



# Southern Philippines: Tackling Clan Politics in the Bangsamoro

Asia Report N°306 | 14 April 2020

Headquarters

**International Crisis Group**

Avenue Louise 235 • 1050 Brussels, Belgium

Tel: +32 2 502 90 38 • Fax: +32 2 502 50 38

[brussels@crisisgroup.org](mailto:brussels@crisisgroup.org)

*Preventing War. Shaping Peace.*

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	i
I. Introduction .....	1
II. 2019: End of the Beginning or Beginning of the End? .....	5
A. The Role of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority .....	5
B. The May 2019 Elections.....	6
C. Continuing Clan Conflict .....	8
III. Maguindanao: A Balance of Power .....	9
A. Dynasties and Vendettas.....	9
B. Divided Turf.....	11
IV. In Marawi’s Shadow: The Lanao Region.....	13
A. Lanao del Sur .....	13
B. Marawi City.....	14
C. The Case of Lanao del Norte.....	15
V. The Sulu Archipelago: Between Cooperation and Contestation.....	17
A. Basilan.....	17
B. Sulu .....	19
C. Tawi-Tawi .....	21
VI. Dealing with Kinship-based Politics in the Bangsamoro.....	23
A. Alliance Building.....	26
B. Mainstreaming Local Conflict Resolution Mechanisms .....	26
C. Regional Stewardship of Peace and Order .....	28
D. Promoting Accountability.....	29
E. Political Party Capacity Building .....	30
VII. Conclusion .....	31
APPENDICES	
A. Map of Mindanao Showing BARMM Provinces .....	32
B. Acronyms.....	33
C. Glossary .....	34
D. About the International Crisis Group .....	35
E. Crisis Group Reports and Briefings on Asia since 2017.....	36
F. Crisis Group Board of Trustees .....	37

# Principal Findings

**What's new?** One year after taking office, following a landmark peace agreement, the Bangsamoro Transition Authority is trying to set the stage for regional stability and durable peace in Muslim Mindanao. In doing so, it needs to deal with powerful political clans that may provoke tensions in the run-up to 2022 elections.

**Why does it matter?** Clans are predominant in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region's politics, which could lead to tensions with the new authority. Confrontations among armed families could reverse peace process gains, as could a falling-out between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the former rebel group, and clans if the transition goes awry.

**What should be done?** The Bangsamoro transitional government should create a strong regional institution that is pragmatic in finding arrangements with political families and capable of curbing inter-clan feuding as well as overcoming clan-linked patronage networks. Donors should support efforts to ensure the state's primacy over kinship interests through a broad funding portfolio.

## *Executive Summary*

One year after its creation, the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) lies at a critical juncture: the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the former rebel group that ascended to political power, is facing the realities of clan politics tied to the region's traditional politicians. The Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA), of which the MILF constitutes the majority party, has been entrusted with creating a viable institutional framework before the 2022 parliamentary elections, which will mark the end of the peace process. But this new dispensation inevitably will need to accommodate the region's influential political families. The ex-rebels will have to be open to political alliances with clan leaders if they are to stand a chance of remaining in power and ensuring stability. At the same time, the BTA ought to find ways to curb the role of elite clans as well as mechanisms for dealing with rampant clan feuding. Donors should help the BTA build a more competent and assertive regional authority centred more around respect for institutional rules and processes than personal politics.

Clan rule is the predominant form of social and political order in Muslim Mindanao. Relegated to the second tier during the transition period, the region's political families are biding their time, contemplating options for the transition and the post-2022 future. They are looking both inward – to their own turf – and outward, to their position in relation to the BTA and the central government. Presently, the clans are inclined to play it safe, well aware that their influence has outlasted previous attempts at creating a regional autonomous entity.

The record of clans in the Bangsamoro is mixed. They traditionally have offered crucial support to its population, particularly during times of civil war and unrest. But these patronage networks also led to self-perpetuation of elites and fuelled forms of violence. Clan leaders found their way into political office and took advantage of a weak state to nurture their position and that of their kin, sustaining themselves through dynastic rule, pragmatic alliances and control of militias.

As a result, patronage and political warlordism paved the way for an environment conducive to a particular type of conflict across Muslim Mindanao: feuding among and between kinship groups. In these communal vendettas, families engage in episodic combat with one another, mostly because of land disputes, political rivalries or personal grudges. The level of violence in many parts of the Bangsamoro is lower than before the peace negotiations between the government and the MILF, which culminated in the 2014 peace agreement. But in a region awash with weapons, armed conflicts remain a very real risk, which will likely grow in the rough-and-tumble of electoral politics.

The political success of the MILF now lies in ensuring that the BTA emerges from the ongoing transition as a robust institution, paving the way for a capable permanent regional government. Yet the fate of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region after the 2022 elections is not exclusively dependent on the ex-rebels' performance. How clans position themselves toward the new entity will be crucial in determining its success or failure.

Antagonising political families would likely be a costly error for the MILF because it could undermine the Bangsamoro's cohesion and perhaps trigger violence. Conversely, working with the clans, one way or another, could represent a strategic gain. The transitional Bangsamoro government should aim to strengthen its institutions while raising the costs of unrestrained clannism and clan warfare.

Striking the right balance between the need to accommodate clans and their patronage politics, on one hand, and the imperative of building strong institutions that can dilute the role of kinship politics, on the other, will require a flexible, pragmatic approach by the MILF. Several principles could guide it. First, the ex-rebels ought to reach out to clan leaders, particularly in the run up to the 2022 elections. Excessive polarisation in the Bangsamoro both pre- and post-elections could fuel violent intra-elite competition, whether among MILF members or clan-related militias. More broadly, the MILF should identify potential allies among clan leaders. Working through the Bangsamoro Transition Authority, it should then cooperate with these clan members on certain necessary structural changes in a steady, albeit unrushed sequence: it should tackle less controversial policies such as conflict resolution mechanisms first, before setting the stage for long-term goals, including fighting corruption and fostering more participatory politics.

Of crucial importance will be maintaining security. Here, too, flexibility and balancing between competing interests is important. While the BTA will want to protect its prerogative as the main body responsible for peace and order in the Bangsamoro, it needs to take account of the role and influence of local clans. Thus, even as it consolidates ministries tasked with public safety and focuses on improving the police force by making it more accountable, it should build on pre-existing local dispute resolution mechanisms. Disbanding of private armies will be particularly sensitive and will need to proceed in parallel to the MILF's own decommissioning.

Throughout, international donors ought to continue to fund both conflict-prevention and institution-building programs. They should also provide expertise to support the BTA and municipalities across the region in harmonising various existing conflict resolution mechanisms and assist them in strengthening fiscal accountability. Supporting emerging political parties across the ethnic and ideological landscape in the Bangsamoro with technical and operational knowledge would also promote broader democratisation in Muslim Mindanao.

**Manila/Brussels, 14 April 2020**

# Southern Philippines: Tackling Clan Politics in the Bangsamoro

## I. Introduction

---

After decades of war, the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) is the latest attempt by Manila and Moro rebels to find a formula for the region's self-determination within the Philippines state.<sup>1</sup> The new autonomous region is an outgrowth of the 2014 peace deal between the government and the biggest rebel movement, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). It was created by virtue of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, ratified by referendum in early 2019.<sup>2</sup> The new region aims to rectify the flaws of its predecessor, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao – itself the result of a peace deal between Manila and an earlier rebel group, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) – which is now widely acknowledged as a “failed experiment”.<sup>3</sup> The region presently is governed by the 79-member Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA). The MILF leads the transition government and holds the majority of BTA seats.

But if the MILF dominates the transitional institutions, the political leadership of the Bangsamoro's provinces and municipalities, elected in May 2019, largely consists of scions of the region's most influential clans. A handful of political dynasties across the region remain crucial players.

Over the next two and a half years, these two groups – the MILF and the clans – appear set to compete in places and cooperate in others as the Bangsamoro region readies for national, regional and municipal elections in May 2022. The polls will be the final step in the peace process's roadmap and will conclude with a new Bangsamoro government. Whether the former rebels and political clans can coexist without conflict is likely to play a large part in determining the success of the new autonomous region and the peace process as a whole.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Bangsamoro refers to the indigenous Muslim population of Mindanao island in the southern Philippines, comprised of thirteen ethno-linguistic groups that converted to Islam, as well as to non-Muslim indigenous people who are also called Lumad. It also refers to the territory of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

<sup>2</sup> For background on the peace process, see Crisis Group Asia Reports N°301, *The Philippines: Militancy and the New Bangsamoro*, 27 June 2019; N°281, *The Philippines: Renewing Prospects for Peace in Mindanao*, 6 July 2016; N°248, *The Philippines: Dismantling Rebel Groups*, 19 June 2013; and N°240, *The Philippines: Breakthrough in Mindanao*, 5 December 2012; as well as Crisis Group Asia Briefings N°125, *The Philippines: A New Strategy for Peace in Mindanao?*, 3 August 2011; N°119, *The Philippines: Back to the Table, Warily, in Mindanao*, 24 March 2011; N°98, *The Philippines: After the Maguindanao Massacre*, 21 December 2009; N°88, *The Philippines: Running in Place in Mindanao*, 16 February 2009; and N°83, *The Philippines: The Collapse of Peace in Mindanao*, 23 October 2008.

<sup>3</sup> “Failed experiment” is language appearing in the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro of 2012. The term is unpopular with those most closely involved in the previous Autonomous Region, notably the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the region's administration.

Clan politics has a long history in Muslim Mindanao but has evolved over recent decades.<sup>4</sup> Some clans have been entrenched in the region for centuries, while others emerged at various threshold moments in modern Philippine history, notably independence from the U.S. in 1946 and the fall of long-serving dictator Ferdinand Marcos in 1986.<sup>5</sup> Since then, new families have carved out and expanded turf of their own. When communal violence first erupted in the region in the 1960s, and during the more organised MNLFF rebellion after 1968, clans were the social units best suited to survive and gain ground.<sup>6</sup> Following an initial peace agreement between the government and the MNLFF in 1996, which led to the creation of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, the rebels had their first turn at exercising political power. The experiment proved unsuccessful, and clans returned as the main political players, taking over the Autonomous Region.<sup>7</sup>

Clans – social organisations that give preferential treatment to family, stem from common ancestry, are organised by kinship and defined by blood relations and ties forged through marriage – vary across the Bangsamoro. Some are relatively cohesive, and others less so.<sup>8</sup> Some encompass thousands of members, while others are much smaller. Most clan leaders are men, but women can play a crucial role in kinship networks – be it through electoral office, social recognition for important deeds or a distinct leadership style.<sup>9</sup>

The elements necessary for political clans to grow in Mindanao are, in the words of many journalists and experts, “guns, goons and gold”.<sup>10</sup> Police confirm that of the 77 private militias existing across the Philippines, 72 are in the BARMM.<sup>11</sup> In areas they control, clans are alternative security providers. Some function as arms of the government, while others are more neutral parties to or even sympathetic allies of insurgents. During Manila’s struggle against the MILF, some powerful families, particularly those who dominated provincial administrations, backed the state, while

---

<sup>4</sup> For background on political families in the Philippines, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°225, *The Philippines: Local Politics in the Sulu Archipelago and the MILF Peace Process*, 15 May 2012. See also Alfred McCoy (ed.), *An Anarchy of Families: State and Family in the Philippines*, 2nd edition (Madison, 2009). On clan rule, see Mark S. Weiner, *The Rule of the Clan: What an Ancient Form of Social Organization Reveals About the Future of Individual Freedom* (New York, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Article 2, Section 26 of the post-Marcos 1987 Philippine constitution forbids political dynasties in the country. The Bangsamoro Organic Law includes no such provision.

<sup>6</sup> In 1968, the death of several Muslim army recruits during a covert mission, known as the Jabidah massacre, galvanised Moro Muslim grievances, which then morphed into an insurgency.

<sup>7</sup> The region remained autonomous, but the MILF continued to criticise the arrangement, demanding more substantial rights – fiscal and political – for the region.

<sup>8</sup> In Muslim Mindanao, conflict within the clan can also occur, although one-man rule usually keeps violence in check. If a patriarch dies or family grudges emerge, intra-clan conflict can escalate. Crisis Group interview, political scientist, Manila, 5 November 2019.

<sup>9</sup> The governors of Maguindanao and Lanao del Norte are good examples: both Ruby Sahali and Sandra Sema gained significant prestige for helping pass the Bangsamoro Organic Law. Cotabato City’s mayor, Cynthia Guiani-Sayadi, is also widely respected for her stern anti-crime drive.

<sup>10</sup> References to these “three Gs” have peppered media output, academic writing and everyday parlance for decades. An early mention appears in Sheila Coronel, “Dateline Philippines: The lost revolution”, *Foreign Policy* (Autumn 1991).

<sup>11</sup> Jaymee T. Gamil, “Poll season: PNP hunting 77 private armies”, *Philippine Inquirer*, 14 October 2018.

others – due to family ties, religious zeal or sympathy for the struggle – supported the rebels.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, clans can integrate their members into official government bodies as paramilitaries or ad hoc armed formations.<sup>13</sup> Their “gold” is the distribution of patronage, defined not only by buying votes but also by the delivery of services and rewards in exchange for loyalty.<sup>14</sup>

Once in a position of power, clans tap the state’s resources and redistribute them to cement political, social and business prominence. Their main source of largesse is the Internal Revenue Allotment – funding allocations from central to local governments.<sup>15</sup> Many clans also benefit from black-market trade and graft.<sup>16</sup>

Clan politics in Muslim Mindanao can also be responsible for conflict. Although clan feuds or violence among families in the Philippines are not limited to the Bangsamoro, they are particularly prevalent there. Commonly known as *rido*, conflicts among families over power, revenge, honour and land are not fully regulated by the government and often left to the clans themselves to settle. Clans exploit deficits in the state’s enforcement of the rule of law to pursue their own ends and enforce their status, through violence if necessary.<sup>17</sup> Disputes over natural resources or personal slights can metastasise into recurrent skirmishes or larger confrontations.

Yet clans are not merely agents of strife. They provide safety nets, ensure internal cohesion in their communities and help kin in emergencies through protection and social services. Clans leaders employ relatives and assure them of financial security – be it in private enterprise or political office. Moreover, because disputes often occur among families, they are also well suited to find solutions themselves.

Power in the Bangsamoro is not only distributed among clans and between them and the MILF but dispersed among regions and ethno-linguistic groups. The new autonomous region comprises two mainland Mindanao provinces, Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur; the three island provinces of the Sulu archipelago – Basilan (excluding Isabela City), Sulu and Tawi-Tawi; and Cotabato City and 63 villages in Cotabato province in central Mindanao.<sup>18</sup> All joined the Bangsamoro following the January 2019 referendum. Sulu voted against ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law but is still included in the BARMM due to its past affiliation with the previous

---

<sup>12</sup> Reliable statistics as to the number of guns in the hands of clans, or armed formations besides the MILF, are rare. According to estimates, the total number of illicit firearms in Mindanao could be as high as 100,000. Crisis Group correspondence, gun proliferation researcher, 30 January 2020. See also “Out of the Shadows: Violent Conflict and the Real Economy of Mindanao”, International Alert, 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Private armies are hard to track, since they can emerge and disappear at their leader’s whim. Crisis Group interview, military officer, Maguindanao, 14 December 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Crisis Group interview, development expert, Davao, 20 November 2019.

<sup>15</sup> The Internal Revenue Allotment is a yearly subsidy from the national government to provinces, municipalities and villages.

<sup>16</sup> The black or grey market includes business operating as legal enterprises and the huge illicit economy in Muslim Mindanao. See “Out of the Shadows”, International Alert, op. cit. Crisis Group interview, military official, Manila, 16 November 2019.

<sup>17</sup> The possible occurrence of *rido* is in itself a deterrent and a protection mechanism: an attack on a clan member entails resistance from his kin. Social cohesion is thus maintained through the very threat of feuds. Crisis Group interview, royal clan member, Marawi, 10 December 2019.

<sup>18</sup> See the map in Appendix A.



Autonomous Region.<sup>19</sup> Six towns in Lanao del Norte, also in Mindanao, voted to join the Bangsamoro but the majority of the province voted against doing so, meaning that those six towns were also left out of the new region.<sup>20</sup> The largest ethnic groups in the region are the Maguindanao, the Maranao and the Tausug, who live in central Mindanao, the Lanao region and the Sulu archipelago, respectively.

Building upon Crisis Group's previous work on Mindanao, this report examines clan politics and conflict in three sub-regions of the Bangsamoro – central Mindanao (Maguindanao and environs), the Lanao provinces and the Sulu archipelago. Research, conducted in November and December 2019, included fieldwork in Mindanao and interviews with representatives of the MILF, the transitional authority, clans, local and national government officials, the military, non-governmental organisations and independent analysts. The Sulu archipelago was inaccessible due to insecurity.

---

<sup>19</sup> Votes for the Bangsamoro Organic Law were counted across all five Autonomous Region provinces as one geographical entity. Sulu's no vote was therefore superseded by the Law's approval in the four other provinces.

<sup>20</sup> The six towns are politically important as they include a number of MILF strongholds, particularly the camp of a well-known commander, Abdullah "Bravo" Macapaar.

## II. 2019: End of the Beginning or Beginning of the End?

---

### A. *The Role of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority*

The Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) is an interim body whose creation was stipulated in the 2012 peace agreement and that is mandated to govern the region until the 2022 elections, act as a transitional parliament and pass necessary legislation. Committees and working groups are tasked with developing legal codes that will be the backbone of the future government and its administration. Inaugurated in February 2019, the BTA comprises 79 members – 41 nominated by the MILF and 38 by the government. Although not elected, it is relatively inclusive. Among its members are women, youth, Christians and indigenous peoples' representatives as well as a slate of former rebels, traditional politicians and clan affiliates – with these categories overlapping across ethno-linguistic lines.<sup>21</sup> While only a few traditional clan patriarchs sit in the transition authority, many of its members belong to prominent families.<sup>22</sup>

Thus far, relations between the BTA and local government units – villages, municipalities and cities – have been good, with some exceptions. Several local government units have been waiting impatiently for the BTA to implement agriculture, infrastructure and other projects and pointing out its slow pace in passing legislation and administrative hiccups. Some national government representatives in regional bodies dealing with the peace process have also at times criticised the BTA's internal divisions and lagging work such as priority legislation and completion of carryover tasks from the past administrations.<sup>23</sup> Others – local governments and national officials alike – have been more supportive, however, insofar as they recognise the challenges of overcoming the new region's birth pangs and pin their hopes on delivery of the Bangsamoro Block Grant, a large financial allocation from Manila that the regional government will disburse, giving it some fiscal autonomy.<sup>24</sup> Local government units that largely ignored the previous Autonomous Region have been ready to engage with the BTA in expectation of largesse.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> While some parts of the native Mindanao population embraced Islam upon its arrival in the southern Philippines, and became Moro by creating a distinct political identity, others did not convert. These non-Islamised communities in Mindanao go by the label of "indigenous people" or "IPs", an expression also commonly used for other indigenous groups across the Philippine archipelago. Christian settlers in the Bangsamoro are labelled as either "Christians" or "settlers" – with the latter term sometimes used to avoid giving the conflict sectarian connotations.

<sup>22</sup> In the future, the Bangsamoro parliament's composition may evolve, for instance through quotas or other amendments inserted into the electoral code. Crisis Group interview, BTA member, Cotabato City, 28 November 2019.

<sup>23</sup> For example, the compensation due to past employees following layoffs and the hiring of new employees. Crisis Group interview, Peace Process Office official, Manila, 13 November 2019; security sector official, Manila, 23 November 2019.

<sup>24</sup> Crisis Group interview, local government information officer, Maguindanao, 25 November 2019. The Block Grant is an annual subsidy from the central government to the Bangsamoro. It amounts to 5 per cent of the Philippines' net internal revenue, the equivalent of 63.6 billion pesos.

<sup>25</sup> Crisis Group interview, municipal mayor from Sulu, Zamboanga City, 23 December 2019.

The BTA also will draft a code for the 2022 elections, which according to the Organic Law should follow a hybrid system.<sup>26</sup> The new Bangsamoro parliament will have 80 seats. Voters will elect half the representatives (so 40 seats) from party lists, 40 per cent (32 seats) from geographical districts and 10 per cent (8 seats) from demographic groups such as women, Christians or youth. While parties will primarily compete for the party list seats, clans and families are likely to nominate their surrogates in the districts, where their chances of victory are greater, even if they run on a party ticket.<sup>27</sup> Success for the clans will therefore depend less on forming political parties ahead of the vote than on traditional tools of personality and patronage.<sup>28</sup> In this regard, the demarcation of single-member electoral districts, which the BTA must carry out before the 2022 vote, will be crucial, likely shaping different clans' influence in each district.<sup>29</sup> The party list voting could, by contrast, counteract the clans' authority at the polls.

At three years, the planned transition period is short, and some local politicians have requested an extension. But it is debatable if an extension would redound to the Bangsamoro's long-term benefit.<sup>30</sup> A longer transition would give the MILF-led BTA more time to prove itself, yet it could antagonise clans by excluding them from power for three more years. As the MILF will contest the elections, it has a strong incentive to deliver results during the transition period, no matter how long that lasts, if it wishes to remain at the helm of Bangsamoro politics.

## B. *The May 2019 Elections*

The May 2019 midterm elections were the first polls in the new autonomous region, but despite the novelty, they were largely "business as usual".<sup>31</sup> The MILF did not compete, owing to an informal pact among the group's leadership that they would wait for the 2022 vote before doing so.<sup>32</sup> There was considerable turnover among governors, mayors and congressmen, but most winners hailed from established families. Jim Hataman-Saliman, from Basilan, was the only incumbent governor in the five BARMM provinces to retain office. Lanao and Sulu elected new governors but from within the same families – in the former, the son replaced the father, and in the latter, the father took the son's spot. In Tawi-Tawi and Maguindanao, members of rival clans ascended to the governorship. The same was true of lower-level offices. In Maguindanao, clan members occupy more than half of elected posts; in Sulu and Lanao del Sur, they sit in roughly 40 per cent of all posts; and in Basilan, they cover

---

<sup>26</sup> A technical working group within the Election Commission, or COMELEC, is assisting the BTA in drafting the code. Crisis Group interview, Sheriff Abbas, COMELEC chairman, Manila, 11 November 2019.

<sup>27</sup> Crisis Group interview, Maguindanao political clan member, 13 November 2019.

<sup>28</sup> Crisis Group interview, MILF official, Cotabato City, 26 November 2019.

<sup>29</sup> Crisis Group interview, Manila, 7 December 2019.

<sup>30</sup> The Maguindanao provincial board filed a resolution in late 2019 formally requesting extension of the BTA's term. The MILF's initial demand was that the transition period last six years. Both the Philippine Congress and the president would have to approve an extension.

<sup>31</sup> Crisis Group correspondence, political analyst, 20-21 August 2019.

<sup>32</sup> "MILF political party to focus on plebiscite, stay out of May 2019 polls", *The Philippine Star*, 8 October 2018.

about 35 per cent.<sup>33</sup> These officials will be the BARMM leadership's companions during the transition and face re-election in 2022.

Although they belong to different political parties, most of these families are allied with President Rodrigo Duterte's administration.<sup>34</sup> These ties are not surprising, considering the traditional link between Manila and elites in the country's periphery. In a society where family remains the first lifeline, the clans – especially those with extensive local turf – are useful to national leaders.<sup>35</sup> They are reliable intermediaries who can deliver votes in national elections in exchange for local or regional autonomy and maintain local order.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, the incentive for the clans is to back the president or other elite politicians because of the patronage on offer from Manila and the opportunities for profit in running provincial fiefdoms.<sup>37</sup> This symbiosis means that, in the words of one official in Manila no Autonomous Region governor “got the job before [getting] the president's blessing”.<sup>38</sup> It remains to be seen whether the new Bangsamoro government can reshape this relationship between national and regional officials so that future Bangsamoro leaders will not require Manila's stamp of approval.<sup>39</sup>

The 2019 elections were among the most peaceful in recent Bangsamoro history. By one count, there were 144 violent incidents, most of them grenade explosions and fistfights rather than gun battles.<sup>40</sup> That several municipalities saw little competition for seats contributed to a relatively calm exercise.<sup>41</sup> In the former Autonomous Region, levels of bloodshed likewise tended to be low when elites chose candidates who ran unopposed.<sup>42</sup> The absence of violence in 2019 does not, however, mean that clan leaders no longer regard force as an option.

---

<sup>33</sup> Ronald Mendoza, Leonardo Jaminola and Jurel Yap, “From Fat to Obese: Political Dynasties after the 2019 Midterm Elections”, working paper, Ateneo School of Government, 2019.

<sup>34</sup> The Autonomous Region's former governor, Mujiv Hataman, now a congressman for Basilan, is an exception as he decided not to endorse one of Duterte's parties. His loyalty lies with Anak Mindanao, a party affiliated with the opposition Liberal Party.

<sup>35</sup> Crisis Group interview, Maguindanaon political clan member, 13 November 2019.

<sup>36</sup> Crisis Group interview, BTA member, Davao, 14 October 2019; academic, Manila, 4 November 2019; clan leader from Maguindanao, Manila, 13 November 2019.

<sup>37</sup> Congressmen representing geographical districts are entitled to dip into the “pork barrel fund” for money they may use at their discretion to carry out local projects, reward allies or buy off opponents. Peter Kreuzer, “Mafia-style Domination in the Philippines: Comparing Provinces”, Peace Research Institute Frankfurt Reports 117 (2012), p. 19.

<sup>38</sup> Crisis Group interview, government official, Manila, 11 December 2019.

<sup>39</sup> Crisis Group interview, MILF official, Cotabato City, 27 November 2019. The official is also a member of the United Bangsamoro Justice Party (UBJP), which is the MILF's political party.

<sup>40</sup> Firefights occurred in Lumbatan, Tubaran and Ganassi in Lanao del Sur. See “Critical Events Monitoring Bulletin”, International Alert, 22 May 2019. There were more intense firefights and deaths in 2016 than in 2019, according to Crisis Group data. The military deemed the 2019 polls also more peaceful (64 violent incidents) than the 2016 polls (96 violent incidents). See also John Unson, “64 poll-related violence recorded in BARMM”, *The Philippine Star*, 14 May 2019.

<sup>41</sup> This lack of violence could also be attributed to the martial law imposed on Mindanao from late 2017 until the end of 2019. The momentum in the peace process is another factor.

<sup>42</sup> Crisis Group interview, political analyst, Manila, 12 November 2019.

### C. Continuing Clan Conflict

Despite the peace process in principle marking the end of the MILF insurgency, conflict persists in pockets of the Bangsamoro.<sup>43</sup> Much of this is violence between Islamist militants and the army.<sup>44</sup> But community conflicts, too, are ubiquitous. Often these overlap with other fault lines: families whose relatives are either MILF members – or sometimes militants – battle village and clan militias.<sup>45</sup> Feuding incidents can be lethal, recurrent and corrosive of social cohesion in villages across the region. Most violence in the Bangsamoro, whether related to family animosity or militancy, stems from grassroots disputes and particular local conditions. Hostilities among elite families, on the other hand, occur mostly where they are competing for political power.<sup>46</sup> These rivalries do not systematically result in bloodshed; clans often simply outbid each other for votes.

*Rido* incidents in central Mindanao from February 2019 to January 2020 alone led to at least twenty deaths, eighteen injuries and 2,000 displaced.<sup>47</sup> Such violence is comparable to levels registered as far back as 2010 – a clear indication that the relative calm brought by the peace process has had no impact on clan-related feuds.<sup>48</sup> Maguindanao is the most affected province, followed by Lanao del Sur and Basilan. Feuds also occurred in the North Cotabato villages that joined the BARMM, particularly from the towns of Midsayap and Pikit. These villages have been formally turned over to the BTA but need to be better connected to its structures of security governance in order for regional authorities to be able to address frequent feuding.<sup>49</sup>

Regional differences within the Bangsamoro also shape the nature of clan conflict. While the bulk of *rido* cases in Maguindanao revolve around competing land claims, for which settlement procedures can be lengthy, feuds in Lanao del Sur and, to an extent, Sulu are even harder to resolve as they often involve long-lasting political rivalries or personal honour.<sup>50</sup> The low level of feuding in Basilan owes in large part to its small size and population, as well as the absence of land disputes. Tawi-Tawi remains virtually unscathed by communal conflict.

---

<sup>43</sup> UN High Commissioner for Refugees data show a total of 1,497 families (6,823 individuals) displaced in central Mindanao due to crime or violence and 26,257 families (131,285 individuals) from Marawi. “Philippines: Mindanao Displacement Dashboard, December 2019 – Issue No. 65”, UNHCR, 31 December 2019.

<sup>44</sup> Crisis Group Report, *The Philippines: Militancy and the New Bangsamoro*, op. cit.

<sup>45</sup> In some cases, feuds are between rival MILF commanders or their families.

<sup>46</sup> Crisis Group interviews, political analyst, Manila, 12 November 2019.

<sup>47</sup> Data collected by Crisis Group.

<sup>48</sup> Kreuzer, “Mafia-style Domination in the Philippines: Comparing Provinces”, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>49</sup> The 63 villages, or barangays, that joined the Bangsamoro will fall under the supervision of the chief minister as a Special Geographic Area but are not organised in a local government unit yet. Ferdinand Cabrera, “63 North Cotabato villages officially now part of BARMM”, NBDC News, 20 November 2019. Crisis Group field notes, Cotabato, 26 November 2019.

<sup>50</sup> Crisis Group interview, military official, Maguindanao, 14 December 2019. All feuding has common features, but its local manifestations are contingent on provincial politics, the efforts of strongmen to reach settlements and the military’s role.

### III. Maguindanao: A Balance of Power

---

#### A. *Dynasties and Vendettas*

Maguindanao is both the most conflict-affected province in the Philippines and a “centre of gravity” within the Bangsamoro.<sup>51</sup> Not only is it the MILF’s heartland, but it also is a historically contested region with a high density of current and former insurgents, warlords and security forces. Traditionally, Maguindanao was ruled by several families who either took turns in steering the province or distributed the spoils (provincial, congressional and local positions) among themselves. For decades, violence was a recognised tool for resolving conflicts – from the political vendettas of the 1950s and 1960s in an undivided Maguindanao (before Moro rebels started seizing towns and villages in the province) to modern-day feuds that can mushroom in small villages and large towns alike.

The reign of the Ampatuan clan during the Gloria Macapagal Arroyo presidency (2001-2010) represented the height of dynastic rule in the province. The family ran Maguindanao like a feudal fiefdom. Under patriarch Andal Ampatuan, Sr’s guidance, the family not only secured crucial support from Manila, but also kept enemies – political rivals and the MILF – in check. Several skirmishes pitted MILF commanders against Ampatuan militias, often supported by the military and police.<sup>52</sup> The clan aimed to control its fief by all means, resorting to violence whenever the status quo was challenged.<sup>53</sup>

The 2009 Maguindanao massacre, a particularly brutal example of such violence, proved the Ampatuans’ downfall. That year, a politician from a rival family, Esmael “Toto” Mangudadatu, ran for governor, challenging the clan’s monopoly. In November, a combination of police and paramilitary forces loyal to the Ampatuans stopped Toto’s convoy on the road in broad daylight and killed 58 people – members of the Mangudadatu family and journalists accompanying them on the way to file his candidacy papers. Every member of Mangudadatu’s delegation died, bar the candidate himself, who had not joined the convoy. National authorities detained Andal Ampatuan, Sr, along with his sons, and launched a manhunt for over 200 suspects. The event triggered nationwide indignation and led to the Ampatuans’ fall from grace. Toto won the 2010 election, and two subsequent terms, remaining in office until 2019.

Toto and the Mangudadatus adopted a different governing style. They built coalitions with key clan leaders early on, switched allies when convenient and secured turf by placing relatives in key positions, starting with Toto’s brothers. He forged alliances with mayors, as well as with other officials in the Autonomous Region and Manila. He partly forgave the Ampatuans, who were pariahs in the massacre’s immediate aftermath, exploiting divisions within the family rather than shunting it aside entirely. Several towns remained under the control of wives of imprisoned Ampatuans.

---

<sup>51</sup> Crisis Group interview, military officer, Manila, 7 December 2019. See also “Conflict Alert 2019: War Makes States”, International Alert, 2019, pp. xii-xiii.

<sup>52</sup> Conflicts with the Ampatuan militias hit the MILF’s 105th and 118th Base Command units particularly hard. Crisis Group interview, civil society leader, Cotabato City, 25 November 2019.

<sup>53</sup> See “‘They Own the People’: The Ampatuans, State-Backed Militias and Killings in the Philippines”, Human Rights Watch, November 2010.

Toto's strategy appears, however, to have backfired – at least temporarily. The Ampatuans slowly regained strength, winning more mayoral positions in the 2013 and 2016 elections. The final reversal of fortune came in 2019 when Bai Mariam Sangki-Mangudadatu was elected governor, defeating Toto's brother Freddie.<sup>54</sup> Bai Mariam occupies an unusual position in politics. She is married to Suharto "Teng" Mangudadatu, governor of Sultan Kudarat province and son of traditional leader Datu Pax Mangudadatu, who also happens to be Toto's uncle.<sup>55</sup> The two branches of the Mangudadatu clan hold sway on the Maguindanao side (Toto and his brothers) and the Sultan Kudarat side (Teng and Datu Pax) of Lake Buluan, respectively.<sup>56</sup> But Bai Mariam is an Ampatuan by blood. Her rise altered the balance of power: her branch of the Mangudadatus is now in control in Maguindanao; and, because of her lineage, her victory signified the Ampatuans' return to prominence.

Her victory astounded observers of Maguindanao politics. First, her opponent Freddie, as Toto's brother, had tremendous resources at his disposal. Secondly, Bai Mariam is Maguindanao's first woman governor. Through the combination of her aristocratic lineage, pragmatic campaign and caring public image, the "eagle of Maguindanao", as her supporters dub her, overcame the province's patriarchal traditions. Her political strategy involved forging alliances with families eager to settle scores with Toto (such as the Masturas and Midtimbangs) and, importantly, with local MILF leaders, whose political elevation after the BARMM's creation meant that they were well positioned to mobilise voters.<sup>57</sup> Bai Mariam will likely run for governor again in 2022, in which case the votes available in hundreds of MILF-supporting communities in Maguindanao will give her a strong incentive to buy into the BARMM and press smaller political players to do the same.

The power dynamic between the Ampatuans and Mangudadatus shifted again in December 2019, after a court found eight Ampatuans, including five high-ranking clan members, guilty of murder in the Maguindanao massacre case.<sup>58</sup> On 24 December, gunmen ambushed an Ampatuan vice mayor-turned-star witness for the prosecution.<sup>59</sup> He survived the attack, but tensions are likely to linger in central Mindanao towns such as Shariff Aguak and environs that are known as Ampatuan strongholds. While Islamist militancy is arguably the principal challenge to peace and order in Maguindanao, clan conflict is not going to wither away.

---

<sup>54</sup> Bai Mariam is the daughter of Ali Sangki, a cousin of Andal Ampatuan, Sr. Sangki, another strong clan representative, was appointed in January 2020 as the 79th member of the BTA.

<sup>55</sup> It is widely rumoured that Datu Pax Mangudadatu will run in the regional elections in 2022. Crisis Group interview, Manila, 12 December 2019.

<sup>56</sup> This division stems from a previous conflict between Datu Pax and Datu Pua, his brother and Toto's father. Crisis Group interview, political analyst, Manila, 11 November 2019. The brothers patched up their personal relationship, but the two branches of the family do not act as one.

<sup>57</sup> Some sources claim that Bai Mariam won MILF's support in the May 2019 election by promising to back MILF personalities in 2022. Crisis Group interview, peace process observer, Manila, 19 February 2020; Crisis Group analyst's field notes in a previous capacity, April 2019. Her campaigning in several MILF camps before the elections in May 2019 was also noted – a different approach from her rival.

<sup>58</sup> "DOCUMENT: Full decision on Ampatuan massacre case", Rappler.com, 19 December 2019. Two other Ampatuans were acquitted.

<sup>59</sup> "Shariff Aguak vice mayor Ampatuan, companions ambushed on Maguindanao highway", GMA Network, 24 December 2019. Two of his escorts died. The investigation has yet to yield a suspect.

## B. *Divided Turf*

Alongside the Ampatuan-Mangudadatu rivalry and Bai Mariam's relative control of the province, numerous other clans exist. Relations among those clans and between them and the MILF will shape the political balance in 2022 and determine risks of violence. The dense patchwork of clans, combined with the MILF's military potency – four of the former rebels' seven camps and at least ten of its 32 military base commands are located in the province – make Maguindanao critical to the transition's success. For the most part, in the transition's first year, the larger clans appear unlikely to challenge the MILF overtly, though they are likely to compete with one another for influence. The proliferation of feuds in the province, some of which have been going on for decades, makes this competition susceptible to violence.

Some families generally enjoy warm relations with the MILF. In the north, the dominant Masturas, who are linked to Maguindanao royal houses, have at times allied to the rebel group. The clan has long dominated politics in the Sultan Kudarat and Sultan Mastura municipalities.<sup>60</sup> In central Maguindanao, the Midtimbangs are also MILF-friendly, ruling over three towns and led by the brothers Ali and Midpantao.<sup>61</sup> The Paglas of Datu Paglas and Pendatuns of General Salipada K. Pendatun are two more old families whose bloodlines intertwine with those of MILF founder Salamat Hashim. All these families are likely to support the MILF in 2022, meaning a violent power struggle in their strongholds appears unlikely.

The Sinsuats and Semas, other prominent families, are also unlikely to resist the MILF's rule. The Sinsuats, who control the vote-rich town of Datu Odin, have traditionally allied with the national government, whichever party is in power. For their part, the Sema rose to prominence in the 1990s following the government's honeymoon with the MNLF after the 1996 peace deal. Muslimin Sema is one of the top MNLF officers of the Jikiri faction, married to Bai Sandra Sema (also a Sinsuat), who is known as the "mother" of the Bangsamoro Organic Law for her role in pushing it through Congress. Both the Sema and Sinsuat families have a big stake in the 2022 elections. The Semas are very likely to support the MILF, while the Sinsuat clan's stance may be more ambiguous, though for now it supports the BTA.<sup>62</sup>

Other Maguindanao clans are less friendly to the MILF but still unlikely to overtly challenge the former guerrillas. Families such as the Sultans and Mangansakans were initially sceptical of the new autonomous region. They feared losing their influence when villages in which they held sway voted to join the BARMM in January 2019. Yet both clans, traditional rivals of each other and competitors of the MILF,

---

<sup>60</sup> Clan leader Tucao Mastura was one of the leading MNLF rebels before he became mayor and enjoyed a political renaissance as a BTA member nominated by the MILF.

<sup>61</sup> Crisis Group interview, Datu Midpantao Midtimbang, BTA member and clan leader, Guindulungan, 25 November 2019.

<sup>62</sup> Some Sinsuat clan leaders are allied with MILF commanders, while others have unresolved conflicts with individual members. Only one Sinsuat is an active MILF commander in Maguindanao. As for the Semas, most members of the family are allied with the MILF leadership, while some followers of the clan are engaged in feuds with MILF members over land disputes.



now support the new region. Despite having no direct representation in the Transition Authority, they have allies in ministries and among some MILF cadre.<sup>63</sup>

Lastly, some families that had privileged positions in past decades but have recently been eclipsed may now re-emerge.<sup>64</sup> These smaller clans' clout is weak compared to that of bigger families. But because they control pockets of Maguindanao, they are nonetheless relevant for the provincial distribution of power in 2022. A few municipalities in Maguindanao are not ruled by well-known families. In some the leadership is contested, leaving the potential for future strife.<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> Sumulong Sultan, the mayor of Pikit, plays a role in local conflict resolution, partly due to his links to MILF commanders. The Mangansakans, Pikit's previous rulers, are rivals of Sultan. The MILF curbed their initial opposition to the Bangsamoro Organic Law through political incentives and the intercession of relatives. Crisis Group interviews, North Cotabato, 26 November 2019.

<sup>64</sup> For instance, the Matalam, Dilangalen, Candao, Biruar, Mangelen and Datumanong families.

<sup>65</sup> The disaster- (flooding) and conflict-ridden (militancy, feuds) town of Datu Salibo, Maguindanao is one example. Cotabato City is at the other side of the spectrum, with its mayor Cynthia Guiani following the long rule of the Semas.

## IV. In Marawi's Shadow: The Lanao Region

---

### A. Lanao del Sur

Lanao del Sur's politics are defined by kinship and its political order verges on dynastic rule. In more than one third of the province's municipalities, both top positions (mayor and vice mayor) are in the same family's hands, resulting in significant clan monopolies.<sup>66</sup> At the provincial level, the Alonto-Adiong's extended kinship network fills the most influential posts.<sup>67</sup> Core family members hold the most important positions: Mamintal "Bombit" Alonto-Adiong, Jr is governor, his son Mohammad Khalid "Mujam" is vice governor, his brother Ansaruddin is congressman from the 1st district and his cousin Yasser congressman from the 2nd district. The family won – or kept – all these positions in the May 2019 elections.

The Alonto-Adiong clan itself has dominated for decades. Positions in provincial boards and municipalities are held by a wider circle, including in-laws and allies. As the Alonto branch of the family is rooted in Maranao royalty, the coalition brings both the legitimacy of traditional power and control over the bureaucracy, fusing its interests into the administrative apparatus down to the village level. Marriages or political appointments act as tools for creating alliances, as does the delivery of development projects to areas outside the clan's traditional turf. Both are ways to secure backing from new allies.<sup>68</sup>

The MILF is weaker in Lanao del Sur than in Maguindanao.<sup>69</sup> Maranao elites have fewer ties to the movement, and its political weight diminished following the March 2012 death of the influential MILF cleric Aleem Abdul Aziz Mimbantas, a leader on the island. Moreover, despite offering to help, the MILF was mostly a bystander during the 2017 confrontation between Islamist militants and Philippines security forces over Marawi City, which ate into its social capital.<sup>70</sup> A clan leader said: "The MILF and MNLF are a spent force. For that reason, they will not win the elections. They can ask the clans to unite with them, but the clans might not respond positively. Clans always unite against an external force".<sup>71</sup>

For now, the Alonto-Adiongs are playing it safe. They publicly support the Transition Authority and cooperate with the new administration in carrying out projects in Lanao. Moreover, despite its comparative weakness, the MILF remains relevant in Lanao del Sur, due to its dominance in the transitional government and its potential ability to influence Marawi's reconstruction. Clans are well aware of its weight in the BTA. According to Vice Governor Mohammad Khalid Adiong, "The BARMM exists

---

<sup>66</sup> Data collected by Crisis Group.

<sup>67</sup> The marriage of Mamintal "Mike" Adiong, Sr to Soraya Alonto, daughter of the late Senator Domocao Alonto, a major Muslim politician, cemented the Alonto-Adiong coalition.

<sup>68</sup> Such ways of gaining influence can be seen, for instance, in projects in towns such as Balindong, along Lake Lanao. Crisis Group interview, 19 December 2019.

<sup>69</sup> Several forces of the MILF are located in Lanao del Norte, lessening the total number of fighters in Lanao del Sur province.

<sup>70</sup> For more on the battle of Marawi, see Crisis Group Report, *The Philippines: Militancy and the New Bangsamoro*, op. cit.

<sup>71</sup> Crisis Group interview, 19 December 2019.

and is a reality. The revolutionary groups of MILF and MNLF and government should go hand in hand”.<sup>72</sup>

Tensions could mount ahead of the 2022 vote. The Alonto-Adiong clan is setting up its own political party to contest the elections. It will likely hedge its bets until the last minute but could well field candidates against the MILF.<sup>73</sup> The propensity for feuding is relatively high in the province. Political competition could also serve as a trigger for battles between MILF and clan members, dragging in reinforcements from their respective allies.<sup>74</sup>

### B. *Marawi City*

The clans’ function as a social safety net was on display following the 2017 battle in Marawi when families, often from the most affected areas known as “ground zero”, provided immediate relief to their kin. Paradoxically, the armed groups leading the siege partly came from a family militia, namely – the Maute, which subsequently evolved into an Islamic State offshoot. Most of the Marawi clans, however, had to flee in the aftermath of the city’s takeover by militants. Instead of going to state-run evacuation centres, the majority of those who fled the fighting stayed with relatives. “Clans were there to help during the siege. When problems come, the clan is there”, one Lanao resident explained.<sup>75</sup> Absent state support, clans also took responsibility for the rehabilitation of mosques and madrasas. Despite Lanao’s propensity for *rido*, violence among the Maranaos did not spike in the wake of the months-long battle, largely because the state imposed martial law and displacement reduced the likelihood of interaction among rival families and individuals.<sup>76</sup>

Conditions for further conflict remain, however, due to the politicisation of returns (certain residents are allowed to visit their homes thanks to their political connections), competing land claims and issues related to land registration, as well as the lack of a masterplan for the city’s rehabilitation.<sup>77</sup> Private contractors selected for reconstruction are linked to local power brokers, such as the Alonto-Adiongs and another prominent family, the Macarambons. Clans once again dominate the marketplace, it appears, a development that could stir resentment among some of the area’s inhabitants, particularly if residents benefit little from reconstruction or struggle to return.<sup>78</sup> Traditional leaders such as the ulama or sultans appear reluctant to challenge the big families.<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> Crisis Group interview, Vice Governor Adiong, Marawi City, 10 December 2019.

<sup>73</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Marawi, 10 December 2019; Manila, 13 November 2019.

<sup>74</sup> *Rido*-related violence in Lanao del Sur occurs frequently, though it often goes unreported. Most such feuds stem from land disputes and political rivalries. Crisis Group interview, Manila, 8 December 2019. Crisis Group interview, Ziaur-Rahman Alonto Adiong, BTA member, Cotabato City, 28 November 2019.

<sup>75</sup> Crisis Group interview, Maranao local government official, Iligan, 19 December 2019.

<sup>76</sup> Crisis Group interview, community leader, Marawi, 20 December 2019.

<sup>77</sup> Crisis Group interview, royal clan member, Marawi, 10 December 2019. Crisis Group interview, community leader, Marawi, 20 December 2019.

<sup>78</sup> Karol Ilagan and Malou Mangahas, “Firms of clans among winners of Marawi road, housing deals”, Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 24 May 2018.

<sup>79</sup> Crisis Group interview, community leader, Marawi, 20 December 2019.

Marawi's recovery is a priority for the Bangsamoro Transition Authority, but it has adopted a cautious approach in the city given local sensitivities. The transitional authority could be a game changer for reconstruction efforts. Its mandate includes the ability to award funds from the block grant it gets from Manila. But to the city's local government the authority is a latecomer, created after the battle. According to one local official, the city has sent a clear message: "Pave your own way [for the rehabilitation]. Assist us, do not antagonise us".<sup>80</sup> Indeed, the BTA has chosen not to challenge existing power networks, opting for a cooperative approach with Maranaos through confidence building and dialogue. It is, in other words, respecting the local government's wishes.

Still, advocating more forcefully for the city's reconstruction and the displaced population's prompt return would be a good way for the BTA to win over Maranaos. It could step up its efforts, possibly through small-scale economic interventions for evacuees – livelihood projects, improved service delivery or technical skills training, for example – and lobbying in Manila for redress of the population's grievances, particularly compensation for property lost during the battle and the right to return. Failure to improve conditions in Marawi could undercut local confidence in the new autonomous region. It could prompt the Alonto-Adionsgs and other kingmakers to seek office directly instead of exploring an alliance with the MILF, raising the likelihood of armed competition in the province. Moreover, further delays in Marawi's rehabilitation could prompt disgruntled locals to turn again to militant groups.<sup>81</sup>

### C. *The Case of Lanao del Norte*

The Lanao del Norte province, which remains outside the BARMM despite its large Moro population, is in the hands of the Dimaporos. Descendants of one of the most powerful Moro clan leaders of the 1970s, the Dimaporos are one of few families to hold power continuously since then, impervious to shifts in national and regional politics.<sup>82</sup> Holding Lanao del Norte's governorship and both congressional seats, the Dimaporos opposed joining the BARMM, mostly because of the proposed inclusion of six municipalities in the Bangsamoro territory. In seeing its territory shrink by losing the six towns to the Bangsamoro, the family would have lost prestige, a share of its internal revenue allotment and several thousand potential voters in future elections.<sup>83</sup> It thus called on Lanao del Norte residents to vote against inclusion. Thus, while a majority in the six towns voted to join the BARMM, the rest of the province, influenced by the Dimaporos, outvoted the six towns.<sup>84</sup>

Despite being excluded from the BARMM, the six towns and its total population of around 160,000 residents remain in the MILF's sphere of influence, particularly

---

<sup>80</sup> Crisis Group interview, member of Marawi local government unit, Iligan, 19 December 2019.

<sup>81</sup> Crisis Group interview, Manila, 7 December 2019.

<sup>82</sup> Mohammad Ali Dimaporo, a former Lanao del Sur governor, was allied with the long-time president, Ferdinand Marcos. His successors re-emerged as lords of Lanao del Norte.

<sup>83</sup> In addition, the Dimaporos highlighted security implications. The governor made clear that she considered the six municipalities to be a "buffer zone" against external threats, which is why their continuous inclusion in the province is crucial.

<sup>84</sup> Crisis Group interview, Maranao civil society leader, 18 December 2019. Crisis Group interview, MNLf member, Cotabato City, 15 December 2019.

that of Abdullah Macapaar, alias “Commander Bravo”.<sup>85</sup> Their residents’ perceptions are a barometer of the BTA’s ability to reach out to people outside the Bangsamoro’s core territory.<sup>86</sup> Their demands are basic: better education, greater economic opportunity and a say in their own governance.<sup>87</sup>

The six towns have put their hopes in the BARMM extending economic development assistance.<sup>88</sup> If the MILF-led BTA does not meet these expectations, the towns might return to having minority status in a province associated with dynastic rule and unequal development, meaning that their residents would again fall behind. Anger among MILF members in the area at BTA representatives could lead to further disarray in a province that has traditionally been among the first battlefields in any confrontation between the state and Moro rebels.<sup>89</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> “Commander Bravo” was born in Munai, one of the six municipalities that wanted to join the BARMM.

<sup>86</sup> Apart from Lanao del Norte there are other areas outside BARMM with a high concentration of Moro Muslims, and several MILF base commands. If they feel excluded, violence could be an option to express grievances, unless the tension is contained.

<sup>87</sup> Crisis Group interview, Maranao civil society leader, Iligan, 18 December 2019.

<sup>88</sup> The Organic Law stipulates such assistance in general in Article VI, Section 12. Representatives brought up a bill in the BTA – so-called Parliament Bill 15 – aiming to establish an office, which should address the needs of these communities outside the core territory.

<sup>89</sup> The last major conflict between MILF and the government broke out in 2008 in Lanao del Norte.

## V. The Sulu Archipelago: Between Cooperation and Contestation

---

The Sulu archipelago encompasses the three island provinces of Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi.<sup>90</sup> Although the islands are politically and ethnically divided, four factors link them: common history, geographical proximity, economic connectivity and an aversion to mainland domination.<sup>91</sup> The BTA's ability to govern the islands will be a litmus test of its ability to unite different clans and ethnic groups.<sup>92</sup> Three families – the Hatamans in Basilan, the Tans in Sulu and the Salis in Tawi-Tawi – are de facto the uncontested rulers of the three provinces. Their perceptions, as well of those of local elites more broadly, of the BARMM will play a large role in determining whether the new autonomous region succeeds or fails.

### A. Basilan

Of the Bangsamoro region's five provinces, Basilan has made the biggest strides toward peace. Populated largely by Yakan and Tausug Muslims (as well as Christians in Isabela and Lamitan cities), the island is far safer than it was during its lawless past, when inhabitants suffered regular kidnappings and clashes between government and Moro armed groups, including the MILF but also the loose network of militants known as the Abu Sayyaf Group.<sup>93</sup> The gains are attributable mostly to the provincial government's efforts to crack down on insurgents – working with the Philippines military – and delivering basic services and infrastructure projects in far-flung areas.<sup>94</sup> Over recent years, the MILF helped secure the island's south-eastern corner, where members of Abu Sayyaf once proliferated.<sup>95</sup> Observers expect that if it continues on the same path, Basilan could be one of the safest areas in Muslim Mindanao in a few years' time.<sup>96</sup>

Today's Basilan is the domain of one family, and in particular one man, Mujiv Hataman, who governed the whole Autonomous Region between 2011-2019 and is now a congressman. Some see Hataman, the brother of provincial governor Jim Saliman, as a progressive politician outside the traditional sphere, while others portray him as yet another clan leader, albeit of a modern type.<sup>97</sup> In reality, he appears to be both reformer and opportunistic traditional politician, combining progressive poli-

---

<sup>90</sup> These areas are mostly populated by the Tausug, Yakan and the Sama ethno-linguistic groups.

<sup>91</sup> Crisis Group interview, BTA staff officer from Tawi-Tawi, Cotabato City, 28 November 2019.

<sup>92</sup> "The Sulu Archipelago and the Philippine Peace Process", Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 29 May 2015.

<sup>93</sup> Crisis Group interview, academic, Manila, 23 November 2019.

<sup>94</sup> Alexander Douglas, "Order amid chaos: tracing the roots of Basilan's recent outbreak of peace", *Aspistrategist.com.au*, 21 June 2018.

<sup>95</sup> Crisis Group interview, MILF official, Zamboanga City, 21 December 2019. The MILF contributed by first, chasing Abu Sayyaf members out of areas of MILF influence, and secondly, resolving a leadership contest within its 114th Base Command.

<sup>96</sup> Crisis Group interview, journalist, Cotabato City, 27 November 2019. The governor also expressed this view at a meeting with international NGOs and UN agencies on 5 September 2019. Crisis Group analyst's field notes in a previous capacity.

<sup>97</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Davao, 14 October 2019; Manila, 13 November 2019.

cies and a consultative approach with credentials as a skilled tactician who survived the bloody clan-based politics of his home turf.<sup>98</sup>

Observers consider Hataman's Autonomous Region tenure successful on the simple grounds that his predecessors were worse, though they also recognise his political skills. His approach to regional rule was non-adversarial. He allowed provincial governors across the Bangsamoro room to run their own fiefs, built good relations with Manila and gained credibility among civil society and international partners. He opened space for development projects across the Bangsamoro, while together with his brother protecting and tending to his turf in Basilan.<sup>99</sup>

Hataman enjoys the support of many young professionals and ex-Autonomous Region employees who are now Transition Authority members (Hataman himself is an invisible – not holding a seat – but important presence in the BTA) as well as President Duterte's grudging respect.<sup>100</sup> Despite suffering losses in the 2019 elections, his party, Anak Mindanao, is one of the few non-MILF entities in the region equipped with party machinery.<sup>101</sup> Over recent years, the Hatamans have sidelined their traditional rivals, the Akbar clan – fighting between the two clans was once rife but is now almost non-existent given the Hatamans' dominance.<sup>102</sup>

Hataman and his brother, Saliman, supported the MILF during the campaign to create the new autonomous region, but likely consider the MILF's leadership of the regional government a midway step toward the Bangsamoro's future dispensation. They aim to embody a new type of Bangsamoro leadership – rooted in traditional politics but implementing more institutionalised and effective policies. Mujiv Hataman may well be aspiring to outsmart the ex-rebels and take over the BARMM in 2022 after the period of MILF transition rule.<sup>103</sup>

The family's consolidation of power has been vital in curbing clan conflict in Basilan. Yet the recent arrest of two Abu Sayyaf bomb makers in Isabela, the explosion of an improvised device killing an army officer in Maluso and a violent feud among families associated with the MNLF in the Tabuan-Lasa municipality, which displaced some 2,000 people, show that the province still faces dangers.<sup>104</sup> Likewise, hundreds of MILF guerrillas on the island – the MILF's strongest presence anywhere in the

---

<sup>98</sup> Crisis Group interview, civil society leader, 28 November 2019.

<sup>99</sup> Crisis Group interview, 20 December 2019.

<sup>100</sup> Crisis Group interview, academic, Marawi City, 20 December 2019; journalist, Cotabato City, 27 November 2019. Hataman is also deputy speaker of the Philippine Congress after his time as Autonomous Region regional governor.

<sup>101</sup> The party now has only one member in Congress, as opposed to two in 2016.

<sup>102</sup> The Aquino government arranged a peace in 2012. "Basilan's warring families reconcile", Rappler.com, 5 June 2012.

<sup>103</sup> Crisis Group interview, MILF official, Zamboanga City, 21 December 2019.

<sup>104</sup> Al Jacinto, "2 Abu Sayyaf members captured", *Manila Times*, 16 January 2020; Teofilo Garcia, Jr, "Basilan village turns into ghost town as MNLF factions clash", Philippine News Agency, 15 January 2020; Roel Pareño, "Army officer killed in Basilan blast", *The Philippine Star*, 16 March 2020. The conflict in Tabuan-Lasa is rooted in electoral competition.

island provinces – could in a worst-case scenario express their dissatisfaction violently should the peace deal run aground.<sup>105</sup>

## B. Sulu

Although several families vie for power in Sulu, Sakur Tan's clan has dominated the political landscape for decades. His reputation is mixed: he maintains a measure of stability in what has traditionally been a volatile province albeit reportedly through patronage and often violence.<sup>106</sup> A survivor of the chaos that befell Sulu during the Moro rebellion, Tan has both revolutionary and establishment credentials – his father was a mayor and his mother related to several MNLF rebels – and rose from town councillor to three-term provincial governor. Tan tried to stop the 2019 plebiscite from taking place in Sulu. Hoping to keep the island out of the new region, he claimed that the Organic Law was unconstitutional and the Bangsamoro concept a mainland imposition on the Tausug. Sulu voted against joining but remains in the new region because it had been part of the previous Autonomous Region and had to follow the majority of the former region's residents who voted in favour. Since that vote, Tan has abstained from overtly criticising the new region and its transitional government.<sup>107</sup>

Tan's *modus operandi* is not an Ampatuan-like mix of brute force and nepotism – although he still plays the dynastic card when necessary and reportedly maintains a large private army.<sup>108</sup> Instead, he works mostly through the government system, using co-opted mayors to control the province. By letting them run their municipalities as they wish as long as they are obedient, and by distributing funds in time of need, he secures their allegiance – and the votes they mobilise during elections – while discouraging challenges.<sup>109</sup> Tan also appears to be playing a long game. His son will challenge one of his few rivals, Abdulmunir Arbison, in the 2022 congressional election in Sulu's 2nd district, a constituency that would add to the family's economic clout.<sup>110</sup> Oil and gas sales from Sulu's main island, Jolo, and investments on the Zamboanga peninsula already offer him a steady stream of capital.<sup>111</sup> Tan also serves as

---

<sup>105</sup> Several MILF commanders from Basilan were given positions in the wider peace architecture framework (for instance committees related to decommissioning or socio-economic transformation of camps to communities) but not the BTA.

<sup>106</sup> Crisis Group interview, MNLF member, Manila, 23 November 2019. A military officer describing Tan said: "In a way, he is a paradox. He gives [us] some sort of stability, but at the same time he is a warlord". Crisis Group interview, Manila, 16 November 2019.

<sup>107</sup> The Supreme Court did not stop the plebiscite, but it also did not formally dismiss the petition.

<sup>108</sup> Tan's son Samier is the congressman representing Sulu's 1st legislative district, and his daughter Shihla Hayudini-Tan is the mayor of Maimbung.

<sup>109</sup> Crisis Group interviews, former Autonomous Region official, Manila, 15 November 2019; civil society leaders from Sulu, Zamboanga City, 21 December 2019. Tan's direct political control reaches only two municipalities in Sulu (Maimbung and Patikul). Indirectly, he controls the whole province. His political rivals hold sway in only a few towns, such as the MNLF stronghold of Indanan. See also "The Sulu Archipelago and the Philippine Peace Process", Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict Report No. 20, 29 May 2015.

<sup>110</sup> Crisis Group interview, Zamboanga City, 21 December 2019. The district houses significant revenue-generating enterprises like the Siasi wharf and the Lugus gas project.

<sup>111</sup> Crisis Group interview, former Autonomous Region official, Manila, 15 November 2019.



spokesman for the five sultans of Sulu, who represent a cultural institution among the Tausug, the majority on the island, giving him additional legitimacy with many of the province's inhabitants.

Tan's position toward the new region will likely be shaped by his primary aim of self-preservation. Known to be pragmatic and willing to compromise, he will assess the benefits he and Sulu will get out of the BARMM and its popularity among the Tausug before deciding whether or not to openly challenge the MILF in the 2022 elections.<sup>112</sup> Challenging the MILF could, for example, entail uniting with other provincial leaders in the Sulu archipelago to block the MILF from winning the majority of seats in the new parliament. Although thus far Tan has kept lines of communication to the BTA open, he voiced concerns toward the end of 2019 about ex-Autonomous Region employees from the island provinces who received no compensation from the BTA.<sup>113</sup> His statements were politically astute, striking a chord with those officials and implicitly warning the Transition Authority that he was not afraid of criticising it.

Tan's opponents in Sulu include traditionally powerful families, notably the Arbisons, Estinos and Loongs, supported by an MNLF leader, Yusop Jikiri. Those families led the yes campaign during the plebiscite. The campaign went better than most expected, given Tan's resistance to the new region, though Sulu still voted against the Bangsamoro Organic Law.<sup>114</sup> During the May 2019 elections, the anti-Tan coalition failed to topple Sakur Tan.<sup>115</sup> Since then, the Arbisons, Estinos and part of the Loong family have gravitated further toward both Jikiri and the MILF.<sup>116</sup> Motivated in part by their opposition to the Tans, they see the MILF's influence in the transitional government as a counterweight.<sup>117</sup>

The MILF must tread carefully in Sulu. Constructive engagement with Tan is important to a smooth transition in the province. It could be a challenge: whatever their affiliation, most of the BTA's Tausug members, and to a degree the MILF itself, are more closely aligned with the MNLF – the most powerful armed group in Sulu – than with Sakur Tan.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, while the majority on Sulu's inhabitants – including Tan allies – have displayed no outward hostility toward the new regional authority, the province as a whole does not yet seem convinced by the BTA. The transitional

---

<sup>112</sup> An example of his pragmatism is his rapprochement with former rival Mayor Wahid Sahidullah of Tongkil. Tan paid Wahidullah a substantial amount in damages after a feud between the two. Crisis Group interview, Zamboanga City, 21-23 December 2019.

<sup>113</sup> Crisis Group interview, MILF member, Cotabato City, 27 November 2019.

<sup>114</sup> Crisis Group interview, Manila, 23 November 2019. The plebiscite lost by only around 30,000 votes. Some government sectors also promoted the yes campaign, focusing on the benefits that the Bangsamoro could bring to Sulu.

<sup>115</sup> As in the plebiscite, the opposition – represented by clan leader Benjamin Loong – lost by a margin of around 29,000 votes.

<sup>116</sup> Crisis Group interview, political analyst, Quezon City, 22 October 2019; Sulu civil society leader, 21 December 2019. The Loongs and the MILF already reached an initial understanding in late 2014. "The Sulu Archipelago and the Philippine Peace Process", *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>117</sup> Crisis Group interviews, civil society leaders, Zamboanga City, 21 December 2019; military official, Zamboanga City 23 December 2019.

<sup>118</sup> The Misuari and Jikiri groups. Nur Misuari is the founder of the MNLF – his group is not represented in the BTA. The Jikiri group is represented with ten members.

authority will need to take steps to deliver services on the island and, most likely, boost cooperation with local elites, including Tan, on projects and policies. Failure to do so would not necessarily risk conflict, given the MILF's minimal presence in the province. But it would mean that the entities risk drifting apart, worsening the sense that the Bangsamoro is an outside imposition, and Sulu would remain volatile and prone to feuding.

### C. *Tawi-Tawi*

Tawi-Tawi, with its 307 islands, is one of Mindanao's most peaceful provinces. Violence occurs, but *rido* is infrequent and armed groups largely absent, resulting in relative calm.<sup>119</sup> Socio-political differences persist between the province's main island and the myriad little ones. Physical distances among the islands mean that family dynasties generally cannot grow into large networks. The exception is the big island, where the Que family has dominated the capital Bongao, which hosts the province's largest port and market.<sup>120</sup>

At the provincial level, newly elected governor Yshmael "Mang" Sali dominates. Elected in 2019, he is a distant cousin of his predecessor, Rashidin Matba. Both Matba and Sali hail from powerful and interrelated Tausug clans. Both families supported the campaign for the new autonomous region in 2018 which led to overwhelming approval of the Organic Law in Tawi-Tawi.<sup>121</sup> In recent years, political competition on the island has been non-violent, largely involving patronage.<sup>122</sup>

During the Transition Authority's initial outreach efforts, provincial elites who engaged with MILF representatives were reportedly positive about cooperation with the new entity but conditioned their support on more infrastructure and development projects for the province.<sup>123</sup> Governor Sali claims to back the MILF's hopes to impose "moral governance" and his son Al-Sayed is a BTA member, ensuring close communication with BARMM institutions.<sup>124</sup> No matter which clan is in power, the Tawi-Tawi elite has traditionally stood at the periphery of the Bangsamoro and tends to go along with the prevailing regional power. The province has nothing to lose cooperating with the new region and its government.

Still, the Transition Authority should not be complacent. Over time, Sali and his allies could opt for an alliance with fellow island elites outside the MILF if they believe they would gain from it, preferring a weak BARMM and thus risking further division between the islands and mainland Mindanao.<sup>125</sup> The BTA should try to

---

<sup>119</sup> Crisis Group interview, Tawi-Tawi civil society leader, Zamboanga City, 23 December 2019.

<sup>120</sup> The present mayor is Jimuel Que, who followed his brother Jasper. Their father, Albert Tan Que, was the first Que to rule Bongao.

<sup>121</sup> One of the main movers behind the bill was congresswoman Ruby Sahali, from the clan that dominated the province until the Matbas re-emerged. Rashidin Matba held the governor's post from 2001 to 2004 and then again from 2016 to 2019.

<sup>122</sup> The Sahalis may be biding their time for 2022 but are now relatively quiet.

<sup>123</sup> Crisis Group interview, MILF member, Cotabato City, 27 November 2019.

<sup>124</sup> "Moral governance" is a concept introduced by MILF leaders as a leitmotif for the transition and can be summed up as good governance with an Islamic tinge. For instance, consultations at the capitol in Bongao are said to take place on Fridays, the Muslim day of prayer. Crisis Group interview, Zamboanga City, 23 December 2019.

<sup>125</sup> Crisis Group interview, Zamboanga City, 23 December 2019.

demonstrate that a strong region would bring sufficient development to the island, whether through direct projects or outside investment. Winning Tawi-Tawi over by giving its elites a chance to buy in to the Bangsamoro and raise their economic profiles could allow the Transition Authority to assert itself and reinforce the new region's credibility in the islands.

## VI. Dealing with Kinship-based Politics in the Bangsamoro

---

The MILF's relations with clans matters for several reasons. Most fundamentally, they will play a key role in determining whether the new autonomous region is successful and, more broadly, whether the peace process endures and levels of violence drop significantly. The MILF's transition from rebel group to central political player in the regional government also depends in part on its relations with clans. Indeed, tensions between the MILF and clans could not only spill over into armed confrontation but also undercut confidence in the new region among elites and the general population alike. Finally, dealing with clans wisely would also afford the Transition Authority an opportunity to end some of the violent feuding that has cost lives and destabilised the region.

The MILF has a delicate balancing act before it. On one hand, it will want to avoid alienating powerful clans, seek political and electoral arrangements, and compromise on measures that challenge clans' economic clout. After all, as a BTA member put it, "traditional leaders will always be there, they just go with the flow", and either bypassing or confronting them would undercut the MILF's ability to govern.<sup>126</sup> Whether on the mainland or in the islands, the newly established BARMM will not cause clans to fade away or lose their *raison d'être* in the Bangsamoro's political order. As a Maranao local government official said:

In the end, the clan or family will stand for you, kill for you, buy for you, be there for you. You focus on them, because only they will help, and you need to return the favour. The common good is difficult, when your in-group depends on you.<sup>127</sup>

Reaching arrangements with the clans is thus relatively urgent, considering that elections are forthcoming in 2022 with campaigning most likely kicking off the year before.

On the other hand, the MILF will need to deliver on its promise of "moral governance" – improving services, stamping out graft and diluting a political culture of feudalism – which almost certainly will necessitate strengthening the role of formal institutions and, conversely, weakening the clans' power. This task in turn will require passage of legislative codes for the administration to function and bolstering the role of ministries as well as, more generally, progressively limiting the predatory aspects of clan rule by reducing the big families' political and economic omnipotence.

Forging alliances with the clans' major power brokers – many of whom rely on patronage – is at least somewhat in tension with this goal. In addition, these arrangements can always fall prey to the zero-sum nature of politics in the Bangsamoro: pacts often do not last, as they are personality-driven and opportunistic.<sup>128</sup> Striking that balance will require different approaches in different parts of the Bangsamoro region.

---

<sup>126</sup> Crisis Group interview, BTA member, 14 October 2019.

<sup>127</sup> Crisis Group interview, Iligan City, 19 December 2019.

<sup>128</sup> Crisis Group interview, political analyst, Manila, 11 November 2019.

Maguindanao might be the province where clans and the MILF are most likely to work out accommodations because of physical proximity, ethnic ties and a politically favourable environment.<sup>129</sup> The governor, Bai Mariam, and the majority of Maguindanao mayors and clans look upon the BARMM approvingly, acknowledging its birth pangs.<sup>130</sup> It is also the province where such an arrangement might most significantly reduce the risk of MILF members clashing with clans because of the high density of MILF base commands and political militias. If rebels and politicians find an agreement, their followers likely will not jeopardise peace by engaging in local violence. For now, the risk of conflict is contained, but to keep peace the MILF needs to maintain this stability – controlling their fighters, proactively resolving disputes and working with the governor. Should the transition go awry, the risk of conflict inevitably would increase.

In Lanao del Sur, the MILF faces a culture of dynastic politics as well as clans whose strength equals, or even exceeds, its own in the capital but also in various towns. It should approach the Alonto-Adions cautiously, without hubris, and use its Maranao leaders to show commitment to the province and to tackling its various challenges, particularly Marawi City's rehabilitation. Toppling the larger clans is unrealistic. Instead, the MILF should opt for some sort of coalition and be open to political concessions in exchange for at least some support from the provincial authorities. On the local level, it can actively work with clans to strengthen conflict resolution in *rido*-affected towns and reduce the number of feuds.

In Lanao del Norte, rivalry existed between the MILF's Commander Bravo and the Dimaporo family until after the plebiscite. Although both now focus on their respective territories, the friction is unlikely to disappear since the six MILF-affiliated towns that voted to join the BARMM are caught between the BTA's promise to improve their situation and the political reality of remaining under the Dimaporos. Its delicate geographical position, past history of conflict and the inherent tension between MILF and traditional clans could lead to violence.

The situation in the Sulu archipelago is different: with no significant presence in Sulu or Tawi-Tawi, and a limited one in Basilan, the MILF can only rely on the BTA to deal with the population, and needs to work skilfully with MNLF allies in parliament to face the likes of the local strongmen, Hataman, Tan and Sali, and ultimately reach political accommodation with some of them. In order to fully stabilise the province and manage combatants' expectations, Basilan's leadership and the BTA will need to fortify their ties. Some sort of agreement is needed with Governor Tan, as he is the BARMM's strongest critic in the sub-region. A deal with Tawi-Tawi might be the easiest to accomplish, considering the province's ability to compromise. For now, risk of violent confrontation on the islands is low, but a widening gap between islands and the mainland could spell political failure for the Bangsamoro.<sup>131</sup>

---

<sup>129</sup> The province is close to the BARMM capital, Cotabato, and the dominance of Maguindanaos both in the parliament and the MILF Central Committee heightens the prospects of cooperation with the new regional government. Maguindanaos constitute roughly one third of the BTA.

<sup>130</sup> Crisis Group interview, Bai Mariam Sangki-Mangudadatu, Isulan, 24 November 2019.

<sup>131</sup> For instance, some observers think that Maguindanao will receive preferential treatment for assistance from the BTA, due to the MILF's strong presence in the province. Crisis Group correspond-

While political deals are essential, they need to be supplemented by a systematic and durable resolution to feuding if the new region is to leave violence behind. Clan politics at the elite level tend to involve competition for power, but the immediate concern for the Bangsamoro population is security. Apart from traditional clan-based justice, there have been several attempts to introduce formal resolution mechanisms. The Regional Reconciliation and Unification Commission, a body created in 1993 and brought to life during Hataman's tenure as regional governor from 2012 onward was mandated to look into *rido*. It was abolished, however, with the BARMM's creation in early 2019, and subsumed under the Bangsamoro Ministry of Public Order and Safety.<sup>132</sup> While its integration in the new administrative setup is welcome, this former mechanism will need to be strengthened with funds, staffing and expertise if it is to become effective.

The inter-agency Peace and Order Councils in municipalities, provinces and regions are also tasked with conflict management. Their performance has been uneven and largely dependent on the lead convener – usually a governor or mayor – and they tend to be ad hoc bodies rather than permanent ones. The relevant armed group leaders, whether individual MILF commanders or heads of political militias, have often been excluded from council meetings, rendering several resolutions meaningless.

The MILF itself has several conflict management mechanisms. The Task Force Ittihad is a unit designed primarily to intervene as a “buffer force” between feuding MILF commanders – who sometimes clash along clan lines. Two other task forces were assigned to deal with internal conflict.<sup>133</sup>

These various bodies have decent but far from perfect track records. While they are capable of ending hostilities – albeit sometimes with delay – they tend not to discuss how to address local causes of conflicts – land ownership, political competition, historical vendettas – leaving them at risk of reigniting. The MILF's armed wing may be unable to influence other Bangsamoro conflict parties, while the state security forces cannot always bring MILF elements to heel. As for intra-clan feuds, more often than not they are resolved informally, rather than by a state institution. As a local politician from the island provinces explained: “Government institutions don't always work and there's no justice. I know I'm a politician myself, but I need to defend my people”.<sup>134</sup> As kinship plays a role both in maintaining peace and sustaining violence, the BTA, the MILF and the national government should focus on interventions that support the former and decrease the latter. For their part, donors should support initiatives with needs assessments, funding and technical expertise.

---

ence, gender and conflict analyst, 24 November 2019. Crisis Group interviews, BTA staff members from Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, Cotabato City, 27 and 28 November 2019.

<sup>132</sup> Crisis Group field notes, North Cotabato, 26 November 2019. Originally, it was to look into *rido* resolution as mandated by the Autonomous Region.

<sup>133</sup> These are Task Force Conflict Resolution, which covers areas often under the influence of the MILF's Inner Guard Base Command, and Task Force Reconciliation and Conflict Management, which is confined to North Cotabato. The latter is formally under Task Force Reconciliation. Crisis Group interviews, MILF officials, Cotabato City, 26 and 27 November 2019.

<sup>134</sup> Crisis Group interview, clan leader, Zamboanga City, 23 December 2019.

### A. *Alliance Building*

In light of the political fragmentation that prevails across the Bangsamoro, alliance building will be key in the run-up to the 2022 elections. As the dominant force in the transitional Bangsamoro government, the MILF risks being confronted by a coalition of influential clans if it does not engage traditional leaders.<sup>135</sup> In a worst case scenario, stronger polarisation in the Bangsamoro before and during the polls could result in both violent elite competition and proxy violence in communities, whether carried out by MILF members or militias. Likewise, an MILF electoral loss in 2022 could result in violence in hot-spots where its main competitors will be eager to fill the power vacuum. By seeking partners beyond traditionally MILF-friendly families, the group could reduce any resentment and remaining clan distrust. Clan leaders are well aware of their electoral relevance and expect the MILF to reach out. “It’s dawning on the MILF that they will have to open up”, said one.<sup>136</sup>

How far the MILF will go in doing that is uncertain. The question is whether, in areas where its influence is weakest, such as the Sulu archipelago, the MILF will reach out to major power brokers – Sakur Tan in Sulu and Mujiv Hataman in Basilan. Doing so could help ensure greater harmony in the region, lowering the risk that disenfranchised sectors turn to violence, as could happen if the islands’ elites fall out with the BTA or if the MILF fails to secure a parliamentary majority. It could also help improve the perception of the MILF in the eyes of island elite politicians who have been most critical of the organisation. Considering Tawi-Tawi’s support for the passage of the Organic Law, an MILF overture to the Salis is more likely to succeed than efforts to reach agreement with Basilan and Sulu strongmen.<sup>137</sup>

### B. *Mainstreaming Local Conflict Resolution Mechanisms*

In a region where clan fragmentation is the rule and *rido* is deeply entrenched, state-led mechanisms cannot work in isolation from local realities. A body like the Ministry of Public Order and Safety can help resolve clan conflicts, but community-based mechanisms are equally important. Among the Maranao, for instance, several dispute resolution systems exist, often emphasising common ancestry as a way to minimise conflict.<sup>138</sup> These arrangements enjoy local legitimacy insofar as they are based on Maranao cultural practices and traditions. Likewise, indigenous people in the BARMM have their own ways of settling conflicts, which local governments have at times recognised and mainstreamed.<sup>139</sup> Communities where the MILF is influential tend to rely on Sharia courts or councils of elders to mediate disputes.

One effective way to promote peacemaking is to ensure that Islamic and traditional approaches are reflected in mediation practices. For the same reason, it makes sense to strengthen locally led dispute resolution bodies, such as Peace and Order Councils at the municipal, provincial or regional levels – by ensuring broad inclusion of social

---

<sup>135</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Cotabato City, 29 November 2019; Manila, 19 February 2019.

<sup>136</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Maguindanaon political clan members, 13 and 25 November 2019.

<sup>137</sup> Crisis Group interview, MILF/UBJP official, 23 February 2020.

<sup>138</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Maranao clan leaders, Iligan/Marawi, 10, 18 and 19 December 2019.

<sup>139</sup> For example, in the municipality of Upi in Maguindanao.

groups as well as regular and standardised council sessions.<sup>140</sup> The Bangsamoro Organic Law recognises several such conflict resolution mechanisms. In the municipality of Matanog, Maguindanao, for instance, a local government unit committee comprising MILF members and religious leaders is tasked with resolving *rido* cases.

Another way to bolster conflict resolution might be to enhance women's roles as mediators between warring male relatives and spokespersons for communities affected by violence.<sup>141</sup> With the exception of female clan royalty, women have not traditionally been at the forefront of resolving feuds. But in several instances women have played important roles as part of collective resolution efforts or on their own.<sup>142</sup>

As feuds often reignite, monitoring mechanisms in local government units (Peace and Order Councils or similar local bodies) can broker and oversee local agreements, develop sanction mechanisms, outsource enforcement measures to government and MILF bodies and set the stage for durably resolving the conflicts' local causes – usually land disputes, political competition or revenge for past transgressions. These bodies' efforts optimally should aim at more than achieving ceasefires and seek to more sustainably resolve local conflicts by actively involving all conflict actors, offering safe spaces for conducting negotiations among warring parties, fast-tracking communication with relevant government agencies (eg, the Departments of Agriculture and Natural Resources), protecting affected civilians and holding follow-up meetings. Only if and when local efforts fail, and hostilities resume, should the Ministry of Public Order and Safety or the Ministry of Interior and Local Government, and possibly security forces, step in.

Donors could support resolution efforts by providing technical expertise on early warning/early response mechanisms and formalising communication flows from local government units to the BTA, as well as advising the ministries in developing a clear framework of responsibilities and strategies to tackle feuds in a prompt, systematic and coordinated manner. Donors can also fund key ministry activities such as strategic planning, workshops and seminars with inputs from external experts on best practices from other conflict settings such as participatory conflict mapping or conflict- and gender-sensitive resource management.

---

<sup>140</sup> Crisis Group interview, Islamic scholar and academic, Manila, 23 November 2019.

<sup>141</sup> The UN recognised Bangsamoro women's peacebuilding potential by creating a pool of trained communicators and facilitators composed exclusively of women – the Speakers Bureau – in April 2018. The recently formed Regional Commission on Bangsamoro Women in BARMM, an entity linked to the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security in the Bangsamoro, is also meant to contribute to peacebuilding efforts in the region.

<sup>142</sup> Women from Maranao royalty – such as the late Princess Tarhata Alonto Lucman and others – have been influential in settling several feuds over past decades. Other examples include Bai Mariam Sangki-Mangudadatu, who while mayor helped resolve land disputes between MILF members and other claimants in Datu Abdullah Sangki, Maguindanao; a women's NGO that facilitated peace and reconciliation efforts in Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Maguindanao and Aleosan, North Cotabato; and the woman-led mediation group in Sulu, Tumikang Sama Sama.



### C. *Regional Stewardship of Peace and Order*

The large number of actors dealing with security in the Bangsamoro requires strong regional leadership. Within the BTA, the Ministries of Public Order and Safety and of Interior and Local Government can play critical roles in dealing with clan conflict. The ministries' formal mandates aside, security largely will depend on national security forces, such as the military and police, that still report to Manila, and for the duration of the transition, on the MILF's informal muscle power. There are also additional but so far limited mechanisms, such as the hybrid Joint Peace and Security Teams, which the peace agreement charges with assisting in maintaining peace and order in Bangsamoro communities.<sup>143</sup>

A first step lies in strengthening the transitional authority's capability to respond to clan violence. As a civilian agency inheriting mechanisms created under the previous Autonomous Region, the region's Ministry of Public Order and Safety should take the lead on *rido* resolution.<sup>144</sup> Because MILF members are often involved in grassroots disputes and the movement enjoys credibility in many Bangsamoro communities, its intervention will be crucial in early stages of feuds.<sup>145</sup> The Ministry should bolster its administrative and formal ties with the MILF's military base commands.<sup>146</sup> The MILF also should gradually link its various conflict resolution mechanisms to the ministry to avoid duplication and disputes over competencies.

Secondly, although the Bangsamoro police force is to remain within the national police, the BTA could also work with the national government to improve the force's capabilities. In particular, the Transition Authority, acting through its Ministry of Interior, should ensure that the police are locally accountable only to the regional authority by limiting any outside harmful influence such as partisanship or manipulation by politicians, clan leaders or privileged individuals. To do that, the BTA will likely need to break the close bond the police enjoy with some municipal authorities. The BTA could further introduce community policing in the Bangsamoro and place it under firm civilian control, restricting firearms use.

Thirdly, private armies should be disbanded, a step that will inevitably create tensions with clans. To carry out this task, the national government will need to review guidelines for the security sector.<sup>147</sup> Currently, the police and military do not target private armies unless they are involved in drug trafficking or other crimes; although the militias operate outside the law, they are protected by legal technicalities and political reality.<sup>148</sup> The BTA, in partnership with the national government, ought to speed up identification of such groups and categorise them in terms of numerical

---

<sup>143</sup> These units consist of army, police and MILF personnel. Their deployment should follow MILF decommissioning and parallel military redeployment.

<sup>144</sup> Crisis Group interview, BTA majority leader, Cotabato City, 27 November 2019.

<sup>145</sup> Crisis Group interview, BIAF military official, Maguindanao, 29 November 2019.

<sup>146</sup> Crisis Group interview, MILF senior official, Cotabato City, 27 November 2019.

<sup>147</sup> The government created a National Task Force for the Disbandment of Private Armed Groups in the Bangsamoro in 2015, but this body has taken no meaningful action to date.

<sup>148</sup> The army or police cannot arrest or disarm militia members – who are often tied to powerful political players – unless they have a warrant or the militias attack government installations or commit otherwise evidently illegal acts. Crisis Group interview, senior army officer, Maguindanao, 14 December 2019.

strength, amount of firearms, protection mechanisms and proximity to rebel areas and develop a long-term action plan in order to help disarm them sequentially, parallel to the MILF's decommissioning. It could achieve this end by convincing their leaders or individual members to lay down arms in exchange for economic benefits (such as one-time grants or integration into state security services).

Disarmament of militias is an integral part of the peace agreement and key to reducing risks of armed conflict. But any such plan will require the BTA to continually press the national government, especially since many private armies answer to influential politicians with ties to Manila.

#### D. *Promoting Accountability*

One way to curb the disproportionate economic strength clans have perpetuated through patronage would be for the BARMM and local government units to cooperate and share fiscal authority.<sup>149</sup>

An opportunity lies in the block grant – the subsidy the BARMM will receive from Manila and the BTA will parcel out to local government units. The latter will be able to implement their own projects or, at least, benefit indirectly from projects funded at the regional level. The BTA-crafted local government code will determine their rights and responsibilities, just as the revenue code and budgeting guidelines will regulate the block grant's allocation and use.<sup>150</sup> Meanwhile, governors and mayors – many of whom are clan strongmen – will still receive funds through the Internal Revenue Allotment, bypassing the BARMM. They will still enjoy some financial autonomy, but a fair distribution of the block grant to all provinces could bring regional and local government closer together and create trust in the BTA. The goals are to loosen ties between local governments and Manila, upgrade the regional authority's financial oversight and limit clan monopolies on local resources.<sup>151</sup> More resources could then go to the region's priority needs – such as health, education and social services – and to villages in conflict-affected areas.

In order to foster a culture of good financial housekeeping, but also to limit corruption and favouritism – whether based on clan affiliation or otherwise – the BARMM and all its ministries should put strong audit mechanisms in place for taxation, expenditures and procurement operations. Likewise, the Ministry of Interior and Local Government should audit and hold accountable local government units and assess their conduct and transparency.

Compliance with BARMM fiscal policies – be it on local government units' part or on the part of BTA members and their staff – will be essential to achieve the BTA's objective of creating a strong, transparent and efficient administration. The BTA should act decisively in cases of non-compliance before a culture of flouting rules takes root and not hesitate to sanction wrongdoing among the newly recruited personnel. A regional ombudsman's office could also help ensure accountability. Donors

---

<sup>149</sup> Crisis Group interview, development expert, Davao, 20 November 2019.

<sup>150</sup> See Dion Lorenz Romano, "BARMM Block Grant: A Policy Brief", Ateneo University, 2019.

<sup>151</sup> The projected Internal Revenue Allotment for the BARMM local governments in 2020 is estimated to be 40 per cent of the total block grant. Ali Macabalang, "P70.6-billion BARMM budget earmarked next year", *Manila Bulletin*, 25 August 2019.

could support these initiatives with technical expertise and funding. The BARMM is likely to have an ample supply of politicians, but its greatest and most immediate need is for capable technocrats and administrators.

#### E. *Political Party Capacity Building*

Technical support for parliamentary politics in the Bangsamoro could help democratise the region. Robust party politics could restrain unchecked clan rule at the ballot box and reduce the potential for violence, as conflicts migrate from the battlefield to the political arena. A more inclusive system would also help the Bangsamoro's people witness the benefits of a shift from feudalism to more participatory politics, lessening the appeal of violence to express grievances.

While donor countries and UN agencies view the MILF as best placed to ensure stability in the Bangsamoro after 2022, their support should aim to strengthen democratic processes in general and therefore extend to all emerging political players in Muslim Mindanao. Even parties affiliated with former powers such as the MNLF and its Bangsamoro Party – or traditional outfits such as Anak Mindanao, Kusug Tausug or other parties led by clan leaders – should benefit from training in forming a party, organising or consensus building.<sup>152</sup> Whenever possible, these capacity-building exercises should be carried out by domestic groups and institutions even as they are informed by experiences in similar conflict settings abroad such as Aceh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, or Northern Ireland. Donors could fund such activities if requested by local organisations, the government or staffers within their own larger peacebuilding programs.

While the clans and the MILF will be the main contenders in 2022, smaller parties may help tip the scales toward one or the other. Political parties representing overarching interests beyond ethnicity and clan are likely to come from civil society, which would allow that sector to play a role in Bangsamoro's gradual democratisation.<sup>153</sup> Local NGOs therefore could also receive capacity-building assistance focused on political and parliamentary procedures.

---

<sup>152</sup> COMELEC, the Commission on Elections, has the discretion to approve registered parties and intends to be diligent about it. Crisis Group interview, Abbas, COMELEC chairman, Manila, 11 November 2019.

<sup>153</sup> Crisis Group interview, Mindanao civil society leader, Manila, 28 October 2019.

## **VII. Conclusion**

---

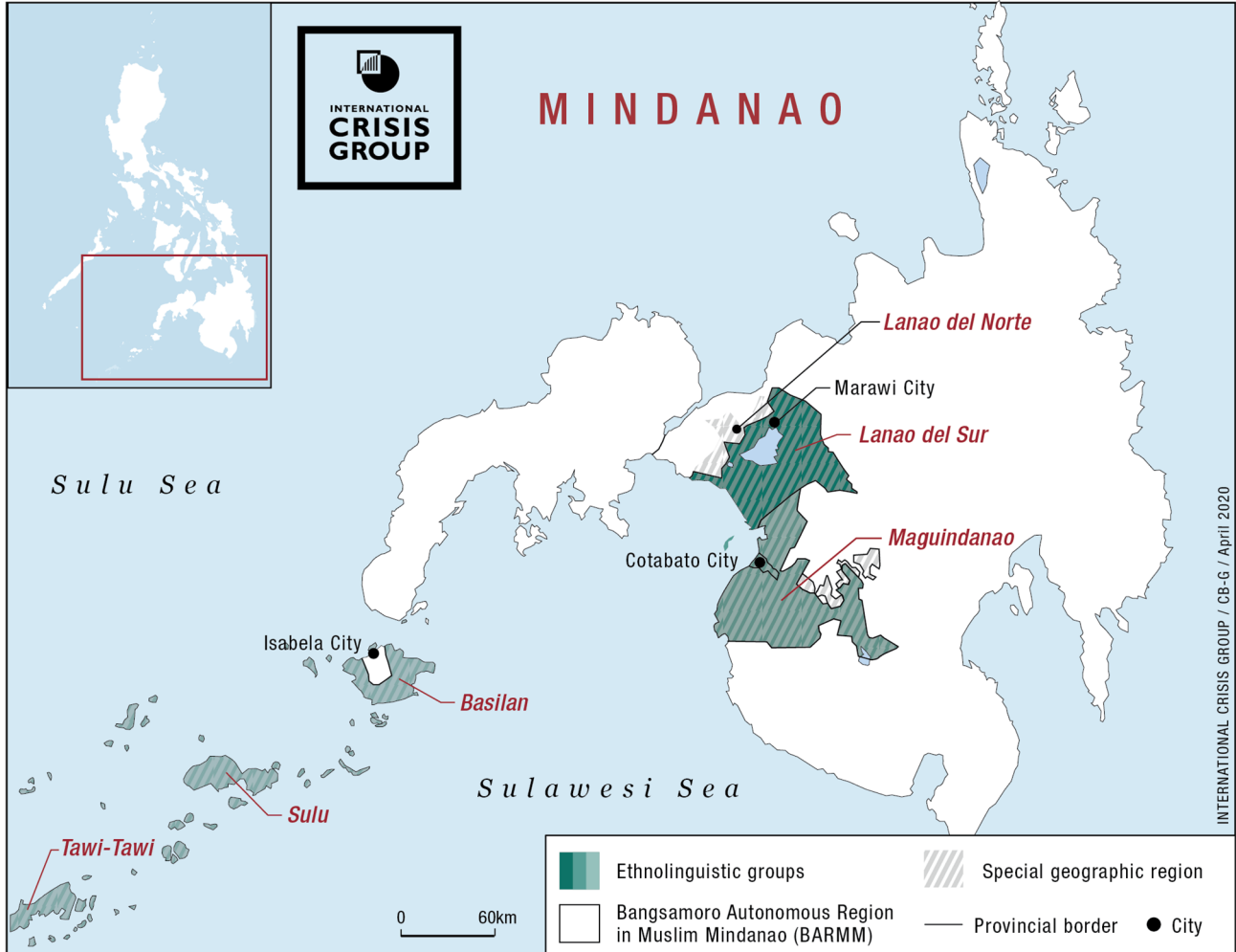
Dealing with the entrenched interests of dynastic players is a principal challenge facing the nascent regional authority in Muslim Mindanao. Families and clans have the ability to ensure local peace – or violence – and, particularly in times of uncertainty, they can act as social support networks in the Bangsamoro. Their buy-in therefore will be essential. The peace process in the southern Philippines needs to take clan politics into account if the autonomous region is to succeed in the long term.

For now, the region's political families remain in wait-and-see mode, in relation to both the coalitions that will be formed for the 2022 elections and their strategic approach to the BTA. As they prepare for the elections, the five governors of the BARMM provinces, all of whom belong to big political families, have no interest in direct confrontation, either with each other or with the BTA. For now, whether they like it or not, they have to work with the MILF. As a result, the BTA is dominant by default.

But that may not last. The challenge for the MILF-run BTA will be to avoid unduly antagonising the clans while spearheading necessary reforms to curb violence, limit corruption and improve governance – all of which inevitably will undermine clan influence. The key to sustainable and inclusive peace will be for the national and regional governments to provide incentives for the clans to fully invest in the BARMM. The alternative would be far worse: intermittent feuding, potential violence between ex-rebels and clans, and political conflict in some provinces.

**Manila/Brussels, 14 April 2020**

Appendix A: Map of Mindanao Showing BARMM Provinces



## Appendix B: Acronyms

---

ARMM	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
BARMM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
BTA	Bangsamoro Transition Authority
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
UBJP	United Bangsamoro Justice Party

## Appendix C: Glossary

---

Block Grant	A special funding allocation to the Bangsamoro by the national government, equivalent to 5 per cent of the net national internal revenue collection of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and of the Bureau of Customs
Datu	Honorific title for a prestigious clan elder/leader
<i>Rido</i>	Family feud. Retaliatory violence primarily between families and kinship groups
Sharia	Islamic law; in the Bangsamoro, various Sharia courts exist, including formal government-created courts and informal courts in the communities
Sultanate	Original form of government in the Bangsamoro areas
Ulama	Religious sector; Islamic preachers

## Appendix D: About the International Crisis Group

---

The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 120 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries or regions at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international, regional and national decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a monthly early-warning bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in up to 80 situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

Crisis Group's reports are distributed widely by email and made available simultaneously on its website, [www.crisisgroup.org](http://www.crisisgroup.org). Crisis Group works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The Crisis Group Board of Trustees – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring the reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policymakers around the world. Crisis Group is chaired by former UN Deputy Secretary-General and Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Lord (Mark) Malloch-Brown.

Crisis Group's President & CEO, Robert Malley, took up the post on 1 January 2018. Malley was formerly Crisis Group's Middle East and North Africa Program Director and most recently was a Special Assistant to former U.S. President Barack Obama as well as Senior Adviser to the President for the Counter-ISIL Campaign, and White House Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf region. Previously, he served as President Bill Clinton's Special Assistant for Israeli-Palestinian Affairs.

Crisis Group's international headquarters is in Brussels, and the organisation has offices in seven other locations: Bogotá, Dakar, Istanbul, Nairobi, London, New York, and Washington, DC. It has presences in the following locations: Abuja, Algiers, Bangkok, Beirut, Caracas, Gaza City, Guatemala City, Hong Kong, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Juba, Mexico City, New Delhi, Rabat, Tbilisi, Toronto, Tripoli, Tunis, and Yangon.

Crisis Group receives financial support from a wide range of governments, foundations, and private sources. Currently Crisis Group holds relationships with the following governmental departments and agencies: Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Austrian Development Agency, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, European Union Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, French Development Agency, French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, German Federal Foreign Office, Global Affairs Canada, Irish Aid, Iceland Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Japan International Cooperation Agency, Principality of Liechtenstein, Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the UK Department for International Development, and the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

Crisis Group also holds relationships with the following foundations: Carnegie Corporation of New York, Charles Koch Foundation, Henry Luce Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Korea Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Ploughshares Fund, Robert Bosch Stiftung, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, UniKorea Foundation, and Wellspring Philanthropic Fund.

**April 2020**



---

## Appendix E: Reports and Briefings on Asia since 2017

---

### Special Reports and Briefings

*Counter-terrorism Pitfalls: What the U.S. Fight against ISIS and al-Qaeda Should Avoid*, Special Report N°3, 22 March 2017.

*Council of Despair? The Fragmentation of UN Diplomacy*, Special Briefing N°1, 30 April 2019.

*Seven Opportunities for the UN in 2019-2020*, Special Briefing N°2, 12 September 2019.

*Seven Priorities for the New EU High Representative*, Special Briefing N°3, 12 December 2019.

*COVID-19 and Conflict: Seven Trends to Watch*, Special Briefing N°4, 24 March 2020 (also available in French and Spanish).

### North East Asia

*China's Foreign Policy Experiment in South Sudan*, Asia Report N°288, 10 July 2017 (also available in Chinese).

*The Korean Peninsula Crisis (I): In the Line of Fire and Fury*, Asia Report N°293, 23 January 2018 (also available in Chinese).

*The Korean Peninsula Crisis (II): From Fire and Fury to Freeze-for-Freeze*, Asia Report N°294, 23 January 2018 (also available in Chinese).

*The Case for Kaesong: Fostering Korean Peace through Economic Ties*, Asia Report N°300, 24 June 2019.

### South Asia

*Pakistan: Stoking the Fire in Karachi*, Asia Report N°284, 15 February 2017.

*Afghanistan: The Future of the National Unity Government*, Asia Report N°285, 10 April 2017.

*Sri Lanka's Transition to Nowhere*, Asia Report N°286, 16 May 2017.

*Sri Lanka's Conflict-Affected Women: Dealing with the Legacy of War*, Asia Report N°289, 28 July 2017.

*Countering Jihadist Militancy in Bangladesh*, Asia Report N°295, 28 February 2018.

*China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks*, Asia Report N°297, 29 June 2018 (also available in Chinese).

*Building on Afghanistan's Fleeting Ceasefire*, Asia Report N°298, 19 July 2018 (also available in Dari and Pashto).

*Shaping a New Peace in Pakistan's Tribal Areas*, Asia Briefing N°150, 20 August 2018.

*Sri Lanka: Stepping Back from a Constitutional Crisis*, Asia Briefing N°152, 31 October 2018.

*After Sri Lanka's Easter Bombings: Reducing Risks of Future Violence*, Asia Report N°302, 27 September 2019.

*Getting the Afghanistan Peace Process Back on Track*, Asia Briefing N°159, 2 October 2019.

*Twelve Ideas to Make Intra-Afghan Negotiations Work*, Asia Briefing N°160, 2 March 2020.

### South East Asia

*Building Critical Mass for Peace in Myanmar*, Asia Report N°287, 29 June 2017 (also available in Burmese).

*Buddhism and State Power in Myanmar*, Asia Report N°290, 5 September 2017 (also available in Burmese).

*Jihadism in Southern Thailand: A Phantom Menace*, Asia Report N°291, 8 November 2017 (also available in Thai and Malay).

*Myanmar's Rohingya Crisis Enters a Dangerous New Phase*, Asia Report N°292, 7 December 2017 (also available in Burmese).

*The Long Haul Ahead for Myanmar's Rohingya Refugee Crisis*, Asia Report N°296, 16 May 2018 (also available in Burmese).

*Myanmar's Stalled Transition*, Asia Briefing N°151, 28 August 2018 (also available in Burmese).

*Bangladesh-Myanmar: The Danger of Forced Rohingya Repatriation*, Asia Briefing N°153, 12 November 2018.

*Fire and Ice: Conflict and Drugs in Myanmar's Shan State*, Asia Report N°299, 8 January 2019 (also available in Burmese).

*A New Dimension of Violence in Myanmar's Rakhine State*, Asia Briefing N°154, 24 January 2019 (also available in Burmese).

*Building a Better Future for Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh*, Asia Briefing N°155, 25 April 2019.

*An Opening for Internally Displaced Person Returns in Northern Myanmar*, Asia Briefing N°156, 28 May 2019 (also available in Burmese).

*The Philippines: Militancy and the New Bangsamoro*, Asia Report N°301, 27 June 2019.

*Peace and Electoral Democracy in Myanmar*, Asia Briefing N°157, 6 August 2019.

*Myanmar: A Violent Push to Shake Up Cease-fire Negotiations*, Asia Briefing N°158, 24 September 2019.

*A Sustainable Policy for Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh*, Asia Report N°303, 27 December 2019.

*Southern Thailand's Peace Dialogue: Giving Substance to Form*, Asia Report N°304, 21 January 2020 (also available in Malay).

*Commerce and Conflict: Navigating Myanmar's China Relationship*, Asia Report N°305, 30 March 2020.

## Appendix F: International Crisis Group Board of Trustees

### PRESIDENT & CEO

**Robert Malley**  
Former White House Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf region

### CO-CHAIRS

**Lord (Mark) Malloch-Brown**  
Former UN Deputy Secretary-General and Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme

**Frank Giustra**  
President & CEO, Fiore Group; Founder, Radcliffe Foundation

### OTHER TRUSTEES

**Fola Adeola**  
Founder and Chairman, FATE Foundation

**Hushang Ansary**  
Chairman, Parman Capital Group LLC; Former Iranian Ambassador to the U.S. and Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs

**G rard Araud**  
Former Ambassador of France to the U.S.

**Carl Bildt**  
Former Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Sweden

**Emma Bonino**  
Former Foreign Minister of Italy and European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid

**Cheryl Carolus**  
Former South African High Commissioner to the UK and Secretary General of the African National Congress (ANC)

**Maria Livanos Cattai**  
Former Secretary General of the International Chamber of Commerce

**Ahmed Charai**  
Chairman and CEO of Global Media Holding and publisher of the Moroccan weekly *L'Observateur*

**Nathalie Delapalme**  
Executive Director and Board Member at the Mo Ibrahim Foundation

**Hailemariam Desalegn Boshe**  
Former Prime Minister of Ethiopia

**Alexander Downer**  
Former Australian Foreign Minister and High Commissioner to the United Kingdom

**Sigmar Gabriel**  
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Vice Chancellor of Germany

**Robert Fadel**  
Former Member of Parliament in Lebanon; Owner and Board Member of the ABC Group

**Frank Giustra**  
President & CEO, Fiore Group; Founder, Radcliffe Foundation

**Hu Shuli**  
Editor-in-Chief of Caixin Media; Professor at Sun Yat-sen University

**Mo Ibrahim**  
Founder and Chair, Mo Ibrahim Foundation; Founder, Celtel International

**Wadah Khanfar**  
Co-Founder, Al Sharq Forum; former Director General, Al Jazeera Network

**Nasser al-Kidwa**  
Chairman of the Yasser Arafat Foundation; Former UN Deputy Mediator on Syria

**Bert Koenders**  
Former Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs and Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations

**Andrey Kortunov**  
Director General of the Russian International Affairs Council

**Ivan Krastev**  
Chairman of the Centre for Liberal Strategies (Sofia); Founding Board Member of European Council on Foreign Relations

**Tzipi Livni**  
Former Foreign Minister and Vice Prime Minister of Israel

**Helge Lund**  
Former Chief Executive BG Group (UK) and Statoil (Norway)

**Susana Malcorra**  
Former Foreign Minister of Argentina

**William H. McRaven**  
Retired U.S. Navy Admiral who served as 9th Commander of the U.S. Special Operations Command

**Shivshankar Menon**  
Former Foreign Secretary of India; former National Security Adviser

**Naz Modirzadeh**  
Director of the Harvard Law School Program on International Law and Armed Conflict

**Federica Mogherini**  
Former High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

**Saad Mohseni**  
Chairman and CEO of MOBY Group

**Marty Natalegawa**  
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, Permanent Representative to the UN, and Ambassador to the UK

**Ayo Obe**  
Chair of the Board of the Gor e Institute (Senegal); Legal Practitioner (Nigeria)

**Meghan O'Sullivan**  
Former U.S. Deputy National Security Adviser on Iraq and Afghanistan

**Thomas R. Pickering**  
Former U.S. Under-Secretary of State and Ambassador to the UN, Russia, India, Israel, Jordan, El Salvador and Nigeria

**Ahmed Rashid**  
Author and Foreign Policy Journalist, Pakistan

**Juan Manuel Santos Calder n**  
Former President of Colombia; Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2016

**Wendy Sherman**  
Former U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs and Lead Negotiator for the Iran Nuclear Deal

**Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**  
Former President of Liberia

**Alexander Soros**  
Deputy Chair of the Global Board, Open Society Foundations

**George Soros**  
Founder, Open Society Foundations and Chair, Soros Fund Management

**Jonas Gahr St re**  
Leader of the Labour Party and Labour Party Parliamentary Group; former Foreign Minister of Norway

**Jake Sullivan**  
Former Director of Policy Planning at the U.S. Department of State, Deputy Assistant to President Obama, and National Security Advisor to Vice President Biden

**Lawrence H. Summers**  
Former Director of the U.S. National Economic Council and Secretary of the U.S. Treasury; President Emeritus of Harvard University

**Helle Thorning-Schmidt**  
CEO of Save the Children International; former Prime Minister of Denmark

**Wang Jisi**  
Member, Foreign Policy Advisory Committee of the Chinese Foreign Ministry; President, Institute of International and Strategic Studies, Peking University

**PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL**

A distinguished group of individual and corporate donors providing essential support and expertise to Crisis Group.

CORPORATE	INDIVIDUAL	
<b>BP</b>	<b>(5) Anonymous</b>	<b>Stephen Robert</b>
<b>Shearman &amp; Sterling LLP</b>	<b>Scott Bessent</b>	<b>Luděk Sekyra</b>
<b>Statoil (U.K.) Ltd.</b>	<b>David Brown &amp; Erika Franke</b>	<b>Alexander Soros</b>
<b>White &amp; Case LLP</b>	<b>Herman De Bode</b>	<b>Ian R. Taylor</b>

**INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Individual and corporate supporters who play a key role in Crisis Group's efforts to prevent deadly conflict.

CORPORATE	INDIVIDUAL	
<b>Anonymous</b>	<b>(3) Anonymous</b>	<b>Faisal Khan</b>
<b>APCO Worldwide Inc.</b>	<b>Mark Bergman</b>	<b>Cleopatra Kittí</b>
<b>Atlas Copco AB</b>	<b>Stanley Bergman &amp; Edward Bergman</b>	<b>Michael &amp; Jackie Lambert</b>
<b>Chevron</b>	<b>David &amp; Katherine Bradley</b>	<b>Samantha Lasry</b>
<b>Edelman UK</b>	<b>Eric Christiansen</b>	<b>Leslie Lishon</b>
<b>Eni</b>	<b>Sam Englehardt</b>	<b>Malcolm Hewitt Wiener Foundation</b>
<b>HSBC Holdings Plc</b>	<b>The Edelman Family Foundation</b>	<b>The New York Community Trust – Lise Strickler &amp; Mark Gallogly Charitable Fund</b>
<b>MetLife</b>	<b>Seth &amp; Jane Ginns</b>	<b>The Nommontu Foundation</b>
<b>Noble Energy</b>	<b>Ronald Glickman</b>	<b>Brian Paes-Braga</b>
<b>RBC Capital Markets</b>	<b>David Harding</b>	<b>Kerry Propper</b>
<b>Shell</b>	<b>Geoffrey R. Hoguet &amp; Ana Luisa Ponti</b>	<b>Duco Sickinghe</b>
	<b>Geoffrey Hsu</b>	<b>Nina K. Solarz</b>
	<b>David Jannetti</b>	<b>Clayton E. Swisher</b>
		<b>Enzo Viscusi</b>

**AMBASSADOR COUNCIL**

Rising stars from diverse fields who contribute their talents and expertise to support Crisis Group's mission.

<b>Amy Benziger</b>	<b>Lindsay Iversen</b>	<b>Nidhi Sinha</b>
<b>Tripp Callan</b>	<b>Azim Jamal</b>	<b>Chloe Squires</b>
<b>Kivanc Cubukcu</b>	<b>Arohi Jain</b>	<b>Leeanne Su</b>
<b>Matthew Devlin</b>	<b>Christopher Louney</b>	<b>Bobbi Thomason</b>
<b>Victoria Ergolavou</b>	<b>Matthew Magenheim</b>	<b>AJ Twombly</b>
<b>Noa Gafni</b>	<b>Madison Malloch-Brown</b>	<b>Dillon Twombly</b>
<b>Christina Bache</b>	<b>Megan McGill</b>	<b>Annie Verderosa</b>
<b>Lynda Hammes</b>	<b>Hamesh Mehta</b>	<b>Zachary Watling</b>
<b>Jason Hesse</b>	<b>Tara Opalinski</b>	<b>Grant Webster</b>
<b>Dalí ten Hove</b>	<b>Perfecto Sanchez</b>	

**SENIOR ADVISERS**

Former Board Members who maintain an association with Crisis Group, and whose advice and support are called on (to the extent consistent with any other office they may be holding at the time).

<b>Martti Ahtisaari</b> Chairman Emeritus	<b>Christoph Bertram</b>	<b>Aleksander Kwasniewski</b>
<b>George Mitchell</b> Chairman Emeritus	<b>Lakhdar Brahimi</b>	<b>Ricardo Lagos</b>
<b>Gareth Evans</b> President Emeritus	<b>Kim Campbell</b>	<b>Joanne Leedom-Ackerman</b>
<b>Kenneth Adelman</b>	<b>Jorge Castañeda</b>	<b>Todung Mulya Lubis</b>
<b>Adnan Abu-Odeh</b>	<b>Joaquim Alberto Chissano</b>	<b>Graça Machel</b>
<b>HRH Prince Turki al-Faisal</b>	<b>Victor Chu</b>	<b>Jessica T. Mathews</b>
<b>Celso Amorim</b>	<b>Mong Joon Chung</b>	<b>Miklós Németh</b>
<b>Óscar Arias</b>	<b>Sheila Coronel</b>	<b>Christine Ockrent</b>
<b>Richard Armitage</b>	<b>Pat Cox</b>	<b>Timothy Ong</b>
<b>Diego Arria</b>	<b>Gianfranco Dell'Alba</b>	<b>Roza Otunbayeva</b>
<b>Zainab Bangura</b>	<b>Jacques Delors</b>	<b>Olara Otunnu</b>
<b>Nahum Barnea</b>	<b>Alain Destexhe</b>	<b>Lord (Christopher) Patten</b>
<b>Kim Beazley</b>	<b>Mou-Shih Ding</b>	<b>Surin Pitsuwan</b>
<b>Shlomo Ben-Ami</b>	<b>Uffe Ellemann-Jensen</b>	<b>Fidel V. Ramos</b>
	<b>Stanley Fischer</b>	<b>Olympia Snowe</b>
	<b>Carla Hills</b>	<b>Javier Solana</b>
	<b>Swanee Hunt</b>	<b>Pär Stenbäck</b>
	<b>Wolfgang Ischinger</b>	