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ASSESSING PEACE PROCESSES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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Introduction

In August 2016, the Colombian government and the country's largest rebel group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), announced a peace deal to end more than five decades of war. The final agreement, reached after four years of negotiations in Cuba, allowed for economic reform and investment in rural areas of the country as well as the disarmament and reintegration of former combatants. However, the peace treaty fell short of a final hurdle. The agreement had to pass a nation-wide referendum in October 2016 but despite promising polling numbers, failed narrowly at the ballot box. This has created an atmosphere of uncertainty about the future trajectory of the conflict. Despite this setback, the peace process itself was remarkable: at its core was an understanding by the Colombian government that a military solution was neither desirable nor feasible, and that a negotiated settlement was necessary for lasting peace.

Such an attitude towards insurgents and separatists is rare. States are usually reluctant to engage in a peace process with domestic armed groups, especially separatist organizations. This lack of enthusiasm arises from a perception that negotiating with a rebel outfit would make the state appear weak, set a precedent for other armed organizations and also give dissident groups a certain legitimacy previously denied to them. This is certainty the case in Southeast Asia, where many countries have had experience with armed separatist groups, communist insurgencies and terrorist organizations. Despite attempts to militarily quell rebellions, many governments increasingly find themselves in a position where they realize that some form of political agreement is ultimately necessary for peace.

In this chapter, I present a comparative analyses of peace processes in Southeast Asia.[1] I discuss some hypotheses about peace processes and use them as a framework to compare and contrast between different attempts to broker peace in the region. Specifically, I draw from the experience of the Philippines with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the communists, Indonesia with Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM) as well as more recent attempts by Thailand and Myanmar.

Assessing peace processes

There is no consensus on the definition of a peace process and for the purposes of this chapter, I define a peace process as *a sustained dialogue between contending parties to a conflict with an intention to quell the violence and an agreement to negotiate the central issues of the dispute*.[2] Based on the above

definition, the peace talks between GRP and MNLF will need to be considered as two separate peace processes. The first concerns attempts to achieve peace by the Marcos government and MNLF (hereafter the *Marcos-MNLF peace process*). The second refers to efforts by the Ramos government and MNLF (hereafter the *Ramos-MNLF peace process*). A similar distinction is also necessary for the peace process in Aceh. The peace attempts between the two sides from mid–2000 through May 2003 will be referred to as the *first GOI-GAM peace process*, whereas the talks from December 2004 through August 2005 will be referred to as the *second GOI-GAM peace process*. Where applicable, I will also discuss more recent peace attempts between the Philippines and the Communist rebels, between Myanmar and its various ethnic groups, and between the Thai government and the Malay-Muslim rebels in the southern provinces.

Gauging the success of a peace process is inherently problematic. At one end of the spectrum, it is possible to argue that a peace process is in itself a success since it provides a forum for armed adversaries to negotiate. At the other end of the spectrum, a peace process can never be considered a success because it is not possible to achieve a Pareto-optimal outcome for all actors. Depending on the analyst's predisposition, it is also possible to view any peace process as either a success or failure. Given this subjective minefield, in this chapter actions taken within the context of a peace process will be considered effective if they contribute to a more peaceful outcome compared to the status quo.

Before discussing the hypotheses under consideration in this chapter, it is necessary to acknowledge that peace processes are inherently political. Whether it is the government, the rebel group or the mediator(s), the decision to participate in a peace process is a strategic move and dependent on their expected gain from the process. So to claim that 'political will' or 'serious give-and-take on both sides' is necessary for a successful peace process is almost stating the obvious. What makes the study of peace processes useful and relevant is about the steps that advance the negotiations towards resolution. With that preamble, we can turn to hypotheses that will lay the foundation for assessing peace processes.

Hypothesis 1: ceasefires with monitoring and enforcement mechanisms at the beginning of a peace process are effective

Ceasefires are typically the first step within a peace process. Before discussing substantive issues, both sides call for a pause in the fighting, either to deliver humanitarian aid or a sign of good will. They help build trust between all actors and allow them to focus on more substantive issues, and are among the best predictors of advancing peace negotiations.[3] Of course, when ceasefire agreements break down there is return to violence. This is sometimes viewed as a setback or a failure. However, this belies an important function of ceasefire agreements – it is a credible signal of control.

When governments and rebel groups decide to participate in a peace process, the issue of control is almost always the first hurdle that needs to be crossed. From the perspective of a rebel group, they want to know whether the government has sufficient control over the military and police. Similarly, the government want to know whether the rebel group leadership is able to command its foot soldiers. In other words, both sides want to know that they are negotiating with people who can actually control events on the ground. Ceasefires are a useful tool to credibly signal your authority to the other side. If the ceasefire agreement fails, then it is a sign that there are 'spoilers' in the peace process[4] and that there exists either armed forces or rebel group personnel who are willing to defy their leadership.

During the Ramos-MNLF peace process, the interim ceasefire agreement was instrumental in concluding substantive negotiations between the two sides. One of the key agreements of first

round of formal talks was an Interim Ceasefire Agreement (ICA). As a formalized version of the agreed ceasefire between ex-President Corazon Aquino and Nur Misuari, it provided for the creation of a Joint Ceasefire Committee (JCC) with representatives from the OIC supervising the implementation of the ceasefire. In contrast, the Tripoli agreement that was part of the earlier Marcos-MNLF peace process served as a way to address substantive issues as well as a broad ceasefire agreement. The two sides did not seek to broker a ceasefire agreement initially, and when the Tripoli agreement collapsed it led to a resumption of fighting between the two sides.

During the first GOI-GAM peace process, a ceasefire termed as Humanitarian Pause for Aceh was signed in May 2000. It is noteworthy that GOI did not want this interim agreement to be called a ceasefire, as this would make GAM an 'equal belligerent'.[5] While this pause was received well internationally, it faced a lot of criticism within Indonesia. Soon enough violence escalated and this contributed towards the collapse of the peace negotiations. In contrast, the second GOI-GAM peace process implemented a monitoring mechanism for the ceasefire. Known as the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM), it comprised of the European Union and five ASEAN countries. They were allowed unrestricted access in the province, ability to adjudicate on breaches and neither party could override any AMM operations.[6] This feature of the second peace process reinforced the ceasefire agreement and paved the way for more substantive peace negotiations.

The issue of control within the rebel organization was also critical in the peace talks between the Thai government and the rebels in its southern provinces. Rivalry between different armed groups in the region made it difficult to determine the appropriate negotiating partners. During the 2013 Kuala Lumpur dialogue process, there was a proposed 40-day ceasefire during Ramadan, but it soon became clear that neither the government negotiators nor the rebel group representatives had control over the activities of the Thai military and the militants respectively.[7] Without any monitoring or dispute resolution mechanism, the ceasefire agreement disintegrated and the violence quickly spiraled to pre-negotiation levels.

Effective ceasefire agreements are also harder to establish in Myanmar where the government is engaged in a peace initiative with multiple ethnic groups. Some of the large armed groups in the country are yet to sign on to a 2015 nationwide ceasefire agreement. The rebel groups are waiting for a credible signal from State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi that she has established civilian control over the military while the government wants assurances on control in the rebel territory.[8] Moreover, monitoring of the ceasefire becomes difficult when some ceasefire agreements have been signed with only some of the rebel groups.

Hypothesis 2: the effectiveness of a mediator depends on the amount of leverage it has over the disputants

Another important issue that both negotiating parties need to decide is whether to use a mediator. The aim of international mediation is to help antagonists achieve settlement to a conflict that is satisfactory to all parties without the use of military force.[9] Mediators usually try to achieve this objective by increasing incentives of arriving at a peace agreement and decreasing inducements of prolonging the conflict. For instance, they can set the discussion agenda and also serve as an important communication channel between the adversaries. Mediators can be states, even superpowers or they can be international organizations like the United Nations. Increasingly, non-governmental organizations like HDC have taken on the role of mediator.

While mediation by non-governmental organizations is sometimes viewed as beneficial,[10] the effectiveness of a mediator depends on the amount of leverage that it has over the disputants. Leverage here refers to the 'the ability of the mediator to alter the objective environment of the disputants: in particular, the capacity of the parties to prosecute the war, the tangible rewards of

choosing peace, and the provision of personnel and services to reduce the risks of settlement'.[11] While all mediators have some leverage, states do have a considerable advantage over NGOs in mediation.[12] First, they have a lot more leverage, which allows them to persuade and at times coerce the disputants to reach a settlement. In highly asymmetric conflicts where the government is militarily powerful, states can exert their influence in favor of negotiations. Second, states can sway decisions taken by international organizations. For example, the removal of a rebel group from a terrorist list is best achieved via a state mediator. Third, they also have much greater funding and resources that may be required during a protracted peace process. This is not to say that NGOs are not effective as an intermediary. If they are in possession of similar leverage as states, they too can effective mediators.

During the Marcos–MNLF peace process, the MNLF had also aroused the interest of the Organization of Islamic Conferences (OIC) and other Arab governments. The decision by the OIC to impose an oil embargo coupled with Saudi Arabia's threat to cut off oil supplies to the Philippines[13] was crucial in getting Marcos to negotiate with the MNLF. Marcos appeased the OIC by condemning the Israeli occupation of Arab land and managed to get the oil embargo lifted. Soon after, the first round of negotiations with the MNLF were conducted in the office of the OIC Secretary General in Jeddah. Among the OIC countries, Libya took the lead in compelling both sides to negotiate. The GRP negotiators had no misgivings about the Libyan threat to escalate the problem to the UN Security Council and proceeded to negotiate with the MNLF in Tripoli in December 1976. As conference chairman, Libyan Foreign Minister, Abdelsalem Ali Treki dominated the negotiations, while Nur Misuari was acquiescent to Treki. The other members of the OIC who were present were also passive to Libya's whims.[14]

Nearly sixteen years after the signing of the Tripoli agreement, President Fidel V. Ramos decided to launch another peace initiative with the MNLF. Before entering into negotiations, President Ramos clearly understood the crucial role of Libya and the influence it had over the MNLF. Even prior to becoming President, Ramos undertook a secret visit in February 1992 to meet the Libyan leader, Muammar Gaddafi in Tripoli.[15] The discussion with Gaddafi was successful with Libya guaranteeing 'support for, and assistance to, the peace process'.[16] The MNLF was also willing to negotiate, as it was able to portray itself as more legitimate than other rebel groups in the southern Philippines. So as in the case of the Marcos – MNLF Peace Process, the role of the mediator proved critical. Libya kept a close watch on the negotiations and was instrumental in inducing both sides back to the negotiating table when violence threatened to derail the peace process.

During the first GOI-GAM peace process, the mediator HDC overextended its resources by trying to play the roles of a mediator, facilitator as well as the guarantor of a ceasefire.[17] It came under increasing criticism for failing to deliver on the Humanitarian Pause but chose to remain as an intermediary and may have inadvertently contributed to the extension of the conflict.[18] The HDC also refrained from reprimanding GOI for violence committed by the TNI because it risked eviction from the conflict. Indeed, HDC did not have any such leverage on GOI or GAM. Its position as an intermediary was weak as GOI could expel it at any time. HDC was left a bystander when violence on the ground continued after the signing of the humanitarian pause and COHA. It was powerless when the TNI overtly used military measures to destroy GAM early on during the peace process. In short, HDC's primary deficiency was that 'it lacked the power usually available to states who attempt to mediate in similar conflicts'.[19]

The second GOI-GAM peace process that concluded in August 2005 after just seven months of negotiations did use a non-governmental organization, the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), as a mediator. Led by the former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, the mediator was able to exert leverage on both parties. Ahtisaari's access to UN secretary general and the European

Union high representative for foreign and security policy allowed CMI to play the role of an authoritative mediator.[20] They were able to influence both GAM and GOI to compromise on their initial hardline positions. For GAM this meant giving up its separatist stance and choosing autonomy within Indonesia, and for GOI this meant blocking any tsunami aid from the international community.[21] Taken together, CMI's leverage over the negotiating parties was crucial for the success of the talks.

Malaysia has acted as a facilitator (but not officially as a mediator) in peace talks between the Thai government and the Malay-Muslim rebels. Given that it is a Malay majority state and borders the violent provinces, Malaysia has some leverage over both parties. Moreover, many thousands of Malay-Muslims in the border regions are known to illegally hold both Thai and Malaysian citizenship.[22] Currently the group considered responsible for a majority of the armed attacks in the southern provinces, Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), is not part of the MARA Pattani alliance involved in the negotiations, and they have also publicly called for the involvement of additional international actors as mediators.[23] Whether Malaysia will use its clout to break the current deadlock in the negotiations remains to be seen.

Hypothesis 3: peace zones are more effective if they involve the local populace

As with ceasefires, the establishment of peace zones is a credible signal that all parties want to achieve a negotiated settlement. A peace zone can be defined as a geographically bound area whose inhabitants are secure from violence. It can also be a political process where it is an imposition by the state authorities, usually as part of a peace process. By prohibiting arms within the peace zone, it serves for the commencement of rehabilitation, humanitarian and disarmament efforts. Involving the local populace in the creation and maintenance of peace zones helps achieve multiple objectives. It helps the efficient delivery of humanitarian aid and also makes it more likely for the local populace to support any eventual peace agreement.

During the Ramos-MNLF peace process, peace zones in southern Philippines were created as a grassroots initiative. Community leaders in various areas negotiated a deal between the various warring factions. The Dungos Peace Pact is a case in point. Signed in 1995 between envoys of the Christian and the Muslim Barangay, the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the MNLF, it served as an inspiration for the creation of various other peace zones.[24] One of the chief achievements of these peace zones was that no armed groups were allowed to enter the peace zone without the explicit request of its inhabitants. The Ramos government recognized the role of such peace zones and consulted with communities in Mindanao, Visayas and Cordillera during the formulation of a peace strategy.[25] Many of these zones were also designated as Special Development Areas (SDA) and given development assistance. The inclusion of the local population in the creation of peace zones allowed for greater trust between the two sides. It also proved that inhabitants of a conflict zone need not wait for the government to institute peace zones.[26] The local population can collaborate with NGOs for instance, in establishing peace zones. Second, it is an attestation to the fact that unarmed residents can negotiate with armed combatants and establish zones of peace.[27]

During the first GOI-GAM peace process, peace zones were established to facilitate disarmament and delivery of humanitarian assistance. The first peace zone was set up in Indrapuri in Aceh Besar but 'there seems to have been no dialogue between the Joint Security Council (JSS) and the local population' and 'there was little interaction' between the different parties.[28] Despite this gulf, additional peace zones were setup in other parts of the province. While they initially helped to reduce violence, the lack of involving the local populace resulted in their

collapse within a few months. Violations of the peace zones by both sides resulted in the JSS overwhelmed in dealing with the breaches. The frustration of the local population began to show when they allegedly attacked the offices of the JSS for their ineffectiveness to keep the peace.[29] The JSS teams were soon withdrawn from the field and the peace zones soon collapsed.

Given that the insurgencies in Thailand and Myanmar have a territorial component, the establishment of peace zones would have to be integral to any future peace agreement. Talks between the Thai government and the southern rebels have included some talks of 'safety zones' but the extent to which the local population is involved in establishing and maintaining these areas is not yet clear.[30]

Hypothesis 4: peace processes are more effective if re-integration of the rebel organization into the political and economic mainstream is given at least the same weight as disarmament and demobilization of the insurgent army[31]

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration are usually chief elements of conflict reduction strategies. Disarmament is 'the collection, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population'[32] while demobilization is much broader and identifies 'the formal disbanding of military formations and, at the individual level, as the process of releasing combatants from a mobilized state'.[33] Reintegration refers to 'assistance measures provided to former combatants that would increase the potential for their and their families' economic and social integration into civil society'.[34] The primary aim of disarmament and demobilization is to reduce the ability of the warring parties to return to armed conflict. It seeks to create a stable environment that will allow for negotiations on substantive issues of the conflict and allow for humanitarian efforts to proceed in parallel.

There are two key problems over the reduction of arms and personnel. First, given the deep sense of distrust between the government and the armed rebels, it is natural for both parties to be reluctant to disarm and demobilize. The ability to return to armed violence is the biggest bargaining chip of the armed rebels. This dilemma is further compounded by the fear of cheating by the other side. Second, no one knows the initial number of arms and personnel to begin with. While an end date to complete disarmament may seem feasible, it is not practical as the fear of cheating is still prevalent during the disarmament period. In spite of these predicaments, disarmament and demobilization are usually seen as precursors to the creation of a new assimilated army and in general to reintegration of the armed rebels into mainstream society.[35] It is assumed that there is a 'natural continuum . . . [w]here disarmament terminates, demobilization begins and where demobilization ends, reintegration commences'.[36] This mistaken view has led many peace processes to only first focus on disarmament and demobilization.

Reintegration of ex-combatants is critical since it incentivizes rebel group members to participate in the formal economy. It gives them the necessary work skills required to get adequate jobs to support themselves and their families. When reintegration is not emphasized within a peace process, it can lead to recidivism where some rebel group members might choose to take up arms again. Sometimes past levels of separatist violence is also associated with future election-related violence – Harish and Toha argue that past separatist violence creates a pool of fighters and without successful reintegration, they revert back to taking up arms but within the context of elections.[37]

During the Ramos–MNLF peace process, emphasis was placed on the integration of MNLF personnel into mainstream society.[38] First, this practice served as a confidence building measure as it clearly showed that the GRP was more interested in pushing the political negotiations than

disarming and disbanding the MNLF. Second, Ramos believed that demobilizing the MNLF would only lead to a loss of face.[39] This went against his strategy for finding peace while maintaining the dignity of the MNLF cadres. The Final Agreement between the GRP and MNLF provided explicitly for incorporation of MNLF fighters into the PNP and AFP. The GRP also agreed to allocate 1500 vacancies in the PNP and integrate 5700 MNLF members into the AFP.[40] Provision was also made for the creation of a Special Regional Security Force (SRSF) with a MNLF member as Deputy Commander. In addition, MNLF cadres and their families were given access to education, technical and livelihood training that would enable them to assimilate easier with mainstream Philippine society.

In direct contrast, the first GOI–GAM peace process emphasized the disarmament and demobilization of GAM. Offers of amnesty had little effect on the violence on the ground and were insignificant in building trust between the two sides. Both sides learnt from this experience and the second GOI–GAM peace agreement included provisions for reintegration, especially the right to establish local political parties. In the peace dialogue between the Thai government and MARA Patani, the focus of the Thai negotiating team seems to be on the disbandment of the rebel group even before the start of the official peace process.[41] Without political re-integration like in the case of Aceh, it is unlikely that the process will yield a peace dividend.

Hypothesis 5: the greater the extent of human rights abuses in a conflict before or during a peace process, the higher the need to include human rights provisions as part of a peace agreement

The notion of human rights has gained salience in violent conflicts over the last decade. Its role in peace processes is more recent and is usually elucidated in a peace agreement. I refer to human rights components as those mechanisms that are in place to deal with past human rights violations.[42] These include prisoner releases, amnesties, independent authorities to investigate alleged breaches and a reconciliation process.[43] The extent to which human rights is a part of a peace process usually depends on the degree to which the populace in the conflict area have been affected by the violence. Addressing human rights issues in peace processes helps not only to build a sense of trust for the rebels, but also to provide a certain degree of security to the people in the affected area. Peace agreements that ignore human rights protection are not durable. Once human rights violations come to the forefront, the peace process will run the risk of slipping back into violence.

The biggest human rights abuse committed by the Philippines government before the launch of the Marcos–MNLF peace process was the Jabaidah massacre. This incident was a catalyst to the formation of the MNLF. In response, the Tripoli agreement incorporated elements that addressed human rights issues: amnesty in autonomous zones, release of political prisoners and return of all refugees.[44] Similarly, in the on-going peace process between the Philippines government and the communist rebels, President Rodrigo Duterte's administration has said that they will consider releasing political prisoners.

In contrast, there have been extensive human rights violations in Aceh committed by both GAM and the Indonesian military. After Aceh was turned into a Military Operations Zone (DOM) in 1990, the military was given a free hand to annihilate GAM. One estimate puts the total number of people killed and missing at more than 4400,[45] with more than 1000 casualties in the first three years.[46] Apologies for human rights abuses under DOM in addition to guarantees of prisoner releases by General Wiranto and President Habibie, were seen as mere rhetoric and had no effect on the behavior of the TNI. Human rights abuses continued to plague Aceh even after the GOI–GAM peace process commenced. The assassination of local GAM commander

Abdullah Syafi'ie as well as the arrest of local GAM negotiators before the final talks in Tokyo contributed to the failure of the first GOI–GAM peace process. Human rights abuses in Aceh have continued after the collapse of the peace process in May 2003.[47] In the second GOI–GAM peace agreement, there were provisions for amnesty, a human rights court as well as a Commission for Truth and Reconciliation. These stipulations went a long way in concluding a successful peace agreement.

Hypothesis 6: symbols play an important role in a peace process

Symbols can be defined as objects, tangible or otherwise, which are attributed to group identity. These include flags, colors, language or even venues. Symbols during a conflict can sometimes be identified by the choice of targets. For instance, an insurgent group may attack a building or a person if it sees them as symbols of state identity. During a peace process, antagonists use symbols to define their own identity. Symbols have high significance during a peace process and yet, this aspect has not been dealt with at length in the existing literature.[48] This dearth is due to the perception that symbols are just poignant elements and its 'irrational' nature fails to addresses anything substantive to a conflict. On the contrary, symbols are highly significant and can direct the successful or unsuccessful outcome of a peace process.

Venues for negotiations are usually a point of contention in a peace process. On one hand, a state might prefer to hold the negotiations within the country since they usually perceive the insurgency as a local problem. On the other hand, the rebel organization would favor a venue outside the country since it might be concerned about the use of violence by the state if negotiations are held within the country. Moreover, a foreign venue would help internationalize their cause. In the event negotiations are held where the mediator is based, the stature of the person chairing the sessions also plays a symbolic role.

Ramos' strategy in negotiating with the MNLF took into account the importance of symbols.[49] He agreed to initial negotiations to be held in Libya and Indonesia. The initial dates proposed by the Indonesians fell during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan and Ramos recognized that holding negotiations during this period would not be fair to the MNLF.[50] Ramos also foresaw that negotiations could take place within the Philippines only if there was sufficient local expertise to achieve the task.[51] This confidence building measure proved a success as the government negotiating team managed to hold the subcommittee meetings within the country.

This tussle over symbols can also be witnessed during the first GOI–GAM peace process. In the signing of COHA, GAM insisted that the spelling of the name of the Aceh province be spelt as 'Acheh'. GOI, on its part, insisted on including the name Indonesia next to Acheh to signify the territorial integrity of Indonesia. The tussle over symbols can continue even after the signing of the agreement as part of the second GOI–GAM peace process. In March 2013, the Acehnese legislature adopted GAM's banner as its provincial flag.[52] The flag was a powerful mobilization tool during the insurgency and its symbolic use continues to raise tensions. These incidents point to the importance of symbols within the context of the peace process.

During the September 2016 Panglong Conference in Myanmar, the participation of the most powerful rebel group, the United Wa State Army (UWSA), was only confirmed after Aung San Suu Kyi lobbied China's support for the process. However, when representatives of UWSA turned up at the conference, they were only given 'observer' and not 'speaker' passes and this led to their storming out of the venue. Myanmar's peace commission had to send a written apology to the UWSA for the mistake but this incident made clear that such seemingly simple symbolic issues can have large consequences on the final outcome of a peace process.

Hypothesis 7: a public peace process is more durable than one that is not

Sometimes governments choose to pursue a peace process in secret. They do so because of possible political cost: a failure to reach an agreement could be viewed as a failure, or even the fact that they would choose to negotiate with armed rebels could have unfavorable political consequences. Such fears can also hold true on the side of the rebel group: negotiating with the government could be viewed by the rank-and-file members as disconnected from their recruitment strategies. While pursuing secret negotiations (and making it public only if an agreement is reached) might be ex-ante useful, it is a short-sighted strategy. When the agreement is eventually made public, it could lead to more spoilers and a rejection of the terms of the agreement making the entire exercise futile.

A durable peace process is one where the government and rebel groups are open about their interest in pursuing a negotiated settlement. Once an agreement is reached, it is then put up for ratification by all citizens of the country, an approach adopted in the recent Colombian peace process. An alternative to the referendum is to ratify the agreement in parliament but this has the drawback that any political party opposed to the agreement today could try and revoke it in the future when they form the government. A referendum has the legitimacy that it is approved directly by the people who live both within and outside the conflict zone. While the Colombians narrowly rejected the proposed peace agreement with FARC, the intention behind the plebiscite was right.

The collapse of the Tripoli agreement was over Article 16 that wanted the GRP to 'take all necessary constitutional processes for the implementation of the entire Agreement'.[53] While the MNLF inferred this clause to be a decree from President Marcos, the GRP wanted to hold a referendum. This impasse continued for many months after which President Marcos unilaterally decided to hold a referendum despite MNLF opposition. The MNLF did not want the plebiscite to be held as it could mean an erosion of their legitimacy in those areas.

The importance of a public peace process is heightened in Thailand, especially given that the current peace dialogue is taking place with the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), the group that came to power during a May 2014 military coup. Even if a peace agreement is reached, it will have a lower legitimacy than when dealing with a democratic government. In that sense, a peace process in Myanmar is more promising as long as the country is able to consolidate its democratic transition in the coming years.

Conclusion

Concluding a peace agreement between governments and armed rebels is an arduous task. When both adversaries have been engaged in battle for decades, the prospects of both sides negotiating a peace treaty are very low. So when governments and rebels initiate a peace process, it is usually viewed with a lot of optimism. It is in this context that this chapter has attempted to analyze peace processes in Southeast Asia. Practically every country in the region has witnessed armed internal conflicts and many of them have attempted to quell them through a peace process. By comparing these different endeavors, I have laid out seven hypotheses that can make a peace process more effective.

Specifically, I have argued that (1) ceasefires with monitoring and enforcement mechanisms at the beginning of a peace process are effective; (2) the effectiveness of a mediator depends on the amount of leverage it has over the disputants; (3) that peace zones are more effective if they involve the local populace; (4) peace processes are more effective if re-integration of the rebel

organization into the political and economic mainstream is given at least the same weight as disarmament and demobilization of the insurgent army; (5) the greater the extent of human rights abuses in a conflict before or during a peace process, the higher the need to include human rights provisions as part of a peace agreement; (6) Symbols plays an important role in a peace process; and (7) a public peace process is more durable than one that is not. These are neither necessary nor sufficient for a successful peace agreement but should be viewed as elements that can help with shaping a peaceful outcome.

Notes

1 A previous version of this chapter was made available as S.P. Harish, "Towards Better Peace Processes: A Comparative Study of Attempts to Broker Peace with MNLF and GAM," Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies Working Paper No. 77, May 2005.

2 For similar definitions with slight modifications, see Cynthia J. Arnson, ed., *Comparative Peace Processes in Latin America* (California: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 1 and John Darby and Roger Mac Ginty, eds., *Contemporary Peacemaking: Conflict, Violence and Peace Processes* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 2. It is sometimes also useful to distinguish a peace process from a peace initiative which is just an attempt to get opposing parties in the dispute to explore ways to resolve the problem through discussion.

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7 Duncan McCargo, "Southern Thailand: From Conflict to Negotiations?," Lowy Institute for International Policy, April 2014, p. 10.

8 "A Long Road," *The Economist*, September 2016. URL: https://www.economist.com/news/asia/21706535-myanmars-new-government-sets-about-making-peace-its-many-ethnic-minorities-long-road

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11 Stephen John Stedman, "Negotiation and Mediation in Internal Conflict," in *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*, ed. Michael E. Brown (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996), p. 358.

12 Konrad Huber, *The Hdc in Aceh: Promises and Pitfalls of Ngo Mediation and Implementation* (Washington, DC: East West Center, 2004).

13 Ivan Molloy, "The Decline of the Moro National Liberation Front," *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 18, no. 1 (1988): 61–2.

14 Rodil, Kalinaw Mindanaw: The Story of the Grp-Mnlf Peace Process, 1975–1996, 1st AFRIM ed. Davao City, Philippines: Alternate Forum for Research in Mindanao, pp. 45–6.

15 The visit to Tripoli was only made public in 1996.

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