

# Interrogating Mao and Locating the Philippine Left's Position within Mao's Protracted War Theory: A Politico-Military Critique

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## ABSTRACT

As the Mainstream Left continues to wage a ferocious civil war against the Philippine state for more than half a century since 1969, it is ironic that it now finds itself in a position of relative political stasis. Such a situation could be characterized by the Left's inability to carry forward its revolution and advance militarily its forces to higher stages of its adopted strategy and tactics called the People's Protracted War (PPW). There is certainly a myriad of causes of this stasis owing to the ideological, political, organizational, and military positions which the Left has taken as strategic and tactical responses to national and international challenges at certain historical junctures. Yet, one aspect that baffles independent Marxist thinkers and onlookers of the Left and even challenges them to undertake a cursory review— is its steadfast insistence on, and recalcitrance to review the validity and applicability of PPW in the Philippine revolution. The paper seeks to dissect PPW's applicability to the Philippine concrete situation and navigate the readers on how the Left has applied this to its revolutionary struggle. Although the review is culled on a primarily military perspective contraposed with the Left's fundamental founding documents, the results may offer some explanations on why the Left today is in a political impasse.

**Keywords:** *strategy and tactics, PPW, Mao, Philippine Left, Marxism, revolutionary war*

## THE LONGEST-RUNNING REVOLUTION SO FAR

It barely took twenty-five (25) years for China to complete its so-called *national democratic revolution* and subsequently entered into its socialist construction phase from the *First Revolutionary Civil War* (1924-27), also known as the Northern Expedition, the *Second Revolutionary Civil War* (1927-37), also known as the *Agrarian Revolutionary War* or the period of reaction, and the *War of Resistance Against Japan* (1937-45) which led to the last and final stage, the *Third Revolutionary Civil War* (1945-49) wherein Mao Tse Tung proclaimed the establishment of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949.

Cuba's *national democratic revolution* against what it termed as *US imperialism* and the supposed reactionary and puppet government of Fulgencio Batista, on the other hand, begins with the revolutionaries' 26th day of July 1953 attack on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago. Since the attack was a defeat, it was quickly followed by the capture of the conspirators led by Fidel Castro, their trial, and their eventual exile to Mexico. After close to three (3) years, the revolutionaries, now to include Che Guevarra, would subsequently return to Cuba through the Granma expedition on November 25, 1956, followed by a brief guerilla and civil war period in the Sierra Maestra Mountains. With the Batista regime imploding in internal crisis and social decadence, Castro and Guevarra were able to rally the Cubans in their thousands to the revolution and eventually proclaimed an independent Cuba on January 3, 1959. The Cuban revolution needed only six (6) years to complete<sup>1</sup>.

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam, in contrast, did take a rather circuitous route from the expulsion of the French colonial forces in the old Indochina through the general people's uprising on August 14, 1945, up to the complete success of what Vietnam calls the *Vietnamese people's heroic and marvelous guerrilla war in South Vietnam* which lasted since 1955 up to the 30th day of April 1975. On that date, the US interventionist forces, and all their local cohorts scampered to get out of Saigon as the Vietcong revolutionary forces rampaged towards the last bastion of *US Imperialism* in Vietnam. Thirty (30) years have, therefore, been spent after Ho Chi Minh launched the revolution in 1945 up to its complete victory, capped by the liberation of South Vietnam and its reunification with the north in 1975.

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1 Jeff Wallenfeldt & Encyclopedia Britannica, *Cuban Revolution - The rise of Castro and the outbreak of revolution* (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.). <https://www.britannica.com/event/Cuban-Revolution/The-rise-of-Castro-and-the-outbreak-of-revolution>

Russia under Vladimir Ulyanov Lenin required twelve (12) years from the failed 1905 revolution towards the successful October Revolution of 1917. The same revolution, as some Marxist would aver, heralds the triumph and the establishment of the first socialist country after the failure of the Paris Commune— the first revolutionary socialist experiment which proved to a certain extent accordingly, the supposed validity of the ideas of Marx and Engels on scientific socialism. Yet if we take into account the early revolutionary activities of various groups in Russia, including the Bolsheviks, the Anarchists, the Narodniks, the trade unionists, and others since the later part of the preceding century, Russia's revolution may have taken more than 30 years to complete.

With this backdrop, the present so-called *national democratic revolution* of the Filipinos against what the Philippine Left has identified as the three (3) basic problems of the people, namely, *US imperialism*, *bureaucrat capitalism*, and *domestic feudalism* and under the leadership of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) which had been reestablished in 1968— would by now qualify to be the longest Marxist-Leninist Revolution in history. From the formal launching in 1969 of the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the CPP, which has since been embroiled in a long-running brutal civil war with various Philippine regimes from that of Marcos, Sr. to that of Marcos, Jr., the revolutionary forces have yet to see a substantive advance in military terms since the later parts of the 1980s when the NPA military formations reached company and battalion level-sizes in various guerrilla zones and red bases across the country.

What is hindering the NPA from advancing militarily? We shall explore this issue below with the CPP's basic documents and its strategy and tactics in the revolution which has been supposedly based on Mao's Protracted War Theory.

Exactly fifty-three (53) years have since passed since the founding of the CPP. Suppose we add up the revolutionary experience of the old *Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP)*, which was founded in 1930 ahead of the establishment of its armed wing, the *Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan (HMB)* which led the people's guerrilla resistance against the Japanese aggression in the Second World War— the revolutionary experience of the Filipinos within the Marxist-Leninist tradition could be summed up to about ninety (90) years or close to a century in all. Yet even as the PKP traces its lineage directly to the old national democratic revolution of 1896 led by the *Katipunan*, given the fact that among its founders were veteran *Katipuneros* themselves, e.g., Crisanto Evangelista and Dominador Gomez, and more importantly, the PKP's aspirations were supposed to be directly linked with that of the *Katipunan's* national self-determination against the Spanish colonialism and social justice for the workers and peasants— we may deduce that the Filipino revolutionaries may have been fighting against colonialism, *imperialism* and social injustice for the past one hundred twenty-four (124) years, either directly or indirectly, en-massed or in certain groups, spontaneously or in organized manner, armed and unarmed.

As it is known today, the CPP with its Maoist orientation is a re-established party from the PKP. The former has accused the latter of being pro-Soviet revisionist that has shortchanged the Filipino proletariat and people for its left adventurism and right conservatism in its conduct of the revolutionary struggles from the 1930s and onward to its eventual weakening in the latter part of the 1960s during the reign of the Marcos, Sr. It is specifically clear from the founding documents of the CPP which include the *Constitution and Program of the Party* ratified by the Party's First Congress in 1968 and approved as well with minor amendments by Second Congress of 2016, the *Philippine Society and Revolution, Our Urgent Tasks (OUT)* and the *Specific Characteristics of People's Protracted War (SCPPW)* as well as other major documents produced during the so called *2nd Great Rectification Movement* like the *Reaffirm Our Basic Principles and Rectify Errors and Stand for Socialism and Combat Revisionism*— that the CPP is Maoist in orientation; regards the defunct Soviet Union and the PKP as revisionists and upholds the *universal theory of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism* as its guide of action while allegedly ameliorating the same to the concrete practice of carrying out the *people's democratic revolution* as the supposed current stage of the Philippine Revolution in preparation for the subsequent stage of Socialist Revolution, the initial phase towards the fulfillment of attaining the ultimate goal of communism<sup>2</sup>.

The character, ideology, orientation, and goals of the CPP are unmistakably Marxist-Leninist and Maoist, as its *Constitution's<sup>2</sup> Preamble* provides. The same *Constitution* assumes that the CPP is the revolutionary Party of the working class and claims to be a vanguard and detachment of the Filipino people's revolution. Accordingly, it learns its basic principles from the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Ho, and other communist thinkers and leaders and from the historical lessons that sprouted from the revolutionary struggles of the Filipinos and other proletarians and peoples around the world.

In clarifying its methods, strategy, and tactics, the same *Constitution's<sup>2</sup> Preamble* is instructive when it declares:

The Party resolutely wields the weapons of revolutionary armed struggle and the united national front to defeat imperialism and such local reactionary classes as the big comprador bourgeoisie and the landlord class. Armed struggle is the main struggle, while the legal democratic movement is the secondary but indispensable form of struggle. Under the Party's absolute leadership, the New People's Army has expanded and consolidated its forces throughout the archipelago. Both underground and aboveground, in urban and rural areas,

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2 Communist Party of the Philippines. *Constitution and Program*. (2016) BannedThought.Net. <http://www.bannedthought.net/Philippines/PPP/2016/PPP-ConstitutionAndProgram-2016-English.pdf>

the patriotic and progressive alliances and component organizations have strengthened by waging all forms of struggle in various fields<sup>3</sup>.

*Article IX, Section 3* of the same *Constitution*, elucidates that,

...the New People's Army (NPA) is the main weapon of the Party in the seizure and consolidation of political power. It wields the basic alliance of the working class and the peasantry. In the countryside, it shall create the conditions for establishing the people's democratic state by waging the armed struggle, facilitating agrarian revolution, and helping build organs of political power and revolutionary mass organizations<sup>4</sup>.

By which method can the CPP accomplish the seizure and consolidation of political power?

The *Program for People's Democratic Revolution*<sup>5</sup> (2016) has been explicit in its declaration that the Party owes its victories to its adherence to the Marxist-Leninist Theory, allegedly the correct method in analysing the Philippine history and society, the revolutionary leadership of the working class, the program and line of the people's democratic revolution and the strategy and tactics of the protracted people's war. The design and tactics of the *national democratic revolution*, a 2-stage course formulated by Lenin (A.R.Desai 2008)<sup>6</sup>, is the people's protracted war enunciated by the CPP in 1974 through the document, *SCPPW*. Such appears to be an attempt of the Party to particularize into the Philippine Revolution the broad theory of Mao as regards the strategy and tactics of people's war, or Protracted People's War in particular.

Given the than fifty-three (53) years of fierce civil war between the CPP-NPA and the Philippine state, and if we take into account the drawn lineage of the revolutionary forces from the PKP1930 and that of the 1896 revolution— it is maybe worth examining the document, *SCPPW* and the conduct of the armed struggle in the Philippines with the original theory of Protracted People's War as conceptualized by Mao Tse Tung using the concrete experiences of the revolutionary China during his time. Avowing that the Philippine Revolution is essentially Marxist-Leninist and Maoist which has adopted Mao's

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3 Communist Party of the Philippines. *Constitution and Program*. (2016), 16.

4 Communist Party of the Philippines. *Constitution and Program*. (2016), 35.

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theory of protracted war through the *SCPPW* while contra-posing the question of why the CPP has been entangled in the civil strife for so long without an end-game in sight—it is maybe enlightening to review the CPP’s *SCPPW* in relation to the original theory of Mao as enshrined in his fundamental military writings on protracted war, namely, *The Problems Of Strategy in China’s Revolutionary War*<sup>7</sup>, *Problems Of Strategy In The Guerilla War Against Japan*<sup>8</sup>, *On Protracted War*<sup>9</sup>, and the *Problems Of War And Strategy*<sup>10</sup>.

Why could the Philippine Revolution not advance fast the strategic defensive hurdle in the protracted war after so many years? What are the problems in the strategy and tactics of the people’s protracted war? Which specific elements and requirements in the strategy and tactics remain unfilled? Can there be some possible refinements of the tactics, and in the same manner, are the same strategy and tactics applicable to the concrete conditions of the Philippines in the first place?

The paper wishes to bring forth some possible answers to those questions from the military perspective of Mao.

#### **THE “SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR PEOPLE’S PROTRACTED WAR” (SCPPW) AND ITS MILITARY EVOCATION**

There are not many detailed documents about the strategy and tactics of the Philippine Revolution which are available in libraries and online sources except what has been provided by the document, *SCPPW*. Reportedly a product of summing-up and synthesis undertakings from 1969, the year the NPA was organized and went to war up to 1974 when the document was released—the *SCPPW* details the Party’s and people’s army conduct of revolutionary war to encircle the cities from the countryside and the subsequent

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7 Tse-Tung Mao. *Problems of Strategy in China’s Revolutionary War*. (Marxists Internet Archive, December 1936). [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1\\_12.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_12.htm)

8 Tse-Tung Mao. *Problems of Strategy in Guerilla War Against Japan*. (Marxists Internet Archive, May 1938). [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2\\_08.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_08.htm)

9 Mao Tse-Tung. *On Protracted War*. (Marxists Internet Archive, May 1938). [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2\\_09.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_09.htm)

10 Mao Tse-Tung. *Problems of War and Strategy*. (Marxists Internet Archive, 6 November 1938). [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2\\_12.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_12.htm)

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seizing of political power from the state. The document, nonetheless, *Reaffirm Our Basic Principles and Rectify Errors*<sup>11</sup>, is enlightening as well on how the people's protracted war has been conducted in the Philippines and the supposed errors committed by the NPA in carrying out such a war in both theoretical and practical domains

The *SCPPW*, as mentioned above, purports to provide both the theoretical thesis and practical guidelines on how to wage the protracted people's war in the Philippines supposedly under the guidance of the Marxist-Leninist Theory and Mao Tse Tung's Thought. The document lists seven (7) items/topics, namely: 1) *National Democratic Revolution of a New Type*; 2) *Protracted War in the Countryside*; 3) *Fighting in a Small Mountainous Archipelago*; 4) *From Small and Weak to Big and Strong*; 5) *A Fascist Puppet Dictatorship Amidst Crisis*; 6) *Under One Imperialist Power*, and 7) *Decline of US Imperialism and Advance of the World Revolution*.

Consequently, of the seven (7) items, only three (3) deal directly with military questions. These are items 2, 3, and 4, with discussions on the *Protracted War in the Countryside*, *Fighting with Mountainous Archipelago*, and *From Weak to Big and Strong*. The other four (4) items chiefly discuss Marxist principles and the supposed elaboration on the character of the *Marxist bourgeois-democratic revolution* in what the CPP calls as the epoch of imperialism and that of the state. However, we shall likewise deal here with item no.1 to enlighten us on the CPP's revolution, its nature and character.

To begin with, the *SCPPW*<sup>12</sup> under its item no. 1- *NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION OF A NEW TYPE* says that the Philippine Revolution is *national democratic* in character, albeit of a new type. The new type, of course, reportedly refers to the theory that the current revolution is being allegedly led by the Filipino proletariat through its vanguard party, the CPP, and in contrast to the old type of the democratic revolution against the Spanish colonialism which the emergent Filipino bourgeoisie had led, the Ilustrado of 1896.

As a *national democratic revolution*, it purportedly aims, according to documentary sources— to free the Filipinos from the crutches of *imperialism*, liberate

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11 Communist Party of the Philippines. *Reaffirm our Basic Principles and Rectify Errors*. (1993). Rebolusyon, 1-80. <http://www.bannedthought.net/Philippines/CPP/Rebolusyon/1993/R1993-01en.pdf>

12 Simoun Riple. *Specific Characteristics of Our People's War*. (Communist Party of the Philippines, December 1974) . BannedThought.Net. <http://bannedthought.net/Philippines/CPP/1970s/SpecificCharacteristicsPW-Riple-1974.pdf>

the peasantry from serfdom and bondage to the soil and free the people from the yoke of *bureaucrat capitalism*, cum the corrupt rule of big landlord and comprador classes which has been lording over the Philippine state for so long now. Being of a new type, the revolution is now reportedly led by the proletariat in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism and whose direction is the building of socialism upon the fulfillment of the democratic requirements of the people's self-determination against colonialism and imperialism and the emancipation of peasants from serfdom. Such contrasts reportedly with the old democratic revolution's trajectory of building a capitalist nation-state under the old bourgeois-Ilustrado leadership.

Acknowledging that the current revolution is a continuation of the 1896 revolution, the *SCPPW* avows:

We are therefore engaged in a continuous Philippine Revolution, with two distinct stages: the national-democratic and socialist stages. In both stages, the class leadership is held by the proletariat, which is historically the most progressive, as a political and economic factor, and which evokes the most advanced ideology. Through its vanguard detachment, the Communist Party of the Philippines, the proletariat sees to it that the national-democratic revolution is carried out and completed; that the socialist revolution immediately ensues upon the victory of the national-democratic revolution; and that for a whole historical epoch, socialism creates the foundation for communism<sup>13</sup>.

To realize this goal accordingly, the *SCPPW* spells the current major task as one which must seize political and state power from the landlord and comprador classes which have since monopolized the state in collaboration with imperialism. Such can be accordingly realized through the basic alliance of the proletariat and the peasantry by way of the people's army, as the supposed expression of the concrete coalition of the workers and the peasants, being the most advanced force in the country under the world capitalist system and the most numerically dominant population in the Philippines, respectively. Therefore, the people's army is tasked, according to the document, to seize the state power through armed struggle by encircling the cities from the countryside in a 3-act war: strategic defensive, strategic stalemate, and strategic offensive.

The logical question that ensues is, how?

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13 Simoun Riple. *Specific Characteristics of Our People's War*. (Communist Party of the Philippines, December 1974) . 3, BannedThought.Net. <http://bannedthought.net/Philippines/CPP/1970s/SpecificCharacteristicsPW-Riple-1974.pdf>



Through item no. 2 -*PROTRACTED WAR IN THE COUNTRYSIDE*, the *SCPPW* attempts to outline the answer on how to launch the revolution of a new type by introducing the people's protracted war in the countryside where the supposed weakest link of reaction exists and through the combination of organizing the people's army with the tasks of pursuing the agrarian revolution and of building organs of political power and mass organizations alongside the general line of encircling the cities from the countryside. The key points identified by the document are the building of the people's army in line with the campaign for the agrarian revolution to attract the vast peasantry and advance militarily in wave upon wave fashion from the countryside to the cities with the consolidated political power of armed guerrilla zones and bases. The *SCPPW* identifies that the core of every guerrilla base and zone is the *organ of political power*, a people's belligerent shadow government against the Philippine state.

Thus, the *SCPPW*'s item no. 2 affirms that in the Philippines,

...it is as necessary as possible to wage a protracted people's war. It is only through a long period that we can develop our forces step by step by defeating the enemy forces piece by piece. We are in no position to put our small and weak forces into strategically decisive engagements with militarily superior enemy forces. In the first place, we have just started from scratch. Neither could we have postponed the start of our people's war. The more time we have for developing our armed strength from practically nothing, the better for us in the future. It is our firm policy to fight only those battles that we are capable of winning. Otherwise, we circle in the face of an enemy force that we cannot defeat and look for the opportunity to strike at an enemy force that we can defeat<sup>14</sup>.

From how we understand it, the necessary *protractedness* of the war is anchored on the long-term building of the people's army capability, the consolidation of guerrilla zones and bases, and the strength and decline of the state forces. Such a war must, therefore, pass through periods of *strategic defensive*, *strategic stalemate*, and *strategic offensive* concerning the relative overall military strength of the revolution and that of the supposed reaction in the countryside. Theoretically, the conduct, intensity, and fluidity of the war must be determined by the people's army itself as it musters the initiative of selecting weaker enemy targets that the supposed people's army could certainly defeat within the entire war situation and theatre at the defensive stage, as the document emphasizes.

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14 Simoun Riple. *Specific Characteristics of Our People's War*. (Communist Party of the Philippines, December 1974) . 5, BannedThought.Net. <http://bannedthought.net/Philippines/CPP/1970s/SpecificCharacteristicsPW-Riple-1974.pdf>

And as the arms and war materiel of the people's army must come directly from its enemy itself through confiscations by way of the war of attrition and annihilation as provided for by the theory of guerrilla warfare, the document avers that the same people's army is expected to increase its strength and grow from weak to strong in conjunction with the increasing consolidation of the red bases and zones. With such a developmental trajectory, the entire revolution is expected to advance from *strategic defensive* to *strategic stalemate* and eventually to *strategic offensive*. So the CPP believes that through the strategic line of encircling the cities from the countryside, the consolidated guerrilla zones in the country at the higher stages of the protracted war can be linked up by regular mobile warfare, which will afford the revolutionary forces to seize towns and cities wherein the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggles of the masses are intense which could trigger mass uprisings<sup>15</sup>.

However, in the above-cited item where a comprehensive exposition on the theory of the protracted war could have been discussed and dissected, not much has been said to this effect. Mao's basic idea of protracted war and how the same could be related, applied, and even refined under the country's specific social and physical conditions could have been presented in a more detailed and nuanced form. Sadly, the same were not dissected thoroughly. Items such as the conditions and requirements by which the guerrilla bases and zones could be built and survive in the long run, the peculiar role of guerrilla warfare versus the regular mobile warfare, the dynamic element to be played by the war of attrition and annihilation, timing of attack and counter-attack within the patterns of encirclements and suppressions of the state forces and the roles of roving, positional and guerrilla warfare within the conduct of the specific campaigns and battles and in the general war situation as whole— have never been discussed thoroughly in the item which purportedly introduces the protracted war as the strategy and tactics of the Philippine Revolution.

Aside from laying down the general line and the justification of the necessary *protractedness* of the war, the item is remiss of the specific nuances of war as well as the general military and logistical requirements of such a war.

In item no.3- *FIGHTING IN A SMALL AND MOUNTAINOUS ARCHIPELAGO* of the *SCPPW*<sup>16</sup>, the document further deals with the question of the people's army fighting in

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15 Simoun Riple. *Specific Characteristics of Our People's War*. (Communist Party of the Philippines, December 1974) . BannedThought.Net. <http://bannedthought.net/Philippines/CPP/1970s/SpecificCharacteristicsPW-Riple-1974.pdf>

16 Simoun Ripl. *Specific Characteristics of Our People's War*. (Communist Party of the Philippines, December 1974) . BannedThought.Net. <http://bannedthought.net/Philippines/CPP/1970s/SpecificCharacteristicsPW-Riple-1974.pdf>

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a small and mountainous archipelago. Nonetheless, except for the statement that the mountainous terrain of the country countervails its archipelagic character and such landscape with some population and thick vegetation presents excellent conditions for the people's war, the item says conspicuously nothing on the character and nature of the Philippine state which could be suited with the people's guerrilla warfare as the strategy and tactics of the revolution. How can the guerrillas exploit the thick vegetation, mountainous terrain, and archipelagic character to cover their movements and build guerrilla zones and red bases without being immediately detected by state forces? The same exposition can be considered a mere descriptive narrative of the physical nature of the country.

The item does not present a detailed form, and strategic evocation of how shall the guerrilla forces would mobilize the peasant masses by agitating, educating, and organizing them within the revolutionary line of agrarian revolution and encircling the cities through the countryside and via the protracted armed struggle under such a physical terrain. While explanations have been made on the small, mountainous, and shredded character of the country as an archipelago which, according to the item, could compel the revolutionary forces to fight on narrow fronts, making the war exceedingly fluid and difficult— not much has been discussed on the supposed departure of the concept of waging a protracted war in such a country as compared to a vast war theatre of China which was being ruled by various and incessantly warring landlords, and without a unified national economy and political system which undoubtedly made the existence of red power through the consolidated armed bases and zones highly possible for long periods of time.

Further, *SCPPW's* item no.4--*FROM SMALL AND WEAK TO BIG AND STRONG* affirms that,

...we must recognize the balance of forces between the enemy and us. This is the first requirement in waging an entire war, a campaign, or a single battle. As matters now stand, we are small and weak while the enemy is big and strong. He is undoubtedly extremely superior to us militarily in such specific terms as the number of troops, formations, equipment, technique, training, foreign assistance, and supplies in general. It will take a protracted period for us to change this balance of forces in our favor. Thus, protractedness is a basic characteristic of our people's war. The enemy armed forces have four major services, namely, constabulary, army, air force, and navy, with a total force of at least 100,000 troops at present. Under the fascist dictatorship, enemy troop strength has been increased by at least 40,000 both by an actual increase in regular forces and by the prolongation of military service by twenty-year-old trainees from six months to one year-and-a-half. Enemy strength is also beefed up by the "civilian home defense force" (another name for the "barrio self-defense unit"). The fascist

dictator has announced that by the middle part of 1975, the total strength of the reactionary armed forces will go up to 250,000 after integrating the local police forces under the Philippine Constabulary<sup>17</sup>.

The summation of the strength of the state armed forces at the time the SCPPW was being written was in the range of 250,000 combatants against a few hundred red guerrillas. Nonetheless, the document is utterly optimistic when the same SCPPW declares:

As matters now stand on a nationwide scale or even on the scale of every region, the New People's Army has no alternative but to be on the strategic defensive in opposition to the strategic offensive of an overweening enemy. But the content of our strategic defense is the series of tactical offensives that we are capable of undertaking and winning. By winning battles of quick decisions, we are bound to accumulate the strength to win bigger battles and campaigns to be able to move up to a higher stage of the war. To graduate from guerrilla warfare to regular mobile warfare as the main form of our warfare, we have to exert much effort over a long period. We are still very much at the rudimentary and early substage of the strategic defensive. We may state that in the long process of its growth from small and weak to big and strong, our people's army will have to undergo certain stages and substages. Considering a probable course of development whereby our forces are inferior now and will consequently become equal and finally superior to the enemy, we can tentatively define three strategic stages that our people's army will have to undergo<sup>18</sup>.

The major deficiency of this item is its failure to exactly pinpoint the fundamental pattern of the war being perpetrated by the state against the people's army and how such a people's army may counteract with such a pattern to defeat the military juggernaut of its enemy and in the process gain more and more arms and ammunition whilst weakening and destroying its enemy towards its ultimate defeat in the long run. From where we stand now, what could be critical here is the description of the stages of war from the defensive, stalemate, and offensive and how such a war will advance and graduate from each stage. While we know that in the strategic defensive stage, the requirements are to build stable guerrilla bases and zones and launch the guerrilla war alongside the strategic line of encircling the cities from the countryside through what the item calls as

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17 Simoun Riple (1974, December 1December 1). *Specific Characteristics of Our People's War*. (Communist Party of the Philippines, December 1974) . 11, BannedThought.Net. <http://bannedthought.net/Philippines/CPP/1970s/SpecificCharacteristicsPW-Riple-1974.pdf>

18 Simoun Riple (1974, December 1December 1). *Specific Characteristics of Our People's War*. (Communist Party of the Philippines, December 1974) . 13, BannedThought.Net. <http://bannedthought.net/Philippines/CPP/1970s/SpecificCharacteristicsPW-Riple-1974.pdf>

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the intensive and extensive guerrilla warfare coupled with agrarian revolution, it is still a puzzle how the revolutionary forces will advance from strategic defensive to strategic stalemate in the same protracted war. Again, the item fails to discuss both the military's quantitative and qualitative requirements of each stage.

Considering the numerical balance of forces locked in war, how can the people's army in their hundreds alone defeat a 250,000-strong state force? This is the most paramount concern and issue in the strategy and tactics. This strategic and fundamental question is ought to be answered by the strategists of the revolution and exponents of the protracted war, the way Mao presented his theory which had been proven to be a resounding success in both the civil wars against the reactionary warlords of the north and the Guomindang of Shang Kai Chek as well as in the ensuing national fight against the Japanese aggression and the subsequent and renewed civil war against the Guomindang after the final defeat of Japanese aggression in China.

## **THE MARXIST REVOLUTION AND MAO'S PROTRACTED PEOPLE'S WAR**

Since the CPP's Constitution avows that it is leading a Marxist-Leninist Revolution, let us briefly discuss the theory and character of a Marxist-Leninist Revolution as drawn from the rich treasury of Marxism-Leninism literature and as how we understand it. Precisely, such a revolution stems from the communist teachings of Marx and Engels through their contributions of dialectical and historical materialism in the field of philosophy and natural sciences, critique of capitalism in the domain of political economy whose essence is the discovery of surplus value and the private accumulation of capital from the product of social labor and the teaching of scientific socialism whose central thesis is class struggle in the area of the communists' strategy and tactics.

From what we have researched, the philosophical basis of a communist revolution stems from the very nature of contradictions within all the natural phenomena and social processes in all of the natural world and social praxis as the basis of their existence, movement and development. Marx and Engels have allegedly discovered that every phenomenon and process is replete with contradictions, which have been further demonstrated in social sciences with the presence of social classes in society as a result of the private ownership of the means of production and private accumulation of capital in capitalist societies. Marx and Engels in *Communist Manifesto* emphasize this when they poetically pronounce,

...the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large

or in the common ruin of the contending classes. In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank. In ancient Rome, we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate gradations<sup>19</sup>.

From what we understand in the *Communist Manifesto*, class struggle has therefore been crystallized as the acme of the doctrine of scientific socialism and the most influential law by which societies have developed from primitive classless society to slavery, feudalism, and capitalism; and could develop further towards socialism and upon the resolution of class contradiction, the same can develop further to yet another classless form, communism, the highest and most advanced type of society in history so as Marx and Engels believe.

In the epoch of capitalism and imperialism, it seems obvious to Marx and Engels that the essential component of the theory of class struggle is the international role of the proletariat as the only revolutionary class in society which needs to be freed from the constraints of private ownership of production and the accumulation of capital for social progress to advance for the benefit of humanity. Marx and Engels are forthright when they proclaim,

...of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a revolutionary class. The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of modern industry; the proletariat is its special and essential product. The lower middle class, the small manufacturer, the shopkeeper, the artisan, and the peasant all fight against the bourgeoisie, to save their existence from extinction as fractions of the middle class. They are therefore not revolutionary but conservative. They are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history. If by chance they are revolutionary, they are so only given their impending transfer into the proletariat; they thus defend not their present, but their future interests, they desert their standpoint in place themselves at that of the proletariat<sup>20</sup>.

It seems, therefore, that under capitalism and imperialism, the liberation of the proletariat necessitates its freedom from all forms of feudal shackles e.g. obscurantism, backwardness in production, fascist laws and mandates, and all the remnants of feudalism,

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19 Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. (1848) par 7. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm>

20 Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. (1848) par 50. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm>

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colonialism, and the bondage of capital. Thus, Lenin, in his theory of the 2-stage revolution decisively linked the struggle of the proletariat to the democratic struggle of other classes for freedom and democracy, including the demand for land by the peasantry. It is now understood from the Marxist viewpoint and through Lenin that the proletariat, in its desire to create socialism and ultimately communism, has to pass through the democratic revolution, incorporating the demands for freedom, democracy, and self-determination of nation-states within the continuum of national and peasant questions.

Again and from what we can infer, central to all this is the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the stage of building socialism and communism. Only through this dictatorship of the proletariat (a class dictatorship not over the people but over the bourgeois class), according to Lenin can the proletariat safeguard its gains in the democratic and socialist stages of the revolution. Being the vanguard and the most advanced detachment of the proletariat, the Communist Party as envisioned by Lenin would stand at the front, center and the rear of this dictatorship, marshalling all the economic resources available in building socialism while unleashing state power on the anticipated counter-revolution of the bourgeois class and its imperialist masters in the international arena.

Joseph Stalin<sup>21</sup> appears to have defined what constitutes the Party of the proletariat from the Leninist perspective. According to him, the Party is the advanced and the most organized detachment of the working class, the highest form of class organization of the proletariat, the instrument of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the embodiment of the unity of will. The principal function of this Party, therefore, from the analysis of Stalin in the revolutionary-pre-socialist stage is to educate, organize and mobilize the proletariat to capture the state power so it could fulfill the requirements of the 2-stage democratic and socialist revolution.

To fulfill the requirements of the 2-stage revolution, Stalin<sup>22</sup> summarized Lenin's strategy and tactics as the science of the proletariat leadership in the class struggle. While his discussion centers on the Russian 1905 and 1917 experiences, Stalin was candid with the stages and the positive forces of the revolution, which are the proletariat in alliance with the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie. He spoke of the tactics as an integral part of the strategic leadership of the proletariat, subordinated to the tasks and requirements of the strategy. Stalin thus challenges that,

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21 Joseph Stalin. *The Foundations of Leninism*. (Marxists Internet Archive, 1953). <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1924/foundations-leninism/index.htm>

22 Joseph Stalin. *The Foundations of Leninism*. (Marxists Internet Archive, 1953). <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1924/foundations-leninism/index.htm>

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...the task of tactical leadership is to master all forms of struggle and organization of the proletariat and to ensure that they are used properly to achieve, with the given relations of forces, the maximum results necessary to prepare for strategic success. What is meant by properly using the forms of struggle and organization of the proletariat? It means fulfilling certain conditions, of which the following must be regarded as the principal ones: *Firstly*. To put in the forefront precisely those forms of struggle and organization which are best suited to the conditions prevailing during the flow or ebb of the movement at a given moment and which, therefore, can facilitate and ensure the bringing of the masses to the revolutionary positions, the bringing of the millions to the revolutionary front, and their disposition at the revolutionary front<sup>23</sup>.

Corollary to the definition of strategy and tactics set forth by Lenin and Stalin, Mao enunciated the *Protract People's War (PPW)* as the strategy and tactics of the Chinese Revolution after the various failed uprisings of the workers in key cities and peasant uprisings as well in different frontier localities in China. Mao formulated this *PPW* in four (4) of his major military writings, namely: *Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War*<sup>24</sup>, *Problems of Strategy in the Guerrilla War against Japan*<sup>25</sup>, *On Protracted War*<sup>26</sup>, and *Problems of War and Strategy*<sup>27</sup>.

Through these books, Mao outlined most comprehensively and integrally China's revolutionary strategy encompassing the periods of 1937-1945, known as the *War of Resistance Against Japan*, and 1945-1949, known as the *Third Revolutionary Civil War*. The earlier periods covering 1924-27, known as the *Northern Expedition* and 1927-37, known as the *Agrarian Revolutionary War*, have been characterized as failures, stemming from

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23 Joseph Stalin. *The Foundations of Leninism*. (Marxists Internet Archive, 1953). Par. 14, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1924/foundations-leninism/index.htm>

24 Tse-Tung Mao. *Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War*. (Marxists Internet Archive, December 1936). [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1\\_12.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_12.htm)

25 Tse-Tung Mao. *Problems of Strategy in Guerilla War Against Japan*. (Marxists Internet Archive, May 1938). [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2\\_08.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_08.htm)

26 Tse-Tung Mao. *On Protracted War*. *Marxists Internet Archive*. (May 1938). [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2\\_09.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_09.htm)

27 Tse-Tung Mao. *Problems of War and Strategy*. (Marxists Internet Archive, 06 November 1938). [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2\\_12.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_12.htm)



wrongful strategy and tactics of coordinated peasants and workers' uprisings, alliance with the Guomindang and pure red zones building in the countryside without elaboration in the strategy and tactics of how to weaken the reactionary warlords, their imperialist masters and ultimately defeat them in the long run.

Mao anchored his *PPW* thesis on the unique characteristics of China and hence, the possibility that an independent red power could exist in the countryside for a long time<sup>28</sup>. He said this red power, cum consolidated armed guerrilla bases, and zones could exist in China given the vastness of its landmass. More importantly, there was no unified national economy and political system, and different imperialist countries partitioned China at that time, each having its puppet local warlord. Interestingly, the same warlords were locked in constant wars. Under such a prevailing chaotic and peculiar situation in China's economy and politics, Mao said that the red political power could exist in the country for a long period of time.

However, Mao warned that this particular situation in China has not existed and could exist in any other nation throughout history. It is therefore instructive to think that his *PPW* was tailored to fit China's specific conditions which may not be duplicated in any other country as the same conditions may not exist at all in any other country at any particular period in history. Simply put, China was unique and its uniqueness could not be duplicated in any other country. Hence, the *PPW* could not be said to be a universal theory for revolutionary wars in various countries.

Now, because the red bases and zones constituted armed revolutionaries pursuing agrarian revolution and aiming for the overthrow of state power through armed revolution, Mao<sup>29</sup> observed that there was a single military pattern by which the supposed reactionary forces employed to crush the armed revolution. The same had been a repeated pattern of alternation of encirclements and suppressions through the blockhouse method. Nonetheless, since the revolutionary forces were still weak compared to the superior forces of reaction (numerical strength, armaments, and capabilities), how did the armed revolution react to this repeated pattern of encirclements and suppressions, campaigns, and counter-campaigns, and attacks and counter-attacks? When would this pattern end, Mao asked and answered the same that such may end only when the balance of forces fundamentally changes in favor of the Red Army and against the White Army.

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28 Tse-Tung Mao. *Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War*. (Marxists Internet Archive, December 1936). [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1\\_12.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_12.htm)

29 Tse-Tung Mao. *Problems of Strategy in Guerilla War Against Japan*. (Marxists Internet Archive, May 1938). [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2\\_08.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_08.htm)

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The same was, therefore, synonymous when the Red Army would grow from small and weak to big and strong, and the White Reactionary Army would be reduced from big to weak in an alternation of roles between the two (2) warring forces. Such could likewise be equated with the strategic stages of the war, tilting from strategic defensive towards the strategic stalemate and ultimately to the strategic offensive from the perspective of the Red Army. Mao referred to this as the fundamental change in the balance of forces locked in war.

Mao<sup>28 29</sup> asserted that the single important consideration in war is preserving one's forces and the physical destruction of the enemy forces. Through this preservation and destruction, the fundamental balance of points may change in Red Army's favor during the long period of alternation between the enemy's offensive and the Red Army's defensive and counter-offensive campaigns and battles. Here lies why the war is protracted and why it had to pass through the 3-stage act: strategic defensive, strategic stalemate, and strategic offensive. Mao would assert here:

In each campaign, the alternation in the forms of fighting consists of the first stage in which the enemy employs the offensive against our defensive, and we meet his offensive with our defensive, and of the second stage in which the enemy employs the defensive against our offensive and we meet his defensive with our offensive<sup>30</sup>.

The logical concern that may arise is how to conduct the defense given the onslaught of the enemy in the repeated campaigns of encirclement and suppression via the blockhouse method. According to Mao, the central problem is how to end this pattern and advance the war into a much higher stage through the self-preservation of the Red Army and the consequent destruction of the enemy forces. Henceforth, Mao<sup>3132</sup> rejected the idea of passive defense and instead formulated the concepts of active defense within

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30 Tse-Tung Mao. *Problems of Strategy in Guerilla War Against Japan*. (Marxists Internet Archive, May 1938). Pars. 95 and 109, [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2\\_08.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_08.htm)

31 Tse-Tung Mao. *Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War*. (Marxists Internet Archive, December 1936). [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1\\_12.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_12.htm)

32 Tse-Tung Mao. *Problems of Strategy in Guerilla War Against Japan*. (Marxists Internet Archive, May 1938). [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2\\_08.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_08.htm)

organized retreats to prepare the counter-attack and counter-encirclement of the enemy in an offensive attack within the defensive stage of the war. Mao<sup>31 32</sup> introduces the concepts therefore of:

1. Active and passive defense.
2. Preparations for combatting encirclement and suppression campaigns.
3. Strategic retreat to preserve the Red Army, tire out the enemy, and deliver the coup de grace in the counter-campaign and counter battle, decisively.

In the ensuing counter-attack, Mao<sup>23 24</sup> developed the tactics of the concentration of forces in a given military situation, the war of quick decision to end a campaign or battle decisively, and the war of annihilation for the destruction of the enemy forces, battle in the interior and exterior lines within contracting fronts and mobile warfare among others.

Similarly, he assigned the roles of guerrilla forces and regular mobile forces for the war of annihilation and attrition, respectively. Thus, according to him, while the regular mobile troops are expected to deliver annihilative measures, and the local guerilla forces are reserved for attrition to deceive the enemy, both forces could still perform interchanged functions which may depend on the requirements of the specific campaign or battle. Again, Mao cautioned the Red Army of the necessity for careful planning, assessment, and proper deployment of the revolution's cadres and Red Army forces for such a defensive campaign and battle and the subsequent counter-campaign and counter-battle.

Annihilation plays a key role in these campaigns and battles as, according to Mao, it is better to chop off all the fingers of the enemy's hand than merely inflict a wound on it. Annihilative results may demoralize the enemy in future campaigns and battles and, in most practical terms, diminish the strength of the enemy's active and reserve forces. To Mao, tilting the balance of forces, therefore, between that of the revolution and reaction depends largely on the successful campaigns and battles of annihilation, the most effective way of reducing the enemy's numerical strength and superiority whilst inflicting damages on its general morale to continue fighting on.

Mao<sup>23,24</sup> would counsel that each campaign and battle have different scope, extent of involved forces, and the character of terrain in the battleground giving rise to various tactical military requirements— the most important of which is the organized and well-planned retreat to terminal points within the Red Army's interior lines of operation and the possible counter-encirclement and suppression campaign to be deployed by the Red Army in the ensuing counter-offensive campaign and counter battles. In various references, he termed the retreat as *luring the enemy into the deep* to tire him out and put him on the defensive position within an adverse terrain, creating in the process a favorable situation for the Red Army to deliver the final annihilative blows through the

concentrated forces of regular mobile warfare and even guerrilla warfare. In Mao's mind, the keys are careful planning, military reconnaissance, and stable guerilla bases and zones to support such military operations.

Thus, it is no surprise that in Mao's war, he routed into annihilative submissions battalion and division sizes of the his enemy forces, effectively reducing the numerical strength of the White Army and inflicting heavy blows of its morale to fight on.

From the above, what can we infer?

First, Mao's protracted war in the strategic defensive stage is not purely defensive at all in character. The defense, active defense to be exact, is utilized for an organized and well-planned retreat, luring the enemy into the deep to deliver the decisive obliterating juggernaut through the concentration of forces, deployment of regular mobile warfare, and the application of the principles of the war of quick decision, and battles in the interior and exterior lines of contracting battle fronts and so forth.

Second, the basis of the *protractedness* of the war lies in the balance of forces which may fundamentally change when the Red Army accumulates decisive victories in the entire war situation through the battle of annihilation. Without the counter-attack in the strategic defensive stage of the general war situation as a whole and the absence of the war of annihilation, the enemy forces could not be diminished, and the balance of forces could not be altered while the revolution would not advance to higher levels within the protracted war in strategic terms. The repeated state forces' campaigns of encirclement and suppression would continue without an end up to such a time when the Red Army may finally grow weary and abandons the revolutionary will to fight.

Third, the war of annihilation plays a central role in the struggle to alter the balance of forces between the revolution and the reaction, as the principal aim of war is to preserve one's forces and to destroy that of the enemy. Without the desire to destroy the enemy physically and en masse through total physical obliteration, the balance of forces could not be altered, and the pattern of repeated campaigns of encirclement and suppression would persist.

Mao<sup>3334</sup> insists that the revolutionary war is a means to end unjust and reactionary wars. Hence, he presented a detailed and integrated revolutionary war strategy and tactics in his people's protracted war, encompassing both the strategic and tactical questions in military terms of the workers' revolution in alliance with the peasantry and other positive forces of the revolution at the time of China's civil wars and the Chinese people's national war against the Japanese aggression in the last world war.

### THE THEORETICAL GAP BETWEEN MAO AND THE SCPPW

From a chiefly military vista alone, there appears an ocean of differences between Mao's original theory with those that are enshrined in the *SCPPW*. First, the conditions in China then do not exist in the Philippines today among which are: the vastness of China's landmass which afforded Mao to build robust guerrilla bases and zones without being discovered by the enemy, the absence of a centralized economy, and a disintegrated political system of governance as the warlord bureaucrats were constantly infighting among themselves.

Precisely because of these specific conditions, Mao was able to formulate and successfully deliver the building of guerrilla zones and bases which became springboards for defensive military maneuvers, luring their enemy into the deep and delivering those decisive annihilative counterattacks against the White Army and the Japanese aggressors. Without these requirements, the prospects of guerrilla warfare appear to be bleak. Certainly, the Philippine Left guerrillas could build red bases and zones and even assemble military formations up to company and battalion level sizes, yet it could not certainly lure its enemy into the deep and deliver destructive military blows as those red zones and bases could be easily reached by the state forces whilst huge guerrilla movements in regular warfare could be detected at once and concentrated on with larger brigade and division size-formations of the state forces. Launching mobile and regular military formations without the support of robust and stable guerrilla zones and bases would tire out the revolutionary military forces as well as they would be constantly mobile at any given time, harassed and pursued without let-up by the state forces which can deploy artillery barrages, air covering assaults and numerically superior ground forces.

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33 Tse-Tung Mao. *Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War*. (Marxists Internet Archive, December 1936). [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1\\_12.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_12.htm)

34 Tse-Tung Mao. *Problems of Strategy in Guerilla War Against Japan*. (Marxists Internet Archive, May 1938). [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2\\_08.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_08.htm)

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Whilst the *SCPPW* purports to particularize the application of Mao's theory for the Philippine situation, the fundamental requirements of the theory itself are decisively missing in the Philippine situation. This may explain why the NPA has reached company and battalion sizes during the height of Marcos Sr.'s dictatorship considering the deep crisis of the ruling system and the wanton civil and political abuses of the regime. Yet after the 1986 EDSA uprising, the same level of military formations dissipated into squad formations called the *Sandatahang Yunit Pampropaganda (SYP)*. When merged with these SYPs are merged in a tactical formation to form a platoon-sized unit in what the NPA calls as Tactical Offensives (TOs), the same is only capable of harassing security guard's units in commercial plantations, ambushes on mobile squad level state forces and assaults on remote police and paramilitary stations. How could an alteration of the balance of forces between the Philippine Left's revolution and that of state forces be achieved if the supposed people's army is only capable of inflicting damages on its enemies in squad level formations? This is far from Mao's practice of delivering solid military blusters against division and battalion sizes of the White Army in juggernauts intended to neutralize thousands of White Army when the same is lured and cornered into the deep.

As the so-called people's army could not deliver annihilative blows and reduce the fighting morale of the state forces owing to the absence of the requirements discussed above, it could not as well reduce the numerical superiority of the state forces and hence, tilt the balance of the so called revolutionary war to advance the guerrilla warfare into the next stage which is the strategic stalemate as outlined in the *SCPPW*. There is nothing in the *SCPPW* that is instructive on how to advance to the next level of the war and this is why we have to ask Mao. His answer is clear and resounding: reduce the numerical superiority of state forces and inflict damages to its fighting capacity and morale through the war of annihilation.

Without this, the Philippine revolution by way of the *PPW* will run in circles and will follow what Lenin terms as the *cyclical revolutionary ebb and flow* (depending on the prevailing political situation and the sharpness of the crisis of the ruling system), without necessarily advancing into the next phase of the *PPW* which the Philippine Left is using as the blueprint of their strategy and tactics. Certainly, because of the deep-seated crisis of the ruling system, there would always be a fertile ground for dissent and revolution. Yet, the same may not be considered to be a significant material political force given the revolutionaries' inability to advance further.

Since a Marxist revolution is the expression of class struggle in its sharpest political and even military forms, some independent Marxists tend to accuse the Philippine mainstream left of militarizing and even dogmatizing the same class struggle through CCP's emphasis on the *PPW* as the supposed concrete expression of class struggles in the Philippines. The basis of such an accusation is the premium emphasis the Party is putting on in a peasant war through the *PPW* when in fact the peasant class itself in the countryside

is *depeasantizing/fragmenting* as a class given the penetration of cash economy into agriculture and the constitution itself of such agriculture into a distinct industry. Again, it is doubtful if the peasant class still demands for land, considering that the poor and middle peasants, and as an offshoot of the disintegration of this class— are already flocking into the cities, seeking odd jobs as OFWs in other countries, as wage earners and as semi-proletariat and lumpen proletariat eking out a living. The disintegration of the peasant class and their expulsion from the countryside are inevitable as the erosion of the natural feudal economy in the countryside has already begun since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

It is no wonder, therefore, that the peasant masses have been disorganized for a long time and that the Philippine Left could not mobilize them in their thousands despite the revolutionary forces' emphasis on agrarian revolution as the basis of building a people's army and the PPW. Even the agrarian revolution campaign itself of the so-called people's army could not keep its promise of reducing the peasants' land rent with the landlords as the revolutionary forces' minimum program in the agrarian revolution. What more on distributing land titles and defending the confiscated lands in favour of the peasants as there are no robust guerrilla zones and bases? In a matter of hours, the state forces could round-up and neutralize the supposed revolutionary occupants of the confiscated lands from the landlords considering that it is just a matter of hours to reach the remotest area of the country through air deployment and assault. So this agrarian revolution campaign has remained stalled and could not be operationalized for a long time now. How could the peasants be then inspired and mobilized through PPW if the promise for their land remains a promise for the last half a century?

The revolutionary left, therefore, has to be contented on some elements of the radicalized and educated youth in the cities as well as of the most disenfranchised Indigenous People's (IPs) tribes in the hinterlands in infusing fresh recruits to the Party and the so called people's army. This seems to be beyond the concept of a class-based revolution as enunciated by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao which is reportedly to be led by the working class in alliance of the peasantry and other supposed progressive forces in the initial phase of the 2-stage revolution.

At best, the current Philippine revolution appears to be a radical petty-bourgeois armed movement inspired by the drawn lineage of nationalism from the 1896 old democratic revolution and which is trying to mobilize a disintegrating peasant class through a war strategy whose political, organizational and military requirements are obviously missing in the Philippine setting. No wonder that after more than half a century of fighting and sacrificing to the altar of the revolution thousands of some of the best sons and daughters of at least two (2) generations, the same revolution remains mired in its inability to advance further.

By putting heavy emphasis on the peasant war through the *PPW*, the Philippine Left thus appears to be neglecting its primary historical task of organizing the Filipino proletariat into a fighting force for the revolution whose interest is socialism. Nevertheless, such a concern is best left to the revolutionaries themselves as the business of resolving revolutionary contradictions and questions, e.g. strategy and tactics is theirs.

Academics simply point out such questions. They usually don't mingle with revolutionaries. Playing with fire is the business of the cadres of the revolution who must endure the pain of burning to enlighten others by keeping the torch in flame on the road less traversed as the iconoclast Lean Alejandro would put it.

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