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## The Dynamics of Communal Violence during Civil War: The Interplay of Violence of Non-State Armed Actors and Clan Groups in the Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines

Low-intensity communal conflicts that simmer in the shadow of large-scale fighting between government and insurgency groups have been generally overlooked in the study of civil war. This article examines the causal mechanisms of communal conflicts as they relate to an ongoing civil war, and questions the connections between violence in communal conflicts and civil war. The nature of communal violence involves not only local civilians as protagonists but other loosely organized armed groups, including lightly armed guards, gangs, and paramilitary forces that have personal or professional connections to an insurgency group. Drawing on cases of interclan violence in the Muslim-dominated area of the southern Philippines, this study finds causal pathways of the dynamics of violence that embroil civil war actors and non-state armed actors in communal conflict between Muslim clan groups. It demonstrates how the dynamics change when political elites vying for local votes intervene in interclan conflicts and outsource paramilitary groups as guns-for-hire to take part in clan conflict retaliation, leading to an escalation of the violence. This further invites state-level armed actors such as the Philippine Army and Muslim insurgency groups to side with the paramilitary groups.

**KEYWORDS:** communal conflict, civil war, non-state armed actors, elites in conflict, dynamics of violence, Mindanao

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PREVIOUS HYPOTHESES on greed-grievance (COLLIER and HOFFLER 2004) in conflict are insufficient to explain the full trajectory of violence and its processual dynamics in civil war. Rent-seeking rebels alone cannot justify the occurrence of Muslim rebellions in Mindanao, and ethnic grievance only partially answers the inter-ethnic cleavage between the minority Muslims and majority Christians. Many of these studies employ international security paradigms that are inspired from theories of international relations on interstate conflict that treat states as homogenous unitary actors. Conflict studies that account for ethnic cleavages between rebels and the state as the root cause of the onset of violence presume that ethnic groups consist of members that share a common identity, and thereby engage in collective insurgency action (HUMPHREYS and WEINSTEIN 2006; GATES 2002; GURR 1993; ECK 2009). These explanations all tie into explaining the onset of civil war concerning state-level actors and conflicts between ethnic groups and individuals. While the former is framed as a macro-level study, the latter is a micro-level study, where intra-community dynamics and individual behavior during conflicts are thought to open up the black box of civil war (see, for example, KALYVAS 2006, 11).

### *Micro-Level Dynamics of Violence*

The disaggregation of conflict onset analyses has become increasingly recognized in the study of civil war.<sup>1</sup> Not all intrastate wars are full-fledged, high-intensity conflicts with demarcated frontlines and a clear distinction between civilians and combatants. The study of civil war has added to our understanding of the dyadic relationships between rebel groups and the state. However, whether rebel groups fighting among themselves, or one ethnic group struggling against another, social groups engage in armed violence regardless of any ongoing civil war fought between the state and rebel groups. These non-state armed conflicts, with a low death threshold of twenty-five battle deaths per year, often operate in parallel to the master cleavage fought between the state army and rebels. Despite their disruptive nature, communal conflicts have remained in the shadow of more acute and severe violence such as civil war and terrorism. This is largely because

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1. As opposed to interstate wars fought between states, civil war as defined in this article refers to armed conflicts fought between the government and opposing armed groups such as insurgency groups. For more details on the conventional definition of civil war, see footnote one in DENNY and WALTER (2014, 199).

the fundamental logic of civil wars is a center-periphery dyad between a hegemon (the state) and a rebel group (HOROWITZ 1985; HERBST 2000; ROKKAN 1999).

Communal conflicts have long been positioned under the umbrella of ethnic violence involving “Sons of the Soil” (FEARON and LAITIN 2011; WEINER 1978).<sup>2</sup> The earlier literature on civil war was eager to identify the correlation between measurements of ethnicity and the onset of conflicts (CEDERMAN and GIRARDIN 2007; FEARON and LAITIN 2003; HOROWITZ 1985; POSNER 2004). However, advancements in the study of ethnicity and civil war have led to methodological improvements, such as investigating the distribution of ethnic groups at the sub-national level using geo-referenced datasets (BUHAUG and GATES 2002; LOUGHLIN and WITMER 2007; WEIDMANN, ROD, and CEDERMAN 2010; WUCHERPFENNIG et al. 2011); others showed more interest in examining the causal mechanisms of micro-level manifestations of communal ethnic violence (BALCELLS and JUSTINO 2014; BALCELLS 2010; ECK 2009; KALYVAS 2003; VERWIMP, JUSTINO, and BRUCK 2009). Meanwhile, other scholars prefer to use a broader categorization of communal conflicts, categorizing them as “horizontal”<sup>3</sup> conflicts as opposed to “vertical” conflicts that relate to insurgencies (ABASOLO et al. 2014).

KALYVAS (2006) explored the micro-foundations of civil war through an extensive case study of the Greek Civil War, showing how local war-time dynamics such as wartime civilian victimization, rebel mobilization, and local cleavages driven by personal animosities manifest violence at the sub-national level. Despite KALYVAS (2003) and other scholars recognizing civil wars as aggregations of multiple, smaller, and overlapping localized preexisting rivalries and cleavages (ECK 2014; KALYVAS and KOCHER 2007; STEELE 2009), the literature has yet to address how the personal violent motivations of perpetrators in communal conflicts and actors in a civil war interact.

In an effort to close this gap, the present article seeks to answer the following: What are the connections between violence in communal conflicts and civil war? This question aligns with the agenda of scholars bridging

2. The definitions of non-state armed conflicts and communal conflicts were elaborated on much later by SUNDBERG et al. (2012).

3. Horizontal conflicts are defined as “violent political competition and armed struggles between local elites, clans, ethnic groups, and rival insurgent groups” (ABASOLO et al. 2014, 17–18). The original concept of “horizontal” and “vertical” conflict traces back to the greed and grievance debate between STEWART (2000) and COLLIER and HOFFLER (2004), as addressed by KEEN (2012).

micro-macro level approaches to civil war by showing how individual motivations at the micro level connect to opportunities to intensify violence at the macro level (BALCELLS and JUSTINO 2014). The novelty lies first in the presentation of case studies that show the development of communal violence over time, using reports from local NGOs and news media. By tracing the processes of communal violence at the individual level and identifying the interactions of those involved in communal conflict and civil war, we can illuminate communications and interactions between actors and their political agency that bridge the violence occurring at the micro and macro levels.

The second is the selection of cases. The Mindanao conflict that dates back to the 1970s is an example of civil war and communal conflicts where one can find a wide range of non-state armed actors, from privately owned paramilitaries, to vendetta-driven security guards, to organized armed groups active at the national level, as well as international terrorist organizations. Violence at the communal level is defined as the use of armed force between groups that share a common identity along ethnic, clan, religious, national, or tribal lines.<sup>4</sup> These are not groups that are permanently organized for combat, but at times they organize themselves along said lines to engage in fighting. Communal conflicts in Mindanao are organized along clan groups and thus provide rich empirics on violence at the community level perpetrated by a wide range of armed actors that either align or defect their associated clan. Furthermore, the Mindanao conflict in Muslim-dominated areas illuminates how intra-Muslim communal conflicts occur in Muslim-dominated areas, and invites further implications for the mechanisms behind intra-ethnic or intragroup violence during a civil war.

Drawing from the Mindanao Civil War and communal conflict in the Muslim-dominated southern Philippines, this study argues that violence in clan conflicts intensifies as local political elites<sup>5</sup> function as linking agents connecting clan conflict disputants and paramilitaries. The response variable is the existence or nonexistence of violence at the state-level (macro) and communal (micro) level. The purpose is to examine processes of conflict development that start at the communal level and then evolve to the macro level.<sup>6</sup> The following explanatory variables contribute to the exis-

4. UCDP Non-State Armed Conflicts codebook v.2.4–2014 (SUNDBERG et al. 2012).

5. Political elites as defined here refer to national and local representatives, mayors, governors, and religious and ethnic leaders.

6. The causal arrow going the other direction—from macro to micro—was not confirmed using the qualitative dataset constructed by the author.

tence (or nonexistence) of micro-macro conflict interaction: *rido* (local terminology for communal conflict in Mindanao) being fought over the ownership and management of land, intervention by the political elites as intermediaries, the involvement of paramilitaries as agents of violence (i.e. guns for hire), political rivalry between the disputants, the privatization of paramilitaries and the participation of auxiliary armed forces of the state to local disputes, and ethnic collective action based on clanship (kinship).

Few of the recent works on the micro-dynamics of violence shed light on actors at the meso-level who identify with its agency to link and intermediate conflict actors at communal and national (or sub-national) levels. BALCELLS and KALYVAS (2014) argue that technologies of rebellion constitute a meso-level variable that links micro-level behavior and macro-level outcomes, such as the recruitment patterns of rebellions that impact the duration of a civil war. CHRISTIA (2008) finds local elites that serve as intermediaries connect micro and macro conflicts by capturing important interaction effects (e.g. in-group behavior) between micro-level economic incentives and macro-level ethnic cleavages.

The behaviors of meso-level actors at the time of conflict, such as paramilitaries and local elites ranging from local politicians to community leaders, are often in the shadow of rebel groups and the national army. Whatever their role and political power in the community, meso-level actors orchestrate, mobilize and recruit, privatize, and incentivize violence at the communal level, bringing novel implications to the micro-dynamics of violence. The contribution of this research is aimed at this line of study showing how meso-level actors participate and behave in the convolution of violence between communal and insurgency conflicts.

Political elites serve as political entrepreneurs and warlords in electoral districts to help coordinate and procure arms resources so that disputants can perpetrate or continue the violence. Elites in general possess disproportionate power compared to other groups in a society. The political elite in the Philippines hold high-level positions such as congressmen and governors in the local and central governments, often monopolizing political power at the subnational level through a single or few family groups having a family member or a relative hold—or having previously held—elected office.<sup>7</sup> Political elites are often found serving as local leaders in villages and municipalities functioning as local consultants to the inter-/intragroup conflict of disputed parties. Their mediation can at times result in peaceful con-

7. Political elites are also referred to as political dynasties in the Philippines (QUERUBIN 2013, 2; TORRES III 2007, 109).

flict resolution but can also result in an escalation of violence if disputants to intergroup conflicts are motivated to retaliate and seek arms resources owned by local elites and paramilitaries. Their incentive is to secure votes to remain in power and pocket government subsidies allocated to Local Government Units (LGUs) to finance private paramilitaries: they often become protagonists themselves, fighting against a political rival's clan. Paid paramilitaries frequently serve as guns-for-hire to execute vengeance for such local crimes as homicide and looting. These arms-intensified communal conflicts invite the intervention of Muslim insurgencies and the Philippine Army, often causing an escalation in the violence (or, at times, a de-escalation).

The role of paramilitaries and political elites in communal conflicts has been largely overlooked until recently, with the exception of the Bosnian Civil War study by CHRISTIA (2008). Christia argues that local elites serve as intermediaries linking economic incentives at the micro (individual) level and ethnic cleavages at the macro level. This study extends her findings by showing the progression of violence in which local elites become intermediaries in communal conflicts, inviting the engagement of paramilitaries.

The next section begins with an overview of *rido*. Existing theories on communal conflict and hypotheses follow. Data and methodology are then presented, followed by two case examples that illustrate the interplay of violence. A synthesis of findings and proposals for future research conclude the article.

### *Rido: Communal Conflict in Mindanao*

The Republic of the Philippines has seen constant guerilla conflicts and violent clashes since its independence in 1946. In particular, Mindanao remains an active epicenter of the socialist national democracy of the Communist CPP-NPA group, the Muslim struggle for self-determination,<sup>8</sup> and the native people's struggle for indigenous self-determination (MENDOZA and TAYLOR 2010, 19). There are also (international) terrorist factions (CUNNINGHAM et al. 2009). Although non-Islamicized indigenous armed tribal groups continue to fight small-scale rebellions throughout the

8. Muslim insurgencies referred to here consist of two groups: the mother group Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), and the splinter group Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The study by CUNNINGHAM et al. (2009), for example, has explicitly differentiated violent incidents between MNLF and MILF, with both groups fighting against the Philippine Army (AFP). For a review on terrorist groups refer to RAND CORPORATION (2012), SANTOS et al. (2010), and CHALK (2001).

country, Mindanao is the only region where macro-level armed resistance operates side by side. The predominantly Muslim provinces are located from inner to western Mindanao, a vast region home to two Islamic separatist rebellions that began in the 1970s and early 1980s respectively (McKENNA 1998; 2002; MENDOZA and TAYLOR 2010; RAND CORPORATION 2012; ÖZERDEM and PODDER 2012).

In stark comparison to the Muslim insurgency<sup>9</sup> at the macro level, communal conflicts known as *rido*, which denotes sporadic armed conflicts that recur between families, clans, and tribes,<sup>10</sup> are smaller in size and scale.<sup>11</sup> Muslims in Mindanao are clan-focused and tied closely to the location of the clan (TORRES III 2007, 11–35). *Rido* can be provoked by minor offenses such as verbal abuse, perceived insults, and dishonor to individuals, families, and clans, as well as major offenses such as homicides and serious injuries that recur over time (TORRES III 2007, 11–35). It is its recurring nature that differentiates *rido* from other forms of violence. Land disputes and political rivalries are the two most common causes of *rido* (TORRES III 2007, 11–35). Social ties and collective action between protagonists and armed groups at both the local level and state level contribute to the escalation of the violence (QUERUBIN 2013), whose consequences may be as dire and disruptive as civil war.

### *Collective Action of Clanship*

The political function of clans is typically limited to the local level, often demarcated by village or municipal borders.<sup>12</sup> Formulating alliances

9. The author recognizes that MILF and the Government of the Philippines is in the midst of peace negotiations as of May 19, 2018, and thereby labeling MILF as an insurgency may cause confusion for readers. However, to maintain consistency when referring to the actors explained in this article, the author chose to refer to all former armed Muslim actors as Muslim insurgencies.

10. This is based on the definition by TORRES III (2007, 12). Some *rido* events fall short of the annual 25 deaths threshold. Nevertheless, their characteristics—groups organized based on clans sharing a common social identification not organized specifically for combat purposes but engaging in violence—resonates with the definition of communal conflict by the Non-State Armed Conflict dataset.

11. By this I mean the number of casualties and injuries, and the number of individuals involved as warring parties.

12. Interview with a local Muslim from a prominent clan in Manila, July 17, 2013. The administrative units in the Philippines are more commonly known as Local Government Units (LGUs), and are divided into provinces, cities, municipalities, and barangays. A barangay (village) is the smallest administrative unit in the Philippines with a wide range



between clan groups to achieve specific objectives is commonly practiced.<sup>13</sup> However, in cases involving natural resources (e.g., land tenure or ownership) or political rivalries, clan competition can be ignited, often leading to the outbreak of *rido*. Empirical findings suggest that families and clans caught in the crossfire between contesting parties are compelled to take sides among their co-ethnic groups.

Bonds of kinship define social groups in societies and impose obligations of mutual defense on members of the same clan; collective obligation is the mirror image of collective responsibility (GOULD 2000, 684–85). Clanship can transcend social class, linking elites to non-elites and blood ties to fictive kinship, as intermarriage is commonly practiced in much of Mindanao (GOULD 2000, 684–85). Clans do not originate from politics, but serve as extensive social organizations active in regional politics to serve the interests of their members (GOULD 2000, 684–85). According to GROSS (2010), clan feuds characterize the local economic order and enjoy high social legitimacy and acceptance. Pledging loyalty to a clan thereby ensures social capital, livelihood protection, safety, and security against the rest of society (TORRES III 2007). The local political environment resembles the postmodern feudal system where a clan is in control of the locality and possesses a power like that of a king in the Middle Ages. This feudalistic system still holds in the social and economic dimension of Mindanao society; without the collective benefits of clanship, a *rido* disputant is left with no protection should another clan seek retaliation (TORRES III 2007).

### *The Mechanisms of Interplay*

The mechanisms by which *rido* and state-level violence interact can take form in various pathways and are intricately interwoven, overlapping many mechanisms and involving different actors. The purpose here is not to condense the dynamics of violence into a standardized causal model, as this can fail to capture the procedural progression of the interplay of violence.<sup>14</sup> The mechanisms of interplay are not constant over the course of a conflict, as *rido*

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in the number of households and population. According to the Philippine Census of 2015, the most populated barangay in 2015 had a population of 247,000. See the Philippine Statistics Authority webpage, May 19, 2016: <https://psa.gov.ph/content/highlights-philippine-population-2015-census-population> (accessed May 29, 2018).

13. Ibid.

14. As KALYVAS (2003, 481) suggests, an examination of local cleavages can open up compelling empirical possibilities on the various paths, trajectories, modalities, and combinations of central and local cleavages, together with their consequences.



can last anywhere from a few days to decades. *Rido* that begin with a certain causal mechanism can induce other mechanisms as the conflict evolves. One *rido* event can trigger single or multiple mechanisms over time, affecting the final outcome—the escalation or de-escalation—of *rido* violence.

To show how macro and micro violence become intertwined, this article highlights the role of political elites and their social connection to non-state armed groups. Rebels fighting against the state can become *rido* disputants, in which case collective action based on clanship may provide external resources from rebel organizations that can lead to the direct participation of the rebel factions in the *rido*. If the *rido* disputants are civilians with no connection to armed groups, political elites will intervene upon request, outsourcing paramilitaries and possibly orchestrating the participation of Muslim insurgency factions in *rido* revenge attacks.

### *Elites as Warlords*

The agency of warlords and their behavior during a civil war is one of the emerging discussions in the study of civil war micro-dynamics. KALYVAS (2003, 478) argues that in a society where politics is intensely local, many warlords swap sides at their convenience. A study of rebel coalitions by DRISCOLL (2012) finds that warlords make strategic choices either to join a warlord coalition to fight against the state or remain outside the coalition. Most current studies focus on identifying the opportunistic conditions that shape the survival strategy of warlords rather than on the magnitude of their political power and influence during conflicts.<sup>15</sup>

To understand a warlord's quest for comparative advantage, this study examines how political elites serve as meso-level warlords connecting the actors in communal conflicts and civil war. It also tests existing theories on the significance of actors serving as intermediaries (BROSCHÉ and ELFVERSON 2012; KLINKEN 2007). The most relevant research on political elites is by CHRISTIA (2008) and CASPERSEN (2008), who portray local elites as meso-level actors who serve as intermediaries providing local economic incentives, thus relegating ethnic cleavage secondary to the onset of civil war. Economic payoffs distributed by local elites help individuals survive while their mother ethnic group is fighting the master cleavage at the macro (national) level.

According to KALYVAS (2006, 383), an alliance is a “process of convergence of interests via transaction between supralocal and local actors,

15. The exception would be KALYVAS (2006, 383–87) briefly mentioning that local actors vie for political power against their rivals by acquiring large amounts of money, manpower, and arms for the operationalization of violence.

whereby the former supply the latter with external muscle, thus allowing them to win decisive advantage over local rivals; in exchange, supralocal actors are able to tap into local networks and generate mobilization.” Therefore, according to Kalyvas, alliance making during a civil war is a process that connects (a) an actor’s quest to the political power of supralocals, and (b) a quest for local advantage<sup>16</sup> for local actors, making it a two-level process linking the meso and micro levels.

Mindanao’s *rido*-related violence supports the basic theoretic framework of Kalyvas’ alliance theory. In addition to the paramilitaries, Muslim insurgencies and the Philippine Army participate in communal conflicts not as *rido* disputants but as meso-level reinforcement forces.<sup>17</sup> Insurgencies and the state army engage in *rido* whenever their associated paramilitary groups are in need of reinforcements at times of heightened armed confrontation to de-escalate the violence and restore local order and security.<sup>18</sup> In one instance, recurring revenge violence between armed groups was set off by the killing of an eight-year-old boy hit by a stray bullet when a group of armed men led by a Mr. Binago attempted to murder a Mr. Kongo, an alleged member of the MILF 105th Base Command.<sup>19</sup> The child’s death resulted in an alliance between the victim’s family and the Muslim insurgency. In retribution, the MILF rebels of the 105th Base Command stormed the village of Napnapan to look for Mr. Binago. When they advanced into the village, they engaged in a firefight with another band of armed men, in which several people were wounded or killed.

### *Paramilitary Participation*

The involvement of paramilitaries conditions alliance-making between local actors and meso-level actors. To illustrate, CANUDAY (2007) cites a *rido* incident in the village of Gli-gli in the Pikit area of North Cotabato Province, an area notorious for frequent fighting between govern-

16. Local advantage refers to local actors’ connections with supralocals to gain the mobilization of local armed actors to win interpersonal disputes.

17. Interview with a local Christian, July 29, 2013, Cotabato City. This was also raised by other informants, including a peace activist and a local NGO representative interviewed on July 29, 2013, in Cotabato City, a Muslim scholar also interviewed on July 29 in Cotabato City, and a government official from a prominent Muslim clan interviewed on July 31 in Cotabato City.

18. Interview with a MILF official, July 26, 2013, Cotabato City.

19. See Nash B. Maulana, “Residents flee as MILF rebels storm village in Sultan Kudarat,” August 15, 2015. Inquirer.net. <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/713313/residents-flee-as-milf-rebels-storm-village-in-sultan-kudarat#ixzz3pg8qBgCH> (accessed October 26, 2015).

ment forces and Moro insurgencies. This particular *rido* had its roots in a street fight between teams of teenage Christians and Muslims who had been playing against each other in a basketball game. The initial encounter led to an outbreak of violence between CAFGU<sup>20</sup> and MILF and escalated into fierce firefights between government forces and the MILF insurgency that resulted in the displacement of area residents.<sup>21</sup>

The Christian and Muslim teenagers had reported the basketball game melee to relatives who were, respectively, members of CAFGU and MILF. While the local MILF members intervened to reduce the level of animosity, the CAFGU called for state military reinforcement. As government tanks rolled into the village and artillery and aerial bombs rained down, MILF fighters took up defensive positions. Following the bombing, the army moved in. Fighting spread far beyond the boundaries of the original conflict. Additional reinforcements from the Philippine Army gradually forced the MILF fighters to withdraw. Although the violence lasted less than a week, it destroyed several generations of peaceful relations between the Muslim Maguindanaoan and Christian settler families.

In Gli-gli, geographical reasons conditioned the involvement of paramilitaries, as Gli-gli was a patrol base for CAFGU units. Almost all the CAFGU members and many residents of the town were related either through affinity or by blood, which placed the locality under the control of CAFGU paramilitaries. Many of the *rido* incidents compiled by the author show paramilitary involvement such as revenge killings and tit-for-tat violence that began as disputes between individuals (civilians) related, either through blood or affinity, to members of armed groups or political elites.<sup>22</sup>

### *Political Elites as Intermediary Agents Connecting Micro and Macro Conflicts*

With the exception of CHRISTIA (2008) and CASPERSEN (2008), the role of elites in conflict has only occasionally been discussed in the literature. Those who do examine the role of elites—of which the most frequently

20. CAFGU (Civilian Armed Force Geographical Units) are categorized as a Philippine military auxiliary service and armed organization subjected to the Military Law of the Philippines Republic Act 7077. CAFGUs are organized to fight against the communist/Muslim insurgents as standby reserves of the Philippine military in local threats or emergencies.

21. According to CANUDAY (2007, 273–74), an informant said, “The neighbors lost each other’s trust. Others were consumed by enmity and did not want to see their neighbors anymore.”

22. This includes the village chair, mayors, and governors.

cited is KALYVAS (2006)—are more inclined to focus on state-level elites rather than local elites, such as religious leaders and regional representatives at the village level. This study highlights the intermediary role of elites in connecting three sets of actors: state-level actors (e.g., government or state military), insurgency groups, civilians, and groups of civilians sharing the same attributes such as ethnicity. Several Mindanao case examples demonstrate convincingly how the intermediary role played by political elites commonly leads to an intertwining of intergroup and insurgency conflicts.

In one such case, an armed incident took place between units of the MILF 105th Base Command, CAFGU, and the Civilian Volunteer Organization (CVO).<sup>23</sup> According to a ceasefire report from a local NGO monitoring team,<sup>24</sup> civilians testified that the fighting began in part due to a past *rido*, when the son of the 105th MILF commander was shot in a revenge killing by the brother of another commander. To retaliate, the commander reinforced his comrades in the village. The tension and fear of violence heightened, eventually leading to elements of the Base Command to engage in a firefight with the CVO. The base commander testified that his men were on their way to reinforce members in another village, but the exit routes were blocked by elements of the CAFGU and CVO paramilitaries in the area loyal to the notorious Datu Ampatuan, a regional representative and local political elite. The Ampatuan family had political support from former President Arroyo. When Arroyo was in office, the Ampatuans began to establish informal alliances giving them protection from government security forces and allowing them to possess a large private army (PARKS et al. 2013). The Ampatuan side claimed that the MILF forces had raided a warehouse and killed one of their CVOs, citing the incident as the reason for blocking the exit routes.

To settle the *rido*-induced fighting between the Christian paramilitary, who backed the political elites, and the MILF base command, a peace dialogue was arranged by local government officials. All parties, together with a joint cessation monitoring team representing the national govern-

23. The CVO is also known as barangay (village) watch, or in the local language, *barangay tanod*, with *tanod* meaning “watcher.” CVOs are National Police Civil Auxiliary Service units for village- and community-level policing and patrol, whereas CAFGUs are the Philippine state’s military auxiliary service that serve as standby reserves for the Philippine military.

24. The details can be found in *Bantay Ceasefire Monitoring Reports* (2006). “Bantay ceasefire Investigative Report on Mamasapano, Maguindanao Clashes in Late January.” January 31, 2006. Bantay Ceasefire is a civilian volunteer group.

ment and the Muslim insurgency,<sup>25</sup> and the International Monitoring Team (IMT),<sup>26</sup> joined in the dialogue, leading to a temporary withdrawal of the two opposing sides. However, after only two days, fighting resumed between the MILF 105th Base Command and elements of the CAGU and CVO paramilitaries. Each side blamed the renewed fighting on the other side's breaching of its territorial control. A few days later, elements of the army were deployed to keep the peace and protect civilian communities from being harassed by MILF elements. However, when one of its soldiers was struck in the leg by a sniper, a fierce exchange of mortar fire between MILF forces and the state army ensued.

Local elites in conflict enhance their political aspirations by collecting votes from the clans in dispute, retaining power and incentives at the sub-national level by winning elections and seeking rent in the form of government subsidies. Thereby the motivation of elites as meso-level actors connects actors of intergroup and insurgency conflicts through coordination and the brokering of arms and armed men.

Below are hypotheses related to Kalyvas' alliance theory that are intended to shed more light on how political elites and paramilitaries behave as intermediary agents in connecting communal and insurgency conflicts.

H1 (privatization of paramilitary groups): Local politicians privatize state-authorized paramilitary groups for their personal use to gain a comparative arms power advantage over their political rivals.

H2 (conflict actors' involvement): Government troops and the Muslim insurgency can be called upon by paramilitaries and political elites to take part in intergroup communal conflicts as reinforcements.

### *Methodology and Datasets*

This study employs personal interviews conducted from October 2012 to August 2013 using semi-structured questions. Key actors over the course of the conflict were identified. Snowball sampling was used to choose potential study participants in Manila, Davao, and Cotabato. Respondents ranged from local Muslim civilians to Christians, indigenous Lumads,<sup>27</sup>

25. This is the Muslim insurgency and the Government of the Philippines Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (GRP-MILF CCCH).

26. The IMT is composed of member countries involving Malaysia, Indonesia, Japan, Norway, and the European Union.

27. Indigenous peoples are collectively known as the Lumads.

religious leaders, government officials, politicians, members of the Muslim insurgency, and the Philippine National Police.

Together with these field interviews, an events dataset (hereafter, qualitative dataset) was compiled from national and local newspapers published between 2000 and 2015. More than half of the disputes examined involved interclan conflicts between Muslims, with lesser numbers involving non-Muslim groups such as the indigenous Lumads and Christian Filipinos. As a consequence, communal conflicts in Mindanao are largely defined as intergroup violence between Muslim clans.<sup>28</sup>

In addition, a dataset detailing occurrences of insurgency violence (violence against the Philippine Army) per municipality was compiled by combining two existing datasets: the Global Terrorism Database at the University of Maryland,<sup>29</sup> and *A Survey Mapping the Conflict in Mindanao*.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, data showing the occurrence of *rido* were gathered from two different sources: The Asia Foundation and the World Bank Bangsamoro Conflict Monitoring System (BCMS), originally based on a previous dataset, the Mindanao Conflict Monitoring System (MCMS).<sup>31</sup> The MCMS dataset covers *rido* from 1940 to 2011 in Mindanao (including ARMM), with the exception of 2007 through 2010 (during which time no data were available).<sup>32</sup> Given the overlap of the two sets of data, this study focuses primarily on the period from 1970 to 2011 (absent the missing data for 2008 through 2010).

28. According to TORRES III (2007), the term *rido* is used only when referring to inter-group disputes within the Muslim population, and thereby creates the impression that it is done only by Muslims.

29. National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd> (accessed December 28, 2015).

30. Report to the delegation of the European Commission to the Philippines, Technical Assistance to the Mindanao Health Sector Policy Support Program (2008). <http://www.doh.gov.ph/sites/default/files/A%20Review%20of%20Poverty%20in%20the%20Conflict%20Affected%20Areas%20of%20Mindanao.pdf> (accessed January 21, 2014). The two datasets cover different time periods, and when combined January 2006 to August 2008 overlap.

31. The BCMS covers violent incidents from 2011 to 2014, while MCMS covers January to April 2011.

32. This is due to the fixed duration of the collected data per data-publishing organization. The Asia Foundation collected data up to 2007, and the World Bank conducted a survey for only 3 months.

|             | N   | MEAN      | STD. DEV. | MIN | MAX |
|-------------|-----|-----------|-----------|-----|-----|
| <i>Rido</i> | 344 | 3.886628  | 6.43754   | 0   | 47  |
| Insurgency  | 354 | 1.141243  | 3.582669  | 0   | 28  |
| NPA         | 344 | 0.8488372 | 1.1422579 | 0   | 16  |

TABLE 1. Descriptive statistics.

Table 1 provides summary statistics for *rido* and insurgency violence involving Muslim groups (insurgency) and communist groups (NPA)<sup>33</sup> from the 1930s through 2005.<sup>34</sup> The data is limited to the ARMM provinces, including provinces in the ARMM region prior to the provincial/municipal merger. By limiting the data to incidents that occurred in the ARMM region only, as opposed to Mindanao as a whole, it allows for the differentiation of armed incidents involving communist groups that are motivated by different sets of political aspirations than those of Muslim groups.<sup>35</sup> The average number of *rido* onsets per municipality was 3.89, with a maximum of 47. The average number of violent insurgency conflicts was 1.14, with a maximum of 28. Muslim violence includes violence involving MNLF or MILF fighters, or both.<sup>36</sup> The frequency of armed clashes between the communist insurgency and state military averaged 0.85 conflicts, with a maximum of 16 conflicts per municipality.

In all, 63 municipalities experienced communal conflict and insurgency violence from 1970 to 2011.<sup>37</sup> The Asia Foundation estimates that 107 municipalities and villages in ARMM are ruled by political families or

33. The communist insurgency was added for comparison with the Muslim insurgency to show that the frequency of communist insurgency violence is not significant when restricted to the ARMM region.

34. The *rido* events dataset was collected from TORRES III (2007). The raw data was available only for the total number of *rido* events from the 1930s to 2005, and thus a yearly events dataset was not available.

35. As implied from the title of this article, the scope of this research does not include communist insurgency as a unit of analysis (the descriptive statistics on communist insurgency inserted in Table 1 is to show its occurrence is highly limited in ARMM). To retain consistency between the unit of observation and analysis, the author has limited the data to the ARMM region, where the majority of the population are Muslims and communist activities seldom occur. The full dataset of BCMS and MCMS includes all provinces in Mindanao.

36. It was not possible to differentiate each insurgency group due to the coding of the raw data.

37. As explained earlier, the overlapping data from 2008 to 2010 is missing.



clans related through kinship to local elites at the provincial and municipal levels (PARKS et al. 2013, 63). In many of these areas, political families dominate regional politics as governors (and vice-governors), mayors (and vice-mayors), and members of Congress. At times, members of the same family end up competing against one another.<sup>38</sup> When rivals threaten the hegemony of political families in electoral districts, pre-/post-election violence is likely to erupt, as in the case of the Dimaporo family of Lanao del Sur Province during elections in 1969 and 1971 (BENTLEY 1994). In another instance, a Mangudadatu challenge to the hegemony of the Ampatuan clan in the 2010 election led to a massacre that killed approximately 50 civilians.<sup>39</sup>

### *Data Collection for Qualitative Dataset*

Data on *rido* from sources published between 2000 and 2015 were collected.<sup>40</sup> Out of 91 incidents reported,<sup>41</sup> more than half (51) occurred between 2000 and 2015; only four occurred from 1970 to 2010 (specifics were unidentified in the published reports). The remaining 36 incidents included no reference to the dates of the original violence. The data included media articles from national and local newspapers,<sup>42</sup> social media articles by journalists, NGOs,<sup>43</sup> and global news agencies,<sup>44</sup> insurgency reports from a local consultancy firm,<sup>45</sup> and ceasefire-monitoring NGO field reports.<sup>46</sup>

38. See for example, BENTLEY (1994), TORRES III (2007), and Ed Lingao, “The Clan Politics of ARMM Ampatuans, web of kin warp Maguindanao polls.” April 10, 2013. <http://pcij.org/stories/ampatuans-web-of-kin-warp-maguindanao-polls/> (accessed February 21, 2016).

39. PARKS et al. (2013, 63). The number of victims vary, according to HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (2010).

40. The time period was chosen for feasibility reasons, as the author did not have access to the newspaper article archive prior to the year 2000. The author chose media frequently cited in other scholarly articles, reports from international organizations, and NGO reports endorsed by AFP-MILF CCH (e.g. *Bantay Ceasefire Monitoring Reports* ).

41. There were two reports that failed to identify the perpetrator and the victim’s profile.

42. For national newspapers I used the *Philippines Daily Inquirer*, *Philstar*, and *ABS-CBN News* to name a few, and for local newspapers I used *Mindanews* and *Zamboanga Times*.

43. For example, Rappler.com, and articles from PCIJ (Philippines Center for Investigative Journalism).

44. For example, CNN.com, economist.com, Bloomberg, and Reuters.

45. Reports collected from Pacific Strategies & Assessments, Inc. (PSA); see [www.psagroup.com/](http://www.psagroup.com/).

46. Here I refer to the *Bantay Ceasefire Monitoring Reports* and reports on violence from the Alternate Forum for Research in Mindanao Inc. (AFRIM).

The qualitative dataset has its limitations, such as the selection of the time period in which the published articles were collected.<sup>47</sup> Another major limitation pertains to the double-counting of *rido* incidents, as some media reported recurring *rido* incidents without providing dates for the initial outbreak of violence.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, the collected information offers rich narratives that allow a fine-grained examination of the trajectories of violence linking communal- and state-level conflicts and provides useful insights into how two initially distinct conflict dyads become intertwined.

### *Findings on Mindanao Communal Conflict*

Table 2 identifies the actors mentioned as disputants in the *rido*. The categories of “Clan versus Clan” and “Clan versus Clan involving non-state armed groups other than the insurgency” differ, as the latter category includes not only the various clans as protagonists, but also armed groups other than the insurgency that participated in the violence, including private armed groups, paramilitaries, and unidentified armed groups. The reasons for the presence of these other groups were not mentioned in news reports, which made it impossible to examine their conduct and recruitment. Nearly half of the “MILF versus MILF” *rido* (15 of 33) involved events perpetrated by a commander on one or both sides. “Clan versus Clan” stands as the second most observed type of *rido*, followed by “MILF versus Clan.”

Since news reports give merely a point-based observation in the series of violent events that normally occur in a single *rido*, “Clan versus Clan” can morph into, for example, “Clan versus MILF” during the course of a conflict.<sup>49</sup> While such reporting is not ideal for examining possible causal

47. Given that many of the key dates in the peace process between the Philippines government and the two Moro insurgency groups took place before the ceasefire of 2003 between MILF and the government, the dataset cannot provide a full explanation of the interplay of violence between communal conflicts and civil war, especially for violent events that occurred after the ceasefire. Also, given that the MNLF reached peace with the government in 1996, the data collected does not fully reflect *rido* involving MNLF, but instead reflects more so on MILF, which became more active after the agreed peace with the MNLF in 1996. However, the published date of the articles does not reflect the initial dates of *rido* incidents unless the article clearly indicated the dates when *rido* violence began. Therefore, coded *rido* events may well include violent events that originated during the era when MNLF was the main insurgent actor instead of MILF.

48. To avoid double counting, I disregarded other articles that did not contain as much description of the incident.

49. To observe the transition of actors over the course of *rido*, a times-series database is needed, which is beyond the scope of this research.

|  | FREQUENCY  | LAND      | ELECTION | POLITICAL<br>RIVALRY | MODE OF<br>RESOLUTION        |
|--|------------|-----------|----------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| Clan versus Clan   | 29         | 7         | 5        | 5                    | R, T, AFP, MI,<br>IMT, G, PE |
| Clan versus Clan<br>involving non-state<br>armed groups other<br>than the insurgency | 6          | 2         | 1        | 1                    | Unknown                      |
| MNLF versus MNLF   | 0          | 0         | 0        | 0                    | Unknown                      |
| MNLF versus Clan   | 1          | 0         | 0        | 0                    | Unknown                      |
| MNLF versus MILF   | 3          | 2         | 0        | 1                    | Unknown                      |
| MILF versus Clan   | 16         | 7         | 0        | 0                    | T, IMT, MI,<br>G, PE         |
| MILF versus Pentagon <sup>a</sup>  | 1          | 0         | 0        | 0                    | Unknown                      |
| MILF versus MILF<br>(involving a command-<br>er on at least one side)                | 33<br>(15) | 12<br>(3) | 0<br>(0) | 0<br>(0)             | MI, AFP, PNP, G              |
| Unidentified <i>Rido</i>   | 2          |           |          | 0                    | Unknown                      |
| TOTAL  | 91         |           |          |                      |                              |

Note: Events that did not fall into the three main categories (land, election, and political rivalry) are included under “Frequency” but the root cause(s) are unidentified.

Key:

R: Religious leader

T: Traditional leader

G: Government officials

PE: Political elites (mayor or governor)

AFP: Philippine state military

PNP: Philippine Police

MI: MILF

IMT: International Monitoring Team

<sup>a</sup>Pentagon is a criminal kidnap-for-ransom gang composed of former Muslim rebels (RAND CORPORATION 2012, 14).

TABLE 2. Qualitative dataset on *rido* incidents.

links of the interaction between communal and insurgency conflicts, these narratives are supplemented by interview responses and secondary sources in order to derive the causal mechanisms of the interplay.

As the table indicates, land, elections, and political rivalry were the three main causes of *rido* violence. Because some reports failed to mention the cause(s) of the violence, the sum of cases observed per cause does not equal the total number (“Frequency”) of cases observed per intergroup dyad. The last column in the table shows the modes of conflict resolution.

The contribution of the qualitative dataset is limited due to the large number of missing values and the small sample sizes. However, each narrative contributes to the analysis by (1) identifying the actors and their ethnological and historical background as they relate to their role as *rido* disputants, and (2) by allowing us to identify the procedural changes and developments in *rido* violence.<sup>50</sup>

The findings by the Bangsamoro Conflict Monitoring System (BCMS)<sup>51</sup> suggest that most of the cases of horizontal conflict (between and among clans, ethnic groups and political elites, and private armed groups) are in the form of clan feuding (*rido*) and factional rivalries among rebel groups that turn violent. This is consistent with the author’s dataset showing that disputes between clans (“Clan versus Clan”) comprise roughly a third (32 percent) of the total *rido* incidents observed and that “MILF versus MILF” infighting was responsible for 36 percent of the incidents.

The findings from the datasets provide a general landscape of the nature of communal conflicts in Mindanao. However, the findings from the datasets remain static as they fail to justify the aim of this article—to show procedural developments on how incentives, motivations, and opportunities of actors in communal conflicts change over time. The following empirical section lays out the dynamic landscape on the behavior of the elite, driven by aspirations to collect local votes and gain a comparative advantage against their rival elites, to employ and privatize local armed actors like paramilitaries, and to join communal violence as reinforcements.

50. However, this was feasible only in cases where the historical background of *rido* was covered in the news.

51. ABASOLO et al. (2014). The BCMS project is in partnership with the Philippine office of the World Bank that compiled a dataset collected from the Philippine National Police and public news media on conflict events in Mindanao from 2011 to 2013, identifying 2,758 cases of violent events that occurred in ARMM.

*Case Example: Rido in Lintangan*

The village of Lintangan in the Mamasapano municipality had often been exposed to feuds among village leaders. In 2004, the simmering animosity between the village chair, Mr. Bangadan, and his nephews over a land-related issue turned into a bloody *rido*.<sup>52</sup> The disagreement persisted, and as each side took a more aggressive stance, the feuding became alarmingly violent. The Philippine Army deployed an infantry battalion to the village and neighboring areas. At the same time, both the MNLF and MILF positioned forces on the fringes of the village. Local armed groups distributed firearms and ammunition to members of the community who were aligned with the Muslim insurgency, while the government army brought in paramilitary groups such as the CAFGU, SCAA, and CVO to help control the area (DE JUAN et al. 2015). Town and provincial government executives generally support paramilitaries as supplementary forces of the national police and army. In Lintangan, the town mayor Ahmad Ampatuan (son of the Maguindanao Governor Andal Ampatuan) had strengthened his power with arms assistance from local police and paramilitary groups.

Large-scale violence broke out shortly before daybreak on January 9, 2005, when a band of MILF guerrillas attacked the patrol base of the Alpha Company of the army's 37th Infantry Battalion along the main road (CANUDAY 2007). The attackers, led by Abdul Rahman Binago, a field guerrilla leader of the MILF's 109th Base Command, killed seven of the soldiers and overran the base. Government forces immediately responded with massive ground and air attacks, followed by the deployment of troops. The January 9 violence was clearly the end-product of the growing tension in the community that turned deadly in late August 2004, when the killing of a MILF member set off a string of violent events from August 27, 2004, to October 15, 2004.<sup>53</sup>

Referring to the same incident, CANUDAY (2007, 265–70) argues that this violence is the product of a series of violent events accumulated over a period of time. He reports that the original date of this event was June 14, 2004, when the nephew of the village chair stormed the house of his uncle to confront him over the charges made against them. Finding that his uncle (the village chair) was away, the nephew confronted a group of his uncle's supporters, taking away three rifles from his uncle's men. The

52. This incident was reported by CANUDAY (2007) and cross-checked using *Bantay Ceasefire Monitoring Reports* (2004): "Bantay Ceasefire Investigative Mission Report," August 30, 2004.

53. Reported by the Bantay ceasefire team.

owner of the firearms was Mayor Ahmad Ampatuan, who had issued the firearms temporarily to the village chair.

Two separate reports were sent to the commander of the army's 37th Infantry Battalion documenting the origin of the feud and highlighting the intensification of violence indirectly involving other state-level armed actors, including the Philippine Army and the Muslim insurgency (CANUDAY 2007, 266). The reaction of the Philippine Army was to extend the search for the nephews and their followers, who had hidden behind MILF lines. At that time, MILF fighters did not engage the army's search team. However, the situation became complicated two months later, when the army established a patrol base on the disputed property of the warring relatives.

The situation worsened when one of the nephews issued a two-page letter to a group of farmers working on the village chair's coconut farm (CANUDAY 2007, 266). The letter warned of dire consequences if the farmers continued their work. This was the same property that was being used as the patrol base of the army. Indeed, the nephews blamed the barangay chair of maneuvering to have the army base on the disputed property. Alarmed, village officials, elders, ulamas (teachers in the Islamic community), and other traditional leaders in the area convened a gathering at which concerns that the carting away of Mayor Ampatuan's firearms had inadvertently dragged the mayor and his family into the conflict were expressed. Fearing that a failure to return Mr. Ampatuan's firearms would likely result in the mobilization of the village's paramilitary (CVO) against the nephews, one of the village officials suggested that they "buy" peace from the mayor by paying for the three rifles, offering 15,000 pesos. However, other members of the gathering were unwilling to share the expense and the gathering adjourned without agreement.

On August 27, the village chair's forces assaulted a group of armed men in a part of the village believed to be the hiding place of the two nephews; the armed men turned out to be members of the MILF 108th Base Command, who resisted the assault. The ensuing firefight escalated, compelling the village chair's forces to seek refuge at the army's patrol base on the disputed property. The MILF forces pursued the attackers. Alerted early on, the army troops took up defensive positions. As the fighting raged, the government forces called for reinforcements, prompting aerial and artillery bombardment. By 3 a.m. of August 28, the feud had turned into a large-scale armed conflict between the army and MILF forces, with the AFP employing heavy artillery until roughly 8 p.m. that evening.

The Lintangan case involves many of the common dynamics of interaction that characterize the escalation of *rido*, including ethnic and social ties between the rebels and the *rido* disputants, and the alignment of paramilitaries with either of the two sides. It also demonstrates the role of political elites—in this case, the Ampatuans—who broker *rido* disputes by dispatching their paramilitaries as reinforcements in areas on alert. The deployment of Christian paramilitaries—the CAFGU, CVO, and SCAA—as well as the distribution of firearms by the Philippine Army used to secure the area was also a dynamic that contributed to the increased tension between the Muslim groups and the insurgencies.

### *Political Elites and Paramilitaries*

Along with government officials, political elites are typically among the first people contacted when a *rido* occurs. According to one source, this is because they have “armed men working for (them).”<sup>54</sup> CVOs working for local leaders are commonly spotted as actors involved in *rido*, serving as security forces for families upon request from the protagonists themselves or from community leaders. These paramilitaries also engage in voter harassment, including threatening and blackmailing voters.

Paramilitaries in service to a family or a clan work as “agents of violence” in the contexts of both civil war and communal conflict (KREUZER 2005, 5). Religious leaders such as the *datus* (local leaders such as chiefs, or of native royalty) are protected by “at least several dozens” of armed men, and clans typically have the capacity to mobilize “several hundred men” (KREUZER 2005, 14). Members of paramilitaries are given political posts and/or economic rights such as logging licenses in return for their service (KREUZER 2005, 14).

The involvement of paramilitaries as guns-for-hire in communal conflicts often drags Muslim insurgents into full-blown gunfights. CVO members hired as paramilitaries by local elites commonly involve the Muslim insurgency, the military, and, by association, the CVOs, into local political rivalry disputes. Provincial politicians who hire these paramilitaries to gain or retain control of their electoral districts participate as intermediaries in coordinating local demand for arms that are often requested by *rido* disputants.

The local elites themselves never engage in the actual violence for fear of being embroiled in a political scandal.<sup>55</sup> Instead, they orchestrate and

54. Interview with an NGO worker, July 27, 2013, Cotabato City.

55. Political elites will “never get their hands dirty” said an NGO peace worker in an interview on July 27, 2013, Cotabato City.



deploy their paramilitaries.<sup>56</sup> Employment in government positions based on nepotism is one of the means by which local elites seek to win elections and secure their positions. Once installed, pocketing a share of the government subsidies<sup>57</sup> (IRA) that accompany these positions enables the elites to finance, sustain, and advance their political influence, which commonly includes the hiring of armed paramilitaries. Once in office, they will frequently carve their fiefs into smaller areas and construct new villages or municipalities to receive more government subsidies. In fact, Reuters reports that from 1995 to 2009, the number of municipalities in Maguindanao increased from 18 to 36, and nearly every one of them was headed by the Ampatuan family.<sup>58</sup>

Paramilitaries and private armies are not strictly organized; they typically have no barracks or regular quarters and are not always in uniform or with a patron.<sup>59</sup> At times, these armed groups are formed for a specific mission, as in the case of the outside armed group hired in Masbate prior to the election in 2010.<sup>60</sup> In general, the Philippine government fails to regulate or oversee the activities of paramilitaries and private armies working for political elites. The law also fails to regulate the recruitment, payment, supervision, training, and structure of paramilitaries, and places no set limit on the number of CVOs and police auxiliary unit members that can be recruited by local governments. This undoubtedly contributes to the growing concern regarding local security and the connections of such groups to political entrepreneurs (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH 2010, 71).

The situation becomes more complex when members of auxiliary units of the state military and police are recruited by political elites and registered as volunteers (CVOs) and bodyguards, as this legitimizes the privatization of state-supported paramilitaries.<sup>61</sup> Local Government Code 1991 authorizes governors, mayors, and village chiefs to carry firearms within their territorial jurisdiction, with no requirement to report the weapons.

56. Interview with an NGO peace worker, July 27, 2013, Cotabato City.

57. Ibid.

58. "Private armies in the Philippines: The warlords' way." <http://www.economist.com/node/15549053> (published February 18, 2010; accessed September 29, 2015); reprinted from Reuters.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

61. Gemma Bagayaua Mendoza, "85 armed groups maintained by politicians-PNP" (November 24, 2012). Rappler.com. <http://www.rappler.com/nation/politics/elections-2013/features/16706-85-armed-groups-maintained-by-politicians-pnp> (accessed September 29, 2015).

Moreover, provincial governors and municipal mayors have the power to direct, superintend, and oversee the daily functions of the police in their area (ABASOLO et al. 2014, 26). When political elites become governors, mayors, and village chiefs, they have broad administrative and disciplinary power to influence the security of the localities in their electoral districts. Furthermore, with their discretionary power over the allotment of government subsidies granted to LGUs, these elites have tremendous political power over the areas they control; combining these areas with areas controlled by other members can result in the establishment of a warlord kingdom run by a single political family or by groups of political families in alliance.

The enduring power of political elites and their families (clans) produces an environment prone to the intensification of violence once *rido* emerge in the area. Political elites can and do successfully mediate peace talks between *rido* disputants; however, they can also function as brokers of paramilitaries and private armies, deploying them to assist *rido* disputants as readily available armed reinforcements prepared to engage in armed attacks. The degree of political power that elites (and their clans) have over their constituents is substantial and is further amplified when they are elected to political posts. Once in an elected position of power, they are free to use government subsidies to finance their cadre of armed men, privatize police and military auxiliary forces to serve their political interests, and settle community conflicts by dispatching paramilitaries that often escalate the violence.

### Conclusion

In the case of Mindanao, local violence tends to stem from recurring clan feuds that eventually entangle state-level actors like the Muslim insurgencies and the Philippine Army. Following the trajectories of *rido* reveals multiple layers of the underlying root causes of the violence, which are often based in land disputes and recurring organized crime. The morphing of conflict actors—from victims to perpetrators and vice versa—can lead to episodes of violence that come in pairs or more. The changes in the roles of conflict actors, and changes in what triggers conflicts, can render the initial eruption of violence and the conflict's ultimate outcome inconsistent. A further process tracing how conflict events (such as a time-series analysis) could help advance our understanding of how communal conflicts between ethnic groups evolve and develop over time, and their connection to state-based conflicts.

This study's findings regarding the agency of political elites and their role in conflict processes, the privatization of paramilitaries, and the

involvement of political elites suggest several future agendas. Using other case studies to further test the hypotheses presented here would help identify and refine the full set of variables that explain communal-to-state-level armed actor interactions.

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