 Aljazeera article has identified four liberation groups: the separatist Tuareg National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), the Arab National Front for the Liberation of Azawad (FLNA), a Songhai Ganda Koy, and the Fulani Ganda Izo.⁵ A religious coalition was formed, comprising AQIM, the Tuareg-majority Ansar al-Dine and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), which is strengthened by shared tribal and kinship ties.⁶ As a result, there is a constant cross-pollination of ideas and activities. It remains to be seen what level of security risk AQIM will pose to bigger states. It has already drawn France into Malian affairs. The fear of a neighboring Islamist Mali, which is a former colony, proved too much for France which sent about 4000 troops to Mali in January 2013, an action backed by the United Nations Security

⁴ *Aljazeera*, Dec. 30, 3012.

⁵ Welsh, “Making Sense of Mali’s Armed Groups,” *aljazeera*.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Council.⁷ The aim of France was to contain the rise of Islamic extremism in the unpopulated north, and restore Mali's "territorial integrity."⁸

Many outsiders have been surprised at the rapid advance of AQIM, getting to within 200 miles of the Malian capital, Bamako.⁹ AQIM has not kept secret its intentions in northern Mali. Not only has it claimed that it will liberate Malians from the French colonial legacy, but it has already established an Islamic Police, and even instituted Shari'a laws in areas they still control.¹⁰ AQIM is clearly following in the tradition of its more famous predecessor, Bin Laden's Al-Qaeda, which began in Pakistan in 1988, and was launched as a radical movement in 1996 when Osama Bin Laden announced a global jihad against America. "Jihad" has many formulations. It embodies "righteous causes" where action is required to create a religious and moral order, and also advocates the individual struggle to follow in the path of God.¹¹ As Paul Heck claims, "[a]ll religious communities face this tension between religious inspiration and religious action."¹² Today, jihad is being adapted to satisfy the cultural and political needs of actors who liberally employ its usage as justification for their causes. In many religious-inspired insurgencies today, jihad fulfills both the need for individual motivation and justification of political aims.

⁷ Paul D. Shinkman, "So Why Did France Invade Mali Anyway?" *U.S. News & World Report*, Jan. 16, 2013.

⁸ Diabaly & Paris, "Sand on their boots," *The Economist*, Jan. 26, 2013.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ "Mali crisis: key players," *BBC.com*, accessed March 25, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-17582909>.

¹¹ Paul L. Heck, "Jihad' Revisited," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 32, no. 1 (2004): 95-96.

¹² Heck, p. 96.

Before AQIM appeared on the international scene, many of its early founders had fought in the 1980s Afghan war against the Soviets. Known as the “Algerian” Afghans, they absorbed the military and ideological experiences of fighting a jihad against foreign occupiers. Upon their return to Algeria after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, they rejoined local Algerian Islamic groups and began engaging in a jihad against the government’s security forces. The leading Islamist party at the time, Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), had won the municipal elections in 1990, but its political victory was soon vacated by a new electoral law, which was passed in 1991 by the ruling National Liberation Front (FLN). A coalition of splinter Islamic groups then began to move against the newly-elected military-influenced government in 1992, and the situation devolved into a period of bloody conflicts from 1991-1999. A 1999 government-sponsored amnesty took effect and the conflict that led to over 150,000 deaths ended.¹³

In the aftermath, there were many competing elements within the Islamic grouping that sought political legitimacy. They were varied in their commitment to the political status quo and their own armed struggles. For example, the Islamic Salvation Front or FIS wanted to pursue a politically-oriented jihad, while the Islamic Armed Group (GIA) preferred a religious jihad against the government. As a result, in-fighting and ideological differences caused a split within the Islamist grouping, and many factions disbanded. Surviving elements of GIA broke away to form the new *Groupe Salafist pour la Predication et le Combat* (GSPC). It is this splinter group that later merged with Al-Qaeda elements.¹⁴

¹³ “Profile: Al-Qaeda in North Africa,” *BBC News Africa*, Jan. 17, 2013.

¹⁴ Jonathan Masters, “Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM),” *Council on Foreign Relations*, accessed February 2, 2013, <http://www.cfr.org/north-africa/al-qaeda-islamic-maghreb-aqim/p12717>.

After the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003, the GSPC transitioned from a jihad movement to a transnational one, serving as a “battleground against ‘infidel’ America.”¹⁵ Its first “global attack” came in December 2006 near the capital city of Algiers when it targeted a bus of foreign employees from Haliburton, a major U.S. services and construction company.¹⁶ This attack recast the movement into a quasi-global one as evident in the decision to target foreign companies. A month after, GSPC became AQIM, and embarked on a series of calculated attacks on other foreign targets. First, it attacked a Russian gas installation in March 2007 to show its solidarity with Chechnya. Then, it bombed an Algerian oil and gas facility in April 2007 because of past grievances with the Algerian government. A few months later, in December 2007, it attacked the offices of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), describing it as “the den of global heresy” with “[c]rusaders who are occupying our lands and plundering our treasures.”¹⁷ During the same year, AQIM stepped up its attacks against security sources, foreign targets, and symbols of the Algerian government. It targeted foreign oil workers, diplomats, soldiers, and even the President, Abdelaziz Bouteflika.¹⁸ It was equally bold when it kidnapped the UN special envoy in late 2008 in Niger’s capital, Niamey. Many of the armed attacks were deliberately done by suicide bombers to inflict casualties.

For the next two years, AQIM operated with impunity from different areas within Algeria. Regional governments were concerned that AQIM was spreading its influence

¹⁵ Jean-Pierre Filiu, “The Local and Global Jihad of al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghrib,” *Middle East Journal* 63, no. 2, (2009): 221.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 223-224.

¹⁸ BBC News, “Profile.”

in the surrounding areas, and establishing ties with other militant cells. As a precaution, Tunisia and Morocco arrested many alleged AQIM militants, and the Algerian government began a series of effective military campaigns, forcing radical members to find refuge elsewhere. The early attempts of AQIM to strengthen its “global” influence beyond the regional borders, however, did not fare well, according to Stephen Harmon.¹⁹ The resort to criminal activities, for example smuggling cocaine and kidnapping for ransom, indicated that AQIM was either biding its time, building up cash reserves or had given up on its global plans. Not helping was the media attention brought to this region. Jeremy Keenan thinks that the alliances between France, Algeria and the U.S. to limit the influence of AQIM “exaggerated ... the danger posed by GSPC/AQIM [in order] to advance their own agendas.”²⁰ In other words, the West, especially the U.S., fabricated these terrorist threats to “justify launching a Saharan-Sahelian front in the U.S. global war on terror (GWOT).”²¹ Algeria and other North African countries are rich in oil and natural resources (phosphates in the Western Sahara and uranium in Niger), and the conflicts could serve as a convenient pretext for the U.S. if it really wants to involve itself in North African affairs.

In any case, by 2010, the AQIM had become a Saharan-based organization, operating mainly from the northern areas of Mali and Niger, east Mauritania, and also from within south Algeria, where there are large stretches of ungoverned spaces. It also established ties with the local Tuaregs, semi-nomadic Bedouin tribes, who have inhabited

¹⁹ Stephen Harmon, “From GSPC to AQIM: The evolution of an Algerian Islamist terrorist group into an AL-Qa’ida Affiliate and its implications for the Sahara-Sahel region,” *Concerned Africa Scholars* 85, (2010): 16.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²¹ Jeremy H. Keenan, “The Sahara Emirate: Al Qaeda in the West, for the West?” *Social Justice* 37, no. 2-3 (2010-2011): 28.

the northern areas of Africa for centuries. The Tuaregs's loyalty to a specific sovereign state is usually in question since they have resisted several attempts to become settled peoples. They have in the past agitated for self-determination and autonomy in northern Mali, a landlocked area that is one of the poorest nations in the world. Since the military coup in March 2012, which has provided an opportune moment for both groups to establish a base for their respective movements, the situation of the Tuaregs remains precarious.

The absence of a stable government in Mali is allowing AQIM to forge alliances both from within and without. As a U.S. State Department Report claims, AQIM is networking with other terrorist groups in nearby and outlying regions, such as Nigeria's Boko Haram, Somalia's Al-Shabaab and Yemen's Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).²² It has so far engaged in low-level assassinations, kidnappings, and arms and narcotics trafficking to finance its activities, possibly becoming the "wealthiest affiliate" from these efforts.²³ By merging and allying with local strains of insurgencies, groups such as Ansar al-Din and the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), AQIM is adapting to its locale, and ensuring its survivability. However, according to Masters, because it feels confident of its control over its occupation in certain "spaces," it is marginalizing the Tuaregs' separatist efforts by imposing its own brand of the Shari'a law on locals.²⁴ Such efforts by AQIM to build legitimacy within the local populace as a "religious" authority seem to indicate that it plans to be there for a long time.

²² Master, p. 4.

²³ David Lewis, "Al Qaeda's richest faction dominant in north Mali-US," *Reuters*, Jul. 26, 2012.

²⁴ Masters, p. 5.

Boko Haram

Like AQIM, Boko Haram's beginnings in Nigeria are rooted in a Islamic conservative or Salafi-inspired ideology. The term "Boko Haram" is a popular translation of "Western Education is forbidden" or, in official Arabic, *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal Jihad* (People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad). Boko Haram (hereafter BH) is the product of a post-colonial world that saw localized neo-patrimonial networks in northern Nigeria replacing centralized political control, and also saw a deterioration in living standards, general autonomy of the Muslim populace under a Christian government, widespread government corruption, and failing socioeconomic and political institutions. Like AQIM, it is seeking to install an Islamic state ruled by sharia law, but, unlike AQIM, BH focuses more on corrupt domestic institutions than foreign influences in Africa. In fact, according to Walker, it has "grown at a time when there are many national issues that draw anger and feed the group."²⁵

Despite Nigeria's status and wealth as a rentier state (oil exports provide most of the national income), it is unable to stop the mushrooming insurgencies that have taken hold in several provinces outside the main regions of Lagos and Abuja. Since its independence in 1960 from the British, Nigeria has been caught in a circle of alternating civilian and military governments, which probably explains why the current government is still struggling to centralize its rule. There are around 250 ethnic and linguistic

²⁵ Andrew Walker, "What is Boko Haram?" *United States Institute of Peace Special Report* 308 (2012): 13.

groups,²⁶ and the competition for power and resources is centered mainly on three groups: the Muslim Hausa-Fulani in the North, Christian Yorubas in the Southwest, and mainly Christian Igbos in the southeast. Nigeria holds an influential position in Africa given its wealth and political status, but it faces similar problems as other underdeveloped countries.²⁷ It is this reality that Boko Haram (BH) has decided to challenge.

Boko Haram was started by Mohammed Ali in 2002 in the city of Maiduguri, located in the northeastern province of Borno. In the pre-colonial period, the Muslim Caliphate that had been based in the Sokoto region had had relative autonomy in an area comprising northern Nigeria, Niger and Southern Cameroon. Under British occupation beginning in 1903, the caliphate lost its political control over its Muslim population and became part of the British dominion. This loss of autonomy triggered many Islamic-inspired nationalist movements against the British in that area, setting a precedent for similar movements later. By the early 2000s, Ali was using radical Islamist youth organizations as a platform to call for a “true” Islamic society because he felt that the Nigerian state was becoming too corrupt and secular. His solution was to adopt the sharia law or Islamic law. Ali’s ambitions ended in a violent confrontation with the police in December 2003. Apparently, there was a community dispute over the fishing rights to a village pond, which escalated into a shootout between the police, army and Ali’s followers. In the aftermath, around 70 people died, including Ali. The

²⁶ Between 2003 and 2006, Nigeria received \$500 billion from oil revenues. Peter M. Lewis, “The Dysfunctional State of Nigeria,” *cgdev.org*, accessed January 15, 2013, p. 91, <http://www.cgdev.org/doc/shortofthegoal/chap3.pdf>.

²⁷ Eighty percent of people live on less than \$2 a day. Auwal Musa Rafsanjani and Chantal Uwimana, “Fighting corruption in Nigeria requires actions not words,” *aljazeera.com*, accessed March 2, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/10/201210891018158911.html>.

disproportionate reaction of the police and the army transformed BH from a local radical group into an organized armed movement.

Surviving members regrouped under a new leader, Mohammed Yusuf, who helped BH evolve to a different level. For five years following this event, Boko Haram was largely dormant, focusing on rebuilding its organization. It did not completely remain invisible, but was generally ignored by authorities. Although the Nigerian media and even the U.S. government took notice of this organization, no one, including Nigerian officials, felt that Boko Haram would become a threat.²⁸ The reluctance of the politicians to act against BH during its formative years would later be their undoing as the government is now trying to contain a more organized BH today. During these five years, BH established a new mosque in Maiduguri, which would remain its base of operations. It became a “state within a state,” creating its own religious police, building a farm, offering food and financial subsidies, and, most likely, recruiting unemployed Nigerian youth and poor refugees coming from neighboring Chad.²⁹ It also took advantage of the government’s complacency by expanding into other neighboring provinces, such as Nauchi, Yobe, and Niger state. The financial sources of BH’s expansion are not well known, but there are reports that they receive funds from rich Salafi members in Saudi Arabia, and wealthy Muslims in the north.³⁰

The years between 2003 and 2009 passed uneventfully until an event that changed the dynamics of BH’s campaign of resistance against the state. What began as a funeral

²⁸ Walker, p. 3.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

march, led to an argument, and then a few days of shootings between BH followers and the police, resulting in a summary execution of suspected members, including the leader, Mohammed Yusuf. His execution was captured on videotape.³¹ The decision by the government to brutally suppress Boko Haram led to the death of around 800 people in the ensuing civil conflict. This disproportionate use of force further radicalized Boko Haram, and the movement soon gained impetus with the arrival of a new, charismatic leader, Abubakar Shekau, a local businessman.

For a short time, BH went underground, but soon resurfaced in 2010, and it continued its assassinations and attacks, destroying police vehicles, engaging in drive-by shootings, and for the first time, using improvised explosive devices (IEDs) as an instrument of violence.³² In one of its attacks, it liberated a prison, possibly acquiring more recruits to replace those lost in 2009.³³ Another deadly attack in the city of Jos ended in the death of 80, mostly Christians. On Christmas Eve in 2010, BH set half a dozen bombs near churches and markets, killing many civilians.³⁴ Similar attacks against security forces and Christians continued periodically during the next two years. In 2011, BH assassinated political officials and police officers, and also exploded bombs near army barracks, around the time leading up to, and after the Nigerian elections in April 2011. The results of the elections, which produced a Christian president, Goodluck

³¹ David Cook, "Boko Haram: A Prognosis," *James a. Baker III Institute for Public Policy*, December 16, 2011, 11-12, <http://bakerinstitute.org/publications/REL-pub-CookBokoHaram-121611.pdf>.

³² Boko Haram's knowledge of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) was sophisticated enough to require outside help, most likely from the Al-Qaeda network. Ricardo Rene Laremont, "Boko Haram, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, and Al-Shabab," *House Committee on Homeland Security*, accessed April 1, 2013, <http://homeland.house.gov/sites/homeland.house.gov/files/Testimony%20Laremont.pdf>.

³³ By 2010 there were probably 5000 to 8000 members. Cook, "Boko Haram," p. 12.

³⁴ Walker, p. 5.

Jonathan, further reinforced BH's beliefs that Muslims would continue to be marginalized.

BH did not stop its attacks against churches and government offices after the election. Its boldest attack came in August 2011 when a suicide attack on the UN headquarters in Abuja led to the death of 23 people, with 76 injured.³⁵ It showed that Boko Haram was looking beyond national targets. This was the first "foreign" target, and it "launched Boko Haram onto world news and established it as a militant group with the technical, and doctrinal, capacity to produce suicide bombs."³⁶ In 2012, BH looked for new targets in schools and press offices. In March, it burned down 12 public schools, affecting the education of some 10,000 students. By the end of that year, and as a result of BH actions against the government, 770 people were killed, the largest amount in any one year.³⁷ A Human Rights Watch Report puts the total dead between 2009 to early 2012 around 2800.³⁸

The gradual evolution from a gathering of discontented youth to a movement bold enough to attack the UN headquarters suggests that the BH movement should not be dismissed simply as a sectarian conflict. Since its resurgence in 2010, it has wreaked socio-economic havoc in the northern provinces.³⁹ The borders with neighboring Chad,

³⁵ Cook, "Boko Haram," 19-20.

³⁶ Walker, p. 6.

³⁷ "Boko Haram," *abcnews.com*, accessed January 5, 2013, <http://abcnews.go.com/topics/news/world/boko-haram.htm>.

³⁸ "Nigeria: Boko Haram Attacks Likely Crimes Against Humanity," *Human Rights Watch Report*, October 11, 2012.

³⁹ "Boko Haram attacks cripple northern Nigeria's economy," *IRIN Humanitarian news and analysis Report*, accessed March 25, 2013, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/97462/Boko-Haram-attacks-cripple-northern-Nigeria-s-economy>.

Niger and Cameroon had to be closed, limiting commercial trade between the countries. BH is also willing to step out of its geographical space to pursue its goals. Most recently, in February 2013, it crossed the porous borders between Nigeria and Cameroon to kidnap seven French tourists as retaliation against French military incursion into Mali. It is publicly linking itself to other insurgent groups. In fact, there have been reports that Boko Haram has been in contact with AQIM and Al-Shabaab of Somalia, which was bound to happen as a matter of course.⁴⁰ Such an alliance, according to a 2011 Homeland Security Report, could have “destabilizing effects throughout West Africa” since Nigeria is “the pivotal state in West Africa.”⁴¹

Abu Sayyaf Group

Another insurgent group with similar aspirations as Boko Haram and AQIM is the Abu Sayyaf Group or ASG (“bearer of the sword” in Arabic) of the Philippines, whose members want to create a political Islamic state for the Muslim majority. Like AQIM, it has been using ransoms from kidnapping as a major source of funding, and has also carried out assassinations, extortion and bombings. The U.S. Department of State has added this group to its list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations.⁴² For a time, it was operating from the outermost islands, but the Filipino government’s military campaigns, along with US assistance, have now limited the group’s operations to the southernmost

⁴⁰ Ricardo Rene Laremont, “Boko Haram, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, and Al-Shabab,” *House Committee on Homeland Security*, accessed on February 2, 2013, <http://homeland.house.gov/sites/homeland.house.gov/files/Testimony%20Laremont.pdf>.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 4.

⁴² This group was added in October 1997. “Foreign Terrorist Organizations,” accessed February 4, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm>.

areas of the Philippines. As the second largest archipelago in the world, the Philippines contains isolated areas in the Sula Archipelago (Sulu Province) and Mindanao islands (Basilan Province), which have now become the stronghold for the Abu Sayyaf Group. These areas are in close proximity to Malaysia, which is facing its own internal strife with extremist elements. Kidnapping for money might create an impression to outsiders that ASG is just a bandit group, but it has evolved to being a fully-fledged insurgent group.

The exact origins of ASG are in dispute, but there is a consensus that Al-Qaeda was involved in its creation, and it is forging ties to other insurgent groups operating in the southern areas of the country. Muslim separatists have been fighting in the Philippines for more than thirty years because they are seeking an independent Islamic province in the south. Rommel Banlaoi argues that ASG was created by the Philippines military in the 1990s to “penetrate the ranks of Muslim radicals in Southern Philippines” in order to become informers for the state.⁴³ There is another report that ASG split from the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), a major Muslim separatist movement operating in the 1990s, over direction of the movement.⁴⁴ Many of these insurgent leaders had fought in the Afghan wars of the 1980s, and ASG founder, Abdurajak Janjalani, was no exception. It was his decision to break away from MNLF in 1991 that signaled the start of ASG. Upon announcing his new group, Janjalani sanctioned the bombing of a

⁴³ Rommel C. Banlaoi, “THE ABU SAYYAF GROUP: From Mere Banditry to Genuine Terrorism,” *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2006): 247-8.

⁴⁴ “Abu Sayyaf Group (Philippines, Islamist separatists), *Council on Foreign Relations*, May 27, 2009.

Christian missionary ship docked in a southern port, which killed two foreign missionaries.⁴⁵

Since the 1960s, the Filipino government has been in a de-facto military conflict with its many insurgent groups. At one point ASG had much influence on the island of Mindanao in the south, but with U.S. anti-terror assistance starting in 2002, the Filipino government was able to limit the operating bases of ASG, restricting them to the Basilan Islands. Additionally, the government signed a compromise with Mindanao-based MNLF in 1996, which had been fighting a secessionist movement for about 40 years. MNLF was offered more autonomy over parts of the mineral-rich island of Mindanao, where the Muslim majority in the Philippines live. Mindanao is the country's third largest island, and MNLF was given more "control" over Islamic law, education, and access to government subsidies and benefits. Over a two decade-span (1970s-90s), secessionist conflicts between MNLF and the government claimed the lives of around 120,000 people, and displaced two million.⁴⁶ The island of Mindanao has been the focal point of Muslim struggles against the government for decades. It is strategically located in the south of the country, miles away from the capital, and strategically close to surrounding countries, such as Indonesia, South Thailand, and Malaysia, where radical Muslim groups are.

The 1996 MNLF compromise gave the government a respite from fighting one of the better organized groups, but MNLF's other offshoots, MILF and Abu Sayyaf, are adamantly opposed to any form of agreement with the government, preferring to fight on.

⁴⁵ Banlaoi, p. 248.

⁴⁶ "Peacemaking in the Philippine: Shaking it all up," *The Economist*, June 30, 2012.

Of the two groups, MILF commands more attention from the government since it has come very close many times to signing a peace agreement.⁴⁷ ASG, on the other hand, is considered the most radical and extreme Islamist group, faithful to its goal for a separate Islamic state in the south. Filipino officials called them “by far the most dangerous group in the country today,” which could become a “magnet for dissatisfaction” among young disenfranchised Muslims.⁴⁸

When ASG’s founder, Abdurajak Janjalani was killed by Filipino forces in 1998, he was quickly replaced by his brother Khadaffy Janjalani, who led the group from 1998-2006. During this period, ASG engaged in a spate of kidnappings and extortion to increase its financial profits. As a result, it received millions of dollars from foreign countries, such as Libya, Malaysia and Germany.⁴⁹ It also increased pressure on the government by mounting some 378 armed attacks, which led to the deaths of 288 people between 1991-2000.⁵⁰ One of its worst attacks occurred in 2004 when it bombed a passenger ferry in Manila Bay killing over 100 people.⁵¹ Although ASG numbers are relatively small, there is evidence that they are in possession of highly-sophisticated weapons and bomb-making skills.⁵² Its lucrative financial assets from ransoms have been

⁴⁷ Signing a peace deal with the government translates into a surrender of independence claims in the south (as did MNLF in 1996) . Aljazeera notes that MILF signed such an agreement on October 15, 2012. “Conflict in Mindanao,” *Aljazeera*, Last modified October 15, 2012, accessed March 26, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia-pacific/2008/10/20081015550561414.html>.

⁴⁸ Simon Elegant, “The Return of Abu Sayyaf,” *Time Magazine*, Aug. 23, 2004.

⁴⁹ Elegant, *Time Magazine*.

⁵⁰ Banlaoi, p. 249.

⁵¹ A 2010 estimate of fighters is around 400. “Abu Sayyaf commander killed in raid,” *Aljazeera*, last modified Feb. 27, 2010.

⁵² Banlaoi, pp. 254-5.

used to recruit and train new members.⁵³ The Filipino government has already been managing its many conflicts with U.S. assistance. However, it has been using primarily military force to uproot these groups, which is proving much more challenging than expected.

Since the death of Khadaffy Janjalani in 2006, there have been many nominal heads and commanders of Abu Sayyaf. The most recent one is Raddulan Sahiron who is on the FBI Most Wanted Terrorist List.⁵⁴ Another is Isnilon Habilon, who has a \$5 million reward to his name, and is believed to be in Basilan.⁵⁵ Both have been accused of kidnapping Americans and other foreign nationals in the 1990s. Since MNLF and MILF signed, symbolically or not, agreements with the Filipino government, this has created a competition of sorts over control of territory in the south, as well as over ransom prizes, Islamic legitimacy, and credibility in the eyes of the people. This was highlighted, in February 2013, by a violent clash on the island of Jolo between Abu Sayyaf and MNLF, which, reportedly, was most likely acting with the government's tacit consent.⁵⁶ MNLF claimed to be "cracking down on Abu Sayyaf bandits in Sulu," and fighting to free any kidnapping victims.⁵⁷ The Filipino army chose to be bystanders, and was only concerned

⁵³ Banlaoi, pp. 254-5.

⁵⁴ "Abu Sayyaf leader Sahiron placed on FBI's Most Wanted list," *gmanetwork.com*, accessed March 26, 2013, <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/282426/news/nation/abu-sayyaf-leader-sahiron-placed-on-fbi-s-most-wanted-list>.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ "MNLF overruns 2 Abu Sayyaf camps," *abs-cbnnews.com*, accessed March 26, 2013, <http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/nation/regions/02/09/13/mnlf-overruns-2-abu-sayyaf-camps>.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

that the clash did not spill over into civilian areas.⁵⁸ Abu Sayyaf was in the news again in March 2013 when members released an Australian man they had kidnapped in 2011.

The security threats of armed insurgent groups to the stability of states are clear, and while governments are using primarily military methods to end these civil conflicts, this does little to even contain the conflicts. The following chapter looks at conditions that may be facilitating the durability of these AIGs, even in the face of repressive and disproportionate use of force by states.

⁵⁸ Julie S. Alipala, "Sulu rebels clash; 26 dead," *inquirer.net*, accessed March 26, 2013, <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/352583/25-killed-in-mnlf-abu-sayyaf-clashes-mnlf-casualties-beheaded-reports>.

Chapter 4

Conditions that Prolong Life of AIGs

The previous chapter provided background on the three armed insurgent groups (AIGs) that will be used as case studies. This chapter will assess specific conditions, which, according to my hypothesis, abet their longevity, and allow AIGs to weather changes at both national and international levels. As hypothesized, three conditions must be present for AIGs to be transformed from fledgling movements into groups engaged in protracted struggles. They are: ungoverned spaces, weak domestic institutions, and a network of local support. These conditions should be understood not as isolated factors, but as interdependent ones.

Ungoverned Spaces

The three armed insurgent groups are located in different geographical regions of the world, and it remains to be seen if each group is impacted by “ungoverned spaces.” To recap the definition of ungoverned spaces, they are “vacant” spaces, used as operational bases, either physical (territorial land) or non-physical (“gaps” in governance that allow illegal activities to flourish). In its inchoate form, and as a matter of course, a movement needs time and space to organize and mobilize in order to expand, hierarchically or laterally. The main question here is: why do insurgent groups install themselves in a specific area?

AIGs exploit three aspects of ungoverned spaces: a) geographical features of these spaces; b) the distance between operational base and seat of government power; and, c) porous borders. Ungoverned space is a relevant issue to security because it not

only predicts when conflicts might recur, but it reveals the symptoms of failed or failing states. In fact, Clunan and Trinkunas think that the prevalence of ungoverned spaces is the major security challenge of the 21st century.¹

Geographical Characteristics of AIG Locations

The operational bases that the AIGs inhabit are varied, but are strategically beneficial to their cause. The topography of selected terrains can play an important role in preserving and protecting the AIGs from authorities. This holds true for AQIM and Abu Sayyaf, though not for Boko Haram, which relies on carving out “safe havens” within the city limits of Maiduguri to use as its operational bases. So, in this case, “ungoverned spaces” would refer to the non-physical definition.

Map 4.1: Mountainous areas of the Adrar des Ifoghas.



Source: <http://www.futura-sciences.com>

AQIM has settled in a desert and mountainous area, known as the Adrar des Ifoghas (see Map 4.1). Prior to 2012, when they were becoming involved in Malian

¹ Clunan and Trinkunas, p. 36.

separatist conflicts, they had occupied the Great Kabylie mountain region of northeastern Algeria. From these areas, AQIM used to launch attacks on Algerian military bases. In Mali, the Adrar des Ifoghas alone covers an expanse of 250,000 square kilometers, consisting of deserts, plains, rocky terrain, and valleys. It is an impenetrable area, and requires the knowledge of local Tuareg settlers, who have inhabited this area for centuries, to move around. The harsh landscape has, so far, deterred any comprehensive efforts to uproot AQIM because of its inaccessibility and remoteness. Thus far, there have been no signs of the government trying to establish a presence in the area to monitor AQIM or secure the area.

Boko Haram, on the other hand, is not protected by similar forces of nature. It has instead taken refuge within the city of Maiduguri in the state of Borno. Suffice it to say, however, that Maiduguri, itself, is distant from Nigeria's capital, Abuja (see next section). By creating a "safe haven" among the local people, it has been able to escape all government's military efforts to dislodge them. By operating within the confines of a city, it has to rely heavily on its local networks to maintain its presence. This will be discussed in a later section.

The Abu Sayyaf Group also relies on its relative isolation from the capital to conduct its operations. Although it is limited to several small islands in the southern regions of the Philippines, it still moves around with impunity to other areas. The topography of these islands is mainly a combination of mountainous and jungle terrain that is "pockmarked by underground caves."² Sahni agrees that the landscape is an impediment to the Filipino government's efforts to neutralize ASG. Thus far, the

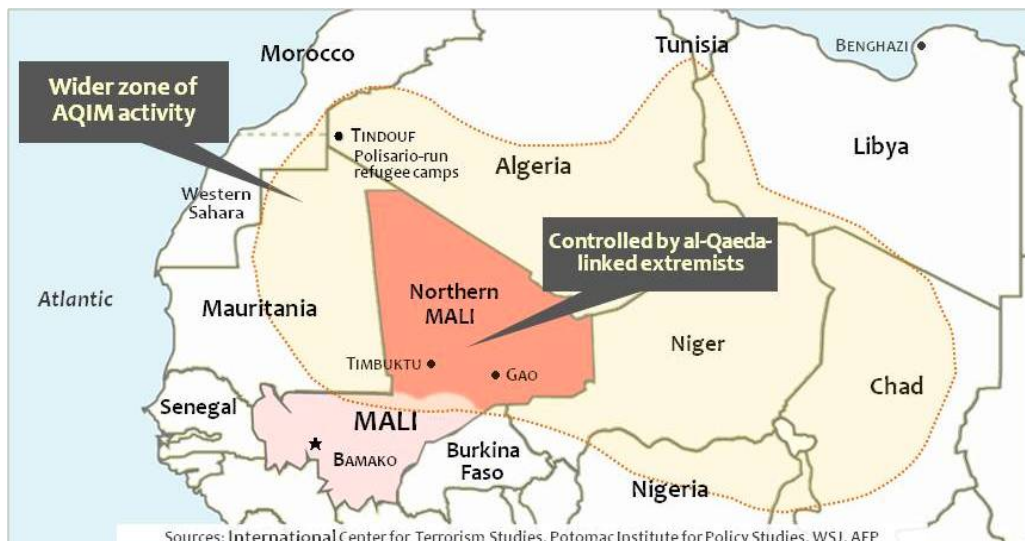
² Larry Nicksch, "Abu Sayyaf: Target of Philippine—U.S. Anti-Terrorism Cooperation," *CRS Report for Congress*, accessed March 28, 2013, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/RL31265.pdf>.

government has shown its incapacity to maintain a constant presence in over 1700 square kilometers of mountains and jungles across the Basilan Islands.³

Distance between AIGs and the Seat of Government

All three AIGs are located in areas that are far from the seat of government power. AQIM and its allies control roughly 300,000 square miles, in the northern areas of land-locked Mali, out of a total 478,839 square miles (see Map 4.2).⁴ The northern areas are home to approximately 1.3 million people of a total population of 4 million.

Map 4.2: Map shows AQIM influence in the Sahelian areas.



Source: <http://moroccoonthemove.com>

The coalition of Islamist groups wanted to create a Tuareg homeland in the northern territories, known as Azawad. This breakaway “state” would have contained three of the largest Malian cities, Kidal, Timbuktu and Gao, which have a combined GDP of US \$1

³ Sahni, *SATP*.

⁴ David Blair, “Mali: how the West cleared the way for al-Qaeda’s African march,” *The Telegraph*, July 10, 2012.

billion.⁵ The Islamists had planned to use Gao as the temporary capital, but the intervention of the French and Malian forces in early 2013 pushed them out of these cities. The cities are of strategic importance since they present an artificial border between the north and the government-controlled south. The takeover of any city (or cities) would mark the consolidation of control by a militant group in the region.

An estimate of the distance between the Malian capital, Bamako, and the mountain ranges where the AQIM has settled is around 1700 Km (or 1050 miles), which provides an isolation that benefits the group. This distance is impeding France's efforts, since its intervention in early 2013, to control the movements of insurgents in and out of the main cities, since insurgents blend in with civilians. France is hoping that African peacekeepers will replace them after they leave, but, according to a New York Times article, the African forces are weak and unprepared, and will have to face "guerrilla fighters with far more experience in desert warfare than they have."⁶ The U.S. has also provided, over a four-year period, both military and financial assistance in the form of surveillance drones, and \$550 million for the training and equipping of African forces.⁷ Even with the intervention of two major powers, there is no sign that AQIM's foothold in the area is decreasing. The distance between its base and the capital prevents any form of concerted resistance by government security forces.

⁵ "Northern Mali at a glance," *OECD Report*, accessed June 25, 2013, <http://www.oecd.org/swac/northernmaliataglance.htm>.

⁶ The French had planned to leave in April 2013. Eric Schmitt, "Terror Haven in Mali Feared After French Leave," *The New York Times*, March 17, 2013.

⁷ *Ibid.*

Map 4.3: Map of Boko Haram's influence in Northern Nigeria.



Source: National Counterterrorism Center at www.nctc.gov

Boko Haram has selected its space based on convenience and significance. Its base is located in Maiduguri, the largest city in the Borno province in northeastern Nigeria, where the majority of Nigerian Muslims reside (see Map 4.3). Its distance from the capital, Abuja, is roughly 692 km (538 miles). The city lies on the pilgrimage route from Senegal to Mecca, and its proximity to Sokoto, whose sultan is the symbolic leader of Nigeria's 70 million Muslims, gives the city some importance in the north.

A coincidence of factors may have allowed Boko Haram to take root here: the tradition of Muslim nationalist resistance to British rule; the long legacy of Muslim presence and culture in the area; and the realities of decades of neglect suffered under the Nigerian government since its independence in 1960, to name a few.⁸ Throughout its insurgency, BH has kept its base in the same geographical location. Although state security forces have stationed military bases in the northern areas, they are not able to

⁸ Toni Johnson, "Boko Haram," accessed May 7, 2013, <http://www.cfr.org/africa/boko-haram/p25739>.

control and contain BH operations, because they are firmly embedded among the civilian population.

On the other hand, the long unprotected coastlines of the many islands in the Philippines provide unlimited access and movement to its insurgents. Abu Sayyaf's space and influence freely extends over a few islands in the southern part of the country –

Map 4.4: Map showing Abu Sayyaf's influence in the South.



Source: National Counterterrorism Center at www.nctc.gov

parts of Mindanao, Jolo and Basilan (see Map 4.4). The Philippines archipelago consists of over 7,100 islands, of which only 2000 are inhabited. Its capital, Manila, is in the north, located some 900 km from the island of Basilan. Similarly to Boko Haram, the Abu Sayyaf Group originated in an area with traditional ties to Muslim culture, where the disenfranchised Muslim minority group must coexist with Christians in a largely Catholic country. This cultural reality, coupled with the geographical isolation of being located in the southern islands, helps ensure a relatively “safe” area far removed from central authorities in the north.

The distances between the bases of centralized rule and the operational bases of each AIG should not be underestimated, especially since they can inform government

policies on civil conflicts. The necessary logistics to control and limit insurgent activities can place a huge burden on developing countries, such as the need to have mobile troops, transport supplies across large distances, maintain security bases to monitor AIG activities, and ready financial outlays to do all the above. The large distance between an AIG operational base and the centralized power in the capital is further complicated by unsecured porous borders, which “define” these ungoverned spaces. This allows AIGs to operate without disturbances from authorities since they are not held to the same laws as governments in moving “freely” across states.

Porous Borders

One of the hallmarks of good governance is the ability of a government to secure its state’s borders, ensuring a state’s sovereignty. Failure to do so can lead to innumerable problems, such as transnational conflicts, border issues and criminal activities. “Borders” are considered “institutions,” according to Salehyan, since they “demarcate legal or de facto lines of military control and political jurisdiction.”⁹ The state’s ability to use force within its territory is tied to its capacity to control the areas within its legal borders. Once insurgent groups have identified the “legitimate” boundaries between governed and ungoverned spaces, they will do their utmost to avoid state repression as the “initial process of rebel mobilization is extremely precarious because the opposition cannot survive a decisive attack.”¹⁰

⁹Idean Salehyan, “Rebels without borders,” p. 29

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 36.

AQIM's operational base in the Adhar des Ifoghas ranges borders Algeria, which, because of its harsh terrain, permits easy border crossings, undetected by authorities. Unlike AQIM, Boko Haram does not inhabit a harsh terrain, but is strategically placed in an area that is contiguous to Chad, Cameroon and Niger, relatively weak states with loose border controls. There are not many credible reports about the movements of BH across the many shared borders, but a kidnapping in February 2013 of a French family in Cameroon shows the potential for cross-border operations.¹¹ Similarly, with Abu Sayyaf, the generally unpatrolled coastlines of the many islands facilitate easy access into adjoining territories, neighboring islands and countries. Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand lie very close, and, more importantly, also host sections of populations that seek a separatist state.

Once borders are unsecured, insurgents are able to create spaces in neighboring countries, as we see in the case of AQIM, moving from Algeria to neighboring Mali. Porous borders not only allow insurgents to move back and forth to escape repression, but also to provoke new conflicts with "settled" insurgents in neighboring countries. Moreover, conflicts can become especially difficult to manage if they are located in areas that "involve contiguous spaces juxtaposing different forms and levels of governance," which could lead to either implosion or contagion.¹² Ungoverned spaces are an indicator of the level of good governance within a state. States may have weak governance, but still be able to control their borders. This would happen if states are strongly militarized

¹¹ Angeliqe Chrisafis, "French family seized in Cameroon by suspected Boko Haram Islamists freed," accessed May 1, 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/apr/19/french-family-kidnapped-cameroon-freed>.

¹² Salehyan, pp. 44, 51.

or conveniently located near strong states, which would enforce border protection. In the absence of such fortuitous factors, insecure borders are an indirect effect of weak domestic institutions.

Weak Domestic Institutions

Discussions on failed and failing states became an important part of security discourses after the terrorist attacks in September, 2011.¹³ However, according to Stewart Patrick, as there are no clear definitions of what “failed” or “failing” means, blame usually falls on poor and developing countries where weak institutions are endemic.¹⁴ The Failed States Index, an annual report created by the Fund for Peace, an independent research and educational organization, measures the general stability and conditions of 178 states, using social science methodologies to compile its data.¹⁵ The Fund has established twelve indicators that cover social, economic and political realities within the state. They are: 1) demographic pressures, 2) the number of refugees and internally displaced persons, 3) the level of group grievance, 4) human flight and brain drain, 5) uneven economic development, 6) poverty and economic decline, 7) the strength of state legitimacy, 8) the ability to provide public services, 9) respect for human rights and rule of law, 10) strength of the security apparatus, 11) presence of factionalized

¹³ Stewart Patrick, “‘Failed’ States and Global Security: Empirical Questions and Policy Dilemma,” *International Studies Review* 9 (2007): 645.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 646.

¹⁵ “The Fund for Peace,” Failed State Index 2013, accessed September 15, 2013, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/06/24/2013_failed_states_interactive_map.

elites, and 12) whether external intervention has taken place.¹⁶ Since space does not permit a lengthy discussion of all the indicators, three main ones will be analyzed to explain why weak domestic institutions enable AIGs to continue to operate. Of the twelve, I think these three indicators are the most effective, and comprehensive, ones that show how failing domestic institutions can facilitate the persistence of AIGs.

The three indicators are poverty and economic decline, group grievances and the state's security apparatus. The Fund defines poverty and economic decline as the inability of the state to provide for its citizens, which is revealed in such national data as GDP (or Gross National Income per capita, GNI), government debt and poverty rates. For group grievance, the Fund measures the tension and violence between groups because of powerlessness, sectarian, and religious violence. As for the state's security apparatus, its control of the legitimate use of force is weakened by illegitimate uses of force, such as rebel activities, militancy, or riots. For comparative purposes, I will also provide figures for Norway, which at number 175 is considered a "very stable" country on the Index. Each of the original twelve indicators is measured from 1 to 10. The higher the score, the worse the performance is. Based on the total scores of all indicators, countries are defined as holding the status of "alert," "warning," or "stable." Any score higher than an 80 means that the state is in the "critical" category. Therefore, countries that are considered stable, like Norway, would have very low scores on the indicators.

¹⁶ "The Fund for Peace," accessed September 15, 2013, <http://ffp.statesindex.org/indicators>.

Table 4.1: Selected countries from the 2013 Failed States Index.

| <u>Rank in Index</u> | <u>Countries</u> | <u>Poverty/Economic Decline</u> | <u>Group Grievance</u> | <u>Security Apparatus</u> | <u>Total (of all 12 indicators)</u> |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 16 | Nigeria (High Alert) | 7.5 | 9.8 | 9.5 | 100.7 |
| 38 | Mali (Very High Warning) | 8.1 | 7.6 | 8.1 | 89.3 |
| 59 | Philippines (High Warning) | 5.6 | 7.9 | 8.7 | 82.8 |
| <i>Cf.</i> 175 | Norway (Sustainable) | 3.6 | 3.6 | 2.7 | 21.5 |

Source: For more data, see <http://ffp.statesindex.org/indicator>

Poverty and Economic decline

This indicator measures a government’s ability to meet the economic needs of its citizens. The population of Mali in 2011 was just over 15.8 million and the GNI per capita was \$610.¹⁷ Mali is one of the twenty-five poorest countries in the world with half of the population living on less than \$1.25 a day.¹⁸ This means that the national poverty rate is at 43 percent, with the poorest Malians residing in the central and northern areas.

Malian ethnic groups are identified by their economic livelihoods; they live in enclaves in the north and northwest if they are pastoralists or herders, and along the Niger River and south as farmers. The early political leaders of the 1960s-70s adopted a socialist form of economic planning, which saw the government actively subsidizing and

¹⁷ For comparative purposes, the USA’s Gross National Income is \$48,620. *World Bank 2011 report*, accessed March 29, 2013, <http://data.worldbank.org/country/mali>.

¹⁸ Neal Lineback & Mandy Lineback Gritzner, “Geography in the News: Al Qaeda and Tuareg in Mali,” accessed May 2, 2013, <http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/2013/01/15/geography-in-the-news-al-qaeda-and-tuareg-in-mali/>

seizing lands to promote an agricultural economy.¹⁹ Only 4 percent of the land is arable. As a result, tensions grew between traditional pastoralists and farmers. The resulting economic policies displeased the already alienated Tuareg groups, mainly pastoralists, who had long engaged in low-level conflicts for separatist rights. Over the years, the frequency of droughts in the Tuareg-populated northern areas and absence of governments' intervention to preserve the Tuaregs' economic livelihood forced them to either migrate to neighboring countries or live in refugee camps.²⁰ Such flights, and the displacements caused by the 2012 conflict, have further deepened the economic misery of the Tuaregs. This is revealed in the level of food insecurity that is present in the northern areas. According to a World Food Programme report, "three out of four households ... are food insecure and heavily dependent on food assistance ... [and] [p]eople in the north are spending between 85 percent and 90 percent of their income on food. Around 1.3 million will continue to need food assistance throughout 2013 and into 2014."²¹ In the absence of government intervention, the burden of providing basic necessities lies on international organizations.

Unlike Mali, Nigeria is a resource rich country, but it has been plagued by socio-political and economic problems since its independence in 1960. Nigeria is important to US interests because it is the fifth largest oil exporter to the United States, providing about 9-11 percent of its crude oil imports. It is also Africa's biggest oil producer, and

¹⁹ "Land laws that focus on state ownership and that marginalise customary practices have played a key role in the ongoing exclusion of pastoral use since colonization." Benjaminsen, p. 78.

²⁰ "Minorities at Risk Report," accessed May 3, 2013, <http://www.refworld.org/publisher,MARP,,,469f3ab1c,0.html>.

²¹ Afua Hirsch, "Mali recovery hampered by poverty and food insecurity," accessed March 29, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2013/oct/18/mali-recovery-poverty-food-insecurity>

has one of the largest gas reserves in the world.²² Its oil revenues provide 80 percent of the government's income.²³ A Bloomberg Report puts its 2010 total oil revenues at \$59 billion.²⁴ Its 2012 GDP stands at US \$262.6 billion and its GNI (per capita) is \$1,430.²⁵ However, 54 percent of its 162 million people still live in poverty, or, understood another way, 80 percent of Nigerians live on less than \$2 a day.²⁶ Despite the generous oil revenues, Nigeria has had a difficult time reconciling incoming wealth with the dire poverty of most of its people. It has repeatedly failed to address the social and economic needs of its people, as evident in its consistently low ranking in the Failed State Index. At number sixteen on the index, it is in the High Alert group with other countries like Somalia (number 1) and Iraq (number 11). In fact, according to a BBC report, poverty is most evident in the northern areas, at 77.7 percent and 76.3 percent respectively, compared to the south, measured at 59.1 percent.²⁷

In the Philippines, American economic policies during colonial rule, which generally stifled national growth to protect American goods, were preserved in the post-

²² "Nigeria," *U.S. Energy Information Administration*, accessed March 29, 2013, <http://www.eia.gov/countries/cab.cfm?fips=NI>.

²³ Maram Mazen, "Nigeria's Oil Revenue Climbs 22% in July on Improved Security," August 16, 2012, accessed May 5, 2013, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-08-16/nigeria-s-oil-revenue-climbs-22-in-july-on-improved-security.html>.

²⁴ Elisha Bala-Gbogbo, "Nigeria's Oil Revenue Rose 46% to \$59 Billion in 2010 on Improved Security," April 14, 2011, accessed May 3, 2013, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-04-14/nigeria-s-oil-revenue-rose-46-to-59-billion-in-2010-on-improved-security.html>.

²⁵ 2012 World Bank Report on Nigeria, accessed Oct. 20, 2013, www.worldbank.org

²⁶ Auwal Musa Rafsanjani and Chantal Uwimana, "Fighting corruption in Nigeria requires actions not words," *aljazeera.com*, accessed March 25, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/10/201210891018158911.html>.

²⁷ "Nigerians living in poverty rise to nearly 61%," February 12, 2012, accessed October 20, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-17015873>

colonial years. Ownership was simply transferred to American allies. This set the tone for later economic policies. According to Julius Parrenas, the Philippines is a weak state “marked by uneven economic development ... [r]egional, social and ideological divisions ... [d]isaffection over the central government’s neglect, and even separatism.”²⁸ One of the enabling factors in the Philippines’ economic decline is the large gap between the masses and socio-economic elites, a legacy of former Spanish and American influences. The exclusive access of elites to power led to a pervasive system of patronage that has preserved the positions of the elites and their descendants to this day. An Al-Jazeera article noted that 178 family dynasties control 73 of the total 80 provinces in the Philippines.²⁹

This socio-political hierarchy affects economic policies and income distribution. Although the Filipino economy has seen some incremental growth in the past three years, this has done nothing to alleviate the poverty rates.³⁰ In 2009, the Filipino government commissioned a report on poverty, which showed that 26.5 percent of the population had fallen below the poverty line.³¹ A 2012 World Bank report shows that around 41 percent of Filipinos live on less than \$2 a day, and its GDP for that year was US \$250.2 billion.³²

²⁸ Julius Caesar Parrenas, “Leadership Succession and Security in the Philippines,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 15, no. 1 (1993): 65.

²⁹ Ted Regencia, “Family affair: Philippine political dynasties,” May 11, 2013, accessed May 13, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/05/2013511104835690790.html>.

³⁰ Between 2010 and 2012, its GDP averaged 5.5% (or \$400 billion average in purchasing power). “Philippines Economy Profile 2013,” accessed September 15, 2013, http://www.indexmundi.com/philippines/economy_profile.html.

³¹ The population was just over 92 million. “2009 Latest Poverty Statistics: Philippines,” accessed May 3, 2013, http://www.nscb.gov.ph/poverty/portal_/.

³² GNI per capita for 2012 is around US\$ 2,470, accessed September 10, 2013, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.2DAY>

The excluded masses are usually the landless and rural poor, who have turned to Communism and religion to deal with the social injustices. The poorest areas are in the south, especially in the region of Mindanao, one of the major island groups, where the poverty rate is around 50 percent.³³ The government has blamed the endemic poverty on continuing civil conflicts in the area. However, aid organizations have cited a lack of government will to address the economic disparities as a major factor.³⁴ Whatever the reason, the southern areas continue to provide ample recruitment opportunities for AIGs, as a representative of the European Commission to the Philippines noted: "...poverty, above religion and secessionism, is the root of the conflict."³⁵

In sum, all three countries have a high poverty rate. According to the World Bank, Mali's 2010 poverty rate (people living on less than \$1.25 a day) was measured at 50.4 percent, Nigeria at 68 percent and the Philippines at 18.4 percent.³⁶ These numbers would increase if the poverty rate included people living on less than \$2 a day. They also share an uneven economic development, which have benefited a small segment of the society.

Group Grievance

All three armed insurgent groups have their base in marginalized and disenfranchised sectors of the population. The Tuaregs in Mali, who have latched on to the AQIM movement, have participated in previous rebellions against the Malian

³³ Mark Dearn, "Mindanao: poverty on the frontlines," June 4, 2009, accessed May 7, 2013, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/email/mindanao-poverty-on-the-frontlines>.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Mark Dearn, ""Mindanao: poverty on the frontlines."

³⁶ "Poverty & Equity Data," accessed September 12, 2013, <http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/home/>.

government, which were usually met with repressive measures. Their traditionally held

Map 4.5: Tuareg-populated areas in West Africa.



Source: BBC

areas were integrated into five neighboring countries during French colonial rule (see Map 4.5). Tuaregs have been fighting for self-determination long before Mali gained its independence. Constituting only 10 percent of the population, they are mostly pastoralists, which pits them against farmers and other non-Tuareg groups in conflicts over the rights to grazing land. Since the government invests more on the cultivable areas around the Niger river, the drier north is left to fend for itself. Residents in the north also have to deal with the recurring problems of famines and droughts, without much government assistance. According to a Minorities at Risk Report (MARF), the

government seems “unwilling or unable to implement necessary development and educational projects to alleviate Tuareg marginalization and poverty.”³⁷

Ideally, Tuaregs would like to preserve their culture and land rights, and maintain their long-standing traditional way of life as nomads. While their “underlying grievances ... [may seem] ... economic and cultural,” they are also politically disenfranchised because of the geographical fragmentation of their people.³⁸ Tuaregs have had to move or relocate to other areas, and other countries, in order to improve their living standards. Another factor that may explain Tuaregs’ marginalization is the perception that they are ethnically distinct from the Black Africans that constitute a majority of the Malian population. Tuaregs are considered fair-skinned “Arabs,” (actually a Berber sub-group) and have their own customs, including their language, Tamasheq, all of which reinforce inter-group conflicts. Mali hosts numerous ethnic groups, and since independence, the Tuaregs have never enjoyed a position of prestige.

While the Tuaregs continue their struggle for self-determination, Boko Haram has placed itself as the “savior” of the marginalized Nigerian Muslims. Nigeria is a democracy (incomplete to some), but it has yet to build a strong sense of national identity. The internal dissensions among the many ethnic groups continue to impede the civilian government’s efforts to establish stability. Boko Haram sees itself as a Muslim militant group fighting against a corrupt Christian government, generating a political narrative using religious memes. This “religious conflict” has helped to legitimize Boko Haram’s role in defending Muslims against the Christians. Both the economic and

³⁷ Minorities at Risk Project, “Assessment for Tuareg in Mali,” December 31, 2003, accessed May 2, 2013, [http://www.refworld.org/publisher,MARP,,,469f3ab1c,0.html](http://www.refworld.org/publisher/MARP,,,469f3ab1c,0.html).

³⁸ Ibid.

political power have traditionally lain in the hands of Christians, and the worsening conditions of the poorest regions in the north have convinced BH that they are fighting a “jihad” against the government to erase the injustices suffered by Muslims.

When group grievances arise as a reaction to perceived injustices, poverty or limited economic opportunities are enough to fuel insurgencies. In the previous section, the poverty rate in the Muslim north, where people largely depend on subsistence farming, was noted as being over 70 percent. Nigeria’s rural poor in the northern states must bear the effects of very limited access to healthcare, education, electricity and water supply since cities are prioritized in terms of investments in these services.³⁹ Borno, and its capital of Maiduguri, is an example of a neglected state. According to the Economist, Borno is one of the most “mismanaged states” where people must learn to live with increasing food prices, high illiteracy rates, late salaries, random curfews and searches.⁴⁰

The Philippine situation is similar to that of Muslims in Nigeria. Over the decades, they have engaged in many insurgencies on behalf of agrarian rights. The multitude of ethno-linguistic groups that make up the Philippines has led to the creation of geographical boundaries, which separate ethnic communities. This, in turn, presents a challenge to national integration.⁴¹ There are about eight main ethno-linguistic groups (about 86 percent of the population) that occupy the northern areas and are predominantly Christians (92 percent). Muslims, mostly residing in the southern areas of Sulu and

³⁹ “Enabling poor rural people to overcome poverty in Nigeria,” accessed Oct. 17, 2013, <http://www.ifad.org/operations/projects/regions/pa/factsheets/ng.pdf>

⁴⁰ “A threat to the entire country,” Sept. 29, 2012, accessed Oct. 17, 2013, <http://www.economist.com/node/21563751>

⁴¹ David Brown, “From Peripheral Communities to Ethnic Nations: Separatism in Southeast Asia,” *Pacific Affairs* 61, no. 1 (1988): 52.

Mindanao, make up six percent of the population. Most Filipino Muslims reside within five southern provinces known as the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), but, according to McKenna, it has “severely constrained resources and very limited political autonomy.”⁴² He notes that the ARMM region is the most neglected area in the south, as seen in its high rates of illiteracy, corruption, infant mortality, and poverty, to name a few.⁴³

To compound the situation, the Filipino government had also tried to reduce Muslim control in the south as early as the 1950s. Leaders held a “colonial” mentality that they were responsible for civilizing the “backward” Muslims, and that they needed to integrate them into society.⁴⁴ As a result, they settled Christians in the Muslim-dominated areas of Moro in Mindanao and Sulu. Soon after, a competition over land began since the Christian immigrants were granted land titles. Muslims were sometimes forcibly dispossessed of their lands by Christian settlers, with the help of government forces.⁴⁵ This, inevitably, left an indelible impression that the state was threatening Muslim local rights and identity. McKenna thinks the gradual loss of Muslim “homeland” has motivated insurgents, along with thousands of local supporters, to fight for their “cultural, economic, and political self-determination.”⁴⁶

⁴² Thomas M. McKenna, “Governing Muslims in the Philippines,” accessed Oct. 19, 2013, http://www.hcs.harvard.edu/~hapr/winter07_gov/mckenna.pdf

⁴³ Thomas M. McKenna, “Governing Muslims in the Philippines.”

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Strength of the Security Apparatus

The default response by the state to any potential conflict or tension is the use of force, of which it has legitimate use. However, according to the 2013 Failed States Index, the social contract that legitimizes the use of force is weakened when the state is challenged by competing groups.⁴⁷ Against all three AIGs, the state has waged many organized military campaigns to eradicate these movements, but none have succeeded so far. In a word, the strength (i.e. effectiveness) of the security apparatus reflects the state's ability, or inability, to contain its domestic conflicts. Of the three indicators on the 2012 Failed States index, all three countries scored over 8.0 points out of a total of 10.0 in the category of security apparatus, which means that their security status is "critical." The strength of the security apparatus determines the ability of the state to effectively control its affairs.

Mali has generally struggled since its independence in 1960 to achieve political stability. Decades of political corruption and military dictatorships, economic instability and ethnic conflicts all impeded the creation of a strong security apparatus. The political chaos following the 2012 military coup almost led to a Tuareg and AQIM-led takeover of the capital. The Malian government had to ask for French military intervention to avoid any advancement of the Islamists into Bamako. In July 2013, democratic elections began a new period in Malian politics, resulting in a tentative truce between the government and the Tuareg separatists, but this "remains fragile."⁴⁸ It will take time for this new government to establish itself before it could confront AQIM, definitively. As of now, according to an Economist article, "[n]one of the ECOWAS's members has the logistics

⁴⁷ "2013 Failed States Index," <http://ffp.statesindex.org/indicators>

⁴⁸ "Mali Profile," accessed Nov. 11, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13881370>

and intelligence to retake a large territory” and so Mali may have to consider better trained foreign troops as an option to end this conflict.⁴⁹

In Nigeria, the civil unrest has complicated the government’s ability to maintain stability. Nigeria’s score of 9.5 out of 10 points in the category of security apparatus (compared to Norway’s 2.7) gives it the status of “High Alert.” Of the three countries, Nigeria’s level of insecurity is the highest. Compounding the security crisis, the state’s security forces have been known to be “indiscriminate in their fight against Boko Haram, often killing innocent civilians.”⁵⁰ This level of disproportionate violence has deepened existing communal conflicts between Christians and Muslims, which is a “permanent feature of rural Nigeria.”⁵¹ The level of ongoing violence in northern Nigeria demonstrates the incapacity of the government to manage its internal security problems, leaving civilians at the mercy of insurgents. This could get even worse if BH decides to coordinate with other insurgent groups in neighboring countries. In fact, as one news article claims, BH may be sharing tactics with other militant groups, such as Al-Shabaab of Somalia.⁵²

Thus far, both the army and police are unable to destroy the movement. Even with additional security forces deployed in the state of Borno, Boko Haram is using “urban guerilla warfare” to effectively compromise the army’s position, demonstrating its skills in conducting a civil conflict in closed spaces within a populated city. Its

⁴⁹ “Where al-qaeda rules the roost,” accessed Nov. 11, 2013, <http://www.economist.com/node/21563335>

⁵⁰ John Campbell, “Boko Haram and Nigeria’s Pervasive Violence,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, December 26, 2012.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Jonah Fisher, “Why Nigerian Government Fails to Defeat Boko Haram,” accessed March 27, 2013, <http://www.africaundisguised.com/newsportal/story/why-nigerian-government-fails-defeat-boko-haram>.

confidence in using Maiduguri as a jumping-off point is reflected in a March 2013 attack against an army base 125 miles from Maiduguri, signaling an intent to extend its radius of operations beyond the borders of the city.⁵³

In the Philippines, the strength of the government's security apparatus is a poor 8.7, second to Nigeria's, which puts it in the "Very High Warning" category. Twenty years after its establishment in 1991, ASG is still presenting a challenge to the government. In spite of heavy-handed tactics against this group, and despite U.S. assistance, the state is failing to manage the conflict. Through compromises and agreements, the government was able to "control" MNLF and MILF, the two more organized separatist groups. But, meanwhile, ASG has been moving around the country with impunity, including neighboring countries, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore. Since 2002, the U.S. has been providing substantial military assistance to the Philippines as part of its global war on terror. According to one source, in 2002, the U.S. government provided over \$100 million worth of mainly military hardware, including helicopters, night vision devices, M16 rifles, and heat sensing and electronic monitoring equipment.⁵⁴ Even with the increased military technology, the Filipino security forces have not been able to totally eradicate ASG, and the security situation between the two sides remains at a stalemate.

To extend its influence, ASG has been forging alliances with both MILF (which signed an agreement with the government in October 2012, which has not been

⁵³ "Nigeria – 20 died in Boko Haram attack on base in Borno," accessed March 27, 2013, <http://africajournalismtheworld.com/2013/03/04/nigeria-20-die-in-boko-haram-attack-on-base-in-borno/>.

⁵⁴ Ajai Sahni, "Wars within Borders," *SATP*, accessed March 28, 2013, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/ajaisahni/Pink130602.htm>.

formalized), and Jemaat Islamiyah (JI, an Indonesia-based separatist group), which was responsible for the Bali bomb attack in 2002 that killed around 200 people.⁵⁵ JI has been known to train with ASG in both Jolo and Basilan islands.⁵⁶ Besides warring with the state, ASG is also conducting a parallel campaign against civilians. Some claim that ASG is nothing more than a bandit group that is “victimizing locals and foreigners alike” and is involved in frequent kidnappings to finance its operations.⁵⁷ Despite the state’s military counter-measures against AIGs, and international support, there is no sign of a letting up on both sides.

Local Support

Both ungoverned spaces and weak domestic institutions are contributing factors to the resilience of AIGs. However, even if a group is successful in implanting itself within a community or space, it cannot continue its operations effectively without establishing a local network of support. A state’s legitimacy is derived from the recognition of its citizens; likewise, a resistance movement needs, especially in its formative years, similar support and recognition. AIGs manipulate local support systems to advance their causes, and movements. For example they rely on ethnic and communal ties to ensure loyalty, and have replaced the state in their ungoverned spaces by providing basic services, such as food subsidies, healthcare and education.

⁵⁵ Ajai Sahni, “Wars within Borders.”

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Jerome Anning, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, February 9, 2013, accessed May 5, 2013, <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/355491/misuari-to-abu-sayyaf-enough-we-cannot-tolerate-you-forever>

Ethnic and communal ties

Although AQIM was created by nationalist Algerians returning from fighting in the 1980s Russo-Afghan war, it operates from within the cultural and geographic space of the Tuaregs. After a military and political backlash from the Algerian government, members of AQIM transplanted themselves to Mali, settling among their Tuareg supporters. It is not certain whether AQIM made a calculated decision to incorporate the Tuareg grievances into their own Islamist cause in order to find a “safe haven.” The two groups are, however, not distinct from each other. Tribal and kinship ties play important roles in building alliances, and both Algerians and Tuaregs share common traditions and customs. Thus, the decision of AQIM to “attach” itself to Tuaregs’ grievances against the state seems to not be a far-fetched one. It would have been difficult to otherwise locate another space since neighboring countries such as Libya, Egypt and Tunisia, were undergoing transitional political periods, and other countries such as Morocco and Algeria, would not hesitate to use repressive measures to stamp out any insurgency.

Uniting with disenfranchised Tuaregs, who have been engaged periodically in conflicts with the Malian government over ethno-political rights, thus seemed opportune for AQIM. Strategically, the areas that AQIM chose to settle are generally poor Tuareg-dominated areas in the north that are physically inaccessible, and cannot be easily penetrated by security forces. A 2011 UN mission noted that AQIM is able to find “accommodation with local communities” where the “humanitarian vacuum is being filled by AQIM and/or criminal elements who are reportedly providing services and humanitarian assistance in remote areas where State [sic] presence is reduced or non-

existent.”⁵⁸ This kind of service could assist the AQIM’s efforts to recruit, and enlist locals to gather information, supply arms and other logistics.⁵⁹ A strategy used by AQIM to integrate themselves into local communities is intermarriages between clans or tribes. For example, Mokthan Bel-mokhtar, an Algerian AQIM leader, married the daughter of a Tuareg chief, which helped consolidate and strengthen alliances.⁶⁰ Another strategy that AQIM uses is publicly uniting with locals in condemning the government’s ineffective policies, thus casting itself as a “protector” of the people.

Proof of AQIM’s goal to ensure local support in order to make their movement more successful was revealed in a letter written in July 2012 by its leader, Abdelmalek Droukdel. In it, he suggests that AQIM can maintain its operations in Mali only if it “gain[s] a region under control and a people fighting for us and a refuge for our members that allows us to move forward with our program.”⁶¹ Droukdel understood that repressive policies would alienate supporters rather than mobilize them, and he voiced his disapproval of certain policies adopted by his allies such as Ansar al-Din, which advocates a more extreme form of Islamism in Mali. Droukdel thinks this attitude could alienate AQIM’s efforts to expand and remain relevant.⁶² Clearly, the goal is not to adopt

⁵⁸ “Mali: Holy wars and hostages – Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb,” *IRIN: humanitarian news and analysis*, accessed March 31, 2013, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/95208/MALI-Holy-wars-and-hostages-AQIM-in-the-Maghreb>.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Modibo Goita, “West Africa’s Growing Terrorist Threat: Confronting AQIM’s Sahelian Strategy,” *Africa Security Brief*, February 11, accessed May 5, 2013, <http://www.ndu.edu/press/lib/pdf/Africa-Security-Brief/ASB-11.pdf>.

⁶¹ Pascale Combelles Siegel, “AQIM’s Playbook in Mali,” *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, accessed March 31, 2013, <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/aqims-playbook-in-mali>.

⁶² Siegel, *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*.

heavy-handed measures that would alienate the state and local population. In his letter, Droukdel called for “co-opting local grievances ... [and] adopt[ing] a flexible strategy of alliances ... [with] various sectors and parts of Azawad society – Arabs and Tuaregs and Zingiya [Blacks].”⁶³ In sum, the letter acknowledges that forming convenient alliances with disparate local groups is necessary to the success of a movement. After all, if AQIM’s goals are to create a global jihad then its leadership must mobilize enough support and alliances to counter local, regional and international resistance.

Similarly, Boko Haram in Nigeria recognizes the importance of having a popular base within a space where local Muslims and insurgent groups were, and still are, united in their grievances against the state. One of the biggest grievances that BH shares with its local supporters is the level of police brutality, which includes murder, sometimes of innocent civilians.⁶⁴ The state has been known to carry out extrajudicial killings, torture and arbitrary arrests of anyone suspected of “terrorism.”⁶⁵ Another factor that unites Muslims in a common cause against the Christian state and Christian followers is a sectarian one. Because BH claims to be fighting for disenfranchised Muslims, they may have garnered civilian sympathizers. The logistics behind large-scale attacks against Christian civilians and churches, according to a Nigerian criminal justice representative, could only be done with “local support and collaboration.”⁶⁶ Although BH has publicly stated its goal, which is to institute an Islamic state in Nigeria, experts are debating

⁶³ Siegel, *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*.

⁶⁴ Campbell, “Boko Haram and Nigeria’s Pervasive Violence.”

⁶⁵ 2013 Human Rights Watch Report, accessed May 5, 2013, <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/nigeria>

⁶⁶ Awr Hawkings, “Religious Apartheid.”

whether it is more intent on expanding the war against Christians than bringing attention to the plight of Muslims in the North.⁶⁷ Communal conflicts reinforce the in-group identity of Muslims, providing tacit support for Boko Haram operations. Using the high poverty levels among Muslims, BH is hoping to create a sharp ideo-political divide between itself and a corrupt Christian government. BH has repeatedly been vocal about government neglect of the northern areas, portraying itself as a fighter against poverty, bad governance and corruption.

A similar phenomenon is taking place in the Philippines where a separatist Muslim AIG is fighting against a largely Catholic government. ASG has survived against thirteen years of government's military campaigns. During periods of inactivity, ASG goes underground when there are large-scale incursions by the governments, and then reappears later. An important factor fueling its comebacks is local support, which, in the initial years, allowed it to expand its base into new territories.⁶⁸ The southern islands contain the 15 poorest provinces of the Philippines, and have witnessed years of military incursions and abuses, landlessness, and general government neglect.⁶⁹

The ability of ASG to implant itself in areas having similar ethno-linguistic ties, shows how it is adapting to its environment. This may explain why the Filipino government is failing to penetrate these areas after more than two decades. The cultural bonds that ASG has to the locals are based on a complex web of alliances shaped by clans, ancestral ties, religion and ethno-linguistic relationships. An Australian

⁶⁷ Hawkings, "Religious Apartheid."

⁶⁸ Eusaquito P. Manalo, "The Philippine Response to Terrorism: the Abu Sayyaf Group," Naval Postgraduate School Thesis, p. 3, accessed April 4, 2013, <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/manalo.pdf>.

⁶⁹ Malao, p. 29.

intelligence reports claims that ASG could have as many as twenty-six clan groupings within its fold, which provide most of the local support base.⁷⁰ Clans generally have their own clan leaders, as dictated by custom. Thus, ASG adapts to its environment by blending in with other locals, and these “close ties and anonymity help to account for these groups’ longevity.”⁷¹

Receiving and maintaining local support is not automatic, and as shown in the cases of these groups, this requires not only time, but also steps to ensure that support continues. In some cases, where there is a strong sense of in-group identity, it becomes relatively easy. In all three cases, there are shared cultural traditions, reinforced by common grievances. Insurgent groups will use both to further their goals, but they also must look for ways to legitimize their goals, without alienating supporters with the use of terror tactics. As elaborated in the next section, an AIG’s decision to become either a “charity” social institution or a “protector” of locals’ rights against the government, or both, helps explain why forming a nexus with the local population is necessary to its survival.

Provision of Social Services

AIGs frequently point to poor governance, such as inadequate social and health care services and educational opportunities, as a major reason for engaging in armed conflict against the government. Integrating themselves into local communities requires

⁷⁰ “Abu Sayyaf Group,” Australian National Security Report, revised October 2012, accessed April 4, 2013, http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/agd/WWW/nationalsecurity.nsf/Page/What_Governments_are_doing_Listing_of_Terrorism_Organisations_Abu_Sayyaf_Group.

⁷¹ Billye G. Hutchison, “Abu Sayyaf,” USAF Counterproliferation Center, accessed April 4, 2013, <http://cpc.au.af.mil/PDF/monograph/abusayyaf.pdf>.

more than just having similar ethnic and communal ties. The impact of AQIM on domestic stability in Mali is yet to be determined, as they are relative newcomers to the international scene. Therefore, there are not enough reports outlining its charity schemes among the Tuaregs. There is no question, however, that it is attempting to strengthen alliances with the indigenous Tuaregs. One of the strategies AQIM uses is to funnel monies from illegal activities such as drug trafficking, smuggling and kidnapping for ransoms, to the people. These ventures have not only generated much income to finance AQIM's operations, but they have also provided "income and job opportunities for communities and individuals in the region."⁷² An Africa Security Report claims that AQIM has been hiring "local bandits and rebels" in nearby regions, while local Tuaregs are being pushed into "the arms of AQIM" because of limited economic opportunities.⁷³ An estimate of its criminal wealth, according to the Africa Security report, is around \$70 million, resulting from kidnappings alone between 2006 and 2011, and excluding revenues from illicit drug trafficking.⁷⁴

The same can be said for Boko Haram, which has replaced, for now, the government's role in the north. Very early on, it made a symbolic move by choosing to build a mosque in the city of Maiduguri as its headquarters. This was just after the security forces killed BH founder, Mohammed Ali, in December 2003. During the following five years BH regrouped, and entrenched itself in the community, building its reputation as a charity service, by providing food and subsidies.⁷⁵ Establishing itself as

⁷² Modibo Goita, "West Africa's Growing Terrorist Threat."

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

an “institution” for the people not only reinforced its position there, but also strengthened its ties with the local inhabitants. As noted earlier, the conditions of Muslims in the north provide another reason to support BH. Even so, some say that BH has been “terrorizing” local residents into supporting them, rather than providing needy services such as food and health care services, according to a New York Times article.⁷⁶ Although this has not been confirmed elsewhere, “forcing” locals to become supporters deviates from how AQIM and ASG establish their local support systems. Such a method reveals that shared cultural practices and grievances may not be enough to convince locals to become willing participants in insurgent movement, as BH is finding out.

As seen with the two previous case studies, socio-political needs and cultural disaffection are the root causes of most grievances, providing a convenient platform for the AIGs to use. The Abu Sayyaf Group has been able to manipulate these grievances by subscribing to the community ideal within Islam. The role of the community or *umma* plays an important role in Islam because it, not the individual, upholds the values of Islam, which, in turn, benefit the larger society. Measures to preserve the community ideal include charities to provide welfare services, health care, and education. These charities serve the dual function of actual charity giving and centers for recruiting, fundraising, arms dealing and other illicit activities, which were part of the ASGs’ policies.⁷⁷ So, in a word, these services are magnanimous, but they also preserve ASG’s presence.

⁷⁵ Andrew Walker, “What is Boko Haram?” *USIP 2012 Report*.

⁷⁶ Adam Nossiter, “In Nigeria, a Deadly Group’s Rage has Deadly Roots,” *New York Times*, February 25, 2012.

⁷⁷ Eusaquito P. Manalo, “The Philippine Response to Terrorism,” p. 36.

Most of ASG's wealth comes from its ransoms from kidnappings, and has generally been used to strengthen familial ties. Ransoms from ASG's kidnappings have not only paid for weapons, but also to support group members in exchange for cooperation.⁷⁸ Securing familial ties has been a way to ensure that Abu Sayyaf is always surrounded by loyal and trustworthy supporters. Groups benefitting from these services are determined by their ethno-linguistic affiliations, which potentially could thwart any government efforts to infiltrate them.⁷⁹ To guarantee long-lasting loyalty, ASG relies on familial ties, and, in fact, "most members are relatives, friends, classmates, and neighborhood associates."⁸⁰

While the provision of local services may boost the status of AIGs within local communities, there is an ideological solidarity that local supporters share with regard to the alleged goals that AIGs claim to pursue. Ideology drives the emotional zeal that binds followers to each other, and to the cause behind the movement. The next chapter will briefly look at two older AIGs in order to support the thesis that the same indicators – ungoverned spaces, weak domestic institutions and local support – were just as applicable to AIGs that existed in the past, and which had a high rate of survival. The comparison should strengthen the case I am making that these three factors are extremely central to AIG longevity.

⁷⁸ Manalo, p. 36.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 38-9.

⁸⁰ Billye G. Hutchison, "Abu Sayyaf."

Chapter 5

Duration of Past Armed Insurgent Groups (AIGs)

The nature of insurgencies generally reflects the types of changes and experiences within the state, and their messages are expressed strategically in language bytes – whether framed by religion, nationalism, communism, or other emotionally-charged ideologies. Once there is a public consensus on perceived grievances, AIGs are quickly born. Although this thesis set out to identify three conditions that help to prolong the lives of AIGs in the twenty-first century, this section will show that these indicators carry equal weight in explaining the longevity of earlier insurgent movements. It will look at two AIGs located in different parts of the world. Both Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path of Peru) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE of Sri Lanka) used geographic spaces and local connections to maintain a presence in their respective “weak” countries for more than twenty years before brutal use of military force ended their movements.

Sendero Luminoso (SL)

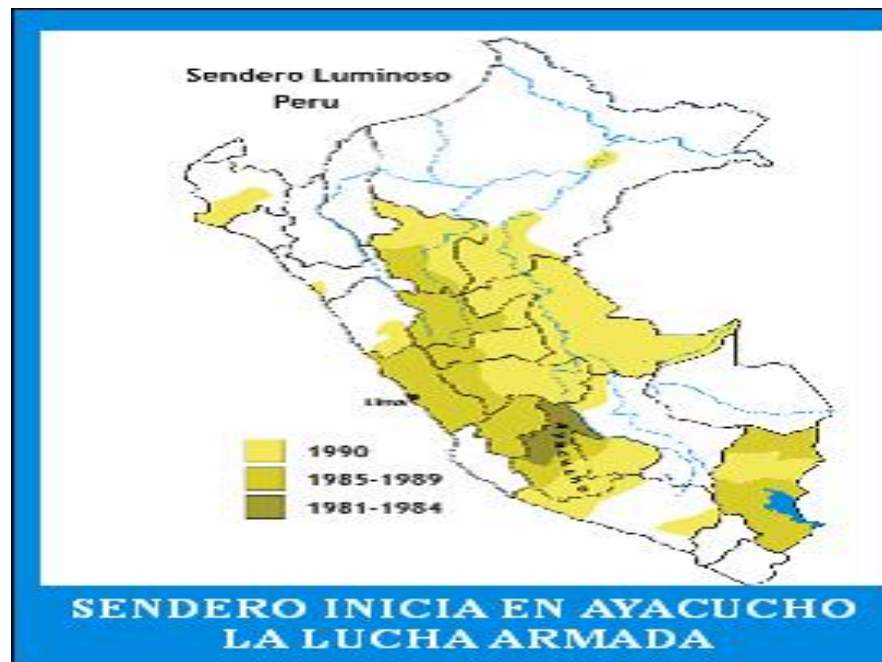
During the Cold War period, the spread of Communism, anarchism and Maoist sentiments was an effective organizing principle for many groups. The Shining Path in Peru (or Sendero Luminoso) subscribed to a Maoist-influenced form of Communism. Although its ideological and organizational foundations began in the 1960s, the group started its campaign against the new civilian government in 1980. After nearly 15 years, they left billions of dollars worth of destruction, and more than 25,000 deaths.¹ Its revolutionary vision was to reform the Peruvian government by removing all traces of

¹ Max G. Manwaring, “Peru's Sendero Luminoso: The Shining Path Beckons,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 541 (1995): 165.

foreign influences, and to eventually replace the government with an indigenous form of “Peruvian democracy.”

There was a sense of “militant, revolutionary commitment to a long-term and very disciplined approach” that sustained the movement until it petered out in the early 1990s with the capture of its figurehead, Abimael Guzman.² It has been mentioned that SL is still operational in some areas in Peru, and has a membership of around 200 to 300 armed militants.³ It is now protecting narco-trafficking routes across Peru to acquire funds to revive SL.⁴

Map 5.1: Map shows increasing influences of Sendero Luminoso during 1981-90.



Source: <http://www.galeon.com>

² Max Manwaring, “Peru’s Sendero Luminoso,” p. 158.

³ “Sendero Luminoso,” Federation of American Scientists Report, accessed May 11, 2013, http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/sendero_luminoso.htm.

⁴ Ibid.

However, its early success during the 1980s as an AIG was due to similar indicators that are benefitting present day AIGs, including their operations in ungoverned spaces, the presence of local support systems, and the “failing” social institutions of the state.

SL was successful in operating from within rural areas, manipulating geographical isolation to create a “full-fledged, territorial-based insurgent state ... [and] imposing territorial units and structures of governance.”⁵ One of its effective strategies was to infiltrate new zones or regions by gradually taking over local power centers through targeted assassinations (see Map 5.1). Local SL cells were established to become the power centers in these areas. Thus SL was able to consolidate its political power over its increasing territorial spaces. By the end of 1993, SL was present in 114 provinces, including the areas that grow coca leaves, which produce 60 percent of the world’s supply of cocaine.⁶ This group deliberately sought refuge in areas close to the Andes known as the *puna*, or areas above 4,000 meters.⁷ Such areas offered SL ready access to populated areas below, major highways and rainforests, which were generally isolated and inaccessible to government forces. Government and military forces occupied the coastal areas and large cities.

SL claimed to be fighting a “people’s war” so it wanted to discredit government institutions. It wanted to create a wedge of distrust between the government and the people. It destroyed government buildings, assassinated officials, and targeted the country’s infrastructure such as the electric company. This was to establish a de facto

⁵ Robert B. Kent, “Geographical Dimensions of the Shining Path Insurgency in Peru,” *Geographical Review* 83, no. 4 (1993): 441.

⁶ Manwaring, p. 162.

⁷ Kent, p. 446.

authority in its acquired territories. Indiscriminate violence against both officials and civilians was deliberate, and the terror campaign to elicit fear, loyalty and compliance proved successful to maintaining SL's momentum. SL's decade long military conflict against government forces showed the weakness of the state's security apparatus to effectively contain any domestic insurgencies.

To make matters worse, Peru's ongoing economic crisis during the 1980s, due to mismanagement after more than 20 years of military rule, pushed the country into a debt crisis and hyperinflation. Land reforms proved inadequate to ease the poverty of the majority of Peruvians, who were poor farmers, reliant on agriculture for their source of income. They lacked the skills and technology to compete with large landowners. New laissez-faire economic policies favored the local elites, which eventually led to a stark socio-economic inequality. To correct this imbalance, the government sought to borrow money from international banks, notably the IMF, which led to a debt crisis. According to Carlos Gomez, in the early 1980s, "the amount of borrowing amounted to more than 473 million dollars, yet the infrastructure was still weak."⁸ He continued on to say that a symptom of the government's weak institutions was the "126 deaths for every 1000 infants born due to inadequate medical facilities."⁹ In sum, living conditions of majority of Peruvians continued to deteriorate, and by the early 1990s, "inflation had increased more than 7,000% and per capita GDP decreased to 1,908 (down from 2,643 in 1987!)."¹⁰

⁸ Carlos Alberto Gomez, "Peru's Debt Crisis and Subsequent Shock Economy," accessed Oct. 21, 2013, <http://www.international.ucla.edu/article.asp?parentid=19898>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

As SL was based in rural areas, it actively sought the support of the mostly peasant communities that reside in the valley areas, which were the main bases of operations. SL employed a series of strategies to gain local support, either through violence and intimidation or as “protectors” of the peasants against the alleged tyranny of large landowners and government officials. Herein lies a clear similarity between SL and Boko Haram. Both AIGs sought to “terrorize” locals into supporting their cause, resulting in local residents becoming cautious and reluctant to join the movements.

Land ownership was a prickly issue between poor peasants and the government, and SL coopted locals’ grievances by claiming to be their advocates. In other areas, mostly in the upper Huallaga Valley in northern Peru, a majority of the coca growers were peasant farmers. In order to protect this lucrative business, SL entered “into a patron-client relationship ... [to] defend the interests of peasants.”¹¹ As a result, SL became a de facto protector of peasant farmers against the government’s coca eradication schemes and other corrupt officials who sought to exploit coca growers. SL’s stratagems of selective intimidation and quasi-protector role contributed to its continuing presence among the civilian population.

Similar factors also informed the movement of the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. The following section will show how operational bases in a distant geographic space, local support and “weak” institutions also sustained the rise of this AIG.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)

The LTTE was a separatist group, formed in the 1970s, that fought from the 1980s to 2000s to establish a Tamil state (or eelam) in north Sri Lanka. This movement

¹¹ Kent, p. 449.

lasted around twenty-six years until it signed a peace agreement with the Sri Lankan government in 2009. At one point LTTE controlled about a quarter of Sri Lanka, had an army of 20,000 soldiers, and was equipped with an impressive array of military equipment that included speedboats and submarine capabilities.¹² LTTE's armed conflict began in 1983 already with "superior discipline and commitment to creating eelam."¹³

LTTE shared many characteristics with SL in its organizational and strategic aspects. However, whereas SL had to continually fight to gain local support, LTTE leadership could rely on shared ethno-linguistic and cultural traditions that dominate in the generally Tamil-concentrated north. Similarly to SL, the three indicators that sustained its militant movement were the consolidation of territorial spaces conveniently located away from the capital, "weak" social institutions that facilitated a prolonged civil war, and connections to local supporters, who, mainly, provided ready recruits for its army.

LTTE's controlled mainly the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka, but its de facto capital was the northern city of Kilinochchi, which was around 330 KM from Sri Lanka's capital, Colombo. It operated a military base out of the jungle area of the northeastern district of Mullaitivu, which saw the last battle between Sri Lankan forces and the Tamil Tigers that eventually ended the 25-year civil war in 2009. From

¹² Neil DeVotta, "The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the Lost Quest for Separatism in Sri Lanka," *Asian Survey* 49, No. 6 (2009): 1023.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 1029.

Map 5.2: Main conflict areas in the LTTE-controlled areas.



Source: BBC.com

1996 to 2009, LTTE experimented with statehood by creating courts, a tax collection system, government administrative offices, and television and radio broadcasting stations in its nominal capital, Kilinochchi.¹⁴ Then in 2000, it wrestled control of the strategic Elephant Pass (see Map), consolidating LTTE's presence in the north with the additional control of the Jaffna Peninsula, and the main transportation routes. It was only in early 2009 that LTTE's power began to wane after the loss of Kilinochchi, and subsequent military defeats. However, for more than thirty years, its influence in the northern areas generally remained undisturbed so it was able to become an effective fighting force with political ambitions. The relative strength or weakness of the Sri Lankan state also facilitated the AIG's continuity.

Sri Lanka, like Peru, relied largely on an agricultural-based economy. Distrust of industrial and capital-based economies was common, and a state-controlled economy led to economic policies that resulted in low GDP rates, high unemployment, especially in

¹⁴ "The history of the Tamil Tigers," accessed Oct. 25, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/focus/2008/11/2008112019115851343.html>

rural areas, and lower standards of living. The “overall effect was a virtual collapse of the economy in the mid-1970s.”¹⁵ Eventually, Sri Lanka had to receive assistance from the World Bank and the IMF through the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) that allegedly reformed the financial sectors, and restructured the government budget. However, a Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) 1999 Report acknowledged that the SAP may not have considered “the efficacy of the process towards the development programmes, poverty alleviation, employment generation and rural development as a whole.”¹⁶ During the 1970s and 1980s, poverty rates, income disparities, consumer prices and unemployment grew exponentially. GNI per capita from 1985 to 2000 roughly held at between US \$380--\$860.¹⁷

Although the strength of domestic institutions, determined by the government’s ability to provide crucial social services, is used as an indicator for failed and failing states on the Failed States Index, it should be noted that both Peru and Sri Lanka did attempt to implement far-reaching social and economic reforms in the pre-insurgent years. Between the 1940s and 1970s, Sri Lanka spent much of its revenues on three social programs: health, education, and food subsidies. Peru opened its economy to foreign investments and privatizations of certain industries, such as mining, and also attempted land reforms to redistribute land rights to poor peasants. At one point, it experienced one of the highest economic growths, between 1950 and 1965 because of its

¹⁵ FAO Report on Sri Lanka, accessed Oct. 25, 2013, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/004/ac158e/ac158e0g.htm>

¹⁶ 1999 FAO Report on Sri Lanka.

¹⁷ 2011 GNI in Sri Lanka was \$2,580. Accessed Oct. 24, 2013, <http://www.indexmundi.com/facts>

exports and foreign investments.¹⁸ However, in both countries, the costs of maintaining social and economic reforms proved too costly, leading to heavy borrowing, which then created a debt crisis.

As a result, the poorest groups in both countries suffered the effects of deteriorating socio-economic conditions. In Peru, it was the rural peasants, and in Sri Lanka, it was the Tamils. A majority of the 2 million Sri Lankan Tamils live in the north (44 percent) and the east (28 percent), where they worked the tea and coffee plantations since the mid-19th century. In the post-independence period, political policies that emphasized ethnic differences ensured poor governance and general neglect in the northeastern areas. According to a 2012 Human Development Report, Tamils were “[t]rapped in generational, long-term poverty, due to historical circumstances and a variety of other factors relating to geography, language and access to services, [and] they have poor health and education outcomes relative to the rest of the country.”¹⁹ The civil war did nothing to mitigate their situation either.

It is important to see how electoral politics can provoke a civil war. In the decades following Sri Lanka’s 1948 independence from Great Britain, the Sinhalese Buddhist government instituted far-reaching policies to ostracize the Hindu Tamils, such as adopting Sinhala-based curricula in schools and favoring the religious status of Buddhism over Hinduism. Post-independence electoral politics used “religion” as a reason to mobilize support along ethnic and party lines. The politicization of religious and cultural identities further alienated Tamils from the state, and by the early 1980s, set

¹⁸ “Peru: Markets, Government and the Sources of Growth,” http://lacea.org/WEB/country_studies/peru.pdf

¹⁹ 2012 HDR Report, accessed Oct. 23, 2013, <http://hdr.undp.org>

a tone for potential civil war. A riot in 1983 marked the beginning of a Tamil diaspora, and the expansion of the LTTE movement. According to DeVotta, "... rebel groups that numbered one or two score became hundreds strong. Sri Lanka's civil war had begun."²⁰

Like SL, LTTE claimed that they were saving the people from oppressors. Both AIGs pursued a path to legitimize their role and discredit the sitting government. Assuming the role of "protector" or "savior" provided a convenient rationale for AIG leaders in the earlier and later insurgent movements. Maintaining local support was necessary to consolidating territorial bases for both organizations. LTTE established itself in parts of the north (Jaffna was the main city) and the east, traditionally a predominant Tamil area. It created a parallel de facto government, complete with its own judicial courts, health and education boards in the city of Kilinochchi. The aim was to create "institutions geared towards the welfare of the civilian population and the economic development of Tamil Eelam ... committed to the rights, welfare and development of the Tamil community on whose behalf the militant and political struggles have been waged."²¹ Without strong local support, LTTE would not have been able to attract adherents to its movement, which at one point swelled its ranks to 20,000 fighters.²² When attacked, LTTE retreated into the civilian ranks, which served at times as "human shields." In fact, this strategy of operating from within civilian areas "discouraged LTTE leaders from escaping into surrounding jungles and reverting to

²⁰ DeVotta, p. 1028.

²¹ Kristian Stokke, "Building the Tamil Eelam State: Emerging State Institutions and Forms of Governance in LTTE-Controlled Areas in Sri Lanka," *Third World Quarterly* 27, no. 6 (2006): 1024.

²² DeVotta, p. 1023.

guerrilla warfare,” which eventually led to their downfall.²³ The ruthless counter-insurgency measures of the then president Rajapaksa government targeted civilian areas in 2009, killing between 10,000-30,000 civilians in order to contain LTTE, forcing them to agree to a ceasefire.²⁴

²³ Ibid., p. 1045.

²⁴ DeVotta, p. 1045.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This thesis argues that armed insurgent groups (AIGs) persist in their host countries because of three conditions: ungoverned spaces, weak domestic institutions that fail to deliver public goods such as economic development and security, and local support networks. Three AIGs were selected from different geographical regions to see whether these conditions have had a similar impact on the longevity of AIGs. The groups are al-Qaeda of Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) of Mali, Boko Haram (BH) of Nigeria, and Abu Sayyaf (ASG) of the Philippines. This paper also looked at two older AIGs, Sendero Luminoso (SL) of Peru and the Liberation Tigers of Sri Lanka (LTTE), to see whether these indicators are equally valid across time and locations.

Each of the three indicators was subdivided into categories in order to show how AIGs are exploiting these interrelated factors that figure prominently in relatively weak states. “Ungoverned spaces” covers general topography of the land, distance between seat of government and the AIG’s operational base, and the porous borders that exist between and among neighboring states. It also covers “non-physical” ungoverned areas, but this was not included in the analysis of the indicators. According to my research, although the three AIGs conform to these categories, a difference should be pointed out in the case of Boko Haram. Both AQIM and ASG are located in difficult and isolated terrain that impedes swift government crackdowns. BH is based within the city of Maiduguri where it is still able to wage an effective and long military campaign against government forces because Maiduguri is not governed effectively. In fact, BH is now raising the level of their game, by operating outside their main base of Maiduguri in the

state of Borno. In September 2013, BH attacked a college dorm in Yobe state, killing around 50 students.¹ In response, the Nigerian military attacked BH's Maiduguri base on October 25, 2013, killing around 74 members.² This tells us that AIGs do not necessarily have to operate in geographic isolation. Rather, ungoverned spaces can be "closed spaces," like the city of Maiduguri, where there is no fear of government intervention.

The second indicator looks at how weak domestic institutions facilitate the longevity of AIGs, because governments are unable to combat poverty and economic decline, group grievances and recurring conflicts. Using the information from the 2013 Failed States Index, an annual report, the thesis shows that the three host countries did not meet the requirements for stable domestic institutions. Poverty and group grievances were consistently present in the three countries, but the effectiveness of the security apparatus varies. Of the three, rich Nigeria has the strongest security forces in numbers and weapons, but has the worst ranking in terms of insecurity (9.5 out of a total of 10 points). Besides having to deal with high levels of domestic crime, Nigeria's forces must contend with BH, which continues to outwit the security forces. Brutal government crackdowns have proven to be counter-productive.

The third indicator is the local support system, which is similar to a quasi social contract between AIGs and the local civilian population. By exploiting the socio-economic grievances of local people, the AIGs can legitimize their roles, and further their interests, within the community. This indicator includes both the categories of ethnic and communal ties that bind the two sides, and the social services that AIGs provide to their

¹ "Nigeria attack: Students shot dead as they slept," Sept. 29, 2013, accessed, October 29, 2013, www.bbc.co.uk.

² "UPDATE 1-Nigeria says kills 74 Islamists in ground, air assault," Oct. 25, 2013, accessed Oct. 27, 2013, www.reuters.com.

supporters. Without question, this “contract” is positively reinforced by shared cultural traditions in the case of AQIM, ASG and LTTE, but there is one caveat. In the case of BH, where both locals and BH members share a bond as Muslims, BH has been “forcing” people into supporting them, killing innocent people randomly. As a result, this has led to the creation of civilian vigilante groups in Muslim northeastern Nigeria, where BH operates. So, despite similar traditions and grievances, locals are not “buying into” BH’s messages. Like BH, Sendero Luminoso sometimes had to coerce people into becoming supporters with the result that they actually lost support. In the other cases considered, however, it was not force but rather the “common bonds” and the provision of social services that were important to maintaining ties to the locals.

In short, with a few caveats, it does seem that my three conditions are necessary to ensure the longevity of AIGs. The use of force by AIGs against their communities is obviously counterproductive. However, most of AIGs’ operations are directed against the state’s apparatus. Over the years, they have had to learn how to adapt to their changing environments in order to remain “credible.” Committing violence against the state ensures that they remain “relevant” and present.

In turn, governments have retaliated in kind, using force as a preventive measure. Although the use of force against insurgencies has largely been the method of choice, its rate of success has varied. A notable success is the Sri Lanka case, which saw the civil conflict end in 2009. The Sri Lankan government has been accused by the international community of committing egregious human rights violations by indiscriminately killing thousands of Tamil civilians in 2009 in its quest to end the conflict against the LTTE.

Despite the successful close to the conflict, Sri Lanka has become a pariah state within the international community.

On the other hand, force has not worked in the three case studies. In May of 2013, Nigerian Jonathan Goodluck ordered an all-out military offensive, the first of many he claims, against Boko Haram in the state of Borno, which, according to the Guardian newspaper, instead of containing the fighters, pushed them to the neighboring borders of Chad, Niger and Cameroon.³ In fact, such “army abuses may be counter-productive because they stir anti-government rage that helps keep the insurgency going,” the article continues.⁴

Both the Philippines and Mali are undergoing similar experiences with their respective AIGs. In September 2013, the Filipino government launched a military offensive against Abu Sayyaf and another splinter group, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom fighters, after a dozen hostages were kidnapped in the southern city of Zamboanga. The origins of this splinter group are unclear, but some have said that it broke away from the Moro National Liberation Front.⁵ Confirmation of these alliances comes from the Manila Standard, which says that fighting is spreading from Zamboanga City to Basilan, long considered the operational base for Abu Sayyaf.⁶ But if insurgent groups are uniting to remain relevant, then it would take a different strategy, and a longer time, to uproot these AIGs. Meanwhile, the Filipino government continues to deny that

³ “Almost 1000 have died in Nigerian jails this year, says Amnesty International,” accessed Oct. 22, 2013, www.theguardian.com

⁴ www.theguardian.com

⁵ “New Clash in the Philippines Raises Fears of a Wider Threat, Sept. 2013, accessed Oct. 27, 2013, www.nytimes.com.

⁶ “Abu Sayyaf joins MNLF, Sept. 13, 2013, accessed Oct. 27, 2013, www.manilastandardtoday.com.

this “domestic matter” is widening, and is confident that the conflict will be contained, according to The New York Times.⁷ Since the kidnapping, 300 armed rebels have been “holding off military forces in Zamboanga City” without a solution in sight.⁸

In Mali, French troops succeeded in thwarting AQIM, but not expelling them from the country. France turned over its security responsibilities for Mali to the UN in July 2013, but retains a small force in Mali. However, northern Mali is still inaccessible and uncontrollable. In the month of September 2013, AQIM targeted a Malian army post in Timbuktu in a suicide car-bomb attack, killing more than a dozen people.⁹ Another suicide attack in October of the same year left two Chadian peacekeepers dead, injuring nine, in the northern town of Tessalit. As a result, there was a concerted military response by French, UN and Malian forces aimed at “preventing a resurgence of Islamist rebels in Mali,” which ended without a decisive win.¹⁰ In other words, military offensives have not yet succeeded in containing AQIM, much less disbanding the group.

Clearly, in all three cases, and despite continuing counter-insurgency efforts, these AIGs are continuing their operations in their respective countries. As with any problem, the next step requires the search for effective solutions. Because insurgencies generally target the state, and they are a major security issue, the use of force is the most compelling choice. However, the Sri Lankan case is a good example of why the use of force cannot be established as a norm, given the weight of international laws. The ready

⁷ “New Clash,” *nytimes.com*, Sept. 2013.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Al “Qaeda ‘terror blueprint’ for North Mali revealed,” accessed Oct. 25, 2013, www.france24.com.

¹⁰ “Multi-national force launches attack in Mali,” Oct. 24, 2013, accessed Oct. 27, 2013, www.aljazeera.com

use of force, and the potential for its abuse by governments, might set a bad precedent for countries. Also, in all three cases studied here, large-scale offensives, often with outside help, have failed to curb any of the insurgency.

A better solution would be to create opportunities that allow both governments and AIGs to avail themselves of the services of international organizations (IOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). First, insurgencies must be securitized by the international community so that they occupy a central place on the global agenda. Laws, treaties, conferences, and policy coordination should evolve as a matter of course. Second, national governments must be “pressured” into accepting outside help once insurgencies are identified as major threats. Because of the deep mistrust between the two sides in conflict, third parties can serve as effective mediators, and advisers, in domestic conflicts. In fact, the ASG has already requested that the Organization of Islamic Cooperation or the UN be involved in any peaceful negotiations in order to resolve the ongoing conflict. It remains to be seen if this offer will be taken up by the Filipino government. States are often deeply suspicious of the “intentions” of outside groups, and see conflicts as domestic issues. However, a state’s sovereignty is not necessarily compromised if it uses the available means to address the realities that threaten its existence. Insurgencies that are persisting over lengthy periods are proving too costly to the very countries that can ill afford to eliminate them.

The last solution, and the most difficult one, is to tackle the root causes of conflicts, which stem from political and economic instability. As we saw, ungoverned spaces, weak domestic institutions and local support, all contribute to sustaining insurgencies, though the exact contribution of each is difficult to measure. Using a

different lens, a question is asked: where exactly do insurgencies occur? Countries with good governance tend to have better economic stability than others without. So, most “stable” countries have few or no insurgent conflicts. The converse is true for countries struggling to deal with economic privation, corruption and autocracy. The root solution, therefore, would be to improve the economic conditions of the people, who have had to endure decades of economic misery. In most cases, sustained economic privation creates the conditions for forms of protests or conflicts. Any solution requires coordination among governments, international agencies and civil society (domestic as well as global). One good effort that should be cited is the commitment made by 189 countries, including Nigeria, the Philippines and Mali, to meet the Millennium Development Goals set out in the 2000 UN Millennium Declaration. It is also a positive sign that already, before the targeted date of 2015, the goal of halving global poverty has been met.

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