

# The Never Ending War in the Wounded Land: The New People's Army on Samar

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## Abstract

The island of Samar is a part of the Philippines where there has been a substantial amount of insurgent activity carried out by the New People's Army, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, a Maoist organization. This article examines the theoretical constructs of insurgency warfare and demonstrates how Samar's physical geography, fragmented political geography, poverty, and landlessness have contributed to the enduring presence of the New People's Army on that island. Abusive measures implemented by the Armed Forces of the Philippines to combat the New People's Army have fueled its membership. Its persistence into the twenty-first century, an era of neoliberal hegemony, demonstrates the continuing relevance of Maoism in marginalized and impoverished places such as Samar.

**Keywords:** Philippines, Samar, insurgency warfare, New People's Army, Maoism, neoliberalism

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Phenomenon under Study

On 14 December 2010, 12 soldiers from the Philippine Army were travelling through the Municipality of Las Navas, in the Province of Northern Samar on the island of Samar, when they were ambushed by approximately 40 members of the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) (Arnaiz, 2010). During the ambush, ten soldiers were killed and two soldiers were wounded; the NPA cadres relieved the soldiers of 11 high-powered firearms and departed the scene (Arnaiz, 2010). While this ambush may appear as an obscure event, occurring on an obscure Philippine island, it is representative of the ongoing violence between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the NPA, one of the longest running communist insurgencies in the world which, since 1969, has claimed over 43,000 lives (Quimpo, 2008). One part of the Philippines where violence between the AFP and the NPA is well entrenched is on the island of Samar, an island having derived its name from the Samareño word *samad* meaning "wound" (Santos & Lagos, 2004). Indeed, one could say that the conflict on Samar is so well entrenched as to constitute a never ending war in the wounded land. This article examines the persistence of the conflict between the AFP and the NPA on Samar.

### 1.2 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study emanates from the long interest geographers have had in insurgency. In 1969, Robert W. McColl authored a seminal article arguing that the geographic dimensions of insurgency warfare are understudied (Note 1). As McColl (1969, p. 614) wrote, "Virtually every aspect of the revolutionary process has undergone intense study. There remains one element, however, that has not received adequate attention. This is the geographic aspect in the evolution, as well as definition, of revolutionary movements". Patton (1970) further contributed to the discussion of the spatial dimensions of insurgency warfare by pointing out that much research on insurgency warfare is inappropriately concentrated at the higher levels of spatial aggregation with entire nations being treated as points in space and with all socio-economic conditions therein assumed homogenous. Insurgents themselves "rarely make this mistake" and a "great deal of their attention is directed to the discovery of those spaces and environments [wherein] their efforts have maximum chances of success" (Patton, 1970, p. 598). This article explores the spaces and environments of Samar contributing to the persistence of the NPA.

The endurance of this conflict also reveals the continuing existence of an armed communist revolutionary movement in a world that has embraced the hyper-capitalist ideology of neoliberalism and has (supposedly) long

since forsaken communism. Neoliberalism refers to the renewal of the liberal policy agenda of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with its belief in free trade, free markets, and its antipathy for state regulation. Harvey (2005, p. 2) defines neoliberalism as:

A theory of political economic practices [proposing] that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.

Worldwide neoliberalism has “achieved the status of being taken for granted or, more than that, has achieved the supreme power of being widely taken as scientific and resulting in an optimal world” (Peet, 2003, p. 4). Protest against neoliberalism is “taken as an offence against reason, progress, order and the best world ever known to man” (Peet, 2003, p. 4). In discussing neoliberalism’s status as a hegemonic discourse Fukuyama (1992, p. 296) made much out of the “failure” of communism and the “triumph” of capitalism stating, “The threat to liberty posed by communism was so direct and obvious, and the doctrine so discredited at present, that it is hard to see it as anything but totally exhausted”. “The past thirty years,” wrote Harvey (2010, vii), “most particularly since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the cold war, have not been a very favorable or fertile period for Marxian thought, and most certainly not for Marxian revolutionary politics”. Nevertheless, despite the abundance of epitaphic literature articulating its demise, armed revolutionary communism continues in the Philippines and the CPP, according to Weekley (2010, p. 52), “has been by far the most important explicitly Marxist force in the Philippines for nearly four decades”. This article examines the factors keeping the (supposedly) discredited doctrine of communism alive on Samar, a place described as being “in the midst of a process of rapid ferment characterized by the clash of opposing paradigms of society, wealth, and power” (Santos & Lagos, 2004, i).

### *1.3 Methodology*

The article begins with a review of the literature on insurgency warfare, extracting the salient characteristics shared by insurgencies, this is followed by an examination of the human and physical geography of Samar, and then the spatial distribution of NPA activity during the time period from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2013 is depicted revealing the correspondence between the characteristics of insurgency warfare and Samar’s human and physical geography.

## **2. Theoretical Framework: Insurgency Warfare**

### *2.1 “Insurgency” Defined*

“Civil war,” is defined by Kalyvas (2006, p. 17), as “armed combat within the boundaries of a recognized sovereign entity between parties subject to a common authority at the outset of the hostilities”. A variant of civil war is insurgency warfare and the United States Army and Marine Corps (2007, p. 2) define insurgency as “an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict”.

### *2.2 Maoist Insurgencies: the Protracted People’s War*

Many insurgencies follow the Maoist model of insurgency developed by Mao Zedong during the Chinese Revolution (United States Army & Marine Corps, 2007). Maoism, a third testament of communism behind Marxism and Marxism-Leninism, is distinguished from communism’s earlier variants by its reliance upon the rural peasantry as the agents of change as opposed to the urban proletariat. Maoism is based upon a doctrine known as the protracted people’s war from the countryside wherein revolution begins in the countryside, expands taking over the cities, and then ultimately engulfs the entire country. Maoist organizations are well known to use what are called the “three instruments of revolution” wherein there will be a political party directing the revolution, an armed group acting as the army of the revolution, and a front group representing the interests of the party in society (Race [1972], 2010, p. 121). According to Race ([1972], 2010, p. 121), “The party is the brain, the army the muscle, and the front is the means of fracturing the society in such a way that the army can do its job with least resistance”.

### *2.3 The Role of Physical Geography in Insurgency Warfare*

Variations in “levels, types, and practices of violence across wars may be affected by factors,” wrote Kalyvas (2006, 8), including “geography and climate”. “War,” wrote O’Sullivan (1991, p. 31), “is a geographical phenomenon” and this maxim is highly applicable to insurgency warfare as it “involves an intense exploitation of the landscape” (O’Sullivan, 1983, p. 140). Warfare is mostly a matter of moving, hiding, and shooting and the ability to do these is conditioned by terrain (O’Sullivan, 1991). Insurgency warfare, in particular, places “a premium on the availability of cover and concealment and an accidented landscape to fade into, one which slows down and fragments the pursuit of conventional forces” (O’Sullivan, 1991, p. 129). In the words of Kalyvas

(2006, p. 132), “Towns, plains, key communication lines, and accessible terrain in general tend to be associated with incumbent control, whereas mountains and rugged terrain are generally insurgent strongholds”. Two important aspects of physical geography for insurgency warfare are mountains and forests; the former make it more difficult for government forces to pursue insurgents, the latter provide cover and concealment for insurgents (O’Sullivan, 1983). “Even within rural regions,” wrote Kalyvas (2006, p. 136), “insurgents are more likely to obtain collaboration in the roughest and most remote areas”.

Intimately related to physical geography are population and road density; a high population density makes it easier for a government to concentrate and control the population while a low population density will require a larger military force for population control (Kalyvas, 2006). According to Galula (1964, p. 24), “The more scattered the population, the better for the insurgent” (Note 2). Just as a low population density aids insurgents so does a low road density “because the counterinsurgent cannot count on a good network of transport and communication facilities” (Galula, 1964, p. 24).

#### *2.4 Political Geography: Administrative Boundaries*

According to Kalyvas (2006, p. 133), “geography should not simply be understood to mean ‘terrain,’” it can also mean “proximity to administrative district boundaries”. Insurgents locate in proximity to administrative boundaries because “these locations [allow] them to benefit from the government’s bureaucratic ineptitude, as local authorities [tend] to reject counterinsurgency jurisdiction when they [can]” (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 133). Locations in proximity to administrative boundaries provide insurgents with simultaneous access to multiple provinces or municipalities and borders are often determined by aspects of the physical geography, such as mountain ranges, which also provide ideal terrain for their operations (McColl, 1969).

#### *2.5 The Role of Grievances*

Grievances, sources of discontent motivating people to take up arms and attempt to achieve change violently, are a crucial impetus to an insurgency. Economic grievances, such as mass poverty, are one of the most powerful grievances motivating people to enter an insurgency. As Griffith ([1961], 2005, 5) wrote, “A potential revolutionary situation exists in any country where the government consistently fails in its obligation to ensure at least a minimally decent standard of life for the great majority of its citizens”. According to the United States Army and Marine Corps (2007, p. 173), “Insurgencies attempt to exploit a lack of employment or job opportunities to gain active and passive support for their cause and ultimately undermine the government’s legitimacy”.

In an agrarian society one of the most powerful grievances is landlessness as it is “every peasant’s ambition to own sufficient land” (Thompson, 1966, p. 65) and “no other factor looms so large in the consciousness of the peasant as land” (Race [1972], 2010, 6) (Note 3). Should the bulk of the land in an agrarian society be held by a small number of land owners an insurgency will find numerous recruits among landless peasants; in the words of Galula (1964, p. 14), “It follows that any country where the power is invested in an oligarchy, whether indigenous or foreign, is potential ground for a revolutionary war”.

Often governments, in attempting to suppress an insurgency, abuse the population and, in doing so, drive people into its ranks. In fighting an insurgency, a government may “act beyond the borders of legality” and if this happens “opposition will increase and the insurgent will thank his opponent for having played into his hands” (Galula, 1964, p. 45). Many people join an insurgency due to government abuses of power; family members may have been killed during government operations, imprisoned, or tortured for rendering aid to insurgents (Kalyvas, 2006). The hatred emerging during an armed conflict as a result of government atrocities often overshadows and amplifies the original motivators driving people into the insurgency and the insurgency gains resilience (Kalyvas, 2006).

#### *2.6 Insurgent Public Services*

Insurgent groups often provide services, such as “protection against common crime” (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 96), to members of the public residing in areas where they have influence. Insurgents often identify, and violently eliminate, abusive husbands, corrupt merchants, cattle thieves, and other types of anti-social elements. “Armed actors are often willing and able to eliminate common crime” (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 70) and this can make insurgents popular among the population and strengthen their mass base. In areas under their control insurgents can provide a form of revolutionary government, which can be more effective than that of the actual government itself (Kerkvliet, 1977).

### 2.7 Insurgent Sources of Funding and Weapons

All insurgencies, to some extent require funding; as Galula (1964, p. 40) wrote, “Money is the sinew of war”. Maoist insurgencies require financial resources in order to build and maintain a counter-state (United States Army & Marine Corps, 2007). Funding can be supplied across land borders from sympathizers, or from sympathetic governments, based in adjacent states (United States Army & Marine Corps, 2007). If, however, there are no sympathizers, or sympathetic governments, based in adjacent states (or if the state experiencing the insurgency is an insular state lacking land borders) such external sources of funding for an insurgency may be unavailable. Thompson (1966, p. 144), however, did not regard this as a problem writing, “It has to be accepted that money is no great problem to an insurgent movement”. Insurgents can acquire funds by extracting “protection money” from companies wishing to avoid the destruction of their property (Thompson, 1966).

Insurgencies also require weapons. As with funding, weapons can be supplied across land borders from sympathizers, or from sympathetic governments, based in adjacent states (United States Army & Marine Corps, 2007). If there are no external sources of weaponry government troops will become “the principal sources of weapons, equipment, and ammunition” (Griffith [1961], 2005, p. 24). Insurgents will ambush small parties of government forces and take their weapons thus ensuring a supply of ordinance (Thompson, 1966). According to Galula (1966, p. 37), “it is capture from the enemy that dictates the nature of the insurgent’s operations. They will be ‘commercial operations,’ conceived and executed in order to bring more gains than losses”. “This,” wrote Galula (1966, p. 37), “requires an overwhelming and sudden concentration of insurgent forces against an isolated counter-insurgent unit caught in the open”.

### 3. Samar: the Wounded Land

#### 3.1 Samar: The Third Largest Island in the Philippines

The Philippines (Figure 1) has been divided by its government into a number of regions for administrative purposes and Samar, along with the islands of Biliran and Leyte, is located in Region VIII, the Eastern Visayas Region.

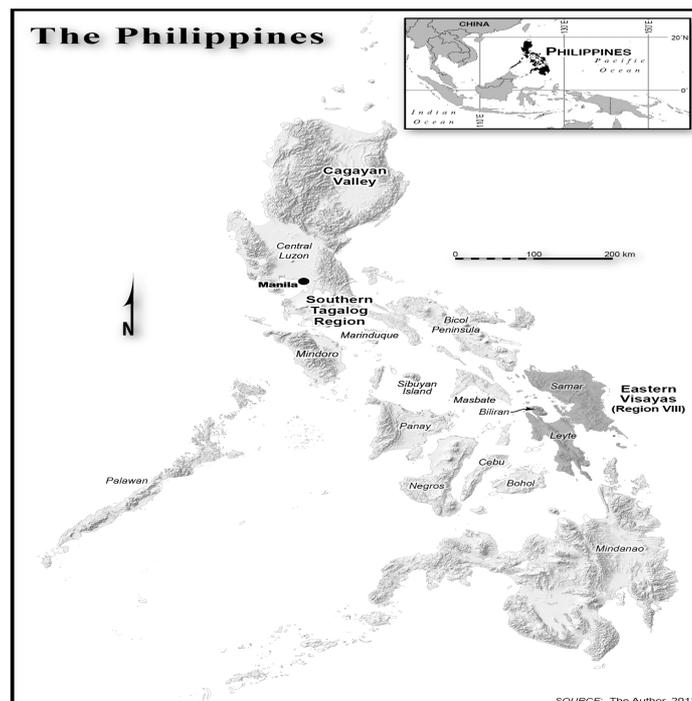


Figure 1. The Philippines

Samar (Figure 2), with a total land area of 14,402 square kilometers is the third largest island of the archipelago (Santos & Lagos, 2004). In 1965, Republic Act 4221 divided Samar into three provinces: Samar (referred to herein as “Western Samar”), with 6,048 square kilometers of land area; Northern Samar, with 3,693 square kilometers of land area; and Eastern Samar, with 4,661 square kilometers of land area (Santos & Lagos, 2004).

These three provinces are further sub-divided into 73 different municipalities and over 2,000 barangays (villages) with Western Samar having 26 municipalities and 951 barangays, Eastern Samar having 23 municipalities and 597 barangays, and Northern Samar having 24 municipalities and 569 barangays (National Statistical Coordination Board, 2012a).

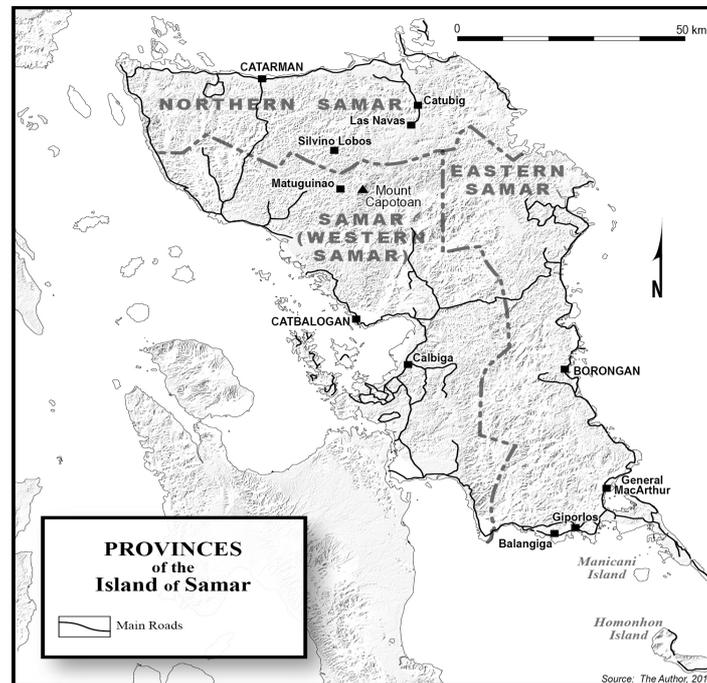


Figure 2. the Island of Samar

### 3.2 The Physical Geography of Samar

In terms of terrain, Couttie (2004, 2) described Samar as an “island of moderate mountains and lush rainforest sliced through by rivers connecting the interior and the coast”. According to Linn (1993, 159), the island is “divided into a narrow coast region and a rugged series of mountains and river valleys that cover most of the interior”. Although the mountains on Samar are lower (between 200 meters and 850 meters) than on other islands in the Philippines, Samar’s terrain is rugged and hilly and two-thirds of its land area has a slope of over 18 degrees (Santos & Lagos, 2004). Some of the roughest terrain on the island is found along the border between Western Samar and Eastern Samar, between Calbiga and Borongan, where there are numerous boulders and limestone deposits with an extensive cave system (Haribon Foundation & Birdlife International, 2001).

Samar has a wet climate, receiving over 3,000 millimeters of rainfall every year and, consequently, is covered with lush tropical rainforests and has the archipelago’s largest remaining tract of unfragmented lowland tropical rainforest (Santos & Lagos, 2004). Some of the heaviest forest cover is found in the area along the border between Western Samar and Eastern Samar, between Calbiga and Borongan, where the forest is composed mostly of closed canopy lowland dipterocarp forest (Haribon Foundation & Birdlife International, 2001).

### 3.3 The Human Geography of Samar

In 2010, Samar had a population of approximately 1.8 million people with 733,377 people residing in Western Samar, 589,013 people living in Northern Samar, and 428,877 people residing in Eastern Samar (National Statistical Coordination Board, 2012a). Island wide, Samar had a 2010 population density of approximately 122 people per square kilometer but in some of the island’s interior municipality’s population density can be less than 20 people per square kilometer and Figure 3 displays municipal population density within the three provinces of Samar (National Statistical Coordination Board, 2012a). The population of Samar is overwhelmingly Christian with there being no appreciable Muslim population and there being virtually no indigenous peoples (those with a historical continuity with the pre-Islamic and pre-Hispanic religions of the archipelago) residing in the Eastern Visayas (Holden, 2012).

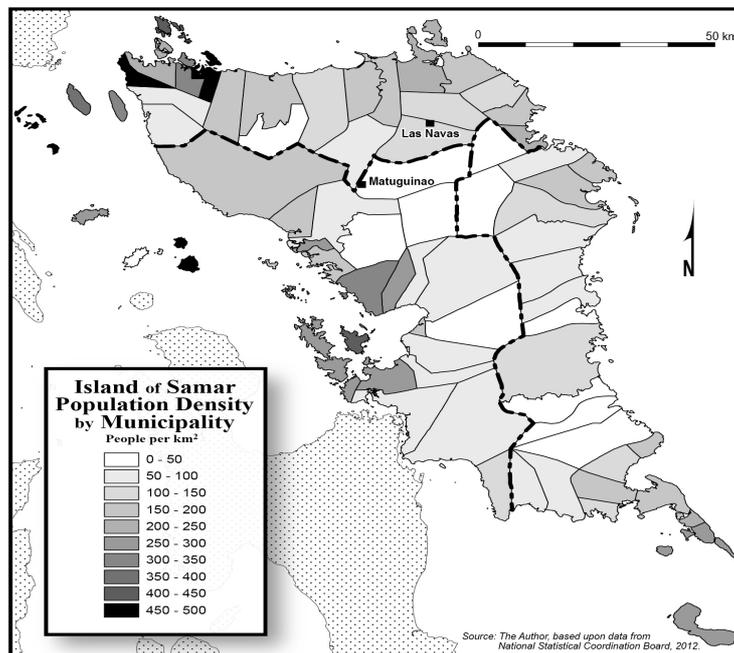


Figure 3. Municipal Population Density on Samar in 2010

Two-thirds of all Samareños are engaged in subsistence agriculture and subsistence aquaculture (Ramas & de Guzman, 2000); in the words of Santos and Lagos (2004, p. 140), “crop growing and fishing are Samar’s main occupation”. The principal commercial crop on the island is coconut, which has been called the “King Crop” of the island (Santos & Lagos, 2004, p. 146). There are 1,671 square kilometers of coconut lands on the island, an amount in excess of the total crop area of rice, camote, cassava, and white corn combined (Santos & Lagos, 2004). Although Abaca, the plant from which hemp is produced, is no longer the dominant crop on Samar, as was the case during the nineteenth century, abaca still retains a significant presence in parts of the island and in 2001 almost 11 million kilograms of abaca fiber were produced (Santos & Lagos, 2004).

The most striking and pervasive feature of Samar,” wrote Santos and Lagos (2004, p. 138), “is poverty”. The three Samareño provinces have traditionally belonged to the poorest provinces in the Philippines (Samar Island Biodiversity Project, 2006). In 2009, it was estimated that 26.5 percent of all Filipinos were living in poverty (National Statistical Coordination Board, 2013). That same year, Western Samar had a poverty rate of 45 percent, Northern Samar had a poverty rate of 51.2 percent, and Eastern Samar had a poverty rate of 54 percent (National Statistical Coordination Board, 2013). As with population density, these poverty rates can vary substantially across the island and Figure 4 displays municipal poverty rates within the three provinces of Samar (National Statistical Coordination Board, 2012b).

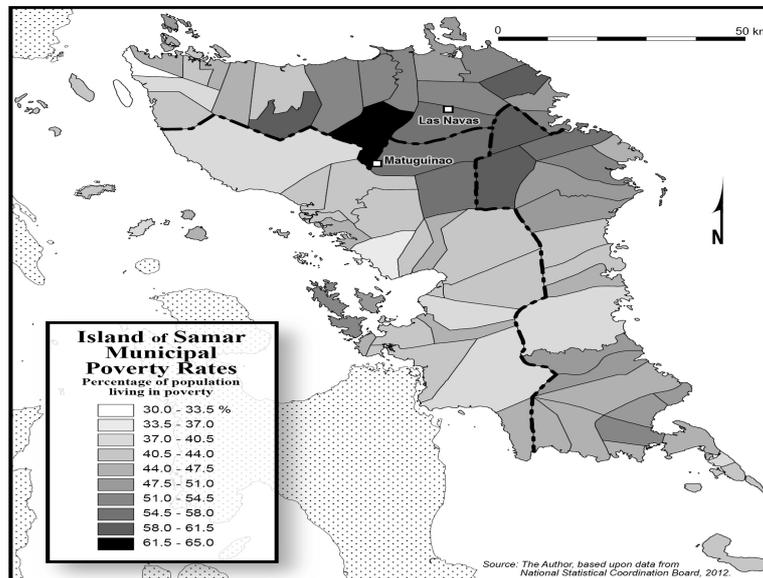


Figure 4. Municipal Poverty Rates on Samar in 2009

Much of the poverty suffered by the Samarons can be attributed to the island's vulnerability to typhoons, which form south and east of the Philippines and track in a northwesterly direction impacting Samar, the Bicol Peninsula of Southeastern Luzon, and northern Luzon (Holden & Jacobson, 2012). The destructive effects of these typhoons destroy crops and infrastructure and impede economic development.

In addition to Samar's high levels of poverty it also has high levels of inequality. The distribution of income can be measured by using a Gini coefficient, which can range from zero (in the case of perfect income equality) to one (in the case of perfect income inequality) (Note 4). In 2006, the Gini coefficient for the Philippines as a whole was 0.414 while Western Samar's was 0.413, Northern Samar's was 0.438, Eastern Samar's was 0.513, and the average for all three provinces was 0.455 (Human Development Network, 2009). These Gini coefficients indicate that inequality is higher on Samar (particularly in Northern and Eastern Samar) than in the rest of the archipelago. What is notable is that the distribution of income on Samar is becoming more unequal over time. In 2003, the Gini coefficient for both the Philippines as a whole and Western Samar was 0.438, Northern Samar's was 0.368, Eastern Samar's was 0.468, and the average of the three provinces was 0.425 (Human Development Network, 2005); while inequality lessened nationwide and in Western Samar between 2003 and 2006 it increased in Northern Samar (from 0.368 up to 0.438) Eastern Samar (from 0.468 up to 0.513), and island wide (from 0.425 up to 0.455). With high levels of poverty concomitant with high levels of inequality one sees that there are large numbers of very poor people living in grinding abject poverty and a small number of highly wealthy people living in affluence- something that is almost certainly a recipe for social unrest.

Perhaps the most famous incident of unrest on Samar dates from the Philippine-American War of 1899-1902 when the residents of Balangiga, Eastern Samar attacked Company C of the 9<sup>th</sup> United States Infantry during breakfast on the morning of 28 September 1901. Both officers and 46 enlisted men were killed; 22 other soldiers were wounded and only four soldiers emerged unscathed (Linn, 2000). No single event in the Philippine War," wrote Miller (1982, p. 204), "shocked the American people as did the massacre at Balangiga". In response the Sixth Separate Brigade under the command of General Jacob Smith was deployed to Samar to conduct a punitive campaign described by Couttie (2004, p. 185) as a "typhoon of steel". During this campaign General Smith ordered those under his command to "turn the interior of Samar into a howling wilderness" (Couttie, 2004, 196.). By the time the United States Army was done Samar was a "wasteland of destruction" (Couttie, 2004, p. 230). Of the 44 municipalities existing in 1902, p. 27 had been destroyed and eighty-five percent of the island's draft animals, essential for agriculture, had been killed (Couttie, 2004). Indeed, much of poverty on Samar today can be attributed to this "devastating and destructive campaign" from which the island "took years to recover, if in fact it ever did" (Couttie, 2004, p. 357).

Much of Samar's poverty can also be attributed to social changes implemented during the American colonial period. During the nineteenth century, as indicated above, the principal crop on Samar was abaca. Prior to the American colonization, relations between upland abaca growers and lowland buyers were governed by

customary laws, which both lowland and mountain people understood and respected (Couttie, 2004). When the Americans consolidated their control over Samar, these customary laws were replaced by an American legal system that favored the wealthy and educated lowland elite at the expense of the upland abaca growers (Couttie, 2004). This was a classic example of what Miller (1982, p. 264) called a system of “Filipino-administered injustice”. These exploitative social relation, combined with declining hemp prices during the twentieth century, and the physical destruction wrought by the Philippine-American War, greatly wounded the wounded land ensuring a landscape of poverty on Samar (Couttie, 2004).

#### 4. Communism on Samar

##### 4.1 The Reestablishment of the Communist Party of the Philippines

The CPP was reestablished along Maoist lines, replacing the old Marxist-Leninist *Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas*, by Jose Maria Sison, an English professor from the University of the Philippines, on 26 December 1968, the 75<sup>th</sup> birthday of Mao Zedong (Santos, 2010a). According to Hilhorst (2008, 203), Sison “modeled the movement by combining Marx’s class-based analysis with the Leninist call for a vanguard organization leading the proletarian masses, and Mao Zedong’s rural based revolutionary tactics”.

Perhaps the foremost authority on the CPP is the Québécois scholar Dominique Caouette and (Note 5), according to Caouette (2004, 9), the communist movement in the Philippines has “three ‘institution-like’ components”: a political party, the CPP; an army, the NPA; and a front group representing the interests of the party in society, the National Democratic Front (NDFP). The NPA, the armed wing of the CPP was established on 29 March 1969, the 27<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the *Hukbong Bayan Laban sa Hapon* (People’s Anti-Japanese Army or Hukbalahap), the most effective resistance organization against the Japanese during World War II (Kerkvliet, 1977). Indeed, the NPA views itself as the *new* people’s army just as the Hukbalahap was the original *people’s* army against Japan (Danenberget al., 2007). The NDFP was created in 1973; it consists of organizations representing the various sectors of society including peasants, workers, women, and teachers (Caouette, 2004). The NDFP “is the main arena from where the CPP goes outside of itself; where it builds from a secure core to the organizational and theoretical uncertainties on the outside” (Caouette, 2004, p. 69). The CPP is the revolutionary movement’s brain; the NPA is the revolutionary movement’s muscle; and the NDFP fractures society for the revolutionary movement in such a way that the army can do its job while encountering the least resistance.

The NPA has suffered a substantial loss of strength since its zenith in the mid-1980s when it had 20,000 to 25,000 armed cadres (Kerkvliet, 2010). However, since the mid 1990s, it has been on the resurgence and today is estimated to have between 5,000 (International Crisis Group, 2011) to 7,000 armed fighters (Kerkvliet, 2010). The NPA is clearly in no position to win a military victory and seize control of the Philippine state. However, it is also clear that the AFP is not in a position where it can eliminate the NPA and, as a result, the latter is unlikely to go away anytime soon. This situation exemplifies the dictum of Kalyvas (2006, p. 67) that in an insurgency “one side is not strong enough to win and the other is not weak enough to lose”.

##### 4.2 The New People’s Army on Samar

The NPA has a long history on Samar dating back to 1970 when the movement for a Democratic Philippines, a CPP organization, was formed at the University of the Eastern Philippines in Catarman, Northern Samar. Initial recruits were reacting to the increased authoritarianism of the Marcos administration, but the movement’s ranks grew to include local politicians and priests dissatisfied with the government (Marks, 1996). At this time Sison dispatched one of his top *protégés*, Jorge Cabardo to the Eastern Visayas to establish a guerrilla front (Jones, 1989) and NPA activists also began organizing in the island’s interior municipalities where they could organize without interference from state security forces (Santos & Lagos, 2004). These early organizers found Samar’s rugged terrain and thick jungle ideal for guerrilla warfare (Jones, 1989). In 1971, early NPA organizing was carried out by armed propaganda units, small groups of from three to seven people devoted primarily to organizing an initial network of mass supporters (Santos & Lagos, 2004). When President Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law on 21 September 1972, members of the NPA regrouped in the Catubig Valley of Northern Samar while dissidents from Eastern Samar crossed the mountains to the north to join them. Further members arrived from the island of Cebu, which had become inhospitable for guerrilla action. At this time the CPP divided Samar into six districts according to a plan developed by Jorge Cabardo, a former Philippine Military Academy cadet from Eastern Samar (Marks, 1996). In 1974 the NPA’s first tactical offensive was launched against a squad of Army Scouts on patrol in Calbiga, Western Samar and the weapons acquired from this bolstered the NPA’s early firepower (Santos & Lagos, 2004). At this time the CPP’s Central Committee made a decision to change policy and organize the major islands of each region first, as opposed to dispersing forces on all islands in a

region (Jones, 1989). Accordingly, Samar was chosen to be the center of gravity in the Eastern Visayas and the CPP concentrated its organizational efforts upon the island (Jones, 1989). During 1975 a new batch of cadres from Manila and Cebu were sent to the guerrilla areas of Western Samar; at this time, the movement began transforming its “guerrilla zones” (areas where the state remains dominant, but where the NPA operates) into “guerrilla bases” (areas where the underground government is dominant) (Santos & Lagos, 2004). In 1976 the NPA gained prestige among the Samarons by dismantling cattle rustling gangs and the CPP established an Island Committee for the entire island while another batch of cadres from Manila and Cebu arrived (Santos & Lagos, 2004). The NPA also divided Samar into northern and southern area commands (Marks, 1996). During 1977 even more recruits arrived from Manila and Cebu and an anti-feudal campaign was launched to reduce land rents (Santos & Lagos, 2004). In 1980, full time guerrilla units wholly engaged in military work were deployed by the NPA (Santos & Lagos, 2004) and by 1982 an effective shadow government was in place and the island had become considered one of the most solid CPP strongholds (Marks, 1996).

During the mid-1980s NPA influence on Samar received a substantial impetus from the decline of the coconut industry (Kerkvliet, 1986). World prices for this major export crop declined sharply at this time and the Marcos regime concentrated the processing and marketing of coconuts “in a manner that richly benefited a few at the expense of most producers and workers” (Kerkvliet, 1986, p. 38). The Samarons, like many people in other parts of the archipelago at this time, “petitioned, resisted, and organized, hoping to get favorable responses from local elites and government officials” (Kerkvliet, 1986, p. 38). Marcos, however, only responded with repression, which served to drive people further into rebellion (Kerkvliet, 1986).

In 1986, after the “People Power” uprising replaced Marcos with President Corazon Aquino, there was a brief (but substantial) feeling of optimism that repression would cease. As a result of this optimism, the NPA on Samar froze all tactical offensives and adopted “a ‘wait and see’ attitude in favor of the Aquino regime” (Santos & Lagos, 2004, p. 197). The results of this proved costly: the AFP used this lull to gather intelligence on the NPA and then the Aquino regime declared “all out war” on the NPA and responded with a series of military offensives and repressive policy measures (McCoy, 2009).

During the 1990s, the Presidency of Fidel Ramos sought to resolve the conflict with “negotiation rather than repression” by repealing “the Anti-Subversion Law, that had outlawed the Communist Party (McCoy, 2009, p. 453). At this time the CPP became “permanently fragmented as a result of internal debates on strategy, tactics, and ideology” (Garcia, 2001, p. 28). The CPP fragmented into two groups: those who rejected a continuation of the protracted people’s war and those who reaffirmed “the correctness of guerrilla-oriented protracted people’s war” (Santos & Lagos, 2004, p. 198). The movement on Samar adhered to the latter of these two groups (Quimpo & Quimpo, 2012), it reorganized its forces into smaller units, and placed its emphasis upon mass base building and consolidating its position in the municipalities where it has influence (Santos & Lagos, 2004).

“Today,” wrote Santos and Lagos (2004, p. 199) “the movement casts a giant shadow on Samar” and “Samar is among the areas in the Philippines where the NPA is believed to be strong and growing” (Santos & Lagos, 2004, p. 186). In the words of Ramas and de Guzman (2000, p. 95), “Samar, particularly in the hinterlands is a hotbed of rebel activities”. The Samar Island Biodiversity Project of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (2006, p. 128) commented on the amount of NPA activity on the island writing, “Samar island is not only a biodiversity ‘hotspot’ but it is also an insurgency ‘hotspot.’” In 2009, Colonel Alexander Cabales, deputy commander of the 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (the Philippine Army Division responsible for the Eastern Visayas) stated “Samar remains a big challenge for the army” (Quirante, 2009) and in 2012 AFP officials in the Eastern Visayas expressed concern that the Samareño provinces have a “considerable presence of rebels” (Gabieta, 2012, p. 10).

Quantifying the amount of insurgent activity is an inexact process; as Kalyvas (2006, p. 48) wrote, “Any Study of violence must face the thorny problem of data”. Using confrontations between state and insurgent forces is problematic because increases or decreases in government patrols can lead to increases or decreases in confrontations with no change in the strength of the insurgency (Kalyvas, 2006). Deaths are often used as “the primary indicator of violence” (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 20) but sometimes fatalities are overestimated or underestimated “depending on the vagaries of the process of adjudicating between competing partisan claims” (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 49). The IBON Foundation publishes annual estimates of the number of confrontations between the AFP and the NPA but this data is not decomposed on a province-by-province basis or even on a region-by-region basis. To acquire an estimate of NPA activity on Samar the Philippines Communist Insurgency Report, prepared by Pacific Strategies and Assessments (a business risk consultancy firm), was used (Note 6). According to Pacific Strategies and Assessments, from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2012 there were 153 incidents involving the NPA on Samar and these incidents resulted in 21 deaths and 55 casualties over this two year period (Table 1).

Table 1. Incidents Involving the NPA on Samar, 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2012

Province	Incidents	Killed	Wounded
Western Samar	55	11	21
Eastern Samar	25	2	7
Northern Samar	73	8	27
Total	153	21	55
Percentage of National	11.00 percent of 1,426	4.54 percent of 463	9.15 percent of 601

Source: Pacific Strategies and Assessments (2011, 2012).

Perspective on the magnitude of NPA activity on Samar can be gleaned by comparing the proportion of NPA incidents occurring there, 11 percent of all incidents nationwide, with the fact that Samar constitutes only five percent of the archipelago's land area and only two percent of its population! The spatial distribution of NPA activity on the island is shown in Figure 5. There were 34 municipalities where there were no incidents of NPA activity while most of the NPA activity was concentrated in the island's interior municipalities with two contiguous municipalities, Las Navas in Northern Samar and Matuguinao in Western Samar, having 22 percent of all incidents while collectively constituting only 3 percent of the island's land area.

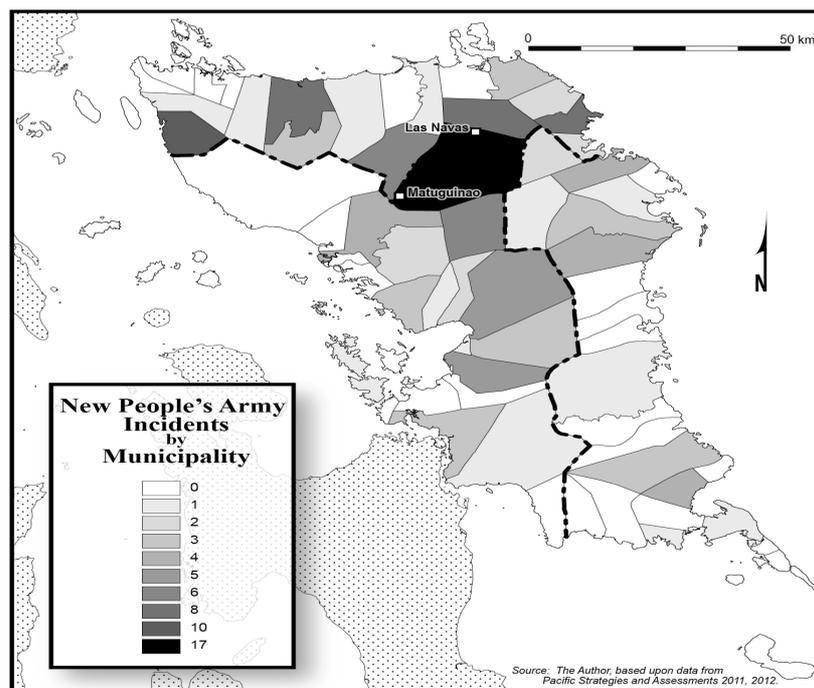


Figure 5. Incidents of NPA Activity, 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2012

#### 4.3 The Role of Geography

The NPA have always emphasized the importance of forested mountainous areas (Quimpo & Quimpo, 2012) and Samar, with rugged terrain covered by dense tropical forests, offers ideal terrain for conducting an insurgency. "The rugged topography of Samar," wrote Tiston (1984, p. 105), "offers a favorable sanctuary to the insurgents. These areas are virtually inaccessible to immediate military action and are therefore considered unfavorable for military maneuvers". Samar's low population density, particularly in some of the island's interior municipalities (Figure 3), also aids the NPA as this makes it more difficult for the AFP to monitor and control the population. Similarly, Samar's low road density of only 0.33 kilometers of road per square kilometer of land area (Monsod & Monsod, 2003) makes it harder for the AFP to operate against the NPA because it cannot count on a good network of transport facilities.

Samar, consisting of three provinces and 73 different municipalities, also aids the NPA by offering a number of administrative boundaries. The NPA has always emphasized locating base areas in border regions where two or three provinces can be influenced from one location. As Corpus (1989, p. 34) wrote:

Most guerrilla base areas are found in border regions adjoining two, three, or four provinces. Provincial border regions in the country are usually characterized by mountainous and forested terrain with isolated barangays serving as ideal grounds for conducting guerrilla warfare.

Border areas also tend to be mountainous and forested so the physical geography has a synergy with the political geography and many of the Samareño municipalities in border areas tend to have low population densities (Figure 3) and high poverty rates (Figure 4) and this imparts a synergy between the political geography and the social terrain. The NPA can establish a base area in a municipality in a border area where it can influence two, or even three, provinces simultaneously. There will be rough terrain, a low population density, and highly impoverished people who are likely to join the movement. Consider, for example, the municipality of Las Navas, Northern Samar: this municipality had 17 incidents of NPA activity during 2011 and 2012; borders both Western Samar and Eastern Samar; has a population density of 129.3 people per square kilometer, below the provincial average of 159.5; and has the eighth highest poverty rate in the Eastern Visayas at 57.1 percent. Consider also the adjacent municipality of Matuguinao, Western Samar: this municipality also had 17 incidents of NPA activity during 2011 and 2012; has some very rough terrain, including the 850 meter high Mount Capotoan; borders both Northern Samar and Eastern Samar; has a population density of 39.1 people per square kilometer, below the provincial average of 121.3; and has the seventh highest poverty rate in the Eastern Visayas at 57.5 percent. There are many places in the Philippines with, rough terrain, administrative borders, and poverty but these two contiguous municipalities are textbook examples of “rather mountainous and somewhat remote” areas offering tactical advantages for an insurgency (Kerkvliet, 1986, p. 50).

#### 4.4 Poverty: A Steady Supply of Recruits

The NPA recruits single young people who are “‘biographically available’ for high-risk activism” (Rutten, 2000, p. 223). Many of these people are intellectuals and idealists, often from the archipelago’s universities, who react to abuses they see in Philippine society. These are people who “head to the hills” and become what the Spanish called *remontados* (“those who remount”), people who took to their horses, left the Spanish controlled areas, and lived outside the jurisdiction of the colonial state (Francia, 2010). However, the bulk of those who join the NPA are the rural poor for whom the NPA “presents one of the few available livelihood opportunities” (Santos, 2010a, p. 18). The parts of the Philippines with much NPA activity tend to be poor areas bereft of government presence and services providing fertile social terrain for guerrilla warfare (Santos, 2010a). The NPA has, as Francia (2010, p. 317) wrote, “Remained a palpable presence in rural areas, where poverty seemed to be, as it has always been, a permanent feature of the landscape”. With high levels of poverty, particularly in its interior municipalities (Figure 4), Samar avails many potential recruits for the movement. De Belder and Vanobberghen (1999, p. 89) acknowledged this writing, “As one of the poorest regions of the Philippines, Samar has been one of the bulwarks of the Philippine revolution”. The NPA has emphasized the recruitment of Samareños because of their poverty and a 2009 article in *Ang Bayan* (the CPP newsletter) stated, “More than ever, the dismal economic and political condition in the region is most favorable for waging revolution” (Ang Bayan, 2009, p. 6).

#### 4.5 Landlessness: Agrarian Unrest

A major impetus to the revolutionary movement both nationwide and on Samar is landlessness. Across the archipelago, millions of peasant farmers lack title to the lands they till and are rendered little more than serfs. A seminal discussion of land reform in the Philippines is that provided by Borras (2007) who evaluated the effectiveness of land reform in the archipelago and declared it to be of medium effectiveness (Note 7). However, in the Eastern Visayas, Borras only rated the effectiveness of land reform as low-to-medium. On Samar it is estimated that 40 landowning families control almost 50 percent of all agricultural land (Castañeda, 2005). “Instead of withering away land rent and tenancy in Samar,” wrote Santos and Lagos (2004, p. 148), “persist to a great extent and channel to landlords a significant part of the income that should accrue to peasants”. On the island, “landlords continue to enjoy political clout and money to influence government decisions, agencies, and even the police” (Santos & Lagos, 2004, p. 150). There are many cases wherein tenants striving for land reform are harassed and even murdered by land owners (Santos & Lagos, 2004). Landlessness has long been seized upon by the Samareño NPA for recruitment purposes and the NPA has recently engaged in what it called “a series of antifeudal struggles” to exploit landlessness” (Ang Bayan, 2012, p. 3). As a 2012 article in *Ang Bayan* stated, “In the history of the revolutionary movement in Eastern Visayas, the strongest guerrilla fronts were those

established on the foundation of agrarian revolution” (Ang Bayan, 2012, p. 3).

“Peasant struggles for land reform,” wrote Quimpo (2008, p. 46), “are at the core of the Maoist insurgency”. With ineffective land reform on Samar one of the central social problems of Filipino society remains unaddressed and this further fuels the revolutionary movement there. Unless, and until, effective land reform is implemented on Samar the NPA will remain strong. Attempts to defeat the NPA through purely military methods only, which do not involve meaningful land reform, will only perpetuate what McCoy (2009, p. 450) called a “Sisyphean cycle of repression and revolt”. As Caouette (2004, p. 698) wrote:

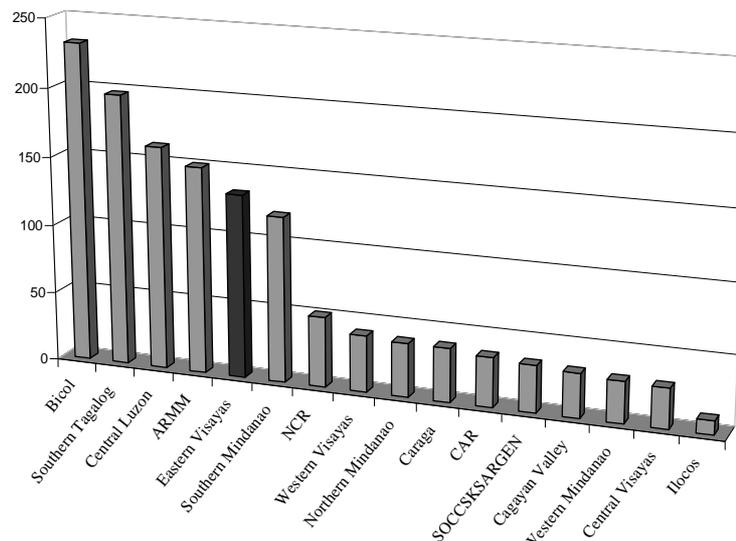
Given the CPP’s current strategy that prioritizes the mobilization of peasants in rural areas and in the absence of the successful implementation of land reforms in the foreseeable future, I would suggest that the CPP activists are likely to be able to continue mobilizing support for a number of years to come.

#### 4.6 Government Abuses

Another factor contributing to the strength of the NPA on Samar are abusive measures implemented by the AFP to suppress it. The counter-insurgency program of the Philippine Army on Samar has given the island a reputation as a “killing field” as a result of “killings, massacres, mass evacuations, military abuses, torture, and illegal detentions” (Carceller, 2000, p. 81). An important dimension of how abusive the AFP has been in its campaign against the NPA is the wave of extrajudicial killings plaguing the archipelago since 2001, wherein people who are suspected of being supporters of the NPA are assassinated by the AFP (Holden, 2011). This program of selective assassinations is modeled upon the Phoenix Program implemented by the United States during the American War in Vietnam (Holden, 2011). Phoenix was a calculated attempt to degrade the political infrastructure of the Viet Cong and it was described by Kalyvas (2006, p. 169) as “one of the most sophisticated programs of selective violence”. Just as the Phoenix Program was designed to eradicate the political infrastructure of the Viet Cong, these extrajudicial killings have been a deliberate attempt to eradicate the political infrastructure of the NPA (Holden, 2011).

There is controversy regarding the exact number of victims who have been assassinated. The Filipino human rights nongovernmental organization (NGO) Karapatan, an NGO also believed to be sympathetic to the CPP (Franco & Abinales, 2007), has estimated that, from 21 January 2001 until 31 October 2012, there were 1,335 victims of extrajudicial killings (Karapatan, 2010, 2012). In contrast to this, Attorney Al Parreno, from the University of the Philippines College of Law, has estimates of the extrajudicial killings that are substantially lower (Parreno, 2010). Nevertheless, notwithstanding controversy regarding the exact number of killings, Parreno (2010, p. 5) commented that the “real number of extrajudicial killings in the Philippines escapes exact determination. Regardless, however, of the true body count, the mere fact that there are so many extrajudicial killings is by itself a cause for alarm”.

According to Karapatan (2010, 2012), of the 1,335 victims, 133 were killed in the Eastern Visayas, putting the region in fifth place behind Bicol, the Southern Tagalog Region (Note 8), Central Luzon and the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (Figure 6). An important factor contributing to the extrajudicial killings in the Eastern Visayas (as well as in the Southern Tagalog Region and Central Luzon) is that it was a region where Major General Jovito Palparan (*Berdugo sa Mindoro* “the Butcher of Mindoro”) was assigned (Holden, 2011). From February 2005 to August 2005, Palparan was the commanding officer of the 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and during this time so many people were killed that human rights activists were afraid to go to the Eastern Visayas on fact finding missions (Holden & Jacobson, 2012). According to Attorney Al Parreno (2012), the level of human rights abuses on Samar during Palparan’s stint as the commander of the 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division were so severe they resembled the punitive campaign carried out by General Jacob Smith’s Sixth Separate Brigade.



Source: Karapatan (2010, 2012).

Figure 6. Extrajudicial Killing by Region, 21 January 2001 to 31 October 2012

The AFP has been so aggressive, and heavy-handed, in its efforts to combat the NPA that people have been driven into the movement to seek protection from, and to fight back against, the AFP; what Kerkvliet (1977) would call repression pushing people into rebellion. The militarization of communities to fight the movement has had the effect of causing it to flourish and “the policy of militarization to combat insurgency has not worked” (Francia, 2010, p. 317). In writing about the enduring presence of the NPA in the Philippines, Manzanilla (2006, p. 101) stated “the reason why people rebel is the systematic oppression compelling the wretched of this land to take up arms and seize power”. Across the archipelago “the rebels are endemic in communities where landlessness and oppression are experiences” (Alamon, 2006, p. 154).

#### 4.7 People’s Revolutionary Government

In contrast to the abuses of the government, the NPA provides services for those communities where it has a strong presence. The NPA functions as a social police in the countryside where the government is absent (Santos, 2005). The NPA provides services, such as health care, pressures landowners into treating tenants better, and delivers brutally harsh revolutionary justice (Text Box 1) against those engaging in antisocial behavior (Rutten, 2000). For many of the poor, the NPA offer “a concrete improvement of their situation and a meaningful perspective for the future” (De Belder & Vanobberghen, 1999, p. 122). As Alamon (2006, p. 161) wrote: “Functioning more as a shadow government that provides critical social services than an armed occupation force external to the community, the NPA assumes an important role for people in these poor farming communities”.

#### Text Box 1: An Example of Revolutionary Justice Carried out by the New People’s Army

On 13 July 2010 the Efren Martires Command of the New People’s Army carried out a death sentence against Mateo Biong, Jr., a drug lord and a corrupt former mayor of Giporlos, Eastern Samar. Biong had been found guilty by a people’s court of: selling *shabu* (methamphetamine) throughout Eastern Samar; having killed at least three other rivals of his in crime; having misused public funds during his time as mayor; having engaged in illegal logging, mining, and fishing; and having exploited women by having at least two mistresses. According to Ka Karlos Manuel, spokesperson for the Efren Martires Command, “The people’s court observed due process in investigating, trying and punishing Biong in accordance with the revolutionary justice system”.

Source: Efren Martires Command (2010).

#### 4.8 Funding and Weapons

The Samareño NPA has funded itself through the extraction of revolutionary taxes (Text Box 2) from businesses; it has a long history of exacting revolutionary taxes from timber and mining companies (International Crisis

Group, 2011). During elections the NPA charges traditional politicians, or *trapos* as they are called (Note 9), permit to campaign fees granting them access into areas under its control (Dizon, 2013). The NPA also refuses to grant access to *trapos* if these politicians do not meet with its approval (National Democratic Front Eastern Visayas 2013a) and if candidates it does approve of are harassed by other *trapos* it will issue warnings to those who behave improperly (National Democratic Front Eastern Visayas, 2013b).

#### Text Box 2: An Example of Revolutionary Taxation

On 11 July 2011 a group of armed NPA cadres demanded PHP 500 (approximately USD 12.00) from each driver transporting minerals to the stockyards of Exotic Mining and King Resort Mining Corporation's chromite operations in General MacArthur, Eastern Samar. The NPA cadres also demanded PHP 100,000 (approximately USD 2,363) for every load of ore hauled by the firm as well as an additional PHP 5,000 (approximately USD 118) from every landowner benefiting from the firm's mining operations.

Source: Pacific Strategies and Assessments (2011).

The NPA has been largely self-sufficient in arming itself and the principal way this has been done is through what are called *agaw armas* (gun grab) raids where the NPA attacks an outnumbered AFP unit and takes its weapons. The ambush in Las Navas, Northern Samar described at the outset of this article exemplifies an *agaw armas* raid and after this ambush an article in *Ang Bayan* (2010, p. 3) touted how, "The Red fighters were able to confiscate at least 11 high-powered firearms".

#### 4.9 A Lack of Internal Purges within the NPA

In explaining the strength and persistence of the NPA in the Bicol Peninsula of Southeastern Luzon (a region of the Philippines with many similarities to Samar) Santos (2010b, p. 50) drew attention to the absence of an NPA internal purge from Bicol, which left "the NPA's Bicol branch relatively unscathed". A similar observation may also be made about Samar where there also were no internal purges. During the early and mid 1980s the NPA experienced rapid growth in response to the depredations of the Marcos dictatorship and, as a result, recruitment rules were relaxed and the movement "grew complacent, ignoring the simplest self-defensive precautions" (Sales, 1992, p. 220). Concerns began to emerge that the movement had been infiltrated by military deep penetration agents (DPAs) and this resulted in a series of purges of suspected DPAs from 1982 to 1988 (Abinales, 2008; Quimpo & Quimpo, 2012). While these purges were most pronounced on the island of Mindanao they also occurred in the Southern Tagalog Region, the Cagayan Valley of northern Luzon, Central Luzon, Leyte, and Cebu (Abinales, 2008; Quimpo & Quimpo, 2012). During these purges hundreds of cadres were killed, many of them only after being tortured, and several thousand cadres left the movement out of fear that a similar fate would befall them (Abinales, 2008; Quimpo & Quimpo, 2012). According to Caouette (2004, p. 400), the internal purges were "an extremely difficult episode of the Party's life". They "profoundly damaged the moral and social norms and trust within the revolutionary movement" and "left profound wounds within the movement, undermining the precious and essential social network that had previously existed and that provided much safety and cohesion" (Caouette, 2004, p. 522). However, with the exception of Caouette's discussion of the exposure of one DPA on Cebu and that person's subsequent liquidation on Samar, the literature on the internal purges makes no mention of any of them on the island. The absence of this self-destructive behavior from Samar has contributed to keeping the structure of the Samareño NPA, painstakingly developed during the 1970s, largely intact.

#### 4.10 Conflict between the AFP and the Muslim Groups

An important factor in the growth of the NPA on Samar, as well as nationwide, was the conflict between the AFP and the Muslim groups. During the 1970s, the AFP was engaged in conflict against the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) on Mindanao (McCoy, 2009). This was fierce positional warfare requiring the deployment of more than 75 percent of all AFP troops to Mindanao (Hernandez, 2005). After the MNLF signed a cease fire with the government in 1976 the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) broke away from it and the MILF continued fighting the AFP after the MNLF entered into a peace agreement with the government in 1996 (Vitug & Gloria, 2000). With so much of the AFP devoted to fighting these Muslim groups there was a substantial easing of "military pressure on the NPA" (Santos, 2005, p. 9). Indeed, Vitug and Gloria (2000) estimate that the threat posed by the Muslim secessionist groups has caused at least 40 percent of the entire AFP to be on Mindanao at any point in time. With so much of its forces deployed against Muslim groups the AFP has been unable to bring the maximum concentration of force against the NPA. As Jubair (1999, p. 183) wrote:

The years of confrontations in the south allowed the NPA to grow in size and strength. In fact, NPA forces were already scoring many remarkable victories in many areas in the North. And for some time the island of Samar in the Visayas was practically a liberated area.

## 5. Concluding Discussion

### 5.1 *Communist Insurgency: A political Response to Societal Realities*

The NPA has a strong presence on Samar, particularly in its interior municipalities such as Las Navas, Northern Samar and Matuguinao, Western Samar. The NPA's presence in the wounded land emanates from a number of factors: the presence of rough, and forested, terrain; a low population and road density; a number of administrative boundaries providing a fragmentation of state authority; high rates of poverty, providing it with a steady supply of recruits; landlessness, and a lack of effective land reform; and an abusive military, which assassinates those it suspects of being affiliated with the NPA. However, of all of these factors perhaps the most influential is the high rate of poverty prevailing among the Samaritans. "The Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army bloc," wrote Bello et al. (2009, p. 327), "will not go away and will be able to maintain itself as a significant presence in the more geographically marginal and poorer parts of the country". Samar is precisely such a marginal part of the country with its high poverty rates and neglected population. For many Samaritans, the NPA is a genuine life option, providing livelihoods (albeit violent ones) for those who join it and services for communities where it is located. Affluent and contented people with numerous options in life do not join armed insurgent groups; those who choose "the uncertain and difficult lives of rebels" do so because they feel "themselves to be the victims of grave injustices and tyrannies" (Constantino, 1975, p. 102). When people join a communist insurgent group they are seeking "a political response to societal realities" (Marks, 1996, p. 85). As Caouette (2004, p. 696) wrote, "People engage in violent collective action because it makes 'sense' given everything else".

### 5.2 *The New People's Army in a Neoliberal World*

At the outset this indicated that the enduring presence of the NPA on Samar demonstrates the continuing existence of an armed communist revolutionary movement in a neoliberal world that has (supposedly) long since forsaken communism. This article argues that one of the principal reasons for the continued existence of an armed communist insurgency in a neoliberal world is the fact that neoliberalism has led to a reduction in the living standards of the poor. Neoliberalism has been influential upon successive governments of the Philippines, as Quimpo (2008, p. 49) wrote:

Under pressure from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, the government has pursued various 'structural adjustment programs' since the Marcos era, stressing first trade liberalization, then debt repayment, and finally free-market transformation marked by rapid deregulation, privatization, and trade and investment liberalization

Across the archipelago, and particularly in its more marginalized areas such as Samar, neoliberalism has led to: a lack of government programs aiding the poor (Santos & Lagos, 2004); a lack of enthusiasm for programs, such as land reform, redistributing wealth and power (Borras, 2007); and policies, such as the aggressive encouragement of large-scale mining, which adversely impact the poor by degrading the environment upon which they depend for their subsistence livelihoods (Holden, 2012); "instead of spurring development, [these] programs have produced low and volatile growth and widespread poverty and inequalities" (Quimpo, 2008, p. 307). The implementation of neoliberal policies in the Philippines has caused the archipelago to become "bogged down in the rut of widespread poverty, grave social disparities and simmering civil unrest" (Quimpo, 2008, p. 307). Government economic policies, wrote Francia (2010, p. 284), have been "conditioned on the classic trickle-down premise, the idea that a rising tide lifted all boats. Unfortunately, the rising tide often swamped smaller, rickety boats". Policies implemented in adherence to neoliberalism have "witnessed economic growth without development and the absence of the trickle-down effect to the majority" (Tadem, 2011, p. 8). Indeed, the poverty and lack of programs for the poor occasioned by neoliberalism in the Philippines is a factor fueling the growth of the NPA. As Rodriguez (2010, xviii) wrote, "The difficulty of everyday life for the working classes and the poor compel many to join up with militant leftist movements, both legal and underground, to contest the state's neoliberal orientation".

Consider the government's promotion of large-scale mining (Holden, 2012). On Eastern Samar's Homonhon Island, chromite mining has reduced the amount of arable land, caused forest denudation, and water siltation; all of which has led to a reduction in the amount of fish caught by the islanders while forcing them to purchase their

drinking water. Similarly on Manicani Island, also in Eastern Samar, nickel mining has reduced the amount of land available to farmers and siltation into the ocean has adversely impacted fishing; before mining, agriculture and aquaculture could sustain the people of Manicani Island but now they have been made poorer. These policies, imposing costs on communities without endowing them with corresponding benefits, can fuel an insurgency; as Kerkvliet (1986, p. 37) wrote, "A state that imposes more on, and demands more from, rural areas without improved social and economic conditions to compensate can be a cause for discontent".

Indeed, there is evidence that the CPP has seized upon such policies to energize a disgruntled population. In 2010, the National Democratic Front-Eastern Visayas (NDFP-EV) stated that large-scale mining "will not benefit the people but only foreign capitalists, as well as seriously damage the environment" (Information Bureau Communist Party of the Philippines, 2010). Then in 2012, the NDFP-EV articulated its position that mining imposes many "social costs such as rising cases of land grabbing, militarization, extrajudicial killings and other human rights violations against those who resist large-scale mining, and the effects of widespread environmental destruction" (National Democratic Front-Eastern Visayas, 2012). The government's promotion of large-scale mining, and the CPP's opposition to it, demonstrate the "clash of opposing paradigms of society, wealth, and power" (Santos & Lagos 2004, i) underway on Samar. On one hand, there is the government of the Philippines, an institution adhering to the principles of neoliberalism, acting to encourage mining, seemingly without regard to its effects upon those subsistence farmers and fisherfolk who could be thrust from subsistence into destitution by its environmental effects; on the other hand, there is the NPA which regards large-scale mining as a manifestation of the capitalist order it opposes.

The extrajudicial killings occurring on Samar also exemplify this "clash of opposing paradigms of society, wealth, and power" (Santos & Lagos 2004, i). It is difficult for the government to attract foreign direct investment with an armed group, espousing an anti-capitalist ideology, waging war against the state (Holden, 2011). Clearly, one motivation behind eradicating the political infrastructure of the NPA is that it has been "foreseen that a communist-free Philippines would be the launch pad of the country's surge to First World status" (Parreno, 2010, p. 26). The extrajudicial killings also represent the violent elimination of a counter-hegemonic project. Earlier the hegemony of neoliberalism was discussed and some see neoliberalism to be so well established that any objection to it is an offence against reason; by acting to eliminate those who do not share the principles of neoliberalism the state quells a competing, and discredited, school of thought undeserving of being heard. As Tadiar (2006, p. 181) wrote, "The military objective is not merely the elimination of insurgency but more broadly the elimination of any counter-hegemonic mode of political representation".

### *5.3 Maoism after the End of History*

In the (in)famous essay "The End of History," Fukuyama (1989, p. 12) declared Maoism to be "an anachronism" and Fukuyama (1989, p. 3) stated that there has been a "total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism". Yet, on Samar, 24 years later, the NPA, a Maoist group, continue to exist! To those Samaritans who join the movement the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe is irrelevant. These people have no intention of "building systems like the former communist regimes in Russia or Eastern Europe. There is, for instance, no mention of some sort of centralized state-run economy" (Danenberg et al., 2007, p. 251). Rather, these people join in search of "a medium for denouncing the existing state of affairs and proclaiming what is still possible as another world" (Danenberg et al., 2007, p. 251). This is what can be referred to as a "negative sense of justice," where people act primarily against injustices they encounter, not necessarily to advance some alternative social order (Danenberg et al., 2007, p. 72). New recruits join "not because they [are] attracted to Marxism (or Maoism), but to avenge personal, family, or community tragedies caused by military abuses" (Kerkvliet, 2010, p. 4); the insurgency is "much more about injustice, deprivation, exploitation, and repression than about communism" (Kerkvliet, 2010, p. 9). This is an example of what Kalyvas (2006, p. 45) calls "the endogeneity of ideology," the situation where people adopt an ideology as a result of a conflict.

Neoliberalism may have achieved the status of a hegemonic discourse but standing in contradistinction to these are counter-hegemonic discourses depriving "their persuasive powers from the collective wills of oppressed peoples, from the experiences of the poor and downtrodden, from the pangs of hunger and the cries of sick children" (Peet, 2003, p. 23). In discussing neoliberalism's status as a hegemonic discourse, Watts (2007, p. 275) posed the question, "from what sources, then, are counter-hegemonic responses to appear, and what might resistance to neoliberalism possibly consist of at this point?" An answer to this is Maoism, which "has been able to speak to the concerns of the oppressed and dissatisfied in quite distinct contents" (Healy & Knight, 1997, p. 5). On Samar the NPA provides a counter-hegemonic discourse and provides a vehicle for the expression of concerns otherwise going unheeded. As Danenberg et al. (2007, p. 241) wrote:

For the *masa* that has no place in the economic area, or in the political field of contention, the movement represents a power and a voice that counts. It articulates their issues and concerns. It mobilizes them and creates venues where their voices can be heard, and where their faces, in their numbers, can be seen. It gives them a sense of togetherness through the commonality of the cause they espouse.

“There is no ‘end of history,’” wrote Healy and Knight (1997, p. 6), to speak of this is “to privilege a particular reading of history whose dominance conceals the existence of rival histories, often those of the marginalized and powerless”. As the world progresses into the twenty-first century the NPA will persist in geographically marginal and poorer parts of the Philippines such as Samar. The poverty and social exclusion aggravated by neoliberalism will fuel the NPA in such places and one will find evidence for the statement made by Marks (1996, p. 2) when he declared, “Revolutionary wars which look to the Maoist model are not going to disappear”. In the wounded land, history has not ended.

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### Notes

- Note 1. According to O'Loughlin and Witmer (2012, 2379), "what McColl wrote about rebellions more than forty years ago is still accurate". Schutte and Weidmann (2011, 143) wrote that McColl's article "remains as valid today as it was back in 1969".
- Note 2. Galula's 1964 book *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* is regarded as a "classic" work on counterinsurgency warfare by the United States Army and Marine Corps (2007, 391).
- Note 3. Thompson's 1966 book *Defeating Communist Insurgency: the Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam* is also regarded as a "classic" work on counterinsurgency warfare by the United States Army and Marine Corps (2007, 392).
- Note 4. Gini coefficients are interpreted such that the *lower* the Gini coefficient the more *equal* the distribution of income and the *higher* the Gini coefficient the more *unequal* the distribution of income.
- Note 5. Caouette's doctoral dissertation was referred to by Abinales (2008, 145) as "by far, the most comprehensive study of the party".
- Note 6. Pacific Strategies and Assessments measures NPA activity by monitoring what it calls "incidents" of NPA activity in each province; surrenders of NPA members to the AFP, detections of NPA camps, NPA attacks upon the facilities of private corporations, or confrontations between the NPA and the AFP. This measure of NPA activity provides a metric on the distribution of NPA activity across the archipelago.
- Note 7. Kerkvliet (2009, 402) described Borrás' book as "an excellent contribution to agrarian studies, particularly to analyses of land reform".
- Note 8. For the purposes of assembling its data Karapatan combines Region IVA CALABARZON (Batangas, Cavite, Laguna, Quezon and, Rizal) and REGION IVB MIMAROPA (Marinduque, Mindoro Occidental, Mindoro Oriental, Palawan, and Romblon) together into one Region IV, which it refers to as the "Southern Tagalog Region".
- Note 9. *Trapo* means filthy rag in Tagalog.

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