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Reset

Agrarian Reform as a Path to Economic Development and Stability in Bangsamoro  
Mindanao

Stuart Hilare Blanchette

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## **Abstract**

The ongoing conflict and resulting instability in Mindanao is the result of several factors, including economic disparity and significant unemployment in Muslim areas. No single approach will likely solve this complex and long-running conflict, but the economic grievances of the Moro population could largely be addressed through land redistribution and agrarian reform. Agriculture has long been the main driver of the Mindanao economy, but decades of restrictions and failed land-use programs have hampered production and created wealth disparities and suboptimal employment for the local population. Returning portions of the available arable land to the Moro population, combined with development programs to diversify production and increase yields, could both improve the local (and national) economy and provide a path to prosperity for thousands of disenfranchised youth in predominantly Muslim areas. By simultaneously addressing a key grievance of the Moro people and creating greater economic opportunity for local agricultural workers, increased investment and greater regional stability could result from relatively small and simple steps toward agrarian reform.

## INTRODUCTION

The American brand of capitalism has failed to spur agricultural development in a way that creates wealth for the people of Mindanao. First US, then Philippine government controls have been placed on Mindanao agriculture, often to the detriment of the local population. Economic disparity and unemployment, together with discrimination against the Moro culture and people, have resulted in separatist movements and violence. International terrorist groups have capitalized on the unrest and gained a foothold in the region, exploiting the local dissatisfaction and disenfranchisement to increase their influence and recruiting. Intervention by the Philippine Army, backed in recent years by US Special Operations Forces, has failed to quell the unrest or subdue the violent groups. More armed intervention seems unlikely to solve these problems, which are rooted in economic dissatisfaction, cultural marginalization and heavy-handed government practices in Mindanao.<sup>1</sup>

Peace seems more achievable through economic development of Mindanao's most successful sector, agriculture, and specifically agrarian reform through land redistribution to small farmers. The proposed and more comprehensive Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) would address these issues and more, but legal and Philippine Congressional concerns have stalled the bill in Congress.<sup>2</sup> Failed negotiations and the current delays in addressing Moro grievances weaken the moderate factions working with the government and increase the draw of extremist groups using violence to force change. In the meantime, passing a narrower and less controversial bill which returned land to the indigenous people would address an

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1. Sietze Vellema, Saturnino M. Borrás Jr, and Francisco Lara Jr, "The Agrarian Roots of Contemporary Violent Conflict in Mindanao, Southern Philippines," *Journal of Agrarian Change* 11, no. 3 (2011): 304, doi:10.1111/j.1471-0366.2011.00311.x.

2. "Philippines: Bangsamoro Law Faces further Risk." *OxResearch Daily Brief Service*, September 07, 2017, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1936236884?accountid=322>.

historical grievance, increase rural employment opportunities and reverse increasing economic disparity. When the Moro people see that the Philippine government is taking serious steps to address one of their core concerns, violence may begin to subside and be replaced by economic investment and development.

## **BACKGROUND**

Philippine agriculture under both Spanish and US colonial rule was marked by a semi-feudal system of elite landholder and tenant sharecropper. Through most of the nineteenth century the Catholic Church was the majority landowner, which gradually spawned resentment and unrest among the tenant farmers. After the US annexed the Philippines in 1899, the church was displaced as the majority landholder and a plan was enacted to transfer significant amounts of arable land to the local populace. Redistribution was to be a response to the inequality and widespread rural unrest which had grown under Spanish colonial rule, and US President Taft saw it as a way to transform rebellious tenant farmers into “contented landholders.”<sup>3</sup> Agrarian redistributive policies were enacted such that by 1903 only 19 percent of farms were worked by tenant farmers. However, this plan was abandoned before the new system could take hold, in favor of a plantation system which again consolidated land holdings in the hands of a small landed elite. Controls which had capped the amount of land which a commercial entity could control were removed, and by 1946 less than one percent of the population controlled 42 percent of the land.<sup>4</sup> The end of

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3. Theresa Ventura, "From Small Farms to Progressive Plantations: The Trajectory of Land Reform in the American Colonial Philippines, 1900-1916," *Agricultural History* 90, no. 4 (Fall, 2016): 466, doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.3098/ah.2016.090.4.459>.

4. *Ibid.*, 461.

US colonial rule and Philippine independence did not change the existing structure, and by 2011 a full 70 percent of agricultural laborers remained landless.<sup>5</sup>

These unresolved agrarian issues have been magnified on the southern Philippine island of Mindanao. American land redistribution policies failed to recognize the (largely informal) claims of the local Muslim population, and encouraged Christian settlers from the northern islands to take up farming on Mindanao with grants of “public” land.<sup>6</sup> When redistribution to small farmers was abandoned in the early 1900s, large-scale plantations formed with the Christian settlers remaining to work the land. The predominantly Muslim Moro people were pushed from their ancestral lands and increasingly marginalized politically and economically as they became a minority among the increasingly Christian population of the island. Their low penetration of land ownership continues to contribute to economic disparity and unemployment among Moro youth. These agrarian dynamics are a key factor in the current Muslim unrest and armed conflict which have plagued Mindanao for several decades.

### **THE IMPERITIVE OF REFORM**

Numerous attempts have been made across multiple Philippine governments to address the underlying grievances of the Moro people in Mindanao. Since 1976, agreements between the various Moro liberation groups and the Philippine government have been negotiated to bring an end to the conflict, but these have failed to come into force and often sparked renewed violence. In 2008, the Arroyo government finalized and signed a promising accord known as the Memorandum of Agreement – Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) to

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5. Ventura, "From Small Farms to Progressive Plantations," 461.

6. Vellema, Borrás, and Lara, "The Agrarian Roots of Contemporary Violent Conflict in Mindanao," 306.

formalize the boundaries of a potential Moro homeland and offered a high degree of autonomy. This accord would have restored a significant amount of the agricultural land which had been appropriated from the indigenous Moro population during the colonial eras.<sup>7</sup> However, the agreement went too far in its proposals for autonomous governance and the Philippine Supreme Court declared the agreement unconstitutional, blocking its passage and opening old wounds between the separatist groups and the government. Violence and further conflict followed.

Despite the failure of the MOA-AD, it seems that a more limited version of the agreement could be negotiated to address only the land ownership aspects of the conflict. A major sticking point with the court, as well as with Christian legislators in the Philippine Congress, has been Muslim rule over all citizens of the proposed Bangsamoro region and the imposition of Sharia law without the consent of the non-Muslim subjects. Numerous groups in Muslim-majority regions of Mindanao are considered indigenous people and are granted, under Constitutional law, the right to participate in governance on their own behalf.<sup>8</sup> This provision, as well as concern for non-Muslims under Sharia law, has held up more recent agreements as well, including the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAR) and the current Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL). Given the legal difficulties which have derailed past autonomy agreements as well as the issues facing the BBL, a narrower approach focusing on agrarian grievances may provide a more universally acceptable starting point.

Land reform has always been a core grievance of the Moro people. Although autonomy in governance and freedom of action in their internal and external dealings is the

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7. Vellema, Borrás, and Lara, "The Agrarian Roots of Contemporary Violent Conflict in Mindanao," 300.

8. "The Philippines: Renewing Prospects for Peace in Mindanao," *Crisis Group Asia Report*, no. 281 (July 2016): 12, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1820844612?accountid=322>.

main goal of separatist groups such as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), this autonomy has proven to be more than past Philippine governments could agree to enact. Addressing the historical injustices of Moro land appropriation by colonial occupiers seems a much less controversial issue in that autonomy and self-rule would not be on the table. Philippine national integrity would not necessarily be threatened by agrarian reform, and the controversial prospect of imposing Muslim religious law over non-Muslims could be shelved for future debate. In the meantime, an agreement which righted a key historical wrong and restored agricultural land to its former owners would represent a significant step forward and serve as a good-faith building block for further negotiations.

Using land reform to ameliorate violent conflict with a separatist group and undercut one of its core grievances would not be a new tactic for the Philippine government. Following Philippine independence in 1946, the Hukbalahap (Huk) movement which had fought the Japanese during occupation was ostracized and hunted by the Osmena and Roxas governments. The Huk became an armed opposition group bent on overthrowing the Philippine government, with the issue of land ownership as one of its core grievances and recruiting tools. Much like Mindanao today, post-WWII Luzon was plagued by land tenancy and economic disparity, such that ninety-five percent of captured Huks attested that they had joined the rebellion to achieve land reform.<sup>9</sup> Throughout the late 1940s the Huk insurgency defied military actions to destroy it and grew more powerful in its challenge to the Philippine government, another parallel with the current insurgency in Mindanao. However, in 1950 Philippine Secretary of National Defense Ramon Magsaysay recognized that rebel support could be undercut with a land reform program to lure fighters away from the resistance

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9. Lawrence M. Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection: A Case Study of a Successful Anti-Insurgency Operation in the Philippines - 1946-1955*, Washington, D.C: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1986, 7.

through resettlement programs. He implemented the Economic Development Corps (EDCOR), a program which granted small plots of government-owned farmland to guerillas willing to abandon armed resistance. The program was an immediate and widespread success, and usurped for the government the previous Huk slogan of “land for the landless.”<sup>10</sup> The program was expanded on Luzon and implemented in Mindanao as well, and by 1955 an estimated 1500 guerillas had laid down their arms to work their own plots of land under the EDCOR program.<sup>11</sup> The Huk began to lose popular support as well as their recruiting base, setting conditions for the Philippine government to defeat the insurgency soon thereafter.

Like the past situation on Luzon, Mindanao agriculture is based largely on plantation-style holdings where a small number of landowners benefit from economies of scale. While efficient at the macro level from the perspective of national agricultural output, this system creates wide economic disparities between the landholders and the agricultural laborers who work these farms. Additionally, efficiency comes at the cost of employment opportunities which would likely expand under a system of disaggregated smaller farms worked by the landowners. Although potentially less efficient in overall output, smaller farms provide additional jobs, offer greater economic opportunity to the landowners, and drive creation of a middle class with a stake in its own future.<sup>12</sup> Given that income disparity and unemployment are key drivers of Moro economic dissatisfaction, land redistribution could begin to reverse

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10. Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 31.

11. *Ibid.*, 32.

12. Kim Cragin and Peter Chalk, *Terrorism and Development: Using Social and Economic Development to Inhibit a Resurgence of Terrorism* (Santa Monica, CA: 2003), 34, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=81664>.

the sense of disenfranchisement among Moro youth which has created recruiting opportunities for violent groups in the area.

### **IMPLEMENTING AGRARIAN REFORM**

Economic development has a good record in promoting regional stability when implemented at the local level. In Mindanao, the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA) works with communities and international organizations to promote economic projects at the local level and has seen success in reducing violence through economic opportunity.<sup>13</sup> This is in contrast to larger government economic projects and foreign investment in structures such as plantation farming, which represents most multinational corporation (MNC) investment in Philippine agriculture. Although large-scale investment also increases production and employment, in Mindanao it has created more opportunity for radical groups to attack MNC assets which has driven many corporations from the region.<sup>14</sup> Large corporate landholdings are considered one of the land use injustices in Mindanao, and MNCs thus make popular targets for attacks. However, driving them from Mindanao has worsened the unemployment problem already plaguing the region, further reducing economic opportunity and stability.<sup>15</sup> President Rodrigo Duterte and his Secretary of Agriculture have called for more locally-focused projects, and urged banks and other lenders to finance micro loans for small farms and individual startup companies in Mindanao.<sup>16</sup> Development at the

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13. Minette Rimando, "Building Peace through Economic Development in the Southern Philippines," *World of Work* (2017): 25-27, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1911171243?accountid=322>.

14. "Philippines: President Duterte Says Mindanao Key to Driving Developments in Philippines Agriculture," *Asia News Monitor*, Oct 11, 2016, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1827465176?accountid=322>.

15. Ibid.

16. Edgardo Angara, "Reformatting Philippine Agriculture," *Business Mirror*, Aug 29, 2016, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1814902004?accountid=322>.

community level shows greater success in reaching target populations, expanding economic opportunity, and driving the creation of a middle class with a stake in maintaining peace.<sup>17</sup>

Assistance from non-governmental organizations and foreign investment have shown success in promoting agricultural development and will be key to any agrarian reform program. However, this investment must focus on the needs of small farmers. Past government investment in Mindanao has favored high-profile infrastructure projects such as coastal roads and bridges, which provide little assistance to inland farmers who lack the roads needed to move goods to market.<sup>18</sup> This is the case throughout much of the Bangsamoro region, partially explaining the difficulty of improving the local economy. Fortunately, there is evidence that the Philippine Department of Agriculture (DA) recognizes this issue and is working to understand and address small farmer needs. Planned World Bank infrastructure projects totaling P5.3 billion will focus on agricultural transport, with over P500 million in the Bangsamoro region.<sup>19</sup> When able to move products efficiently, Mindanao farmers have seen success in leveraging local investment to expand agricultural production and exports, which show a demonstrated link to job creation, increased stability and reduced violence.<sup>20</sup>

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17. Cragin and Chalk, *Terrorism and Development*, 34.

18. Yves Boquet, *The Philippine Archipelago* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2017), 282, [http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzE1MDY2MzNfX0FO0?siid=06cc378f-c6c7-498f-93ca-a87a48647a43@sessionmgr101&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp\\_465&rid=0](http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzE1MDY2MzNfX0FO0?siid=06cc378f-c6c7-498f-93ca-a87a48647a43@sessionmgr101&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp_465&rid=0).

19. "Philippines: World Bank Group Scales Up Work for Rural Development and Job Creation in Mindanao," *Asia News Monitor*, Dec 11, 2014, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1634766814?accountid=322>.

20. Cragin and Chalk, *Terrorism and Development*, 18.

A relatively stable security environment will be needed to successfully introduce an agrarian reform program in Mindanao. When properly implemented, economic development improves the living conditions of those affected and raises living standards, which tends to reduce local dissatisfaction with the government. While these outcomes are exactly the reason for conducting development programs, they are antithetical to the purposes of violent groups who rely on popular disaffection and instability for their influence. A study of past insurgencies indicates that separatist or terrorist groups tend to actively undermine economic development programs which threaten their regional support base by stepping up attacks and violence.<sup>21</sup> For this reason, any agreement to implement agrarian reform should be accompanied by a general cease-fire between the government and separatist groups, and the cease-fire must include as many armed factions as possible. Unfortunately, some fighters in southern Mindanao may be more interested in perpetuating instability for their own purposes rather than addressing historical grievances and improving conditions for the Moro people. Philippine military and law enforcement, possibly in conjunction with the moderate rebel groups supporting the program, must therefore stand prepared to defend those implementing economic development and infrastructure from fighters not party to the cease fire or who wish to undermine it. A relatively secure environment will allow agrarian reforms to have their desired effect on the economy and population.

The cost of land redistribution will be a primary consideration in implementing a just and affordable solution. Compensation for those displaced must also be conducted in a way consistent with the Philippine Constitution. Fortunately, there are numerous precedents for conducting agrarian reform in a legal, just, and cost-effective manner. The Philippines has

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21. Benjamin Crost, Joseph Felter, and Patrick Johnston, "Aid Under Fire: Development Projects and Civil Conflict," *The American Economic Review* 104, no. 6 (2014): 1835, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42920868>.

attempted land reform in various ways since 1955, most of which failed when faced with cost or legal challenges. However, the Agricultural Land Reform Code of 1963 attempted land redistribution based on a fixed formula of compensation which was determined to be legal and constitutional by the Philippine Supreme Court.<sup>22</sup> This formula was refined and improved under Presidential Decree 27, which further specified the measure for determining compensation values and was again upheld in the courts.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, P.D. 27 affected only a small percentage of Philippine agricultural land and was limited to land which at the time was producing only rice and corn, further reducing the amount of land affected in Mindanao. However, this precedent could be leveraged in crafting a plan for agrarian reform in the Bangsamoro and surrounding areas. Avoiding tenuous and undefined measures such as “fair market value” for compensation would limit potential legal challenges and allow for better prediction of the potential cost of wide-scale land redistribution, thus greatly increasing the chances for success.

The Philippine government can also improve the prospects for successful implementation of agrarian reform through agricultural deregulation and infrastructure projects in the Bangsamoro region. Crop diversification to expand fruit and vegetable production would improve profits for many small farmers. Philippine rice and other cereal production is among the least efficient in Asia, yet these products enjoy tariff protection and

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22. Timothy M. Hanstad, “Philippine Land Reform: The Just Compensation Issue,” *Washington Law Review* 63 (1988): 423, <http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/washlr63&collection=journals&id=429&startid=&endid=456>.

23. P.D. 27 set land values based on a fixed formula of two and one-half times the harvest of three normal crop years. The Philippine Supreme Court specifically upheld P.D. 27 in the case of *Gonzales v. Estrella*, 1979. See Hanstad, “Philippine Land Reform,” 424.

government subsidies.<sup>24</sup> Encouraging and funding the production of these less-efficient crops stifles investment in those in which the Philippines enjoys a comparative advantage.<sup>25</sup> Transportation and other agricultural infrastructure is also intended to support relatively inefficient staple crops rather than higher-value fruits and vegetables, and thus needs investment to allow for smooth crop transition. Finally, vegetable production requires nearly double the amount of labor needed for cereal crops, which would increase employment in the Bangsamoro region.<sup>26</sup> This combination of higher profits and greater employment opportunities for Moro farmers make a strong case for deregulation and agricultural diversification in Mindanao.

The Mindanao climate and the success of agriculture there indicates that agrarian reform could work well as an economic panacea for the Moro people. As mentioned, much arable land in Mindanao is dedicated to cereal crops such as rice and corn, although high value fruits and vegetables hold greater promise for small farmers. Despite a food security strategy favoring rice production, the Philippines remains a significant rice importer mainly due to unfavorable geography and insufficient irrigation.<sup>27</sup> Mindanao is well suited to coconut, pineapple, and palm oil production, and large areas of arable land in the

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24. Roehlano M. Briones, "Agricultural Diversification and the Fruits and Vegetables Subsector: Policy Issues and Development Constraints in the Philippines," *Philippine Journal of Development* 35, no. 2 (2008): 94-95, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/892753896?accountid=322>.

25. Roehlano M. Briones, "Domestic Resource Cost in Philippine Agriculture: Measuring Global Competitiveness of Key Commodities," *Philippine Journal of Development* 41/42, no. 1 (2015), <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1870609618?accountid=322>.

26. Briones, "Agricultural Diversification and the Fruits and Vegetables Subsector," 83.

27. Boquet, *The Philippine Archipelago*, 282.

Bangsamoro region currently lay idle.<sup>28</sup> These disparities represent a significant opportunity to improve farming yields and efficiency and increase the value of Bangsamoro exports. Combined with land reform, agricultural deregulation and incentives to plant high-value crops for export could create wealth for small farms while also pushing up overall agricultural production.

Although an agreement on full implementation of the potential Bangsamoro Autonomous Region is currently stalled, this may be a hidden blessing for would-be Moro small farmers. Beginning the peace process by implementing agrarian reform would allow newly-created landholders to experiment with agricultural practices under the existing, known system before striking off under a new form of self-government. By starting with economic reform, the Moro people can devise lessons and best practices which can inform the economic policies of a future Bangsamoro government. President Duterte has championed a populist agenda and voiced complete support for agrarian reform and local land rights, even calling previous efforts a “farce” and pledging to greatly expand land distribution to farmers.<sup>29</sup> If he can overcome opposition by landowners and entrenched interests and expand the powers of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), land redistribution and its benefits could become reality for Bangsamoro farmers. Increased prosperity and greater investment could follow, creating a virtuous cycle of economic development.

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28. "Development of More Oil Palm Farms in Mindanao Pushed," *The Philippines News Agency (PNA)*, Aug 25, 2015, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1707048646?accountid=322>.

29. Petr Drbohlav, J. Svitálek, and Jiri Hejkrlik, "Socio-Economic Assessment of the Philippine Agrarian Reform," *AGRIS on-Line Papers in Economics and Informatics* 9, no. 2 (2017): 33, doi:10.7160/aol.2017.090203.

## COUNTER-ARGUMENTS

One argument against large-scale land reform as a step in reducing economic disparity and unemployment is that agrarian reform does not necessarily reduce poverty in all cases. The Philippines' most significant recent foray into land redistribution was the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) in the 1980s-1990s and its follow-on Community-Managed Agrarian Reform Program (CMARP), which attempted to make landowners of four million peasants through land transfers.<sup>30</sup> However, after some initial successes, the program was undermined during the Arroyo administration in 2000 through the influence of elite and foreign interests, which began to weaken and circumvent the intent behind the transfers. Large landholders would break up their holdings but transfer them to family members or to tenants under a lucrative leaseback agreement, which essentially perpetuated the current tenant system.<sup>31</sup> When the program was applied to Mindanao, poorly-substantiated landowner claims to Moro ancestral lands were often upheld and the local laborers forced to buy their own historical lands at inflated prices.<sup>32</sup> These problems undermined the reform programs by enriching landholders at the expense of locals, the exact opposite outcome of what was intended. Future agrarian reform in Mindanao must therefore be closely monitored to close loopholes and ensure positive outcomes for local agriculture and poverty reduction among those working the land.

An additional argument against land redistribution programs as part of a solution to violent insurgency is that economic development may not influence the behavior of armed

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30. Saturnino M Borrás Jr., Danilo Carranza and Jennifer C Franco, "Antipoverty or Anti-poor? The World Bank's Market-Led Agrarian Reform Experiment in the Philippines," *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 8 (2007): 1559, doi:10.1080/01436590701637409.

31. *Ibid.*, 1561.

32. *Ibid.*, 1569.

opposition groups. A recent study shows little correlation between economic grievances and ethnically-driven terrorist acts.<sup>33</sup> This model demonstrates an increase in terrorist action in response to increased political grievances but no correlation between increased economic grievance and terrorism; this seems to undermine the argument for economic development as a remedy for an ethnically-driven insurgency such as the MILF. However, the data used in this study is limited to sub-national groups and his conclusions are directly contradicted by the findings of an earlier study by Piazza, which did find a significant correlation between economic grievance and ethnic terrorism.<sup>34</sup> Given this disparity and the demonstrated success of agrarian empowerment tactics against previous insurgencies such as the Huk, economic development through agrarian reform should be considered as the next step in the Bangsamoro peace process.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

US counterinsurgency doctrine is clear in emphasizing the coordinated use of all instruments of national power in defeating an insurgency, but the tendency to rely heavily on military power is difficult to shake. Past Philippine governments have tried for decades to defeat the insurgent groups in Mindanao with military force and consistently failed. Additionally, the comprehensive Bangsamoro Basic Law faces Congressional and constitutional hurdles before implementation can begin, which prolongs the ongoing conflict. Economic disparity and unemployment is a key grievance of the Moro separatist movement, and thus needs additional attention as part of the solution to instability in southern Mindanao.

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33. Brandon M. Boylan, "What Drives Ethnic Terrorist Campaigns? A View at the Group Level of Analysis," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 33, no. 3 (2016): 265, doi:10.1177/0738894214530832.

34. James A. Piazza, "Poverty, Minority Economic Discrimination, and Domestic Terrorism," *Journal of Peace Research* 48, no. 3 (2011): 350, doi:10.1177/0022343310397404.

Agriculture is already a key driver of the local economy and should therefore be the primary focus for reform efforts aimed at increasing productivity, attracting additional investment and reducing unemployment. As discussed, agrarian reform has shown demonstrated success in undercutting past insurgency movements and swinging the local population to support government development efforts rather than separatist movements. For these reasons, land redistribution and agricultural development projects should be prioritized and emphasized as a critical component of the overall approach to resolving the ongoing insurgency, using an all-of-government effort including economic development as a path to regional stability.

Given the convincing prospects for agrarian reform to achieve at least an initial success in negotiations between the Philippine government and Moro separatist groups, the United States should leverage its influence to push for this agenda. U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) should refine its country plan for the Philippines accordingly, in conjunction with the U.S. Embassy in Manila and other national levers of foreign policy. As discussed, some of the more extreme armed factions, when faced with economic development programs which threaten to improve local conditions and weaken their power, may resort to increased violence to undermine the programs' success.<sup>35</sup> PACOM should therefore remain prepared to assist the Philippine military and law enforcement in deterring and defeating attacks meant to subvert the economic development programs. US military involvement, in conjunction with other elements of national power, will remain a key enabler in the peace process. Through this combined effort, agrarian reform and economic development can take hold in a permissive environment, improving local conditions as an initial step toward building a lasting peace with the insurgent groups and Moro population in Mindanao.

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35. Crost, Felter, and Johnston, "Aid Under Fire," 1854.

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