



NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**INDONESIA, MALAYSIA AND THE PHILIPPINES
SECURITY COOPERATION IN THE CELEBES SEA**

by

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June 2008

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE June 2008	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's Thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Indonesia , Malaysia, and the Philippines Security Cooperation in the Celebes Sea			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Andrés H Cáceres-Solari				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) In this thesis, I explore the challenges to and reasons for the current limited trilateral security cooperation among Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines in the Celebes Sea. This study analyzes historical and current events among these countries and relations between them and extraregional powers. In particular, it examines their unilateral and bilateral policies, their domestic political constraints, and the status of their respective militaries and domestic law enforcement institutions. These nations have been successful in establishing trilateral agreements among each other to enhance security cooperation in the Celebes Sea, however these have lacked sufficient scope and depth to address the current terrorist and piracy threats in the Celebes Sea region. I find that this lack of security cooperation is mainly due to these nations' historical mistrust of each other's national interests, domestic political challenges and limited force projection and interagency capabilities. In this thesis I make recommendations for U.S. policy and theater engagement planning in these nations.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Southeast Asia, Celebes Sea, Sulawesi, Borneo, Mindanao, Sulu, Security Cooperation, ASEAN, Terrorism, Piracy, Seams, Makassar, Straits.			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 83	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39-18

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**INDONESIA, MALAYSIA AND THE PHILIPPINES SECURITY
COOPERATION IN THE CELEBES SEA**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES (SOUTHEAST ASIA)

from the

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I explore the challenges to and reasons for the current limited trilateral security cooperation among Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines in the Celebes Sea. This study analyzes historical and current events among these countries and relations between them and extraregional powers. In particular, it examines their unilateral and bilateral policies, their domestic political constraints, and the status of their respective militaries and domestic law enforcement institutions. These nations have been successful in establishing trilateral agreements among each other to enhance security cooperation in the Celebes Sea, however these have lacked sufficient scope and depth to address the current terrorist and piracy threats in the Celebes Sea region. I find that this lack of security cooperation is mainly due to these nations' historical mistrust of each other's national interests, domestic political challenges and limited force projection and interagency capabilities. In this thesis I make recommendations for U.S. policy and theater engagement planning in these nations.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my wife, Danielle Cáceres-Bricheno for her love, selfless support, encouragement and understanding which has kept me going through the years. Thank you for all the long hours and evening spent helping me reach my goals and dreams.

I would like to thank my parents, Dr. Alberto M. Cáceres-Díaz and Mrs. Marta B. Cáceres-Solari, who planted the seed of discovery in me when I was young and who encouraged me to travel the world in search of new lands and cultures. Without your efforts and hard work I would not be where I am today, thank you for your love and support across the oceans.

I would like to thank my advisors, Dr. Michael Malley for his patience and guidance supporting me to finish this goal and Dr. Robert Looney for his trust and confidence in me. Your long hours and dedication motivated me to learn and immerse myself in Southeast Asian affairs.

I would also like to thank Dr. Abbas Kadhim for his inspiration and support in my endeavors to understand the cultures and faiths of the people who live in the surroundings of the Celebes Sea.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE

This thesis will explore the present status and prospects for future security cooperation among Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines in the Celebes Sea and its adjacent coastal regions. I will attempt to identify and describe the nature of security cooperation among Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, address major threats in the Celebes Sea and how to improve it. I will explain why the current security cooperation among these three nations is limited in form, scope, intensity and duration.

Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines have been able to cooperate politically and economically via international and regional organizations as well as through bilateral agreements. These nations have also collaborated in regional security, however this has not developed to the same extent as their economic and political cooperation. Doing this analysis may provide the foundation needed to predict these nations' future actions and formulate recommendations regarding U.S. policy in the region.

B. IMPORTANCE

Security cooperation in the Celebes Sea region among Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines is essential for their own security and for the safe passage of international trade. Ian Storey labeled the Celebes Sea's triborder area as the "danger zone of Southeast Asia," due to cross-border activities of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), these organizations are involved in crime, terrorism and piracy among many other illicit activities.¹ These organizations are capable of coordinating activities and executing operations across borders with fellow terrorists. The governments have found growing evidence of their ability to orchestrate combined operations such as the four suspects who were

¹ Ian Storey, "Triborder Sea is SE Asian Danger Zone," *Asia Times*, October 18, 2007.

apprehended for their involvement in the bombings of February 14, 2005 in the Philippines. Among the detained were two JI Indonesians, one Malaysian and a Philippine member of the ASG.²

Southeast Asia plays a significant role in the world's trade, transport and security interests due to its geography. More than half of the global maritime trade travels through Southeast Asia, predominantly through the Strait of Malacca due to location and established navigational aides.³ However, the Lombok-Makassar passage which leads to the Celebes Sea is one of the only bodies of water in the area capable of supporting submarines and supertankers, making this passage important for world trade and energy commerce.⁴ On June 6, 2007, the U.S. Office of Naval Intelligence published the Worldwide Threat to Shipping Mariner Information message which included reports of piracy activities throughout the globe. Of the eleven listed piracy-related events reported in Southeast Asia, three took place in the Celebes Sea and surrounding straits. A fourth incident took place in the Sulu Sea, an adjacent maritime thoroughway where the same groups engage in terrorist and piracy activities.⁵

The disruption of this maritime region and its routes could inflict a significant blow to the world economy and the political stability of the U.S. and its allies. Cooperation among these three nations in securing the Celebes Sea and adjacent straits would not only reduce terrorism, pirate activity and related markets in the area, but furthermore reinforce the porous maritime and insular borders of these nations.

Security cooperation among Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines would increase central government presence in this sea and their adjacent land masses which

² Stephen Ulph, "Evidence of Jemaah Islamiyah Expansion in the Philippines," *Terrorism Focus* 2, no.5 (March 2003): 1.

³ Leif Rosenberger, *Shipping and Commerce*, Camp Smith: US Pacific Command, 2002.

⁴ Ji Guoxing, "SLOC security in the Asia Pacific," *Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies*, February 2000.

⁵ "Worldwide Threat to Shipping Mariner Information," *Office of Naval Intelligence*, http://www.nga.mil/MSISiteContent/StaticFiles/MISC/wwtts/wwtts_2007%200606100000.txt (accessed April 1, 2008).

have been labeled as ungoverned spaces by the Office of the U.S. Secretary of Defense.⁶ The limited government presence in the islands surrounding the Celebes Sea provides a niche for piracy and terrorism to flourish. These territories are far from their respective nations' capitals and this distance has contributed to their governments' inability to successfully control these islands and establish security. The current lack of infrastructure and rugged topography of the bordering islands of Sulawesi, Mindanao and Borneo provide the perfect terrain for insurgent and criminal groups to sustain their activities without fear of government detection or prosecution.⁷

These nations' weak organizational structures, limited resources and different capabilities pose challenges to successful security cooperation in the Celebes Sea. U.S. sponsorship for multilateral security cooperation faces other challenges due to these nations' fears of a super power manipulating its weaker allies as well as mistrust of U.S. intentions and long term commitment to the region.⁸

⁶ Stew Magnuson, "Southeast Asia Struggles to Create Anti-Terrorism Network," *National Defense*, June 2007.

⁷ Angel Rabasa, Kim Cragin, Peter Chalk, Steven Boraz, *Ungoverned Territories* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2007), 3.

⁸ Amitav Acharya, "Regional Military-Security Cooperation in the Third World: A Conceptual Analysis of the Relevance and Limitations of ASEAN," *Journal of Peace Research* 29, no. 1 (February 1992): 7-21.



Figure 1. Illustration of the Celebes Sea and surrounding areas.⁹

⁹ "Southeast Asia Map," Geographic Guide, <http://www.asia-atlas.com/maps/southeast-asia.jpg> (accessed May 20, 2008).

1. Trilateral Security in the Celebes Sea

Trilateral security in the Celebes Sea is jeopardized by a complex threat which affects Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. Terrorist organizations have found safe havens in the surrounding islands of the Celebes Sea to recruit, train, operate and remain concealed. Many of these territories are hosts to ethnic and religious conflicts, a greater challenge for local authorities and providing a safe haven for these organizations to operate. Some of these organizations have adopted traditional pirate tactics to fund their operations and to carry out their agendas. Criminal piracy is also rampant in the region, affecting the livelihood of local communities and the safe transit of international commerce.

The three nations have unilaterally attempted to combat this threat, however the terrain and remoteness of these archipelagic borders allow these groups to move easily from one country to another. These nations have engaged in bilateral efforts to control their common border areas, however the effectiveness of their forces, mistrust of each other's intentions and corruption has limited these efforts. The failure of unilateral and trilateral approaches to these problems has prompted the three nations to reinstate trilateral efforts to secure the areas surrounding the Celebes Sea.

2. Nature of the Threat in the Celebes Sea

The threats to regional peace and stability in the Celebes Sea are diverse and come from foreign and domestic groups. Terrorism and criminal piracy endanger the maritime lanes of the Celebes Sea which are the venues for critical commercial cargo transiting from the Indian to the Pacific Ocean. Cooperation among terrorist groups has been seen throughout the three nations as they share ideology, training, and assist each other in regional operations. In 2002, when the JI experienced a series of setbacks due to Indonesian counter terrorism actions, this terrorist group reached out to the ASG for shelter and joint training in Mindanao's MILF camps.¹⁰

¹⁰ Zachary Abuza, *Balik Terrorism: The Return of the Abu Sayyaf* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), 22.

In November of 2005, a study by the Merchant International Group predicted that Indonesian waters outside of the Malacca Strait would experience over 70 attacks to maritime shipping within one year.¹¹ The study placed particular emphasis on the eastern coast of Borneo, classifying it as a lawless area where organized crime and corruption of government officials is rampant. The study also mentioned high risk areas such as the Malacca and Makassar straits, and Sulu Archipelago, the latter two being areas adjacent to the Celebes Sea. The Strait of Makassar is not heavily transited with the exception of crucial cargo which encounters difficulty in transiting the Strait of Malacca due to depth limitations.¹²

Ethnic and religious conflicts around the Celebes Sea do not present a direct threat to trade in the region, however the disorder and chaos caused by the escalation of violence provide terrorists and criminals with a safe haven. In Sulawesi and the Maluku islands, historical religious division between Christians and Muslims maintain these islands in a state of tension and potential conflict. Following the exit of Suharto from power, the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, and the anti Christian violence in Jakarta (1998) which left six Christian Ambonese dead, widespread violence erupted in the island of Ambon and quickly spread into the surrounding Malukan islands.¹³

Another outbreak of violence in the late 1990s between armed religious factions drove the city of Poso, Sulawesi into chaos. This may have also been the result of a similar conflict in the Maluku archipelago spreading into the island or the outcome of the Muslim migrations from the rest of Indonesia into Sulawesi which reduced the proportions of the Christian population.¹⁴ The religious conflicts in these islands have produced ideal environments for radical organizations to recruit, hide and launch operations.

¹¹ Thomas Turner, "Piracy Risk is More Than Just the Malacca Strait: Wider Indonesian Waters Pose Even Greater Threat to World's Shipping Says MIG's Model," *Lloyd's List*, November 1, 2005.

¹² Ji Guoxing, "SLOC security in the Asia Pacific," *Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies*, February 2000.

¹³ Gary Dean, "Ethno-Religious Conflict in Maluku," *Okusi*, June 2000.

¹⁴ Nicholas Nugent, "Analysis: Roots of Sulawesi Conflict." *BBC News*, December 20, 2001, Asia-Pacific, World.

3. Explanation for the Limited Trinational Security Cooperation in the Celebes Sea

Several historical events among the three nations have caused mutual mistrust since their independence. During the 1950s, Indonesia experienced a series of revolts and secessionist movements across the archipelago which Malaysia, the United Kingdom and the United States supported. As the Sukarno regime reaffirmed control over the troubled islands, the Malaysian government offered asylum to the fleeing leadership of the Revolutionary Government of the Indonesian Republic.¹⁵ In kind the Indonesian government supported and aided insurgency efforts in the Sultanate of Brunei and other opposition movements in Malaysian territory in 1962.¹⁶

These events were followed by two near simultaneous hostile policies assumed by the Indonesian and Philippine governments against Malaysia. In 1962 the Government of the Philippines made a claim to the Malaysian province of Sabah as part of the Republic of the Philippines due to the historical background of the territory as part of the southern Sultanate of Sulu. In 1963, the government of Indonesia declared its “*Konfrontasi*” policy against Malaysia, which stemmed from Jakarta’s strong opposition to the creation of the Malaysian state due to its colonial nature and the former involvement of the British colony on Indonesian affairs.

¹⁵ Justus M. Van der Kroef, “Indonesia, Malaya, and the North Borneo Crisis,” *Asian Survey* 3, no.4 (April 1963): 173-181.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Tensions cooled after the Philippine claim became a lower priority and the Indonesian government renounced *Konfrontasi*, however this short-lived friendly period was followed by another wave of tensions. In 1968 the Manila press exposed the Philippine government's "Corregidor Affair," a plan to infiltrate Sabah with a special trained unit resulting in the massacre of the unit's Muslim recruits.¹⁷ Thirty four years later Manila revived the claim as a response to Malaysia's deportation of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW).¹⁸

Further impediments are due to the nations' lack of resources to control the triborder region. These nations' militaries are inadequate to simultaneously enforce the law and public order within conflicting regions and patrol maritime areas. Even when bilateral operations take place, they do not have enough depth to effectively employ combined efforts in the region. USN Lieutenant John Bradford identified the frustration of some of the region's naval officers, who express that many of the existing joint security operations along the neighboring Malacca Strait are reduced to formalities between vessels and schedule exchanges.¹⁹

The Malaysian government identified equipment and information technology challenges as obstacles to armed forces effectiveness.²⁰ Other challenges are corruption and inefficient interaction by domestic institutions. Ed McWilliams, former political counsel for the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta, stated that the Indonesian military is a source of support for criminal and terrorist organizations such as Laskar Jihad.²¹ The International Narcotics Control Strategy Report of 2006 mentions the lack of cooperation and

¹⁷ Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia* (London: Routledge, 2001), 48-51.

¹⁸ Joyce Pangco Pañares, "KL Crackdown on OFW Revives Sabah Claim." *Manila Standard Today*, February 9, 2005.

¹⁹ John Bradford, "The Growing Prospects for Maritime Security Cooperation in Southeast Asia," *Naval War College Review* 58, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 63-86.

²⁰ Mohd Zahidi Zainuddin, "Armed Forces Faces IT Challenge to Keep Abreast." *New Straits Times*. September 19, 2000.

²¹ "US funding for Indonesian Military Expected to Resume," *Judicial System Monitor Program*, http://www.jsmp.minihub.org/Indonesia/JakNews/29_01_03indonnewsjr03feb03.htm (accessed March 30, 2008).

inefficiencies between the Philippine law enforcement and criminal justice systems as significant hurdles to the effective prosecution of criminals and terrorists.²²

4. New Surge of Trilateral Security Cooperation

These nations began showing greater inclination to cooperate against the existing threat shortly after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the Bali bombings of October 12, 2002. In 2001, Philippine President Gloria Arroyo and Indonesia's President Megawati Sukarnoputri discussed plans for greater bilateral security agreements while establishing new trade agreements. The discussions included the establishment of an aggressive combined response to maritime piracy and increased cooperation among the nations' intelligence and security services.²³ In 2005, the governments of Indonesia and the Philippines reached a four-point agreement, which included bilateral security cooperation. Current Indonesian President Yudhoyono explicitly addressed the necessity to safeguard the areas of North Sulawesi, Borneo, southern Mindanao and northern Maluku, which share the Celebes Sea.²⁴

Foreign power interests in the triborder region have added to the momentum of security cooperation in the region. In 2002, the governments of Australia and Malaysia agreed on bilateral efforts to combat terrorism in the region. This would allow law enforcement agencies from both nations to cooperate in the prosecution of terrorist groups through the sharing of intelligence, training and other education.

In 2006, the Indonesian government approached Australia to establish more extensive bilateral maritime security cooperation.²⁵ Some of the ideas discussed involved laying maritime beacon devices to facilitate the monitoring of maritime traffic between both nations. In the same year the U.S., Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and other

²² "International Narcotics Control Strategy Report of 2006," *School of Pacific and Asian Studies*, http://www.shaps.hawaii.edu/drugs/incsr2006/incsr_2006_the_philippines.html (accessed April 2, 2008).

²³ Robert Go, "Arroyo, Megawati Sign Deals and Discuss Security," *The Straits Times*. November 13, 2001.

²⁴ "Indonesia, Philippines Reach Four-Point Agreement." *BBC*. June 22, 2005.

²⁵ "Indonesia Asks Australia to Consider All Aspects of Maritime Cooperation." *BBC*. November 24, 2006.

regional partners, held Southeast Asia Cooperation Against Terrorism (SEACAT), an annual maritime security exercise off the coast of Phuket, Thailand. This multilateral effort involved these nations' naval forces responding to simulated piracy attacks on commercial configured vessels, presenting a realistic scenario for future operations.²⁶

ASEAN has also become a forum for security cooperation in region. Per the declaration of the ASEAN Concord II of 2003 (Bali Concord II), ASEAN is a community comprising the principles of political, security, economic and socio-cultural cooperation.²⁷ This was later enhanced through the establishment of the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM), creating a forum for the region's defense ministers to discuss security and defense issues. In May of 2006, the first ADMM was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where the nations' representatives declared the establishment of the ADMM-Plus, a forum where ASEAN nations can address security issues with external nation partners.²⁸

5. Theories on Security Cooperation in Southeast Asia

There are two schools of international relations theory which attempt to explain security cooperation in Southeast Asia, realism and constructivism. Realism bases its argument on independent states seeking self interested cooperation to ensure their own security. Constructivist theory approaches the debate by weighing more on these nations' sense of community, common history and norms which have developed concepts such as the "ASEAN way." Realism is better suited to explain this relationship during times of instability in the region, as states strive to assure their security, while constructivism finds

²⁶ Edward Baxter, "Button Sews Up Pacific Piracy Exercise," *Military Sealift Command*, July 2006.

²⁷ "Declaration of ASEAN Concord II," *Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, <http://www.aseansec.org/15159.htm> (accessed February 1, 2008).

²⁸ "ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-PLUS)," *Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, <http://www.aseansec.org/21216.pdf> (accessed April 2, 2008).

better grounds during times of regional peace and prosperity. Both schools differ in their focus of study, realists employ state centric interests while constructivists adhere to a sense of regional identity.²⁹

According to Amitav Acharya, security cooperation in the third world after World War II was usually limited to a hegemonic and an autonomous model. Neither of these seemed to function in Southeast Asia mainly due to foreign powers' emphasis on external threats as opposed to focusing on existing internal disputes among the members when attempting to unite these nations in various organizational frameworks. Other challenges were due to these organizations' weak structures, nations' limited resources and different capabilities, the potentiality for the leading great power to manipulate its weaker allies and its inability to focus on the region.³⁰

Shortly after the Vietnam War the ASEAN nations adopted four principles for the establishment of a security community in the region: national and regional resilience based on economic, political and social stability, a non provocative attitude towards the Indochinese threat and the control of Great Power influence in the region.³¹ Challenges to a greater security community in the region are differences in capabilities and resource levels (as mentioned above) as well as differences in doctrine, materiel (Russian, Chinese or U.S.) and training levels.

The establishment of ASEAN as a security community in the region has been successful as Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines have refused violent means to intra regional dispute resolution, opting to engage diplomatically. However, Nicholas Khoo points out that these nations have sought external venues to resolve regional conflicts such as the Malaysian and Indonesian dispute over the Sipadan-Ligitan. This dispute was

²⁹ N. Ganesan, " 'Mirror, mirror , on the wall': misplaced polarities in the study of Southeast Asian security," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 3, (2003): 221-240.

³⁰ Amitav Acharya, "Regional Military-Security Cooperation in the Third World: A Conceptual Analysis of the Relevance and Limitations of ASEAN," *Journal of Peace Research* 29, no. 1 (February 1992): 7-21.

³¹ Amitav Acharya, "The Association of Southeast Asian Nations: "Security Community" or "Defence Community"?", *Pacific Affairs* 64, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 159-178.

taken to International Court of Justice rather than seeking a regional solution, reinforcing the undesired need for foreign intervention.

C. METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

This thesis is a case study of cooperation among Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines regarding their approach to security cooperation along their common border area of the Celebes Sea. The analyses will begin by studying the present threats to regional peace and stability in the Celebes Sea and the governments' response. Particular consideration will be given to the historical tensions and conflicts among Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines to understand possible reasons for the present limitations in security cooperation. This will be followed by analysis of recent efforts by these three countries to increase trilateral and multilateral efforts in guaranteeing security along their borders, the Celebes Sea and its adjacent waterways. Finally, I will make recommendations for regional approach and U.S. involvement in this regional effort for US strategic, operational and tactical planners.

The sources will include journals, books, and articles by experts on regional security, economic cooperation, and foreign and domestic policies adopted by these nations. Some of the articles and chapters studied focus on heightened conflicts in areas where the region's governments are combating secessionist insurgencies or other government opposing movements. Other literature specializes in more peaceful engagements among these nations and external influences when addressing respective interests and goals of the region.

The hypothesis is that these nations' regional cooperation reaches boundaries due to conflicting national interests, including religious, ethnic, political and territorial disputes among them. For example, border disputes on the island of Borneo are still present, although not a current priority in these nations' agendas. Christian-Muslim relations constitute major issues in Indonesia and the Philippines, with an impact on foreign as well as domestic policies. A final factor influencing these nations'

interrelations may be their attitude towards foreign intervention, as Malaysia and the Philippines welcome Western influence and presence (including military presence) while Indonesia maintains a less welcoming approach.

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II. NATURE OF THE THREAT

A. CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

Threats to regional peace and stability in the Celebes Sea are diverse and come from foreign and domestic sources. This body of water is surrounded by Indonesian, Malaysian and Philippine island territories where boundary enforcement is limited. As a result, terrorist organizations, pirates and peaceful civilians move across islands and land borders with minimal government restrictions.

The colonial history of this area paved the path for today's conflicts in the region of the Celebes Sea. Historical ethnic and religious differences among neighboring populations have contributed to conflicts among communities in Borneo, Maluku, Mindanao, Sulawesi and Sulu. Ethnic tensions as a result of Indonesian and Philippine programs of sponsored migrations have added another element of friction with the native populations in the region. This unrest and the governments' limited presence in these remote lands have provided a haven for terrorist groups to operate and obtain refuge.

The emergence of radical Islamic organizations with connections to the Middle East and Al Qaeda has complicated the threat. According to Mao Tse-Tung, for the "fish" to reproduce the environment has to be beneficial, the above mentioned ethnic and religious tensions have provided the warm waters for terrorist organizations to flourish. Some of these organizations have adopted piracy practices native to the region, establishing a lucrative business which provides these organizations with funds to sustain their operations. This terrorist and criminal piracy endangers the maritime lanes of the Celebes Sea which are the transit lanes for critical commercial cargo transiting from the Indian to the Pacific Oceans. In this chapter I will describe the main three threats found in the Celebes Sea and its coastal areas, and I will attempt to explain how foreign and domestic groups converge to complicate the security situation in the region.

B. TERRORIST GROUPS

Terrorist groups in Southeast Asia emerged with the assistance of Middle Eastern organizations in the later part of the 20th century, following the independence of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. While Indonesia and the Philippines experienced nationalist and Islamic movements throughout their colonial histories, some of these and Middle Eastern sponsored organizations gave way to new groups with the intent to purify Islam and return to a more literal style of religious practice. An example of one of these sponsors is the International Islamic Relief Organization, founded by Mohammad Jamal Khalifa (Osama Bin Laden's brother in law) which established operations in the Philippines in 1988. This organization provided funds to the ASG to purchase weapons and fulfill other needs in support of their operations.³² Furthermore, the organization was involved in the support of radical Islamic groups throughout Southeast Asia where Muslims are oppressed by U.S. backed regimes.³³

This Middle East Islam connection and exposure became the recruiting channel for *mujahedeen* in conflicts during the Afghan Anti Soviet *jihād*, the Bosnia, Chechnya and Kashmir conflicts among others. Their time in Eurasia allowed these fighters to adopt more radical Islamic beliefs and establish connections with other radicals in Southeast Asia and the world, facilitating funding and links between regional extremist groups as well as with Al Qaeda. In 1994, Middle Eastern terrorists cooperated with local Southeast Asian terrorist organizations to plan and attempt operation *Bojinka*, which planned the simultaneous bombing of several U.S. passenger airplanes over the Pacific. These regional associations have allowed the present radical movements across Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines to cross train, plan and engage in illicit cross border activities with assistance from Eurasian terrorist groups.

³² Zachary Abuza, *Balik Terrorism: The Return of the Abu Sayyaf* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), 22.

³³ Rohan Gunaratna, "Terrorism in Southeast Asia; Threat and Response," *Hudson Institute*, http://www.hudson.org/files/pdf_upload/terrorismPDF.pdf (accessed February 2, 2008).

The *mujahedeen* who returned to Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines from Eurasia brought back lethal training, hard-line ideas as well as radical motives, establishing radical Islamic schools, transmitting their teachings to new students in Southeast Asia. The Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM) is a perfect example of this phenomenon, founded by Zainon Ismail, a former mujahedeen in the Soviet-Afghan conflict.³⁴ Jemmah Islamiyah of Indonesia (founded by Abu Bakar Bashir, and Indonesian national of Yemeni heritage) dates to the 1970s with roots in the native Indonesian Darul Islam movement, however it gained momentum in the late 1990s at the end of the Suharto regime with *mujahedeen* support. Al Qaeda established its presence in Southeast Asia via the ASG, assuring a foothold in the region and expanding its jihadist efforts.

Cooperation among these groups has been seen throughout the three nations as they share ideology, training, and assist each other executing operations in the region. On February 24, 2005 the Philippine authorities announced the apprehension of four suspects involved in the bombings of February 14, 2005 in the Philippines. Among the detained were two JI Indonesians, one Malaysian and a Philippine member of the ASG.³⁵ Within the Philippines, the insurgent activities taking place in the Sulu archipelago have been orchestrated by alliances among the Misuari Breakaway Group (MBG), MILF and the ASG, the latter being known for engaging in cross border activities between Borneo and the Sulu islands.³⁶

These groups' abilities of unrestricted travel throughout the Celebes Sea, adjacent waterways and littoral areas allow them to extend their network of terrorist operations to the entire region. Evidence of this is the ASG orchestrated kidnappings in Sipidan, Malaysia in 2000, and Palawan, Philippines in 2001.³⁷ Additionally, in 2003 a senior JI

³⁴ "In the Spotlight: Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM)," *CDI*, http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?DocumentID=3109&from_page=../index.cfm (Accessed February 18, 2008).

³⁵ Stephen Ulph, "Evidence of Jemaah Islamiyah Expansion in the Philippines," *Terrorism Focus* 2, no.5 (March 2003): 1.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Zachary Abuza, *Back Terrorism: The Return of the Abu Sayyaf* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), 22.

member known as Zulkifli was captured with other fellow JI members and two Middle Eastern operatives as they attempted to enter the Malaysian state of Sabah from the nearby Sulu archipelago.³⁸ Previously Zulkifi was the head of the JI in Mindanao and was responsible for several orchestrated attacks in this southern island.³⁹

Training camps have been established in the islands surrounding the Celebes Sea as part of the development of more robust and autonomous terrorist organizations. Among these are camp Balikpapan in Indonesian Borneo, and camps Vietnam, Palestine and Hodeiba in Mindanao.⁴⁰ These camps host a myriad of training opportunities and events for the region's terrorist groups. In 2002, when the JI experienced a series of setbacks due to Indonesian government operatives cracking down on the organization, this terrorist group reached to the ASG to coordinate joint training in MILF camps in Mindanao.⁴¹ In exchange for shelter and training areas, the JI provides the MILF and ASG with funding and experts in their camps as well as explosive and other terrorist training.⁴²

In 2000 the government of Malaysia captured several KMM members who allegedly trained in MILF camps in Mindanao. While the MILF denies any KMM recruit participation in their training areas, the suspects stated they were trained in the Ubaidiah and Abu Bakar camps before the latter was captured by the Philippine Army in 1999.⁴³ In 2003, Taufik Rifki, the JI's finance and liaison officer was captured by Philippine authorities for his involvement in training insurgents at camp Ubaidiah since the late

³⁸ Rohan Gunaratna, "Terrorism in Southeast Asia; Threat and Response," *Hudson Institute*, http://www.hudson.org/files/pdf_upload/terrorismPDF.pdf (accessed February 2, 2008).

³⁹ "Southern Philippines Backgrounder," *International Crisis Group*, July 13, 2004 <http://www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/2004/icg-phl-13jul.pdf> (accessed March 30, 2008).

⁴⁰ Rohan Gunaratna, "Terrorism in Southeast Asia; Threat and Response," *Hudson Institute*, http://www.hudson.org/files/pdf_upload/terrorismPDF.pdf (accessed February 2, 2008).

⁴¹ Zachary Abuza, *Balik Terrorism: The Return of the Abu Sayyaf* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), 22.

⁴² "Review of the listing of six terrorist organizations," *Parliament of Australia*, http://www.aph.gov.au/HOUSE/committee/pjcaad/terrorist_listingsa/chapter3.htm, (accessed March 29, 2008).

⁴³ "MILF denies knowledge of KMM Members Trained in Its Camps," *Asia Human Rights News*, January 1, 2002.

1990s.⁴⁴ The present dialogue between the government of the Philippines and the MILF prevents authorities from classifying this latter organization as a terrorist group, further restraining government action against the MILF.⁴⁵ In 2002 the Malaysian authorities captured an Indonesian and one Malaysian terrorist suspect in Sabah, northeastern Borneo. These two men, alleged JI members, were accused of providing transportation and lodging for recruits on their way to training camps in southern Philippines.⁴⁶ The Darul Islam cell in the Malaysian province of Sabah, provided assistance to Umar Patek and Dulmatin, two fugitives involved in the Bali bombings of 2002. This assistance involved transportation across land, maritime boundaries, and weapons smuggling.⁴⁷

In Indonesia, the islands of Borneo and Sulawesi host Islamic boarding schools or *pesantren*, which facilitate the JI with a captive audience to proselytize its objectives and intents, and provide new recruits. These students and members travel to the Sulu archipelago or Mindanao via Borneo, Sulawesi or the Maluku islands where the JI enjoys support from local radical Islamic groups and organizations.⁴⁸ Not only do these territories provide necessary transportation channels for the regions' terrorist network, the current sectarian violence in the Indonesian islands of Sulawesi and the Malukus provide the JI with recruits.⁴⁹ In the southern Philippines, the centuries-long *Bangsamoro* struggle of national liberation against the Christian north and foreign intervention has created the perfect atmosphere for the ASG and the MILF to recruit new fighters.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ "Indonesia Says Man Detained in Manila JI Trainer," *Reuters*, November 11, 2003.

⁴⁵ "Manila says Muslim rebels dismantle militant camps," *Reuters*, April 24, 2005.

⁴⁶ "Malaysian police arrest two suspected terrorists," *Suara Merdeka*, December 22, 2002.

⁴⁷ Natalie O' Brien, "Terrorists on the run," *The Australian*, June 12, 2006.

⁴⁸ "Review of the listing of six terrorist organizations," *Parliament of Australia*, http://www.aph.gov.au/HOUSE/committee/pjcaad/terrorist_listingsa/chapter3.htm, (accessed March 29, 2008).

⁴⁹ Christopher S. Bond, "Indonesia and the Changing Front in the War on Terrorism," *Heritage Lectures*, no. 875 (April 15, 2005): 1-7.

⁵⁰ Rommel C. Banlaoi, "Radical Muslim Terrorism in the Philippines," in *Handbook on Terrorism and Insurgency in Southeast Asia*, ed. Andrew Tan (London: Edward Elgar, 2006), 1-27.

These groups fund part of their operations through criminal activity in the region such as kidnappings, piracy and robberies.⁵¹ The ASG and JI inherited much of their maritime expertise from Al Qaeda's maritime operations commander, the captured Abdul al-Rahim al-Nashiri. This senior member of Al-Qaeda conceived and put into practice the idea of employing small boats laden with explosives to inflict damage on U.S. military and commercial vessels.⁵² His ideas and experience proved fatal in the bombing of the USS Cole in 2000. As mentioned before, this organization's kidnapping activities in the region have been with the objective to collect ransom money, a major source of funding. In 2000, the Libyan president Muammar Khadafi, paid USD 20 million to the ASG in return for the release of the Sipadan hostages. This money was then utilized for the purchase of more speedboats and weapons, which would be used for further criminal activity in the Celebes, Sulu Sea and the adjacent islands.⁵³ This incident was followed by the kidnapping of twenty hostages (including 17 Philippine nationals and three Americans) from a resort in the island of Palawan in 2001.⁵⁴

The rise of Khadaffy Janjalani to the leadership of the ASG after the death of his older brother and founder, Abdurajik Janjalani, attempted to bring back the organization to its religious purposes and sever ties with criminal activities. However, this continuing lucrative business has raised doubts about the ASG's legitimate Islamic purposes. This ransom-seeking terrorist activities prompted experts to believe that pirate activity is preferred over the pursue of an Islamic state.⁵⁵

C. MARITIME PIRACY

In 2004, half of the world's reported cases of maritime piracy took place in Southeast Asia, the majority in Indonesian waters, earning this nation's fame of a pirate

⁵¹ "Abu Sayyaf Group," *Intellnet*, <http://www.intellnet.org/documents/200/060/267.html>, (accessed April 2, 2008).

⁵² Boyd, Alan, "Asian Ports Still Open to Terror," *Asia Times*, May 11, 2007.

⁵³ "History of the Abu Sayyaf," *Mount Holyoke*, http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~aefrazie/world%20politics116/terrorist_groups/MILF/History_AbuSayyaf.htm (accessed April 1, 2008).

⁵⁴ "Profile, Abu Sayyaf," *PBS Online News Hour*, January 2002.

⁵⁵ Dan Murphy, "The Philippine Branch of Terror," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 26, 2001.

haven.⁵⁶ The Celebes Sea has a long history of maritime piracy which precedes the arrival of Islam and Christianity to the region. Piracy was a method for local communities to benefit their economies through established markets for pirated goods. It was also a means of political gain, attacking neighboring states and weakening their status. This practice was a profession which many seafarers adopted.⁵⁷

Today's pirate activity in Southeast Asia, particularly in the Celebes Sea has a larger spectrum of effects which go beyond local communities and the region's nations. Victims of piracy are also international shipping companies, large multinational corporations, and several nations. Local poor villagers engaged in fishing or small scale maritime transportation fall prey to this type of activity as well.⁵⁸ Local fishermen have lost their small boats and engines to pirate attacks, many times these possessions are their life savings. These victims are often left abandoned at sea. Without proper action from the local governments, many local villagers and fishermen are forced to provide their own protection with weapons and hired gunmen to secure their safety.

In November of 2005, a study by the Merchant International Group predicted that Indonesian waters outside of the Malacca Strait would experience over 70 attacks to maritime shipping.⁵⁹ The study placed particular emphasis on the eastern coast of Borneo, classifying it as a lawless area where organized crime and local government corruption are rampant. The study also mentioned high risk areas such as the Malacca Strait, Sulu Archipelago and the Makassar Strait, the latter two being adjacent areas to the Celebes Sea.

⁵⁶ Stefan Eklof, "Piracy in Southeast Asia: Real Menace or Red Herring?," *Japan Focus*, August 5, 2005.

⁵⁷ Ger Teitler, "Piracy in Southeast Asia," *Mare Center for Maritime Research*, <http://www.marecentre.nl/mast/documents/GerTeitler.pdf> (accessed February, 27, 2008).

⁵⁸ Lakshmanan, Indira A.R., "Rich and Poor Fall Prey to Pirates," *The Toronto Star*, September 10, 2000, WAB Section.

⁵⁹ Thomas Turner, "Piracy Risk is More Than Just the Malacca Strait: Wider Indonesian Waters Pose Even Greater Threat to World's Shipping Says MIG's Model," *Lloyd's List*, November 1, 2005.

Modern hostage-taking piracy in the Celebes Sea has a history that precedes terrorist activities in these waters. Pirates have operated in the area and established transnational illicit activities long before modern day terrorist organizations adopted the same methods. In 1998, 22 Philippine crew and passengers from the Virgin Pearl were taken hostage while transiting the Celebes Sea on its way to the city of Davao in Mindanao. The vessel was sunk and the hostages were transported and held in the town of Nunukan Timur, Borneo, close to the Malaysian border.⁶⁰ The captors demanded close to USD 1 million from the Philippine government for their release. Today's piracy affects world trade, and has a larger negative impact on those nations with the least resources to react to this problem.⁶¹ Pirates around the Celebes Sea are not restricted to theft at high seas. As mentioned above, kidnappings for ransom has become a lucrative business, affecting local tourism industries and international shipping.

Armed with high technology weapons and systems, short distances between objectives and safe havens, these groups can be very effective in the Celebes Sea. Short distances allow these groups to travel in small fast boats without refueling, the coastal landscape provides ample opportunities for disguise and escape, and the weather in the region allows pirates to navigate the seas throughout the year.⁶² Unlike the Strait of Malacca, the Strait of Makassar is not heavily transited for the exception of crucial cargo which encounters difficulty through the former strait due to depth limitations.⁶³ The Makassar Strait has not been developed to the same extent as the Strait of Malacca. In

⁶⁰ Alec Almazan, "Filipino crew, passengers held hostage by pirates," *Business Times*, August 10, 1998, Shipping Times Section.

⁶¹ Ger Teitler, "Piracy in Southeast Asia," *Mare Center for Maritime Research*, <http://www.marecentre.nl/mast/documents/GerTeitler.pdf> (accessed February, 27, 2008).

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ji Guoxing, "SLOC security in the Asia Pacific," *Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies*, February 2000.

January 2008, the U.S. committed to the installation of critical surveillance equipment in the Strait of Makassar to support Indonesia's efforts to counter maritime terror and piracy.⁶⁴

The region's International Maritime Bureau (IMB) Piracy Reporting Center only receives reports in English, a language barrier which restrains several vessels from reporting attacks or witnessed events.⁶⁵ From January to March of 2007 most cases of piracy in Indonesian waters (3) took place in the Malacca Strait, while only one case was reported in the Makassar Strait.⁶⁶ The above mentioned challenges to piracy reporting in the remote and less traveled Celebes Sea may hide a larger amount of unreported incidents.

In 2005, the Philippine Navy clashed with two speedboats allegedly involved in the kidnapping of three tugboat crewmembers. The clash resulted in the deaths of two gunmen and the escape of the second boat.⁶⁷ This kidnapping took place in the Malaysian province of Sabah, north Borneo. Soon after the clash the speedboat fled in the direction of the Sulu Islands, known as the ASG's area of operations. However, not all vessels that fall prey to piracy live to tell. Many pirate attacks result in the killing of the crews, the capture of the ship, its reregistration and reflagging, causing the virtual vanishing of the vessel.⁶⁸ As mentioned above, the topography, geography and vegetation of the coasts surrounding the Celebes Sea provides the perfect environment for this type of activity.

⁶⁴ "RI agrees to install seven radars from US in Makassar Strait," *Now Public*, <http://www.nowpublic.com/politics/ri-agrees-install-seven-radars-us-makassar-strait> (accessed April 2, 2008).

⁶⁵ Ian Storey, "Triborder Sea is SE Asian Danger Zone," *Asia Times*, October 18, 2007.

⁶⁶ Jane Chan and Joshua Ho, "Report in Armed Robbery and Piracy in Southeast Asia; 1st Quarter 2007," *Walden University*, http://www.ntu.edu.sg/RSIS/research/PDF/Armed_Robbery_and_Piracy_in_SEA-1stQtr07.pdf (accessed February 9, 2008).

⁶⁷ Al Jacinto, "2 killed in Clash With Navy in Celebes Sea," *Arab News*, April 5, 2005, World Section.

⁶⁸ Frederick Forsyth, "The Terror Next Time: It's Not a Plane, It's a Boat," *Sunday Times*, October 29, 2006, Features Section.

D. ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS

Christianity arrived to present day Indonesia and the Philippines via the expansion of European power into the region. Portuguese missionaries arrived in eastern islands of Indonesia in the XVI century while the Spanish arrived in the Philippines commencing the colonization and Christianization of the new territories. These historical incursions and influences around the Celebes Sea resulted in today's regional domestic conflicts in Muslim Mindanao, the Maluku archipelago, Sulawesi and Borneo.

1. Indonesia

Iberian colonizers had little tolerance for those of the same faith that occupied their homeland for centuries, which led them to forcefully convert the newly found Islamic pagans. As a response, these communities united under their common Islamic faith and motivated other persecuted groups to convert to Islam. The Portuguese influence in the Indonesian archipelago was successful in establishing colonies and creating Christian populations in the eastern islands, particularly in Timor, the Maluku Islands and north Sulawesi.

This Dutch and Portuguese push into the central portions of the islands triggered the accelerated spread of Islam throughout the inland populations. Dutch forces arrived in the western Indonesian islands but were not characterized for having a strong proselytizing agenda as their Iberian counterparts.⁶⁹ However, Dutch rule replaced the existing structures, imposing a European style of rule, fueling the initiation and local support of Islamic based anti-colonial resistance. Jihadist movements emerged in areas such as Aceh, where the native population violently opposed Dutch rule and influence, resulting in brutal colonial repression.

⁶⁹ Vincent J. H. Houben, "Southeast Asia and Islam," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 588, (July 2003): 149-170.

In Central Sulawesi, the historical religious division between a Christian north and a Muslim south sustains a state of conflict in this Indonesian island. Traditionally the religious communities in this island lived together in peace. An outbreak of violence in the late 1990s drove the city of Poso into turmoil between armed religious factions. This may have been the result of a similar conflict in the Maluku archipelago or the outcome of the Muslim migrations from the rest of Indonesia into Sulawesi which reduced the proportions of the Christian population.⁷⁰ Violence between both factions is very common and often spills onto non warring parties.

In 2006, the bodies of three beheaded Christian girls were found in the Central Sulawesi village of Gebong Rejo.⁷¹ These victims were killed as Ramadan trophies by Muslim radicals of the island's warring faction, directed by an Indonesian named Hasanuddin with connections to the MILF. In October of the same year a group of Christians were arrested for killing two Muslim men in retribution for the killing of Catholic militants.⁷² Even though this tit-for-tat lethal violence takes place, government officials refuse to admit the religious motives behind the attacks, for fear of further spread of violence on the island. Government official, Minister Jusuf Kalla accused the JI of involvement in the attacks to three Christian villages in October of 2003.⁷³ Growing evidence of training camps in Sulawesi which emerged after the arrival of fleeing JI operatives from Java, solidify the belief that organized terrorism is fueling the present religious conflict.

Similar transmigration programs took place in the Maluku archipelago, increasing the Muslim population of the islands and reducing the traditional Christian majority.

⁷⁰ Nicholas Nugent, "Analysis: Roots of Sulawesi Conflict," *BBC News*, December 20, 2001. Asia-Pacific, World Section.

⁷¹ "Beheaded girls were Ramadan Trophies," *Indahnesia*, http://news.indahnesia.com/item/20061114/beheaded_girls_were_ramadan_trophies.php (accessed April 2, 2008).

⁷² "Police Arrest 14 Christians over killings of Muslims," *Indhanesia*, http://news.indahnesia.com/item/200610095/police_arrest_14_christians_over_killings_of_muslims.php (accessed April 2, 2008).

⁷³ Derwin Pereira, "Who Set Poso Ablaze; All Fingers Point to JI Over Oct 12 String of Attacks in Sulawesi," *The Straits Times*, November 6, 2003, Asia.

Following the exit of Suharto from power, the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, and the anti Christian violence in Jakarta (1998) which left six Christian Ambonese dead, widespread violence erupted in the island of Ambon and quickly spread into the surrounding Malukan islands.⁷⁴ Ongoing violence has forced the government in Jakarta to deploy military and police forces to the region. In May 2004 the Brimob paramilitary unit was deployed to Ambon to support security and sweep operations.⁷⁵ This unrest also resulted in the increasing support for the independence of the Maluku, promoting the creation of the South Maluku Republic (RMS). In the summer of 2007, the appearance of separatist flags caused widespread protests throughout Indonesia against the government for its lack of action against pro independence groups.⁷⁶

Borneo's native population is mainly composed of Dayaks and ethnic Malays. Since the independence of Indonesia, strict Muslim Madurese arrived on the island as part of the government sponsored migrations. The Madurese customs, religions (most Dayaks are Christians) and their increasing numbers have created friction with the traditional communities.⁷⁷ This friction erupted in violence at the hands of the Dayaks and Malays, resulting in killings and cannibalism of Madurese victims. Sights of limbs and decapitated bodies were common after Dayak warriors attacked Madurese villages, in one instance over 500 were killed in the village of Sinkawang. By 1999 over 10,000 Madurese had been displaced by the violence: however the Indonesian military was able to stop the advance of the Dayak and Malay offensive.⁷⁸ In 2001, another wave of

⁷⁴ "Ethno-Religious Conflict in Maluku," *Okusi*, <http://www.okusi.net/garydean/works/maluku.html> (accessed March 28, 2008).

⁷⁵ "More paramilitaries sent to troubled Ambon, toll rises to 38," *Indahnesia*, http://news.indahnesia.com/item/200405021/more_paramilitaries_sent_to_troubled_ambon_toll_rises_to_38.php (accessed March 26, 2008).

⁷⁶ "Jakarta Urges Calm as More RMS Flags Found in Ambon," *ASAP*, http://www.asia-pacific-action.org/news/jp_jakartaurgescalmasmorerms_030707.htm (accessed April 3, 2008).

⁷⁷ "Ethnic Groups Involved in the Borneo Conflict," *Fox News*, March 7, 2001.

⁷⁸ Richard Lloyd Parry, "Carnage and Cannibalism in Borneo as Ethnic Conflict Rages," *The Independent*, March 24, 1999.

violence between the Dayaks and Madurese resulted in thousands of immigrants leaving Borneo, the government deployed troops and police to the island with strict orders to shoot any aggressors.⁷⁹

2. Philippines

The Spaniards conquered The Philippines, converting the northern island of Luzon and the Vizayan archipelago while Mindanao remained Muslim. As mentioned above, the southern Muslim population was able to maintain a certain degree of autonomy as the Spanish invaders were not able to completely control the southern islands. This was the case until Don José Oyanguren's expedition which began the Christianization of the Philippine Muslim territories after 1848. Under American rule, the U.S. engaged in southern counterinsurgency operations aimed at subordinating the islands to Manila, however, the U.S. did not employ Christianity as a tactic. Philippine President Ramon Magsaysay successfully encouraged the migration of northern Christian Filipinos to the southern islands, causing the rapid spread of the faith and the present Christian majority in Mindanao⁸⁰.

This historical Philippine division between a Christian majority population controlling the central government and an impoverished and disadvantaged Mindanao and Sulu archipelago made this religious conflict a regional reality. The *Bangsamoro* movement became a historical struggle against invading non-Muslims such as the Spanish, American, Japanese and Christian Filipinos since the arrival of the first Europeans in the XVI century until present day.

The policies of promoted migrations of Christian northerners to the southern islands not only made the Muslims a minority within their own lands, but also reduced them to the present provinces of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). Over 90% of the population on the island of Mindanao was Muslim at the beginning of the XX century, almost 100 years later they comprise less than 20% of the inhabitants.

⁷⁹ "Borneo Police Ordered to Shoot on Sight as Violence Continues," *CBC*, February 28, 2001.

⁸⁰ David Joel Steinberg, *The Philippines: A Singular and Plural Place*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990): 86-89.

Initial separatist movements such as the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) were able to engage in successful diplomatic dialogue with the government of the Philippines, achieving their goal for more regional autonomy. This secular movement gave way to two radical Islamic groups, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Misuari Breakaway Group (MBG), the latter was founded in Cairo, Egypt.⁸¹

E. TRINATIONAL SECURITY ATTEMPTS

Terrorism as a global threat did not become a priority for these nations until 2001 for Malaysia and the Philippines and in 2002 for Indonesia. Until these years, terrorist and criminal groups were a domestic problem which these nations addressed unilaterally, resisting foreign intervention. One exception to foreign interference is the current peace talks between the Philippine government and the MILF which have been hosted by Malaysia.⁸² This diplomatic process and its associated cease-fire have resulted in a severe decrease on violent exchanges between both parties and the reduction of training and shelter provided to other terrorist organizations such as the ASG and JI.⁸³

It is important to clarify that these transnational terrorist groups did not become a significant threat to any of these nations until the end of the 1990s when former Eurasian conflict *mujahedeen* fighters returned to their homelands after democratization. Once these radical recruiters and clerics were immersed in madrassas and other social circles, the tumultuous events of the late 1990s offered them with the perfect opportunity to catalyze their objectives while the government focused on larger economic, political and security issues.

The limited unilateral efforts to counter these groups and the favorable environments these have enjoyed in the remote regions of these three nations allowed them to flourish and engage in cross border activities, worsening these nations' security

⁸¹ Rommel C. Banlaoi, "Radical Muslim Terrorism in the Philippines," in *Handbook on Terrorism and Insurgency in Southeast Asia*, ed. Andrew Tan (London: Edward Elgar, 2006), 1-27.

⁸² Al Jacinto, "Manila Resumes Peace Talks With MILF," *Arab News*, October 24, 2007, Kingdom Setion.

⁸³ "Philippine Peace Talks With Muslim Rebels Go On Despite Clashes, JI Presence," *Agence France Presse*, February 2, 2008.

situation. The democratization of these three nations in the 1990s and the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997 made Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines vulnerable to internal strife and the rise of radical groups within their borders. The combination of democratic transition and economic decline gave these radical movements the fertile soil needed to re-energize their cause. The simultaneous emergence of secessionist movements in Timor and the Maluku (1999-2001) helped convince groups that Christians and other different ethnic groups were behind the financial, social and political problems these nations faced.

F. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The presence of illicit foreign and domestic elements flourishing in the Celebes Sea, where triborder security is limited, complicates the threat in the region, requiring decisive and effective cooperation to control the sea and littoral areas. Unilateral action by one of the nations will not be effective as these groups have the ability to move across borders, adapt to new lands and continue operations. As mentioned before, the geography and topography of the region provide ample concealment for these activities. This is an advantage which poses a considerable challenge for governments with limited resources to combat the region's crime and terror.

The presence of ethnic and religious conflicts on the islands bordering the Celebes Sea provide fertile ground for the propagation of radical Islamic rhetoric and the chaos needed to conduct piracy operations without detection. Growing resentment against Christian and animist populations in the Celebes Sea has produced a captive audience for radical Islamic clerics. The targeted individuals are easily convinced that their situation is mainly due to the negligent attitude of their government to the Muslim population due to "anti-Islamic principles" such as democracy and secularism. These ideals are based on the principles that Islam is being subdued by a Judeo-Christian conspiracy via economic and political means, and current Islamic leaders have been polluted by non Islamic ideals distancing them from the pillars of the faith. Some of these Islamic radical groups desire

to bring back their nations to the “right path of Islam,” establishing *Shari’a Law* and recovering the true essence of Islam also known as *salafism*.⁸⁴

Part of the funding for these organizations originates from piracy, a historical lifestyle and means to obtain power in the Celebes Sea. However, present pirate activities have larger repercussions than during the colonial years. This increasing threat can lead to an increase in militias in the absence of government protection, further delegitimizing the respective governments’ rule within their borders. The power vacuum left in the peripheries of these nations provides the needed support for terrorist and separatist organizations to sustain agendas and operations.

In order to counteract this complex and self supporting threat the governments in the region must act multilaterally and synergically. These three nations must have a common understanding of the threat’s gravity and a high priority to combat it. Unilateral or haphazard efforts will only dissipate the threat to other islands, as these groups have been able to do in the past.

⁸⁴ Greg Fealy, “Islamic Radicalism in Indonesia: The Faltering Revival?,” *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2004): 104-121.

III. REASONS FOR LIMITED TRINATIONAL SECURITY COOPERATION IN THE CELEBES SEA

A. CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the chapter is to explain the underlying reasons why the governments of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines do not engage in more comprehensive security cooperation in the Celebes Sea region. The three reasons I discuss in this chapter are historical mistrust, domestic political concerns and limited force projection capabilities. Historical events among these nations have caused deeply rooted mistrust which affects their extent of cooperation in securing the Celebes Sea. These nations' willingness to cooperate with each other ends when territorial sovereignty is in question, particularly when a neighboring country's forces are operationally present within a neighbor's borders. These historical events are worsened by recurring territorial disputes.

Domestic political concerns also shape these governments' responses to neighboring states. The military forces of these nations are also ill-equipped to effectively counteract the transnational criminal and terrorist threat present in this sea. The tri-border region's distance from the nations' capital obliges the governments to stage semi-permanent forces in forward areas and establish constant vigilance in the Celebes Sea. In this chapter I examine the above mentioned challenges which affect Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines and why these have caused the governments to resist establishing trilateral security cooperation in the Celebes Sea.

B. HISTORICAL MISTRUST

Several historical events among these three nations sustain a level of mistrust which restrains these governments from establishing closer ties. Some of these events have reoccurring patterns which worsen their mutual relationships. In this segment I will discuss three trilateral friction points.

1. Indonesia's Konfrontasi Policy and Foreign Interventions

In 1963, the government of Indonesia assumed the “*Konfrontasi*” hostile policy against Malaysia, which stemmed from Jakarta’s strong opposition to the creation of the Malaysian state due to its colonial nature and the former involvement of the British colony on Indonesian affairs. During the 1950s, the Malaysian, Singaporean and U.S. governments supported rebellions in Sumatra and Sulawesi while Indonesia attempted to unify the country.⁸⁵ From 1958 to 1959, the Malaysian government offered asylum to the fleeing leadership of the Revolutionary Government of the Indonesian Republic, providing refuge to an enemy of Sukarno’s regime. This was aired by opposition groups in Malaysia who exploited this opportunity to accuse the government of supporting insurgency groups in Indonesia.⁸⁶

The Eisenhower administration’s suspicious approach to the Sukarno regime led the U.S. to support rebel movements in the Indonesian archipelago, launching support missions from neighboring states like the Philippines.⁸⁷ During this American endeavor, former U.S. Air Force pilot First Lieutenant Allen Pope was shot down in Indonesian airspace while providing support to the rebel forces. When captured, authorities discovered he was a military member under a CIA contract with a mission originating from Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines to attack an Indonesian vessel convoy headed to quell down the rebellion in Morotai.⁸⁸

Prior to Sukarno’s *Konfrontasi* declaration, the Indonesian government supported and aided insurgency efforts in the Sultanate of Brunei and other opposition movements within Malaysian territory.⁸⁹ The domestic opposition to the creation of the Malaysian

⁸⁵ “GJA-Lessons From Konfrontasi,” *Hamline University*, <http://www.hamline.edu/apakabar/basisdata/1995/07/26/0006.html> (accessed April 11, 2008).

⁸⁶ Justus M. van der Kroef, “Indonesia, Malaya, and the North Borneo Crisis,” *Asian Survey* 3, no.4 (April 1963): 173-181.

⁸⁷ Matthew Jones, *Conflict and Confrontation in Southeast Asia, 1961-1965*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1-25.

⁸⁸ Tom Cooper, “Operation Haik,” *ACIG*, September 1, 2003.

⁸⁹ Justus M. van der Kroef, “Indonesia, Malaya, and the North Borneo Crisis,” *Asian Survey* 3, no.4 (April 1963): 173-181.

state was led by Inche A. M. Azahari, a local politician who had close ties with the Indonesian and Philippine governments. In late 1962, Azahari and his followers initiated a revolt in Brunei where he declared himself premier of the independent state, which became a short lived attempt due to the effectiveness of British troops, crushing the rebellion.⁹⁰

Just as the U.S. used the Philippines as a platform to violate Indonesian sovereignty, the British did the same through from Malaysian territory. The previously mentioned increase of British troops in the region used Malaysia as an operating base to attack Indonesian targets within Indonesian territory.⁹¹ These missions were designed to maintain the newly arrived Indonesian forces from exerting control over the Kalimantan provinces while keeping them at a distance from the border.

2. The Malaysian and Philippine Dispute over Sabah

In 1962 the Government of the Philippines claimed the Malaysian province of Sabah as part of the Republic of the Philippines due to former ownership under the southern Sultanate of Sulu. The dispute arose from the terms in which the province changed possession from the Sultanate to Baron de Overbeck in 1878. According to the Malaysian translation of the document, the province was ceded to the Baron, while the Philippines interpret the transaction as a temporary lease between both parties.⁹² This is further complicated by the Baron's representation of a private firm, not the sovereign government of the United Kingdom. This Malaysian province later became part of the British Protectorate of North Borneo, which then became part of the Malaysian Federation.

During this period Malaysia found itself surrounded by hostile neighbors which doubted the legitimate reason for its national existence. This confrontation of Indonesia

⁹⁰ Justus M. van der Kroef, "Indonesia, Malaya, and the North Borneo Crisis," *Asian Survey* 3, no.4 (April 1963): 173-181.

⁹¹ "Confrontation," *Diggerhistory*, <http://www.diggerhistory.info/pages-conflicts-periods/malaya-korea/confrontation.htm> (accessed April 8, 2008).

⁹² Bernard K. Gordon, *The Dimensions of Conflict in Southeast Asia* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 9-12.

and the Philippines towards a same rival brought both nations together, exerting pressure on the British colonial power and what seemed to be the remnants of its empire in the region. The Philippine claim on the Borneo province eventually quieted down until press reports revealed that a secret force had been trained on the island of Corregidor. This revelation appeared in the Manila press in 1968 and was quickly labeled as the “*Corregidor Affair*,” airing renewed Philippine efforts to claim the territory, this time through violent means.⁹³

This plot involved the training of over 200 southern Filipinos of Tausug and Sama origin with the purpose of infiltrating Sabah and commencing a revolution. The group became mutinous when the trainees discovered the nature of their mission, which would have involved acts of violence against their ethnic and religious brothers in the Malaysian province. The government reacted by killing them in Corregidor Island where they were undergoing training, one survivor, Jibin Arula, escaped to reveal the story to the Manila press.⁹⁴

The Philippine government has not retracted its claim to the northern Borneo territory of Sabah. In fact, Manila revived its claim in 2002 as a result of Malaysian government deportation of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW).⁹⁵ Close to 300,000 Philippine citizens reside legally or illegally in Sabah, most of them working under the OFW program under expired visas. The Malaysian government began a crackdown on the large numbers of illegal workers, resulting in arrests and deportation as well as alleged violence and rape of the Filipino deportees.⁹⁶ Similar procedures are being taken against illegal Indonesians in Sabah, resulting in simultaneous Indonesian and Philippine government protests against the Malaysian government.

⁹³ Amit Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia* (London: Routledge, 2001), 48-51.

⁹⁴ Paul F. Whitman, “The Corregidor Massacre 1968,” *Corregidor Historic Society*, May 18, 2008.

⁹⁵ Joyce Pangco Pañares, “KL Crackdown on OFW Revives Sabah Claim.” *Manila Standard Today*, February 9, 2005.

⁹⁶ “Philippine’s Claim to Sabah,” *E-Pilipinas*, <http://www.epilipinas.com/SabahClaim.htm> (accessed April 23, 2008).

3. Border Sensitivities and Other Issues

ASEAN's principle of non interference among its members may play a major role in limiting these nations' interference on the pursuit of respective domestic terrorist and criminal groups.⁹⁷ This hinders the ability for these nations to successfully monitor, pursue and prosecute these transnational groups as they quickly cross borders undetected while fleeing any one nation's government forces. Current border disputes among Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines may also contribute to the resistance of these nations to allow rights of hot pursuit within each other's territorial waters.

In 2004, the Malaysian government refused to conduct maritime joint patrols with Indonesia, Singapore and the U.S. in the Malacca Strait. The Malaysian foreign minister insisted that the presence of foreign troops within national waters presented an infringement of national sovereignty.⁹⁸ As a result, Malaysia agreed to limit the cooperation to bilateral exercises and coordinated patrols along the maritime border. This nation further emphasized its desire to engage in an operational hand over of responsibility when hot pursuits reach Malaysian waters, a decision which affects anti-piracy efforts in the Celebes Sea.⁹⁹

Indonesia and Malaysia have a history of restricting foreign maritime passage close to critical borders with domestic turmoil. Indonesia forbade the maritime traffic in Acehese waters in support of counterinsurgency operations while Malaysia took similar measure off the coast of Sabah to protect critical off shore islands.¹⁰⁰ During peacetime, vessels of high importance are escorted by Malaysian Navy vessels, ensuring the security of passage while maintaining foreign armed forces from incurring within national

⁹⁷ Dana Robert Dillon and Paolo Pasicolan, "Promoting a Collective Response to Terrorism in Southeast Asia," *Heritage Foundation*, July 22, 2002.

⁹⁸ "KL Assures Adm Fargo of Help to Fight Terrorism, But Rejects Joint Patrol," *Business Times Online*, June 22, 2004.

⁹⁹ "Malaysia," *Brookings Institute*, <http://www.brookings.edu/fp/research/projects/islam/malaysia20050802.pdf> (accessed April 21, 2008).

¹⁰⁰ John Bradford, "Southeast Asian Maritime Security In the Age of Terror: Threats, Opportunity, and Charting the Course Forward," *Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies*, April 2005.

maritime borders.¹⁰¹ In 2003, the Philippine President stated that the AFP is not impeded by borders when pursuing border crossing Muslim guerillas in the southern part of the nation, causing immediate Malaysian government backlash through the exportation of OFW and heightened security measures.¹⁰²

The north Borneo coasts along the Indonesian and Malaysian borders are rich in important mineral deposits. In 2002, the International Court of Justice ruled that the islands of Ligitan and Sipidan belong to Malaysia, however both these nations' maritime claims in these coastal areas show sustained friction.¹⁰³ This enduring dispute escalated to a mutual deployment of forces in 2005 as a result of both nations awarding oil exploration contracts in the same territory to two different petroleum companies.¹⁰⁴ This situation was solved through bilateral diplomatic efforts, however during the heightened dispute, Malaysia accused Indonesia of trespassing into its national waters, further enhancing the Malaysian aversion towards Indonesian armed forces within its borders.

C. INDONESIA'S DOMESTIC CONCERNS AND ACTIONS TOWARDS TERRORISM

After September 11, 2001, the Philippines and Malaysia offered immediate support to the United States in its endeavors to hunt down the Islamic radicals. Malaysia immediately denounced Al Qaeda as an extremist Muslim organization not representing the real ideology of the religion. The Philippines immediately offered the U.S. the use of its former bases of Clark and Subic Bay for military response to the attack. In response, the American administration offered assistance to the government of the Philippines in its

¹⁰¹ "Malaysia," *Brookings Institute*, <http://www.brookings.edu/fp/research/projects/islam/malaysia20050802.pdf> (accessed April 21, 2008).

¹⁰² Eduardo Capulong, "Washington's Military Intervention Deepens in the Philippines," *International Socialist Review*, May-June 2003.

¹⁰³ "Sovereignty over Pulau Ligitan and Pulau Sipadan (Indonesia/Malaysia)," *International Court of Justice*, <http://www.icj-cij.org/presscom/index.php?pr=343&pt=1&p1=6&p2=1> (accessed April 21, 2008).

¹⁰⁴ Greenlees, Donald, "Oil-Rich Islands Split Malaysia and Indonesia," *International Herald Tribune*, March 8, 2005, Asia-Pacific Section.

efforts to defeat the Muslim insurrection in the southern Philippines.¹⁰⁵ Meanwhile, Indonesia did not show the same commitment to the American led cause until the Bali bombings of 2002.

At the wake of the attack on the Balinese tourist nightclub, the Indonesian government began deliberations to emplace tougher anti terrorism laws, elevating the national priority with regards to this threat.¹⁰⁶ However, the Indonesian government has been careful not to ally or align itself too closely with the U.S. for fears of upsetting voters. This nation's Muslim majority and the leadership of moderate Muslim organizations expressed disapproval to U.S.' policy in Afghanistan and the Middle East, accusing the U.S. of destroying sovereign nations.¹⁰⁷

The government of President Megawati did not address the problem caused by radical Islamic schools and organizations which supported JI, allowing these terrorist groups to recruit and train in Java with limited government counteraction. This was worsened by both Megawati and the present Yudhoyono's administrations resistance to declare JI as a terrorist organization until 2008.¹⁰⁸ Prior to this decision, the JI was able to maintain uninterrupted financial support through real estate holdings, charity donations, and other non fluid assets.¹⁰⁹ The recent decision by the Indonesian courts would now allow fluidity in the law enforcement system to prosecute the JI and other terrorist organizations more effectively.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Renato Cruz De Castro, "The Revitalized Philippine-U.S. Security Relations: A Ghost from the Cold War or an Alliance for the 21st Century?," *Asian Survey* 43, no. 6 (November-December 2003): 971-988.

¹⁰⁶ "Indonesia Pledges to Fight Terrorism in Wake of Bali Blast," *PBS Online News Hour*, October 16, 2002.

¹⁰⁷ "The President's Trip to Asia," *PBS Online News Hour*, October 22, 2003.

¹⁰⁸ Dana R. Dillon, "Southeast Asia and the Brotherhood of Terrorism," *Heritage Foundation Heritage Lecture*, December 20, 2004.

¹⁰⁹ Mark Dunn, "Jakarta Yet to Freeze JI's Millions," *Herald Sun*, November 8, 2006, National Section.

¹¹⁰ "Indonesian Militants Declared a Terrorist Group," *AP*, April 21, 2008, South and Central Asia, World News Section.

D. LIMITED FORCE CAPABILITIES

Another challenge Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines face is the status of their law enforcement and military forces in regards to infrastructure and capabilities. While this is not a deeply entrenched historical obstacle, the current reality of these nation's force capabilities limits their potential to unilaterally pursue security in the triborder area, making trilateral cooperation a more difficult objective.

The Indonesian military (TNI) is currently underfunded by the central administration in Jakarta. The Indonesian national budget does not completely cover the needs of the Indonesian military, causing the armed forces to seek additional sources of funding which cannot be quantified.¹¹¹ This directly impacts the ability of the government to successfully control the military and its operations throughout the archipelago. In instances, the TNI has been accused of supporting terrorist organizations such as Laksar Jihad and militias which were responsible for the 1999 unlawful killings in East Timor.¹¹²

As a result of these human rights violations, the congressionally approved Leahy Law forbids American support of the Indonesian military, which includes funding and training. Consequently, the equipment of the TNI has been deteriorating and has not been successfully replaced by similar higher technology equivalents.¹¹³ President Yudhoyono's administration was successful in increasing the portion of the national budget dedicated to the military, however the amount approved was short of what the defense ministry identified as critical.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Angel Rabasa and John B. Haseman, *The Military's Funding and Economic Interests* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2002) , 69-78.

¹¹² "U.S. Funding for Indonesian Military Expected to Resume," *JSMP News*, January 29, 2003, Asia Pacific Section.

¹¹³ "Susilo Approves Additional Military Funding," *East Timor and Indonesia Action Network*, <http://www.etan.org/et2005/may/22/19susilo.htm> (accessed April 22, 2008).

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

In Malaysia, the government approved necessary funding for essential equipment needed in Sabah to deter the incursions of Philippine insurgents in the Malay province.¹¹⁵ This government's decision came as a response to the Sipadan and Pandanan islands kidnappings in 2000. However, the increase in military expenditure is not enough to counteract the large coastal area surrounding Sabah, composed mainly of small islands, close to international borders through which other nations' forces may not cross. Further challenges to the Malaysian armed forces are due to its traditional focus on counterinsurgency and less emphasis on border control, causing the disproportionate underdevelopment of the nation's coastal defenses.¹¹⁶

Furthermore, this government's custom of purchasing military hardware from multiple suppliers may prove economically feasible and efficient in the beginning.¹¹⁷ However, the logistical requirement to support and sustain multiple variations and types of machinery may force the increase and diversification of maintenance expertise which could increase the overall cost of maintenance.

The Philippine's lack of national police compared to the larger size of the army impedes this nation to properly prosecute terrorism suspects throughout its extensive archipelago. Even though Indonesia did not declare JI as a terrorist organization until 2008, this nation has been able to make more arrests of terrorism suspects than the Philippines.¹¹⁸

The International Narcotics Control Strategy Report of 2006 mentions the lack of cooperation and inefficiencies between the Philippine law enforcement and criminal justice systems as significant hurdles to the effective prosecution of criminals and

¹¹⁵ Harian, Berita, "Malaysia Allocates Defence Funds to Curb Incursions by Philippine Separatists," *BBC*, September 18, 2000, Asia-Pacific Section.

¹¹⁶ Razali, M. Jeffri, "Challenges Facing Armed Forces," *New Straits Times*, September 16, 2000, National Section.

¹¹⁷ "Malaysia Maneuvers; Increasing Military Helicopter Needs Could Spell Longer-Term Sales," *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, December 10, 2007, World News and Analysis Section.

¹¹⁸ Dana R. Dillon, "Southeast Asia and the Brotherhood of Terrorism," *Heritage Foundation Heritage Lecture*, December 20, 2004.

terrorists.¹¹⁹ Other obstacles are due to the severe lack of maritime police and coastal security force which allow terrorism and piracy to freely operate along the extensive archipelago. This report mentions current backlog problems in the judicial branch causing the delay of case procedures and lengthening judicial processes.

Equipment issues are a key obstacle in the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Since the U.S. handed over Clark Air Base and Subic Naval Base, the AFP's opportunity to obtain equipment and repair parts for their U.S.-made military equipment was reduced to Foreign Military Sales channels. The inability of the military to repair equipment close to front lines forces the leadership to rely on a central Manila maintenance facility to repair all equipment. It is also very common for the AFP's weapons and ammunition to fall in the hands of the insurgency. U.S. journalist Eliza Griswold was shown U.S. made rifles equipped with night vision devices during a visit to an MILF camp in Mindanao.¹²⁰ Some of this equipment fell in the hands of the insurgency, however this was not as a result of battlefield spoils. According to the interviewed MILF commander, AFP members sell weapons and ammunition to the insurgency.

Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines do not have enough military, police and other civilian law enforcement forces to deploy and sustain in remote regions of their nations such as the triborder area. Even if these governments were to authorize border incursions and hot pursuit, these nations would not have the force projection capabilities or necessary domestic interagency frameworks to ensure security cooperation.

E. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The combination of deep-rooted rivalries and among Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, worsened by recurring events when former claims are raised, maintain an environment of mistrust among these nations. Other more recent actions by these

¹¹⁹ "International Narcotics Control Strategy Report of 2006," *Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs*, http://www.shaps.hawaii.edu/drugs/incsr2006/incsr_2006_the_philippines.html (accessed April 2, 2008).

¹²⁰ "Where US Weapons Used to Kill Philippine Marines?," *GMA News*, <http://gmapinoytv.igma.tv/sidetrip/blog/?/archives/253-Were-US-weapons-used-to-kill-Philippine-Marines.html> (accessed April 15, 2008).

governments perpetuate the region's friction such as the OFW deportations from and the deployment of military forces in support of territorial disputes between Indonesia and Malaysia. Mistrust among Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines restrains the depth of security cooperation, particularly in the effectiveness of cross border criminal and terrorist pursuit. The inability of these nations' forces to cross into their neighbor's waters while on an official capacity to pursue these groups allows the fugitives to exploit seams, which are protected in the name of territorial sovereignty. Malaysia's proposal to exercise on the border operational transfers of responsibility is significantly affected by the readiness, training and ability of the region's forces to rapidly deploy and share continuous information under time constraints.

This is further complicated by Indonesia's domestic politics which maintain Jakarta from taking a harsh stance against JI, which was not declared as a terrorist organization until April 2008 due to fears of alienating the population. This Indonesian government response towards domestic terrorism showed the world its resistance to openly commit against the regions' anti terrorist efforts. Jakarta's delay to even consider terrorism as a major threat in Southeast Asia was more evidently proven after its resistance to joins its neighbors in officially condemning radical Islamic groups. This government's decision further impaired regional security efforts, particularly in the ungoverned Celebes Sea.

The immediate hindrance to the security of the Celebes Sea is the present status of these nation's military forces and law enforcement agencies, which would find it difficult to conduct limited unilateral actions. The domestic cooperation between law enforcement and the judicial branch of the governments appears flawed, posing obstacles to the effective prosecution of criminals and terrorists operating in the region. While all three governments attempt to increase their patrols and presence in the Celebes Sea region, other priorities such as domestic conflicts and turmoil in Indonesian and Philippine territories compete for scarce security national resources. These nations do not have the manpower, equipment and means of sustainment to maintain an efficient permanent force in the triborder region.

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IV. NEW SURGE OF TRINATIONAL SECURITY COOPERATION IN THE CELEBES SEA

A. CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

International pressure, domestic desire and regional efforts have slowly pushed Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines to further increase security cooperation in the Celebes Sea. While in the past, most of these governments opted to unilaterally deal with internal insurgencies, criminal and terrorist groups, new bilateral and multilateral cooperation has promoted closer neighborly ties. Some initial attempts included the interaction of military forces as well as intelligence and law enforcement agencies, adding depth to the security agreements among these nations.

While Malaysia maintained a solid position prohibiting the presence of Indonesian or Philippine forces within its waters under official capacity, new trination agreements have paved the way to joint operations among Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. However, some of this new motivation may be a result of these nations' increasing maritime security agreements with increased willingness of external powers. This has not only motivated bilateral and trilateral agreements, regional defense dialogue has also resulted from ASEAN's decision to host meetings among the member nations' defense ministers, adding another aspect of ASEAN cooperation. In this chapter I outline the results of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines' changing attitudes towards security cooperation in the Celebes Sea.

B. TRINATION EFFORTS

Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines have been successful in engaging in trilateral dialogue with the purpose of establishing more concrete security cooperation efforts. Some of these initiatives ranged from establishing links between military and security agencies to engaging in tactical level joint missions to secure the common porous maritime border of the Celebes Sea.

In 2001, Philippine President Gloria Arroyo and Indonesia's President Megawati Sukarnoputri discussed plans for greater bilateral security agreements while establishing necessary trade agreements. The discussions included the establishment of an aggressive combined response to maritime piracy and increased cooperation between the nations' intelligence and security services.¹²¹ Later in December of the same year, officials from Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines approved a treaty to fight transnational terrorism and crime among the three nations.

This was finalized at a conference in Manila where other regional nations like Singapore and Thailand attended to observe the event.¹²² This treaty committed the signatory nations' intelligence agencies to practice collective efforts and military forces to engage in rapid combined deployments against regional threats. This was followed by the signature of a trade and security bilateral agreement between Indonesia and the Philippines in 2002, cementing deals to share intelligence which would lead to a reduction in cross border trafficking and piracy.¹²³

Indonesia and Malaysia attempted to host a multilateral anti sea mine exercise with Asia-Pacific nations in 2003, however the scare of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) postponed the initiative.¹²⁴ This was part of the region's effort to counter possible terrorist threats on international commerce based on evidence that these organizations would engage economic targets. Other non-security efforts have indirectly increased the security of the triborder region. In 2004, the three nations' governments declared plans to establish a Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Eco-region with the purpose of saving the sea's underwater flora and fauna.¹²⁵ This would increase the monitoring of environmental friendly fishing practices and the piracy threats in the region which have affected the livelihood of local fishermen and merchants.

¹²¹ Robert Go, "Arroyo, Megawati Sign Deals and Discuss Security." *The Straits Times*. November 13, 2001.

¹²² "Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia Sign Pact on Terrorism, Transnational Crime," *BBC*, December 30, 2001, Asia-Pacific.

¹²³ "Philippines, Indonesia sign trade, security pact," *Philippine Daily Enquirer*, December 23, 2002.

¹²⁴ "Navy Deploys Antiterror Reinforcement Troops," *Jakarta Post*, October 7, 2003.

¹²⁵ "Haven Saved," *The Sunday Telegraph*, February 15, 2004, World Section.

In 2005, the governments of Indonesia and the Philippines reached a four-point agreement, which included bilateral decisions on security. Indonesian President Yudhoyono explicitly addressed the necessity to safeguard the areas of North Sulawesi, Borneo, southern Mindanao and northern Maluku, which surround the Celebes Sea.¹²⁶ The president also stated that both nations and other regional partners would meet in the future to increase cooperation among their respective intelligence, security and justice agencies.

In this same year the Malaysian and Philippine governments agreed on increasing the frequency of maritime patrols between the state of Sabah and the Sulu archipelago. These patrols involved bilateral naval force interactions as well as law enforcement agencies, increasing the scope and the involvement of these nations' governments. This bilateral decision and commitment was a response to the ongoing piracy activity in the area where gunmen kidnapped the crew of a Malaysian tugboat and fled to the Sulu islands in early 2005.¹²⁷

At the end of 2005, the President of the Philippines proposed the respective heads of state from Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia to establish joint patrols from the Celebes Sea to Irian Jaya, including the Malukus.¹²⁸ This proposal was welcomed by the government representatives of Indonesia and Malaysia, marking a significant change of attitude and previous resistance to joint patrols and foreign presence within national waters. These measures extended the patrolled area beyond what was agreed during regular exercises, implementing a permanent joint measure along the common coastal areas of these nations. This proposal emerged as a necessity to stabilize and govern the region to attract investors and business.

In April 2005, the Manila government stated its interest to host joint exercises in Mindanao and Sulu islands, and extend the joint patrols to Australia and the ASEAN

¹²⁶ "Indonesia, Philippines Reach Four-Point Agreement," *BBC*, June 22, 2005.

¹²⁷ "Asia Pair Step Up Piracy War," *Lloyd's List*, April 6, 2005, News Section.

¹²⁸ "Nations agree joint terror patrols," *CNN*,
<http://www.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/asiapcf/12/11/asean.patrols/> (accessed April 9, 2008).

nations.¹²⁹ These arrangements would facilitate any partner nation to participate in joint operations and exercises in the Philippines. In November of the same year Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines reached an agreement to enhance trilateral security cooperation along their borders and common maritime regions during the ASEAN Chiefs of Defense Forces Informal Meeting held in Manila. These nations' defense ministers developed a program named "Coastal Watch South" in which the nations will adopt current Philippine coastal measures and extend them to north Sulawesi and Sabah.¹³⁰ This measure determines clear and mandated maritime lanes of travel, any course alteration in the Celebes Sea would lead to the interception of the vessel by the respective nations' authorities.

In 2006, the Indonesian and Philippine police joined forces to draft security agreements to counter illegal trafficking, border crossing and terrorist threats between both nations.¹³¹ Increased intelligence cooperation was seen in 2006 during similar arrangements, the Malaysian government granted Philippine authorities access to an ASG member captured on the coast of Sabah. During the same timeframe, the Philippine authorities handed Dulmatin's wife (a wanted terror suspect accused of taking part of the 2002 Bali bombings) and other terrorists over to authorities in Indonesia where they had outstanding warrants.¹³²

In 2006, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and other partners (to include the U.S.), held Southeast Asia Cooperation Against Terrorism (SEACAT), a maritime security exercise off the coast of Phuket, Thailand. This multilateral effort involved these nations' naval forces responding to simulated piracy attacks on commercial configured vessels, presenting a realistic scenario for future operations.¹³³ This training event

¹²⁹ Luz Baguioro, "Philippines Said Seeking Regional Military Ties In War On Terror," *The Straits Times*, April 2, 2005.

¹³⁰ "Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia Agree Joint Defence Line Against Terror," *The Philippine Star*, November 12, 2005.

¹³¹ "Philippines, Indonesian Police in Two-Day meet to finalize security pacts," *The Philippine Star*, November 27, 2006.

¹³² Leslie Lopez, "S-E Asian Govts Join Hands in Terror Fight; Security Agencies Share Data and Allow Access to Suspects as Mistrust Gives Way to Pragmatism," *The Straits Times*, December 6, 2006.

¹³³ Edward Baxter, "Button Sews Up Pacific Piracy Exercise," *Military Sealift Command*, July 2006.

emphasized the need for multinational force coordination and intelligence sharing to effectively respond to common threats in the region.

In the summer of 2007 the Indonesian and the Philippine Navy increased naval presence and activity in their common archipelagic borders to secure economic relations established between southern Philippine and northern Indonesian communities.¹³⁴ This naval interaction was facilitated by the Bilateral Naval Exercise Coordinated Patrol between both nations which took place on July 13-23 of the same year, further enhancing Coastal Watch South's goals of maritime commerce security among the neighboring islands. During this exercise the Indonesian Navy apprehended two Philippine fishermen who entered Indonesian waters illegally and were returned to Philippine authorities accordingly.

In March 2007 the Malaysian government expressed its willingness to work with foreign governments and their militaries to defend its coastal waters against terrorist threats.¹³⁵ Particular emphasis was placed on the maritime region surrounding the Borneo provinces of Sarawak and Sabah. In November of 2007, the Malaysian and Indonesian authorities attended the High Level and General Border Committees held in Surabaya where they discussed the idea of establishing a permanent joint patrol along the common Sabah and East Kalimantan border, to include land and maritime frontiers.¹³⁶

This talk was held between the nations' chiefs of defense while discussing other common maritime border threats along the Strait of Malacca. This discussion was followed by the Malaysian decision to station national police forces in remote islands near Sabah.¹³⁷ This move came as a result of the International Court of Justice decision to award sovereignty of Ligitan and Sipidan to Malaysia as mentioned in previous chapters. This proposal would commit the members of these forces to train in criminal investigation to accelerate the law enforcement process in the far region. In the past,

¹³⁴ Romer S. Sarmiento, "RP, Indonesia, Tighten Naval Security," *Business World*, July 30, 2007.

¹³⁵ "Malaysian Navy Said Ready to Work With Any Foreign Military to Fight Terror," *The Star*, March 1, 2007.

¹³⁶ "Malaysia, Indonesia meet to strengthen border management cooperation," *Bernama*, November 15, 2007.

¹³⁷ "Malaysian Marine Police to be stationed on remote islands," *Bernama*, November 29, 2007.

those captured by the police where handed over to the national criminal investigative services, lengthening the process due to bureaucracy and distance from these services.

C. EFFORTS WITH POWERS OUTSIDE THE REGION

International interest and involvement in the region's maritime security has increased and has seen the growing presence of other powers. Australia and New Zealand's economic ties with China and other northeast Asian nations, and their increasing demand for energy have prompted them to establish ties with Indonesia and the Philippines to secure necessary maritime passages.¹³⁸ Due to the former nations' geographical location, their maritime commerce transits the Celebes Sea and its critical straits. This approach led Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines to engage their respective law enforcement agencies to exchange expertise and gain experience working together. This effort gradually led to the interaction of their military institutions and forces. Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines have shown interest and willingness to work with other nations and powers outside of the region with relation to security issues in their border areas, to include the Celebes Sea. Australia and the U.S. are two nations which have been involved in bilateral cooperation in the triborder region.

In 2000, Philippine Secretary Orlando Mercado stated his confidence on the movement towards establishing multilateral security cooperation to deal with local and common threats in the region.¹³⁹ This came as a result of the 2000 U.S. Pacific Command's initiative to hold a multinational planning conference with the intention of establishing common norms and processes for nations in the Pacific region to operate in support of a combined contingency. This would mark a further step from the common bilateral exercises held with regional partners and foreign powers. In support of this effort

¹³⁸ Michael Richardson, "Michael Richardson: Security Vital In Billion-Dollar Trade," *The New Zealand Herald*, June 26, 2006.

¹³⁹ "Philippines Foresees Multilateral Defence Cooperation in Asia," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, March 7, 2000, International News.

the U.S. Pacific Command directed U.S. Forces to engage with the AFP in bilateral field and staff training exercises such as Balikatan and Philippine Subject Matter Expertise Exchange.

During Balikatan and other annual U.S.-Philippine bilateral exercises, several Civil Action Projects with medical, dental, veterinary and engineering foci take place to improve the lives of remote communities in the Philippine Republic.¹⁴⁰ The Philippine government and U.S. Pacific Command envision broadening this exercise to include other nations in the area participating under a simulated scenario driven by a common threat to the region. The U.S. also approached Malaysia with similar purposes. In 2002 Malaysia and the U.S. held talks on the idea to establish a counterterrorism training center in Malaysia with the objective to provide necessary training to the regional forces to counter this threat.¹⁴¹ This resulted in the establishment of the Southeast Asia Regional Center for Counterterrorism (SEARCCT) in 2003.¹⁴² The first participants included representatives from the ten ASEAN members attending law enforcement and military training.

In 2002, the governments of Australia and Malaysia agreed on bilateral efforts to combat terrorism in the region. This would allow law enforcement agencies from both nations to cooperate in the prosecution of terrorist groups through the sharing of intelligence, training and other education. This agreement is a significant step for Malaysia, a nation which has traditionally resisted Australia's intentions in the region, being the only nation in the triborder area not to sign a defense cooperation treaty with Australia.¹⁴³ However, in late 2004 the government of Malaysia rejected the Australian counterterrorism plan of basing troops in Southeast Asia, further stating that Malaysia

¹⁴⁰ Lisa Brackenbury, "Fort McHenry Wraps Up Participation in Balikatan 2000," *C7F*, <http://www.c7f.navy.mil/news3/7frel894.html> (accessed April 1, 2008).

¹⁴¹ Parkinson, Tony, "Mahathir Agrees to Pact on Terror," *The Age*, August 1, 2002, National News.

¹⁴² "Malaysia: Counterterrorism Center," *Department of State*, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2003/25047.htm> (accessed June 5, 2008).

¹⁴³ Tony Parkinson, "Mahathir Agrees to Pact on Terror," *The Age*, August 1, 2002, National News. (accessed April 9, 2008).

can deal with terrorism in a unilateral fashion.¹⁴⁴ On April of 2008, Datuk Salim, Malaysia's high Commissioner to Australia mentioned that Kuala Lumpur should seize the vast mutual cooperation opportunities Australia offers, to include defense agreements.¹⁴⁵

The Philippines has also established defense cooperation agreements with Australia, to include the Philippine-Australia Defense Cooperation Group established in 2004. The agreement was established by both nations with the purpose of cementing a bilateral defense treaty encompassing mutual interests, including maritime security.¹⁴⁶ In 2006, both nations' government officials agreed on the JI being the largest threat in Southeast Asia. Both nations also agreed JI had the capacity to attack any nation in the region.¹⁴⁷ Finally in 2007 both nations signed a defense cooperation treaty which would allow the AFP to receive training and key equipment from the Australian government to include fast patrol boats and maritime surveillance systems for installation in the republic's southern coasts.¹⁴⁸ The Australian actions are not meant to compete with the support and cooperation the U.S. seeks with the Philippines, but meant to compliment the security of the Philippines, not replace the U.S. as the primary defense partner.

In 2006, the Indonesian government approached the Australian government to establish more extensive bilateral maritime security cooperation.¹⁴⁹ Some of the items discussed involved laying beacon devices in the water to facilitate the monitoring of maritime traffic between both nations. Further talks in Lombok led both defense ministers to agree on their nations not to foment and support separatist movements

¹⁴⁴ "Malaysia Rejects Howard's Terror Plan," *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Online*, September 21, 2004.

¹⁴⁵ Neville D'Cruz, "Malaysia Must Seize Opportunities From Australia, Says Envoy," *Bernama*, <http://malaysia.news.yahoo.com/bnm/20080406/tts-australia-opportunities-993ba14.html> (accessed April 10, 2008).

¹⁴⁶ "Philippines, Australia to Set Pace of Defense Cooperation," *Xinhua*, October 5, 2004.

¹⁴⁷ Pia Lee-Brago, "Philippines, Australia Say Jemaah Islamiyah 'Biggest Regional Terror Threat,'" *Philippine Star*, June 29, 2006.

¹⁴⁸ Marites Dañguilan Vitug, "Australia Moves Up in RP Defense Radar Screen," *Newsbreak*, June 6, 2007.

¹⁴⁹ "Indonesia Asks Australia to Consider All Aspects of Maritime Cooperation," *Antara*, November 24, 2006.

violating their respective nations' sovereignty.¹⁵⁰ The following year both Indonesian and Australian governments agreed to enhance bilateral military cooperation, including joint efforts in their campaigns against terrorism.¹⁵¹

Finally in 2008, both nations' defense ministers met in Jakarta to expand on common goals such as maritime security and counterterrorism through joint exercises and mutually hosted military training.¹⁵² The decision was a result of the Lombok Treaty on Defense Cooperation signed in November 13, 2007.¹⁵³ This treaty unified both nations on mutual efforts against terrorism, and fomented bilateral law enforcement in maritime affairs. This common effort has as an underlying basis the nations' mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, renewing ties which were severed after the Australian led mission in East Timor at the beginning of the century.

D. ASEAN EFFORTS

The ASEAN Special Senior Officials' meeting held in Yogyakarta in 2004 directed the establishment of a forum for ASEAN Defense Ministers to meet with the purpose of establishing objectives for the ASEAN Security Community.¹⁵⁴ Per the declaration of the ASEAN Concord II of 2003 (Bali Concord II), ASEAN is a community comprising the principles of political/security, economic and socio-cultural cooperation.¹⁵⁵ The creation of a forum focused on the enhancement of this association as a security community contributed to the region's multilateral security commitment. This led to the development of the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM), a

¹⁵⁰ Azhar Ghani, "Jakarta, Canberra Sign Pact to Boost Security Ties; Deal Includes Clause on Not Backing Separatist Groups in Each Other's Lands," *The Straits Times*, November 14, 2006.

¹⁵¹ "Indonesian Australian Armed Forces Agree to Enhance Co-operation," *Antara*, April 19, 2007.

¹⁵² Patrick Walters, "Defence Beefs Up Ties With Jakarta," *The Australian*, March 28, 2008.

¹⁵³ Nusa Dua, "President Hopes House to Ratify Lombok Treaty Soon," *Antara*, August 27, 2007.

¹⁵⁴ "Concept Paper for the Establishment of an ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting," *Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, <http://www.aseansec.org/18511.htm> (accessed April 2, 2008).

¹⁵⁵ "Declaration of ASEAN Concord II," *Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, <http://www.aseansec.org/15159.htm> (Accessed February 1, 2008).

mechanism designed to expand the region's cooperation on defense and security within the organization and with external partners, emphasizing transparency and realizing the goals of the Bali Concord II.

In May of 2006, the first ADMM was held in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia, where the nations' representatives declared the establishment of the ADMM-Plus, a forum where ASEAN nations can address security issues with external nation partners. However, this dialogue emphasized ASEAN as the center and priority of the forum, focusing importance in the collective ASEAN interests over those of outside nations'.¹⁵⁶ The member nations of ASEAN announced they would reconsider the foreign interests in the security of the region, placing ASEAN interests and goals at a higher priority.¹⁵⁷ Indonesia's Defense Minister emphasized that foreign desires must not interfere with the member nations' national security, further announcing that ASEAN would assure its own regional security. This Indonesian stance translates into this nation's refusal to enter military pacts with foreign powers unlike Malaysia and Philippines. These latter two nations have already established agreements with Australia, the UK and the U.S. as mentioned above.

In November of 2007, the second ADMM was held in Singapore where the nations' delegates discussed regional challenges posed by terrorism and maritime threats in the region.¹⁵⁸ The outcome of this meeting was the agreement on a Three Year Work Program which would promote multilateral security interaction based on existing agreements and structures, mutual trust and sharing of intelligence enhancing regional security, transparency and openness. The nations also committed themselves to the establishment of an organization's early warning system to prevent conflicts in the region.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ "ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-PLUS)," *Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, <http://www.aseansec.org/21216.pdf> (accessed April 2, 2008).

¹⁵⁷ Febiana, Fanny, "ASEAN Agrees to Handle Regional Security-Indonesian Defence Minister," *Tempo Interaktif*, May 11, 2006.

¹⁵⁸ "Singapore Hosts Second ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting From 13-15 Nov 07," *Sprinter*, <http://app.sprinter.gov.sg/data/pr/20071114979.htm> (accessed April 7, 2008).

¹⁵⁹ "ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) Three (3)-Year Work Programme," *Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, <http://www.aseansec.org/21214.pdf> (accessed April 12, 2008).

E. CHAPTER SUMMARY

Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines have increasingly shown an interest in cooperating with each other to improve security in the region, particularly in the Celebes Sea. In Southeast Asia, more attention has been placed on the Strait of Malacca, but the Celebes Sea is now receiving a similar level of attention. The increasing willingness for the three nations to cooperate extend from their military services, to intelligence and law enforcement agencies, which adds depth to the security cooperation in the Celebes Sea and littoral areas.

The effect of pressure from Australia and New Zealand to enhance the security of passages along the Celebes Sea has raised the pressure on the littoral countries to increase security cooperation. As international pressures and incentives have pushed these nations to cooperate in the security of their borders and territories, old sensitivities to interference in their internal affairs has limited the extent of maritime security among them. While Malaysia and the Philippines have shown more willingness to enter agreements with foreign powers, the deep historical anti colonial feelings of Indonesia may be steering these former colonies towards a security initiative in which regional countries, not outside powers like the U.S. and Australia, play the main role.

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V. CONCLUSION

A. DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL PRESSURES FOR TRINATIONAL SECURITY COOPERATION IN THE CELEBES SEA

The existing links and cooperation between terrorist and criminal groups of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines pose a complex threat which these nations cannot resolve through unilateral efforts. These groups have proven their ability to move from island to island across the Celebes Sea with limited government interference. When Indonesian counterterrorism efforts in Java forced the JI to move their base of operations to other Indonesian islands such as Sulawesi, it also allowed them to conduct joint training and seek refuge in military camps controlled by separatist rebels in the southern Philippines.

These groups have been able to evade government efforts by crossing maritime borders in a matter of hours. Traditional Indonesian and Malaysian resistance to allowing Philippine and U.S. forces to operate within their waters allows these groups to exploit seams in the triborder area. The inability of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines to maintain a permanent security posture in these remote territories through out the year enhances these groups' survivability.

Mutual mistrust among Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, domestic constraints that prevent these governments from engaging in closer military cooperation with each other and their limited force projection capabilities severely hinder effective security cooperation in the Celebes Sea. Historical and ongoing border disputes along with persistent territorial claims further deepen the trilateral mistrust among these nations. This provides the advantage to terrorist and criminal groups, which are able to engage in effective transnational cooperation. However, these mutual frictions become less relevant as foreign nations increase their pressures on the three nations to secure critical maritime passages such as the Makassar Strait and the Celebes Sea.

Australia, New Zealand, and the United States among other external powers have increased their interest and have successfully cemented security and defense agreements with the three nations. This increasing foreign security presence has interfered with the sense of regionalism among these nations. These foreign nation approaches and following extra-regional diplomatic achievements have violated the underlying ASEAN principles of non interference, prompting Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines to reconsider their external ties and focus on trilateral cooperation as stated during the ADMM meeting of 2006 held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

This renewed trilateral drive has allowed Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines to take necessary steps towards further cooperation, including the acceptance of joint operation proposals within their national borders despite previously mentioned obstacles. However, these initiatives have lacked adequate depth, as they have been subject to trilateral disadvantages due to several institutional and force projection challenges. This gap can be successfully filled by foreign governments' assistance to domestic civilian law enforcement, intelligence agencies and the military. Assistance can be in the form of training, equipment sales and logistics infrastructure development. This new approach would place foreign nations in a supporting role, while Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines maintain a leading role in securing the Celebes Sea triborder area.

B. RECOMMENDED U.S. POLICY TO ENHANCE TRILATERAL SECURITY COOPERATION IN THE CELEBES SEA

U.S. policy in the region has a reputation of short commitment which obliges these nations to be flexible when dealing with foreign powers and their influences in Southeast Asia. The delayed reaction of the U.S. and the unpopular measures of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) following the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 left a bitter taste in the affected nations, reinforcing the belief that U.S. commitment cannot be counted on when mostly needed. This is further complicated by the diverse regional reactions toward the American presence. While the Philippines has become more welcoming since the late 1990s, Indonesia's willingness to accept a U.S. presence in its

waters and territory is very low. During Operation Unified Assistance (in response to the Tsunami in December 2004), the U.S. was not able to maintain troops overnight in Indonesian territory as a result of this nation's mistrust of American intentions. The present American commitment in Afghanistan and Iraq further implies to these nations that our attention is somewhere else.

American policy in the Middle East, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the aforementioned engagements are closely observed by the governments and Muslim populations in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. Even though the governments of Indonesia and Malaysia urge their fellow Muslim states to emphasize economic growth instead of radical Islamic ideology, these same governments are highly critical of the U.S.-led operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Closer to the region is the American support of the Philippine government in its Mindanao and Sulu campaigns, which share a common history and religion with Indonesia and Malaysia.

Indonesia and Malaysia pay close attention to the manner in which the U.S. provides this support and the way the Philippines handles the Mindanao and Sulu situation. Common sentiment and impression among these Muslim populations is that the U.S. intends to weaken the Muslim world, and this presents a serious obstacle to American policy in Southeast Asia. Even though U.S. assistance during the tsunami along with the current running television advertisements with pro-American sentiments may have improved Indonesian public opinion toward the U.S., further engagement is necessary to transform this nation's colonial-origin adversity and mistrust towards foreign powers.¹⁶⁰ Further U.S. civil-military cooperation in the Philippines contributes to its government presence in remote territories, reducing insurgency and separatist support which may incline the government and the population of Indonesia and Malaysia to favor American military presence.

As previously mentioned, these nations are very sensitive when dealing with their territorial integrity and sense of sovereignty, therefore U.S. policy must abide by these principles if success is desired. Earlier chapters discussed examples of agreements with

¹⁶⁰ Anthony Smith, "U.S. – Indonesia Relations: Searching for Cooperation in the War Against Terrorism," *Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies* 2, no.2 (May 2003): 1-4.

foreign powers which seemed to have more extensive results than those reached among Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. Using this pattern, U.S. policy should be designed to support indigenous trilateral security cooperation in the Celebes Sea, instead of leading it. Continuous military and civilian agency bi/multilateral exercises allow partnership and trust to solidify while contributing to the security of these nations.

U.S. policy toward Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines should be focused primarily in providing training to increase the expertise of these nations' armed forces in counterinsurgency, maritime interdiction, and security and stability operations. The U.S. military and domestic law enforcement agencies are crucial for the development of necessary capabilities in these nations. This training should not be exclusive to the military forces, but extended to their civilian law enforcement agencies, which are more often engaged in these types of operations. Civil-military trilateral exercises and cooperation allows cross border contacts and relationships to develop, bridging across decades of mistrust and rivalries.

The U.S. and international respect of these nations' sovereignty and national integrity, the reduction of respective domestic constraints to trilateral cooperation and the assistance to develop well equipped, trained and efficient military and domestic law enforcement agencies will pave the way for the needed trilateral security cooperation in the Celebes Sea.

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