TERRORISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:
A CASE STUDY OF THE ABU SAYYAF

M GEORGE ZACHARIAH

THESIS SUBMITTED AS PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
(STRATEGY AND DIPLOMACY)

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES
UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA
BANGI

2012
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in this thesis is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

August 23 2012

[M. George Zachariah]

P62624
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, all praise and thanks goes to God Almighty for His grace and provision.

I would like to express my love and appreciation to my family, who have been a source of constant support and encouragement throughout the tenure of this course and beyond.

I also take this opportunity to convey my sincerest gratitude to Associate Professor Dr. Jatswan Singh Sidhu, who has patiently guided and provided invaluable advice throughout the writing of this work.

A special word of thanks also goes out to all my lecturers, the wonderful people at IDFR and my fellow coursemates. Thank you for everything.
ABSTRACT

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon to Southeast Asia. In a region made up of diverse ethnic groups, conflict and violence along ethnic lines is inevitable. This research provides an in-depth, comprehensive, and most up to date analysis of the various facets of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). In addition, this research also analyses terrorism from a broader perspective namely, how this menace has affected some, if not all, Southeast Asian countries. In this way, it allows for meaningful generalisations on the scourge of terrorism in Southeast Asia. More so when taking into account the fact that terrorism is indeed a transnational issue. The aim of the research is threefold. Firstly, it attempts to provide an analysis of the origins of the ASG. Secondly, this research analysed the organizational structure of the group, so as to obtain an in-depth understanding of its leadership and structure. Last but not least, it analysed the modus operandi of the ASG. Being qualitative in nature, the paper relied heavily on data collection from both primary and secondary sources, which was supplemented with a semi-structured interview. Taking into account the fairly diverse variety of sources utilised in this research, the triangulation method was therefore employed for the purpose of data analysis. This research also utilised Gurr’s Ethno-Terrorist Model to analyse and explain the genesis of the ASG and its resilience, especially in the face of continued counter-terrorism efforts by the Philippine government. This research found that Gurr’s model was highly applicable to the ASG and concluded that the origins of the ASG are closely tied to the conflict in Mindanao.
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRAK</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTENTS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview                                  1
1.2 Problem Statement                         5
1.3 Objectives and Scope                      6
1.4 Terrorism: A Definition                   8
1.5 Theoretical Framework                     10
1.6 Literature Review                         13
1.7 Research Methodology                      19
1.8 Limitations of Study                      20
1.9 Organization of Chapters                 21

### CHAPTER 2 TERRORISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

2.1 Introduction                              23
2.2 Terrorism in Southeast Asia: An Introduction 27
2.3 Southeast Asian Islamic-Based Terrorist Groups
   2.3.1 The Jemaah Islamiyah (JI)               28
   2.3.2 The Moro Liberation Islamic Front (MILF) 30
   2.3.3 The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)             31
   2.3.4 The Kumpulan Mujahiddin Malaysia (KMM) 32
2.4 Terrorism in the Southeast Asian States    33
CHAPTER 3

SEPARATISM AND THE MINDANAO CONFLICT

3.1 Introduction 44
3.2 Defining Separatism 45
  3.2.1 The Influence of Economics on Secession 47
  3.2.2 The Influence of Ethnicity and Religion on Secession 48
  3.2.3 The Influence of Politics on Secession 49
3.3 The Response of the Global Community to Separatism 51
3.4 The Mindanao Conflict 53
  3.4.1 Introduction 53
  3.4.2 Historical Background 55
  3.4.3 Causes of the Conflict 58
  3.4.4 Separatist Groups in the Southern Philippines 59
  3.4.5 External Responses to the Mindanao Conflict 63
  3.4.6 The Moros and the Issue of Unity 64
  3.4.7 Demands of the Moro People 65
3.5 Summary 67
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 4</th>
<th>THE ORIGINS OF THE ABU SAYYAF GROUP (ASG)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>The Formation of the ASG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Ideology and Objectives of the ASG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Motivations of the ASG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 5</td>
<td>THE ABU SAYYAF GROUP (ASG): ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE &amp; MODUS OPERANDI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Leadership and Organizational Structure of the ASG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Modus Operandi of the ASG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Recruitment Strategies of the ASG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 6</td>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>The ETM and the ASG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>