CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background

The 21st century brought about major changes to the world, some positive and some not as much. The world we live in today is filled with innovation, technological advancement, and relative peace. Though this may be so, the 21st century has also brought about countless horrors including but not limited to the spread and increased frequency of terrorist attacks. Transnational terrorism in particular has been on the rise since the attack on the World Trade Center in New York on the 11th of September, 2011 by the extremist group Al-Qaeda. [1] After this, new groups and their branches began rising such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS), the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL), Islamic State (IS), and Boko Haram to name a few. These groups began their operations in the Middle East and Africa, but in order to survive and expand they began to spread their activities to Southeast Asia, particularly the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia.[2]

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[1] Margaret Mary Egudo, "The Al-Qaeda transnational jihadist movement in historical context: understanding and countering religious and secular forms of terrorism" PhD diss., University of Adelaide, School of Social Sciences, 2016, Adelaide Research and Scholarship,
(10.4225/55/58c0beb0ae2f3).

[2] Nathaniel L. Moir "ISIL Radicalization, Recruitment, and Social Media Operations in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines." *PRISM* 7, no. 1 (2017): 90-107. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26470500.
accessed February 25, 2019.

The ideologies and messages of these groups have spread to these countries, inspiring people to join and even adapt their ideologies to create new groups. This creates mass concern over transnational terrorism in Southeast Asia as the region is filled with diversity, a lack of regional consensus in regards to a unified security countermeasure against such threats, and the widespread of ideologies and recruitments through the internet, social media platforms, and mobile messaging applications.[3]

Nowadays, communication is effortless. With the push of a button, people are instantly connected whether they be two houses apart or two continents apart. This technological advancement has made it much easier for people to spread information about anything and everything, including radicalism. The widespread of radicalization can be attributed to a number of things, and the internet is one of them. This can be seen in the dissemination of IS jihadist ideologies and propaganda by members and supporters of the radical groups over social media platforms, both open-source and encrypted.[4] The spread of these ideologies often go undetected as they become increasingly more decentralized, meaning that it is easier for these radical groups to recruit new members from all around the world through encrypted messaging platforms such as WhatsApp and not get caught until it is too late.[5] This

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[3] Nathaniel L. Moir "ISIL Radicalization, Recruitment, and Social Media Operations in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines." *PRISM* 7, no. 1 (2017): 90-107. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26470500.
accessed February 25, 2019.
[4] Angelica Habulan et al., " Southeast Asia: Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore, Online Extremism," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 10, no. 1 (2018): 7-30, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26349853.
accessed February 24, 2019
[5] *Ibid.*

creates the ideal situation for radical groups to recruit foreign fighters, convince them to join their cause, and eventually either join them in a certain attack or create martyrs out of them. In Indonesia alone, it was reported that as of March 2016 there was anywhere from 250-1,000 ISIL members and/or supporters in the country with nearly 800 Indonesian foreign fighters taking part in radical activities in Syria.[6] In the Philippines, foreign fighters have existed since the late 1990's with the creation of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) which had members from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore.[7] The existence of this group, and the fact that there had already been foreign fighters, made it easier for the Islamic State in the Philippines (ISP) to plan and carry out the attack on Marawi. The year 2017 saw a rapid rise in the recruitment activities of foreign fighters, with the ISP's use of the state of Sabah in Malaysia as a transit point to move the recruits into the Philippines.[8] The battle of Marawi saw the participation of at least 40 members of the *Jemaah Ansharut Daulah* (JAD), an Indonesia IS aligned group, and 28 Malaysians.[9]

The siege of the city of Marawi in the province of Mindanao, The Philippines is a prime example of the amalgamation of these notions. What initially was thought of as being a domestic operation was in actuality a transnational terrorist attack, involving foreign fighters from three if not more Southeast Asian

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[6] Nathaniel L. Moir "ISIL Radicalization, Recruitment, and Social Media Operations in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines." *PRISM* 7, no. 1 (2017): 90-107. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26470500.
accessed February 25, 2019.

[7] Angelica Habulan et al., " Southeast Asia: Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore, Online Extremism," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 10, no. 1 (2018): 7-30, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26349853.
accessed February 24, 2019.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] *Ibid.*

countries, that lead to the siege of the city of Marawi. The reports estimate that there were 300 fighters involved in the initial attack with 150 Maranaos, 40 foreign fighters, 50 Yakans and Tausogs, 30 Balik Islams (those who have converted to Islam), and 30 Maguindanaoans.[10] Though in retrospect, 40 foreign fighters out of a total of 300 does not seem to be a significant amount of people, it is still undetermined whether or not more foreign fighters were recruited to conduct attacks outside of Marawi or to come in at a later time as once again the advancement of technology has made it difficult to track the recruitment activities of these groups.

The involvement of foreign fighters in transnational terrorism issues is an interesting topic to explore as in the modern world and in the future there may be an increase in foreign fighters due to their pre-existence which would be an asset in terms of recruitment and planning transnational attacks. Therefore, it is intriguing to see how the widespread of radicalization and recruitment through the use the internet and social media platforms contributes to the increasing numbers of foreign fighters and their involvement in transnational terrorism.

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[10] Rohan Gunaratna, "The Siege of Marawi: A Game Changer in Terrorism in Asia." *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 9, no. 7 (2017). http://www.jstor.org/stable/26351533.
    accessed February 25, 2019

1.2   Research Questions

Based on the information provided above, the author suggests the following research questions:

1. What are the causes of the increased involvement of foreign fighters in transnational terrorism?

2. How is the process of engagement of foreign fighters in transnational terrorism?

1.3   Research Objectives

The objective of the research is to first and foremost identify the causes of the increased involvement of foreign fighters in transnational terrorism as a result of radicalization with a focus on investigating the case of the siege of Marawi. The research aims to explore the widespread of radicalization and the methods of recruitment used by radical groups that have made the process simpler for them yet nearly undetectable to track for those who wish to put an end to such violence activities.

The research also aims to explore the process of engagement of foreign fighters in various terrorist organizations in the world. This research will be done in order to compare and contrast the various cases to be able to possibly uncover a pattern within the process of engagement.

1.4   Research Contribution

The result from this research proposal will provide a deeper understanding on the causes of the increased involvement of foreign fighters in Southeast Asian

transnational terrorism by analyzing aspects such as the spread of radicalization and the various recruitment techniques used. This research topic is significant in the study of international relations as it will explain how transnational terrorism is not only a domestic or regional concern but a global one that must be tackled properly so as to minimize the possible damages. This research will also provide insight into the minds of the foreign fighters as it will explain the reasons why they have chosen to partake in such activities by looking at the case study of the siege of Marawi. This topic is beneficial as it also aims to explain and analyze the actions of the countries involved in tackling these transnational terrorism issues which will in turn be able to create a strong foundation in counter-extremism and terrorism measures in the future. This research will enhance the knowledge of those in the field of international relations regarding the topics of transnational terrorism, radicalization and recruitment, foreign fighters, and the joint actions taken by the countries involved and/or effected.

1.5 Structure of Writing

This research is broken down into five main chapters. Chapter one details an introduction to the research topic of foreign fighters in transnational terrorism. The chapter also provides a brief insight into the scope of the research as it presents the research questions and the objectives of the research.

Chapter two of the research is focused on the literary, theoretical, and conceptual framework. The chapter discusses the previous research similar to the topic that has been done before and has had an influence on the decision to create

this research. The chapter also discusses the grand theory of the research which is constructivism and the concepts that stem from the theory.

Chapter three of the research talks about how the research is a qualitative research as it aims to collect data from works of literature, journal articles, and other scholarly works, as opposed to a quantitative research that would collect numerical data. The chapter also details the research methods that have been used in the research which are the historical comparative research method and the case comparative research method.

Chapter four of the research paper is the analysis of the research. The chapter is broken down into five main subsections that all pertain to the research and lead towards the conclusion.The chapter focuses on the three main terrorist organizations of Al Qaeda, the Islamic State, and the Islamic State of Lanao. Each organization is described in detail, from its history, to main events, and the involvement, recruitment, and engagement of foreign fighters. The chapter ends with a comparison of all three organizations, aiming to find any similarities and differences that were found during the research.

Chapter five of the research paper discusses the conclusion of the analysis of the research as a whole. The chapter answers the two research questions of; 1. What are the causes of the increased involvement of foreign fighters in transnational terrorism? And 2. How is the process of engagement of foreign fighters in transnational terrorism? The chapter also entails recommendations made that have accumulated throughout the entire research process.