

## THE RE-EMERGENCE OF PARANG SABIL: A FOUCAULDIAN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS ON SUICIDE TERRORISM PHENOMENON IN THE PHILIPPINES

*Kebart Peligro Licayan<sup>a</sup> and Francis M. Esteban<sup>b</sup>*

### ABSTRACT

*Terrorists and the threat of terrorism know no pandemic, as the 2020 Jolo suicide bomber incident vividly demonstrates. One of the signs of the new age of Philippine terrorism is the emergence of suicide terrorism. However, the lack of adequate explanations for the phenomenon shows that suicide terrorism is still a poorly researched topic in Philippine terrorism studies. This paper aims to contribute to the literature by investigating the power dynamics, specifically looking at how the phenomenon is interpreted by scholars using the Foucauldian Discourse Analysis. This study presents several scholarly arguments, examines how these arguments are created, and looks into the implications of their understandings. We argue that scholars hold the power to interpret the phenomenon. Their interpretations are crucial in policymaking. The results reveal that the limited information available allowed for such a diverse range of hypotheses. Yet, despite the limitations, their initial interpretations are crucial in addressing the issue at this time. This highlights the importance of scholars in this setting. The truths revealed here may or may not have an impact on unique community conditions.*

**Keywords:** Parang Sabil, suicide terrorism, Philippines, Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, jihad

### INTRODUCTION

On August 24, 2020, at the height of the pandemic, a double explosion happened in Jolo, Sulu. The initial explosion was set off by a motorcycle-mounted improvised explosive device (IED). Six soldiers and civilians were killed in this incident. According to intelligence reports, the second explosion happened on the same day and was carried out by a female suicide bomber. (“Jolo Suicide Bomber Subject of 4 Slain Soldiers’ Intel Mission – Sources,” 2020). The 2020 Jolo suicide bombing incident clearly shows that terrorists and the threat of terrorism disregarded the pandemic. The recent suicide bombing is one of the manifestations of the new age of Philippine terrorism hence, the rise of suicide terrorism.

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<sup>a</sup> Kebart P. Licayan (kebartlicayan@gmail.com) is a Legislative Staff Officer under the Legislative Research Division of the Policy Research and Legal Services. BA in Political Science from Rizal Technological University, Philippines, and MSc (International Relations) from Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

<sup>b</sup> Francis M. Esteban (festeban@feu.edu.ph) is the Chair of the Department of International Studies at the Far Eastern University, Manilla, Philippines.

Since 2018, the Philippines has seen an uptick in suicide bombings, twelve of which were carried out by Filipino terrorists (Yeo, 2021). Filipino terrorists rarely use such techniques because of their “warrior culture.”<sup>1</sup>

As a result, these cases involving Filipinos as perpetrators are regarded as sporadic. The trend poses concern among the authorities as it threatens the country’s national security. This grabbed the attention of several analysts and scholars, raising debate about whether such a phenomenon is influenced by international factors. According to various scholars, such an act began among the indigenous peoples, particularly among the Tausug (“Suicide Bombings Take Root in the Southern Philippines - Philippines”, 2019, p. 7; “Indigenous Roots of the ‘First’ Filipino Suicide Bombing, Lowy Institute,” 2019). There are two theories as to why suicide terrorism occurs in the Philippines. The first is the large-scale recruitment of foreign combatants. The second theory is the adoption of local customs. (“Suicide Bombings Take Root in the Southern Philippines - Philippines”, 2019). Although data shows foreign terrorist combatants are involved in the majority of suicide bombings in the country, most scholars believe *parang sabil* is an important factor in locating the issue. (“Indigenous Roots of the ‘First’ Filipino Suicide Bombing,” 2019). Despite the increased radicalisation of Islamic State (IS)-related ideology among Filipinos, IS has not recently expanded its presence in Southeast Asia. As a result, such an examination may be deemed insufficient.

The goal of this research is to comprehend the growth of suicide terrorism. It specifically investigates how academics view suicide terrorism in the Philippines. This research will (a) present several academic arguments, (b) explore how these arguments are developed, and (c) investigate how these understandings shape public awareness. Furthermore, the correlation between suicide terrorism and *parang sabil* is examined in this study. We claim in this work that researchers can interpret the phenomenon. The dearth of specific proof allowed for a wide range of interpretations. Scholars have an important role in the creation of knowledge in this phenomenon. In policymaking, their interpretations are critical. This research explores the power relations in the phenomenon using Foucauldian Discourse Analysis. This paper is divided into three sections. The research begins with an examination of the current condition of suicide terrorism in the Philippines. The connection between suicide terrorism and *Parang Sabil* is discussed in the following section. The data and outcomes from the interviews are discussed in the third part. In the final section, the arguments of scholars will be contrasted with the information provided, and an attempt will be made to comprehend how suicide terrorism is perceived.

### **State Of Suicide Terrorism in The Philippines**

There has been a shift in academic interest in terrorism from traditional security studies since the end of the Cold War. Terrorism is defined as “an act perpetrated by an organisation or by individuals who are directly motivated, inclined, or stimulated by the ideological objectives of a subnational entity to inflict violence and psychological consequences on people outside the target” (Hoffman, 2006). Since then, terrorism has taken on many various forms. One of the most well-known types of terrorism is suicide

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<sup>1</sup> Warrior culture refers to the utilization of conflict rather than being a coward. This puts premium on the honor of the battle which is as important as victory. See: (Suicide Bombings Take Root in the Southern Philippines - Philippines)

terrorism. Suicide terrorism, like all other forms of terrorism, has no homogenous definition. Suicide terrorism is defined as a “prominent terrorist approach in which violent non-state actors use suicide as a method of generating huge numbers of deaths per attack” (Horowitz, 2015).

Why is it vital to conduct research? According to Pape and Feldman (2010), the element of ‘suicide’ makes this method extremely dangerous. The presence of suicide enables the necessity of deterrence because it might occur at any time and in any location. There is also debate about whether the term “suicide terrorism” is appropriate. Many academics have coined terms like suicide attacks, suicide bombs, suicide missions, and suicide operations to replace the term suicide terrorism. The usage of terms is important as different terms pose different meanings (Moghadam, 2006, p. 707-729). Suicide terrorism is an attack on civilians, whereas suicide attacks, bombings, missions, and operations are attacks against uniformed personnel. The phrase “suicide terrorism” shall be utilised throughout this work and defined as an attack on non-combatants and/or uninformed individuals for consistency’s sake.

Suicide terrorism has been utilized by Hezbollah, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Al Qaeda, and, more recently, the IS. Experts noted that the type of government is linked to suicide terrorism. However, a recent study shows that religion has become the most crucial factor in the adoption of such tactics (Moghadam, 2006, p. 707-729). In the Philippines, the first case of suicide terrorism was reported in Maguindanao province in 1991 (Banlaoi, 2019). Other publications, on the other hand, indicate that suicide terrorism took place in 1996 and 2002. Whatever the reason may be, the truth remains that there has not been another instance in decades. The majority of these attacks were carried out by foreign terrorist fighters (FTF). So far, two of these prosecutions have implicated Filipino extremists.

The 2019 Indanan bombing was a watershed moment in Philippine terrorism because it marked the first time a Filipino terrorist committed suicide terrorism (“Indigenous Roots of the ‘First’ Filipino Suicide Bombing, Lowy Institute,” 2019). Norman Lasuca, the first Filipino suicide bomber, went missing in 2014. His disappearance suggests that he has joined the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). His father’s treatment may have prompted him to join the group (Marquez, 2019). Lasuca’s activities were quickly claimed by the Islamic State, which has a strong presence in the Philippines. Scholars, on the other hand, are dismissive of the claim. In November 2019, the Philippine military disrupted a suicide bombing plot and seized explosive vests, weapons, and grenades (Al Jazeera, 2019). A Filipino was one of the three suicide bombers murdered in the incident.

According to Abuza (2019), suicide terrorism in the Philippines is important for four reasons. To begin with, the existence of suicide terrorism in the Philippines indicates that the IS ideology has taken root in the country. Second, the presence of foreign terrorists employing these methods shows that the Philippines is still a significant target for regional and global terrorism. Outbidding terrorist organizations, third, merely indicates one’s commitment to the cause. Furthermore, domestic terrorist groups may be persuaded to use similar techniques to attain their goals as a result of this. Fourth, using this strategy as a surprise just heightens the sense of fear. This increases the government’s existing responsibilities in dealing with the terrorism problem from a national security stance.

## Concept Of Defence in Islam

The notion of *Parang Sabil* is one of Islam's defence doctrines. The Tausug simply refer to *Parang Sabil* as their version of jihad. In Islam, jihad is regarded as the "holy war," a concept that is frequently misunderstood. Jihad is an Arabic term that translates to "fighting" in English (Esposito, 2002). However, it is not always associated with conflict and vice versa. Jihad is divided into two types: higher and lesser. For example, a lesser level of jihad concerns the security component of a family's right to safety when they are in danger. Meanwhile, jihad in its broadest definition refers to a man's struggle with faith, job, love, or health.<sup>2</sup>

Aside from such categorisation, the concept of jihad refers to a focused attempt to achieve Allah's righteousness (Abd Razak et al., 2020, p. 1012). There are various ideas about the origins of the word jihad, as well as many different interpretations of what it means. One comes from Abd Razak et al (2020), who defined jihad as Islamic efforts and activities, as well as a call to humanity and a challenge to overcome (Abd Razak et al., 2020, p. 1013). Al-Qardhawi, on the other hand, defined jihad as a commitment to or enjoyment of war against infidels (Razak et al., 2020, p. 1013). Despite this reality of meaning, jihad has become a logophobia in recent years.<sup>3</sup> Extremist groups' distortion of jihad jurisprudence is the source of this anxiety. Razak et al. studied how extremist groups like the IS interpret the term jihad and its connotation with the war in a literal sense. (Abd Razak et al., 2020, p. 1013). It is found that while the word jihad appears more than forty times in the Qur'an, it is employed in diverse circumstances and has different meanings. The majority of the declarations on jihad call on Muslims to expand Islam and defend its doctrines. While experts have reached a consensus on many forms of jihad, the jihad law debate has become prevalent. Jihad is classified into two types: *jihad al-difa* (defence) and *jihad al-talab* (invading enemy territory). Scholars agree that *al-difa* is a *fardhu ain* (obligatory) for all Muslims, whereas *al-talab* is conditional on the situation (Abd Razak et al., 2020, p. 1014) The application of jihad laws is contingent on the current situation. Al-Asqalani mentioned two periods in which jihad was used: during the Prophet's lifetime and after his death. This is a crucial distinction to make because the determination would be based on the context of the usage. The authorised ulama and the legitimate government are in charge of determining whether jihad laws are required or not. Extremist groups, such as the IS claim that their war is true jihad because they seek to uphold Allah's rules. They believed that using weapons was the highest form of Islamic law (Abd Razak et al., 2020, p. 1014) and thus considered jihad as the sixth pillar (Knapp, 2003, p. 82).

Muslims in the Philippines used jihad to defend Islam throughout the colonial period. The persistent danger to the Moros' faith transforms into their *fardhu khifayah* (collective obligation).<sup>4</sup> If a specific person or group is the sole one capable of carrying out the commitment, *fardhu kifayah* becomes *fardhu ain*. As a result, it requires the ruler's blessings. *Parang sabil* is both Islamic and cultural in the Tausug context. It is

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<sup>2</sup> Mostly found in the doctrine of Sufi. See: Knapp, Michael G. *The concept and practice of Jihad in Islam*. ARMY WAR COLL CARLISLE BARRACKS PA, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Logophobia means an irrational fear of words. See: Abd Razak et al., 2020.

<sup>4</sup> *Fardhu kifayah* or *Fard Kifayah* or *Fard Kifayah* is a communal obligation on all of the Ummah to execute it. If this requirement is disregarded, the entire Ummah will be considered sinful (each one according to his capacity).

Islamic in the sense that it is akin to jihad and cultural in the sense that it is unique to Tausug.

### The Concept of *Parang Sabil*

The rite of *parang sabil* is widely misinterpreted. In the war against *kafirs* or unbelievers, such activity is both sacred and patriotic for the Tausug. *Parang sabil* is different from *juramentado* and *amok*. Contrarily, the Spanish term "juramentado" refers to personal jihad and was a type of suicide against Christian settlers and non-Muslims (Kiefer, 1973, p. 108-109). This type of *parang sabil* first appeared around the middle of the nineteenth century, following the beginning of the Spanish presence in Jolo. This continued up to the American colonial era (Kiefer, 1973, p. 109). On the other hand, *amok* refers to a habit of unrestrained aggression that seems unconcerned with the consequences. The Spanish viewed *sabil* as simple madness of a particularly challenging kind since they were unaware of the theory behind it (Kiefer, 1973, p. 112).

Using the folk ballad *Kissa kan Panglima Hassan*, or The Story of Panglima Hassan, Ingilan (2018) investigated *parang sabil* and discovered that it is performed according to the dogmas of *dar' al Islam* (peace), *martabbat* (honor), and *Tawheed* (oneness).<sup>5</sup> During the Muslim holy month of Hari Raya Puasa, the chief of Sulu was tormented, according to folklore (feast of fasting). According to them, this was a clear affront to the ummah, both the Tausug and the Muslim community (Ingilan, 2018, p. 41). It was against their *martabbat* to do so. As a reaction, they must conduct *parang sabil*. Such behaviour is simply a way for the Tausug to defend their culture and faith. For colonial resistance, this practice is used as a "last resort" (Ingilan, 2018, p. 37). Both Spanish and American interests in Sulu constitute a violation of *dar' al Islam* from a cultural and historical standpoint. This means they have to fight the adversary who brings *dar' al Harb* (corrupt space) to their homeland. The *parang sabil* performance is for the freedom of their homeland (Ingilan, 2018, p. 41). When one shields the Muslim community from external threats, he or she is practicing *Tawheed* (Ingilan, 2018, p. 37).

*Parang sabil* may have influenced the Philippines' suicide terrorism epidemic. *Parang sabil* is derived from the Bahasa verb *parrang*, which means "to battle," and is combined with the Arabic word *sabil*, which is a shortened version of the Arabic *fi sabillah*, which means "in Allah's way" (Kiefer, 1973, p. 109; Ingilan, 2018, p. 37). In short, *parang sabil* means "to fight in Allah's way," something the Tausug of Sulu is well aware of. This is how Tausug carry out their jihad. This is similar to how ceremonial cleansing is carried out in Islamic rites. With bladed weapons like *Kalis* or *kris*, the *sabils*, or warriors, raid the chosen place (Ingilan, 2018, p. 40). This bladed weapon with a wave-like design is most widespread in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia and Malaysia. In the end, the *sabils* are always killed. When a blooded warrior dies, it is thought that a winged horse will carry him to paradise (Lluisma, 2011). There are two types of *Sabil*. The first is true *sabil*, which occurs as a result of a religious and patriotic act. *Pseudosabil* is the second category, and it is defined as death caused by personal circumstances (Lluisma, 2011). During the Spanish colonial period, *parang sabil* was a defence method used against Spanish soldiers. During the American colonial period, this was utilised again, most notably during the Battle of *Bud Bagsak*. The last time this strategy was used was during the Marcos administration in response

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<sup>5</sup> *Kissa kan Panglima Hassan* is set during the American colonial period.

to martial law (“Indigenous Roots of the ‘First’ Filipino Suicide Bombing, Lowy Institute,” 2019).

## METHODOLOGY

For this paper, the qualitative methodology was employed. The Philippines was chosen as the country case for this study. We used purposive sampling in identifying respondents. Respondents are chosen based on their publications about suicide terrorism in the Philippines. The researchers interviewed two Filipino academics, two international academics, and a cultural expert. From March to April 2021, the interviews were conducted via a virtual platform called Zoom. To process the data, we employed Foucauldian Discourse Analysis to investigate how knowledge is generated and its genealogy. In his inaugural lecture at the College de France, Michel Foucault (1981) highlighted how discourse wields power in constructing social structures. It is further argued that the production of discourse is regulated by those that have power, and that discourse itself provides power through the languages, and context used (Foucault, 1981). The Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) focuses on the power relations bound within a certain discourse and we can then define discourse as a set of concepts and structured thinking which are located in greater social structures (Power, 2007, p. 18-34). In this study, the FDA is used to determine the power that scholars provide in interpreting doubts on the definition of *Parang Sabil* in the Philippines.

The FDA is also considered more relevant for qualitative data analysis as it investigates social legitimacies (Khan & MacEachen, 2021). As for the data in this paper, an FDA methodology will scrutinise the discourse by scholars on the *Parang Sabil* phenomena, of which the author looks at how each discourse legitimises its meaning. As scholars who possess a variety of understanding of the phenomena of *Parang Sabil*, their interpretations hold the power to legitimise the phenomena to give it a more concrete and relevant meaning in the Philippines. Such an instance resonates with the criticality vantage of FDA which gives primacy to the political utility, and critical capacity of discourse as an effective method of facilitating forms of critiques and resistance to the established notions of ambiguity in defining the phenomena of *Parang Sabil* in the Philippines (Hook, 2007).

Additionally, the researchers are conscious of the sensitive nature of the subject. Respondents were given free, prior, and informed consent on the rationale of the data-gathering and were assured that their identities shall remain confidential should they not consent to be identified.

## DISCUSSION

We looked at how scholars interpret *parang sabil* using the FDA. The purpose of this study is to look into the knowledge creation and genealogy of the problem of suicide terrorism. Rather than explaining what happened in the past, Foucauldian discourse analysis explores the discursive contexts. The so-called genealogy, in which Foucault concentrated on the functions of power, the processes of truth, and how it came to be, distinguishes FDA from other discourse analysis methods (Khan & MacEachen, 2021,

p. 4). According to Foucault, power exists in all places and is linked. It shapes us as a result of the normalizing process (Khan & MacEachen, 2021, p. 5). Moreover, the FDA looks into how certain discourse is routinely constructed.

In this study, we looked at how academics have viewed the phenomenon of suicide terrorism. We looked at how truths are constructed, what is backgrounded and foregrounded, what alternative meanings are created, who is mobilised, and how discursive knowledge is created. The following findings can be drawn from the interviews:

### **Truth and Evidence**

In a Foucauldian view, truth is intertwined with power structures. Truth is formed through the "virtue of numerous sorts of restrictions," because "power is relational" (Rider, 2022). It is the product of the political and economic forces that wield the bulk of the power in society. It is a set of well-ordered techniques for generating statements from knowledge. It is intertwined with power structures that aided in its creation and maintenance. As a result, a regime of truth is established.

We investigated how truth is created and maintained in this work. Based on the evidence, it appears like two truths are being represented here. The first truth is that the suicide terrorist phenomenon in the Philippines is not a cultural impact, but rather an international one, as foreign scholars, including cultural experts, have pointed out. This is supported by the fact that FTF is responsible for the majority of suicide attacks in the Philippines. They also claimed that there was a clear lack of cultural aspects in the occurrence, such as the usage of a knife. Scholars pointed out that if the attackers used a knife, it would be a result of both cultural and international influences, noting that knife attacks are a common suicide terrorist method in Europe.

Local scholars, on the other hand, believe that the *parang sabil* is not necessarily driving the suicide terrorist phenomenon, but that it can do so. This is a slight departure from their past claims that the phenomenon constitutes a cultural renaissance. The evidence that local scholars use to support their opinions varies. One respondent based his reasoning on Rixhon and Kiefer's descriptions of *parang sabil* patterns. While there is a caveat that the practice of *parang sabil* was delegitimised as early as the American colonial period, it still exists. This, together with the fact that the first Filipino attacker was a Filipino, may explain the phenomenon. Meanwhile, another local scholar used the ideology versus religiosity debate to back up his claim. He remarked on the differences in Islam in archipelagic Mindanao<sup>6</sup> and the mainland (Local Scholar 1, Personal Interview, 2021). He goes on to say that mainland Islam is more "religious" than island Islam. On this basis, it is easy to predict that there will be more suicide attacks on the mainland. Ideology, on the other hand, enters the picture. He also claims that Mindanao, the archipelago, is more "secular," given the existence of two nationalist movements (MILF and MNLF). This, in combination with *Parang Sabil's* historical experiences, explained why the Tausug were able to accept the concept of suicide terrorism. (Local Scholar 1, Personal Interview, 2021). He also argued that the latest attacks are not necessarily *parang sabil* because more inquiry is needed, such as looking into the ritual done before the act.

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<sup>6</sup> Referring to the island provinces of Muslim Mindanao namely, Sulu, Basilan, and Tawi-Tawi.

## Backgrounded and Foregrounded

We perceived a dearth of representation and comprehension of Tausug culture, in particular, the *parang sabil* throughout the interviews. Despite such a lack of representation and because of the similarity of the cultural practice and the phenomenon, both are promptly intertwined. As a result, the phenomenon is deduced to be linked to the *Parang Sabil*. There is a lack of nuance in the context of *Parang Sabil's* practice – past and present. According to the literature, there is a significant difference between how *parang sabil* was practised in the past and how it is practised presently. If *parang sabil* is considered the historical backdrop, critical concerns arise, such as "Who among the community leaders gave the offenders the blessing to commit such an act?" Why has not the practice progressed? What motivates them to resurrect such a long-ago practice? This is critical to remember. *Parang sabil* is being performed as a folktale. One respondent stated that the Tausug population is unaware of *Parang Sabil* and that it is only used as a warning sign (Cultural Expert, Personal Interview, 2021).

The lack of substantial understanding of *parang sabil* is something that foreign scholars have acknowledged. They were able to solely rely on the data available as a result of this. As a result, it is argued that the phenomenon is not a result of a local effect. Local scholars, on the other hand, utilised the same data. The high prevalence of suicide terrorism in Sulu, as well as the attackers' Tausug identities, prompted 'speculation' among Filipino academics on the employment of *parang sabil*. Everyone acknowledged, however, that evidence is scarce due to our inability to question the deceased. The lack of a psychological autopsy makes it difficult to verify these theories. This is the current study's restriction on suicide terrorism.

## Alternative meanings

Scholars have several perspectives on the phenomenon in the Philippines. The first is that the Philippines' phenomenon is a mirror of a stronger ISIS ideology. However, there is a crucial matter that needs to be addressed. What makes ISIS ideology greater than al-Qaeda ideology, if this is a manifestation of ideology? The rise of the Islamic State (IS), according to local scholar number one, correlates with the rise of social media. Social media is a powerful tool for spreading the virtuous idea of suicide terrorism (Local Scholar 1, Personal Interview, 2021). In the 1990s, al-Qaeda was the first to introduce suicide terrorism,<sup>7</sup> The concept of suicide terrorism was not accepted since the explanation was not convincing at the time. IS, on the other hand, was able to use social media to recruit supporters and promote suicide terrorism as something that Muslims should do (*fardhu ain*) (Local Scholar 2, Personal Interview, 2021; Abd Razak et al., 2020, p. 7). This, together with the cultural practice of martyrdom, reinforces ISIS ideology on the ground. Foreign experts are also vehement about the *parang sabil* definition, and as a result, they do not endorse it as a reason for the phenomenon.

Second, local scholars characterised the occurrence as a hybrid due to the lack of rites done by Filipino assailants that are similar to those used in the West, such as the donning of white robes. There is no evidence recovered from Lasuca, and there is no proof that he was subjected to any ceremonies. This is significant because practising

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<sup>7</sup> Data as acclaimed by scholar 1. Although there is a need to verify such. Unfortunately, the data is limited and nowhere to be found.



jihad necessitates several processes before you can die for Allah's sake (Local Scholar 1, Personal Interview, 2021). Due to a lack of evidence, it is impossible to say whether such bears *parang sabil* components. It is still unknown whether the assailants were blessed by a community leader, as is customary in *Parang Sabil*. Local scholar number two agrees, emphasising that the discovery of proof that Lasuca performed a ceremony before the deed itself can make or break the hypothesis. More than that, this will be useful counter-terrorism reference material (Local Scholar 2, Personal Interview, 2021).

Third, local scholar number two does not rule out the possibility that Lasuca committed suicide in an individualistic manner. Lasuca may have viewed the act as a personal rather than a social obligation. He may have been motivated by a superficial comprehension of the *parang sabil* and IS doctrine. However, the scenario could also include the prospect of financial inducement.

Fourth, stresses the historical precedent. There could be a reason for the dormancy that has yet to be uncovered if such a phenomenon has a local effect. Finally, the cultural expert emphasises the importance of listening to stories from the margins because there are stories that the mainstream media and/or the security sector do not cover (Cultural Expert, Personal Interview, 2021). These narratives are also necessary for comprehending the phenomenon's emergence.

### **Interests**

We saw that a wide range of interests is being mobilised in this area. According to the interpretation of the phenomenon, state actors and policymakers regard it as a security issue that must be addressed. Whether the phenomenon is locally initiated or not, counter-terrorism actions will be determined. This is critical in determining the problem's root cause. The research was undertaken by academics and security personnel, however, will determine the outcome. Scholars are left to explain the phenomenon in detail. As a result, there are numerous interpretations. Scholars kept their 'academic-ness,' carefully balancing the interests of the below and above. On the one hand, experts are cautious about determining if the phenomenon has cultural roots because it could put some cultural groups and traditions in jeopardy, particularly with the emergence of stricter anti-terror domestic legislation. Scholars, on the other hand, must provide information to policymakers to develop counter-terrorism strategies. Furthermore, the academics' objective is to create scholarships and fill in the gaps.

In contrast, the community's interests, particularly those of the Tausug, are rarely promoted. While there is a reference to Tausug literature, there is a lack of research that highlights the community's narratives concerning the problem. The absence of representation and labelling is a major issue in this situation. Associating an indigenous tradition with a terrorist act could put the community at risk.

### **Knowledge Production**

The genealogical method distinguishes Foucauldian Discourse Analysis from other discourse analysis methods. The genealogy method examines how truth and knowledge are created (Tamboukou, 1999, p. 2). From a Foucauldian perspective, genealogy entails situating oneself inside the philosophy. It is all about figuring out what's going

on right now and figuring out what is going on. We examine the reasons behind suicide terrorism and how it came to be in this study.

We may see that the theories supplied by researchers alter dramatically throughout the interviews. Local scholars' viewpoints shift from debating and describing the situation as "impossible" to "re-emergence of *parang sabil*" to hybrid suicide terrorism.<sup>8</sup> Following the reasoning of the locals, the issue becomes: why is there a dormancy? This is the hole that needs to be filled to prove their point. Foreign researchers, on the other hand, are constant in their assertions that the phenomenon has a worldwide effect, although one significant point that has been highlighted is the phenomenon's onset.

When was the first act of suicide terrorism committed? According to a variety of sources, it appears to have begun in 1991 (Banlaoi, 2019), 1996 ("Indigenous Roots of the 'First' Filipino Suicide Bombing, Lowy Institute", 2019) 2002 and 2018. Looking at the statistics, it appears that the majority of the dates listed are within al-Qaeda's timeframe. However, the focus was not on "when was the first," but rather on "when was the first suicide attack linked to IS ideology" (Foreign Scholar 1, Personal Interview, 2021).

The above data demonstrates what is normalised and pathologized in the production of knowledge about this phenomenon. Scholars are left to make sense of the situation. On the criteria of suicide terrorism and *parang sabil*, we detect some flexibility. The focus on the definition has resulted in a lack of cultural nuance in the phenomenon. Knowledge production is at the top of the hierarchy. Scholars interpret the phenomenon, and policymakers and the media adopt the findings of the scholars. Perspectives from below serve as a supplement to the hypothesis that has been developed. Margins continue to be passive participants in the discourse.

## ANALYSIS

Scholars have proposed *parang sabil* as a plausible explanation for the Philippines' suicide terrorism problem because the concepts of jihad, *parang sabil*, and religious terrorism overlap. However, one aspect of this argument that is missing is the relationship between religion and culture. When does a religious activity become cultural, and when does it become the other way around? Religion and culture are frequently linked when it comes to the IS group. These organisations have chosen Islam because it has a religious foundation that can be nurtured. Because of its cultural roots, however, people may recognise and support it (Religion and Culture as Motivations for Terrorism, 2020). To further explain, one can easily concentrate on Qur'anic texts that deal with holy war. Following that, the concept of ummah will be used to support such a goal without being critically examined. This is not to say that every Muslim act in this way. If one does not have a better understanding of one's faith, both theologically and historically, such violence may be easily enticed. Without the support of society, an organization cannot function effectively.

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<sup>8</sup> Hybrid suicide terrorism is a combination of local influence (*parang sabil*) and international influence (IS ideology)

Within the context of religion, there is a need for cultural representation. It can address and resolve the gaps in the case of this phenomenon. In the context of *parang sabil*, religion and culture, for example, can be distinguished. Terms like *bidadali* (angels), *nabi* (prophet), and *kuraan* (Qur'an) are just a few examples of how *parang sabil* incorporates Islamic doctrines. The Tausug culture, on the other hand, is exemplified by their high regard for themselves, as evidenced by the folktale's use of adjectives such as *tunggal kabibimbangan* (most valuable) and *maingat* (wise) (Ingilan, 2018, p. 39). To assert that the suicide terrorism phenomenon takes its roots in a cultural practice is a deficient argument. We must look at how terrorism is used then and now. Rapoport posited that modern terrorism has four waves. These are the anarchist, nationalist, leftist, and religious wave. However, Kaplan (2008, p. 12-24) argued that there is the fifth wave – that is Rapoport's fourth wave, the religious wave with an element of suicide bombing. Moreover, it is also a result of foreign education and the influence of foreign beliefs, which turns domestic terrorism into a global one. If one regards *parang sabil* as terrorism, which wave does it fall? Besides, which lens are we using? The execution of *parang sabil* among the Tausug of Sulu does not mean a suicide attempt. Rather, it is their way of waging jihad against its colonisers. Committing suicide is still a forbidden act in Islam. In the lens of the Tausug, it is an obligation to protect their home, their identity, and their religion.

If we understand *parang sabil* in the context of the colonial period, such may constitute a terror act in the eyes of colonisers, and so is colonisation. This is the linguistic problem of terrorism. Who gets to brand one act or group as terrorism? Jackson (2008, p. 25-32) explained that there are four issues in the constitution of terrorism.

First, many scholars have abandoned the theoretical debates on the definitional turn in terrorism, and instead, used and assumed the term as-is. Second, elite groups such as government officials, academics security experts, and the media get to define the term, which in their understanding, is reduced to simply a dogma or a movement. Third, actors in terrorism are always substate actors. State terrorism is reduced to just state oppression. Lastly, terrorism is always referred to as politically-motivated violence. Jackson also pointed out that there is some sort of 'bias' to the West. Groups that do not have the blessings of the West are immediately referred to as terrorist groups. (Jackson, 2008, p. 26).

Although there is no consensus on the definition of terrorism, there is one common theme - the 'element of fear.' If *parang sabil* sowed fear among colonizers, the same goes for colonization among these indigenous groups. Who has the authority in terrorism labelling? This clearly shows the imbalance of power relations. Dominant groups get the chance to create the rules of the game. In this case, the cultural practices of minorities can be easily viewed negatively if the dominant groups want to.

An additional concern is that how we explain the dormancy of *parang sabil*? Why is *parang sabil* not present during the post-colonial period? In the context of terrorism, secessionist movements in the Philippines were popular during the Cold War. If indeed, this is a cultural practice, there should be at least a sighting of suicide attack from time to time. If we take a look at its historical context, the missing factor is the element of 'colonisation'. A response to colonisation is *parang sabil*. In the contemporary situation, who might be able to take the place of colonists so that Tausug can execute *parang sabil*? Furthermore, what persuades militant groups to "recycle" an

old tactic? This is still being investigated thoroughly. At the very least, there is no publicly available information indicating that authorities are conducting psychological investigations. This will be an excellent way to gather their narratives. We cannot collect those narratives because they are already gone. We can, however, collect the accounts of suspected and apprehended suicide bombers.

Will *parang sabil* constitute a valid argument if other extremist organisations of different indigenous groups adopt suicide terrorism? *Parang sabil* is an infusion of Islamic teachings and Tausug identity. What is common to other indigenous groups is the notion of jihad. However, as mentioned above, jihad differs per indigenous group. Furthermore, it just happens that most suicide terrorists are Tausug. We cannot simply associate *parang sabil* with suicide terrorism because of the presence of jihad.<sup>9</sup> Global jihad is different from local jihad. Jihad has many forms. We need to understand its theological and historical context. One apparent difference between global jihad and *parang sabil* is the concept of the afterlife. In global jihad, there is a promise of eternity with pleasure whereas in *parang sabil* a concept of the winged horse will carry the blooded warrior into heaven. Furthermore, the presence of FTFs in the country is still apparent data. Also, the concept of 'outbidding' is missing, which might be a possible explanation for the phenomenon. FTFs are using the concept of jihad to gain support within the local community. However, we should not rely on how terrorists misrepresented jihad if we want to counter their narrative.

Should we take *parang sabil* and treat it as a suicide practice? We must understand its cultural and historical context. If *parang sabil* is simply understood as suicide practice, what happens to Tausug's high regard for themselves? What will happen to the 'warrior culture'? Does it mean that there is a degeneration of this culture in favour of another one? What about *parang sabil* as an oral practice? Should we easily forget it and focus more on the theme of jihad? Just because one has a similar method to a cultural practice does not automatically mean that it is the same. This claim has spawned a slew of new questions, which will require further investigation.

Religion and culture are only one aspect of suicide terrorism in the Philippines. There is still a scarcity of solid evidence to support the other factors. As a result, there have been numerous interpretations of the phenomenon, and we cannot blame scholars for how and why they made their arguments. Because there is little to no representation of the below and community, as well as a lack of inside perspective in academic debates, the above can freely interpret the phenomenon.

Another point of view is that how is *parang sabil* understood by the academe, the government, and the media. These are the actors that get to define what terrorism is. Among these groups, it is the academe who gets to define first. In the context of *parang sabil*, pundits who primarily come from the academe first coined the term. In turn, the government and media adopted what they claimed. Additionally, these pundits are also the ones who write articles in the media, through the op-ed section. Although scholars do have substantial evidence to support their claim, what is lacking in their argument is the contemporary understanding of *parang sabil* among the Tausug. At present, *parang sabil* is practised through folksongs for entertainment purposes. Moreover, it is still a taboo among Muslims to commit suicide. If the government

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<sup>9</sup> See: Ingilan, Sajed S. "Tausug's Identity in Parang Sabil: A Critical Discourse Analysis." for further reading.

adopts the understanding of *parang sabil* as a suicide terrorism act, does this mean the government should ban practising *parang sabil* as an oral practise as well? We can see how influential academics are. Foucault emphasises governmentality and disciplinary authority in the FDA. Scholars sit and act as sovereigns in this case, and their interpretations of the phenomenon are the disciplinary power. We noticed a scarcity of academic scholarships on suicide terrorism in the Philippines during our data collection. Scholars, on the other hand, write a lot of news and commentaries. That is to say, they are responsible for the public's understanding of suicide terrorism in the Philippines. Within the phenomenon, it demonstrates the power relations of scholars in knowledge production.

There is also a difference in viewpoints between foreign and local scholars. We can observe the consistency of international researchers' arguments, whereas local experts incorporate their 'culture' knowledge of terrorism in the Philippines in general. These diverse viewpoints are still critical in addressing the problem of suicide terrorism. Academic scholarships are still an important part of developing counter-terrorism policies, and scholars are still important players in this process.

## CONCLUSION

Suicide terrorism is on the rise in the Philippines, posing a new threat to the country's national security. It is critical to comprehend why this phenomenon is occurring to create stronger counter-terrorism policies. Scholars offered various explanations for why this problem is so prevalent. Scholars proposed three possible responses to this question. To begin with, the rise of suicide terrorism in the Philippines indicates that the IS ideology has progressed. Second, there is a chance that a cultural practice known as *parang sabil* possibly resurfaced. Third, the phenomenon is the result of an amalgamation of foreign (IS ideology) and local influences (*parang sabil*). The minimal data available allowed for such a wide range of explanations. Nonetheless, their initial interpretations of the phenomenon are critical in tackling the problem right now. This demonstrates how scholars are important players in this scenario. As a result, scholars must maintain their "academic-ness" to balance the interests of the lower and upper classes. The truths presented here may or may not have an impact on the conditions of specific communities.

On the other hand, the scarcity of explanations for the phenomenon demonstrates that suicide terrorism remains an understudied topic in Philippine terrorism research. The shift in narrative from an impossible scenario to a possible indigenous account must be investigated. What drives them to do what they do? What role does culture play in this phenomenon? Why is there a dormancy if there are cultural explanations for this? These voids must be filled. Addressing these issues will help to reduce speculation and advance academic research and policymaking in this area.

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