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A young child, seen from behind, stands on a wooden structure. The child is wearing a purple dress and is holding a large, red, propeller-like object on their back. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a blue sky and some structures.

INCLUSIVE PEACE IN MUSLIM MINDANAO: REVISITING THE DYNAMICS OF CONFLICT AND EXCLUSION

Francisco J. Lara Jr. and Phil Champain

Understanding conflict. Building peace.

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Front cover image: Girl with toy airplane from the houses-on-stilts village of Tubig Indangan in Simunul Island, Tawi-Tawi.

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Inclusive Peace in Muslim Mindanao: Revisiting the Dynamics of Conflict and Exclusion

Francisco J. Lara Jr. and Phil Champain¹

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Executive Summary

The people of Mindanao in the Southern Philippines have been suffering the effects of violent conflict for over 30 years, at a cost of at least 120,000 dead, and the displacement of an estimated two million people. There have been peace agreements, in particular the agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1996, but these agreements have failed to secure a lasting peace. Indeed, the evidence points to an increase in violence following the 1996 settlement.

This paper sets out a case that explains why there is ‘so much conflict in the post-conflict moment’. It argues that at the core of the problem is the exclusionary political economy that is developed and sustained through a complex system of contest and violence. Rebellion-related violence relating to the vertical armed challenges against the infrastructure of the state combines with inter- or intra-clan and group violence relating to horizontal armed challenges between and among families, clans, and tribes. These two types of conflict interact in ways that are poorly understood and which sustain conditions serving the interests of those with access to economic and political power and exclude the majority of those in Mindanao from opportunities to improve their lives. The authors argue that the region’s underdevelopment can no longer be ascribed solely to the colonial and post-colonial exploitation of the region and discrimination towards Muslims and indigenous people, but must also be connected to the shifting balance of economic and political power within Bangsamoro society itself.

A number of key research findings support this argument:

- Incidences of local clan-based, or group violence (“*rido*”) have increased markedly following the 1996 peace agreement;
- The weaknesses of the Misuari government post-1996, and its inability to control the violence that intensified following the increase in *rido* and the war between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the GRP in 2000, opened up opportunities for rival groups to step up to the plate and (re)acquire economic and political power;
- Conflict has enabled the continued growth of an underground economy marked by the proliferation of illegal drugs, unlicensed firearms, and control over small-scale and unlicensed mining activity and smuggling, providing revenue for local clans; and
- Muslim Mindanao continues to be excluded from the fruits of national growth, and the minimal growth in the region itself is unsustainable, and mainly dependent on election and reconstruction-related consumption spending.

Given this, international and local efforts to end armed rebellion and that call for immediate ceasefires, elections, autonomy, and decentralisation as the key instruments for lasting peace and development are left wanting. They are inadequate not because these are the wrong aspirations, but because they do not engage strategically with the less visible yet vital dynamics of inter- and intra-clan conflict.

Peacebuilding strategies must, therefore do the following:

- Include consideration of local clan-related conflict dynamics and the ways in which armed rebellion interacts with them;
- Involve a closer exploration of the informal economy and the contestation for political influence that brings control of this economy; and
- Enable the true nature of political and economic exclusion to be unpacked and effectively addressed.

Making progress on these fronts is challenging in that it requires dialogue processes which:

- Operate at the nexus between armed rebellion and local community conflict;
- Engage those towards both ends of the excluded/included spectrum – in order to confront and unpack current patterns of power and control;
- Draw in the private sector – since this sector is key to the delivery of jobs and incomes;
- Develop practical and strategic reforms – since dialogue in and of itself is only a means to an end;
- Work at multiple levels – since managing conflict is the responsibility of many; and
- Sustain momentum over an extended period – since societal change takes time.

If this peacebuilding approach can be strengthened and successfully complement other peacebuilding initiatives, then it is more likely that the resources for equitable and sustainable development in Mindanao can be harnessed effectively, to bring about the transition from persistent violence and underdevelopment to peace and prosperity for all.

1. Introduction

Musheera lugs most of her personal belongings wherever she goes. She is used to evacuating her children and her valuables at a moment's notice, and like other Muslim women caught in the long conflict in Mindanao, she has witnessed the mindless violence and depredation caused by a conflict where there are no bystanders, only perpetrators and victims. She went through the same ordeal when she evacuated her family from Kauswagan, Lanao del Norte to Iligan City following a deadly attack on civilians by Muslim rebels in August 2008. Four years of working for peace has not diminished her fear of reprisals. Musheera provides psycho-social counseling to Muslims and Christians who have experienced the trauma of conflict. Sometimes the Christian victims could not bring themselves to trust a Muslim woman to help them recover from the trauma of violence. 'We had been talking about peace in this municipality for more than ten years, engaging in countless rituals to promote solidarity and peace, but it only took a single day of cruelty and violence to bring back all the fear, anger, and suspicion that we thought we had left behind'.

Makin used to join in *rido* (violent inter- and intra-clan feuds), believing that revenge was the only way his family could restore its honour and protect its interests when threatened by other clans or tribes. In his village, the *rido* are often due to land issues, but they can easily erupt out of jealousy, humiliation, and disrespect for the family. 'It's dangerous because you can get killed even if the problem involves a distant relative, so everyone in the clan is cautious and always prepared to fight'. Makin confesses that his family was involved in a *rido* that led to several deaths. The violence prevented children from going to school and men from working in the fields. He nearly left school, but his father helped to settle the feud, enabling him to finish his studies. 'Thanks be to Allah... if I had not finished school I would have no future. That would have led me to the path of the rebels, since my father was a rebel commander himself. Worse, it could have steered me to the criminal gangs here', Makin says.

The stories of Musheera and Makin² underscore the recurring violence that accompanies successful political settlements in the Philippines and other countries in Southeast Asia. Musheera and Makin reside in communities where violence was expected to subside after a peace agreement was signed between rebels and the government in 1996. However, a few years after the agreement was signed, a new war broke out and inter-clan conflicts intensified, exposing the fragility of the agreement and provoking a re-examination of strategies designed to ensure a lasting peace.

The situation in Muslim Mindanao begs an important question: *Why is there so much conflict in the post-conflict moment?*³

This paper examines the roots of persistent conflict by going beyond the original narrative of resistance and rebellion to shed light on the shifting political and economic conditions that explain their longevity. It distinguishes between the original causes of conflict (*onset*) and the emerging politico-economic conditions that underlie their persistence (*duration*).⁴ The paper argues that a gap exists in current analysis of persistent conflict in Mindanao, which is based upon a traditional discourse of exclusion that fails to capture the region's shifting economic and political conditions and the emergence of new forces that shape the possibilities and limits for a lasting peace.

This study offers a political economy and institutional approach to analysing conflict that can help various stakeholders, namely: civil society groups (including those from the business sector); local and national government executives; and, local and international development agencies engaged in creating conditions for a lasting peace in Mindanao. The paper is also relevant to other places that have witnessed enduring conflict in Southeast Asia and includes a brief review of the Mindanao conflict in relation to the dynamics of conflict and exclusion in Aceh, Indonesia.

2. Injustice and exclusion at the onset of the Mindanao conflict

Most studies of the Mindanao conflict highlight the injustices and grievances against the colonial and post-colonial Philippine state, tracing the roots of violence to the historical resistance of the *Bangsamoro* (Moro Nation)⁵ people to foreign colonizers who ruled Mindanao bringing with them the Christian settlers and businessmen from the northern and central part of the Philippines, and the transnational companies that grabbed the lands farmed and occupied by the Muslims and indigenous people.⁶ The theft of the Moro's land was facilitated and reinforced by an externally (Spanish and American) imposed set of property rights institutions based on the colonial system of titling, transfer, and sale of land over the Moro's traditional system of communal ownership and stewardship of property.

The colonization of land was made worse by the official neglect of poor rural communities by the central state and local governments in Mindanao, accompanied by political repression, militarisation and discrimination towards Muslims and indigenous people in the countryside.⁷ In comparison to the ethnic and identity-based struggles that mostly defined the nature of conflict in parts of Africa and South Asia, the scholarship on Mindanao paid little attention to ethno-religious differences as the basis of conflict.⁸ Scholars pointed out how ethno-religious identities were poor mobilising symbols for the secessionist movement, even though the rebels used them to instrumentally project their legitimacy to the international community, particularly the Islamic states. In fact, ethno-religious discourse was often used to blur the failures of governance, especially at a time when local governments were falling under the control of Moro "strong men" or the rebels themselves.

The current rationale for resistance and rebellion remains anchored to this historical discourse of injustice and discrimination, despite the shift in the economic balance of power, the changes in local political authority, and the different set of actors that play a role in governance. They resonate in the proposition that a solution to the historical injustice of land grabbing and economic exclusion perpetrated against the *Bangsamoro* is to be found in autonomous self-rule, which is critical to achieving peace and development, and is best addressed through the recognition of their ancestral homeland.⁹ However, as we shall discuss later, the sources of unrest and the triggers of violence and conflict in the region have markedly changed.

The Mindanao conflict is estimated to have resulted in at least 120,000 dead, and the displacement of an estimated two million people since it started in the early seventies.¹⁰ In 1996, a peace accord between the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) paved the way for the former to govern an autonomous regional government called the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) – a devolved political authority established in 1991 that provided for autonomous rule by the Moro people.¹¹ Autonomy was aimed at the development of the economy and improvement of the welfare of Muslim Mindanao, which includes the population residing in the five provinces and one city that elected to join the autonomous region.¹² Establishing a separate region dominated by Muslims was also expected to improve the targeting of programmes and services that would improve standards of living, and encourage the entry of domestic and foreign investors in the conflict-torn areas of the region.

However, more than ten years after the 1996 agreement, economic growth, or the lack of it, has opened up new patterns of exclusion.

3. The continued economic exclusion of Muslim Mindanao

There are at least two aspects in the current pattern of economic growth in Muslim Mindanao that create hostile conditions for a lasting peace.

a. Exclusion from benefits of national economic growth

The lives of the poor and disadvantaged in Muslim Mindanao have not improved during the periods of economic growth that the country as a whole has enjoyed over the past decade. As the Philippines recovered from the 1997 Asian crisis and its GDP grew at an average of 4 percent, most of the Mindanao regions recovered except for four of five provinces within the ARMM, which remain at the bottom of the ten low-growth provinces in the country in terms of real per capita income.¹³

This had a palpable effect on the human development indicators of Muslim Mindanao. The economic and social conditions in Muslim Mindanao lag behind other provinces and regions, evidenced by its poor record in terms of employment, poverty, and health (Table 1). Absolute poverty in Muslim Mindanao is 45 percent, compared to the national average of 36 percent. Unemployment is five times higher than the national average. Meanwhile, expected life at birth (ELB) in Muslim Mindanao is only 52 years, in comparison to the national average of 71 years for the Philippines. In addition, infant mortality is higher in Muslim Mindanao, where 55 infants die per thousand compared to 49 for the rest of the country.

Muslim Mindanao displays a similar trend in terms of education. Twenty-six percent of children of school age participate in primary school compared to 43 percent in Mindanao and 45 percent for the rest of the country. Of those that are able to enter school, cohort survival rates are the lowest in the ARMM, with only 37 percent of students entering the elementary grade (Grade 1) making it to the sixth grade, versus 53 percent for Mindanao and 66 percent for the rest of the country.

Table 1. Human Development Indicators: Muslim Mindanao

Province/ Country	ELB	Poverty	Infant Mortality (per 1000 live births)	Percentage of Unemployed
ARMM	52 years	45%	55 infants	56%
Philippines	71 years	36%	49 infants	10%

Sources: The study was done by the UNDP's PHDNetwork. Philippine Human Development Report (2005). *Peace, human security, and human development in the Philippines*. Makati City: Philippine Human Development Network, UNDP, NZAID; National Statistics Office (2008). *Total population and annual population growth rates by region: Population censuses 1995, 2000, and 2007*. Quezon City: NSO.

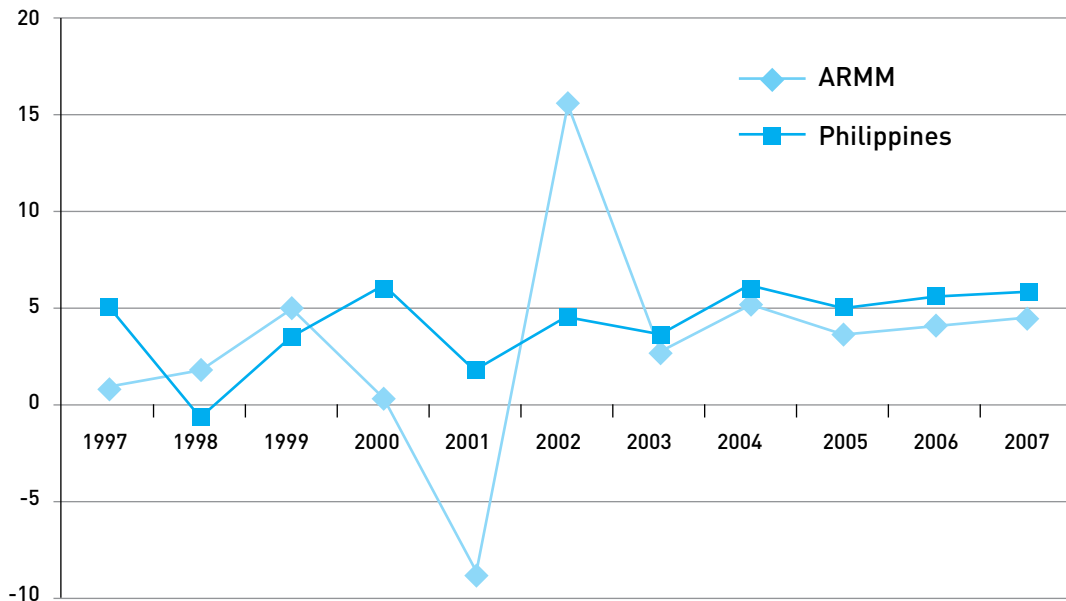
The divergence between provincial or regional figures and national indices expose the geographical exclusion of Muslim Mindanao from the gains of national economic growth and poverty reduction, despite the onset of a formal peace.

b. Unsustainable growth patterns

During the few instances when economic growth in Muslim Mindanao was comparable to, or exceeded the national pattern of growth, that growth has been unsustainable because it was based on reconstruction and election-driven consumption spending.

Economic growth in Muslim Mindanao is much lower than the national average, even though it followed the pattern of national growth except in 2000 and 2002 (Figure 1). The fall in economic growth in 2000 is traced to the “all-out war” between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the GRP.¹⁴ The spike in 2002 and the increase in 2004 can be traced to the infusion of reconstruction aid after the 2000–2001 war, and the growth in consumption during and after the regional and national elections during those years (1998 national elections, 2002 regional elections, 2004 national elections).

Figure 1. Percentage Increase in Real GDP: Muslim Mindanao and the Philippines, 1997–2007



Source: NEDA, 2008

Thus, except for the palpable increase in consumption spending in Muslim Mindanao following major political exercises and the onset of “post-conflict” aid and reconstruction, there is little improvement in terms of value-added production and sectoral productivity. Statistics (Mindanao Economic Development Council, 2006) demonstrate that productivity gains from 2000–2005 were limited to fisheries and a few agricultural crops such as rice and corn.

The unsustainable nature of ARMM’s economic growth, coupled with the region’s exclusion from the benefits of national growth, make a durable peace more difficult to achieve.¹⁵ Studies have shown how the type of economic growth that is directly caused by the massive infusion of aid and reconstruction expenditures, or by the exploitation of both lootable (e.g., valuable gems, drugs, timber, agricultural products) or non-lootable (e.g., oil and gas) resources in post-conflict areas opens up new arenas of competition and conflict, and a rise in separatist or non-separatist violence.¹⁶

4. Understanding conflict duration in Muslim Mindanao

This paper differentiates between two types of violence in Muslim Mindanao: the first type is referred to in the conflict literature as separatist, political, rebellion-related, top-down, or conflict-related violence which pertains to the vertical armed challenges against the infrastructure of the state and the insurgent and rebel groups; the second is often called non-separatist, bottom-up, inter- or intra-ethnic, clan, or group violence which pertains to horizontal armed challenges between and among families, clans, and tribes.¹⁷ For this paper, we shall use the terms rebellion-related violence and inter- or intra-clan or group violence, respectively, in distinguishing between these two types of conflict.

Rebellion-related conflict in Mindanao is sub-national and separatist, while inter- or intra-clan or group conflict is community-based and non-separatist. Both can be products of resource disputes and politico-economic contestation at various levels. Rebellion-related violence is the outcome of armed confrontation between the GRP and the MILF and MNLF.¹⁸ On the other hand, inter- and intra-clan or group violence can take various forms, of which *rido* is the most widespread.¹⁹ The two types intersect in terms of politico-economic foundations and the forms they take. Their persistence is tied to the capacity of protagonists to engage in armed, organised, and protracted violence.

The two may also be distinguished in terms of their beneficiaries. Rebellion-related violence benefits the national or sub-national states or the insurgent and rebel infrastructure. Inter- and intra-clan or group violence benefits the families, clans, and tribes that emerge victorious after violence and conflict subsides or ends.²⁰ Other beneficiaries include business interests and specific ethnic or religious identity groups that alternately support the state, the rebels, or both.

Before the 1996 peace agreement, the previous administrations of the ARMM had been led by Muslim political elites backed by traditional clans with strong connections to the central government.²¹ The entry of MNLF Chairman Nur Misuari to the ARMM governorship can therefore be viewed as a formal turn-over of power and resources from the traditional Muslim clans to the rebel leadership of the MNLF.²² The transition of power was aided by Misuari's popularity as a symbol of the Bangsamoro resistance. Misuari had strong access to the central government under Ramos and he enjoyed international support and recognition from the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

Four years later in 2000, war was reignited between the GRP and another rebel group called the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), after the then President Joseph Estrada implemented a more bellicose policy towards insurgents and ordered an attack against MILF camps across and beyond the ARMM. Armed conflict erupted again in 2003 and 2008 under the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

The outbreak of hostilities in Muslim Mindanao during the second half of 2008 alone led to hundreds of fatalities and the displacement of an estimated 250,000 people.²³ These clashes were provoked by an aborted deal that was to provide for the recognition of the ancestral domain claims of the Moro people and the establishment of a Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE). The Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) was hammered out after years of negotiations between the MILF and GRP peace panels. But after the proposed agreement was declared unconstitutional by the Philippines Supreme Court after the deal was announced, the government panel was disbanded and peace negotiations were suspended. Negotiations have since resumed, though few expect any significant breakthrough until after President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's term ends in 2010.

The persistence of rebellion-related violence in Muslim Mindanao can be principally traced to the failure to reach an effective political settlement between the different rebel groups and the GRP. However, this sort of violence can also escalate when both the rebels and the military take sides among feuding clans and tribes engaged in fights over land, resources, or political office. This in turn leads to a vicious cycle where continued armed challenges to the national and local government cause militarization and human rights violations that poison the formal peace process.²⁴

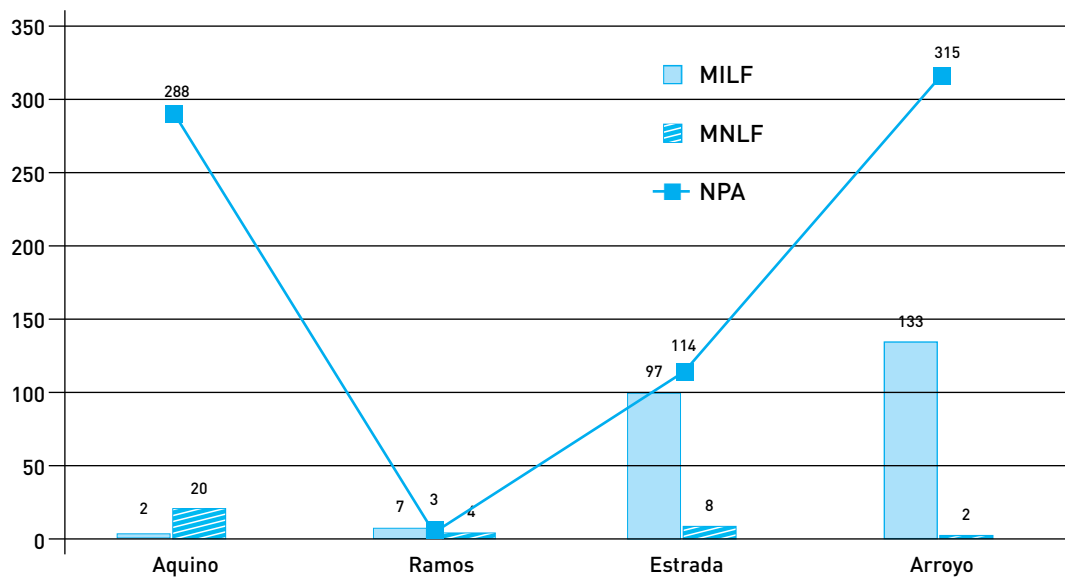
Studies have shown how the weaknesses in governance under Nur Misuari's administration created conditions for the persistence of rebellion-related violence.²⁵ The regional autonomous government was neither autonomous nor capable of governing from the start. The ARMM was weak and unable to deliver basic programmes and services in key areas such as health care and education. Tax and revenue-generating power was inadequate, and the ARMM was beset by numerous and increasing cases of graft and corruption. These problems partly explain why local and international aid and development agencies were directly involved in the provision of public goods and other developmental programmes and services.

In addition, the ARMM did not wield effective command over the local police and armed forces. The failure to monopolize the state's coercive power meant that the regional government had very little influence over the provision of security and the direction of internal security reforms. The ARMM could not even play an active part in preventing *rido* and other community-level conflicts.

Part of the reason behind the failure of the post-1996 ARMM government was the absence of genuine powers required by the regional executive office and the regional assembly in such important areas as fiscal autonomy which remained under central control.²⁶ These had been part of the original agreement, but their implementation was blocked by Congress. At the same time, the new rebel-governors lacked the required skill and capacity to deal with the multiple evolving conditions in the field: where a new rebel challenger (MILF) was getting stronger, community-level conflicts were erupting, and criminality was increasing. And not unlike the clan-based governors that preceded him, Misuari was faced with charges of mismanagement and corruption.

In reality, the Misuari-led regional government presided over the autonomous region under peace terms aimed at securing the short-term economic goals of the Ramos administration (1992–1998). The Ramos government created the political space necessary to undertake fiscal and economic reforms aimed at controlling growth in expenditures and a refocusing of resources towards economic priorities such as infrastructure building and energy generation.²⁷ The strategy was successful and violence declined significantly in the period prior to and shortly after the conclusion of peace talks with the MNLF (Figure 2). The Ramos administration can also be credited with stemming rebellion-related violence by simultaneously entering into peace negotiations with the MILF, the Communist Party of the Philippines – New People's Army (CPP-NPA), and military rebels associated with the Reform Armed Forces Movement and the Young Officers Union (RAM-YOU).

Figure 2. Incidents of Rebellion-related Violence



Source: Philippine Human Development Report (2005). *Peace, human security, and human development in the Philippines*. Makati City: Philippine Human Development Network, UNDP, NZAID. Compiled by P. Abinales and E. Ramos.

However, a latent unrest continued to grow behind the peace bargains secured by the Ramos government. Indigenous groups, Christian settlers and politicians, and some of the traditional Muslim clans that were excluded from the GRP-MNLF peace processes saw their interests threatened and their needs unmet by the post-1996 rebel-led government which styled itself as a “representative” of the entire Bangsamoro people. This unrest was accompanied by a spike in hostilities between the GRP and the MILF and CPP-NPA after the end of Ramos’ term in 1998. As a result, business groups and investors continued to evade Muslim Mindanao, preferring to invest instead in the prosperous metropolitan centres of Davao, Cagayan de Oro, and General Santos, and the East Asian Growth Area (EAGA) business initiatives being promoted by the Ramos government.²⁸

Without a doubt, the intensification of rebellion-related violence after 1996 reinforced the causal relationship between social exclusion and conflict, but with a new twist. Whereas the original discourse of social exclusion was synonymous with the anti-statist political line advanced by the Moro separatists in the struggle for an independent state, the current discourse of exclusion is being wielded by indigenous peoples, including local businessmen, Christian settlers and politicians, and the powerful Muslim clans against the rebel-separatists themselves. Their grievance – economic and political exclusion from the outcome and benefits of the GRP-MNLF and the GFP-MILF peace processes. Their target – the Misuari-led ARMM, the current ARMM administration, and the MOA-AD.

This reverse antagonism holds the key to understanding the connections between political authority and the evolving shifts in the region’s political economy. The region’s underdevelopment can no longer be ascribed solely to the colonial and post-colonial exploitation of the region and discrimination towards Muslims and indigenous people, but must also be connected to the shifting balance of economic and political power within Bangsamoro society itself – between those who prospered from the war and the ensuing “peace”, versus those who did not benefit, in particular the many who remain impoverished and vulnerable within the region. In reality, this represents a tug of war between the Muslim rebels and their advocates and followers on the one hand, and the Muslim aristocracy and the Christian settler-elites on the other. In the middle stand the mass of poor and vulnerable communities that were, and continue to be, excluded from the supposed benefits of the peace process.

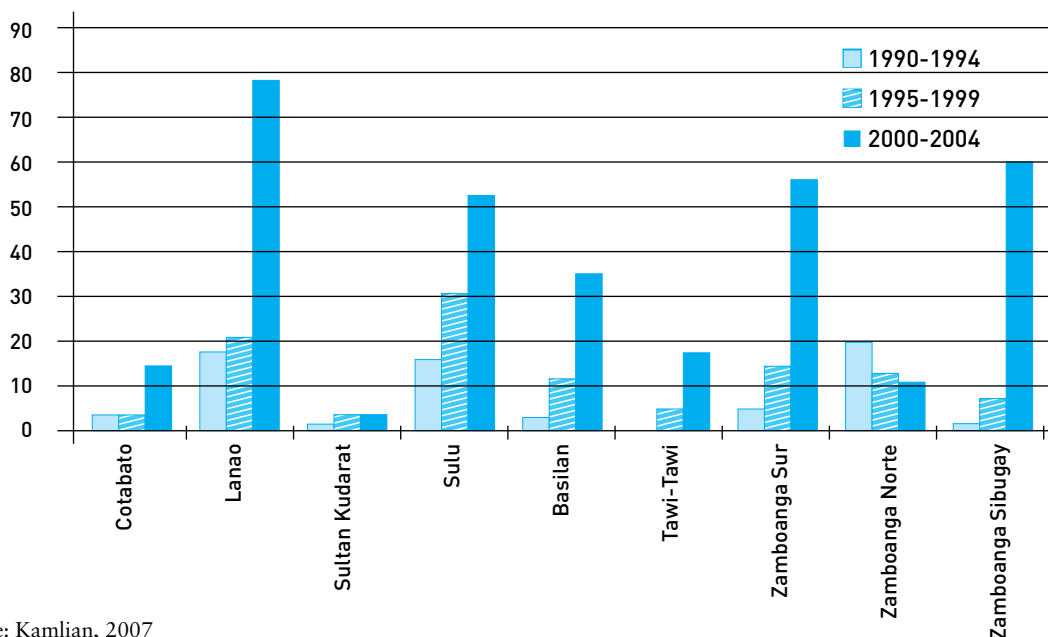
The traditional dichotomies underlying the Mindanao conflict have changed. In tandem with the central state, the powerful Muslim and Christian clans and the leaders of the MNLF must share part of the blame for the lingering violence, and the perpetual failure to generate wealth and prosperity within the region. The MILF will be facing the same challenges if a peace agreement is achieved, as inclusionary demands have started to rise among indigenous people, settlers, women, and local business groups in light of the aborted MOA-AD.

The authenticity and urgency of local demands cannot be discounted as crucial socio-economic issues have not been addressed. Access and secure rights to land, a just share in the region’s natural resources, the availability of employment and credit for livelihoods are fundamental demands which the different ARMM administrations failed to address, resulting in the steady deterioration of people’s standards of living. The growing economic and political diaspora from Muslim Mindanao is recorded each year in the increased density of Muslim ghettos in Metro-Manila, Cebu, Davao, Baguio, and other secondary urban centres. These ghettos offer a poignant reminder that the change in the region’s leadership has not produced the desired development.

Unequal access to key resources such as land continues to provoke unrest and violence. Large tracts of land continue to evade agrarian reform in the ARMM, which ranks second in terms of working scope (321,869 hectares) under the Philippines Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Programme (CARP) as of 2003, yet has the lowest accomplishment report (60%) in the transfer of private agricultural land (PAL) across Mindanao after more than a decade of agrarian reform implementation. Worse, almost all of the PAL areas that have been transferred were acquired through voluntary offers of sale or voluntary land transfer (VOS-VLT), a system of land transfer rife with fraud and corruption.²⁹

The persistence of land-based conflict and the inability to undertake an effective land reform programme creates a critical intersection between rebellion-related violence and inter- or intra-clan or group violence. The outbreak of hostilities between the MILF and the GRP in 2000, for example, was prompted by both parties taking sides in a local Muslim-Christian conflict over control of a parcel of land in Lanao del Norte.³⁰ The confluence is manifested in inter- and intra-clan feuds which have escalated as a form of dispute settlement between competing clan and tribal interests during the post-1996 peace settlement period (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Column Chart of *Rido* Incidence, 1990–2004



Source: Kamlian, 2007

The persistence of inter- and intra-clan or group violence in Muslim Mindanao is distinctly related to resource conflicts at the community level particularly on the issue of land.³¹ Numerous studies have also pointed to the strong links between *rido* and the flawed institutional make-up of agrarian reform in the region. Indeed, the imposition of a conventional, top-down agrarian reform programme in a region where specific cultural institutions of communal and clan ownership over land prevail is partly to blame for the violence.³² An analysis of sources of *rido* confirms numerous cases where the survey and land titling processes undertaken under the CARP led to intra-family violence when individual titles encroached on land owned (through inheritance or “*pusaka*”) by another family member.³³

Apart from land issues, election-related conflict constitutes a secondary but significant source of community-level violence, as it leads to control over political office that increases access to firepower, or determines entry into businesses that are part of the underground economy. This represents another convergence point between sub-national and community-level violence, namely electoral disputes and conflicts over the illegal economy, such as in the lucrative drug trade in Muslim Mindanao. It reveals the onset of a new dynamic of exclusion that is distinct from its earlier representations, and the emergence of new and powerful clans with access to new sources of economic power.

5. Clans and conflict in Muslim Mindanao

Studies have shown how the power of the clans that were a fixture of traditional Muslim society were held in check by the rebel forces of the MNLF and MILF in the long years of conflict from 1970 to 2001. Several Muslim families and clans were directly or indirectly involved in the conflict, offering material support and sending their young men and women to join and support the rebel armies. Other clans collaborated with the central state, strengthening their access to national resources in exchange for providing a security apparatus for the central state in the region. However, even the clans that colluded with the Marcos regime saw the need for peaceful coexistence with rebel forces in a bid to neutralize, and sometimes draw upon the latter's firepower.³⁴

However, with the weaknesses of the Misuari government and its inability to control the violence that intensified following the increase in *rido* and the war between the MILF and the GRP, a window was opened for rival groups to step up to the plate and (re)acquire economic and political power. Misuari's demand for the national state to deliver on its commitments and his stab at another revolt was a belated attempt at maintaining power. Misuari was arrested and imprisoned, paving the way for the restoration of clan politics and the resurgence of clan institutions such as *rido*, and the emergence of warlord clans that exercise power based upon their control over devolved political authority and a vast underground economy.³⁵

Clan control over the ARMM government and the informal economy in the region induces much of the same violent competition associated with the traditional clan control over land. Fund transfers between the central government to the ARMM in the form of internal revenue allotments (IRA) constitutes the bulk of funds placed under the control of the clans, amounting to an estimated 2.23 billion pesos in 2006 alone.³⁶ This underscores the violent, "winner-takes-all" nature of electoral competition. With government consumption expenditures in the ARMM growing at a faster rate than the rest of Mindanao combined, it was clear that whoever controlled the state would corner these sums.³⁷

It also explains why every election year is alternately seen as a source of opportunity and danger by poor communities in Muslim Mindanao. Elections offer the chance to sell votes and influence in exchange for money and other resources such as firearms, but they also present countless dangers associated with the potential *rido* that can erupt if a family or clan relative runs for political office. The mode of electoral competition in Mindanao also creates a powerful link between rebellion-related violence and inter-clan violence, particularly when violent feuds between rival clans escalate when rebel groups and the police and military support rival candidates.³⁸

Apart from government-to-government transfers, a growing underground economy marked by the proliferation of illegal drugs, unlicensed firearms, control over small-scale and unlicensed mining activity and smuggling provides additional sources of revenue for local clans (Table 2). Earnings from illicit activities are deposited and laundered in commercial banks in the key cities of Davao, Cagayan de Oro, General Santos, Iligan, and Zamboanga City.³⁹ A key aspect of the booming underground economy is the existence of an informal market for arable agricultural land. This study uncovered several instances of land transferring ownership without any state law regulating the sale or generating the required taxes.

The violent mix between a spreading underground economy and electoral corruption also reflects the forces and relationships that bind the central Philippine state with Muslim Mindanao. Sub-national state building is ostensibly sacrificed for the central objective of sustaining the powerful

coalitions at the national level – in this case the government of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. The underground economy and a corrupt electoral system is permitted to exist, despite the loss of valuable revenues and the collapse of legitimate autonomous rule, in exchange for delivering votes to the ruling coalition during national elections. The end result is a vicious cycle of violence that shapes and is shaped by politico-economic forces that further embed the exclusionary structures that prevail in the region. Eventually these newly emerging politico-economic forces weigh upon the historical issues of unequal access to land and natural resources, discrimination, and economic neglect that have been the enduring sources of violent conflict in the region, and further weaken the cause of an enduring peace.

Table 2. Traditional and Non-Traditional Sources of Revenues from the Informal Economy

Traditional Sources of Revenue	Non-Traditional Sources of Revenue
Smuggling of goods from Sabah, etc.	Smuggling of goods from Hong Kong, China, etc.
Trade in small arms and long weapons	Drug production, distribution, and export
Unregistered transport of persons and goods	Illegal reproduction and sale of CDs, DVDs, etc.
Unregistered transfers of land	Extortionary “sale” of right-of-way privileges, illegal tollgates
Illegal logging	Kidnap for ransom (KFR) activities
	Trade in armaments, explosives, and other munitions (especially before and after elections)
	“Jueteng” and other forms of illegal gambling
	Small-scale illegal mining activities
	Carjacking and gun for hire
	Smuggling of oil and fuel
	Illegal and undocumented export of labour
	Forgery and sale of official documents, including certificates of live birth, police clearances, etc.

Source: Interviews with local traders and businessmen, including focus group discussions with ulamas, development workers, government employees, indigenous people, and Muslim women.

6. Clans and conflict resurgence in 2008

The resurgent violence in the second half of 2008 demonstrates the aforementioned role of clan institutions as an endogenous factor that plays a decisive role in the outbreak of violence. When the government scuttled a draft memorandum of agreement on ancestral domain (MOA-AD), some base commands of the MILF went on a rampage, leading to the indiscriminate killing and injury of hundreds of civilians in some coastal towns of Lanao del Norte.⁴⁰ These attacks provided the justification for the reversal of the GRP's original position to support the MOA-AD, and the launch of major offensive operations against the MILF in Northern and Central Mindanao.

The confrontation between the GRP and the MILF did not exist in a vacuum, but was aided by forces outside the main protagonists in the conflict. As war began to rear its head, preparations for the scheduled elections for the regional leadership of the autonomous region were underway. The MILF publicly called for a suspension of the ARMM elections. On the other hand, the clans wanted the elections to proceed, hoping that it would provide a barrier to the eventual creation of a Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE), as called for in the agreement.

The current ARMM governor comes from a strong clan in Central Mindanao, known for its firepower and political influence that stretches beyond central Mindanao.⁴¹ The same clan retains strong ties with the central government, and is alleged to have played a key role in the electoral fraud and violence associated with the 2004 and 2007 elections.⁴² The formation of a BJE posed a genuine threat to the traditional clans at a time when both the political leadership of the ARMM regional government and several key provinces within the region were under their control. The collusion between regional power-brokers and specific national agencies in spurious land deals would also be affected by a successful MOA-AD.⁴³

A conjuncture was reached when the interests of the ARMM-based clans and the local government officials near the region converged, with the latter engaging in armed actions against MILF field commands in the provinces adjacent to the ARMM.⁴⁴ The MOA-AD cast some uncertainty over the future of investments in Mindanao and was ostensibly a threat to the economic and political base of the Christian political elites who stood to lose part of their territory to an expanded BJE. The inflammatory rhetoric coming from several local government officials went unabated precisely because they enjoyed the support of local big business and the landed elite in Mindanao.⁴⁵ Their actions during the tense few days following the announcement, combined with a reciprocal vehemence against the MOA-AD from among the national political elite, has been repeatedly cited as a major cause for the rush to arms, and was subsequently used by several base commands of the MILF to justify their attacks.⁴⁶

Accounts of the recent turmoil in Mindanao provide evidence that validates the analysis of the links between emerging economic sources of power and intensified social exclusion in Muslim Mindanao, namely:

- The interests of the powerful Muslim clans and Christian politicians converged in a manner that made it easy to scuttle the draft agreement on ancestral domain, aided by the national government which withdrew from the agreement after encountering widespread opposition. While there is no evidence of direct collusion between the Christian and Muslim clans, their responses to the threat of a BJE coincided to undermine the agreement. The scholarship on Muslim Mindanao has pointed to the role of “local strong men” who can either facilitate or delay peace processes. A similar situation occurred in the events leading to the signing of the MOA-AD, except that this time the Muslim clans had a stronger influence over the central state. Their enhanced leverage derives from the strategic role that they have played in shaping national electoral outcomes.

- Apprehension over the loss of control over territory and the revenue streams from business and investments, coupled with the huge income from the illegal economy played a central part in the “parallel” moves of the traditional Christian and Muslim aristocracy to scuttle the agreement and in fomenting violence in the events leading to the explosion of full-blown conflict. As aforementioned, the importance of controlling political office is intertwined with the economic foundations of power in Muslim Mindanao, i.e., successful electoral struggles enable the control of formal political authority that is required to corner the proceeds from both the expansion in local and foreign investments, government-to-government transfers, and the expanding underground economy.⁴⁷
- The peace process actually excluded several groups that could have rallied behind the agreement, including the local business and church leaders sympathetic to the cause of a lasting peace in Mindanao. In addition to the social exclusion experienced by poor Muslims, there exists an equally deep experience of exclusion amongst women and the indigenous people of Mindanao, whose constituencies contain widespread support for lasting peace.

Indeed, women take on additional burdens in securing the household and the family in the course of conflict-related violence, often taking the lead during times of forced displacement, and seeing to the needs of the family in evacuation camps. They have not been effectively drawn into peace processes, despite the fact that they play a key role in negotiating an end to community-level violence, and often confront the risks and dangers associated with inter- and intra-clan violence (*rido*). Not only does this fail to harness women’s potential contribution, it contravenes UN Security Council Resolution 1325 which stresses, amongst other things, supporting women’s political, economic and social participation in peacebuilding at all levels.

The same is true for indigenous groups such as the Higaonon, Teduray, Iranun, and Subanen tribes who are often displaced when conflict-related violence erupts in areas which they occupy. They possess deep-seated animosities towards rebel leaders who make instrumental claims that a consensus exists among the Bangsamoro people over the future of the ARMM, despite their exclusion from the negotiations. They have repeatedly warned of a new front opening in the Mindanao conflict if the MOA-AD were approved. While some tribes have been Islamised, the influence of tribal traditions and the distinct tribal claims over land and areas which they claim as part of their ancestral domain prevent them from complying with the outcomes of any peace agreement between the central state and Muslim rebels unless they are directly involved.

The poor and vulnerable peasant communities (mostly Muslim), women, and indigenous people are the new faces of social exclusion in Muslim Mindanao, and their continued marginalisation from the peace processes and the benefits of economic growth present formidable barriers to the cause of a lasting peace.

7. A regional perspective: The case of Aceh

Persistent violence afflicts other places in Southeast Asia where political settlements have been achieved between rebel forces and the central state that led to devolved political authority. The 2005 Peace Accords that ended the civil war between the Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM) and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia (RI) have produced a fragile peace punctuated by violence between ex-combatants of GAM and between different ethnic and political groups.⁴⁸ Evidence has also emerged that some elements of the Indonesian armed forces (TNI) are unwilling to recognise the legitimacy of GAM and its leaders, which adds to the distrust and growing unrest under Aceh's new leaders.

What was a tentative peace began to unravel soon after the agreement was reached. Conflict erupted even before the holding of the first democratic elections in the autonomous province in 2005. Tensions arose within the rebel forces over who should run as Aceh governor, originating from a factional split within GAM before the peace agreement was signed. An official break-up then emerged after Yusuf Irawandi was elected governor.⁴⁹

The split within the GAM led to the exclusion of a significant number of ex-combatants from the financial benefits of the reintegration programme, with several ex-GAM commanders being left out from the reinsertion and reintegration assistance that was cornered by the dominant faction within GAM. The struggles within the rebels' ranks spilled over to the allocation of choice political posts within the province. Meanwhile, some ex-combatants who were excluded tried to get their share by bullying local government officials into giving them contracts during the post-tsunami reconstruction.

The unequal access to land and post-conflict reintegration benefits by ex-combatants, including the thousands of Acehnese victimised by conflict, partly explains the persistence of violence. However, there are other drivers of violence, including the continued exclusion of poor communities from revenues derived from Aceh's natural resources, the weakness of devolved governance institutions, and the marginalisation of certain ethnic groups especially those residing in the central highlands.

Aceh demonstrates a paradigm of democratisation that has turned violent, as political and inter-ethnic rivalries erupted soon after the Helsinki agreement was signed in 2005. These should have been anticipated, as previous studies⁵⁰ have called attention to the likely consequences of a hastily-imposed western-type democracy on ethnically diverse communities.

Aceh saw western-style democracy and devolution imposed on a cauldron of inter-ethnic and inter-political animosities, resulting in the hardening of ethnic and political divisions. As a result, poor rural and urban communities remained vulnerable to sudden outbursts of ethno-political violence especially during the period before and after the 2009 national legislative elections.⁵¹

Indeed, Indonesia faces several ethno-political conflicts within its borders, including in places such as West Java, North Maluku, Central and Southern Sulawesi, where lingering problems with the system of democratic and electoral competition are bound to worsen. In a similar way to the Philippines, constitutional reforms to address economic and political issues that affect local conflict have arrived slowly due to competing agendas for charter change in both countries.⁵²

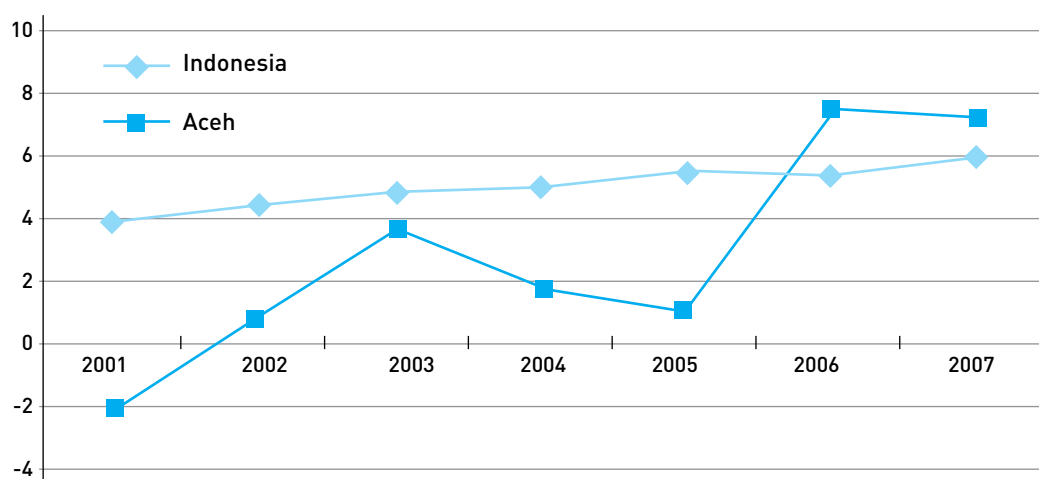
As with Muslim Mindanao, Aceh has been excluded from growth during the past decade (in this case Indonesia's). Human development indicators expose the lagging state of health and employment in the province (See Table 3).

Table 3: Human Development Indicators: Aceh and Indonesia

Province/ Country	ELB	Poverty	Infant Mortality (per 1000 live births)	Unemployment rate
Aceh	55 years	35%	42 infants	29%
Indonesia	67 years	27%	35 infants	12.5%

Source: World Bank, 2008

However, unlike Muslim Mindanao, Aceh's source of domestic economic growth is showing some signs of value-added production in agriculture. This has been the product of the massive post-tsunami infrastructure reconstruction work that helped to facilitate the flow of agricultural goods. Data on Aceh is limited to the period 2001–2007, but the figures demonstrate positive growth arising from farm productivity (See Figure 4).

Figure 4: Comparative Real GDP Growth in Aceh and Indonesia 2001–2007 (Percentage Increase)

Source: World Bank, 2008

However, a marked depletion in oil and gas reserves threatens to impact negatively on this pattern of growth. If the overall decline in the value of these resources were included, Aceh's economy would actually register a contraction of 2%. Moreover, while the increase in Aceh's share in the revenues accruing from oil and gas reserves flowed into the provincial government in the period prior to and following the armed conflict, few benefits trickled down to the grassroots level, as evidenced by the wide gap that remains between standards of living in Aceh compared to other provinces in the North Sumatra region.

As in the case of Muslim Mindanao, research has also unveiled the spread of an underground economy in Aceh, manifested in the spread of loose firearms, bribery, and extortion activities, particularly in the transport sector. This has had a substantial effect on the costs of the post-tsunami and post-conflict reconstruction process.⁵³

Nevertheless, the economic sources of conflict in Aceh are eclipsed by the problems of democratisation that accompanied the creation of a devolved authority within the province. This

is underscored by two factors in particular. First, the worsening division amongst the Acehnese is depicted in the formation of six local political parties, which joined 34 other national parties in vying for electoral posts in the recent elections. Second, the actions of the central Indonesian state that tried to favour one group within GAM to the detriment of the others.

As in the case of Muslim Mindanao, democratisation and devolution was marked by a “winner takes all” process of political competition, as control over political office carried with it control over government-to-government transfers, revenues from the oil and gas reserves, and reconstruction benefits.

The GAM-affiliated Partai Aceh has attained a significant victory in the 2009 elections, but the political crevices that led to outbreaks of violence in the provincial capital remain as wide as ever. These flashpoints intertwine with the unsettled issues and claims of ex-combatants dissatisfied with the post-conflict reintegration process and the demands of indigenous people in the central highlands and the southeastern part of the province, where armed groups continue to organise adherents and foment secessionist demands. The unrest is further stoked by a rise in unemployment as the post-tsunami reconstruction phase begins to wind down, and as oil and gas production declines with resources drying up along Aceh’s east coast. Placing the entire post-tsunami and post-conflict reconstruction process under the control of a provincial government controlled by a dominant faction within GAM has been a source of continuing tensions.

In conclusion, a confluence of events occurring at the same time as the peace process provides the core of a crisis that threatens to engulf the province.

8. Conclusion: Fostering an inclusive peace

This study has pointed to newly emerging sources of violence and conflict in Muslim Mindanao and focuses on the resurgence of clan politics, the recurrent property rights issues that fuel *rido*, and the expansion of an informal economy that provokes both rebellion-related and inter-clan or group conflict. The study emphasises the decisive role played by electoral politics in determining access to and control over government-to-government budget transfers and the vast informal economy. The paper highlights the persistent social exclusion that is being nurtured by the rapid changes in the region's political economy. And to enable an initial analysis of conflict from the Southeast Asian regional perspective, a brief comparison has been undertaken between Muslim Mindanao and Aceh.

Previous studies have pointed to the exclusion that Muslims in Mindanao and Aceh experience as the cause of the long wars between rebel challengers and the nation-state in the Philippines and Indonesia. These studies have also shown how the secessionist cause often fails to gain strong adherents at the local level. While the language of secession has been replaced by a discourse on autonomy, the original claims of social exclusion continue to resonate at the local level – as the gains from growth and autonomy fail to lead to a significant change in peoples' standards of living.

Exclusion then remains an often-used term at the heart of explanations of violent conflict in Mindanao and elsewhere. But exclusion is not a straightforward concept, and cannot be understood solely in terms of Muslim identity. For identity at the local level in Mindanao is more complex than this. Exclusion is also determined by other aspects of identity such as gender, clan and age, and by relationships and networks which either enable access to political and economic power or not.

As the sources and expressions of exclusion have changed and become more complex since the onset of the struggle for a Bangsamoro homeland (see Table 2 above for example), so has it become more urgent to dig deeper into questions of who the excluded are, what they are excluded from, by whom, and why? These are difficult questions to answer given a multitude of different actors and agendas. They can also be dangerous questions to ask given that they lead swiftly to an exploration of who holds power and the nature of this power.

This paper posits the presence of a blocked transition towards a lasting peace in Mindanao and Aceh. The literature describes a blocked transition as – *a situation where the government directly or indirectly condones the use of violence against independent political actions undertaken by the poor majority*.⁵⁴ In the particular case of Muslim Mindanao, we refer to a blocked transition as a situation where traditional local elites and the central state collude and condone the continued spread of violence as a hedge against the political actions of opposition groups and armed rebels, and is most pronounced during electoral struggles. In the case of Aceh, the continued use of violence against other "claimants" in the post-conflict process is inextricably linked to the process of shoring up one rebel faction to the exclusion of others. In both cases, the continuation of violence intimidates political opposition and cripples the ability of devolved and autonomous political authority to end widespread violent conflict.

Part of the limitation of current approaches to peacebuilding is that these approaches often frame violent conflict predominantly as armed, rebellion-related conflict. However, as this paper has sought to illustrate, the armed conflict between the MILF/MNLF and the GRP armed forces both feeds and draws on inter- and intra-clan conflict (*rido*). This conflict cocktail, with its roots

in exclusionary politics and economics, creates new opportunities for those benefiting from exclusion. It underlines the lingering plight of people like Musheera and Makin, who live under the terms of a formal peace that exists only on paper.

International and local efforts to end armed rebellion and that call for immediate ceasefires, elections, autonomy, and decentralisation as the key instruments for lasting peace and development are left wanting. They are inadequate not because these are the wrong aspirations, but because they do not engage strategically with the less visible yet vital dynamics of inter- and intra-clan conflict and do not enable understanding of how these dynamics are inextricably linked to key issues such as the unsettled property rights framework that governs access to land, the mode of democratic electoral competition, the expansion of an underground economy, and the relationships between this economy and local clan politics. Without the full picture, a full solution is not possible. Certainly, the informal economy may provide livelihoods for the poor and vulnerable in conditions of uncertainty and insecurity, but it also brings with it risk of local conflict, and ultimately weakens the administrative capacity of the state.

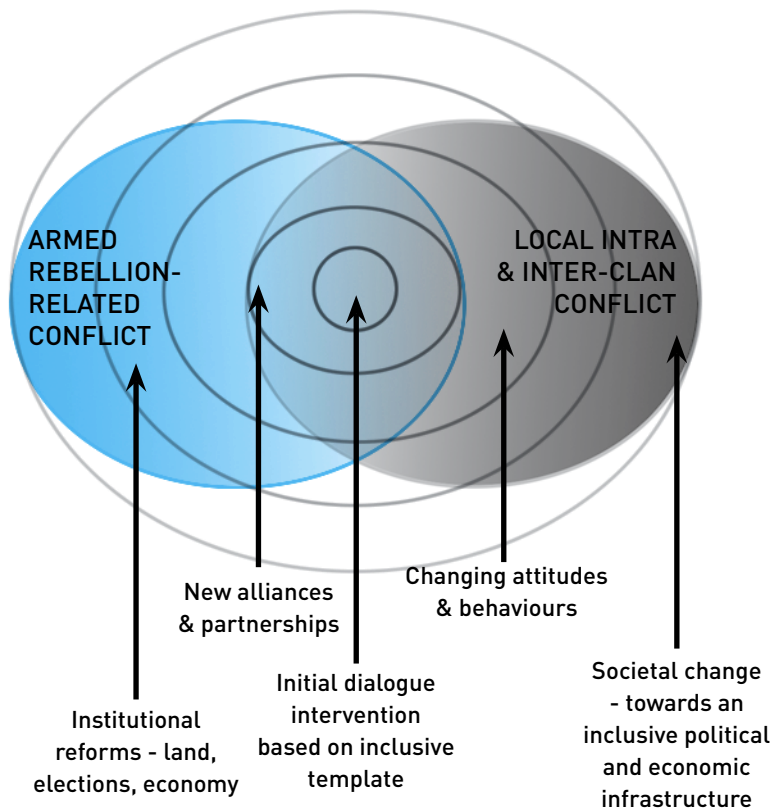
Peacebuilding strategies must, therefore, include consideration of local community conflict dynamics and the ways in which armed rebellion interacts with them. This consideration will inevitably lead to a closer exploration of the informal economy and the contestation for political influence that brings control of this economy. Such a process requires dialogue with particular characteristics. Dialogue that operates at the nexus between armed rebellion and local community conflict; that engages those towards both ends of the excluded/included spectrum – in order to confront and unpack current patterns of power and control; that can draw in the private sector – since this sector is key to the delivery of jobs and incomes; that develops practical and strategic reforms – since dialogue in and of itself is only a means to an end; that operates at multiple levels – since managing conflict is the responsibility of many; and that can sustain momentum over an extended time period – since societal change takes time.

If this peacebuilding approach can be strengthened and successfully complement others then it is more likely that the resources for equitable and sustainable development in Mindanao can be used effectively, to bring about the transition from persistent violence and underdevelopment to peace and prosperity for all.

Like a stone dropped into a pond, dialogue between different stakeholders, if characterised as above, can create changes in attitudes and behaviours that, like ripples, spread out to influence institutions and policies, gradually creating a new environment in which inclusion can eventually trump exclusion (Figure 5). Such an inclusive state would depend upon an open and fair process of political competition, and a political and economic infrastructure based upon the absolute control by local states of the means of coercion.

The challenges are many. Such a situation may not be favourable for national elites who seek to utilise weak electoral systems for their benefit. A representative state may also be vulnerable to the legitimate claims and grievances of a dominant group that may see few benefits from a discourse that is representative of all sectors and a practice accountable to all citizens. Furthermore, identity-based regimes in the post-conflict period such as the GAM-led provincial government, or the MNLF-led ARMM and MILF-proposed BJE would have to deny themselves the armed strength that is necessary for their armed groups to survive. This truism remains at the core of the problem of continued violence, i.e., an identity-based and instrumentalist regime possesses the seeds of its own instability and insecurity.

Figure 5: The Peacebuilding Ripple



Source: International Alert.

In the face of these challenges, new and innovative interventions are required to stem continuing violence. These interventions must be owned by those with a stake in the required transition from conflict to peace, and informed by an honest dialogue exploring the current expressions of exclusionary political and economic practices. They must build on the learning of past and present dialogue initiatives, drawing on experience already gained.

International agencies must support such a dialogue process which promises to develop a new template for development assistance based on an understanding of the links between armed rebellion and local community conflict. Such a template will result in interventions that will enable vulnerable groups to adapt to conditions of conflict and provide the building blocks for the settlement of fundamental issues such as land ownership, ancestral domain, and natural resource distribution.

Only then will Musheera be able to live without the constant fear of displacement, and Makin bring up his children without the need to protect them from *rido*, as his father had to do for him. Only then will the principle of inclusion, the key to lasting peace, become a reality.

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Endnotes

- 1 Francisco Lara Jr. is Research Associate at the Crisis States Research Centre of the London School of Economics and Political Science. Phil Champain is Director of Programmes for Asia and Eurasia regions at International Alert.
- 2 Not their real names.
- 3 This puzzle is taken from Moxham's (2007) paradoxical challenge in the case of Timor-Leste, which in turn is based on a study of the "post-conflict" moment in Afghanistan by C. Cramer and J. Goodhand (2002).
- 4 Writing on conflict in Aceh, Collier and Sambanis (2005, p.53) have pointed to the looting of resources that contributed to the *duration*, rather than the *onset* of conflict.
- 5 The term "*bangsa*" is a Malay term with Sanskrit roots that refers to nations, castes, races, lines of descent, and estates (Buendia, 2005). The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) popularized the term "*bangsamoro*" to promote their advocacy for an independent Moro nation. See Noble (1976), Jubair (1999), Muslim (1994), and Lingga (2007).
- 6 T.J.S. George, 1980; Ahmad, 1999; Muslim, 1994; Jubair, 1999.
- 7 Mercado, 1984; Ahmad, 1999.
- 8 Abinales, 2000; Buendia, 2005; Mc Kenna, 1998.
- 9 The Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain reads: 'It is essential to lay the foundation of the *Bangsamoro homeland* in order to address the Bangsamoro people's humanitarian and economic needs as well as their political aspirations'. (No. 2, Concepts and Principles, Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain Aspect of the GRP-MILF Tripoli Agreement on Peace of 2001.)
- 10 Schiavo-Ocampo and Judd, 2005.
- 11 The first series of negotiations in the seventies led to the Tripoli Agreement of 1976, which caused the MNLF to drop their claim for independence and to agree to autonomy. After the fall of the Marcos dictatorship, peace talks were revived by President Corazon Aquino in 1986. The creation of an autonomous region was eventually passed as a law in 1987 named The Organic Act for Muslim Mindanao or Republic Act 6734 of 1987, and in 1989 a plebiscite was held to determine the cities and provinces that would join the autonomous region. See Cagoco-Guiam (2006) and Iribani (2006).
- 12 The ARMM covers 27,500 square kilometers and has a population of 2.7 million. In this article, we abbreviate the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) to Muslim Mindanao, a region carved out of Western, Central, and Northern Mindanao and comprising the provinces of Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi, and the Islamic City of Marawi.
- 13 These provinces are Maguindanao, Sulu, Tawi-tawi, and Basilan. Their incomes amounted to an average of 11,668 pesos (£166.00), or only a third of the real per capita income of the Northern Luzon province of Nueva Viscaya (2005 Human Development Report, p.101).
- 14 The MILF is a breakaway faction from the MNLF that was established in 1984 by Hashim Salamat, a devout Muslim scholar who was part of the MNLF leadership. Salamat died in 2003. The MILF was not a party to the peace agreement signed between the MNLF and the Philippine government (GRP) in 1996.
- 15 The sort of economic growth experienced by Muslim Mindanao further marginalises poor communities that did not have access to reconstruction and reintegration funds, nor the spoils from electoral contests. Studies show that some post-conflict disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) policies and programmes that leverage one group over another may harden ethnic divisions (See Berman, 1998; and Snyder, 2000).
- 16 Often referred to as the "resource curse", some scholars have pointed to the connection between lootable resources and non-separatist violence, and between non-lootable resources and separatist violence (Ross, 2003, pp.47-67).
- 17 Reno, 2000; Tilly, 2003; Keen, 2008.
- 18 Interviews conducted for this study validate the presence of the Communist Party of the Philippines – New Peoples Army (CPP-NPA) regulars operating in villages adjacent to or within the ARMM, with frequent reports of tactical cooperation among MILF and NPA field commanders in the past. Meanwhile, another armed group that has captured national and foreign attention is the Abu Sayyaf, which claims to adhere to an ideological and political platform, though its armed actions have focused on hostage-taking for ransom, intimidation and extortion. It is more appropriate to describe the latter as engaged in "criminal violence". See Gutierrez (1999, p.349).
- 19 There are unwritten rules in *rido* that separate women and children from being the objects of violence. However, recent cases of *rido* appear unmindful of these rules (See Durante et al., 2007; UNYPAD, 2007).
- 20 Inter- and intra-clan and tribal conflicts are sometimes unresolved, though the violence may dissipate after a major confrontation as each side weighs the costs of escalating the violence. Without a settlement of the original causes of conflict, the feud is passed on to succeeding generations.
- 21 The first ARMM governor was Zacarias Candao (1991-1993), who comes from a powerful clan in Maguindanao with close ties to the Aquino government. The second governor was Liningning Pangamdaman (1993-1996), who comes from a prominent clan in Lanao del Sur with political connections to the Ramos government.
- 22 Danguilan-Vitug and Gloria (2000) note that apart from Nur Misuari, more than 30 members of the MNLF senior leadership joined the ARMM regional government in 1996. Other MNLF central committee members such as Cotabato Mayor Muslimin Sema sought electoral office.

- 23 Clashes between government troops and MILF rebels in August 2008 occurred following charges and counter-charges of deception and indiscriminate killing by both sides. Renewed fighting actually erupted following a court injunction that prevented the signing of a memorandum of agreement on ancestral domain (International Crisis Group, 23rd October 2008, *Policy Briefing*, Jakarta and Brussels).
- 24 A review of security and militarization and their consequent effects on the civilian population in Muslim Mindanao is available in the 2005 UNDP report (Peace, Human Security, and Human Development in the Philippines).
- 25 Gutierrez and Danguilan-Vitug, 1999; Guiam, 2006.
- 26 Rasul, 2007.
- 27 Ramos assumed the presidency in the midst of a fiscal crisis and the breakdown of basic services such as water and electricity. See Danguilan-Vitug and Gloria (2000).
- 28 While ostensibly promoting peacebuilding in Mindanao, the Ramos government had few incentives within the EAGA to attract investments to the conflict-affected areas within the ARMM, preferring to promote instead the major urban centres of Mindanao.
- 29 Dela Rosa and Abreu, 2003.
- 30 Community-level conflict between Muslim and Christian peasants over the right of use to a 30-hectare coconut farm in Linamon, Lanao del Norte became the first flashpoint in the 2000 war, as the AFP sided with the Christians while the MILF defended the Muslims. Interview with Musa Sanguila, Executive Director of Pakigdait Inc. (2007).
- 31 An extensive study on the causes and effects of *rido* showed that land disputes were the principal sources of community-level violence, followed by electoral competition.
- 32 Durante et al., 2007.
- 33 Matuan, 2007.
- 34 Interviews and focus group discussions conducted for this study revealed the close links between the powerful clans and rebel forces. The Lanao clans (Alonto-Lucman) including that of the late Ali Dimaporo, were said to have been in constant contact with some leaders of the MNLF in the 70s. The respondents also revealed that some powerful clans in Maguindanao and Lanao provided significant financial and material support to the MILF, particularly during the leadership of the late MILF leader Hashim Salamat.
- 35 Misuari was toppled from the ARMM leadership in 2001 by the so-called Group of 13 headed by Dr. Parouk Hussein, who became the next ARMM governor. The Group of 13 is composed of key leaders of the MNLF who were dissatisfied with Misuari's leadership. The Hussein-led ARMM was a brief preface to the eventual take-over of the ARMM by the powerful Ampatuan clan of Maguindanao.
- 36 Newsbreak and UNDP (2007) IRA Distribution by Provinces 2006, in Democracy and Governance in the Philippines Project. Interview with Suharto Ambolodto, ARMM Judicial Reform Activity Manager, USAID.
- 37 National Statistical Coordination Board, GRP, 2008.
- 38 Torres, 2007, The Asia Foundation.
- 39 Interview with a senior bank officer (anonymous) of one of the largest commercial banks in the Philippines in charge of supervising regional fund transfers across Mindanao.
- 40 The head of the MILF negotiating panel, Mohagher Iqbal, denounced the indiscriminate killing of civilians in Kolambugan, Linamon, and Kauswagan, and announced publicly that an investigation would be internally conducted by the MILF to determine the responsibility of base commands under MILF commanders Umbra Kato and Bravo.
- 41 Among the groups affected were the Ampatuans. The Ampatuan family is an important political force in Muslim Mindanao. Andal Ampatuan is the former governor of Maguindanao, while his son Zaldy Ampatuan was reelected in 2008 as governor of the ARMM. See *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 13th August 2008 and 14th March 2007.
- 42 See *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 14th May 2007.
- 43 Interview with a ranking official of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) (anonymous) in Manila reveals that several powerful clans in Maguindanao were directly engaged in anomalous voluntary offers of sale (VOS) of land and "right-of-way" transactions. These irregularities, he claims, are the reason why the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) indefinitely suspended the payment of VOS claims.
- 44 Congressional hearings after the August 2008 attacks reported an increase in armed encounters between paramilitary militias and MILF elements prior to the announcement of the MOA-AD.
- 45 Local officials who were stridently opposed to the MOA-AD included Vice-Governor Manuel Pinol (Cotabato) and Mayor Celso Lobregat (Zamboanga City).
- 46 Focus group discussions indicate a deepening of distrust among ordinary Muslims towards national politicians and parties that took the lead in blocking the MOA-AD.
- 47 Lara, 2007.
- 48 GAM control over the Aceh Reconstruction Agency (KPA) fuels most of the distrust (*Jakarta Post*, 6th March 2009).
- 49 Former GAM head Irwandi was elected in 2005 as governor of Aceh.
- 50 Snyder, 2000; Berman, 1998.
- 51 International monitoring groups have reported a surge in violence as the nation approaches national elections in 2009. Several Partai Aceh candidates have been gunned down, while candidates from other contending parties in Aceh have been harassed and intimidated. *The Associated Press*, 13th February 2009; World Bank, July-August 2008.
- 52 Lara, 2008, 2009.
- 53 Studies reveal that illegal payments along the main route between Banda Aceh and Medan substantially increase the cost of business in Aceh (World Bank, 2006).
- 54 Lara and Morales, 1990.

