

ZAMBASULTA to Malaysia, the most common destination of trafficked victims from the Philippines.

The study begins by presenting a background of human trafficking—what it means in the legal sense, how it happens, and why it largely remains undetected. Although the efforts of the Philippine government to curb trafficking of persons in the country have been generally considered a failure by the Trafficking in Persons Report, the study clarifies that this does not mean that the government has not been making significant efforts in fighting the third largest most profitable kind of organized crime in the world. The study attributes the Philippines' placement in the Tier 2 classification to a number of reasons, foremost of which is the unsuccessful prosecution of human traffickers.

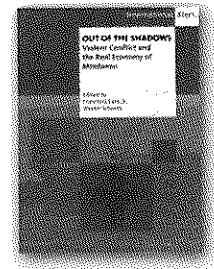
In the second part, the study presents a comprehensive review of trafficking in persons from both a global and a historical perspective. It then zeroes in on the Philippines by discussing the various factors to the occurrence of the crime, its victims' coping mechanisms, the government's efforts to combat trafficking, and the most recent developments on human trafficking in the country.

The results which the study presents are perhaps the most interesting yet disturbing part. The study illustrates human trafficking as a complex web of ironies with innocent but sometimes willing victims, faceless but sometimes familiar perpetrators, striving but mostly inefficient implementing agencies and promising but generally despondent homeland conditions. Perhaps the study's bravest endeavour is its expose of the vulnerabilities of the government and the private sector that are expected to provide protection to trafficked and potentially trafficked victims. The section lists down the corrupt practices and weaknesses of Philippine government agencies and private sector organizations vis-à-vis their supposed responsibilities in addressing human trafficking. The data reveal how there are agencies that struggle to improve their mechanisms in resolving the crime, but there are also so many others who willingly or unwillingly facilitate to its commission or to the failure of prosecution.

In many levels and angles, the study was successful in fulfilling what it mainly intended to do. This insightful compendium of trafficking data rightfully deserves to be the bible for trafficking information not only in ZAMBASULTA but in the Philippines as well.

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Out of the Shadows: Violent Conflict and the Real Economy of Mindanao. Francisco Lara, Jr. and Steven Schoofs (Eds.). London: International Alert, 2013. 289 pages.



On October 15, 2012, a preliminary peace agreement between the Republic of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Front was signed in Malacañan Palace. The Framework Agreement called for the creation of an autonomous political entity named “Bangsamoro,” replacing the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), which President Benigno Aquino III described as “a failed experiment.” This framework agreement serves as a hopeful development in the ongoing struggle to ensure durable peace in Mindanao. On September 9, 2013, however, Zamboanga City was sieged by a faction of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) led by Ustadz Habier Malik and Khaid Ajibon and that continues to recognize Nur Misuari as MNLF Chairman. The crisis erupted when this MNLF faction attempted to raise the flag of the self-proclaimed Bangsamoro Republic at Zamboanga City Hall. The standoff degenerated into urban warfare and brought parts of the city to a standstill for days. This dramatic turn of events leads one to ask such questions as: why must politics in Mindanao erupt into violence? How is such violence sustainable? Is historical background enough to explain the complexity of the present shape of the conflict in Mindanao? How can political economy, especially the shadow economy of conflict, enrich our understanding of the perennial friction in the region?

Out of the Shadows: Violent Conflict and the Real Economy of Mindanao provides but one answer to these very complicated questions. It serves as a timely piece that delivers a startling yet crucial glimpse into an important variable in the ongoing conflict. Often referred to as the “back door” of the Philippines, illicit activities such as gun smuggling, drugs and kidnapping, continue to plague various parts of Mindanao. While such activities happen all over the country, they take on new significance in an area rife with historically based animosity and distrust, and ongoing movements for further autonomy. The Introduction of the book, penned by its editors Francisco Lara, Jr. and Steven Schoofs provides a vivid picture and compelling

analysis of an often-neglected aspect of the ongoing conflict. It tackles, in a very direct way, some of the underlying activities that help to sustain conflict in Mindanao.

The main bulk of the book is organized into seven chapters that demonstrate how the shadow economy contributes to the ongoing conflict. Chapter 1 provides a staggering picture of the urgency of the shadow economy situation. Francisco Lara, Jr. and Nikki de la Rosa effectively make the argument that Mindanao's real economy is critically linked to conflict by examining the size of the informal economy and its effects upon poverty and conflict. In Chapter 2, Eddie Quitariano shows, through a comparison of two cities, that it is the failure of the state that contributes to the rise of illegal gun trade, benefitting rebels and anti-state actors. Chapter 3, written by Rufa Cagoco-Guam and Steven Schoofs, focuses on the complex interactions between the drug economy and violent conflict. Although the chapter does not go so far as to say that the drug market functions as a war economy, it reveals the complicated amalgam of issues that emerge from the activity, such as exploiting fragile institutions, providing easy money in poverty stricken areas and encouraging the creation of a status hierarchy in which drugs serve as a means to achieve social status. In Chapter 4, Eric Gutierrez demonstrates how kidnapping is a product of the destructive consequences of war and how the affected social infrastructure perpetuates such activity. Chapter 5 of Judy Gulane and Chapter 7 of Jamail Kamlian demonstrate how land disputes and informal borrowing, respectively, that emerge from the complicated and somewhat dysfunctional legal system perpetuate conflict between borrowers, lender and clans, creating more conflict in an already conflict-ridden landscape. Lastly, Starjoan Villanueva in Chapter 6 shows how some of these existing problems, such as illicit trade, can be traced back to history, economic conditions and poorly designed and executed state regulations.

The data gathered throughout this book are impressive. The interviews conducted provide a torrid glimpse into normally impenetrable activities. I would imagine that the authors have many times put their personal safety on the line.

While the authors have made a significant contribution to understanding the conflict in Mindanao, this book is not for everyone: it provides a picture that many might not want to see. It toes the line between brilliant and obscene. Though many may not be comfortable with some of the facts presented, the meticulous research makes the conclusions indisputable.

One lingering question I am left with, however, is this: If the shadow economy is a factor in helping to perpetuate conflict, would the achievement

of a durable peace put an end to shadow activities? Perhaps this question highlights the fact that the situation in Mindanao is incredibly complex and that the existence of the shadow economy is but one factor in the emergence and perpetuation of the conflict in Mindanao.

Questions aside, this book is a brave and useful study of an aspect of the war in Mindanao. It is an intriguing read that is robust in data while remaining accessible and engaging.

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