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# As wind, thunder and lightning: local resistance to China's resource-led diplomacy in the Christian Philippines<sup>1</sup>

*Pak Nung Wong, Kathlene Aquino, Kristinne Lara-De Leon and Sylvia Yuen Fun So*

**Abstract:** In recent years, transnational Chinese investors from the Greater China region have been seeking natural and mineral resources in foreign countries. This paper focuses on a mineral-rich region in the Philippines where China's resource-led diplomacy was first launched in 2007. Although foreign Chinese mining companies have made inroads into mineral-rich local communities, they have also encountered resistance from non-state actors, causing their operations to be disrupted and suspended. The authors argue that the local reception of China's resource-led diplomacy can be attributed to two factors. First, in light of the debate on 'China's globalization versus South East Asian state sovereignty', the growing strength of the Philippine state in resisting transnational mining endeavours hinges on the democratic space constituted by both state and non-state actors, resulting from political decentralization and active social activism. Second, it shows that the transnational Chinese actors have an insufficient knowledge base, in which they privilege a top-down state-centric approach that reinforces the patrimonial rule of the Philippine politicians. The authors conclude, first, that such patrimonial rule is largely made possible through the provincial governor as the key agent connecting the national state authority, local government units, mining operators/investors and the affected villagers. Second, local resistance to resource-led patrimonial rule hinges on the formation of Philippine democratic space. This space remains transient and unpredictable in nature, and so cannot be assimilated into the patrimonial character of the Philippine state. Such democratic struggle is like wind, thunder and lightning – hard to chase, hard to catch.

**Keywords:** security studies; black sand (magnetite) mining; China's resource-led diplomacy; Chinese foreign investments; Philippines

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From 2 to 17 December 2007, Chen Laiping, Consul and Head of Post of the Consulate of the People's Republic of China in Laoag city, led a historic diplomatic delegation to the once communist-insurgent-infested Cagayan Valley. There he visited the Cagayan Provincial Governor, Alvaro Antonio, and the Tuguegarao City Mayor, Delfin Ting. He came to 'explore and promote the prospects for bilateral exchange and cooperation in terms of agriculture, mining industry and etc'.<sup>2</sup> Afterwards, Consul Chen proceeded to other provinces in the northern Philippines, including the grain-rich Isabela province where Governor Grace Padaca 'introduced the vantage of rice and corn producing' to the Chinese diplomatic delegation.<sup>3</sup> In the following months, various Chinese and Taiwanese joint mining and agro-business ventures landed in the Cagayan Valley.

The above ethnographic snapshots raise a timely research question for scholars of global Chinese studies who are concerned about China's reach into various parts of the world: how could we account for China's resource-led local diplomacy and transnational Chinese mining investments in the Philippines? This question will set the terrain of this paper. In the following pages, the paper will answer this question by first engaging with the debate on China's globalization versus South East Asian sovereignty. Here we argue that a more comprehensive understanding of China's resource-led diplomacy and transnational endeavours is not possible without approaching them from the perspectives of local dynamics and resistance, which constitute a democratic space in which a range of societal forces compete for legitimacy with state officials. In light of the various agendas and concerns of these forces, the paper draws on the grass-roots voices from two mining-affected villages in Cagayan province to show how foreign Chinese mining ventures have operated and have been locally resisted. In conclusion, we suggest that local resistance to China's resource-led diplomacy in the Philippines can largely be attributed to two factors. First, the top-down policy implementation approach adopted by Philippine government officials caused much unrest and conflict among local populations. Second, there was a shortage of knowledge about local politics on the part of the Chinese state actors and investors.

### **China's economic globalization and South East Asian state sovereignty**

China's post-Second World War political and economic relations with the Philippines and South East Asia as a whole have largely been driven by its national agenda to promote internal political unity and economic development. With a gradual incorporation into the global capitalist system and vibrant economic development, China's progress into South East Asia signals a new era, starting from the end of the millennium (Harvey, 2006; Ong, 2006). During the Mao period (1950s–70s), China exported various types of support to the peasant insurgency

<sup>2</sup> Source: 'Chen Laiping visited the province of Cagayan', news release of the Consulate of the People's Republic of China in Laoag, 5 December 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Sources: (1) 'Chen Laiping visited province of Isabela', news release of the Consulate of the People's Republic of China in Laoag, 5 December 2007. (2) 'Chen Laiping visited the province of Pangasinan', news release of the Consulate of the People's Republic of China in Laoag, 18 December 2007. (3) 'Chen Laiping visited the province of La Union', news release of the Consulate of the People's Republic of China in Laoag, 18 December 2007. (4) 'Chen Laiping inspected PNP Force of Region One', news release of the Consulate of the People's Republic of China in Laoag, 18 December 2007.

and communist movements in the Philippines and South East Asia in general (Appleton, 1959; Landsdale, 1972; Macmillan, 2007). In an attempt to rescue its devastated domestic economy in the 1980s and 1990s, China aimed to absorb South East Asian Chinese capital to facilitate its own economic development with Deng Xiaoping's 'open door policy' (Wong, 2002). Large overseas Chinese businesses were particularly encouraged to conduct foreign direct investment in their own ancestral provinces in China, with Special Economic Zones (SEZs) deliberately being set up in the southern regions, such as Fujian and Guangdong provinces (Howell, 2000; Wang, 2001). However, following the ASEAN–China Free Trade Agreement signed in 2002, recent trends show that China has been engaging in bilateral trade with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries in order to fuel its industrialization and modernization programmes. According to ASEAN statistics, China was consistently among the top four largest trading partners in 2008 and 2009.<sup>4</sup> In 2008, China was even the largest exporting country to ASEAN.<sup>5</sup> In the post-millennial era, China's outreaching interactions with ASEAN countries are expected to flourish (Yeung, 2006). In short, China has become a major foreign direct investor in South East Asia in its own right.

Furthermore, one prominent aspect of China's economic globalization is that of its strategy on resource security. The continuous growth of the country since its economic reform in 1978 has exerted increasingly large demands on various kinds of resources including minerals, oil and agricultural products. The internal demand accelerated by the encouragement of industrialization in the last two decades has heavily exceeded the national supply and has made China one of the leading consumers of these resources internationally (Alden, 2011, pp 179–181). The significance of a resource-led diplomacy was further marked by the publication of a White Paper on Energy and a White Paper on Diplomacy in 2007 and 2008 respectively. In order to secure its consumption of minerals in the long run, China has strategically developed diplomatic relations with Africa and many South East Asian countries.

In the context of this regional background, this paper engages with the 'globalization versus sovereignty' debate. On the one hand, proponents of economic globalization have suggested that transnational capitalistic endeavours undermine state sovereignty by weakening the control of the state over its population and territory, eroding policy-making autonomy, undermining law enforcement capability, challenging political legitimacy and even altering its body politic. On the other hand, proponents of state sovereignty have suggested that the state may act autonomously in relation to globalizing forces and actively collaborate with and utilize them to further its own governance, development and state-building agenda. By putting this scholarly debate in the context of the Philippine mining industry, this paper will examine whether Philippine state sovereignty has been compromised by transnational Chinese mining ventures. Before embarking upon the case study, a review of the relevant existing literature will be provided.

Does China's economic globalization undermine South East Asian state sovereignty? On the one hand, various scholars have argued that intensifying global capital flows, advancing mass communications technology and proliferating

<sup>4</sup> Source: ASEAN Secretariat (2010), 'ASEAN Statistics', ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta, Tables 19 & 20, website: <http://aseansec.org/19230.htm> (last accessed 29 June 2010).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Table 21.

transnational movements of migrants and commodities have made the territorial boundaries of nation-states more transparent and porous (Ohmae, 1999; Sklair, 2001). Conceivably, state sovereignty is weakened by globalizing actors and transnational forces. Apart from the blurring of territorial borders, the legal and policy measures and body politic of states have been compromised and altered by transnational forces. On the other hand, confronted by competing arrays of globalization processes, it is argued that nation-states have been successfully reaffirming their sovereignty, not just by defending their territorial intactness, but also by reasserting political legitimacy and control over their economies and societies (Ong, 2005; Sassen, 1996; Vertovec, 1999). Many scholars do not view globalization as a process that weakens or strengthens states; instead, they have pointed out that there are regional variations and local culturally specific practices by which the states can adapt to complex global changes without compromising their sovereignty (Agnew, 2009, pp 212–216; Taylor and Flint, 2000, pp 288–309; Yeung, 2000, pp 11–12). In short, globalization involves complex processes in which transnational networks may constitute ethnicity-based transnational circuits for a new global division of labour. Various scholars have therefore suggested that South East Asia may be considered a transnational field where the transnational Chinese circuits meet the sovereign states (Castells, 1996, pp 106–115; Mittelman, 2000, pp 49–54). In his analysis of the dynamics between China and ASEAN, Shambaugh (2005, pp 16–17) further argues that a ‘multi-textured and multi-layered hybrid system’ characterizes the era of accelerating globalization. The system is constituted by the webs of various non-state actors operating at the societal level, which ‘bind societies together in complex and interdependent ways’.

An effective and informed response to this debate would not be possible without conducting contextualized case study research in a South East Asian country, such as the northern Philippines. The following pages will argue that China’s globalization does not undermine Philippine state sovereignty. In contrast, Philippine state sovereignty at the local level has even been reinforced through resisting foreign Chinese transnational investments. Moreover, it is determined that post-Marcos/1986 Philippine political decentralization measures – through state-building instruments such as the Local Government Code (Philippines Republic, 1991) – made such sovereignty-reinforcing resistance possible in three respects (Wong, 2006).

First, although the president sets the overall policy for mining, post-Marcos/1986 political decentralization has largely delegated the legal and executive authority to broker mining investment and to grant mining licences to the provincial governor at the local level. The Philippine Mining Act and the Local Government Code give provincial governors the authority to issue mining permits for large or small-scale mining and quarrying, after coordinating with the responsible national and local government offices.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the provincial governor is the key collaborative agent of domestic and foreign mining investments in the Philippines.

Second, such a clearly stipulated legal framework of political decentralization

<sup>6</sup> Local Government Code of 1991 does not include specific provisions regarding mining arrangements (either domestic or foreign). However, it states that it is within the authority of the provincial governor to issue mining permits (Section 465) and determine tax shares (Section 138).

has also provided the Philippine non-state actors with unambiguous targets (that is, responsible government officials) towards which to conduct their resistance. These targets mainly include the provincial governor, city mayor and the Regional Director of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) at the local and regional levels, and the Secretary of the DENR (one of the president's cabinet members) at the national level.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, given the clear legal stipulations, Philippine decentralization has actually provided the anti-mining resistance activists with the necessary conditions to express disagreements and conduct resistance at both local and national levels. Despite the fact that China's resource-led diplomacy has made inroads into the rural Philippines, local resistance to such endeavours has paradoxically served to reinforce Philippine state sovereignty through a reconstitution of democratic space. The process whereby this has ensued is detailed in the following paragraphs.

### **China's resource-led diplomacy in the northern Philippines: recent trends**

Shortly after former President Gloria Arroyo endorsed two Executive Orders in 2004 to revitalize nationwide mining that would develop the national economy,<sup>8</sup> state actors and business investors from East Asian countries, especially China, held various bilateral talks with the Philippine government 'on areas of mutual interests' such as 'mining promotion'.<sup>9</sup> In particular, from 2 to 17 December 2007, Consul Chen led a historic diplomatic delegation – the first to visit the Cagayan provincial government and Tuguegarao city government – to 'explore and promote the prospects for bilateral exchange and cooperation in terms of agriculture, mining industry and etc'.<sup>10</sup> Afterwards, Consul Chen proceeded to other provinces

<sup>7</sup> For large-scale mining, the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 or RA 7942 suggests that mineral agreements (foreign and domestic) will have to be filed with the provincial government where the mining site is located (through the Provincial Mining Regulatory Board), but these agreements will be approved by the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) (see Section 29). After approval, copies of approved agreements will be furnished to the President and the Congress. For small-scale mining, mining contracts are awarded by the Provincial Mining Regulatory Board (for provinces) and City Mining Regulatory Board (for cities) (please see Sections 24 and 25 of the Small Scale Mining Act or RA 7076). For quarry resources, applications for permits are filed with the Provincial Mining Regulatory Board, but the permits are granted by the provincial governor (see Section 43 of the Philippine Mining Act). Furthermore, the Implementing Rules of the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 specify the role of the local government in mining arrangements (see Section 43).

At the national government level, the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources has the final say for large-scale mining arrangements, since s/he is the one who approves such arrangements. Since the Secretary is a member of the President's cabinet, it would be fair to say that s/he would reflect the policies of the President regarding mining. At the regional level, the Regional Director of DENR, as the representative of the Secretary in the region, has the power to recommend mining agreements for the Secretary's approval. A representative from DENR is the automatic chairman of the Provincial Mining Regulatory Board, and would probably be the Director of the Bureau of Mines and Geosciences from the national government (see Sections 6 and 7 of the Implementing Rules).

<sup>8</sup> Sources: (1) Executive Order No 270, 16 January 2004, 'National policy agenda on revitalizing mining in the Philippines', Office of the President, Manila. (2) Executive Order No 270-A, 20 April 2004, 'Amending Executive Order No 270', Office of the President, Manila.

<sup>9</sup> Sources: (1) 'RP, China concludes 24<sup>th</sup> trade meeting, productive talks on areas of mutual interests take place', *Department of Trade and Industry Review*, Vol 2, No 14, 2005 Series, 22 June 2005. (2) 'RP mining promotion shifts to Japan', *Department of Trade and Industry Review*, Vol 2, No 14, 2005 Series, 22 June 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Source: news release, *supra* note 2.

in northern Luzon, including the grain-rich Isabela province where Governor Grace Padaca 'introduced the vantage of rice and corn producing' to the Chinese diplomatic delegation.<sup>11</sup> In fact, as early as the late 1990s, the Isabela provincial government had already made plans to attract foreign direct investment at the municipal level to make use of the mineral-rich and fertile Cagayan River plains for economic development after conducting a few study tours in China.<sup>12</sup> The national government followed suit and endorsed nationwide development plans for all river basins in 2007.<sup>13</sup> In Isabela province, collaborative endeavours for mining and procurement of farmlands to grow export-quality agricultural produce had already been in place since the early 2000s.<sup>14</sup>

To understand the strategy of the Chinese government on this specific aspect, a Chinese mining delegation was interviewed in Tuguegarao city.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, instead of relying solely on its state-owned enterprises, the Chinese state had been flexibly leasing procurement orders to private enterprises, which simultaneously used policy privileges to enable them to venture overseas to meet the increasingly complex demands for minerals and natural resources for, in former Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji's (2000) own words, China's 'all-out' national development and comprehensive modernization programmes. However, the Chinese state has its own ways of regulating the decentralization of resource-led diplomacy. It is, for instance, not unusual for relatives of Chinese state officials and their associated business enterprises to act as agent-brokers to generate capital from markets, and simultaneously to negotiate with the Chinese state bureaucracy and collaborate with foreign actors. The director of the Chinese mining firm who was interviewed was actually a Chinese lady in her early 20s who had established a head office in Manila's main business district and managed several mining operations in the Philippine provinces with a China-trained English-speaking lawyer as her deputy. In response to the problems encountered during the mining operations in Cagayan, she said that they were still seeking legal and political/diplomatic resolutions. Later, a Chinese-Filipino source suggested that the lady interviewed was actually the heir of a senior-ranking government official from a Chinese coastal province.<sup>16</sup>

In the months after Consul Chen's delegation left Cagayan, various civic groups and the Catholic Church criticized Arroyo's agenda to revitalize collaborative mining, based on concerns that mining would destroy the natural environment and the local people's livelihood.<sup>17</sup> Yet the news continued to report that foreign

<sup>11</sup> Sources: news releases, *supra* note 3.

<sup>12</sup> Sources: (1) Provincial Government of Isabela (December 1999), *Implementation Program for Tumauni River Multipurpose Project*, Isabela Provincial Government, the Philippines. (2) Interview with Atty. Ricardo Angobong, residence, Tumauni, Isabela province, the Philippines, 26 April 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Source: River Basin Control Office, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (2007), *Integrated River Basin Management and Development Master Plan (Main Report). A National Plan on Sustainable and Ecosystem Management and Development of the Philippine River Basins*, River Basin Control Office, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Quezon City, The Philippines.

<sup>14</sup> Source: Interview with Atty. Ricardo Angobong, *supra* note 12.

<sup>15</sup> Source: Field notes, Tuguegarao city, Cagayan Valley, The Philippines, 21 April 2009.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Sources: (1) 'Arroyo risking social upheavals for mining policy', *Bulatlat*, Vol IV, No 51, pp 23–29, January 2005. (2) Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment Defend Patrimony Alliance (2008), *Intensified Imperialist Mining, Growing People's Resistance. 2008 Mining Situation and Struggle in the Philippines*, Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment, Quezon City. (3)

mining firms and diplomatic missions (mostly from China) travelled to other mineral-rich destinations in the Philippines, such as Mindanao.<sup>18</sup> During 2007–09, they encountered severe local resistance from various forces, especially the grass roots, environmental groups, the Philippine Left and the Catholic Church, despite the ability of the foreign mining firms that were operating in the coastal municipalities of Cagayan to secure mining and export permits from local government units.

### **As wind, thunder and lightning: forms of resistance against magnetite (black sand) mining<sup>19</sup> in the Cagayan Valley**

In the Cagayan Valley, the Regional Development Council of Region 2 (RDC-02) held a mining forum in Tuguegarao city in September 2005 on emerging developments and public concerns.<sup>20</sup> An estimated 120 representatives from local government units, the Catholic Church, the legal sector, private sector and various people's organizations were invited to exchange views. The forum concluded that it was necessary for the Philippine state authorities to study carefully ways to 'address the environmental threats of mining' and be prepared to respond to the 'impact of mining on affected communities' before fully involving local

'Bishop slams government's mining policy', *Community Struggle*, 30 December 2008. (4) 'Cordillera: tribes fight to keep out mining corporation', News release of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, 8 June 2009. (5) 'Pacman's help sought by anti-mining groups', *GMAnews.TV*, 20 November 2009.

<sup>18</sup> Sources: (1) 'Roadshow in Beijing, mining conference in Manila', Department of Trade and Industry news release, 14 January 2005. (2) 'Mining strides in past six months', Philippine News Agency, 11 May 2005. (3) 'Philippines sees boom in mining sector in 2008', Reuters, 25 January 2007. (4) 'Philippines' Atlas to raise output at copper mine', Reuters, 5 August 2009. (5) 'China's mining companies are planning a giant mining exploration targets', *Mining Exploration News*, 24 August 2009. (6) 'Chinese firms eye investments in RP's agriculture, mining, tourism sectors', *The Philippine Star*, 17 September 2009. (7) 'China eyes mining deals', *Business Mirror*, 17 September 2009. (8) 'Chinese mining firm to invest \$1 billion in the Philippines', Xinhua News Agency, 15 October 2009. (9) '2 Chinese mining firms to invest in RP', Philippine News Agency, 15 October 2009. (10) 'China interests RP's mining, energy', *Sun.Star Davao Newspaper*, 17 November 2009. (11) 'MGB grants British firm ownership of gold-copper project in Nueva Vizcaya', *Business Mirror*, 17 November 2009. (12) 'Mining equipment firms betting rebound next year will drive sales', *GMAnews.TV*, 18 November 2009. (13) 'Chinese businessmen look for mining investments', *Business World*, 29 December 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Magnetite is a magnetic and dense mineral, a form of iron. It is an important source of iron for making steel and is used as an industrial mineral to produce other value-added products, such as paper, paint, ink, jewellery, cosmetics, etc. Proponents of magnetite mining in the Philippines claimed that it would generate benefits for local communities and foster national economic development. Since magnetite is widely found in the black sand beaches along the seashores of northern Luzon and the Cagayan River banks, it is known locally as 'black sand mining'. Magnetite mining largely involves the extraction and transportation of this black sand before industrial processing. As a result, mining-affected communities expressed concerns and worries that their farmlands would be eaten up by the seawater and the irrigation system would be destroyed because the black sand that was used to hold the riverbank and seashores was being taken away. Philippine fishermen also expressed worries about offshore and riverbank mining because they believed that it would damage the coral reefs and the river ecosystems and, therefore, the fishery resources. Sources: (1) 'Magnetite mining in the offshore areas of Cagayan', Mining Watch (Cordillera Peoples Alliance), 2 July 2008. (2) 'Fisher folks convey worry over possibility of offshore mining in La Union', *La Union Times*, 17 November 2010.

<sup>20</sup> Source: Secretariat of Regional Development Council 02 (2005), *A Report on the Mining Forum Held on September 20, 2005 at the NEDA Conference Hall, Carig, Tuguegarao City*, Regional Development Council 02, Tuguegarao City, Cagayan Valley.



communities in collaborative mining.<sup>21</sup> In contrast to the resource-led economic development agenda from the president, local public opinions were considerably more reserved. The following years witnessed a series of anti-mining protests and local resistance. Within the anti-mining democratic space, there are three main forms of anti-mining resistance, which are symbolized by wind, thunder and lightning, which we attempted to follow (Miranda *et al*, 2011). ‘Wind’ refers to the come-and-go-style public expression of criticisms and the open airing of disagreements; ‘thunder’ to the sudden organization of non-violent public protests; and ‘lightning’ to the surprise launch of armed attacks.

These symbolize the nature of the democratic struggle at the local level, which comes and goes like the winds – hard to hold, impossible to capture. It is like thunder and lightning: it emerges and then disappears all of a sudden. It seems that genuine democracy is not something that can be attained, achieved and fixed forever institutionally, but is an ontological and communal condition for which we have to continue to strive. As with wind, thunder and lightning, we like to chase them, but we will never be able to hold them – democratic struggle is by nature ‘ever-contesting’ and ‘never-ending’ (Ronas, 2011; Wong, 2009).

### **As wind: airing public criticisms**

Due to the absence of a well maintained public knowledge base for the mining industry (Israel, 2010), mining in the Philippines has been criticized by the civic sector for causing environmental destruction, corruption, human rights violations and sidelining the interests of locally affected communities (Asuncion, 2005; Doyle *et al*, 2007; Kalikasan People’s Network for the Environment and Defend Patrimony! Alliance, 2008). As a result, it continues to generate political dissent, local tension and state–society conflicts (Hatcher, 2010; Rovillos *et al*, 2003; Stark *et al*, 2006). For example, in 2008, the Save Apayao People’s Organization (SAPO) in Connor, Apayao province, openly denounced the permit that Oceana Gold Mining Corporation had obtained from the municipal government for conducting mining exploration in several villages.<sup>22</sup>

In Cagayan province, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Tuguegarao sternly requested local government officials to ‘stop immediately the mining operations along the Cagayan River and the coastal areas’ because mining activities ‘may cause adverse effects on the income of fishermen’, ‘threatened [*sic*] the communities’ and ‘destroy the environment and adversely affect the lives of the people’.<sup>23</sup>

Apart from mining black sand along the beaches, some foreign Chinese mining corporations were also permitted to ‘dredge’ the Cagayan River bank to remove silt deposits as a way to prevent flooding. However, when reporting his findings on an investigative field study, the environmentalist and geologist Ric Saturay criticized the so-called ‘dredging’ as a mere cover-up for magnetite mining:

<sup>21</sup> Source: Secretariat of Regional Development Council 02 (2005), *A Report on the Mining Forum Held on 20 September 2005 at the NEDA Conference Hall, Carig, Tuguegarao City*, Regional Development Council 02, Tuguegarao City, Cagayan Valley, p 3.

<sup>22</sup> Source: Bombo Radyo Tuguegarao City (2008), *Bombo Radyo Philippines Forum & Cagayan News*, date of broadcast: 28 April 2008.

<sup>23</sup> Sources: (1) ‘Priests urge local execs to stop mining operations in Cagayan’, Philippine Information Agency press release, 23 October 2008. (2) ‘Bishops want all mining operations in Cagayan stopped’, Philippines News Agency news release, 8 April 2009.

'They [the officials and mining companies] told the communities surrounding the river that the dredging project is for flood control and reduction of bank erosion and failures along the river. But, based on field information and testimonies gathered by the team, massive river bank erosion is occurring in the area and communities are experiencing higher incidence and intensity of flooding after the "dredging" operation by the Chinese corporations.'<sup>24</sup>

In a similar vein, Clemente Bautista Jr, the coordinator of a grass-roots environmental concern group, the Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment, suggested that:

'The black sand mining in the province of Cagayan will definitely bring havoc, not only to the unique marine and river ecosystems, but also to the livelihood and safety of communities particularly in the coastal areas. Numerous studies and documentations have already revealed that black sand mining in coastal areas have resulted to coastal erosion, inundation of communities, and degradation of marine ecosystem.'<sup>25</sup>

In September 2008, the Cagayan Provincial Governor, Alvaro Antonio, granted a Chinese mining company, San You Philippines Mining and Trade Ltd, an official permit to carry out magnetite mining in the municipality of Lallo. However, such a move immediately met with opposition from the residents of the towns of Lallo and Camalaniugan. They argued that mining would threaten the survival of the country's most precious fish, which is the *ludong*.<sup>26</sup> The regional office of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) issued a 'cease and desist order' (CDO) to the President of San You, Wang Zhongfeng, on the basis that dredging in the area concerned was considered illegal. The stoppage order was, however, contested by Governor Antonio.<sup>27</sup> In view of the continued opposition from the residents, the MGB again issued a stoppage order in June 2010 to San You to refrain from mining and processing activities. However, this order was quickly lifted after one month.

In the magnetite-rich coastal town of Buguey, the opposition mayor, Ignacio Taruc, mobilized some 1,500 farmers and fishermen, and launched an anti-mining protest rally against the mining operations endorsed by the provincial government. In response to the accusation from Governor Antonio that Taruc was a "bogus" anti-mining advocate, Taruc replied in seemingly left-wing rhetoric that '[p]roject plans and propositions from foreign capitalists were not even entertained by me'.<sup>28</sup> Taruc further gained the support of Environment Secretary Lito Atienza to suspend mining operations in Buguey.<sup>29</sup> Shortly after Governor

<sup>24</sup> Source: 'Special report: Dredging of Cagayan River, an ecological destruction cover-up – environmentalists', CBCP News, 22 September 2010.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Source: 'Indiscriminate quarrying threatens survival of expensive fish', *GMA News.TV*, 11 October 2008.

<sup>27</sup> Source: (1) 'Cagayan gov't says Mines Bureau selective in issuance of ECC', *GMA News.TV*, 25 November 2008. (2) 'Foreign, local firms raid Cagayan for magnetite', *Alyansa Tigil Mina*, 5 April 2011.

<sup>28</sup> Source: 'Mining rift in Cagayan intensifies', *GMA News.TV*, 14 February 2009.

<sup>29</sup> Source: 'No offshore mining off Cagayan', *Manila Bulletin*, 22 December 2009.

Antonio issued a suspension order against Taruc, Taruc retaliated by filing a ‘graft and corruption’ lawsuit against Antonio and openly accused a patron of Antonio, the Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile, of ‘having a hand in his suspension’.<sup>30</sup> With the Catholic Church’s advocacy, similar anti-mining protests quickly spread to other towns in Cagayan.<sup>31</sup> In 2009–10, foreign Chinese and Taiwanese mining firms in coastal municipalities (for example, Aparri, Buguey, Camalaniugan and Gonzaga) were caught in complex local political dynamics, and either temporarily deferred operations or decided to venture into other provinces along the Cagayan River.<sup>32</sup> However, because much was perceivably at stake, the local government officials and the foreign mining companies did not entirely give up.

Public concern over foreign magnetite mining in the northern Philippines peaked on New Year’s Eve 2009. Twenty-two North Korean seamen were successfully rescued by Philippine coastguards after their ship ran aground outside the seawaters of the coastal municipality of Claveria in Cagayan province. Registered as *MV Nam Yang 8* in North Korea, the ship was fully loaded with about 2,800 metric tons of magnetite ore, which had been extracted by San You.<sup>33</sup> After setting off from Aparri port bound for China, the vessel encountered very strong sea currents and eventually gave in due to the heavy load. By using a lifeboat, the 22 North Koreans were able to abandon the ship before dawn on 1 January 2010.<sup>34</sup> Despite the fact that the vessel was able to present an export permit validated by Governor Antonio, anti-mining critics questioned the prevalence of foreign mining activities after the MGB had ‘recently assured that no magnetite mining activities were being conducted along the province’s northern shore’.<sup>35</sup> In particular, the Director of the Social Action Center at the Catholic Church, Father Manuel Catral, openly stated that the accident had exposed ‘the lies that some local officials peddled about magnetite (black sand) mining in the province’ and ‘the lies peddled by some politicians here were exposed in their attempt to cover up irregularities in that accident’.<sup>36</sup>

In response to these criticisms, the government officials responsible provided conflicting explanations about the accident. While Governor Antonio held that ‘there is no mining going on in Cagayan’ and he was ‘not aware of any shipment of magnetite sand that is coming out of Cagayan’, the Regional Director of the MGB in Cagayan Valley, Mario Ancheta, said that the North Korean vessel had the proper permit issued by the Cagayan provincial government.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the

<sup>30</sup> Sources: (1) ‘Anti-mining Cagayan mayor suspended again’, *Northern Philippine Times*, 24 May 2009. (2) ‘Anti-mining Cagayan mayor suspended’, *ABS-CBN News.com*, 3 June 2009. (3) ‘Cagayan governor faces graft raps over mining’, *GUMIL-Ayab News*, 5 July 2009.

<sup>31</sup> Sources: (1) ‘“Stop Mining!” Cagayan clergy urges recall of mining permits’, *The Northern Forum*, Vol XXIX, No 12, pp 22–28, March 2009. (2) ‘Magnetite mining blamed for floods’, *Inquirer Northern Luzon*, 26 October 2009.

<sup>32</sup> Sources: (1) Interview with Benjie de Yro, journalist, Tuguegarao city, Cagayan Valley, the Philippines, 9 April 2009. (2) Interview with Atty. Ricardo Angobong, *supra* note 12, source (2).

<sup>33</sup> Source: ‘Mayor denies Aparri as source of magnetite sand’, Philippine Information Agency press release, 5 January 2010.

<sup>34</sup> Sources: (1) ‘22 Koreans rescued after ship loaded with minerals sinks off Cagayan’, *GMANews.TV*, 1 January 2010. (2) ‘22 North Koreans abandon troubled ship in Philippines’, *PhilStar*, 1 January 2010.

<sup>35</sup> Source: ‘Sea mishap off northern Cagayan: 22 North Korean survivors are legal aliens’, *PhilStar*, 3 January 2010.

<sup>36</sup> Source: ‘Priest: Mishap exposed “mining lies”’, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 3 January 2010.

<sup>37</sup> Sources: (1) ‘Ship carrying magnetite stokes fear on Cagayan mining’, *Inquirer Northern Luzon*, 2 January 2010. (2) ‘North Korean crewmen are VIPs in Cagayan, say mining critics’, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 5 January 2010.

Mayor of Lallo, Maria Pascual, confirmed that the magnetite sands on MV Nam Yang 8 were 'old stock' that originated from Lallo.<sup>38</sup> The foreign magnetite mining activities along the Cagayan riverbanks and seashores had been a major source of controversy due to public concerns over environmental destruction, threats to the livelihoods of local farmers and fishermen, allegations of illegal mineral extraction and the collaborative plundering of foreign mining companies with government officials.<sup>39</sup> Despite the fact that Philippine government officials regarded magnetite mining as a viable economic development strategy, it was obvious that the local population widely censured foreign mining, and the issue became a crucible of deadly conflict, especially during election time.

### **As thunder: organizing public protests against extrajudicial killings**

On 1 March 2010, while Taruc was running against Juan Ponce Enrile Jr (son of Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile) for congressman in the first district of Cagayan province, one of Taruc's aides was shot dead by two motorcycle-riding gunmen. A leader of Cagayan's anti-mining group – the Alliance for Buguey Community Advocates – Gensun Agustin, died from fatal gunshot wounds to the head and body. Taruc reasoned that Agustin had been killed because he 'had denounced some provincial officials for pushing magnetite mining, which is destructive to the environment'.<sup>40</sup> The killing of Agustin was just another example in the trail of extrajudicial violence generated against Cagayan's anti-mining advocates since November 2009. On 30 November 2009, Pedrito Tabaco and his relative Alfredo Rabit were gunned down together in Buguey. On 13 May 2010, Conrado Buenaflor of Buguey was shot dead. On 15 May 2010, William Arzadon died of multiple gunshot wounds in Buguey. On 17 May 2010, Adamson Arellano was wounded by gunshots in Aparri. All of these anti-mining advocates were keen supporters of Taruc in his electoral congressional campaigns against the Enrile party. The police therefore probed the five killings and the shooting together in terms of motives relating to local politics and anti-mining advocacy.<sup>41</sup>

Environmental groups and the Catholic Church urged the Philippine government and the wider public to address the extrajudicial killings of the anti-mining

<sup>38</sup> Source: 'Mayor denies Aparri as source of magnetite sand', Philippine Information Agency press release, 5 January 2010.

<sup>39</sup> Sources: (1) 'A statement on mining issues and concerns', *CBCP Online*, 29 January 2006. (2) 'Magnetite mining in the offshore areas of Cagayan', Mining Watch (Cordillera Peoples Alliance), 2 July 2008. (3) 'Mining threatens Cagayan agri lands', *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 8 November 2008. (4) 'As I see it: South Koreans illegally mining beaches', *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 31 May 2009. (5) 'The Philippines magnetite mining blamed for floods', *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 26 October 2009. (6) Interview with an anonymous government employee, Cagayan province, Philippines, 9 March 2011. (7) Interview with an anonymous environmental advocate, Cagayan province, Philippines, 9 March 2011.

<sup>40</sup> Source: 'Anti-mining activist shot dead in Cagayan', *Inquirer Northern Luzon*, 2 March 2010.

<sup>41</sup> Sources: (1) Groups denounce death of Cagayan anti-mining activist', Alyansa Tigil Mina press release, 18 May 2010. (2) 'Groups seek government action on Cagayan anti-mining activist killings', Alyansa Tigil Mina press release, 18 May 2010. (3) 'Gov't asked: probe Cagayan anti-mining activist killings', *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 19 May 2010. (4) 'Probes on deaths of anti-mining advocates sought', *Manila Bulletin*, 21 May 2010. (5) 'Environmentalists want Cagayan killings probed', *GMA News.TV*, 23 May 2010. (6) 'Groups seek government action on Cagayan anti-mine activist killings', *Northern Philippine Times*, 24 May 2010.

advocates seriously as a nationwide phenomenon.<sup>42</sup> In mid-September 2010, a week-long demonstration co-organized by the Catholic Church and various civic groups was joined by some 300 people in front of the Manila Hotel. They urged the government to ban mining – to no avail.<sup>43</sup> Consequently, the newly elected President Benigno Aquino III was criticized for being either irresponsive or a supporter of foreign mining.<sup>44</sup>

In Cagayan province, anti-mining opinions were widely circulated during the May 2010 electoral campaigns. Running for re-election, Governor Antonio shifted his usual pro-mining stance and agreed to cease magnetite mining if he won the election. Shortly after he was successfully re-elected, he issued a province-wide mining suspension order. In July 2010, the news reported that six foreign Chinese miners had been charged with mineral theft in the town of Lallo.<sup>45</sup> A month later, eight Chinese nationals were caught conducting illegal extraction of minerals in Gonzaga, the coastal hometown of Antonio's patron, Senate President Enrile,<sup>46</sup> who had actively spearheaded the accommodation of foreign Chinese investments in the Cagayan Valley.<sup>47</sup>

However, in view of the fact that foreign Chinese magnetite mining was still taking place, anti-mining critics continued to chastise the Antonio–Enrile alliance: 'Still local authorities are saying there are no mining operations in the area. We believe it's already time for Malacañang [President's palace] to look into the issue. Who's benefiting from the black sand in one of the country's remaining natural resources? Who are these Chinese mining companies? It's time to investigate before it's too late.'<sup>48</sup>

### **As lightning: Philippine communist guerrillas strike back**

While warning the Philippine public against the foreign mining companies who

<sup>42</sup> Sources: (1) 'Justice to all human rights victims and anti-mining martyrs!' Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center press release, 14 September 2010. (2) 'Amnesty International urges government – deliver justice to victims of extrajudicial executions in mining communities', Amnesty International Philippines public statement, 14 September 2010.

<sup>43</sup> Sources: (1) 'Church and religious light candles and prayers for extra-judicial killings', Alyansa Tigil Mina press release, 15 September 2010. (2) 'Irresponsible miners hit by local groups', Alyansa Tigil Mina press release, 16 September 2010. (3) 'Groups seek ban of mining operations', *Sun Star*, 18 September 2010. (4) 'Gov't asked to stop attacks, killings of anti-mining activists', *Inquirer Mindanao*, 19 September 2010. (5) 'Justice to all human rights victims and anti-mining martyrs!' *Sun Star*, 20 September 2010. (6) 'NCIP exec vows to annual FPICs deemed illegal', *Baguio Midland Courier*, 3 October 2010.

<sup>44</sup> Sources: (1) 'Development in disguise?' *Daily Mirror (Philippines)*, 10 October 2010. (2) 'Arroyo's foreign mining projects continue to displace communities and destroy environment under P-Noy, say environmental groups', Kalikasan Peoples' Network for the Environment press release, 11 October 2010. (3) 'IPs dissatisfied with PNoy's inaction on IP agenda', *Northern Dispatch*, 11 October 2010. (4) 'Advocacy groups disillusioned over Aquino's lack of action over mining review', *Pacific Scoop*, 18 October 2010. (5) 'President Aquino called to action on mining', *Manila Standard*, 18 October 2010.

<sup>45</sup> Sources: (1) '6 Chinese face charges for mineral theft', *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 24 July 2010. (2) *2010 Annual Accomplishment Report*, Regional Office (Cagayan Valley), Mines and Geosciences Bureau, Tuguegarao City, Philippines, pp 20–21.

<sup>46</sup> Source: 'Cagayan mining alert up after 8 Sino extractors nabbed', *GMANews.TV*, 21 August 2010.

<sup>47</sup> Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile is known to be the architect of the Cagayan Special Economic Zone Authority (CEZA), in which Port Irene (in Sta Ana, Cagayan province) became the first entry point for Chinese-made cars (for example, Dong Feng) to penetrate the Philippine market. Source: 'China cars to enter via Port Irene', *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 24 October 2008.

<sup>48</sup> Source: 'Mining threatens Cagayan River', *Remate Ang Diaryo Ng Masa*, 22 September 2010.

allegedly 'deceive, force people to agree to [mining] operations', a major news outlet of the Philippine Left also made the following report:

'Meanwhile, Chinese and Taiwanese mining companies like Shaitan Cagayan Sand and Gravel Corp., San You Philippines Mining Trade Ltd., and Lian Xing Philippines Stone Carving Corporation were given permits by the Cagayan provincial government to operate. These mining companies were operating in municipalities of Lallo, Camalaniugan, Gonzaga and Aparri. [...] In Cagayan province, several local government units at barangay and municipal levels stated their opposition to mining but the provincial government still allows mining to operate in their areas.'<sup>49</sup>

Starting from late 2010, in the face of increasing civil society opposition, the Philippine government announced that it had failed to meet the annual mining-generated investment targets.<sup>50</sup>

Nonetheless, in Cagayan province, there was no sign that the provincial government would give in. Hence, the guerrilla force of the Communist Party of the Philippines, the New People's Army (NPA), started to enter the scene.

On 3 December 2010, a 30-strong group of NPA guerrillas launched an assault and burned the warehouse and equipment of Uni-Master Conglomeration Inc (UCI), a Taiwanese and Chinese-Filipino joint magnetite-mining venture in the coastal town of Gonzaga.<sup>51</sup> It was then reported that the NPA local commanders wanted to seek higher taxes from the mining companies. Although seven major foreign mining companies threatened to pull out from the country, NPA spokesman Ka Oris sternly stated that 'the rebels were open to compromise with big mining companies if they would abide by their rules to protect the environment and take care of farmers, workers and communities'; 'we will stop their operation once we have sufficient capability to enforce our own rules'.<sup>52</sup> In a subsequent public statement issued by the Communist Party of the Philippines, it pinpointed the Gonzaga Mayor, Carlito Pentecostes Jr, as being instrumental to 'the Enrile dynasty', the military and police in harassing and forcing the village officials, the general population and peasant leaders to sign agreements to foreign magnetite mining. At the same time, the Communist Party unambiguously

<sup>49</sup> Source: 'Foreign mining companies deceive, force people to agree to operations', *Bulatlat*, 18 October 2010.

<sup>50</sup> Sources: (1) 'Philippines: Arroyo's foreign mining projects continue to displace communities and destroy environment under President Aquino, say environmental groups', *Indigenous Peoples: Issues and Resources*, 11 October 2010. (2) 'Group: black sand mine endangers Cagayan coast', *The Valley Journal (Bambang, Nueva Vizcaya)*, Vol XX, 13 October 2010. (3) 'Zambo Norte Ordinance vs open-pit mining lauded', *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 25 January 2011. (4) 'Tampakan mine opponents challenge government stance', *Business World*, 25 January 2011. (5) 'Environmentalists call for wider ban on mining', *Catholic News Asia*, 28 January 2011. (6) 'House committee to probe mining royalties', *GMANews.TV*, 1 February 2011. (7) 'Swiss, Australian, NZ diplomats visit Tampakan project', *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 5 February 2011. (8) 'Philippine mining falters in the face of civil society opposition', *Manila Times*, 6 February 2011. (9) 'Mining investments miss target in 2010 – MGB chief', *Business World*, 6 February 2011.

<sup>51</sup> Sources: (1) 'Armed men torch mining equipment in Cagayan', *Inquirer Northern Luzon*, 3 December 2010. (2) 'NPAs torched down mining firm warehouse, facilities in Cagayan', *The Valley Journal (Bambang, Nueva Vizcaya)*, Vol XX, 3 December 2010.

<sup>52</sup> Source: '7 mines threaten pullout. Army says NPA seeking higher "tax"', *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 28 December 2010.

denounced the UCI and the Beijing-based Huaxia Corporation as perpetrators of 'imperialist mining'.<sup>53</sup>

Without conducting prior public consultation in the affected communities, Huaxia Corporation was permitted by the provincial government in December 2010 to conduct black sand mining in Gonzaga. Shortly after a step-up statement issued by the NPA to fight the foreign mining and quarrying firms in all towns in Cagayan province, on 12 March 2011, some 2,000 people staged a rally in Gonzaga's town centre against Huaxia's entry and expressed their disappointment in the political leadership.<sup>54</sup> Another 4,000-strong rally was organized in the towns of Gonzaga and Sta. Teresita the following week.<sup>55</sup> In light of these developments, in 2011, the research team conducted field research in two of the mining-affected communities in coastal Cagayan, attempting to chase the sources of the wind, thunder and lightning.

### **Chasing the wind, thunder and lightning: voices from two mining-affected villages**

Two mining-affected villages [*barangay*] in a coastal municipality of Cagayan province were chosen for the field research. They commonly experienced the presence of foreign Chinese and Taiwanese mining operations. While both are located along the seashores of northern Luzon, one is found along the Cagayan River bank. For security reasons, information identifying these communities and informants has been changed. The issue recently became more volatile because of the intensive political struggles described above. To protect the personal identities of the interviewees, we sought to conduct the interview procedures with a very low profile. We therefore adopted a convenient sampling technique (snowballing) by first seeking referrals from relatively unaffected and neutral individuals whom we considered to be 'safe' – for example, the colleagues and friends of the investigators, as well as their relatives in nearby communities. Through the social networks of these individuals, we further contacted the targeted communities to conduct the interviews discreetly in non-public areas – for example, inside residences during the late afternoon and evening. A semi-structured interview questionnaire was used, with recent news clippings as props for eliciting information. Hereafter, the municipality will be known as San Antonio and the two villages will be known as Barangay Mares and Barangay Rio. In each village, we conducted interviews with 20 individuals. In total, we interviewed a sample of 40 adults. Before detailing the local dynamics of magnetite mining in these communities, some introductory descriptions of each community will be provided, as follows.

The residents of Barangay Mares mostly engage in farming and fishing activities.

<sup>53</sup> Sources: (1) 'Press release: 'Cagayan Mayor and 17<sup>th</sup> IB harass peasants to sign mining endorsement', Information Bureau, Communist Party of the Philippines, 24 January 2011. (2) 'Violence and harassment by big mining companies', *Ang Bayan*, 7 February 2011.

<sup>54</sup> Source: '*Gubat ti Umili ti Sungbat Iti Ganggannaet a Panagminas!* [English translation from Ilocano: People's war is the answer to foreign mining !], Cagayan Valley Chapter, Philippine Revolution Web Central, 1 March 2011.

<sup>55</sup> Sources: (1) 'Cagayan residents rally against black sand mining', Alyansa Tigil Mina press release, 19 March 2011. (2) 'The people are fighting against Taiwanese mining firms in northeast Cagayan', National Democratic Front of the Philippines, 19 March 2011.

**Table 1.** Feature summary of interviews held in Barangay Mares, San Antonio, Cagayan province.

Interviewee's gender and age (if indicated)	Occupation of interviewee	Position on mining	Perception of the identities of the foreign miners
1 Female, 37	Housewife and farmer	Anti-mining	No answer
2 Female, 28	Farmer's wife	Anti-mining	No answer
3 Female	Farmer's wife	Anti-mining	Chinese and Taiwanese (witness)
4 Female, 40	Village official	Anti-mining	Chinese and Taiwanese (witness)
5 Female	No answer	Don't mind	No answer
6 Female, 24	No answer	Anti-mining	Korean
7 Female, 27	No answer	Anti-mining	Korean
8 Female, 51	Farmer	Anti-mining	Taiwanese
9 Female, 55	Farmer	Anti-mining	Taiwanese
10 Female, 30	Farmer	Anti-mining	Taiwanese
11 Male	Farmer	Anti-mining	Taiwanese (witness)
12 Female	Farmer's wife	Anti-mining	Chinese (witness)
13 Female	Farmer's wife	Anti-mining	Chinese (witness)
14 Female, 52	Farmer	Anti-mining	Chinese (witness)
15 Male	Farmer	Anti-mining	Taiwanese
16 Female	Farmer	Anti-mining	Taiwanese
17 Female, 62	No answer	Anti-mining	No answer
18 Male	Tricycle driver	Anti-mining	No answer
19 Male	Farmer	Anti-mining	Taiwanese
20 Female	Farmer	Anti-mining	No answer

Source: Field interviews in Barangay Mares, San Antonio, Cagayan province, Philippines, April–May 2011.

The road into the village is actually the shoreline. Travelling to Barangay Mares is limited to certain hours of the day when the tide is low. The roads that connect to and within the village are mostly unpaved. Most of the interviewees were farmers who occupied farmlands right next to the black sand beaches (Table 1).

Before the mining site was established by the mining company, the former *barangay* chief was invited to a public hearing to discuss the mining operation in the village. The *barangay* chief had invited the villagers to attend the meeting. In the meeting, the mining operator explained to the residents how the operation would work. Although the operator tried to convince the residents to agree to the mining operation because it would bring additional income, benefits and jobs to the community, they were neither informed that it involved massive extraction nor about the potential adverse effects. Moreover, the identity of the foreign mining firm remained unknown. The residents were asked to sign an attendance sheet and were given food. Despite the fact that the opinions of the *barangay* councilors were divided (four votes for and four votes against mining), because of the view that the *barangay* would receive monetary shares and additional taxes from the mining company, the *barangay* chief eventually came up with a resolution and permitted the operation to take place. To make it appear that there was a village majority in favour of mining, some of the *barangay* officials allegedly took the attendance sheet and the minutes from the previous public hearing and collated them with the resolution. However, things started to go wrong from this point onwards.

First, the mining operator built a mill and hired the village residents as labourers and security guards. A villager recalled what had happened:



*'Ngem ti umununa ke nangala da pelang ti sample ke tonetonelada metten nga sample idi ket agriri kamin. Haammi kayat ten ah ta apay nga mangala da ti sample ke ham pay ammu ti Barangay Officials. [English translation from Ilocano: At the beginning, they only took samples and then they were taking tons of samples and we resisted! We really did not like it because they were taking sand without the permission of the barangay officials!]'*<sup>56</sup>

According to other witness accounts, after extracting the black sands from the beaches with heavy equipment, the mining company used an enormous magnetic machine to separate the magnetite-rich black sands from the non-magnetite sands. These were then packed and loaded on to either trucks or boats to be transported to the river-mouth port in Barangay Rio. The vessels would transport the black sands either southwards to a point somewhere along the Cagayan River for industrial processing, or ship them to a foreign destination through the South China Sea.

When the residents of Barangay Mares gradually realized that the black sand mining would eventually submerge the beaches and their farmlands, they protested against the magnetite mining operation. Faced with continual protests, the mining company abruptly stopped employing the residents and brought in other local people as the mining workforce. The operation was unaffected because the *barangay* chief was still in favour of the mining operation. The villagers believed that the *barangay* chief owed a debt of gratitude [Ilocano: *utang a imbag nga nakem*] to the mining company. The word was later circulated that the mining company had paid the *barangay* chief 100,000 pesos for his Christmas party and had also paid the bail of his wife, who was charged with the illegal possession of firearms. The following months witnessed a series of protests and petitions to the municipal government, provincial government, Senate President Enrile and the Regional Office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Tuguegarao. Due to continued protests from the residents of Barangay Mares, the *barangay* election in late October 2010 allowed a new *barangay* chief and councillors to be elected. They then requested the magnetite mining operation to be formally halted. The operation stopped and the Chinese mining company left Barangay Mares in December 2010. This clearly marked the victory of the democratic struggles of the Barangay Mares residents.

In contrast, because of its proximity to the river-mouth port as a nexus of transportation, the roads in Barangay Rio are all paved. As the black sands are widely found along the Cagayan River bank and the seashores, Barangay Rio is an important logistic choke point of high strategic value, not just for the mining companies, but also as a crucial hub for river-to-sea (and vice versa) transportations for the municipal and provincial governments. The mining site was in full operation when the research team conducted fieldwork. It was next to the port and still busy with several construction work projects. Interviews were conducted in the slum area adjacent to the sea walls (Table 2). Although the residents were aware that more than 30 locals were employed as workers at the mining site, they all expressed an anti-mining stance because of the same fear that they shared with the residents of Barangay Mares – submerging of the riverbank and seashores, which would, in

<sup>56</sup> Source: Interviewee No 4, Barangay Mares, San Antonio, Cagayan province, Philippines, April–May 2011.

**Table 2. Feature summary of interviews held in Barangay Rio, San Antonio, Cagayan province.**

	<b>Interviewee's gender and age (if indicated)</b>	<b>Occupation of interviewee</b>	<b>Position on mining</b>	<b>Perception of the identities of the foreign miners</b>
1	Female, 30	Wife of a fisherman and mine worker	Pro-mining	No answer
2	Female, 22	Fisherwoman	Anti-mining	Chinese and Taiwanese (witness)
3	Female, 30	Fisherwoman, fisherman's wife	Anti-mining	Chinese and Taiwanese
4	Female, 62	Farmer	Anti-mining	Taiwanese
5	Male, 31	Fisherman	Anti-mining	Taiwanese (witness)
6	Male, 57	Fisherman	Anti-mining	Chinese, Korean, Malaysian and Taiwanese (witness)
7	Female, 60	No answer	Anti-mining	No answer
8	Female, 51	No answer	Anti-mining	No answer
9	Female, 48	No answer	Anti-mining	Chinese, Korean and Taiwanese
10	Female, 45	No answer	Anti-mining	Chinese, Korean and Taiwanese
11	Male, 33	Farmer	Anti-mining	No answer
12	Male, 36	Fisherman	Anti-mining	Korean
13	Female, 63	No answer	Anti-mining	Korean
14	Male, 48	Vendor	Anti-mining	Taiwanese
15	Female, 75	Sari-sari store owner	Anti-mining	Taiwanese
16	Male, 45	Tricycle driver	Anti-mining	Korean and Taiwanese
17	Female, 48	Tricycle driver's wife	Anti-mining	Korean and Taiwanese
18	Male, 65	Fisherman	Anti-mining	No answer
19	Male, 55	Fisherman	Anti-mining	No answer
20	Female, 60	No answer	Anti-mining	No answer

*Source:* Field interviews in Barangay Rio, San Antonio, Cagayan province, Philippines, April–May 2011.

the long run, damage the agricultural and fishery resources along the Cagayan River and the nearby coral reefs. Moreover, some residents were even told that they would be asked to move to another place because there were black sands underneath their houses.<sup>57</sup>

The strategic location of Barangay Rio also meant that much was at stake. With his political allegiance to Senate President Enrile and Governor Antonio, the municipal mayor was actually the one who endorsed and actively coordinated the foreign mining operations in San Antonio. In response to the concerns of the local people and in defence of the mining operation, he frequently conducted meetings with the Barangay Rio residents. The residents were even told that instead of 'mining', the foreign firms were merely conducting 'dredging', which helped to clean the Cagayan River bed.<sup>58</sup> However, this claim was commonly rejected by the interviewees. The residents also felt that their wishes and intentions to express their views (to stop the mining) were either consistently deflected or implicitly discouraged by the municipal leadership. A resident told us about this predicament:

<sup>57</sup> Sources: Interviews Nos 9, 10, 14, 15, 16 & 17, Barangay Rio, San Antonio, Cagayan province, Philippines, April–May 2011.

<sup>58</sup> Sources: Interviews Nos 6, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19 & 20, Barangay Rio, San Antonio, Cagayan province, Philippines, April–May 2011.

*'Syempre haan mi pay naibaga ah kasi nu mangi baga kami dagita ke kasla dakes kami, isu nga haan kami makatagari. [...] Ngem syempre nu adda bagam ke dakes ka ngarud isu ta no comment kami. [English translation from Ilocano: We haven't said any word to him (mayor) because if we do, we will come out as bad, so we are not saying anything. [...] But if you express your thoughts about the (mining) issue, it will be taken negatively. That's why we don't want to comment anymore.'*<sup>59</sup>

Another resident, who knew that the mayor was aware of her anti-mining position and participation in the anti-mining rallies, exclaimed that even though the mayor understood her stance,

*'ngem awan met action na [kasi] adda mas nangatu pay kanya na ke anya mabalin ni Mayor nga maaramid nu adda pay mas nangatu kanya na nga mayat dita mining (English translation from Ilocano: he [mayor] doesn't have any action [because] he cannot do anything if someone from a higher position likes the mining.'*<sup>60</sup>

Even though the residents denied that the mining would benefit them in the long run, a major reason for this common self-restraint in expressing an anti-mining opinion to the mayor was that the mining operations indeed brought some employment opportunities to the people of Barangay Rio, where the recent decade has witnessed a significant decline in the fishing harvests in the river and the sea.<sup>61</sup> Nonetheless, a resident also aired his grievances against the provincial governor and the mayor to us:

*'Governor ken Mayor ke binayadan da ti million tapnu makamina da ditoy eh baybayan da met nga madadael awan bibyang da. Ke ni Mayor ke adda pay balay da ta Amerika, awan talaga bibyang da ta mamamayan, dajay nababa nga tao. [...] Laban nen wen nu gera ta awan me mabalinam mi. [...] Aggera tayu amin nen ta makasurun deta ubra da. [English translation from Ilocano: The governor and mayor were paid millions of pesos so that the owner of the mining site will be allowed to mine here. They don't care whether the soil will erode or not. The mayor even has a house in America; he doesn't really care about his fellow men. [...] We will fight for our rights even if it will lead to a war. [...] Let's just go to war because what they are doing to us is really annoying. ]'*<sup>62</sup>

In contrast to the victorious experience of the Barangay Mares residents in stopping the magnetite mining, the geostrategic significance of Barangay Rio made it more difficult for the residents to express their reservations and fears against mining.

<sup>59</sup> Source: Interview No 6, Barangay Rio, San Antonio, Cagayan province, Philippines, April–May 2011.

<sup>60</sup> Source: Interview No 7, Barangay Rio, San Antonio, Cagayan province, Philippines, April–May 2011.

<sup>61</sup> Sources: Interviews Nos 3, 11, 15, 18, 19 & 20, Barangay Rio, San Antonio, Cagayan province, Philippines, April–May 2011.

<sup>62</sup> Source: Interview No 14, Barangay Rio, San Antonio, Cagayan province, Philippines, April–May 2011.

It also became a burden for them to organize a unified resistance against the municipal mayor, who was seen as the primary stakeholder in maintaining Barangay Rio as a major mining site for higher-ranking officials and foreign investors.

## **Conclusion**

The above case study from a mineral-rich northern Philippine province further confirms that the state actors and business enterprises from the Greater China region have indeed started to invest in South East Asia for a new phase of development: that is, the procurement of natural resources such as minerals. With comparative reference to resource-related conflicts in Africa that have involved China – such as Darfur in Sudan (CQ Researchers, 2010, Chapter 11; Srinivasan, 2008; Taylor, 2009) – although there are legitimate worries that China's post-millennial resource-led diplomacy may invoke new forms of transnational conflicts for the African strongmen who are colluding with China to plunder state resources and perpetuate violence,<sup>63</sup> informed researchers have made two instructive observations. First, it is an undeniable fact that China has launched a resource-led global diplomacy and encroached into resource-rich areas in the developing world (Acharya, 2008; Downs, 2007; Gill *et al*, 2007; Li, 2007). Second, the Darfur conflict has led China into multiple arenas and complex processes where China is pushed into performing an intriguing form of 'diplomatic manoeuvring' (Holslag, 2008, p 71). What is this diplomatic manoeuvring? While the infamous pragmatic motto of Deng Xiaoping to 'grope for stones to cross the river' continues to guide China's internal governance, Holslag (2008) convincingly argues that China has also applied this motto to foreign diplomacy. In the Darfur conflict, for instance, moral influences were arduously sought by China in order to find a feasible consensus for acceptance by international public opinion, human rights groups, the Sudanese political elite and the United Nations.

Interestingly, in contrast to the African experience, the above Philippine case portrays a different picture. Facilitated by China's resource-led diplomacy in the northern Philippines, which started in 2007, major mining companies from the Greater China region were then granted access by regional strongmen who occupied national and local government offices. On the one hand, mining operations in the Philippines are mainly characterized by a top-down approach, in which the interests and concerns of the locally affected communities are not fully considered before operation and are largely sidelined during implementation. However, as the post-Marcos Philippines has been undergoing democratization since 1986, state-building measures such as political decentralization have been taking place. Legal frameworks such as the Local Government Code of 1991 point to those government officials who should be held accountable. The Provincial Governor is identified as the key implementing agent of domestic and foreign mining activities in the Philippines, together with other regional and national government officials such as the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Manila.

On the other hand, in the course of mining, once the local populations gradually

<sup>63</sup> Sources: (1) 'China invests heavily in Sudan's oil industry. Beijing supplies arms used on villagers.' *Washington Post Foreign Service*, 23 December 2004. (2) 'China and Sudan, blood and oil', *The New York Times*, 23 April 2006. (3) 'The Chinese century', *Time*, 11 January 2007.

came to realize that their livelihoods and interests were threatened and at stake, they naturally opposed the mining and forged joint resistance with other competing forces such as the Catholic Church, environmental activists and the communist guerrillas. Such local resistance against foreign magnetite mining constitutes a democratic space in which the Chinese mining firms were dragged into the often complex political dynamics in the provincial Philippines. Three forms of anti-mining resistance were identified, symbolized by wind, thunder and lightning. Wind symbolizes the airing of public criticism; thunder the organization of public protests/demonstrations; and lightning symbolizes the use of armed attack. Through chasing wind, thunder and lightning, despite the fact that they are difficult to catch, we found that Philippine state sovereignty had been reinforced by local resistance to China's resource-led diplomacy.

Does China's economic globalization undermine Philippine state sovereignty? Although foreign mining ventures from the Greater China region in the provincial Philippines seem to have stirred up state-society conflicts, case studies rather revealingly suggest that Chinese magnetite mining has reactivated two different and competing forms of Philippine governance repertoires: democratic and patrimonial. The field research in the two mining-affected villages shows corresponding variations in the local receptions to magnetite mining. It is true that, in localities of low geostrategic value (such as Barangay Mares in San Antonio), the electoral turnover of the *barangay* council would largely determine the outcome of the mining company and would be more likely to lead to the democratic success of the local residents. However, in localities of high geostrategic value (such as Barangay Rio in San Antonio) where there is much more at stake, regional and local politicians will dedicate relatively more effort to ensure the smooth operations of foreign mining projects through their patrimonial rule, despite the fact that there are considerable disagreements and grievances from the ruled majority.

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