



Climate Change and Civil-Military Coordination in the Philippines: How Climate Change Disasters Will Impact Aid Delivery in Areas Affected by Conflict

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Abstract

The Philippines is affected both by climate change and general hostility and insecurity, specifically Mindanao. This situation makes civilian relief agencies operate in proximity to the military. Typhoon Haiyan experience brought changes in the implementation of disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) and the role of the military. This study sought to understand perceptions on the role of the military in DRRM both during peacetime and conflict and explore existing frameworks in humanitarian-civil military coordination at the national level and in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Semi-structured interviews were conducted in Luzon and Mindanao with thirty respondents coming from the members of the military, disaster management agencies, and humanitarian non-governmental organizations. The existing frameworks are examined for community and conflict resilience using the lens of DRRM, climate-induced hazards, and the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, independence, and impartiality. Research reveals significant challenges in protecting the integrity of independence of both military and humanitarian actors in areas impacted by both conflict and disaster. This underscores the need for principled humanitarian civil-military coordination to avert threats to both humanitarian aid workers and disaster affected populations. The findings are particularly relevant to South East Asia where the use of the military in disaster response is common.

Keywords: civil-military coordination, climate change, conflict, disasters, humanitarian emergencies, humanitarian principles

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Highlights

- While guidelines on civil-military coordination exist, its understanding, implementation and application in the Philippine context merits exploration especially in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan and the creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).
- Climate change will exacerbate impacts of natural hazards particularly in areas affected by conflict and political turmoil.
- There is a need for principled civil-military coordination in these contexts to ensure the integrity of security operations to support peace and stability while preserving the independence of humanitarian actors serving crisis-affected populations.

Introduction

When Typhoon Haiyan wreaked havoc in the Philippines, estimated multi-hazard annual losses reached US\$ 8 million, equivalent to 69% of the country's social expenditure (Alcayna *et al.*, 2016). This changed the government's approach to disaster response and shifted mindsets toward preparedness to the "new normal". It exposed weaknesses in Philippine systems such as effective communications (Dy & Stephens, 2016) and public misunderstanding of national warnings, especially to storm surge (Reyes, 2013). Haiyan also demonstrated overreliance on the military in disaster response and ultimately dependence on international militaries and humanitarian agencies to provide assistance.

The government prioritized addressing weaknesses through reforming the system by establishing the Philippine International Humanitarian Assistance (PIHA) under the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and creating two new clusters: Search, Rescue and Retrieval, and Management of the Dead and Missing. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) created two new bureaus: National Resource and Logistics Management Bureau (NRLMB) which manages the National Resource Operations Center (NROC), and the Disaster Response Management Bureau (DReMB) which oversees camp management and climate change programs. Interestingly, self-organization of the private sector to prepare and respond to disasters was facilitated by the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF). While these changes among national agencies under the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) happened, the establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) leading to parliamentary system in some areas in Mindanao also occurred.

As adverse effects of climate change intensify, communities face disaster displacement (Jimenez-Damary, 2020). People without secure land tenure, especially indigenous peoples (IPs) are most vulnerable to the direct effects of natural disasters and climate change because the lack of tenure security limits their choices, diminishes their capacity to recover and rebuild, and creates cycles of poverty, vulnerability, and displacement (ANGOC & LWA, 2019). In Mindanao, violent conflicts often occur. Building resilience from natural disasters and conflict involve effective coordination between government agencies, humanitarian NGOs, and the military.

Like many other countries, the Philippines relies on its military in responding to major disasters. This creates complexity in areas experiencing both conflict and exposure to natural hazards, specifically areas in which the military may be actively engaged in combat and counterinsurgency measures. Response to humanitarian emergencies in these contexts requires understanding of conflict dynamics as well as appreciation of factors that contribute to local capacity to cope with disasters.

This research was designed to understand the role of the military in the context of disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) in the Philippines, both during peacetime and during conflict. Specifically, it aims to:

1. Describe the role of the military in DRRM at the national level.
2. Examine the impacts of exposure to climate change-induced hazards in the role of the military.

Key Guiding Questions

1. What is the current role of the military in disaster preparedness, response, risk reduction, rehabilitation, recovery, and resilience at the national level?
2. How does exposure to climate change-induced hazards impact the role of the military, both during peacetime and time of conflict?

Method

Purposive sampling was conducted. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with NDRRMC institutions in Luzon from August 2018 to March 2019 and in BARMM ministries in February 2020.

The questionnaire had four thematic areas: disaster preparedness, response, disaster risk reduction and resilience, and mitigating climate change impacts. This instrument also asked about the level of military involvement and methods of coordination at the local, regional, and international levels. Responses to the

interviews were coded and grouped into responses coming from the military, DRRM agencies and humanitarians. Responses to each thematic area were compared and contrasted based on these categories. Common responses were presented by providing the quotation which best captures the context coming from the perspective of that specific group. Conflicting statements were presented in the paper as direct quotations coming from the respondent to present differing views of the respondents.

There was a time gap for interviews in Mindanao because it was under martial law after the Marawi incident in 2017. Martial law was lifted in January 2020 but a state of emergency still persists (Aspinwall, 2020). Another reason was the inauguration of the BARMM in March 2019, creating an interim parliamentary form of government.

Participants

Thirty respondents were interviewed. Recruitment of participants was based on their institutions' involvement in DRRM at the national level and in the BARMM areas in Mindanao, including among others, agencies working on social welfare, health, education, housing (temporary settlements), agriculture, planning and development, interior and local government, civil defense, safety and security (including different branches of the military like Air Force, Navy, Army), armed and uniformed service (like National Police, Coast Guard, Fire Protection), and humanitarian NGOs. Consent was obtained from the participants. Prior to engaging in research, the interviewer completed an online course on protection of human subjects in research by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Program which provides compliance training as required by institutions conducting research involving human subjects.¹ Measures were taken to ensure respondents' anonymity.

Results and Discussion

Climate Change and Conflict

There is growing evidence that communities experiencing conflict are also exposed and poorly equipped to respond to climate-related impacts (Peters & Budimir, 2016). Though it is unclear that climate is considered a risk factor for armed conflict (Mach *et al.*, 2019), there is growing evidence that climate change "acts as threat multiplier in fragile and conflict-affected contexts" (Peters *et al.*, 2020). A number of studies have identified the determinates of local preparedness for disaster (Thanh Toan *et al.*, 2014; Wachinger *et al.*, 2013; and Bagarinao, 2016) but these are not in fragile contexts. Climate change also brings slow-onset events

which decrease availability of vital resources and erode capacity of communities to withstand further hazards. Slow-onset events like sea level rise resulting in flooding can turn into disasters. Slow-onset events also act as threat multipliers for economic, social, cultural and political factors in crisis (Jimenez-Damary, 2020). Both climate-induced hazards and conflict impact human mobility like displacement, and communities are affected differently depending on environmental, social, economic, and cultural factors. Communities are displaced when the area has become uninhabitable or too dangerous.

For example, many of the IPs in Eastern Visayas affected by Haiyan were originally from Surigao in Mindanao. Active warfare between government forces, NPA and other illegal armed groups, as well as long standing conflicts between various groups of IPs and mining companies over land rights and resources, caused forced displacement of these communities. Eight out of eleven IP communities were identified as Haiyan-affected (UNHCR, 2014).

It is precisely in fragile contexts that greater information is needed about how communities prepare and cope with the impacts of ongoing conflict and exposure to recurring hazards like flooding, severe weather, and drought. These climate-related hazards are compounded by conflict and vice-versa. When disasters happen in these areas, response can be hampered by the continuation of hostilities and general insecurity. Further, as first-responder in major disasters, it is not clear how communities would view relief provided by the military in areas where it is engaged with non-state armed groups.

The Role of the Military and Uniformed Personnel in Disasters as Mandated by Philippine Laws

Republic Act (RA) 10121 or National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010 provides legal basis for disaster management in the Philippines. It lays the foundation for more resilient local communities that are able to better prepare and respond to natural hazards, and also provide a framework for national government support. Under this, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) has authority for disaster management at the national level. The NDRRMC includes secretaries of various government departments and is administered by the Office of Civil Defense (OCD). This national structure is mirrored down to the smallest political unit or barangay, each hosting its own Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (LDRRMO). The Department of National Defense (DND) wherein the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and OCD are administratively located, is also a member of the NDRRMC. When there are climate-induced disasters, the AFP has involvement through the NDRRMC at the national level down to other administrative levels through the LDRRMO.

The AFP, Philippine Air Force (PAF), Philippine Navy

¹ The Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative, *CITI Program*, <https://about.citiprogram.org/>, (accessed 17 December 2020).

(PN), Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), Philippine National Police (PNP), and Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) play important parts within the response phase. When disasters are large in scope and exceed local government capacity, they are able to marshal significant sea and airlift capacity that is crucial to saving lives in the early days of disaster response. In practice, the military has utilized both its airlift and sealift capacity during major disasters and often provide heavy lift equipment for road clearance, removal of debris, light construction projects related to restoring critical infrastructure and power. The AFP together with the OCD are also invited as resource persons for training and capacity building of local government units especially on the Incident Command System (ICS). Globally, the AFP regularly participates in the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG).

Experience of the Military During Typhoon Haiyan

The Philippines was not prepared for the magnitude of Haiyan in 2013 despite frequently experiencing around 20 typhoons per year. It required significant levels of support from the international community when Haiyan caused more than 6,300 lives lost and displaced more than 4 million (Dy & Stephens, 2016). The L3 declaration resulted in the deployment of more than 450 international surge personnel from UN inter-agencies for a three-week period and a Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) allotment of \$25 million (Carden & Clements, 2015). While many studies demonstrated great appreciation and positive experience with foreign assistance, Philippine government agencies had different experiences with foreign aid (TAF & SWS, 2013). As one respondent noted, *“all government agencies started revising their policies. The Yolanda (Haiyan) experience showed how chaotic coordination was at that time. Creation of the Philippine Humanitarian Assistance Cluster under the DFA was a direct consequence of this experience.”* Now, only specific assistance that matches what is needed when there are disasters will be accepted by the Philippine government.

While government agencies were implementing changes after Haiyan, the military also recognized the massive impact of international response, some of which entered the Philippines without going through the proper channels. As one respondent said, *“The DFA gives diplomatic clearance and flight clearance to the (foreign) military. There is also a civ-mil coordination center in OCD put in place by the NDRRMC. Before, the responders were used to doing their own thing during disasters. Now, everything has to be coordinated and must use the incident command system.”*

Another respondent anticipated future needs associated with changes in climate and development patterns. *“We learn from past experience. The experience from Haiyan taught us a lot. There is no perfect system for disaster because mistakes can happen and no two types*

of typhoons are exactly the same. Climate change is making flooding and landslides more frequent. Maybe development is also the cause since more trees are cut just to have spaces for roads.”

The Impacts of Exposure to Climate Change Induced-Hazards During Peacetime

There was a rehauling of the disaster management system and placing of the responsibility in a new national level department. Currently in its final stages of legislative approval, the new Department of Disaster Resilience (DDR) will function as the “single national government agency responsible for disaster preparedness, prevention, mitigation, response, recovery, and rehabilitation” (Cervantes, 2018). As the Philippines moves toward a more centralized disaster management system that would consolidate the functions currently distributed across a number of ministries, one unique challenge will be to address the role of the military in disaster preparedness and response. The AFP Development Support and Security Plan “Kapayapaan” 2017-2022 requires the AFP to “attain the highest standard of capability preparedness on disasters, and selected AFP units shall continue to be trained and capacitated for first responder’s role.” But its stated mission goes well beyond rescue efforts. The AFP is further tasked with “protecting the environment and institutionalizing climate change adaptation.” This AFP Plan also states to “help in building climate change-resilient communities” through its support of civilian authorities and through its community support programs.

Protecting the environment is an important aspect in mitigating impacts of climate change especially for the IPs who live outside of the major settlements and permanent farms (ANGOC & LWA, 2019) and whose health security systems are linked to the health of their forest and ecosystem (UNHCR, 2014). The clearing of forests by extractive companies makes communities vulnerable to natural disasters and climate change. Unfortunately, the Philippines has consistently recorded the highest number of killings in Asia of people who oppose illegal logging, destructive mining or corrupt agribusiness with the military being suspected as responsible for over a third of the killings (Global Witness, 2019). In light of climate change and the need to protect land and forests, recognizing and protecting indigenous peoples’ rights to land and self-governance by the military remains a challenge. There is a need to enhance awareness of government staff as well as police and military to uphold human rights, alternative dispute resolution and culturally sensitive approaches (ANGOC & LWA, 2019).

During Armed Conflict

Some have expressed concern with the military engaging in activities that take it away from its primary duty to protect the country. While most key stakeholders recognize the importance that AFP plays in disaster

response, its capacity to support climate change adaptation initiatives and to build community resilience is not entirely clear. An obvious question is whether the government should invest in the development of professionalized disaster offices at the subnational level and focus attention on the role that civilian agencies can play in reducing the vulnerability of the population to natural hazards? This needs consideration in areas of the Philippines experiencing latent or open conflict. It is not obvious the AFP would position itself to deliver aid impartially or that it would even enjoy unimpeded access in areas controlled by a variety of different actors, as is true, for example, in areas of Maguindanao where non-state armed groups are active.

Investigating Framework for Assessing Community Disaster and Conflict Resilience

The Role of the Military in Disasters During Peacetime From Their Own Perspective

The military plays a significant first-responder role in large emergencies. Some interviewees noted that its involvement in disaster response should be further limited and civilian agencies strengthened to provide direct relief. Its engagement in disaster response was sometimes seen to be a distraction from the military's core mission of national security and protecting the country's sovereignty. One interviewee suggested *"civilian agencies should be self-reliant in responding to disasters. The expectation that the military will respond to disasters conflicts [with the] military's first priority, addressing threats to the nation."*

This view was supported by others in terms of conflict resilience or the ability to resist or recover from conflict. Another interviewee noted that while the primary role of the military is territorial defense, its capacity and size make it ideally suited to disaster response. Civilian organizations maintain limited capacity to respond on a large scale which results in both local government units and NGOs depending on military assistance for disaster relief, *"But that is not supposed to be the case like in other countries such as Japan and the US, the military does not have a major role in disaster response. In other countries, it is the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) that acts during [a] disaster."*

Similarly, a third person offered that *"It will always be the armed forces being depended on because they have the asset. But in terms of humanitarian response, the ideal is for the military not having to be involved in face to face (direct) response. The LGU should be the first to respond and the AFP should only provide assistance when needed."*

The future role of the military will be determined, in part, by the success or failure of legislation introduced to the Philippines Congress by Senator Joey Salceda for the creation of a civilian Department of Resilience under

House Bill 6075. Such an agency would bring into one FEMA-like department roles for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. These responsibilities currently reside with a number of different departments and would likely lead to an increase in civilian capacity and reduction in reliance on the military and the OCD in its chief executive function of the NDRRMC.

The Role of the Military During Disasters From the Perspectives of Humanitarian Actors: Military Presence Can Pose Harm

Despite the military playing an important role in disaster response and providing safety and effectiveness to the humanitarian sector as stated in the IASC guidelines, there are some instances when their presence can pose harm.

Attacks from non-state actors sometimes happen during disaster relief operations. One respondent said, *"The use of uniform of AFP during response adds risks to the other (humanitarian) responders and may make the other civilian responders vulnerable to attacks by other groups."*

Another respondent added, *"The use of uniform of AFP in response to rescue children may also add trauma and stereotype. In some operations with the PNP to rescue children, the PNP do not wear uniforms to prevent children from associating the uniform with their traumatic experience, maybe the AFP can do that as well. The use of AFP vehicles with logo is also being avoided so we do not ask the AFP as escorts when bringing assistance during disasters such as in Compostela Valley (in Mindanao)."*

One interviewee mentioned that in his previous experience in Sudan, it was the military that instigated attacks in hospitals and took badly needed medicines by the community. He expects the military in the Philippines *"To respect International Humanitarian Law. We expect the military not to attack hospitals and not to block our activities of providing humanitarian assistance. In areas of conflict, we expect the military not to intervene (from the humanitarian perspective) except to provide protection of civilians. As military personnel, we want them to serve as examples to the other local military personnel in upholding the International Humanitarian Law."*

Coordination with the Military is Vital but has Limitations in Order to Gain the Trust of the Local Communities

During disasters in peacetime, the military's role focuses on cooperation which provides high opportunities for civil-military cooperation and low risks for humanitarians being drawn into conflicts (Metcalf, Haysom and Gordon, 2012). But when military personnel have direct participation in disaster response, there is security risk

in communities where humanitarians conduct work. Erosion of community trust could happen. To avoid this, humanitarians coordinate with the military.

One respondent mentioned, *"It is easier to gain acceptance and gain space if we have good contact with the military commander in the province where we work. We inform the military about our movement and we get idea of the security situation. Although we seek advice from the military about the situation, we take action on the basis of our own analysis of the situation."* The principle of neutrality is also put to a test when the military offers support. A respondent said, *"There are times when the military offers support to us but we do not accept because we have to stay neutral. Acceptance of the community is the most important component for us so we can continue with our work."*

Military's Role and the Humanitarian Principles

Despite the advancement in the mechanisms of civil-military coordination, there are still some areas of concern such as: when relief and reconstruction assistance are provided with military's assistance, political patronage or non-need-based criteria. When politicians use military escorts, a practice common in the Philippines, this connotes partiality which increases disaster's scope and magnitude because politically-marginalized communities face acute risks. As explained by Raleigh (2010) these marginalized communities are less likely to receive relief assistance and less capable of expressing grievances arising from disasters and consequences. Impacts of disasters can reinforce a vicious cycle of insecurity and vulnerability and exacerbate anti-state grievances (Eastin, 2017). If people believe that the relief allocation process is corrupt or people in authority withhold goods or reward those loyal to them, disaster management decisions can then generate perceptions of social injustice which legitimize dissent and heighten conflict.

When the military gets involved politically in disaster response, it goes against the humanitarian principle of independence wherein provision of assistance ought to be autonomous from political, economic, military or other objectives. One respondent highlighted the need for *"...having capacity on humanitarian principles, protection mechanisms, and upholding humanitarian standards. Perhaps the military need[s] to have a special unit focusing only on humanitarian assistance."*

This respondent highlights the need for principled humanitarian civil military engagement where both military units and humanitarian agencies are familiar with and adhere to the guidelines developed for this purpose, including, for example, *"The Recommended Practices for Effective Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination of Foreign Military Assets (FMA) in Natural and Manmade Disasters."*

The Role of the Military in Times of Conflict: Mindanao Conflict and Humanitarian Civil-Military Response

Mindanao is in the southern part of the Philippines laden with various conflicts rooted in underdevelopment, land issues, neglect from the government and clashes of the military with non-state actors (IDMC, 2008; IDMC and NRC, 2009). The marginalization of the indigenous tribes and Moros extended to politics, economic and cultural life and control of their land and resources causing protracted struggle to regain their territories, preserve their culture, and self-determination on the island (Mendoza and Taylor, 2010). Marawi City is in Lanao Del Sur, one of the provinces in the BARMM. The siege in Marawi City in 2017 demonstrates the impact of ISIS-inspired non-state armed actors, inflicting harm to civilians, destroying infrastructure and undermining long-term livelihoods and security. The Marawi siege resulted in the displacement of 59,495 families (UNHCR, 2018). Continued insecurity and failure to implement a recovery plan have left those that were displaced in temporary camps, three years after the siege.

Aside from the Marawi siege, there is violence and coercion perpetrated by state and non-state actors in Southern Philippines that force IPs from their lands. Perpetrators of violence are unknown gunmen, substate militants, and even the AFP during anticommunist counterinsurgency operations (Abuza and Lischin, 2020). In South Upi in the province of Maguindanao, nearly a thousand families fled in order to avoid getting caught in a crossfire between government forces and non-state actors (Arguillas, 2020). This situation has occurred repeatedly despite assurance from the Bangsamoro Government that it recognizes the rights of IPs and shall adopt measures for the protection of indigenous customs and traditions.

Confusion on the Role of the Military in Disaster Response in Areas With Armed Conflict

One of the respondents said, *"There are instances that our operations are blocked (by the military) and as head of mission, I try to negotiate. There was a situation in Lanao Lake and in Marawi where our organization pursued work when our safety was guaranteed by our network even if the military advised us otherwise."*

On the side of the military, one respondent answered, *"The military needs the respect and understanding of the humanitarian NGOs/INGOs and to assist us so the military can facilitate its work and the work of others and save more lives."*

During conflict, the military's view borders on co-existence wherein there are low opportunities for civil-military cooperation and high risks for humanitarian being drawn into conflict dynamics (Metcalf et al., 2012). The AFP has increasingly undertaken a range

of humanitarian activities themselves in Mindanao to achieve strategic or tactical objectives or as part of stabilization strategies. These activities especially in Marawi and SPMS Box (area in Maguindanao known for heightened tensions and conflicts) are challenging existing frameworks of civil-military coordination in the humanitarian context. Humanitarian action is a separate sphere and not merely a conflict management tool (Metcalf *et al.*, 2012). Further study is needed to understand the degree to which these expanding roles impact humanitarian outcomes.

Added Expectations for Military Assistance by Other Government Agencies

In conflict-affected areas like Marawi, there is expectation by government agencies to use military assets and resources to provide disaster relief and initial recovery assistance. Military assets are necessary because humanitarian actors take time to respond and some LGUs lack the equipment for logistics. According to the Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies (OCHA, 2006) and the Guidelines on The Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief (the 'Oslo Guidelines') (2007), military and civilian defence assets are used in support of humanitarian operations only for these criteria: last resort (no appropriate alternative resources exist), urgency, clear humanitarian direction (civilian controlled), and for limited time. This becomes problematic when there are repeated expectations from the military to always provide assistance.

Additionally, when the military uses humanitarian assistance to further their political or military gain through stabilization and counter-insurgency efforts, it contrasts directly with the principle of impartiality as viewed by humanitarian actors. It is also perceived as being partisan when the local governments or politicians use the military for humanitarian activities. This is contrary to humanitarian principles and poses a dilemma because humanitarians often engage with the LGUs and local leaders.

Expectations from the Military to Help in DRRM, to Maintain Peace and Security in BARMM, and to Assist the BARMM Government

The BARMM was formed as a revolutionary government. One respondent said, "*BARMM culminates the long struggle of MILF and MNLF, as well as the Maranao, Tausug, Maguindanaoan, and Christians. Expectation for BARMM is high.*" But the high expectation does not match the capacities of previously MILF combatants now assigned to the BARMM government. As one respondent said, "*The capacities inside BARMM is really low because education system was destroyed or disrupted most of the time. My experience with the new BARMM government now is seeing new re-alignment of*

political families and appointments of the military."

In relation to peace and security, one respondent highlighted that "*There is high trust and public support for the development of the region but if the new Bangsamoro government fail, there will be emergence of a new group (to start the conflict).*" In a similar vein, one BARMM official who used to be in the military said that in order to end conflict, there has to be a focus on convergence and inclusivity, "*There are forty thousand MILF and four thousand MNLF. Part of the normalization is socio-economic integration for those that cannot be entered in the BARMM office. Php40 million budget was allotted for the returnees, to be given as livelihood assistance and housing.*"

There is also high expectation of the people from the BTA and the BTA's management of these expectations are critical in respect of each of them such that if peace process falter or go unrealized, recruitment from the MILF's ranks will happen again and others may join militant groups (Abuza and Lischin, 2020). Part of the stabilization strategies in BARMM is the combination of aid, political, military, security, rule of law, governance interventions and humanitarian assistance. This helps transition from war to peace as a conflict management tool (Collinson *et al.*, 2010). With the recent establishment of BARMM, reliance on the military is still high and will continue to do so.

Interventions of Humanitarian Actors for Areas Affected Both by Climate-Induced Hazards and Armed Conflict

The humanitarian actors in Mindanao regularly meet and coordinate with OCHA, local DRRM offices, BARMM ministries, and other members of the Mindanao Humanitarian Team (MHT). Interventions cover DRRM, peacebuilding, and addressing poverty, which is one of the sources of conflict. Coordination with the military plays an important role in implementing various development and humanitarian interventions.

In the case of BARMM areas in Mindanao, DRRM is intricately linked with development and peacebuilding activities. This multi-dimensional framework of various DRRM stakeholders as well as NGOs and BARMM ministries span immediate stabilization and protection of civilians, support of humanitarian assistance, engagement in security sector reform, assistance in the development of political structure like BARMM, assistance in elections, disarming, demobilizing and reintegration of former combatants help lay the foundation for attaining peace and building both natural disaster and conflict resilience.

Emerging Framework on the Role of Military During COVID-19 Pandemic

The highest priority for the humanitarian system for COVID-19 was issued by IASC on April 2020 through the COVID-19 Outbreak Readiness and Response Plan. It promotes mechanisms providing opportunity for NGO/civil society involvement at the national and international level. In the Philippines, the updating of Preparedness and Response Plan for Pandemic and Avian Influenza was done in October 2019 to merge with Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) Pandemic Plan. A state of Public Health Emergency was declared on March 2020 and the COVID National Task Force (NTF) led by government agencies was assigned to manage COVID-19 by the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging and Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID). The NTF was led by the DOH for response operations and by the DSWD for resource management and logistics.

The NDRRMC activated the Incident Command System (ICS) to manage hazards and consequences associated with COVID. Regional and local response clusters covered health, law and order, food and non-food items, governance, and management of the dead. The OCD released Interim Protocols providing guidelines for a permit system for humanitarian workers which require authorization letters, reporting templates, and coordination. Approval of the local chief executive is required before humanitarian NGOs could proceed with conducting interventions in the LGUs. Some INGOs experienced confusion in the permit system which caused delayed interventions. If INGOs have operations in multiple areas, they would have to get permits for all these areas separately and get permits from all the other LGUs where their supplies would pass through, even though these are not the areas where the INGOs specifically operate. This became challenging for transporting humanitarian aid from Visayas for example to reach areas in Luzon but got stuck somewhere in NCR because the mayor or the agency took time to grant permits.

In light of the COVID pandemic, the PNP and the AFP were directed to ensure implementation of IATF measures, especially the lockdown of different areas. The PNP and Joint Task Force Shield Quarantine operated control points on the ground including airports and seaports, manned by security personnel from PNP, AFP, BFP, and PCG (NDRRMC, 2020). Maintenance of law and order covered arrest of curfew violators and individuals that were hoarding, profiteering, manipulating prices of necessities or violating liquor ban. For security assistance, police were deployed in vital establishments like rice warehouses, supermarkets, malls, and food manufacturing and to assist DSWD social workers in the conduct of social amelioration programs. The public healthcare system was overwhelmed by the increasing number of COVID cases after the lockdowns were

lifted. In response, reservists of the AFP in the medical field were called to active duty for a period of two years (Sadongdong, 2020).

The current administration considers uniformed personnel its "backbone" in governance at the time of pandemic (Dizon, 2020). This reliance on the expanded role of the military in governance has been criticized. On the side of the government, retired military personnel bring with them an array of experience, discipline, and training that enable them to perform tasks efficiently when they take on civilian roles in government agencies or in local governance. It also makes coordination among NDRRMC members easier because their appointed heads are ex-military.

The appointment of ex-military in civilian functions is perceived as militarization of the government and blurs the lines between civilian-controlled government and military control. As of 2019, there were 46 former military and police officers assigned to key civilian posts in the government, including 10 Cabinet and Cabinet-level positions and there was intention to hire more (Gita, 2019). Worse, some of the appointees have been associated with corruption or human rights violations.

Conclusion

This study described the roles of the military in DRRM at the national level and in BARMM areas in Mindanao and how climate-induced hazards impact the role of the military. The convergence of natural disasters and conflict is increasing. With the expanding role of the military to take up civilian functions in key government offices, the space for NGOs, INGOs, and civil society also shrinks. Principled humanitarian civil military coordination requires that both civilian-led humanitarian organizations and military are familiar with, respect and adhere to guidelines that are designed to ensure that each of these actors maintains its independence to fulfill their own mandates. Climate change will almost certainly lead to increased need for humanitarian assistance, assistance that will sometimes be needed in areas that are also impacted by ongoing conflict. In these cases, principled humanitarian civil military coordination is essential to the safety and security of humanitarian aid workers and to the impartial delivery of assistance. The heavy use of former military and police officials as heads of civilian government agencies responsible for disaster preparedness and response could well constrain the work of the humanitarian sector by imposing bureaucratic measures such as registration, reporting obligations, permit system, and restricting access to funding at a time when more, not less, independence of humanitarian actors will be needed to meet the disasters of the present and near future.

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