The Complexity of Armed Conflict in Mindanao: Beyond Economic Deprivation, Discrimination, and Inequality

Nasser Pendatun Lidasan
Old Dominion University

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THE COMPLEXITY OF ARMED CONFLICT IN MINDANAO: BEYOND ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION, DISCRIMINATION, AND INEQUALITY

by

Nasser Pendatun Lidasan
B.A. May 1990, Notre Dame University, Philippines
M.A. May 2006, University of Bradford, United Kingdom

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
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Approved by:

Regina E. Karp (Director)

Petr Schulman (Member)

Thomas Chapman (Member)
ABSTRACT
THE COMPLEXITY OF ARMED CONFLICT IN MINDANAO: BEYOND ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION, DISCRIMINATION, AND INEQUALITY
Nasser Pendatun Lidasan
Old Dominion University, 2013
Director: Dr. Regina W. Karp

Studies on internal conflict focus on bringing a violent conflict to non-violent. Economic development and good governance are most attractive since essential services are provided to people, regardless of ethnic affiliation. Autonomy for minority groups to maintain the integrity of a state is another option. Applied in Mindanao conflict, negotiated settlement, separation, and military victory did not create a lasting peace. This study applies the levels of analysis framework to investigate the conflict and considers the sub-state level as vital. It suggests the role of local actors as crucial in intrastate conflict. It examines the dynamics of conflict at the local level and the interactions of national and local leaders in the occurrence of war and peace in an armed conflict-stricken state.
This dissertation is dedicated to my late mother, Babay Pendatun, and my late brothers Maida and Ronnie, who were all victims of the consequences of the armed conflict in Mindanao. Also, to my father Sultan Kanocan "Ismael" Lidasan, Alhaj, who exerted more efforts during the times of intensified clashes between the government’s security forces and the Muslim combatants in 1970s and 1980s so that we may able to get a good education by sending us to safer places. I also would like to dedicate this work to all fallen Muslims and Christians who were all equally victims of unreasonable war in this part the globe.

I also specially dedicate this work to my wife, Rhea Jane, and daughters Sameera Sophia and Rhean Natalie for their sacrifices while I am away and to my elder sister Gina, and brothers Sukarno, Andy, Ricky and Basser for their full support as I tried to continue and seek higher education abroad. Lastly, the entire Filipino Muslims and the Christians who have endured the miseries of war for decades but will continue to find ways to end the same armed conflict, this work is for them.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am benefited greatly from the many individuals who gave their precious time and effort. I especially would like to thank the individuals in the Philippines, particularly in Mindanao, who granted interviews. I would like to thank those leaders of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Police for unselfish contribution to this work by sharing their views and experiences in dealing the security issues in Mindanao. I also especially would like to thank the individuals, both in the government, non-government and civilian sectors who granted me interviews—though some preferred their names withheld for security reason. Their hidden but more important views helped uncover those unseen facts and reality in the conflict areas.

In addition, I would like to especially thank Secretary Voltaire T Gamin, General Victor Ibrado, and Major General Benito T Ramos for their full support being my previous commanders in the Special Forces Regiment who, without hesitation, allowed me to go for schooling after serving several years in the field. Without these visionary and open-minded military commanders, I may not be able to pursue a Ph.D. degree in the United States.

I also would like to especially thank my advisor, Prof. Regina W. Karp for her guidance and in providing direction not only for this project but for being my educational advisor during the entire duration of my studies at Old Dominion University. Also, my special thanks to the other members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Peter Schulman and Dr. Thomas Chapman for their guidance and
support.

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## NOMENCLATURE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFP</td>
<td>Armed Forces of the Philippines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARMM</td>
<td>Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASG</td>
<td>Abu Sayyaf Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangsamoro</td>
<td>Muslim nation in Mindanao, southern Philippines (originally comprises the main Island of Mindanao, Sulu archipelago, and Palawan or MINSUPALA).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIFF</td>
<td>Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAFGU</td>
<td>Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCP</td>
<td>Communist Party of the Philippines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNI</td>
<td>Commission on National Integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>CPP/NDF/NPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVO</td>
<td>Civilian Volunteers Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRP</td>
<td>Government of the Republic of the Philippines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPH</td>
<td>Government of the Philippines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MILF</td>
<td>Moro Islamic Liberation Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNLF</td>
<td>Moro National Liberation Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOA-AD</td>
<td>Memorandum of agreement on Ancestral Domain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moro</td>
<td>Word used by the Spaniards during colonial period in 16th century to mean Muslims in the Philippines.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDF</td>
<td>National Democratic Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPA</td>
<td>New Peoples' Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPE</td>
<td>New Political Entity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSAG</td>
<td>Nonstate Armed Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>OPAPP</td>
<td>Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNP</td>
<td>Philippine National Police</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rido</td>
<td>A family or clan conflict in the Philippines</td>
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</table>
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Internal conflicts until recently are the main source of instability in international affairs. No doubt the trends of armed conflict in the 21st century have changed dramatically from interstate conflict to intrastate violence. Today, there are conflicts that are very elusive and seem very much resistant to settlement. Records show that civil wars, for instance, have increased considerably in the past fifteen years or so, and are now considered the dominant form of warfare.\(^1\) This is a concern of leaders of powerful states, policymakers, and scholars in their analyses not only due to the massive destruction of lives and property within the state in conflict but also owing to the fear that it may spill over to neighboring countries. Scholars and students of conflict commonly ask questions such as who fights in the conflict and why they do so. Indeed, why are internal conflicts, like secessionist movements and similar other kinds of armed struggle so cruel and seemingly victimize civilians rather than those principally holding weapons? What make those supporters of violence so aggressive that they tend to forget, or at least do not seem to mind, the consequential suffering brought about by violence? Why are insurgency movements seemingly intractable that even the leaders of governments, apparently reluctant, become timid in looking for resolution? Why is it that international organizations and distant powerful countries are hesitant to intervene in a very destructive war even before it reaches a point where civilians are killed en masse?

\(^1\) Dennis Sandole, *Capturing the complexity of conflict: Dealing with Violent Ethnic Conflicts of the Post-Cold War Era* (London: Printer, 1999), 3.
These are among the most puzzling concerns about the complexity of internal conflict and war.

If it is true that conflicts confronted by states internally are mostly categorized in the study of conflict and war as asymmetrical, then it is only proper, subject to international laws and laws of the country in conflict, for international organizations or powerful countries to intervene because when violence persists, the state in trouble is incapable of resolving its internal security issues. Other than this, what else needs to be studied on the issue of internal conflict? What about the role of individual actors, neighboring countries, and internal leaders both at the state level and the local level? This study is encouraged by the notion that conflict or war, in general, is not a natural phenomenon in world affairs. Rather, it is a man-made disaster that only humans can resolve in the context of attaining peace. Second, people—even those who are deeply oppressed—generally do not want conflict or war, if they can avoid it, for it can throw them into a quagmire of violence. In other words, violent conflict may only become part of human society if man loses conscious reason and forgets or wrongfully calculates the bad consequences of his behavior and action, or when he is pushed to the limit and sees no other option but to take up arms. Individual behavior becomes worse when such a feeling of uncertainty is transformed into collective grievances, especially if and when charismatic and responsible leaders emerge and take up the cudgels for the rights of many. This holds true particularly in a situation where individuals or groups are in a state of uncertainty that their security is endangered.²

Thus, this study supports and emphasizes the important role played by elites and leaders in the eventual turn of a volatile situation into a violent confrontation between the stronger (usually government forces) and the weaker (rebel groups) with incompatible goals. In short, bad leaders can be blamed for the occurrence of conflict and war, including its persistence, while good leaders, especially at the local level, can be praised and commended for the absence of conflict and, if there is, their perseverance is the key to the resolution of such conflict and the establishment of a peaceful environment.3 This does not mean that the leaders in a state bombarded by several security problems are all irresponsible, but their mishandling in the channeling of efforts, especially where monetary matters are involved, significantly influences the outcome of any initiative to end violent conflict. Of course, there have been many violent conflicts that have defied resolution and persist to this day, most of these being driven by "ancient hatred." The Philippine case falls into this category, having as it does a still very active secessionist movement in its southern island of Mindanao impeding development for more than forty years now. The Mindanao conflict, the focus of this study, has its roots in centuries-old historical and sociocultural debacles that have made the people of that region accustomed to never-ending violence. However, such conflict has a solution and can therefore be resolved by finding the appropriate means of ending conflict and wars.

Corollary to this, ancient hatred may be one of the hardest issues to address in internal conflict. But as the saying goes, "time heals," that is, combatants and

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unarmed people who may have made the war possible would reach a point where they are all weary of war. The critical point is how the means to ending conflict can be found and channeled to the beneficiaries of peace, and how the eagerness of people for peace is translated into action. One must keep in mind that a society experiencing conflict, by and large, has a structure with appropriate leaders at each level. But these same leaders are weak in managing the conflict, and their incapacity prevents them from resolving the conflict. Thus, efforts of any kind intended to ease the tension or perhaps end the conflict, if coursed through the same weak leaders, diminish the likelihood of success in the same manner that whatever is agreed at the "top level" of the government structure is not an assurance that it will be carried out at the local level. In fact, mere speculations on the possible reactions of the local leaders may influence the policy of state and strategic decision of state leaders. This paper suggests that, more than anything else, the role of local leaders vis-à-vis state policy is a more important variable in efforts to understand the persistence of internal violent conflict, including those deemed rooted in ancient hatred.

This inquiry is structured in a manner that would satisfy the supposed outcome in the study of internal conflict. Internal conflict, in the context of this study, refers to security instability within a state caused by challenges from non-state actors regardless of whether the intention is secession or the capture of government. The focus of the study is the internal armed conflict in Mindanao that has endured for more than four decades now. To this effect, the study attempts to provide explanations to the following research questions: To what extent is the

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intractability of the armed conflict in Mindanao influenced by the role of state-level actors and the local-level actors exploiting the dynamics of the conflict? What explains the Muslims' continuous popular support for an exclusive organization that has resisted many attempts to settle the conflict in Mindanao? To what extent is the armed conflict in Mindanao compelled by economic deprivation, ethnic discrimination, and inequality? And in what ways, if any, does the Mindanao conflict play a critical role in the stability of this part of the world against transnational security threats?

To address and provide analytical explanations and to align the research process to its overall goal, the study follows a sequence that would help attain, among others, the objective of understanding the recurrence of violent armed conflict in Mindanao. Chapter Two is the critical review of the literature on the study of conflict and war. The work of scholars, particularly, the theoretical framework they have developed about war and peace, is evaluated with particular attention to the occurrence of internal violence. An examination of the causes of war or conflict and peace, especially those that seem difficult to address, serve as the foundation of the study. And then the last part of the literature review is a critical examination of the approaches to internal conflict, which are contentious issues in the field. Nevertheless, three main tools for ending intrastate wars are examined, as follows: (1) negotiated settlement; (2) the partition (de jure or de facto) or giving away of a piece of territory; and military victory which basically means letting a wars come to its natural end.

Chapter Three is the historical account of the Mindanao conflict. It is the
basis for the analysis in understanding the intractability of this security problem in this part of Southeast Asia. It also elaborates on several responses of both the Philippine government and the international organizations in the search for an end to this perennial conflict between the minority Muslims and the government-backed Christians. Most studies of this conflict find that the problem is between the Muslims and the Christians both living on the same island, but the truth is it is a conflict between the secessionist Muslims and the government of the Philippines. The daunting part is that most scholarly work about this conflict, especially those written by international scholars, claims that the internal violent conflict in Mindanao has been resolved, that is, basically because of the peace agreement signed by both parties in 1996. But the reality on the ground shows the opposite. In fact, many analysts consider the recent surge of violence in Mindanao's conflict-affected areas to be even more cruel than any of the previous clashes. This is one of the many reasons that studies of the same internal conflict are sometimes derailed due to a misreading of the real issue and the main problem. Hence, undertaking this study became imperative.

Chapters Four and Five discuss the cases involving serious attempts to end the violent conflict in Mindanao. Chapter Four reviews the first peace agreement signed, under the auspices of international organizations and distant powerful states, between the government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1976. The peace agreement sounded good but there was no resemblance at all of peace on the ground even years after the agreement was implemented in the southern Philippines. In short, only a few
leaders of the rebel forces benefited from the poorly conceived peace agreement. Selected leaders of combatants were made to enjoy the benefits of a luxurious life. They were brought to the national capital city of Manila and were given enough money and big houses. As a consequence, the real issue for the implementation of the agreement was neglected, creating massive confusion both on the part of the Muslims and the government of the Philippines. The misunderstanding on the interpretation of provisions in the agreement led to continuing violence that has victimized not only the Muslim minority but the Christians as well because armed confrontations were almost everywhere.

Chapter Five is a critical examination of the second and supposedly final peace accord between the Moro secessionists and the government of the Republic of the Philippines in 1996. Many analysts were convinced that it was one of the most successful ways of conflict resolution in history. It was peaceful and conducted in an orderly manner, with the MNLF members handing over their firearms and heavy weapons to the government in exchange for a brighter future. A key element of the implementation of the agreement was the integration of 7,500 combatants into the Armed Forces and the Philippine National Police. But apparently, the problem did not end there particularly on the part of the Muslims in Mindanao.

Critics have argued that the peace agreement only temporarily halted the violence, and provided enough space for the rebels, and even the armed forces, to replenish their losses, consolidate their forces, and reorganize their waning organization for armed hostilities in the future. This view was proven right when a series of actual armed confrontations broke out just a few years after the peace
agreement was signed. What went wrong? This is the prevalent question that needs further deep analysis. The details are found in the analysis portion of this study about the 1996 peace agreement. But it would be worth mentioning at this point that this shows how difficult it is to deal with internal conflicts, particularly if there is a religious component involved. It is a fact that expectation is crucial in interstate relations, especially in the way cooperation prevails between and among states particularly on matters involving trade if they see a probability of high trade in the future. This theory can also be applied to the volatile relations between parties in conflict. If people expect that an attempt to conflict resolution would give them an acceptable change in their future, then the likelihood of cooperation is high. In contrast, if they see that the expected changes in the status quo would not amount to a better future for them, then cooperation especially on the part of the weaker is not likely. The relationship even worsens when commitments are not given fulfillment and promises are broken. This situation is very dangerous because it affects relations and destroys trust in one another.

The Filipino people, except the spoilers, fully expected the 1996 peace agreement to create a more promising future that would bring about peace and stability, economic development, better living standards for people in the conflict-affected areas, and so on. But those expectations were generally thwarted by the fact that the changes did not solve the economic, educational, and social problems. No doubt, the surge of violence just a few years since the agreement was signed became endemic in the area, with the magnitude of destruction it brought upon lives and

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property even greater than before.

Chapter Six offers a critical analysis of the previous chapters. This study uses and is encouraged by the levels of analysis framework which, though deemed an old method by some, remains a useful tool in analyzing the occurrence of conflict and war. The three-levels-of-analysis, for example, has been used by several scholarly studies on understanding a certain phenomenon in world affairs. Recently, with some modifications, it has been reevaluated and has subsequently included one level, the local level, to turn it into four levels of analysis in understanding internal conflicts and wars – such as those categorized as ethnic conflicts.6 In this study, the “four levels of analysis” is used to frame and increase the levels of analysis on the question of why conflicts such as the one in Mindanao, among others, persist.

The study argues that the role of local leaders within the local setting is much more significant and influential when the future or outcome of an internal conflict is taken into account. It is a fact that in any conflict or war, there is always a set of heads or leaders of organizations who are credible enough to be followed by their followers. In the case of internal conflict, whether the goal of a group is secession, control of resources, or capture of the state, local elites and leaders can play a more important role. In short, internal conflicts are basically the result of aggressive behavior of leaders, both at the state and local levels. The extent to which their state of leadership contributes to the dynamics of the conflict varies from one place to another. In contrast, the attainment of a solid and more enduring peace is highly dependent on the benign intentions and kindness, or the intellectual capacity, of

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both leaderships at all levels. The degree as to how much impact the actions of leaders has in each level varies from one place to another. However, the study of internal conflict requires an understanding of the concept of bargaining, and this research work puts forward the idea that local leadership shares more in attaining mutual agreements\(^7\) in the same manner that national leadership exercises more patience along with an aggressive pursuit of benign and fair policies for the domestic constituents.

This study does not claim that every conflict can be ended by benign intentions of dialogue. However, whatever the causes of conflicts, be it driven by ancient hatred, economic instability, oppressive governments, or discrimination against minority groups, this study suggests that one important reason about the protracted nature of conflict is the fact that local actors are left out of the equation and decisions are always made and manipulated at the top leadership without full concession from local elites and leaders who are significant actors in the conflict. It may sound inconceivable to secure local leaders' consensus but that is the reality about the complexity of internal conflict and war. The case of the decades-long Mindanao conflict has thus laid the foundation for this proposition.

Finally, the last chapter summarizes the key points of this study. In this chapter, the study lays out the result of its examination of the various aspects of internal conflict and war, particularly the one that has raged for over four decades in Mindanao. It also shows a set of analyses about the obstacles that lie in the path to ending the Mindanao conflict, and the circumstances within which efforts have been

made in an attempt to resolve the same. Among the expected outputs of this study is that it would uncover the circumstances that have impeded any attempt at resolving the conflict, with greater emphasis on the role of actors at each level. The chapter also puts forward a set of modest recommendations that would enhance our understanding of the complexity of this phenomenon, and the way in which attempts at a resolution of the Mindanao conflict can be more effective in terms of bringing about a lasting peace. Lasting peace in this study means that other than the absence of armed confrontation, or negative peace, there is a resemblance of stability in the area because its inhabitants are finally integrated into mainstream society regardless of their economic and social status, ethnic and religious affiliation, creed, class, gender, and disability.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

THE NATURE OF INTERNAL CONFLICT

Internal conflict is pervasive, complex, and almost everywhere that it requires careful analysis in the context of understanding the causes and consequences, and possibly come up with viable recommendations that may, in the course of continuous studies, increase our knowledge of determining solutions to this world phenomenon. This problem, which basically occurs within a state, is not new and is getting much attention not only because of its immense effects on the population but also due to its perceived cross-border effects on other countries. The recent chaos, in fact ongoing in some states, in the Middle East had revived the attention of policymakers, state leaders, scholars, and international communities to look back into the nature of problems that are occurring within states. The current internal problem in the Middle East has, indeed, created some skepticism in most students of International Studies or International Relations on the mode of resolving this type of conflict. Usually, the rebels in conventional wisdom are always treated by any state as groups opposing the legitimate existence of political power, and that their actions in the eyes of the state as well as the international community, in most cases, are considered treasonous that in no way must prevail.

In recent years, however, the internal security problems of states have been getting much attention and gaining substantial support, especially if the population represented by armed groups is oppressed. In essence, there is skepticism on
whether international actors or outside forces are contributing to the resolution of the conflict, whether favoring the legitimate state or the rebel groups. Other internal conflicts, whether the overall goal is control of resources, change of political system, or secession, are still active in some countries that it seems resolution is still farfetched. So, why are some internal conflicts resolved and others are not? What accounts for their persistence? Who are the actors that may have been playing important roles in the conflict? These are some of the sources of confusion in the study of internal conflict that need careful analysis especially in the context of continuous study and the search for viable solutions appropriate in the current globalized world.

By definition, internal conflict or intrastate war generally occurs between identity groups, as in ethnic conflict, or between certain groups and a legitimate government. Internal conflicts are usually violent, with both parties in the conflict using force or arms in the attainment of specific social or political objectives. Other types of violence as spontaneous mob actions like riots and small-scale insurgencies are excluded in the category internal conflict in this study since they are temporary in nature and do not require much of the resources of states. Intrastate conflict is very difficult to resolve, and even if a halt is put on the ground through any means, the threat of a recurrence of violence is always possible as observed in many internal conflicts in the past and those happening elsewhere.

Michael E. Brown (1996) gives us the specific forms of internal conflict which are basically originated from domestic rather than outside factors such as "violent power struggles involving military or civilian leaders; armed ethnic conflicts and
secessionist campaigns; challenge by criminal organizations to state sovereignty; armed ideological struggles; and revolutions.¹ Monica Toft similarly defines internal armed conflict between the state and domestic challengers, like civil wars, as one that leaves large numbers of people killed in a mutually harmful and relatively continuous fighting.² Most internal conflicts are driven by group identity, which is deemed to be very difficult, if not impossible, to change as it is often based on an individual’s descent (e.g., language, religion, or race).³ In most cases, it is this component of an identity, and the politicization of that identity, that motivate groups to form militant organizations to identify the entire group as either loyal or disloyal to a country’s population.⁴ In her data analysis of civil wars fought from 1940 to 2007, Toft is able to identify the focus of combatants as “sovereignty and governance,” that is, who will control the political unit. In regard to this political objective, each side rejects the legitimacy of the other to rule over part or all of the territory of a state.⁵

In most cases, internal conflicts involve asymmetrical forces, that is, one side is stronger, usually the government, in terms of forces, resources, and material support, while the other side usually referred to in the modern world as insurgents is weaker in almost all aspects. Thus rebellion, for instance, is a kind of two-fold struggle between gaining much attention, support, or even legitimacy for the

⁵ Toft, 2010
struggle, on the one hand, and the struggle for sufficient power to attain the expected and perceived overall goals, on the other. In short, the struggle to achieve the “end” goal is directed against the government while the struggle for “means” is basically a struggle against nature, or one that is directed towards either the domestic or the international situation in the places of conflict. In a broader sense, thus, internal conflicts may or may have no influence from external factors. In the same way during the struggle to attain the “means,” groups may either escalate the conflict to elevate it to a higher level to attract more outside actors to their advantage, in a sense “socializing” the issue, or frame the direction of the main issue so that media mileage works to the advantage of the weaker group. Socialization of the supposed confined internal conflict is one of the effective tools that weaker groups may use to elevate their position relative to the opposing force. In analyzing the current dynamics of internal conflict, whether for social or political reasons, the framing of issues has effectively helped weaker groups (rebels) in attracting and getting the international community and distant powers onboard in addressing the internal problems of a particular state. But other than this common assumption in our preliminary investigation of the nature of internal conflicts, it is also worth looking at theories and how scholars of conflict and war, especially the pioneers of security studies, were able to contribute to the development of tools that have aided

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and enabled students of international relations and security studies in the analysis of war and peace.

One of the early studies on the occurrence of war has been the analysis of interstate war. Applicable theories on this matter can be utilized to apply similar findings of the early studies of interstate conflict to the occurrence of internal conflict. After all, among the most important factors to look into in the study of collective movements or conflict - whether interstate or intrastate - are the nature and behavior of individual leaders that represent either the stronger (state) party or the weaker (the insurgents) party. Perhaps, the most common understanding on why war occurs is that society changes over time. Thus collective violence may be interpreted as a result of "the process of breakdown in a society." In this context, Charles Tilly et al. have observed that the effect of change in the society, in the form of "urbanization or industrialization" for instance, could dissolve the control over antisocial behavior as such rearrangement creates a potential for uncertainty and strain. In other words, even if the change in society is aimed at economic development, there is no assurance of evenly distributed benefits to social and economic structures. In sum, the situation of "unevenness" creates a potential for disharmony between the usual practices or experiences and the mechanism that is expected to regulate them. Tilly et al. argue that responses to changes are crucial. These may be in the form of different collective social movements such as peaceful agitation, political violence, nationalism, or can be elevated to a form of revolution.

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and subversion.\textsuperscript{10} In this case, we can expect that participants of collective movements are those who are most adversely affected by societal change. There are also other similar theoretical explanations and even empirical data suggest that collective actions or social movements are especially attracted to those who have been left out without being benefited by the old social ties and excluded in the new social order.\textsuperscript{11} In the real world, this theory can be interpreted to mean that the existence of political and social disorder in any of the states experiencing internal aggression by a group or groups is a result of systematic marginalization brought about by societal change.

In the world of modernization, development is often seen as a kind of change that is generally perceived to uplift the living conditions of a population. It is sometimes expected to gratify and fulfill the long aspirations of society, but in reality social change may also result in social discontent. Ivo K. Feierabend, et al. argue that political turbulence is understood to be the result of social discontent— it is a precondition for political instability and violence.\textsuperscript{12} In other words, the instability caused by collective movements that prompt states to react according to what they deem necessary is basically understood to be something that originated from the very exact reason of dissatisfaction. The idea of satisfaction is often thought to be in regard to individual needs rather than social circumstances, but when collective discontent is attained at some point, then it translates to a stage

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid., 5.  
where violence occurs within the society. The theory of social change stands on the assumption that people are basically pushed to an environment they are not familiar with, and that they, in the context of change, are exposed to a new system with new rules and procedures that eventually create anxiety and confusion which, in turn, transform individual or group behavior into an uncooperative mode.

Social changes, in contrast, are expected to happen in every part of the world as states expect a great deal in modernization - a kind of social development that many believe could uplift the economy of every state. Thus, in the context of the theoretical arguments about societal change that most scholars are pushing forward, continuous or at least occasional conflict among and between the people in a particular state amidst developmental change can be expected. Nevertheless, all of these theoretical assumptions can be summed up to one behavioral equation that explains the overall attitudes of individual or group who, in one way or another, is in the chain of violence. In simple terms, people tend to respond appropriately to things that surround them, especially if their expectations are directly affected.

James C. Davies (1962), for instance, looks at the expectations and needs of a society and draws a parallel ascending line of 'expected need' and 'actual need', both of which must be satisfied over time. He argues that "revolutions are most likely to occur when a prolonged period of economic and social development is followed by a short period of reversal."13 In other words, as the expected need satisfaction ascends, the actual need satisfaction declines, and at that point the gap between them may be considered intolerable that it pushes people to rise up. Similarly, Ted

Gurr (1970) in his classical work asks why men rebel. His analysis is anchored on the physical and psychological needs of humankind. His "frustration-aggression approach" to analyzing earlier social movements links the incidents of political violence and rebellion directly to feelings of deprivation arising from unfulfilled expectations. In other words, this theory can be linked to questions of internal conflict, as in secession, quest for autonomy or even for separation, that people are most likely to resort to violent means if they see no chances of success through peaceful ways. The daunting part in any of these social collective movements is that when responses are not carefully studied in the context of resolution, then such people's actions may lead to war. In his famous 'Protracted Social Conflict Theory,' Edward Azar (1980) argues that low-intensity warfare such as conflicts over religious, cultural or ethnic identity are entirely dependent upon the satisfaction of basic needs and, if not met, such conflicts in the long term cannot just be remedied by ordinary methods of diplomacy or the use of force.

WHY WAR INSTEAD OF PEACE?

Few people, if any, like to live in conflict with one another. Almost everyone in the world, even those who lived in the early centuries, would most likely reject the idea that violence is acceptable in society. The same holds true in the present set-up of the world order. The reason, perhaps, is that everyone today is aware of the very clear and substantial lessons of previous wars. This notwithstanding, however, the modern world continues to be plagued with violent conflicts that

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seem never-ending despite numerous attempts to calm down violence so as to stop the killings not only for the sake of the combatants of both parties, but also to ease the more disastrous effects of conflict on innocent civilians. This is the empirical puzzle that needs careful attention. To people in some parts of the world, internal conflicts continuously engender a disastrous environment. Why do we need to take up arms and go fight to kill others? Why are there groups willing to die for their cause? What motivates people to engage in rebellion? Why do people join mass revolts against legitimate governments? These continue to be among the basic questions that have been asked many years ago and are still being asked today that have yet to be answered.

Perhaps, one of the extreme observations that have aided us in understanding the occurrence of war or peace is the psychological explanation on why a supposed peaceful world sometimes turns into a place of misery. Kenneth Waltz (1959), in the first of his *three images of war*, is convinced that in order for anyone to explain how peace can be achieved, one must have an understanding of the causes of war. For him, the miseries of mankind are ineluctably the product of man's natures. His theory blames man as the primary cause of war when Waltz explicitly states that, "the root of all evil is man, and thus he himself is the root of the specific evil, war."16 This theory is, without a doubt, a classical realist's perspective but it is a convincing claim. The only thing is that most often the behavior of man toward certain things is also dependent on the outside forces that may influence one's attitude and behavior or subsequent actions. Along this line, Waltz also

emphasizes that understanding the likely consequences of any one cause may depend on understanding its relationship to the other causes; more often, the possible interrelationship of causes makes the problem even more difficult.\textsuperscript{17} In short, the first image, which is that of International Relations, means that explanations about the important causes of war are found in the nature and behavior of man. The theory is very candid in its analysis about the pernicious effects of human behavior that if the individual goodness of people can only be exhibited in every aspect of their lives and universalized, then it would all simply translate into "world peace." In the context of collective social movements, it may be assumed that the actions of every individual or significant leader could be crucial to the eventual occurrence of conflict - be it in an interstate or intrastate environment.

Human perception is also one of the significant factors that explains the occurrence of conflict and war. It is sometimes difficult to get a correct interpretation of what people observe in their surroundings that may affect their routine endeavors and interests. When individual human behavior reaches a collective stage, then it may turn into violence that may sometimes be beyond the control of individual leaders themselves or even states. If one party's perception of others- connotes a threat to the former's existence and interests, even if it is incorrect, then that situation will lead to disaster. Barry Posen (1993) explores the applicability of the "Neo-realist self-help concept" to the issue of internal disputes or intrastate conflicts. In this context, states basically want to remain autonomous and secure from any threats, either external or internal, and will do so in trying to

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 14.
In other words, states are always reactive to whatever forms or types of threat they may perceive as causing a bigger problem for them in the future.

The critical point in this view is that a state facing internal security problems would react, beforehand, to security threats posed by communal groups -- whether the overall goal is secession, control of resources, or capture of government -- according to what it deems appropriate. In this case, whatever actions the state may take, its leaders may not be aware that such actions are perceived by others as threatening. This perception, then, can trigger an arms race, and either party would view as a "security dilemma" any potential crisis in which no one would come to their aid to defend the security of the state. The worse that may subsequently arise is that one party (preferably the stronger state) would initiate the first action by attacking a perceived threat to national security. Once a violent conflict starts, any move to stop it may be difficult as neither of the parties in the conflict would accept blame nor be willing to come to a settlement without having tested their full potential for using force. In short, most of the succeeding actions once a violent conflict has erupted could easily be justified by either group – the state may be in a position to take pre-emptive action while the weaker could maximize the utilization of a "just war" concept or self-defense. Almost all histories of internal conflicts are characterized by a complex phenomenon in which whatever their outcome – whether it be negotiated settlement, partition, or autonomy – it would always imply change in the social or political structure of states.

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Social and political changes in society have been perceived as critical in the transformation of peace to violence. Structural changes can happen in the international system and the domestic politics. However, most often than not, changes in the system would always come from the domestic politics of certain states that eventually escalate if not addressed in the early eruption state of the problem. Robert Gilpin (1981) argues that understanding why a state’s policy changes, whether because of external or internal factors, is related to the cost and benefit analysis of the prevailing or impending situation. Governments change policies if the perception about the cost is much higher than maintaining the status quo.\(^{19}\) In the same vein, changes in government politics that may have a great impact on the domestic structure of society may be interpreted within the context of how other scholars view an individual state or its leaders. In this sense, it is assumed that a state or its leaders are basically relative gain, not absolute gain, thinkers.\(^{20}\) Most scholars favoring this argument are convinced that states (in the case of international system) or parties or groups (in the case of domestic politics) in this context can never have a cooperative relationship since they always think of their ‘gains relative to others’ so that competition becomes inevitable in the process. In short, this line of argument holds that either world politics or domestic politics are full of, and being shaped by competition, for dominance or control of politics, thus ensuring the predictability of occasional conflict because in competition, a cooperative relationship always slides to animosity between competitors.


The individual behavior of humans is a good predictor of violence but it is not capable of generating the common notion that man, by nature, is innately aggressive. Still, what makes individual behavior changes -- whether cooperative or aggressive -- is what matters more through the influence of outside ‘situational forces’ that drive individuals to change attitudes. Michael Howard (1983) is convinced that whatever may be attained in the calculation of advantage and risk, whether careful sometimes or crude, that state leaders make before involving their government in conflict or war is not related to the notion of “machismo.” In his study of war, what makes war inevitable is the fear of either side that their opponent is a rising power as in the Peloponnesian case wherein war was made inevitable by the growth of Athenian power and the fear this may cause in Sparta.21 This is consistent with the earlier observation that ‘perception’ is a much more important predictor of the occurrence of violence whether interstate or those conflicts occurring within the boundaries of states. While structural factors may be considered in the analysis of war and peace, looking back at the very origin of certain conflicts may reveal that the individual behavior of leaders is influenced by their common understanding or interpretation of a phenomenon. So, in either case, the causes of war can be determined by looking at actors’ behavior and thinking with conscious and reasoned decisions based on calculation, made by both parties, that there is more to be gained in going to war than just keeping a peaceful environment.22 At this point of the analysis, the occurrence of violent conflict and its eventual protracted nature can be blamed on the stupidity and self-interest of ‘elite

22 Ibid., 22.
leaders' both at the state level and the local level of society.

Man's capacity for calculating the future may also cause problems that create more confusion in the long run. Most often than not, man's ability to foresee what the future is greatly dependent on historical lessons of the past. The worse that may come out is that when one's sources of information are raw, they can lead to even more confusion in man's subsequent reactions. This is one of the problems of Prospect Theory which states that due to the asymmetry between gains and perceived losses, which is central to prediction, groups (by extension through their leaders) who are within the domain of losses accept the risks in making a decision while those in the domain of gains are risk averse. Similarly, in terms of the relationship of parties, cooperation is expected to prevail if security is not an issue, but if security is involved, then cooperation is unlikely since identity or ethnic groups begin to calculate the costs of the benefits to their security on the basis of relative gains.23 In short, the critical and more significant basis for analyzing conflict and peace is that incomplete information, mutual uncertainty, and most of all erroneous expectations are significant and more important predictors of civil war than what has been traditionally emphasized about the oppressive role of anarchy.24 But in spite of the individual role of leaders, what is more puzzling in our analysis is the question of solidarity that transforms single individual actions and perception into a collective movement.

It is widely believed that violence grows out of the struggle for dominance or

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power among well-defined groups. But what brings them together for a common goal of contesting an established rule or policy is a question that has many possible explanations. Charles Tilly, et al. have explored and consider solidarity theory as an alternative understanding of the theory breakdown.\(^\text{25}\) In other words, both these theories are concerned primarily with the potential for violent conflict or even war that may stem from changes in the societal structure. Not all changes may be a potential source of violence as there are times when people are bored of the stagnant or slow rate of development in society and embark on undertakings to uplift their living standards. Land disputes are one example, as they may be understood as a type of violence that may generate a protracted civil war.

In some studies of territorial problems among groups, the possession of a piece of land is sometimes not the issue. Bruce M. Russett (1964), in his study of the relationship of land ownership to violence, finds that there can be a wide range in the amount of land owned by individuals without producing instability. Instead, Russett declares as critical to this a situation where "those who have the smallest amount of land are unable to make a steady and decent living of it," thus raising the degree of instability.\(^\text{26}\) In short, the scarcity of resources may create high levels of violence, on the one hand, and may also induce stability, on the other, depending on the impact of those resources on the expectations of society. Therefore, as long as the needs of individuals or groups are relatively fulfilled, then the likelihood of collective action is minimal. This explains how political mass actions in urban areas

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\(^{25} \text{Charles Tilly, et al., } \textit{The Rebellious Century 1830-1930}, 7.\)

\(^{26} \text{See Bruce M. Russett,} \ "\text{Inequality and Instability: The Relationship of Land Tenure to Politics,}\" \textit{World Politics}16, no. 3 (April, 1964): 442-454."
happen where possession or ownership of material things is not related at all to the formation of collective movements. It can then be suggested that solidarity can be related to needs and/or expectations. People will most likely join a mass movement if they have similar goals, frustrations, and most of all similar and unfulfilled needs, even if they do not belong to the same cultural or ethnical identity and religious affiliation.

In religious violence, a different interpretation may be required depending on how intense it may be, this type of violence being most often perceived as extreme due to the role that religion plays in mass action. Understanding violence brought about by collective action involving religious groups is even more difficult in the 21st century due to a fear of religious fanaticism, as in the Islamic world, or its more extreme version called terrorism. However, scholars are not slow in their study of this phenomenon. Mohammed Hafez (2003) looks through a different lens in explaining violent behavior in some countries, especially in the Muslim world. He argues that violence, especially that which has spilled over to other parts of the world, is a result of a political process that has deprived these groups of access to political power. He identifies at least three resources that the Islamist movement could command to effect social and political change: (1) Material and organizational resources commonly exercised by dedicated activists and experienced cadres; (2) Legitimacy and identity resources that serve as a moral authority to command sacrifices from activists and sympathizers; and (3) institutional resources where

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groups have access to public office and state ministries.²⁸

At any rate, humans by nature are found to be mostly fond of anticipating what may affect their future aspirations. Man's ability to calculate the consequences of his actions is crucial to his future endeavor as it is this ability to see and predict the consequence of his deeds that would determine who he is in the future. If man's calculations of future events do not seem exactly right, then actions related to these are more likely to end disastrously. Michael Howard (2001) confidently explains that whatever may be the underlying causes of interstate or intrastate conflict, "even if we accept the role of atavistic militarism or of military-industrial complexes or of socio-biological drives or of domestic tensions in fueling it," the occurrence of war begins with conscious and reasoned decisions based on a calculation, made by both parties, that they can achieve more gains by going to war than by just keeping the status quo or being in a state of peace.²⁹

In his response to the growing appreciation for global economic cooperation, Joseph Grieco argues that the observed high level of mutual cooperation between states or, in domestic politics, ethnic or identity groups, is not evidence that the oppressive effects of anarchy are no longer an important determinant of the characteristics of interstate or intrastate politics. This is because a high level of cooperation is expected when security is not the main issue, but when security is uncertain, cooperation is very difficult to achieve as states or groups would tend to

²⁸Ibid., 19.
begin calculating their relative gains over absolute gains.\textsuperscript{30} In other words, it is assumed here that interstate or intrastate wars do not just emerge from our social system nor by erroneous calculation and understanding among men, but instead by a powerful force that is deeply ingrained in racial behavior.\textsuperscript{31} These are all, or some, of the major explanations that may guide students of security studies in the analysis of war and peace occurring in interstate or intrastate politics. But other than these theoretical assumptions, it is also worth looking at the question of how such actions of groups are transformed into violence, or simply how a dispute turns into a violent conflict or war between contending parties.

FROM DISPUTE TO VIOLENT ARMED CONFLICT

In theory, there are many explanations guiding the analysis of phenomena. In the study of violence, knowledge of theories about the collective movement, as in a revolution or mass protest, is imperative even as this is not enough to explain the question of why people turn violent to the extent of being willing to kill or be killed for the welfare of others. The conventional wisdom in this regard is that the violence in internal conflicts is directly caused by a deeply ingrained social fabric of "ancient hatred" among and between groups that forces them to rise up in arms that consequently becomes a contagion spilling over to other areas even far beyond the borders of states. Again, the behavior and attitudes of the leaders – whether they are bad or good – are crucial to the future of a fragile stability as their decisions and actions:


actions are potential sources of an unstable situation turning into an open violent confrontation or war.\textsuperscript{32}

Bad leaders, both at state and local levels, are responsible for committing the members of a group, where he is influential, to forget and abandon the tranquility of peace and resort to taking arms. If leaders would only see who that staying at peace is a better alternative to waging war, then states may be saved from the miseries and pernicious effects of internal conflict. The problem is that, even the ability of good leaders to calculate the approximate cost of committing their followers to war becomes erroneous, especially when a situation is reached that pushes them to the limit. In other words, the ancient hatred theory of internal conflict may not be capable of explaining the persistence of violence because humans sometimes reach a point of becoming war-weary, thus giving way to the emergence of good leaders who seek to pacify bellicose ethos.

The occurrence of internal conflicts and or its resolution is primarily dependent on domestic factors which are, most often, manipulated by elites or leaders both at the state and local levels. At the state level, in a broader sense, leaders contribute much in times of conflict at the local scene while, at the same time, the unscrupulous attitudes of elites and leaders on the ground of actual fighting further exacerbate the confusion caused by decisions made at the state level.\textsuperscript{33} In the simple process of 'action-reaction' analogy, conflicts are simply the


conglomeration of dynamics of decisions made, on behalf of the majority of the population (state citizens), through the perception of good leaders of the common good, and the very actions of local leaders in their response to policies made for them and on account of ethnicity, culture, and religious affiliation. When the policies of state leaders are acceptable because these are deemed to serve the interests of identity groups and are perceived to be good by local leaders, then the likelihood of violent conflict is minimized. On the contrary, not all policies agreed and decided at the state level are implemented at the local level. Sometimes, the dynamics of the domestic political situation generate conflict, such as ethnic conflict situations, provoked by elites and leaders in times of political and economic crises in order to fend off domestic challengers.\footnote{Michael E. Brown, \textit{International Dimensions of Internal Conflict}, 17-18.} In other words, the role of local leaders, in this view, plays an important part in whatever the state policy may impose on the provincial or regional level. In sum, whatever the factor that triggers armed confrontation in the internal conflict, whether it is economic, political, cultural, or religious in nature, individual leaders' behavior and perception of gains and losses are the deciding factor in the occurrence of war and peace. That means that bad leaders bring the community into chaos while good leaders bring the society into peace.

\textbf{INTERNAL ARMED CONFLICT MITIGATION}

Internal conflict is not a new phenomenon. Its complexity brought about by many angles of a conflict-ridden environment has attracted policymakers, state leaders, and scholars to seek a deeper understanding of the fluidity of intrastate conflict. Since the end of the Cold War, students and scholars of international
relations or international studies, particularly those specializing in security concerns, have been trying to investigate and study the surge of internal violence, ranging from conflicts aimed at control of resources to secessionist movements and political control to capture the state. The general idea, in looking for possible viable solutions to internal wars, is to come up with a policy that both individual states in conflict and international communities can adopt so as to mitigate the effects of actual fighting between the state and groups by saving properties and lives at the earliest possible time. In a sense, the consensus on the question of how to prevent mass killings among parties to the conflict is to have a serious and dedicated effort for negotiation.

Faced with the proliferation of intrastate conflicts that have caused many deaths brought about by ethnic civil wars in the mid-1990s, international policymakers and scholars have focused much attention on "partition" as a viable solution for preventing the recurrence of ethnic civil wars.\textsuperscript{35} The debate surrounding partition has emerged in the field of conflict resolution at the end of the Cold War, as this was the time ethnic conflicts came to the forefront of Western policymakers' attention. For this reason, international boundaries were redrawn so as to accommodate the political demands of ethnic groups. However, in the process of the continuing search for viable solutions to internal conflict, scholars in recent years have introduced a counterargument to negotiated settlements and partition. Proponents of the "give war a chance" option argue that belligerents

should be allowed to continue fighting until one side achieves military victory.\(^{36}\)

Once started, internal conflicts are very difficult, if not impossible, to resolve for many reasons. Scholars of conflict have been trying to focus their attention finding possible solutions to ending violence particularly happening in developing countries. Wars could be ended in many different ways, such as: (1) when one of the conflicting parties achieves a military victory over the other; (2) when the warring parties enter into a signed peace agreement as a result of negotiations; or (3) when a truce/stalemate or ceasefire is established, thus terminating the actual fighting. Other than these, Roy Licklider (1995) has identified other factors that can influence the termination of intrastate conflict such as civil war and help prevent their recurrence, as follows: (1) the length and costs of the war; (2) the ability of the central government to make commitments; (3) the presence of mediators; (4) the strength of the security forces; and (5) the willingness to address grievances.\(^{37}\)

In the study of civil wars, scholars focus on the possibility of finding a definite solution to the conflict. In other words, studies seek to determine which types of ending internal conflicts -- like civil wars resulting from secessionist movements, the collapse of the state, the struggle for political control and resources, or the struggle for autonomy-- is more attractive because it is perceived as having the potential to produce an enduring peace. As observed in the history of wars elsewhere, most internal conflicts, after they have been ended for quite some time, revert to the same intolerable violence with even more devastating consequences.

\(^{36}\) See Edward N. Luttwak, "Give War a Chance," *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 4 (July/August 1999): 36-44.

This is the reason that international community and policymakers have emphasized the importance of finding more viable means of ending violence that could produce a lasting peace.

NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT

After the end of World War II, scholars and policymakers shifted their attention to settling wars primarily occurring within state boundaries. This was aimed at mitigating the tension between the two warring parties through a negotiated settlement. The core recommendation of this policy is to employ a third party which could facilitate and mediate in peace talks between the parties in conflict. This process involves offering resources primarily in the form of economic incentives and allocation of positions in the existing government in order to halt the violence and preserve the lives of combatants. Scholars of civil wars, for their part, have devoted the bulk of their research work on how best to achieve negotiated settlements. But what is negotiated settlement? Toft, in her most recent publication (2010), defines negotiated settlement as “an ideal type of war termination in which none of the warring parties admits defeat” and the combatants consequently agree to end the violence, especially the armed confrontation, and accept common terms on how to govern a post-war state. A survey of the literature on civil war termination shows that negotiated settlement is a far more pervasive and influential option than any other type of war termination.\(^\text{38}\) The basic assumption of advocates for negotiated settlement is that the earlier the fighting is stopped, the more lives are saved.

\(^{38}\) Toft, Ending Civil Wars, 11.
Since the end of the cold war, negotiated settlements have been understood to emphasize the benefits of cooperation while downplaying the threat of punishment should either or both parties fail to live up to their obligation under the agreement. Comparing options on ending internal conflict, advocates of negotiated settlement contend that the combination of the proliferation of weak states, refinement in insurgency strategy, and the wide-distribution of small arms have made it relatively more difficult for even well-supplied and well-led combatants to achieve victory. In short, what makes a settlement last long is the fact that combatants, including those who made the war possible, have grown too weary of war that going to another war is unlikely for both parties.

The durability of the peace attained after a settlement, to some scholars and practitioners, would probably depend on the international community to establish and implement the provisions of the peace agreement, including that of sustaining peace on the ground. In other words, if former combatants who subscribed to the idea of ending violence as a result of a peace agreement are given a chance to have a voice in their political, economic and social destiny, then renewed violence can be averted. This factor alone may explain why scholars prefer negotiated settlement to all other types of conflict resolution because allowing the combatants to have a say in the postwar configuration of the government increases the likelihood that such a democratic process will lead to the creation and strengthening of democratic institutions.39

In sum, the most powerful theoretical argument that supports the idea of

ending intrastate conflict through a negotiated settlement is that it reduces the number of deaths and damage to properties at the soonest possible time. Assuming that the costs of civil war, for instance, are measured narrowly in terms of life, negotiations to halt violence would spare more lives than when fighting continues and, as a consequence, reduces the costs of war for both parties.\(^40\) In other words, without a settlement the combatants would continue to go on killing each other, or even escalating the level of violence.

The above arguments, however, have been criticized for many reasons. First and foremost, scholars and practitioners opposed to negotiated settlement argue that it while may end the overt violence, it does not provide a promising future for longer peace. A well-established truce, for example, can stop human suffering but at the same time it can be a good opportunity for either party to the conflict to rearm, consolidate, and build up their forces for future battles. Thus, negotiated settlements may save lives but only for a short period. Moreover, even after a peace accord is signed and all is set to be implemented on the ground of previous conflict, many see that the possibility of attaining a more enduring peace would still be hard, as parties, especially the combatants, always have strong incentives to reject the idea of sharing power in a new government.\(^41\)

In the study of Alexander B. Downes (2004) on intrastate conflict, he identifies many problems in regard to ending civil wars through third party interventions for a negotiated solution. He observes that the conventional wisdom

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\(^41\) See Toft (2010), Ending Civil Wars: A Rebel Victory?.
in both academic and policy circles on how best to end ethnic civil wars assumes that secessionist conflicts, for example, are best managed by granting regional autonomy in order to pacify ethnic groups, while contests for control of the state could be addressed by power sharing. This idea has been adopted by scholars and promoted by the international community with emphasis on the combination of autonomy and power sharing. Some of the countries where this approach has been applied are Angola, Bosnia, Sierra Leone, Kosovo, Macedonia and most recently Afghanistan and Iraq, but peace in these states remains elusive. Many other countries in conflict have also undergone a negotiated settlement and either federalized their political system (Spain, Ethiopia), created new federal units if already a federal system (India), granted regional autonomy (Sudan, Nicaragua, Moldova, The Philippines, Russia, Bangladesh), or instituted power sharing (Lebanon in 1958 and 1976, Chad, Northern Ireland) in order to curb ethnic rebellions, but a lasting solution to these conflicts has not been found.

In fact, states that instituted power sharing after a civil war have collapsed into a renewed conflict while others were abrogated before they could be implemented. Furthermore, agreements that have provided regional autonomy for rebels usually failed to end the conflict, as in the case of Moros in the Philippines, Ethiopia’s Afars, Somalis, and Oromo, Sri Lankan Tamils, and India’s Assamese and Bodos. These are just a few of the generally problematic cases involving negotiated settlements to internal conflicts.

43 Ibid
The opponent, especially the dominant power, appears willing to settle the conflict at any time it is prepared, but the war just fought gives each side little reason to be confident about the other's future intentions. On the other hand, negotiated settlements to internal conflicts require that groups, especially the weaker, abandon their armed struggle in order to unify the country. In some cases of conflict resolution, arms are to be turned over to the government in exchange for monetary value in a process referred to as "buy back." The problem is there is no certainty that their former adversary will not cheat on the deal, and that there is no guarantee they are safe from attacks when they are most vulnerable. In other words, groups always have the tendency to preserve their forces for their own security, thus making former combatants a potential threat for renewed violence. If the groups are willing to settle, combatants are forced to surrender their arms and share the same state. This notwithstanding, the same groups legitimately fear to cooperate while others cheat, and skepticism prevails that could undermine the duly signed peace agreements.

Furthermore, both the government and the rebel groups are uncertain of political institutions they are sharing with their former enemy, and there is distrust that their recent adversary will live up to their obligation in the agreement. Some scholars also argue that in power sharing arrangements (for instance, in regional autonomy), both the state and the rebel groups fear that the other side will attempt to capture the state, exclude them from power and resources, and use government power to repress them in the future. In the final analysis, scholars tend to believe that a misperception of the intentions of each side makes the parties more reluctant
to enter into a negotiated settlement; at the same time, parties to the conflict fear about their own security and are apprehensive about being attacked in the future. With all these theoretical arguments that show little confidence in the ability of negotiated settlements to produce a lasting peace then, scholars and practitioners of internal conflict have considered partitioning as a better solution to internal conflicts.

QUESTIONS OVER PARTITION

The debate over territorial partitioning as a solution to internal conflicts like civil wars is highly political in nature. It involves not only revising the laws of the existing state in order to accommodate the new political decisions, but also requires the consent, in most cases, of the international community. But what is partitioning? Sambanis and Wohl (2009) broadly define partition as a civil outcome that leads to the territorial separation of a sovereign state. In legal parlance, partition, mostly a result of negotiations, can be in the form of 'de jure partition,' in which a new internationally recognized state is created as a result of successful secession (scholars point to Bangladesh, Croatia, and Eritrea as examples); and 'de facto partition,' in which there is divided sovereignty over the territory of a single internationally recognized state (e.g. Abkhasia and south Ossetia in Georgia and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in Cyprus).

At the height of the Iraqi civil war in 2006 to 2007, policymakers and

46 Ibid
analysts turned to the concept of partitioning the country in the face of intensifying violence against civilians, mistrust among the main Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish groups, and the bleak prospects for state building. In recent years, two examples come to mind: the de facto partitioning of Kosovo from Serbia in 1999 followed by the international recognition of Kosovo's independence in 2008, and the August war between Russia and Georgia following the latter's invasion of the separatist region of South Ossetia.

Advocates of the partition option assume that instability in power sharing after a civil war makes it difficult not to separate warring parties with or without formal recognition (de jure or de facto). This idea is perceived to be a stable solution to secessionist or ethnic civil wars and a clear-cut approach to creating a self-enforcing peace. Moreover, arguments for partition claim that ethnic identities are hardened by war, making inter-ethnic cooperation difficult and increasing the risk that individuals are prone to being targeted by violence simply because of their ethnic affiliation. Therefore, scholars and analysts advocating partition suggest that it is better to physically separate warring ethnic groups in order to reduce the risk of continued or escalating violence. In short, the partition theory explains why warring ethnic groups are having difficulty preventing themselves from de-escalating and demobilization. So, it is argued that in view of the prevailing fear and mistrust between the warring parties, ethnic groups must be separated and given sovereignty to produce long-term peace.

Other scholars, policymakers, and state leaders even push for complete partitioning to prevent the recurrence of war, that is, by moving populations in order to have a homogeneous society. It means that since borders can rarely be drawn to create an ethnically homogeneous society or state, for instance, advocates of complete partition recommend population transfers to accomplish what would otherwise be a worse situation for civilian populations. Moreover, it has been argued that a third-party transfer would be better than forced transfers perpetrated by enemy militias aiming for ethnic cleansing or worse. Advocates of partition, however, do not claim that separating warring ethnic groups will always prevent a return to war or low-level violence forever, but that it is often the best option to enable peace to take root and flourish. But this has been criticized by scholars who, while acknowledging that partitioning is conceivable, are convinced that it is difficult to implement. They raise a number of arguments in this regard, namely: (1) that it would be hard for the international community to intervene by moving or relocating populations in the face of intense violence; (2) that human suffering could be expected particularly for those who are to be relocated and, in most cases, people strongly oppose being transferred because it may cause them not only economic and political instability but also pose security problems for them.

Another argument for partition is elaborated by Chaim Kaufmann, who claims that "partition is a good solution if it is impossible for groups to live together in an ethnically heterogeneous state." The argument is founded on the theoretical

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49 Ibid.
assumption that ethnic power sharing, as suggested for negotiated settlements, is a particularly unstable solution because ethnic identities have been strengthened by the previous war and are thought to be more easily identifiable in the long run than any other group identity. Consequently, members of certain ethnic groups become even more vulnerable and easily identified when the peace process fails. According to Kaufmann, "partition can help mitigate, if not prevent, further escalation of violence in civil wars because of the idea that it resolves the ethnic security dilemma"—that is, it reduces the threat that each ethnic group poses to the other by dividing territory and physically separating warring groups.51 In this process, the two warring parties are even encouraged to form a homogeneous society even if it involves population transfer. It means that in terms of armaments, the capacity of each group to secure their ethnic members remains, as they have not given up their weapons to the central government. This argument turns to Barry Posen's ethnic security dilemma to explain why partition would reduce violence during or after ethnic civil wars.52 Posen basically assumes that during the time when there is no impartial state policing among the population, when the state is weak or collapsing most likely due to bad domestic politics, and when the time comes that there is an outbreak of political violence in a multi-ethnic state, then anarchy prevails as ethnic groups become responsible for their own security. So, by separating them while maintaining their military forces, the aspect of being apprehensive about their own security is reduced. Don Doyle (2010) for his part, looks at identity as a means of giving incentives for a group to secede. He argues that "modern nations typically

51 Ibid.
identify their origin in a struggle to liberate their people from unjust -- often foreign-- rule and to unify their territory and people under the banner of a single national community."53 Therefore, whether the desire for secession is expressed through violent or peaceful means, secessionists can succeed only if there are means available to them especially when they see no other option.

Critics, however, question the logic of Partition theory since the threat of renewed violence, even if warring groups are separated, is always imminent. As Sambanis and Wohl put it, even if partition solves a violent intrastate conflict by separating populations that do not trust each other to cooperate in a postwar state, it can generate potential incentives for identity conflicts in both the former (rump) and the secessionist state.54 In other words, there is always a post-partition potential for conflict within the newly formed state over control of government or competition for power because conflict can be created by a new group seeking to secede from the newly formed state either to rejoin the “rump state” or create a new entity. Second, there is a possible conflict between the newly formed state and the rump state (interstate conflict) when the new state has achieved legal sovereignty. Third, there can also be a conflict over control of the rump state, as nationalist groups always challenge the government over the issue of territory lost to the secessionists. In the succeeding part, this paper will examine the other suggested solution to internal conflict, which is that of military victory.

53 Don H Doyle, Secession as an International Phenomena: From America’s Civil War to Contemporary Separatist Movement, ed. (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 4.
LEGITIMACY OF A MILITARY VICTORY

Internal conflicts are so complex that even state leaders become irrational and could not think of acceptable options once armed confrontation begins. They tend to get outside actors to come on board in the belief that the latter could, in their capacity, bring some kind of peaceful resolution to domestic issues. No doubt, in recent years of studying civil wars, scholars and analysts have shown a preference for either peace negotiations to possibly end the violence at the earliest possible time to prevent more loss of lives, or separating the warring parties so they could both have the authority to govern their regional area, or new state, while fears for their own security are also reduced. These options, however, both have considerable advantages and disadvantages, depending on the nature and degree of violence and the characteristics of the warring groups. If the conflict is ethnic-based, then the conventional wisdom is to create an ethnically homogeneous society, or if both parties are more likely to adapt to a power-sharing system of government, then regional autonomy or federalism may probably work to maintain a peaceful environment within a state. But, as to whether the peaceful environment on the ground can last after the violence is halted is another story altogether.

It is clear, for instance, that intrastate conflicts are very difficult to manage as they usually require the intervention of the international community because the state, through its government, lacks the capacity to resolve the conflict. In light of these complexities of internal conflict, some scholars in recent years have presented their counterargument by considering the seemingly perverse option of promoting

55 See Chaim Kaufmann, (Spring 1996):136-175
'victory' which, in their assumption, could offer a longer peace. One consideration is that in peace negotiations, the process does not move forward without any hitches; that is, every step forward is always followed by two steps backward. This may be the reason for some advocates of victory to argue in favor of allowing the warring parties to continue fighting until they reach a point where one of the parties achieves a military victory. Victory, as defined by Monica Toft (2010), is an "ideal type of war termination in which one side explicitly acknowledges defeat and surrenders."56

The most prominent argument in favor of 'victory' is that of Edward N. Luttwak (1999), where he argues that peace can happen when belligerents become exhausted or when one wins decisively.57 In other words, allowing the warring parties to continue fighting is seen as a better option for many reasons. Advocates of victory argue that, as far as the recurrence of renewed violence is concerned, it is unlikely to happen because the loser has less capacity to wage war, coupled with the fact that he accepts the superiority of the other. As Robert Wagner (1993) puts it, victories are more stable in the long run than any other means because one side who surrenders has little potential to reignite a new war.58

For outside actors' influences, Luttwak (1999) puts the fault and blame on the international community for the escalation of conflict as he argues that "too many wars nowadays become endemic conflicts that never end because the

56 Toft, 2010.
57 Edward N. Luttwak, "Give War a Chance," Foreign Affairs, (July/August 1999): 36-44.
transformative effects of both decisive victory and exhaustion are blocked by outside intervention." Similar, the view that internal security problems of states may have been caused in part by "Bad Neighbors" is widely accepted. Moreover, in negotiated settlements such as a ceasefire or armistice, combatants are more likely to use the temporary halt of violence as an opportunity to reconstitute, reorganize, and consolidate or even beef up their forces in anticipation of future war. Along this line, the possibility of war recurrence is very high, and thus negotiated settlements may have an increased likelihood of saving lives. But advocates of "Give War a Chance" argue that these options work only in the short term and that once renewed violence occurs, it is hard to end again and can be costlier than the previous conflict.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have seen and analyzed key issues in understanding the complexity of internal armed conflict. It shows that the prevention of mass killings of combatants and innocent civilians calls for a closer study of internal conflict, not because interstate conflict is waning in the international system but because intrastate conflicts, in today's world, are the primary source of instability. Theories of war have been providing a guide to every scholarly analysis of both interstate conflict and internal conflict. But there are times that these theories are insufficient in understanding world phenomena, such as the persistence of intrastate conflicts.

59 Luttwak, 1999.
which impede and hold down countries from moving towards development. There may be enough tools to aid analysts in understanding the causes and the consequences of internal conflict, but the continuing quest for appropriate responses to this world phenomenon requires more and more studies. Uniformity of approaches to internal conflict is not possible at all because conflicts driven by ethnic identity, religious belief, and political orientation do not follow a linear pattern. The problem arises if, for instance, one approach is proven effective and promises a good outcome but is rudely applied elsewhere by leaders and policy makers.

Today, there is no doubt that the world is equipped with sufficient studies on determining the causes or “approximate causes” of internal conflict, but because of its protracted nature, there arises a need to extend the analysis beyond the domestic affairs of states and ask questions such as to what extent the behavior of outside actors could invite internal conflict and whether they contribute to more confusion in the internal affairs of states. The intervention of outside forces may exacerbate or ease tensions, but what is clear is that states are seldom capable of resolving their own internal conflict. It is suggested, in the context of looking for avenues of peace, that interventions are needed because government forces, more often than not, are involved in actual armed confrontation. Thus, if the state in conflict is left alone to resolve major issues, it is unlikely that parties would reach a point of consensus not only because the state itself is weak, but also because the state in trouble usually makes biased strategic decisions that does not take into account the interests of its opponent groups.
The focus of internal conflict is often sovereignty and governance, and that is why states have difficulty addressing conflict issues because governments could hardly give up a piece of territory without having to use all available means to preserve the integrity of the country. Similarly, internal conflicts are usually characterized as asymmetrical conflicts which involve a weaker side (usually the rebels) and the stronger side (usually the government forces). However, in today's globalized world, the stronger is not always the dominant side. In fact, the weaker side can use advanced communication and technologies to influence major strategic decisions, as exemplified by “the Arab Spring” phenomenon. More than anything else, it is evident that the nature of collective actions, in general, is often driven by feelings of discontent – which is why many studies focus their analysis on social needs, which are not easy to satisfy especially when it becomes a social demand. At any given time, when social dissatisfaction reaches the ‘point of no return,’ that is, a population is pushed to the limit and must act, the groups of people who feel oppressed and discriminated against are more likely to form an exclusive organization that would challenge current policy, thus creating a very high potential for revolution or rebellion. But beyond this theoretical assumption, perception is a much more important variable to explain the triggering mechanism of internal violent conflict. Both parties' view of one another may or may not create a potential environment for attaining peace. There have been cases when groups would resort to taking up arms if their security is at risk, but such is dependent on how one may logically interpret the actions of others. Even the benign intentions of either party or by extension the international effort can be perceived as threatening, hence the
probability of cooperation cannot be expected.

There are at least three major concepts that offer a solution to internal conflict by suggesting ways of mitigating the pernicious effects of violence driven by differences in social, political, religious, and cultural beliefs. It seems that negotiation is the primary option not only because it is the best solution but also because it is the option that is traditionally always available in order to stop the miseries of conflict. However, everyone would agree that negotiations as a solution may resolve differences but it usually takes longer to reach an agreement. Nevertheless, a negotiated settlement is preferred by state leaders, policymakers, and international organizations because of the belief that it is a democratic process of settlement which is assumed to create a democratic system; would address the demands of both parties; and above all, reduce the feeling of insecurity and/or uncertainty once a peace agreement is reached. The idea is to have a strong state under one central government composed of diverse groups that abide by the rule of law.

If forming a homogenous society is next to impossible, then studies of internal conflict strongly suggest 'partition' as a second option. The general assumption in this option is that if it is hard to integrate different groups with different beliefs, then it is more advantageous to separate them so that armed confrontation is minimized, if not totally abolished. Some analysts even advocate a kind of segregation that comes close to a complete partition. However, it is not an easy task to move from their place of origin to places unknown to them for it is most likely to transform their normal lives to one full of misery. Above all, even if a new
state is created, there is no guarantee that a small group will not rise up to demand for separation from the new state, or join advocates for unification with the rump state.

Victory is deemed to be the last resort to end the violence brought about by internal conflicts. This option does not believe in the capacity of humans to resolve their disputes by peaceful means. It sounds simple and easy and makes no claim that interventions are unnecessary, but it is simply an option that advocates no action to stop the surge violence. Therefore, if the goal of internal conflict studies is to minimize and/or prevent a catastrophe in a conflict situation, then this idea serves nothing in our investigation. However, there are situations wherein using force is necessary if only to return control over domestic order. This is not to advocate armed confrontation or war, but that in a situation where there is a potential armed threat posed by rebels, the state should, if necessary, use its might if only to assert its legitimate existence. Relatively strong armed groups are hard to convince diplomatically if they see nothing to obstruct them from threatening the government. In other words, using force by both the weaker and the stronger side in an internal conflict may be a last resort, but it is evident that parties are willing to cooperate if they see more disadvantages than gains by refusing to cooperate.

The concluding argument here is that, whatever the causes of internal conflict, be it state discrimination and/or oppressive government policies toward minority groups, the critical factor in the persistence of violent conflict or its peaceful ending is the attitude and behavior of leaders of both parties. Theories of conflict may serve as a guide in the quest for a lasting solution to internal wars, but
an investigation of the “triggering mechanism” of violence reveals that the behavior of individual leaders, especially those belonging to the influential local elite and leaders in local politics, is a very important variable in this regard. The occurrence and persistence of violent conflicts can thus be blamed on bad leaders, but they can also be praised when peace is flourishing in a state populated by multi-ethnic groups.
CHAPTER 3
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE MUSLIM ARMED REBELLION IN THE PHILIPPINES

INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the Mindanao problem, it is important to trace the history of the Muslims better known as 'Moros,' in the southern Philippines. Failure to know the historical background of the Mindanao conflict may sometimes lead to irrational thinking and misleading analysis, leading to the mistaken view that the Muslim combatants are mere bandits or terrorists. Mindanao is the second largest island of the Philippine archipelago which is the product of a long historical development influenced by many foreign rulers, each of whom have tried to recreate the native people in their own image. In the process, the native people and communities became dislocated and were forced to adapt to social changes totally new to them. The culture itself became a heterogeneous gathering of many strains and influences from many sources, and each source was represented by a set of practices, values, and beliefs, but they co-existed rather than mixed or harmonized in society. As a result, group identities within different communities came about and each group alienated themselves from one another. This alienation was manifested in Philippine history, among others, by the long years of Muslim or Bangsamoro struggle wherein the effects are considered a major problem of the Philippine government until now. Notably, of all the conquerors, the Spaniards in over 333 years of colonization laid the foundations for the emergence of a Filipino

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nation that failed to create a homogeneous Filipino society under one government. In the end, the disintegration of the native people created an environment favorable to the colonizers that no forces formidable enough came to oppose such foreign rule.

The Americans took over the administration of the country at the turn of the 20th century and developed the islands into a state with a political system similar to that which had been prevailing in their home country, the United States of America's liberal democracy. However, for so long the Americans were not totally successful in making the country a peaceful society through many attempts to integrate ethnic groups, particular the Muslims in the south, into the social and political mainstream. These attempts at Muslim integration under American or Filipino rule in Mindanao did not serve to create an avenue to pacify the 'on and off' conflict between government and the secessionist tendencies of the Moros. The same trend was observed even after the Americans left at the end of the Second World War and subsequently gave birth to an independent Republic of the Philippines on July 4, 1946. Today, the same "ancient hatred" is forming the historic force that harks back to the events of the past and is making it difficult for the Philippine government to resolve the long-standing violent conflict in Mindanao. In fact, many among the Muslim population do not regard the Philippine government today as their government. More and more Muslims, especially in the conflicted areas, believe that the government development initiatives are only for the Christians in Mindanao. Some are of the view that economic aid is brought to the Christians while the mortar shells are delivered to the Muslim communities. This is one of the reasons that despite a number of educated Muslims who are part of the political system at the
center of government in Manila, a considerable portion of the Muslim population in the south ignores attempts for integration because they are convinced that the government is only for the Christians who now comprise the majority in Mindanao. Empirical evidence shows that many Muslims are covertly supporting the rebellion against the Republic of the Philippines. For a clearer view of the Mindanao conflict, thus, this chapter provides a brief historical background on the more than four decades of almost continuous conflict in the southern part of the Philippines which, for many, has 'ancient hatred' roots that can be traced back to the colonial period.

THE MORO COMMUNITIES AND CHRISTIANITY

It is important to note that before the Spanish colonial rule began in 1521, Mindanao Muslims were already socially, politically, and economically organized in the two sultanates of Maguindanao and Sulu. At the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th century, Islam as a religion was believed to be well-established on the island of Jolo and surrounding areas, now comprising the Sulu province, and later spread southward to the main island of Mindanao and the island province of Palawan to the north. The arrival of Islam in this area was primarily a result of natural commerce in which the traders from neighboring areas as far as China, India, and Arab countries engaged with the locals. Traders from these countries, particularly the Muslims, had intermarriages with the local elites and settled permanently, at first, in the city of Jolo and later in other adjacent areas. There were also bands of Malay Muslim clerics from Sumatra and other places in the Malay Archipelago who followed the Arab traders. Prominent foreigners like Raja Baguinda Ali, who came from Sumatra at the end of the 14th century, achieved a key
position in the local Muslim community. Thereafter, the concept of a Sultanate, where the Sultan is the supreme ruler assisted by several bands of Datus under him, was introduced. Sharif Abu Bakar, Raja Baguinda Ali’s son-in-law, became the first sultan of Jolo, which translated to the conversion of its people to Islam. This process of Islamization was accepted by the local communities, and later the concept of a Sultanate spread and extended to other areas such as Basilan Island, now the province of Basilan, northward to Palawan, eastward to Zamboanga, and westward to Borneo. This process was replicated in the main Island of Mindanao, particularly in the Cotabato and Lanao areas where Sharif Muhammed Kabunbuan, a trader from Malaysia who was the main actor in this movement, won the trust and confidence of the people of Maguindanao and eventually converted them into Islam. It is believed that by the first half of the 16th century, the process of Islamization that originally started in Borneo and Sulu extended its influence to as far as Mindoro and other areas in southern Luzon. In Manila, now the seat of government, Raja Sulaiman was the first prominent figure advocating the sultanate concept in the region.²

Islam as a religion was the common denominator, and the unifying factor, among the communities in the entire archipelago. The population centers were important trading places run by organizations called the barangay, or a community made up of a dozen to several hundreds of families. The process of Islamization then further accelerated the natural expansion of this barangay-type society, which was usually headed by 'datus' (Muslim traditional leaders). The Datus were usually heads of clans who served under the supervision of the Sultan and were guided by

the functions of the religious court, Agama, and the customs of the Adat, non-Islamic customs.³ In practice, the position of Datu is hereditary. The Datu was a political leader, judge, oftentimes owner of the larger portion of the land, and made sure that religious obligations were fulfilled. Nowadays the Datu no longer owns a large portion of the land but remains a respected and influential figure in the Muslim communities. In those social arrangements, the Muslims were basically organized into numerous small political units headed by Datus and then integrated to the sultanate of Sulu and Maguindanao. The set-up is similar to India's caste system, where the class below Datu was composed of freemen, and below the freemen were the debt-bondsmen, and at the bottom of the social hierarchy were the slaves.⁴ This system has somewhat changed in today's traditional Muslim political system. Slavery is no longer practiced and the ownership of land is no longer a monopoly of the Datu. Still, the authority and influence of the Datu in the entire community of Muslims still prevails. In fact, even those who do not belong to the Datu's hereditary line are called Datu by virtue of the political position they hold, which is a reflection of the authority they wield in their community.

Islam was the official religion adopted as result of the then-flourishing trade with merchants from China and Arabic countries in the Middle East including Yemen. In short, the international commerce brought in not only traders but Islamic missionaries that paved the way for Islam to proliferate in most areas in the country. The introduction of Islam gave the Muslims a separate distinction from all

⁴ Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 192-193.
other ethnic identities that were eventually Christianized in the archipelago. Islam as a religion gave the people of Mindanao a sense of community, which developed into a consciousness of belonging to the international brotherhood that transcended tribal, linguistic, and even racial identity. Islamic activities were intensified to become the rallying point of every Muslim when the spread of Christianity began to surge from the north (Luzon) to the Visayas region and some parts of Mindanao. By then, Islam had evolved into a powerful force against the spread Christianity, which the Spaniards were determined to propagate all over the archipelago.

The vast majority of Muslims consistently refused and strongly resisted the Spanish rule even after Raja Sulaiman was defeated in Manila, so that the Sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao were never incorporated into the Spanish colony. Today, the same strong religious bond serves as the primary factor preventing the Muslim communities from accepting and or adapting to a different way of life. As a consequence, relations between the Muslim communities and the Spanish colony were characterized by hostilities known as the Moro wars, save for some instances of intermittent truces, over 333 years of Spanish rule.

Today, the Muslims in the Philippines are generally found on the main island of Mindanao, in the Sulu archipelago, in Palawan, and on different islands in Luzon and the Visayan region by reason of trade or migration. The greatest demographic concentration is in the Lanao, Cotabato, and Davao areas, the Sulu archipelago, the island of Basilan, and Balabac in the southern part of Palawan. There is no exact

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6 Ibid.
number of Muslims in the Philippines, but they are estimated to account for about 6 percent to 8 percent of the current total national population. One other important characteristic of Muslim communities in the country is that they do not share a single common language as they are composed of different ethnic groups that speak their own language and dialect. But beyond this diversity, they are united by Islam into one solid organization in the entire country, no matter where they are, for it gives them the distinctive identity. In fact, they always identify themselves as Muslims rather than Filipinos. These ethnic groups of Muslims in the Philippines have, in the past, joined forces whenever one of the ethnic groups was faced with the challenge of having to defend itself against the national government’s armed forces. While these Muslim ethnic groups are a minority in terms of their population, it is not necessarily so in terms of the strength of force they possess whenever they join up to face the armed might of the national government.

The four major Islamized ethnic communities are the Tausug and the Samal (or Sama) who are concentrated in the Sulu archipelago and the Zamboanga region, the Maguindanao who are concentrated in the Cotabato region and part of Zamboanga, and the Maranao of the Lake Lanao region (to many, the Iranon group belonged to the Maranao even as this group is situated between Lanao and Cotabato). Some Muslims from any of these major ethnic groups are dispersed in the Zamboanga region, Davao, and Bukidnon, and a growing number is based in Manila.7

In situations where one or more of these ethnic groups is facing problems, especially if it involves their relations with the national government, then they automatically

earn the sympathy and support of Muslims from ethnic groups that are not necessarily affected by the problem. This explains why the government, though it has the monopoly of power, could hardly create a dent in the solidarity and cohesiveness of the Moros to adapt to policies of the national government that are understandably new to them. The section that follows presents a review of the historical accounts of the Muslim resistance against the Spanish colonial rule.

THE MORO WARS AGAINST THE SPANIARDS

Spain became interested in its expansion to explore Southeast Asia from the late 1500s to the decolonization period. The Philippines was one of their primary targets for inclusion into the Spanish territory while converting into Christianity the inhabitants in these areas who were undoubtedly already socially and politically structured and organized according to the Islamic way of life. The prominent figure in Spain’s expansionist process was Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, who arrived in the Philippines in 1565 and declared Spanish sovereignty over the islands. While Islam was in the process of spreading from the south to the north, the Spaniards began converting the people to Christianity. There was opposition to Spanish rule and the conversion to Christianity, notably in the Sultanate of Manila led by Raja Sulaiman, but his rule ended when he was defeated by the Spaniards in May of 1571.8 As a result, many were converted to Christianity especially on the islands of Luzon and the Visayas while the whole archipelago was named the Philippines in honor of King Philip III of Spain. Consequently, the process of conversion halted the spread of Islam to the north and, instead, the Islamic way of life was confined to the south of

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8 Moshe Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession*, 199.
the Philippines -- the Sulu archipelago and the Island of Mindanao. In short, both religions, Islam and Christianity, played an important role in changing the landscape of Philippine society, virtually dividing the formerly unified groups of people in the entire archipelago. This was the time when the cooperative relationship between Muslims and those eventually Christianized Filipinos was transformed, and overt violent conflicts became prevalent, especially when the colonizers influenced and used the people of the north to fight those opposing conversion to Christianity (Muslims in Mindanao). In other words, Muslim anger against the colonizers was exacerbated by the fact that the supposed local allies -- whom the Spaniards called *Indios* -- fought alongside the foreign invaders either voluntarily or by force. For more than 300 years the environment was characterized by hard fighting, in some instances interrupted only by short-term ceasefires, and halted only momentarily in 1899 when the Americans came and successfully defeated the Spaniards.

The 'Moro wars' were generally lumped together as a result of numerous Spanish expeditions to the Muslim lands in the Philippines, the frequent Muslim raids on territories already held by the Spaniards, and the naval battles that took place between the Muslims and the Spaniards from about the time of Legazpi's arrival in 1565 to the last days of the Spanish rule in the Philippines. Other Spanish scholars, notably Vicente Barrantes and Jose Montero y Vidal, have called these wars "guerras piraticas," on the premise that the Spaniards waged war on the

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10 Moshe Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession*, 200-201.

Muslim territory in the Philippines, including Brunei, to eliminate, or at least minimize, the piratical incursions of the Muslims into the Spanish-held territory. This period of Moro resistance against the Spaniards, as observed by Cesar A. Majul (1973), was the first of six major stages that characterized the struggle between Spain and Brunei for political and commercial primacy in the Philippine Archipelago. At this stage, the Spaniards succeeded in destroying the Manila settlement and fort that were ruled by a Bornean aristocracy and eliminating Bornean traders from the Visayas and Northern Mindanao. This stage ended with the Spanish attack on Brunei in 1578. 12 The second stage, covering about two decades, is characterized by the attempt of the Spaniards to establish a colony in Mindanao, reduce the Muslim rulers into vassals, prohibit the rulers from admitting Muslim preachers, and persuade them to accept Christian missionaries. The third and fourth stages, covering a number of years in the 17th century, witnessed the contest between the Spaniards and an alliance of Muslims in Mindanao to control the Visayas. This contest was decided in Spain's favor after her conquest of the Moluccas in 1606. In this period, there was an acceleration of Spanish imperialistic expansion. The Spaniards decided to conquer the sultanates by compelling the Indio group (natives of Luzon) to fight the Moros. The daunting part of this stage was when the Spaniards adopted the policy of depopulating the Muslim areas -- burning settlements, plantations, fields, and orchards, and enslaving the Muslims for the galleys. As a consequence, most of the people retreated into the interior areas to keep themselves relatively safe from Spanish attacks. Owing to Spanish

12 Ibid., ch. 3-8
provocations in Muslims territories, Sultan Kudarat in 1656 declared a *jihad* against the colonizer in the Cotabato region, and this was supported by all the other traditional leaders. This period, according to Majul, demonstrated the fact that the Muslims were willing to keep the peace in Mindanao provided that the Spaniards would leave them and their territories alone. Although the Muslims never had a standing professional army of their own, their coordinated efforts resulted in a large number of casualties on the Spanish side. Every man was a citizen-soldier who was prepared to give his life in defense of the community.

It was during the *fifth stage*, according to Majul, that the Moro wars began with the re-fortification of its garrisons notably in Zamboanga in 1718 but ended during the Spanish failure during that century to reduce the Muslims to vassalage. It was also in this period that the two distinct Muslim groups, the Iranun and the Maranaos, began their devastating attacks on the other parts of the archipelago, reducing the number of tributes to Spain from the Visayas and causing a virtual disruption of the economy of many islands under the Spanish colonial regime. Similarly, about half of the century during which Spain was involved in the Seven-Year War in Europe, the British invaded Manila and were able to put up a rule. Although the capture of Manila did not last long, the Muslims exploited the presence of the British in carrying out attacks against the Spaniards. As a result, in 1763, the Sultan of Sulu ceded to the British some territories of the sultanate in North Borneo as a way of recognizing British help to the Muslims. The *sixth stage* of the Moro

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wars was believed to have started with the 1851 Spanish campaign against Sulu (western part of Mindanao) and only ended towards the culmination of Spanish rule in the Philippines in the late 19th century. In this period, there was a notable decline in the Sultanates of Maguindanao and Sulu for various reasons. In February 1851, the Spaniards captured and burned down the entire city of Jolo in retaliation for the pirate attacks led by some Datus. But after a short period, the Spaniards evacuated the city when they were able to forge an agreement on April 30, 1851. Among the reasons contributing to the defeat of the Sultan was the Spaniards' use of improved war equipment. Institutional incapacity of the Muslim societies to respond to increased Spanish military pressures was another factor that brought about the gradual decline in the Sultanates' influence over the entire Muslim region. From then on, the people of the north (Christians) inherited the oppressive ways of the colonial power, leading to a series of major clashes between the Christians and the unorganized Muslim armed troops. Thus it has been argued that the centuries-long Muslim war against the Spaniards stemmed from Spanish efforts to subdue and Christianize them, to which the Moro people in general responded by developing the cult of being a warrior.

In 1899, the separate political existence of the Moro people was recognized by then President of the first Philippine Republic, Emilio Aguinaldo, through a message to Congress. He proposed that his government be empowered to negotiate with the Moros of Mindanao and Sulu for the purpose of establishing national

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solidarity upon the real basis of a Federation with absolute respect for beliefs, culture, and traditions. It is important to note that the word Jihad, or holy war, was used by the Muslims to refer to their almost continuous conflict with the Spanish colonial rulers in the southern Philippines during this period. They also referred to their combatants as mujahideen. This Jihadist tendency in the Muslim world even then shows that in a war against non-Muslims, the Jihadist movement reinforces the morale of those who dare to combat the threat posed by their enemies. The thousands who were killed during the war with the Spaniards are considered shahids, or martyrs. Also, when the Sultans were unable to resist the might of the Spaniards, the term *jihad* was brought down to the level of local communities, understandably led by their respective local leaders because they were obliged to defend *Dar al-islam* (the obligation to fight for the maintenance of the borders of Islam and their expansion) and *shari'a* law unto death.\(^{16}\) To the extreme, Jihad for the Muslims in the south was carried out in the form of suicidal attacks, or *juramentado* in Spanish, meaning someone who has taken oath. This conduct of *juramentado* by the Moros, in their fight against infidels, was carried out in almost the entire duration of the Spanish era, and against the American soldiers who responded to Muslim resistance against foreign incursions by using their semi-automatic caliber .45 hand gun and an automatic Crag-Jorgensen rifle.\(^{17}\)

\(^{16}\) Moshe Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession*, 206.

THE MOROS AND THE U.S. MILITARY OCCUPATION

The Americans arrived in the Philippines in 1898, the same year when the Filipinos, through the leadership of General Emilio Aguinaldo, declared Philippine Independence on June 12, 1898 in the midst of their uprising against Spain. The Americans eventually captured the capital Manila and the Spaniards in other places surrendered as well. As a result, a treaty was concluded on December 10, 1898 between the United States and Spain in which sovereignty over the Philippine archipelago, including Mindanao (although some Muslims in Mindanao claimed not part of the treaty), was turned over to the Americans. General Aguinaldo was frustrated by the Americans’ non-recognition of the 1898 declaration of independence, thus leading to a three-year war which ended after the surrender of revolutionaries on April 16, 1902.18 With the Spanish departure from the Philippines, the Moros in the south which was then comprised by the Sultanates of Sulu, Maguindanao, and Buayan and the various principalities of the Lanao region, continued to function as a distinct and separate national entity, and was not a part or under the effective control of what is now the Philippines or any other broader entity.19 In fact, upon the coming of the Americans in 1898, they were not fully aware of the presence of the Moro people in the south and when they learned about it, they were very cautious not to engage the Muslims in a hostile manner.20

The Americans used “western education” instead of religion as a tool for


18 Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 213.
conquest. Just about a year after the Philippines was ceded by Spain to the United States of America under the Treaty of Paris, the Americans on August 10, 1899 arrived in the city of Jolo with relatively no major armed resistance from the Moros. This resulted in the signing of an agreement between the American military-governor of Jolo, Brigadier General John C. Bates, and the Sultan of Sulu, Muhammad Jamalul Kiram II. In the agreement, the Muslims recognized the sovereignty of the United States, agreed to help suppress piracy, and turn over to the Americans those accused of crimes against non-Muslims. Moreover, Sulu would be allowed to run their internal affairs while the United States would maintain and recognize the dignity and authority of the Sultan and other Datus. More importantly, the Americans agreed not to interfere with religious activities and respect the full religious freedom of the local people. Other than these, the Americans agreed to pay a monthly subsidy to the Sultan in the amount of $250 and smaller sums to Datus, and the Muslims would also have the protection of the United States against external threats.21 In international affairs, this period also marked the start of a long relationship between the Philippines and the United States. Unlike the Spaniards, the Americans preferred to negotiate with the Muslims rather than using force. This was manifested by the message of U.S. President William McKinley to the U.S. Congress in 1899 in defining the policy of the United States towards the Philippines:

The Philippines are not ours to exploit, but to develop, to civilize, to educate, to train in the science of self-government. This is the path we must follow or not recreant to a mighty trust committed to us.\textsuperscript{22}

The policy was a self-assumed mandate and it came to occupy, for quite a different reason, an important place in the thinking and rhetoric of both Americans and Filipinos. For the Muslims in the south, the agreement with the Americans meant that they had neutralized the threat posed by the Americans and ensured the continuity of their traditional way of life as Muslims whose identity was distinct from that of other Filipinos.\textsuperscript{23} Muslim leaders saw and seemed to believe that their diplomacy had kept the Americans out of their internal affairs and guaranteed their way of life on terms no worse than those imposed by the Spaniards. The Americans, on the other hand, believed they were gaining Muslim cooperation by the fact that they were keeping the latter peaceful and at the same time securing their acknowledgment of United States sovereignty over the islands. In reality, the U.S. Army's main task was to maintain a peaceful relationship with the Muslims, not to antagonize them, but at the same time suppressing piracy, curtailing the slave trade (though not abolishing slavery), and keeping Muslim inter-group conflicts within bounds.

The U.S. military occupation of Moro lands ensured Muslim acknowledgment of the United States sovereignty in Mindanao and Sulu. During this period, the U.S. army could not spare many troops from operations in the north and depended

\textsuperscript{22} Peter C. Gowing, \textit{Mandate in Moroland: The American government of Muslim Filipinos 1899-1920} (Manila: Community Publishers, 1977), 15-16.

mainly on garrisons at a few strategic points in Moro land. The 23rd U.S. Army with three officers and 185 enlisted men took over garrisons left by the Spaniards in the city of Jolo, then their seat of government, with a very specific mission to relieve the Spaniards and gradually extending American influence over Sulu and Mindanao. In dealing with the Moro people, the Americans sought diplomacy instead of using coercion to win Muslim friendship and neutrality not only to avoid serious trouble but because the U.S. troops could expect no circumstances in which reinforcement was possible.24

The first American who assumed the post of military-governor of the Muslim areas in Sulu and Mindanao, then called the Department of Mindanao, was Brigadier General George W. Davis. He served from 1901 to 1902. In spite of careful administration by the United States government, the American mandate in the Philippines -- particularly in the Muslim region -- was mildly implemented during the military occupation. The policy of non-interference, for example, in the Moro internal affairs prevented any vigorous effort to develop, civilize, educate, and train Muslim Filipinos in the science of democratic self-government. In this context, certain features of Muslim Filipino society in judicial procedures, including slavery, generally made the Americans unhappy, as these were contrary to their sense of social justice and order. Some officers of the US army were eager to use a direct hand in 'civilizing' the Muslims. Modern care was made available at any U.S. Army hospital and clinic. Public health and sanitation were introduced. Few schools were built and soldiers and civilians served as teachers primarily intended for Muslims.

Moreover, bridges, roads, trails, and wharves were constructed which both directly and indirectly benefited the Muslims. But in spite of systematic efforts to educate the Muslims, Datus in different communities refused to let their children go to school, fearing that this would mean a systematic move for conversion to Christianity. Instead, a Datu would just send a younger slave to study in those schools.\footnote{Albert Ravenholt, op.cit.,58.} To further push education, more US soldiers were sent to Mindanao. But this troop movement was easily misunderstood by the Muslims, as there had been ongoing speculations among the Muslims communities that American activity in their midst might have already undermined the security of their religion and way of life.\footnote{Peter Gowing, "Muslim-American Relations in the Philippines," in The Muslim Filipinos, eds. Peter C. Gowing, and Robert McAmis (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1974), 35.}

General Davis, during his term, attempted to change the traditional practices of the Moro to make them resemble the democratic beliefs and practices in the United States, such as ending slavery, polygamy, and piracy, and weakening the influence of the Datus over their constituents. It may have been motivated by noble intentions but the traditional Muslim leaders saw it as a systematic move that threatened their community and the traditional authority. The American decision to take a direct hand in controlling Moro affairs triggered a vigorous opposition from Muslim leaders that led to violent conflict between the American Army and the Moros. The first recorded incident occurred in Sulu in 1901 when Panglima Hassan, who believed resisting American or foreign rule was considered commandments of \textit{fi sabil allah} or fighting in the name of Jihad, stood up against the Americans. This
action was replicated by other Muslim groups, including that of the Maranaos who attacked American forces north of Lake Lanao on the main island of Mindanao.27 The incident was followed by several others that killed many Muslims as well as members of the American army. The American military regime also attempted to change other systems in the area of Sulu and Mindanao, such as the imposition of a tax system, customs duties, and a requirement for surveying lands, registry, and mapping which the Muslims became truly worried about. All these activities and similar attempted changes the Americans wanted to implement in the Moro communities were regarded by the Muslims with great suspicion about the Americans' real intentions.28

THE CREATION OF A MORO PROVINCE

Civil military authorities began to take a close look at the American policy on Moro land during the time when the United States was formally committed to the full independence of the Philippines, as mandated in the Philippine bill of 1902. The policy of non-interference was abandoned in order to exercise direct rule over the Muslims with the intention of preparing them for eventual integration to the Philippine political system.29 By this time, Muslim areas in the south were called the 'Moro Province' which was further subdivided into the five districts of Zamboanga, Lanao, Cotabato, Davao, and Sulu. The Moro province was closely administered by the American Army which was entirely different from other islands of the

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29 Peter G. Gowing," Muslim-American Relations in the Philippines," 72-76.
Philippines, which were transferred to civilian administration when the uprising of the revolutionaries ended.\textsuperscript{30}

Many factors were considered in the abrogation of the American policy of non-interference in Moro affairs. The influence of Filipino Christians, particularly the nationalists, was powerful enough. They insisted that the Moro land was inseparable from the Philippine archipelago. Moreover, both the Americans and the Filipinos in the North considered the vast natural resources of Mindanao and Sulu as vital to the national economy. In the process, the American policy on dealing with the Muslims developed into something very similar to that of the Spanish policy in the same region, which devastated not only the Muslims' nationalism but also their relationship with fellow Christian Filipinos. This resulted in severe shocks to the Muslim communities and the Muslim traditional leaders (the Datus), their situation further exacerbated by the settlement of Christians in Muslim areas.\textsuperscript{31}

On the other hand, the Americans recognized that integration of the Muslims into the modern Philippine state would take a long time, but they were determined to organize provinces that were dominated by the Christians. In the Moro lands, the Americans took the politico-military district system as a template for direct rule over the Moro people by making the Datus of every district serve as the headmen, particularly in the remotest tribal areas. For the different government posts, officials were carefully selected. Those in the higher positions at first were mostly army officers, and few civilian Americans were appointed to posts as provincial attorney and superintendents of schools. All provinces were still under the direct supervision

\textsuperscript{30} Moshe Yegar, \textit{Between Integration and Secession}, 215.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 215
of the Governor General in Manila and the Philippine commission which was also
dominated by the Americans.

The system set-up gave the Americans an opportunity to implement what
seemed right for the modern Philippine state. Slavery was made illegal and tyranny
as practiced by the traditional leaders was reduced to some degree; these were the
first rules forcefully imposed on the Moros. An attempt to introduce the American
concept of the justice system was made through the tribal ward court system under
the supervision of American attorneys. This was also the start of the demographic
alteration of the people of Mindanao, as people from the North started to migrate to
Mindanao as part of the program to civilize the Muslims and at the same time
exploit the rich natural resources of Moro land. In the process, Muslims became the
minority in the region while the U.S. political system also began to proliferate all
over the country.

These developments, resulting from colonially imposed laws which basically
did not recognize adat (Moro customary law), slowly stoked feelings of resentment
among the Muslims against the central government in Manila.32 The American policy
of direct rule and attempts to implement the mandate to use the democratic model
of governance struck the authority and prestige of the Muslim chiefs, including the
customs, traditions, and practices they had known for centuries. Laws against
slavery threatened the politico-economic structure of traditional society, and the
establishment of provincial and district governments enforced basically by US army
troops undermined the absolute power and status of traditional leaders in Muslim

32Rufa Cagoco-Guilam, op.cit., 483-488.
society. Moreover, bypassing Muslim courts and refusing to recognize the existence of customary laws increased the Moros' feelings of ill will against the Americans. The Moros believed that their customs, traditions, and practices were consistent with the teachings of Islam, which is their way of life guided by the Holy Qur'an. Any move to change or restructure their society by enforcing strict obedience to foreign laws was seen as a fundamental challenge to their religion and their very existence as human beings.

Americans who became governors of the Moro province never had friendly relations with the Muslims. General Leonard Wood, the first governor of the Moro province from 1903 to 1906 and was governor-general of the Philippines from 1921 to 1927, found nothing worth preserving in the Muslim customary laws or Adat.33 As a consequence, he fought Muslims who did not subscribe to American laws. It was at this time that Moro people who resisted American authority were called bandits or outlaws. The succeeding governors, such as Generals Bliss and Pershing, followed the same path of forcible strategy instead of diplomacy in dealing with the Moro people until 1914. Finally, with the heavy losses the Muslims had incurred in fighting the Americans, the entire Muslim communities and their leaders realized that continued fighting with the American army that was equipped with modern weapons could mean the continuing loss of lives among the Moro people in Sulu and Mindanao.34 Consequently, when Brigadier General John Pershing took over and served from 1909 to 1913 as military governor of the Moro province, and after a

34 Peter G. Gowing, Muslim-American Relations, 372, 378-379; Peter G. Gowing, Mandate in Moroland, 139-148; Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 215-217.
series of bloody fighting between the opposing forces from June 11 to 16, 1913 in which the Muslims suffered heavy casualties, the Americans gradually gained the cooperation of the Datus by. In some instances, the Datus extended assistance in suppressing Muslim rebellion while the Americans also recruited Christian Filipinos in their Military campaign. By 1901, the Philippine scouts and Philippine constabulary, composed entirely of Indios or Filipino Christians allied with foreigners, were organized under the leadership of American officers.35

MORO RESISTANCE AS PART OF AN INDEPENDENT PHILIPPINES

The general situation in the Department of Mindanao and Sulu, established on 15 December 1913, continued to be chaotic even when the first civilian governor, Frank W. Carpenter, was appointed head and administrator of the department in the same year. The Americans, all at command level starting at the top with Secretary of War Elihu Root, were convinced that it would take a long time to integrate the Muslims into the Philippine or American government, and were optimistic that turning over the control and management of Moro land would only be more problematic instead of simply allowing the Moro tribal structure and their way of life to continue.36 The Zamboanga Chamber of Commerce had a similar view and, in January 1910, made representations to the President of the United States requesting that the southern Island of the Philippines be separated politically from the Philippine archipelago and be declared American territory due to its potential

economic benefits.\textsuperscript{37}

This attempt to separate Mindanao from the rest of the country was repeated when the Muslim communities made a strong and concerted move in 1924 to allow the United States to annex Mindanao after independence was to be granted to the Philippines, and forcefully opposed inclusion in an independent Philippine Republic.\textsuperscript{38} But in spite of such a strong appeal, the Americans accelerated plans toward Philippine self-government and independence which exacerbated tensions as it was coupled with a policy implementing a rapid campaign for 'Filipinization.' Consequently, Governor Carpenter transferred the supervision of the Muslims in Sulu and Mindanao from American administrators in Zamboanga to the Filipinos' seat of government -- where only a few Muslims were actively involved -- in Manila while continuing the Americans' socio-political plans for the Moros with the aim of speeding up the process of their integration to the government of the Republic.

This process consequently annoyed the Moros in general, even as there were a few Muslims who worked with Christian Filipinos on the integration program. After six years of the existence of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu (from 1914-1920), it turned out that a majority of the people working there were Christians, a situation that convinced the Muslims that the Philippine government was only looking out for the Christians or what they termed as "Christian Philippinization."\textsuperscript{39}


\textsuperscript{38} See appendix 3, Full text of the Declaration of Rights and Purposes by the group of Muslim Politician in February 1924 addressed to the US Congress.

\textsuperscript{39} Peter G. Gowing, \textit{Mandate in Moroland}, op.cit., 18, 242, 251; Peter G. Gowing, \textit{Muslim American Relations}, 373, 379; R.B. Thomas, \textit{Muslims but Filipino}, 45-60; Che Man, \textit{Muslim Separatism}, 23-24; Ralston Hayden, "What Next for the Moro?" \textit{Foreign affairs} 6, no. 4 (July 1928): 639-640; Moshe Yegar, \textit{Between Integration and Secession}, 219-220.
Of all the roles played by the Americans in Moro land, the one that really transformed and undermined the traditional power of the local Muslims elites was the cancellation of the Sultanate of Sulu. It was a result of the nine-day negotiation between the governor of the Department of Sulu and Mindanao, Frank Carpenter, and the Sultan of Sulu, Jamal Kiram II. The agreement says that

The Sultan of Sulu is the titular spiritual head of the Mohammedan Mosque in Sulu archipelago, with all the rights and privileges which under the government of the United States of America may be exercised such an ecclesiastical authority, and subject to the same limitations which apply to the supreme spiritual heads of all other religions existing in American territory, including the rights to solicit and receive voluntary popular contributions for the support of the clergy rites, and other necessary lawful expenses of an ecclesiastical character.40

The continued Moro resistance made the Philippine government realize the need for continued military support from the US government. The U.S. army role in aiding the cause of advancing Philippine society by preserving peace and keeping order was assumed more and more by the Philippine Scouts and the Constabulary. From the standpoint of the Moros, including the Sultan of Sulu, they had acquired hereditary sovereignty over the land after a long history and the agreement with Spain was merely about sovereignty over Moro land, and therefore, the Spaniards could not transfer the same to the United States, like the rest of the Philippine Islands, since that sovereignty was never subject to their ownership. In spite of the numerous developments put in place as part of efforts to integrate the Moros into the national socio-political system, many among the Moros interpreted such a wave of

40 For the text of memorandum, see Gowing, Mandate in Moroland, 352-353; Samuel K. Tan, The Filipino Muslim Armed Struggle, 176-179; Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and secession, 220-221.
development as a threat to their way of life. Consequently, such developments were perceived as part of the continued militarization of the Moro land while the Philippines was under a commonwealth system. In fact, there were many Datus, particularly in the Lanao region, who refused to send their children to public schools, surrender their weapons to the Americans, or allow the government to survey the lands. The same feeling of opposition to changes in Moro society was felt in the Cotabato regions, where a call for simultaneous opposition to American infidels and Christian Filipinos was aired. Thus for several years, the Moros were virtually under military rule which exposed them to the violent side of the government. This experience left indelible prints in the consciousness not only of the Moros who had endured it over a long period of time, but also the more enthusiastic and vibrant young Moros who learned this important historical lesson of their existence.

INTERNAL MIGRATION AND CONTINUING COLONIZATION

The proximity of the Visayan Islands (especially Bohol, Cebu, Leyte, Siquijor, and Negros) to Mindanao has been a major factor in the movement of people between these two Islands. It was believed, without substantial proof that Visayan settlers -- particularly those from Bohol, who reportedly founded Dapitan in Western Mindanao -- had already settled along the northern coast of Mindanao even

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41 MacapadoAbaton Muslim, op.cit., 59.
before the Spaniards came.\textsuperscript{43} The two provinces of Mindanao, notably Agusan Del Norte and Surigao Del Norte, had been receiving migrants from the islands of Leyte and Bohol through the years.

This pattern of migration from the Visayas to Mindanao, as observed by Klaus Hausherr, continued and even accelerated during the American regime especially after the Moros were virtually contained by the U.S. army in 1915.\textsuperscript{44} As the U.S-planned settlements in Mindanao were well underway, the government declared that those who would transfer from the crowded north to Mindanao and Sulu would be given financial aid, housing, and similar other benefits. The Cotabato area was the first target destination for the main bulk of settlers, while similar other smaller groups were scattered in some areas of Mindanao and Sulu. For example, one area for the settlement of American soldiers who decided to stay in the Philippines was established in Momongan, now Balo-i, Lanao del Norte. Years later, the peopling of Mindanao by Visayan and Luzon farmers was also aided by the entry of the logging industry, the extensive farm plantations, and the beginning of large scale mining industries in several areas of Mindanao.\textsuperscript{45} While the political situation in Manila continued to develop in March 1934, the US Congress passed the Tydings-McDuffie Act providing for Philippine Independence after a ten-year


\textsuperscript{45} Hilario M. Gomez, \textit{The Moro Rebellion and The Search for Peace} (Zamboanga: Silsilah Publication, 2000), 92.
commonwealth period. With the continuation of the settlement program, the Philippine commonwealth government established the National Settlement Administration in 1938 purposely to look at the systematic movement of population to Moro land. This movement was temporarily halted in late 1941 at the start of the Pacific War, when the Philippines was preparing for inevitable invasion by the Japanese Imperial Army. But again, after the end of the Second World War in 1945, the migration of people from all other parts of the Visayas and Luzon rapidly surged in most of the fertile lands of the Moros. After the 1950s, more Filipinos as well as American and Japanese business interests came for the purpose of further exploiting Mindanao. This exploitation was made successful when the government approved permits for investors to establish business, notably Del Monte, Stanfilco, and Dole which were especially engaged in growing bananas, pineapple, papaya, and tomatoes.

Most of the workers were from outside Moro land and, with their love of work, most of them opted to stay permanently in the place where they were working together with their families. The increasing population in the area spelled trouble not only because of the increasing needs of society but also because the Muslims realized that there was a systematic move to take their land away from them. The Moros believed they were the true owners of the land and not the Christians from Luzon and the Visayas who, by authority of the government, rapidly populated the lands. For the Muslims, the land was their heritage and was therefore

47 Hilario Gomez, op.cit, 93.
48 Ibid.
not to be owned nor sold to strangers for their own profit. Land for the Muslim has no owners; instead, only the right to use it is transferable and can be renewed. The Datu in each community, in this period, only assigned the right to use the land or in some cases transfer that right to others within their area of influence.\textsuperscript{49} The Moro system of administering the land was entirely the opposite of American and Christian ways. This realization marked the start of the Muslims' overt resistance to the national government and led to the eventual rise of the Moro organized armed struggle.

The Philippines got its independence from American rule on July 4, 1946 with Manuel A. Roxas as the first president of the Republic. Certainly, the Muslims in the south were considered part of the new liberal, democratic country. And with the new independent state, the notion of Muslim secession would not be entertained. Instead, the leadership was quite convinced that Sulu and Mindanao should be developed because the area would be of importance not only for the economy but also the security of the region. Although majority of the Muslims did not share the notion of nationalism, there were some especially the educated ones who cooperated and worked with the government leadership as they supported and participated in the new political system of the country. However, in the south, the Moros did not consider themselves citizens of the Republic of the Philippines, and were uneasy that the lands were gradually taken over by people they considered foreigners.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{49} Moshe Yegar, \textit{Between Integration and Secession}, 225.
\textsuperscript{50} Moshe Yegar, \textit{Between Integration and Secession}, 241.
Their sense of a separate identity was exacerbated by the role of religion. Muslim Philippines became acquainted with the spread of pan-Arabism throughout the world in the 1950s and well into the 1960s. While the Moros belonged to different ethnic groupings, they were united by Islam in opposing the Christian Filipinos from the North. Starting in the early 1950s, many Muslim religious preachers came to the Philippines from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Qatar, Pakistan, and the neighboring Islamic countries of Indonesia and Malaysia.\textsuperscript{51} An important development in this period was the eventual awareness of Islamic education among the Moros, who were encouraged in this regard by many countries in the Middle East. Consequently, many young Muslims of the south availed of the scholarships made available to them and pursued studies in different Islamic schools, particularly at the Islamic University of Madina in Saudi Arabia and in al-Azhar, Cairo. Simultaneous to this development was the massive build-up of Madrassas or Islamic schools in Muslim Mindanao, especially after scholars returned home and served as Ustadz or teachers.

Another important development in this period was when some of the local Muslim leaders were invited to participate in various conferences and seminars in the Muslim world and in the annual *haj* or pilgrimage to Mecca. These are among the various factors that brought the Muslims in the Philippines closer to the Islamic world. In fact, one of the most significant events in the local history of Islam was the conduct of the first Filipino Muslim Conference in 1955 in Cotabato City which was participated in by more than 5,000 delegates from Egypt, Iraq, Pakistan, Indonesia, Indonesia.

and Singapore.\textsuperscript{52}

In the meantime, the Moros' sense of alienation from the rest of Philippine society grew and became a staging point for inevitable collective action. In 1951, the revolt against the government began in Sulu under the leadership of Hadji Kamlun supported by some 100 men. The primary reason for their revolt was not very clear, but one thing there is no doubt that the Moros did not like the government's settlement program, including the systematic subdivisions of their lands. After the end of WWII, the immigration policy was renewed ostensibly to decongest the populated North and at the same time explore the economic potentials of Sulu and Mindanao. Again, this was one of the most serious reasons for instability that ruined the relations and continues to create major barriers between Muslim and Christian Filipinos rather than bring progress to the economy of Mindanao and the entire country. Today, the then-small population of Muslims has grown considerably but they remain a minority not only in the context of the total national population but also vis-à-vis the smaller total population of Mindanao. The daunting part of the Moros' long history of alienation and eventual repression has served as the basis for the Moro people's struggle for their right to self-determination. It is also the reason that the cooperation of the Muslims has been minimal whenever an attempt is made to integrate them into the mainstream of the Philippine socio-political system.

\textsuperscript{52} Moshe Yegar, \textit{Between Integration and Secession}, 243.
CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have seen the centuries-long history of animosity between and among identity groups with different social orientations. This was evident in the long series of never-ending violence between Muslim and Christian Filipinos since the Spanish colonial period up to current times. There was never a situation where both parties' cooperation prevailed in a way that they would have an environment in which they could have a harmonious co-existence under one progressive, strong, and democratic government of Filipinos. The first major factor that greatly contributed to the complexity of the conflict situation in Mindanao and in the entire country was the coming of the colonial powers. They failed to produce one homogeneous society under one umbrella of government. Those who subscribed to Christianity, either voluntarily or by force, were highly influenced by or adapted to Spanish rule, while those did not – particularly the Muslims in the south – remained loyal to their traditional way of life based on the teachings of Islam.

These accounts show how difficult it is to change the habitual social, political, cultural, and religious beliefs and orientation of individual identity or ethnic groups. It can be argued that changing the structure of society into something that is new to the population is very difficult, if not impossible, particularly where religious beliefs are involved. In the case of the Moros of the Philippines, it is true that they belonged to different ethnic groups that were never united under one ruler, but they were unified under Islam in the face of great uncertainty and insecurity.53 Filipinos on the islands of Luzon and the Visayas adopted the religion that had been introduced to

them, arguably by force, because of the massive power of the colonizers that they could not beat back in their years of opposition to foreign rule. At this point, Dr. Regina Karp's views on the importance of religion to people is most apt when she states, in an academic essay, that "Recent conflicts and post-conflict stabilization efforts (war on terror) have driven home the message that questions of faith are a vital part of people's vision of how they want to live." It only shows that, even in the 21st century, security and cooperation in world affairs is highly affected by how people are influenced by their religious beliefs.

The Americans succeeded in taking over the administration of the Philippine archipelago, conscious and aware of the lessons of the preceding Spanish rule. They obeyed and took seriously the notion of non-interference in the religious aspect, that is, full respect for religious freedom, especially for the Muslims in the south. The environment was relatively calm for a while because the Moros felt that they could continue to practice their traditional way of life, but when the Americans began attempts to impose their own view of what is right, consequently trying to alter certain aspects of the Islamic way of life, they were faced with serious opposition that eventually resulted in fierce armed confrontations that led to casualties on both sides.

The foreign rulers' failure to establish a homogeneous Filipino society by way of integrating different ethnic groups was exacerbated by the process of isolation and discrimination. The situation worsened when the isolationist tendency of the Moros was countered systematically by their forced integration using Christianized

54 Prof. Regina W. Karp is the director of Graduate Program in International Studies at Old Dominion University.
Filipinos from Luzon and the Visayas to convince the Moros to agree to integration, even to the extent of using these Christians to fight the Muslims in the south. These attempts to integrate the Muslims continued up to the 1970s. Indeed, the history of the Mindanao conflict has seen the different ways, either diplomatic or coercive, of trying to gain the full support of the Moros for their possible integration into mainstream Philippine society, and the outcomes of such attempts that should serve as lessons for future activities in this region. A careful reading of their history shows that the Moros would cooperate with any effort to pacify or integrate them if and when their social, political, cultural, and religious orientations are respected. Lastly, it was evident in this chapter that Moros have a high regard for the traditional hierarchical structure of their community and a high respect for traditional leadership. In the next chapter, this paper critically examines the major attempts at conflict resolution in the southern Philippines.
CHAPTER 4
SOCIAL INTEGRATION PROBLEMS AND THE 1976 PEACE AGREEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The integration process for Muslims or the "Moros" in the southern Philippines was a long and tedious task which the government had been facing for several years with difficulties. In spite of such difficulties, however, the government continued to execute the policy believing that through the economic and educational programs for Mindanao, the Muslims would eventually appreciate the government effort for them. The immigration policy was designed primarily to develop Mindanao, and was expected to address the economic problem not only for the benefit of the Muslims in the south but for the entire country as well. Other than the government-assisted immigrant Filipinos from Luzon and the Visayas, the influx of business industries to Mindanao came next as the government approved many applications for establishing plantations and logging concessions in that region. To ensure full implementation of the development program, the government put up an agency, renamed in later years, which would ensure that the benign intentions for the Muslims and the whole population of Mindanao would be fulfilled. On the other hand, the program for the education of the Moros was also undertaken in the belief that once the Moros got a good western education, they would become part of the overall society of educated people who would run the Philippine government. These were the two main government programs for the Muslims which was at the time vigorously pursued in the context of attaining unity between the Muslims and
the Christians. But it seems that such approaches did not provide an avenue for the resolution of the conflict. Instead, it gave an opportunity for the intensification of violence between the native Muslims and the Christianized Filipino settlers in Moroland. When the deteriorating security situation coupled with the draining of resources and pressure from international community were felt, the Philippine government had no other recourse but to negotiate and find a peaceful resolution to the Mindanao conflict. In this chapter, the effects of these government internal policies toward the Muslims, especially in Mindanao, will be examined. The last part of this chapter undertakes a critical examination of the first major attempt at conflict resolution in 1976 (the Tripoli Agreement) under the auspices of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, now renamed the Organization of Islamic countries (OIC).

ECONOMIC PROGRAMS FOR MINDANAO

The plan to develop Mindanao after independence from the United States of America, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, was one of the priorities of the newly formed democratic government of the Philippines. The program for the exploration of both Mindanao fertile lands and its natural resources coincided with the pacification campaign of the rebellion in the north by the Huks (HUKBALAHAP). The Huks had been organized on March 29, 1942 during the Japanese occupation of the Philippine archipelago. By the time Manuel Roxas, the first president of the independent republic, assumed office, the Huk movement was the only group posing an internal threat in the north. This group was inspired by the communist ideology that had attempted to influence the government system. It was the right time for
the government to use the vast fertile lands of Mindanao to attract the rebels to return to the mainstream of society.

When Ramon Magsaysay became Philippine president in 1953, the settlement efforts of the government continued vigorously because the administration had promised and ensured that sizeable lands in Mindanao would be given to the Huk rebel returnees. This was one of the major factors that paved the way for the cessation of hostilities as many of the Huk members agreed and accepted the offer of the government. The Economic Development Corps (EDCOR) was organized purposely to decongest Luzon and ensure the economic benefits for the former combatants while exploring the economic potential of Mindanao. In short, the resettlement to Mindanao was properly institutionalized particularly for the people not from Mindanao but those Filipinos who, for the Muslims, were considered foreigners in Mindanao. For sure, the government motivation for this program was not directed against the Muslims; rather, it was based on the idea that the entire Philippine archipelago must be dealt with as a whole, and the isolationist tendency of any ethnic group had to be addressed in the context of coexistence.

The government’s systematic policy of settlement resulted in the massive movement of population from the North to Mindanao, not only of former rebels but also the landless, released prisoners, army veterans, those who had come simply to explore the areas, and everyone who wanted to resettle in Mindanao. For those who had enough capital, they put up plantations and cattle ranches; others went into logging in the almost untouched forests, exploring mines, and other similar activities

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1 Moshe Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession*, 247-248.
that signified permanent settlement in the area. In the business sector, the Chinese came to the area and took care of the business industry while some of them also exploited the natural resources of Mindanao. This systemic economic process undertaken in Mindanao may have contributed to expanding the national economy, generally raised the people’s living standards, relieved the country of the problem of congestion in Luzon, eased tensions over a growing communist insurgency in Luzon, and most of all provided an opportunity for the government to develop Muslim areas for their integration into the national socio-political mainstream. However, only a few Muslims benefited from this process because most of the development companies such as mining, logging, and other industries were all taken over by the Christians. Owing to their lack of educational qualifications and their tendency to isolationism, the Moros were left out of the government’s development effort.2

In 1954, the agency called the National Resettlement and Rehabilitation Administration (NARRA) was formed to facilitate the immigration of Christians to Mindanao and administer the targeted areas for settlement on the island. The agency was able to attract more and more settlers to the resettlement program not only because of the proposal to distribute land (considered public lands) to them but also because the government was determined to provide them with financial and logistical support. By the end of 1958 or some four years since NARRA’s creation, about 23,400 Christian families had already settled in the Cotabato region alone. This process of moving populations continued systematically, and in fact some of the settlers who were not part or did not avail of the settlement program

2 T.J.S. Revolt in Mindanao, 104-105; Cesar Majul, The Moro Struggle, 900; Gowing, Muslim Filipinos, 189.
simply moved to Mindanao on their own. In ten years, between 1960 and 1970, the Christian population in Cotabato alone was more than doubled. By the end of 1976, some analysts estimated the number of Christian settlers in Cotabato to have hit a million. The NARRA was deactivated in 1964 and was replaced by the Land Authority whose function was basically to administer the distribution of lands to settlers.

Under the administration of President Ferdinand Marcos, who was elected to office in 1965, reelected in 1969, and prolonged his stay in power until 1986 by declaring Martial Law in 1972, the government continued the programs for Mindanao with some slight modifications especially in terms of the functions of offices. In 1971, Marcos deactivated the Land Authority and established a new agency, the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), which served as the mother agency that supervises the Bureau of Settlements to administer land distribution. In furthering the development effort of Mindanao areas, Marcos put up a coordinating agency called the Reconstruction and Development Program for Mindanao (RAD), whose function was to ensure the administration and rehabilitation programs already in place was taken care of and functioning according to the overall aims for Mindanao. It is good to note that of all the government development programs for Mindanao, RAD was tasked to look into Islamic Education.

The responsibilities of RAD, among others, were to administer the education of Muslim pupils and increase the number of scholarships to Muslim students. By this time, there was an attempt for educated young Muslims to occupy positions in the government service. Some of those who availed of the government educational
programs were rebel returnees. The daunting part was that, for little-known reasons, some of them returned anew to the underground movement after completing their educational courses. Perhaps, it was the government immigration policy which they perceived as a threat to their parents' continued right to till their lands that drove young Muslim professionals to rebel against the national government instead of rendering their services to the government in exchange for their education.

Mindanao island is wide enough to cater to the economic needs of the country. For those running the government, there is no reason for the state not to develop the area, more so since it is not owned by the Muslims. There was no question, perhaps, on the development of the vast land as it had addressed the problem of landlessness and had relieved the overcrowded North, but the increasing number of settlers became a source of alarm for Muslim communities over ownership and control of the land which had effectively raised tensions between the Christians and the Muslims. The Moros' feelings of resentment against the Christian majority had increased not only because of the land issue, but also because the Christians earned government support in almost all their dealings with the Muslims. As a result, the government was seen as the main factor pushing for discrimination against the Muslims and supporting the systematic landgrabbing in Mindanao. Of course, the Army, the police, and local authorities were all under government and mostly Christian control which gave the Moros a reason to claim

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3 Michael Mastura, Development Program for Mindanao and Sulu, 144; George, Revolt in Mindanao, 264-266; Silva, Two Hills of the Same Land, 44-46; Rodil, The Lumad and Moro, 12; Man Mohini Kaul, "The Marcos Regime in the Philippines," India Quarterly 34, no. 3 (July-September 1978):320; Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 248.
they were discriminated against and being eased out of Moro land. With the combination of the settlement process and tensions, the Moros were forced to retreat to the mountains, with some preferring to move to the swampy areas where the source of livelihood was solely fishing. This explains why many Moros would rather rebel than coexist with the settlers until today. Since then, the conflict between the Moros and the government-backed Christian settlers, especially in 1967 and 1968, became more intense in almost all areas in Mindanao. Instability in Mindanao was always expected because the conflict was not only about concern with the social system but also involved legal matters.

Moro society in general is essentially based on tradition while the Christians relied too much on what was legal according to written documents. This was a major cause of conflict of interest between the Muslims and the Christian settlers that made it almost impossible to resolve in terms of creating a homogeneous society. Although there were some Muslims educated during that time, but still they were only a mere handful that their influence on the whole community was minimal. The worse that sometimes happened, especially during a crisis, was that the Christians were even seen by many as collaborators of the aggressive and discriminatory government of the Philippines against the Muslims. In short, the economic approach conceived by the government since its inception in 1953, when President Magsaysay assumed office, to pacify the secessionist tendency of the Moros of the south improved the lives of the Christian settlers but the alienated

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Muslims continued to occupy the other side of the development program, as aggressors, owing to what they perceived as a discriminatory policy against them. In effect, violence occurred in almost every major center of Mindanao with a considerable number of casualties on both the Moro and Christian sides. In sum, government economic programs substantially enhanced the living conditions of some people, especially the Christians, in Mindanao but its impact on the resolution of the violent conflict was minimal.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR THE MUSLIMS

Perhaps, of all the programs intended for the Muslims in the south, education was the most effective tool for integration and undoubtedly benefited and improved the living conditions of the next generation of Moros after independence. Some of them joined government service as lawyers and engineers, among others, that to some extent helped the process of integration of Moros into Philippine society. In fact, with the deteriorating security situation in the south, the Philippine Congress appointed three of its members led by Congressman Domocao Alonto, who later became senator, to investigate and possibly come up with a recommendation about the situation of the Moros in the south.

The product of this study led the Philippine Congress to pass a law creating the Commission on National Integration (CNI) in 1957. Under this law, the government was to ensure that education, among other things, was one of the priorities of the government for Muslims in the south similar or of equal standard to that of the Christians. Muslim education, then, was supported by the government through scholarships for young students in order for them to finish their respective
courses. According to some studies, this educational support for young Muslim students peaked in the 1960s and enabled them to go to a university of their choice. A total of 1,210 recipients were recorded as of 1967, most of them coming from the families of Datus while some were children of poor families.5

This program served not only as an avenue for socialization between Christian and Muslim students but also became an opportunity for Muslim students to meet other ethnic groups and share their experiences with one another. The school campus became a meeting place to discuss things related to their situation in schools as well as the instability in Moro land. In essence, the solidarity between and among the Muslim ethnic groups was strengthened by the bonds the students formed in school. It was expected that this generation of Muslims would be much more different than those who stayed behind in their homeland where connections and knowledge about the outside world were limited.

Educated individuals, in theory, are always expected to be well-informed. In the event the situation is reversed, they are expected to air their grievances in a more sophisticated manner that would enable them to gain the attention of the outside world. At the national capital of Manila where almost all the scholars were studying, the mosque became another important place for Muslim students to gather particularly after their Friday weekly prayers. This isolationist tendency should not be a surprise as even before the CNI was created by the Philippine Congress, the three Muslim congressmen who were appointed members of the study group in 1954 found out that Muslims in the south neither identified

5 Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 244-245.
themselves as Filipino citizens nor as part of Philippine society; rather, Islam was central to their identity.\(^6\)

In general, the Moros were happy to be called Muslims rather than Filipinos and their loyalty was to their respective ethnic groups -- Maguindanao, Maranao, Tausug, and others. This observation held true not only for those in urban areas but also those in rural areas. This was the reason the study group recommended that the government embark on “education and economic programs” for Muslims, believing that such tools would pacify the Muslims and ease tensions in the south. Apart from several other educational programs for Muslims, thus, the Mindanao State University (MSU) was established in Marawi City to cater to the educational needs of the Moros in rural areas of Mindanao.\(^7\) In later years, other MSU branches and public schools were established for both Muslims and Christians in Moro land.

In 1963, the Senate reviewed the results of the education and economic programs of the government and found that the objective of Muslim integration into the national mainstream had not been met, that is, the social, economic and educational gap between the Muslims and the Christians and other groups remained at a high level. In other words, the Moros had rejected the government’s policy of assimilation both in terms of educational and economic programs as only meant for the Christian majority. In short, the benign intention behind the creation of the Commission of National Integration for the Muslims was never realized up to its

\(^6\) ibid...

\(^7\) McAmis, Muslim Filipinos, 43; Majul, The Moros of the Philippines, 169; Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 244-245.
abrogation in 1975. Not surprisingly by mid-1960s, a more informed set of young Muslim leaders had emerged. Most of them were lawyers who gradually opposed the government's discriminatory policies in areas such as diplomatic and issues concerning the Philippine economy and politics. This new band of leaders included Muslim students and clerics who had studied abroad and were openly criticizing the government's discriminatory policies against the Muslims.

It may have been part of the assimilation strategy for the government to assume that the Muslims had finally realized that they were part of Philippine society. Simultaneous in this process was the country's impending territorial claim to Sabah in North Borneo. The Muslims, particularly the Tausug, were aware that Sabah was once a part of the Sultanate of Sulu. This was a great opportunity for the country to use the Tausug in asserting its claim to Sabah. Notably, in this period, both Christians and Muslims were interested in security matters and, through local politicians, they gradually formed militias primarily for their security.

President Diosdado Macapagal was the first to raise the Philippine claim to Sabah before the government of England in 1962, reiterating that Sabah belonged to the Sultanate of Sulu even before the Spaniards came to Philippine shores, and that it was never sold nor given to any nation in the region. It was true that sometime in 1878, the territory had been leased to a British company but sovereignty over the territory was never given to any nation or distant power. In spite of the Philippine claim, however, the British turned over the territory to Malaysia on September 16,

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8 Peter G. Gowing, Muslim Filipinos, 184-185; Cesar Majul, The Moro Struggle, 900; Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 245; Che Man, Muslim Separatism, 59-60.
In 1967, the Philippine Army recruited a number of Muslims, mostly young Tausug, for a secret military training. The Moro recruits were brought to the isolated island of Corregidor, formerly a well-fortified American base south of Manila, for military training in order to prepare them for an eventual infiltration of Sabah. However, for reasons that were unclear, the trainees numbering about 28 to 60 were massacred by their trainers on March 18, 1968. One of the Muslim trainees named Jibin Arula managed to escape from the mass killings that eventually became known as the Jabidah massacre. In one of the testimonies of Arula before the Senate, the trainees were brought to an airstrip on Corregidor Island in batches of 12 and were then killed by their trainers by firing squad.

The process of integration of the Muslims to Philippine society was gearing towards gradual success, manifested by the willingness of the educated Moros to join government service at that time, even joining the Army as in the case of the Moro trainees who were unfortunately massacred. This horrible incident, more than any other, may have completely discredited the integration process for Muslims, serving as a stark reminder to the entire Muslim community in the country of the discrimination, distrust, and other acts inimical to their interests that had been perpetrated by the foreign colonizers and continued by the national government ruled by Christian Filipinos. It was easy for the Moros to conclude that the massacre was proof that the administration, then under Ferdinand Marcos, had no regard for the life of Muslims in the South. The incident had many significant implications for

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9 McKenna, Sources of Muslim Separatism, 9; Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 251.
the Moros, especially in terms of what they felt as the government's utter disregard for them as citizens of the Philippines, and consequently led them to realize the importance of intensifying the Moro struggle for separation. In fact, the declared attempt for secession through the Mindanao Independence Movement (MIM) was understood to be a direct consequence of the *Jabidah* massacre.\(^{10}\)

The *Jabidah* massacre should have been kept internally by the Philippine government, but because some senators and lawmakers were Muslims reinforced by the opposition party, the killings became known to the public and eventually affected the Philippines's international relations with some other countries, most notably the severing of its diplomatic ties with Malaysia. According to analysts, it was at this time that the Malaysian government, increasingly concerned over the conflict in Mindanao, began to support the Muslims in the south to the extent of providing them with training assistance and armaments.\(^{11}\) In the local scene, Datu Udtog Matalam and several other Moro leaders openly established the Muslim Independence Movement in May 1968 and later renamed it the Mindanao Independence Movement. The emergence of the MIM was an apparent response to the *Jabidah* massacre, indicating the Moros' loss of trust in the Philippine government. Furthermore, the overall goal of the organization, contained in a manifesto, was that the Muslims in the south, comprising the area of Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan (MINSUPALA), were seceding from the Republic of the Philippines in

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order to establish an Islamic State wherein the Muslims could preserve their ancestral territory and be governed by their own system according to Islamic rules and the Adat of the Moros.

The MIM manifesto’s fundamental elements are found in its Declaration of Principles, namely: (1) the Muslim right to self-determination (2) Islam as the religion of the community which requires a defined territory since that religion is not just an ideology but also a way of life for the Moros; (3) the economic advancement, cultural development, and political independence of the Moros that can only be realized if they have sovereignty over their territory; and (4) the Muslims’ capability for of self-rule or political independence because of the fact that the Muslim community has a considerable number of educated men who can govern.\textsuperscript{12} This declaration reached the attention of the international community through a copy sent to the United Nations and heads of different Islamic states. The important role of local leaders in the Muslim community must be emphasized, at this point, and in those years, there was no recorded incident of strong opposition to the MIM’s declaration of secession from any group of Moros in Mindanao, Sulu, or Palawan. Unity among the Islamized ethnic groups in the south on the matter of opposing the government may have already been deeply embedded in their culture, but it was intensified by the Jabidah massacre coupled with new set of articulate leaders who had acquired education from universities in Manila and elsewhere, including those educated in the Middle East.

Many claim that the MIM was never a successful or popular movement. The

\textsuperscript{12} For the full text of the manifesto, see Glang, Muslim secession or Integration? 103-105; and in Che Man, Muslim Separatism, 187-188.
movement as observed by many historians was confined only to the documents published in media outlets. More so, the movement's leader, Datu Udtog Matalam, had publicly withdrawn his position for reasons that are unclear. Naturally, that development dampened Christian worries about Muslim secession while the Muslims may have simply lost confidence in Matalam's leadership and were convinced that the MIM was only a course of action taken by Matalam due to his frustration with his political career in Cotabato. Whatever Matalam's motivations were, one thing is clear: the MIM opened the minds of the new generation of Moro leaders. Again, it may have been one important outcome of the education of Muslims that they, through the abrogation of MIM, were able to reconcile themselves with the reality that sometimes you may not succeed in your quest for change especially if you do not have the support of the majority. Taking advantage of the favorable situation, the government applied the pacification strategy to contain and prevent the escalation of secessionist movement.

In October 1968, President Marcos met with Matalam, resulting in a better future for Matalam's political career. He was offered a position in the government as presidential adviser for Muslim affairs. This development neutralized the MIM and marked the end of Matalam's leadership of the movement, but it did not ease tensions and the escalation of violence in the south. In fact, after a while, Sultan Rashid Lucman established another radical Muslim organization, the Union of Islamic Forces and Organizations (UIFO). In the same year, another Muslim organization, the more conservative Ansar al-Islam, was founded by Senator

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13 Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 253; Cesar Majul, Moros of the Philippines, 174; George, Revolt in Mindanao, 129-142; Tan, The Filipino Muslim Armed Struggle, 120.
Domoco Alonto that brought Islam into the scene. Senator Alonto sought not only the support of the local population in the south but also established linkages to Muslim networks abroad. Hence, the situation in the south became regionalized as neighboring states covertly intervened in the internal affairs of the Philippines. By the end of 1969, about 90 young Muslims from Mindanao were recruited for guerilla warfare training in a Malaysian army training camp on the Island of Pangkor.

The group of trainees was organized both by the MIM and the UIFO. Among the members of this group were Nur Misuari, who later headed the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), Abul Khayr Alonto, Jimi Lucman (son of Rashid Lucman), and several other young Moros who were aware of the situation of the Muslims in their homeland. When this group returned home, they were the ones who organized the secessionist MNLF and the Bangsa Moro Army (BMA). Most of them became leaders of the Moro struggle for independence in succeeding years. According to some accounts, there were a number of British nationals and Palestinians who served as instructors and trainers during the group's training in Pangkor. The training of the Moros was made possible upon the recommendation of then-Chief Minister of Sabah Tun Mustafa, who had Tausug blood, which was approved by then-Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman who promised the Moro leaders that he would support the training and their eventual struggle for independence from the republic of the Philippines, although Tunku denied any such involvement of the Malaysian government in the Moro struggle for secession from the Philippines. Subsequently, the local Muslims leaders, upon the suggestion of the Malaysian government, established the so-called Islamic Directorate of the
Philippines (IDP) whose aim was to coordinate outside assistance for Muslims in the Philippines. The IDP organizers were from the conservative and traditional leaders as well as militants such as Nur Misuari, Rashid Lucman, and Macapanton Abbas. In a declaration signed by all leaders, the IDP called for unity among the Muslims and their readiness to defend Islam and the homeland against any form of aggression.14

By 1970, there was increased tension coupled with some deadly armed confrontations not only in the Cotabato areas, where the most populous Christians formed militias, but also in North Cotabato. In later months of that year, the violence spread in the areas of South Cotabato where most of the settlers from the Visayas had also organized their armed militias. Similar forms of armed confrontation also intensified in the Lanao areas, with considerable damage to properties and lives, between the “Black Shirts” or Muslim guerrillas and the “Ilagas” (rats) or the militias formed by the Christians against the threat posed by Moros. The Ilagas were mostly Christians supported by the constabulary while the Black Shirts depended on the local community aided by support from Muslim countries. These armed confrontations were devastating for both the Muslim and the Christian communities in the affected areas, even as the Moros were worse off.

Their failure to suppress the massive attacks of the Ilagas, who burned and destroyed Muslim communities, forced the Moro people to flee their communities for safer places. These armed attacks by the Ilagas were perpetrated in various Muslim communities in the provinces of Sultan Kudarat, South Cotabato, and North Cotabato and in some areas where Muslims had originally established their

14 Che Man, Muslim Separatism, 75; Mercado, Culture, Economics, and Revolt, 157; Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 253-254.
communities. In Lanao del Norte, the Ilagas, who coordinated their operations with the Constabulary, were reportedly supported by a band of local politicians such as the Christian governors and financed by business companies who were allowed by the government to operate randomly in some areas of Mindanao. On the Muslim side, some of the prominent leaders identified to have been providing support to the Moro fighters were also politicians and traditional leaders such as Congressman Ali Dimaporo and Matalam, but they eventually became President Marcos's close political ally and adviser on Muslim affairs, respectively.

The conflict in some communities escalated further until the deteriorating situation was understood as a war between the Muslims and the Christians. Owing to this, the Muslims considered all Christians to be their enemies no matter where they were in Mindanao. On the part of the Christians, their most damaging perception of the Moros that has been perpetuated to this day, though not openly articulated, is that the only Muslim Filipinos they can trust are "no one but the dead Moros." Muslims had suspected as much, because the Army and the police fought against the Muslims in many places in Mindanao, and the Ilagas fought the Muslims in the region's rural areas; hence, the entire Moro population in the south was committed to defending themselves while attacking Christian communities.15

The heightened violent conflict in Mindanao invited many outside actors and the international community. The Moros were quite assured of support from the Muslim world as some pledged aid to the Muslim armed struggle. Others remained

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15 Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 254; Cesar Majul, The Moro Struggle, 903-905; Gowing, Muslim Filipinos, 188, 192-194; George, revolt in Mindanao, 143-161; Noble, The Moro National Liberation Front, 410.
moderate and looked for possible collaboration with the government of the Philippines for the peaceful resolution of the conflict. The Government of Libya was the first to react, bringing the issues concerning the Moros in Mindanao before the UN Subcommittee for Human Rights in August 1971. This action was supported by several other Muslim states, which accused the government of the Philippines of genocide and persecution of religious minorities. In reaction to such allegations, the Libyan President Muammar Qadhafi gave assurance that he would extend material aid to the Muslims in the Philippines. During the outbreak of hostilities in Mindanao, there were reports that Arab countries were supporting the Moro struggle, thus equipping the Muslim rebels in terms of logistics and finance. It was also reported that Pakistan and Libya collaborated in efforts to provide arms to the Moros. This development came to the attention of then-Philippine President Marcos, setting off a serious debate on whether to cut off Philippine diplomatic relations with Pakistan that did not, however, materialize.16

The endemic violence in Mindanao had terrified the entire population. But in spite of the chaos that gripped almost all of Mindanao, leaders of both Muslim and Christian communities attempted to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Despite such efforts, the same leaders became indecisive and were unable to find and pursue a peaceful resolution to the problem. The educated Muslims in government, like Senator Mamintal Tamano, could do nothing but blame the government for its flawed policy on the Mindanao conflict. Tamano claimed that if the bloodbath in Mindanao was not given adequate attention, it would bring about

16 Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 255-256.
serious economic and security problems not only in Mindanao alone but that it may further escalate to engulf the entire country and involve international actors.\textsuperscript{17}

Unable to do more to control the violence especially between the \textit{Ilagas} and the \textit{Moro} rebels, the government declared a truce. On 26 February 1971, President Marcos declared a ceasefire in order to be able to give way to negotiations for the peaceful resolution of the conflict. Marcos offered financial aid to the leaders of Moro rebels in Cotabato in order to pacify them and perhaps improve the economic condition of the Muslim communities. Other than that, he also tried to look at the problem of land disputes by promising the Muslims that the government would find ways to resolve the land issues. This was the usual reaction of state leaders whenever they came to realize that violence could not be ended by “military victory or by doing nothing” to stop the surge of violence resulting from adamant behavior. In other words, the government policy on the Mindanao conflict was merely one of “containment” since it is very difficult to end an internal conflict once it has started, and more so if the government itself has been an accessory to the conflict. Unfortunately, the containment policy is prone to reversal when leaders do not see any progress or when such a policy does not provide a tool for effectively halting the surge of violence. On March 30, 1971, President Marcos ordered the Armed Forces to undertake a renewed military option in Mindanao, which meant that the government would increase its military presence in the south. Unfortunately, it did not ease tensions in the region.

The fighting in the Cotabato areas had escalated anew, particularly in

\footnote{Glang, Muslim Secession or Integration? 70-71; Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 256.}
Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga Del Norte, and Lanao Del Sur. At this time, some Muslim leaders began calling for *jihad* against the *ilagas* (Christian Militias) who were perceived as a grave threat to the existence of the Moro community. It so happened, likewise, that an increasing number of Christian politicians now held local government positions as mayors and governors in Muslim-held territory, a political development that confirmed the idea that the resettlement program of the government had truly succeeded. This seemed so because of the fact that the majority of the resettlement areas were already dominated by Christian settlers, easing out the Moros who retreated to the mountains and marsh lands. Estimates show that by the end of 1971, about 1,566 had been killed -- more than half of them Muslims -- and about 100,000 displaced from both Muslim and Christian communities. By this time, the Muslims feared for their security, as they considered both the army and the civilian armed groups their enemies.\(^\text{18}\)

No doubt, the deteriorating security situation in the southern Philippines attracted the attention of the Muslim world. Again, the first to react was Libya, when Muammar Qadhafi sent a letter addressed to then-Philippine President Marcos on July 1971, expressing concern over the situation of the Muslims in Mindanao. The Philippine government realized it had to respond accordingly not only because of the internationalization of the Mindanao issue but out of fear that the Muslim world might cut off their oil supply to the Philippines. The Government of the Philippines, through acting Foreign Minister Jose Ingles, thus, denied all allegations of abuse and religious repression of the Muslims. Ingles, who spoke on behalf of the Philippine

\[\text{18} \quad \text{Cesar Majul, The Moro Struggle, 905; Peter G. Gowing, Muslim Filipinos, 194-195; Noble, Moro National Liberation Front, 407, 410. Che Man, Muslim Separatism, 75.}\]
government, claimed that the violent conflict in the south was rooted in land disputes and political tensions and that the government would welcome any investigation.

By October 1971, the escalated violence in Mindanao prompted Libya, Kuwait, Malaysia, and the Islamic secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) to condemn the Philippine government for allegedly committing genocide and slaughter of Muslims. These states demanded that the United Nations intervene. In response to the accusation, President Marcos in January 1972 invited the ambassadors of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt to visit the Mindanao areas so that the issue, especially on religious involvement, would be clarified. The visit was apparently showed that there was no anti-Muslim genocide in the Philippines. In March 1972, the government of Libya offered financial aid to the Philippines in exchange for ending the war against the Muslims in the south. Also, there was a report that the visiting Libyan delegation distributed 35,000 British pounds to the Muslims intended for the purchase of land to build mosques, as well as for food, medicines and clothing.

The Libyan representative visited Indonesia and Malaysia and encouraged the leadership to join in Libya's effort to assist the Muslims. However, the Libyan representative denied the veracity of these reports, saying that if ever assistance was extended to the Muslims in the south, it was all intended for strengthening religious faith by increasing the number of mosques, for the rehabilitation of destroyed communities, the construction of cultural centers, and purchase of food for refugees in the region. In short, Libya strongly denied aiding the Muslim
rebellion while other Islamic countries insisted that they extended aid to the Moros solely for humanitarian purposes. But it was clear that through the government of Libya, the Islamic world was pressuring the Philippine government to take care of the Muslims, and not subject them to abuse and genocide. In spite of the Philippine government's effort to contain the issue so it would not be interpreted as a war between Christians and Muslims, visiting delegations from Egypt and Libya concluded, after a four-day visit in July of 1972, that the conflict in the southern Philippines had become a "religious war" and that local authorities were the ones supporting the armed militias. In July of the same year, Salipada Pendatun, an educated Muslim leader who was the Speaker Pro Tempore of the Philippine House of Representatives, reported having received promises of support in terms of aid to the Moros in the south from the leaders of Algeria, Morocco, and Libya. ¹⁹

In 1972, the tension became intense as armed hostilities occurred in almost all areas in Moro land which agitated the Muslims to press for secession toward the establishment of an independent Muslim state. Most of the Muslim students in the national capital of Manila returned home to Mindanao, leaving their studies and joining the underground movement to oppose the perceived oppressive government and eventually establish an independent Islamic state in the south. Another reason these students went home was the rumor that the President would declare martial rule in the Muslim areas of Mindanao. The speculation came true on September 21, 1972, when President Marcos placed the entire country under martial law in order

¹⁹ The Manila Chronicle (March 27, 1972); Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and rebellion, 257-258; Cesar Majul, The Moro Struggle, 905-906; Gowing, Muslim Filipinos, 195-196; George, Revolt in Mindanao, 244-246; McAmis, Muslim Filipinos, 50-52.
to, according to the declaration, address the rampant violence in Mindanao and stop the organization of the Muslim secessionist movement in the south. However, the government intention to disarm the Muslim population earned different reactions particularly from the Muslims. They regarded such a government plan as a threat to their security and an insult to their sense of pride. In other words, they deemed pride and security much more important than the government's intention to restore stability in the areas of conflict. In the end, the declaration of martial only led to the escalation of violence and strengthened the quest for secession. Furthermore, the declaration of martial law and its subsequent impact helped to glorify the existence of the Moro resistance, particularly the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) that served to represent the Muslims.  

In spite of numerous attempts to pacify the Moros, the violence even escalated that it seemed the government forces were unable to control the growing popular support of the Muslim communities to the rebels. By the end of 1972, the conflict was apparently no longer a case of sporadic fighting but an organized rebellion that was causing many deaths. At this time, several reports confirmed a massive arms shipment in Mindanao from abroad purposely to aid the Moro combatants in fighting government forces. Usually, when the military option was unable to lessen the violence, the government would resort to getting the attention of outside actors or to declare a ceasefire. Indeed, President Marcos unilaterally declared a ceasefire and ordered government troops to temporarily halt military operations against the Muslims -- from December 20, 1972 to January 15, 1973 -- to

20 George, Revolt in Mindanao, 183-185; Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 258-259.; Peter G. Gowing, Muslim Filipinos, 196; Rodil, The Lumad and Moro, 17.
give way to negotiations. He promised once again that the government would grant amnesty to the rebels who choose to return to the fold of the law. But it seemed that Marcos was not sincere in this because even as he made the announcement, there was an increased deployment of troops in the south. The increased military presence in Mindanao may have been meant to reinforce the capability of the Philippine Army to maintain peace and order in the region, but the move was naturally interpreted by the Muslims as a threat. Consequently, even the President decided to extend the deadline for the grant of amnesty to April 1973, but the Muslim rebels did not avail of the amnesty program. Instead, the Moro rebel organization was further strengthened and foreign aid poured into the Muslim communities, thus allowing them to acquire more weapons.

There are, indeed, lessons to be learned from the policy of containment in the southern Philippines. First, educational programs alleviated the harsh living conditions of the Muslims, and some of the educated Muslims were able to occupy political positions and participate in other sectors of governance such as in medical and health, engineering and construction, and social development. But on the other hand, the education of the Muslims also presented them with a clear avenue for openly bringing the issues of Mindanao to international attention, thereby enabling the international community to intervene in the internal affairs of the Philippines. Through the CNI, the economic development program for Mindanao also helped alleviate the living conditions of populations, particularly the Christians from the north who were systematically aided by the government resettlement program.

Mindanao's idle lands turned into vast plantations became a major source of agricultural products that had contributed much to the national economy. But on the other hand, the government's resettlement program was a leading cause of the Mindanao conflict that even the government has been unable to resolve it until now. Perhaps, if those economic development programs were implemented equitably to benefit both the native Muslims and the Christian settlers, then the land disputes would not have been as intense as they turned out to be. The issue of land ownership may not be a big problem at all but when the benefits from the land are insufficient or not distributed evenly, then rebellion is always expected because it is a matter of survival for the affected communities. The next section will show how succeeding developments in Mindanao impacted on the domestic and foreign policy of the Philippine government vis-a-vis interventions from other countries.

THE 1976 TRIPOLI AGREEMENT

Before the peace agreement better known as the “Tripoli Agreement” was signed between the government of the Philippines and the leadership of the MNLF, there was a series of developments both in Philippine politics and at the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). In 1972, the Moro National liberation Front (MNLF) had grown into a formidable armed group representing the Muslim communities. This movement had begun as early as 1969 when a group of 90 Muslim volunteers from Mindanao underwent military training on the island of Pangkor, Malaysia. When they returned home, they became the core leaders of the Moro underground movement against the government whose purpose was to establish an independent Muslim state in the south. Nur Misuari, a Tausug and
former professor at the University of the Philippines where he had also gotten his tertiary education, became the Chairman of the MNLF. Abdul Khayr Alonto, a Maranao from Lanao and a son of former governor of Lanao Del Sur, was the deputy of Misuari, but later for unclear reasons was replaced by Hashim Salamat who was a Maguindanaon from Cotabato. Misuari became a known young leader as early as his University days because of his idealism and his conviction that change is possible only through an armed uprising. His primary concern was the situation of the Muslims in the south even as he was also connected for a while with the leftist Marxist organization *Kabataang Makabayan* (Patriotic Youth). The MNLF had earned substantial support both from the local Muslim populace and foreign Islamic nations. By 1969, Misuari met local leaders Datu Udtog Matalam, founder of the Muslim Independence Movement (MIM), Salipada Pendatun from Cotabato who later became senator, and Rashid Lucman of the Lanao District. These three prominent Moro leaders helped conceptualize the training of local Muslims in Pangkor where Misuari had been one such trainee. Supporters of the MNLF provided not only logistical and financial assistance but also the conduct of trainings, the provision of political asylum, and weapons, along with political pressure on the Philippine government. The political problem in Mindanao and the subsequent declaration of Martial Law strengthened the MNLF, which became the vehicle for coordinated Moro resistance as it did did not welcome any form of intervention not aligned with its goal.22

The developing situation in the south had to be addressed not only due to the

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22 Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 267-268; Noble, The Moro National Liberation Front, 409; George, Revolt in Mindanao, 197-200.Che Man, Muslim Separatism, 77-78.
escalating violence that had killed many but also because the government of the Philippines was under foreign pressure, specifically from the government of Libya and the Malaysian government which was providing training venues for the Moro rebels, along with several other Muslim countries which were extending financial aid to the Muslim rebellion. Undoubtedly, the Libyan support for the separatist movement in Mindanao had been noted when Colonel Muamar Qadhafi contacted local Muslim leaders, especially Rashid Lucman. The Libyan government through its spokesman had announced that since 1971, Libya had assisted the MNLF in terms of providing arms, financial aid, asylum, and exerting efforts to organize economic sanctions by Muslim countries on the Marcos regime. According to reports, the MNLF did obtain much of its support in the early stages of the revolt from the government of Libya, which gave Nur Misuari $3.5 million, although additional financial assistance came from the “Solidarity Fund of the OIC.” In the later part of the rebellion, the MNLF through its field commanders got additional support from the local Muslim populations through Zakat.23

The Philippine government was aware that the foremost demand of the MNLF was independence for the Muslim areas in Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan (more popularly known in the Moro communities as MINSUPALA). However, it was not clear whether the MNLF was truly aiming for complete independence (or secession from the Republic of the Philippines) or just autonomy. In any armed uprising, the goal has to be properly defined; otherwise, it can become aggravated as leadership changes or the passing of time could mean a different situation for both

23 Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 272-273; Noble, The Philippines, 13; May, The Moro Movement, 54-55.
parties. By April 1973, the MNLF leadership demanded that the Philippine Army in Mindanao be pulled out, that those lands formerly owned by the Moros be returned to them unconditionally, that the Islamic laws and the traditional customs, *adat*, be imposed in the Muslim territory, and that the MINSUPALA region be granted autonomy. Included in these demands were complaints about the burning of Muslim houses, robbery, and similar other related complaints concerning respect for Moro women and their religion, Islam.\(^2^4\)

In July of the same year, a Muslim World League delegation came to the Philippines to conduct an investigation in the conflict-affected areas in Mindanao. Interestingly, the delegation expressed satisfaction with the outcome of their investigation and reported that, after meeting with Moro leaders, they had found that the Muslims in Mindanao had put aside the issue of secession and that therefore it was best to resolve the problem through negotiations, as suggested by President Suharto of Indonesia, and not by the use of force. In August 1973, however, another delegation of four Muslim Foreign Ministers of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) came to the Philippines to conduct the same investigation. This time the team stayed for two days in Mindanao and found out that the Philippine Army had specifically used its might to attack the Muslims in the south. In their press conference in Manila, the team openly stated that the "political solution" rather than socioeconomic or military approaches was the key to bringing to an end the violent conflict in Mindanao. This led to the team to conclude and suggest to President Marcos to negotiate with the MNLF rather than use the military, noting

\(^{24}\) Moshe Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession*, 277; May, *The Religious Factor*, 309;
that the MNLF had adequate means to continue the rebellion against the government. In turn, the government was disappointed not only because of the result of the investigation but also because of the Libyan assertion that the Moro issue in the southern Philippines would remain in the agenda of the Muslim world.25

Indeed, despite the move of Indonesia and Malaysia not to include the Mindanao situation in the agenda of the fifth Conference of Muslim Foreign Ministers held in Kuala Lumpur on June 19-26, 1974, a number of Arab representatives clearly stated that one of their primary concerns was the problem of Muslim minorities in the world, particularly the Minority Muslims of the Philippines. Consequently, a resolution prepared by Muslim dignitaries during a conference held at the Mindanao State University in Marawi city became part of the report of the Committee of Four Foreign Ministers. The recommendation was to grant autonomy to the Muslim minority in the southern Philippines. In the same conference, the Libyan foreign minister raised the problem of Muslims in Mindanao, and openly admitted that, indeed, Libya had provided financial, arms, and ammunition to the rebellion in Mindanao, and promised to continue helping and using every means available, including oil embargo, to bring about a political solution to the Mindanao problem. On June 25, a resolution was passed in which the Conference seriously expressed its deep and ongoing concern about the situation of the Moros in Mindanao, and called on the Philippine government to stop the military operations and avoid further actions that would kill the Muslims and destroy their properties and places of worship. In short, the Conference called on the government of the

25 Noble, Chronology, 3; Nobel, Ethnicity and Philippine Malaysian relations, 463; George, Revolt in Mindanao, 246-248; Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 282-283.
Philippines to stop the military campaigns against the Muslims and negotiate instead with the Muslim leaders, particularly with the MNLF who at that time was the sole armed group representing the plight of the Moros. The Conference also demanded that the Philippine government provide protection and security to the Muslims, return the evacuees to their homes, and most specifically to halt the systematic and government-supported Christian migration from Luzon and the Visayas to Mindanao. These resolutions undoubtedly increased the level of pressure from Islamic countries and certainly raised the prestige of the MNLF, and provided a starting point for Arab countries to take the issue seriously in the succeeding conferences.26 In fact, following the resolution was the constant visits of foreign dignitaries to the Philippines in a bid to ensure that the government of the Philippines was moving toward negotiations.

By early 1975, Hassan Al-Touhami, secretary-general of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), visited Manila in order to encourage the Marcos regime to negotiate with the Muslims in the south. Perhaps owing to the pressure from Islamic countries particularly the perceived threat of an oil embargo, President Marcos responded favorably by sending a delegation to Jeddah, headed by Alejandro Melchor, for exploratory talks with Nur Misuari and other Moro leaders. However, the meeting had a result unfavorable to both parties as the Muslim delegation insisted on the establishment of autonomy for the areas covering Mindanao, Sulu,

and Palawan while simultaneously demanding the recall of the military troops from these areas. The Melchor-led delegation was firm on its position that the government would not accept the condition as it would compromise the country's territorial integrity. It was the conclusion of the Melchor delegation that external actors were just using the MNLF demands to further their own interests.27

In spite of the announcement made by Marcos that he would not agree to the demands of the MNLF for autonomy and the establishment of an army unit independent from that of the Philippine army, Misuari on his part continued calling on the government to recognize the Bangsamoro homeland, its sovereignty, and its political autonomy. Misuari said that by granting local autonomy to the Moros, it would mean that the central government of the Philippines would just be concentrating on external security while Mindanao would be responsible for its own internal security. The government, through Melchor, refused to acknowledge these demands because it considered them a threat or even an attack on the sovereignty and integrity of the country. This led once again to an impasse. Nevertheless, while another round of talks was set for April of the same year, the military forces from both parties escalated the violence in Mindanao. On 15 January 1975, the day the Jeddah negotiations started, a group of about 400 rebels attacked an army camp in Jolo, killing 41 people and destroying a radio station in Marawi city, followed by several other attacks on a number of towns in Mindanao on the same day.28 Perhaps, this was a strategy to get more international attention. This is a natural tendency in

27 Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 295.
28 Noble, Ethnicity and Philippine-Malaysian Relations, 468; Santos, Towards a Solution, 226; George, Revolt in Mindanao, 249; Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 295-296.
a rebellion, especially on the aspect of asymmetry, because it is the only way the weaker side in a conflict can elevate its strength relative to the dominant government forces. Secondly, it was suspected that such escalation of violence was designed, especially on the side of the stronger, to control the violence and neutralize the challenger -- otherwise it may lose the credibility that is vital to gaining domestic support.

The process of negotiation was not only a business between the MNLF and the government. In fact, whatever the outcome of the process of trying to arrive at a consensus favoring a resolution, the most important factor was still the local audience or civilian population. As the peace negotiations with the MNLF began to gain ground, the Christians were suspicious that Mindanao would eventually be under the control of the MNLF and were skeptical about how the Moros would govern the population of Mindanao. Consequently, some of the Christian residents of Mindanao rushed to sell their properties, while those on the side of the Muslims expressed disagreement with the government intention to recognize the MNLF as the sole organization representing the Moro people in the south. Also, there were Muslims who never joined the MNLF because of the belief that the MNLF was an organization for the Tausug and Samal, or because they were not convinced by the way the MNLF was pushing forward the struggle using violence. Naturally, the government took advantage of this virtual division among the Muslims to announce that it would not confirm that the MNLF was the sole representative of the Moro people, and that other identity groups should be included in the talks.29 If the

29 Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 296-297; George, Revolt in Mindanao, 251-251.
intention of the government was to weaken the MNLF demands, then it made some progress because the local support for the MNLF had certainly declined to a certain level, but this development in the negotiations had also increased the complexity of the problem because the government would now have to deal with many groups with different goals and demands from the central government.

In response to a letter from OIC secretary General Al-Touhami, who stressed the renewal of the negotiations on the condition that autonomy was granted to the Bangsamoro in Mindanao, President Marcos announced in March 1975 that the negotiations would resume the following month. He then took another action purposely to weaken the MNLF stand on the negotiations particularly on the latter's claim of being the sole representative of the Muslims in the south. In April of that year, he called for a four-day local peace conference in Zamboanga City in the southern Philippines that was attended by the Philippine ambassador to Saudi Arabia and hundreds of leaders from different Muslim armed groups, mostly not from the MNLF ranks. The conference resulted in a rejection of the supposed establishment of an Islamic separatist state. Consequently, President Marcos announced that he would appoint Muslims to some ranking positions while accepting rebel surrenderees into Philippine Army units, establish an agency called the Southern Philippines Development Authority (SPDA), and allocate enough funds for development projects such as roads and bridges. Other than these initiatives, President Marcos sent his wife Imelda on a series of foreign mission to seek the help of other countries. Imelda visited several heads of state for the purpose of getting them on board for the resolution of the Mindanao issues. Among the leaders she
visited were Anwar Sadat of Egypt and King Khaled of Saudi Arabia, both of whom promised to support the peace process between the government of the Philippines and the Muslim minority in the south. Some Philippine leaders also met with their counterparts in other Islamic countries like Tunisia, Kuwait, Algeria, and the United Arab Emirates, all of whom confirmed their support for the peaceful resolution of Muslim issues in Mindanao. While there were continued intensified MNLF operations and government forces beefed up their military offensives, the government announced that about 17,600 men had surrendered to government authorities.30

The government policy of attraction coupled with the strategy of building up the state's military superiority enabled the Marcos regime to gradually deescalate MNLF attacks in different areas of Mindanao. However, the increased number of the Armed forces and Police also adversely affected efforts to resolve the security issues. The officers of the Army particularly those deployed in the Muslim areas were highly trained and capable of leading their units, but the attitudes and behavior of lower ranked soldiers were not that admirable. Those who came from the north were poorly trained in combat and their standard of discipline was poor. They did not speak the language of the locals, which made it even more difficult to communicate and coordinate their efforts in Mindanao. In any military campaign, mastery of the local language is a must, otherwise stabilization operations would be a disaster. In 1976, the ground troop situation had improved especially on the aspect of training and logistics, which has a great impact on the effectiveness of

30 Noble, Chronology, 4;
military operations against the rebels. In the government's assessment, the number of rebels had decreased dramatically as a result of their losses and defections. These losses on the side of the Muslims were attributed to the political defeat of Tun Mustafa, the chief of Sabah, who was replaced by Tun Fuad Stephens. Stephens was known not to use Sabah in furthering secessionist movements or anti-government movements nor as a place for refugees. But with a considerable number of Muslim immigrants from Mindanao in Sabah who had been living there even before the time of Stephens, such plans faced serious problems not only because of family ties among the Muslims in Sabah and Mindanao, but also because Sabah was so close geographically to the Sulu archipelago.

During the seventh conference of Muslim Foreign Ministers held in Istanbul on May 12-15, 1976, the leadership of the MNLF asked the participants to put pressure on the government of the Philippines to accept what was decided by the conference during the 1974 and 1975 meetings. At the end of the conference on May 16, the foreign ministers reaffirmed the decisions made in the previous conferences and called for the cooperation of both sides to renew negotiations that could lead to a possible peaceful solution to the Mindanao conflict. It was also agreed that the negotiations should be based on the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission (Libya, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and Senegal) recommendation for the termination of the military offensives against the Muslims, the withdrawal of the same forces from the area of conflict, and the implementation of autonomy within the state of the

31 Noble, Moro National Liberation Front4, 18-420; Carl A. Trocki, Islam: Threat to ASEAN Regional Unity? Current History 78, no. 456 (April 1980): 181; Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 300.
Philippines. While intense violence was ongoing in Jolo and Zamboanga, thus, the
government of the Philippines announced its new plan for autonomy in Mindanao.
The proposal was for the creation of two autonomous commissions that would
facilitate Muslim participation in government affairs as well as set the priorities for
economic, political, and social development in the Muslim areas.  

President Marcos was convinced that it was Libyan President Muammar
Qadhafi who had pressured the OIC to support the MNLF, had given asylum to MNLF
fighters, and had provided the rebels with financial and military assistance. With
this conviction, Marcos was strongly convinced that Qadhafi would be the key to the
resolution of the Philippine internal security problem in the south. Marcos believed
that even if the government forces defeated the Moro rebellion, the more serious
threat to his government would be an oil embargo. Therefore, negotiations for a
peaceful resolution to the Mindanao conflict was the best option provided that the
integrity of the country was protected. Thus, Marcos sent his wife Imelda to Tripoli
in November 1976 to talk with Qadhafi about renewed negotiations with Misuari,
who was then living in Tripoli. The result of Imelda's two meetings with Qadhafi was
the signing of what became known as the "Tripoli Agreement," a significant
document in the history of the Philippines, signed on December 23, 1976.
Subsequently, a ceasefire was declared, followed by a series of talks between
government representatives and the MNLF, with representatives of the OIC in

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32 Moshe, Yegar, Between Integration and secession, 303-304; Noble, The Moro National Liberation
Front, 423-424; Suhrke and Noble, Muslims in the Philippines, 187; Che Man, Muslim Separatism,
144-145; see OIC Resolution 12/7-P, The Seventh Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers
attendance.\textsuperscript{33}

Present at the talks from December 15-23 that year were government representatives and a delegation from the MNLF headed by Nur Misuari; Libyan foreign minister Ali Abdussalam Treki, who served as the chairman of the meeting; and the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission (Libya, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, and Somalia) including the Secretary General of OIC Dr. Ahmad Karim Gaye. The document became a starting point for the supposed peaceful resolution of the Mindanao conflict. The main contents of the Tripoli Agreement are as follows:\textsuperscript{34}

1. The establishment of Autonomy in the Southern Philippines within the realm of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines;

2. The areas of the autonomy for the Muslims in the Southern Philippines shall comprise the following: Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte, North Cotabato, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, Davao del Sur, South Cotabato, and Palawan;

3. Foreign Policy shall be of the competence of the Central Government of the Philippines;

4. The National Defense Affairs shall be the concern of the Central Authority provided that the arrangements for the joining of the forces of the Moro National Liberation Front with the Philippine Armed Forces will be discussed later;

5. The Muslims shall have the right to set up their own Courts which implement

\textsuperscript{33} Noble, Chronology, 6; George, Revolt in Mindanao, 253; Gunn, Radical, Islam, 47; McKenna, Source of Muslim Separatism, 23; Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 304.

\textsuperscript{34} For the Full text of the Tripoli agreement, see appendix “E”.
the Islamic Shari'ah laws. The Muslims shall be represented in all Courts including the Supreme Court. The representation of the Muslims in the Supreme Court shall be upon the recommendation from the authorities of the Autonomy and the Supreme Court. Decrees will be issued by the President of the Republic of their appointments taking into consideration all necessary qualifications of the candidates;

6. Authorities of the autonomy in the South of the Philippines shall have the right to set up schools, colleges and universities, provided that matters pertaining to the relationship between these educational and scientific organs and the general education system in the state shall be subject of discussion later on;

7. The Muslims shall have their own administrative system in compliance with the objectives of the autonomy and its institutions. The relationship between such administrative system and the Central administrative system will be discussed later;

8. The authorities of the autonomy in the South of the Philippines shall have their own economic and financial system. The relationship between this system and the Central economic and financial system of the State shall be discussed later;

9. The authorities of the autonomy in the South of the Philippines shall enjoy the right of representation and participation in the Central Government and in all other organs of the State. The number of representatives and ways of participation shall be fixed later;
10. Special Regional Security Forces are to be set up in the area of the Autonomy for the Muslims in the South of the Philippines. The relationship between these forces and the Central security forces shall be fixed later;

11. A Legislative Assembly and an Executive Council shall be formed in the areas of the Autonomy for the Muslims. The setting up of the Legislative Assembly shall be constituted through a direct election, and the formation of the Executive Council shall take place through appointments by the Legislative Assembly. A decree for their formation shall be enacted by the President of the Republic, respectively. The number of members of each assembly shall be determined later on;

12. Mines and mineral resources fall within the competence of the Central Government, and a reasonable percentage deriving from the revenues of the mines and minerals shall be fixed for the benefit of the areas of the autonomy;

13. A Mixed Committee shall be composed of representatives of the Central Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the representatives of the Moro National Liberation Front. The Mixed Committee shall meet in Tripoli during the period from the Fifth of February to a date not later than the Third of March 1977. The task of said Committee shall be to study in detail the points left for discussion in order to reach a solution thereof in conformity with the provisions of this agreement;

14. A ceasefire shall be declared immediately after the signature of this agreement, provided that its coming into effect should not exceed the 20th
January 1977. A Joint Committee shall be composed of the two parties with the help of the Organization of the Islamic Conference represented by the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission to supervise the implementation of the ceasefire;

15. The said Joint Committee shall also be charged with supervising the following:

   a. A complete amnesty in the areas of the autonomy and the renunciation of all legal claims and codes resulting from events which took place in the South of the Philippines;

   b. The release of all the political prisoners who had relations with the events in the South of the Philippines;

   c. The return of all refugees who have abandoned their areas in the South of the Philippines;

   d. To guarantee the freedom of movements and meetings;

16. A joint meeting shall be held in Jeddah during the first week of the month of March 1977 to initial what has been concluded by the Committee referred to in Para. 11;

17. The final agreement concerning the setting up of the autonomy referred to in the first and second paragraphs shall be signed in the City of Manila, Republic of the Philippines, between the Government of the Philippines and Moro National Liberation Front, and the Islamic Conference represented by the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission and the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Conference;
18. Immediately after the signing of the Agreement in Manila, a Provisional Government shall be established in the areas of the autonomy to be appointed by the President of the Philippines; and be charged with the task of preparing for the elections of the Legislative Assembly in the territories of the Autonomy; and administer the areas in accordance with the provisions of this agreement until a Government is formed by the elected Legislative Assembly. The Government of the Philippines shall take all necessary constitutional processes for the implementation of the entire Agreement.

The Tripoli Agreement raised hopes and the opportunity for a final end to the long conflict in the southern Philippines. The Marcos regime was praised by many countries particularly the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). However, in the capital Manila, there were mixed interpretations about the agreement. Some viewed the government's decision to sign the agreement as a clear indication of the MNLF's victory because the terms in the agreement were, indeed, very close to what the MNLF had been demanding from the government, which meant that the MNLF organization had successfully taken steps toward full autonomy. But in contrast, Marcos strongly stressed that further moves to join the Muslim districts into one administrative region would require a process of determining through referendum what the people in the affected areas truly wanted. Naturally, the MNLF was not happy with this development and stressed that it would oppose the holding of a referendum as it was not stipulated in the Tripoli agreement. Consequently, the agreement faced a serious problem because of the differences in interpretations and understanding of the terms of
The government of the Philippines wanted to ensure that the people living in areas to be covered by autonomy were consulted instead of simply imposing the agreement on them according to the terms of implementation. In other words, this situation confirms that even with a signed agreement between the government and the rebel movement, there is no assurance it could be implemented in the conflict-affected areas. What is agreed at the national level is not necessarily followed at the provincial level, especially if such a policy would lead to sudden changes in the traditional system of authority in the affected communities.

In the beginning of 1977, an agreement on the cessation of hostilities was signed between the government and the MNLF under the supervision of the ICFM, followed by a government declaration the amnesty for rebel returnees was already in effect. On January 11, the government announced that it would conduct a referendum in the 13 districts stipulated in the Tripoli Agreement to determine whether the populations in those districts were willing to live in an autonomous region and also determine the extent of the areas to be covered by the autonomous government. This development created a confusion that required a renegotiation on the implementation of the Tripoli agreement. On the side of the Philippine government, Imelda Marcos visited Tripoli once again in a bid to break the impasse on the impending referendum. Qadhafi, through a letter to Marcos, urged the Philippine government to issue a decree that would enable the creation of autonomy for the 13 districts; set up a provisional government in which the MNLF would

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35 Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 306; Peter G. Gowing, Religion and Regional Cooperation, 17; Mercado, Culture, Economics, and revolt, 163-164.
participate; and allow the provisional government to organize a referendum to determine the form of administration within the area of the autonomy.\textsuperscript{36}

Consequently, President Marcos declared the establishment of autonomy in the 13 districts in the south on March 26, 1977. Among his first acts was the appointment of six Muslims as district governors and seven Christian governors to compose and run the provisional government. Marcos offered the chairmanship of the provisional government to Nur Misuari; but convinced that such autonomy was limited, Misuari rejected the offer. What followed in the process was the declaration for the establishment of two autonomous regions, regions 9 and 12. The autonomous government covered by region 9, to be based in Zamboanga city, was Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-tawi, Zamboanga del Sur, and Lanao del Norte. The autonomous government in region 12 covered Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, North Cotabato (now Cotabato Province), and Sultan Kudarat in which Cotabato city was the selected base. The two autonomous regions were not allowed to act independently on matters that fall under the jurisdiction of the central government. Furthermore, the two regions, 9 and 12, were to directly report to the President of the Philippines.\textsuperscript{37}

The MNLF was not happy with the creation of the two autonomous regions as they excluded other districts mentioned in the Tripoli Agreement. It considered such a move as an effort to mislead the Muslims on the true meaning of the terms and conditions of the Tripoli Agreement. The MNLF turned for help to outside actors as it called on Muslim countries to pressure the Philippine government to act in

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{36} For text of the Qadhafi's letter, see selected Documents-part I (ISIP), 6-14 and Aid Memoire, 34-37, for the position of the MNLF, see selected Documents-Part 3 (ISIP), 169-173.
\textsuperscript{37} Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 307.
\end{footnotesize}
accordance with the mandate of the Agreement signed in 1976.\textsuperscript{38}

In spite of the strong opposition of the MNLF and its counter-proposal to establish an autonomous region placing Zamboanga City as its capital city where it would have security forces of its own, the Marcos regime was determined to hold a referendum as planned to determine the extent of the autonomy while asking the people whether or not they would want to live under MNLF administration. The MNLF declared that they would not participate in the referendum and would move to undermine the smooth conduct of such government activity. The MNLF suspected that the conduct of the referendum placed it at a disadvantage since only five of the 13 districts had a Muslim majority, the rest being populated by a Christian majority. Despite the MNLF protest and the disagreement of Libyan Leader Qadhafi, the referendum was held in the 13 provinces on April 17, 1977 and the final result was announced on April 23.\textsuperscript{39} Majority of the respondents in the referendum opposed the inclusion of the 13 districts into one region under MNLF administration while Marcos's plan to grant autonomy to the two regions was ratified even though a majority of the Muslims boycotted the referendum. The foreign minister, Carlos Romulo, visited many Muslim countries in an effort to explain the outcome of the plebiscite and the stand of the government of the Philippines on the Muslim autonomy issue. But on May 16-22, 1977 at the Eighth Conference of Muslim Foreign Ministers convened in Tripoli, the foreign ministers called on Muslim states

\textsuperscript{38} Che Man, Muslim Separatism, 147; Rodil, the Lumad and Moro, 17; Mercado, Culture, Economics, and Revolt, 164; Peter Gowing, "Contrasting Agendas for Peace in the Muslim South," \textit{Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society} 8, no.4 (December1980): 298-299.

\textsuperscript{39} For official result of the referendum, see selected documents-part-1 International Studies Institute of the Philippines (ISIP), 15-19.
to support the MNLF and criticize the Marcos regime for not complying with its international obligations under the Tripoli Agreement. The conference further instructed the Committee of Four to continue finding ways towards the resolution of the conflict between the government of the Philippines and the Muslims represented by the MNLF. At this time, the OIC granted the MNLF observer status at the Conference.40

In the local scene, the fighting continued in different areas of Mindanao in which both parties to the conflict accused each other of breaking the ceasefire agreement. At the upper level of command in the Armed Forces, senior military leaders suggested to the President tougher military campaigns as a possible solution to the Mindanao conflict. On the other hand, the MNLF was unable to generate formidable forces like those from 1970 to 1973 due to exhaustion on the part of the combatants, the surrender of some MNLF fighters to the government, and the emerging corruption within the ranks and file of the MNLF. These difficulties faced by the MNLF organization were exacerbated by the fact that its leaders were not in the area of battle but were based abroad. Consequently, the fighting elements of the MNLF coalesced with local leaders of the Muslim communities. Despite the perceived decline of the combat effectiveness of the MNLF forces, the government authorities—especially the Army—had not been capable of maintaining peace and security in the south because of the threat posed by another rebel group: the

40 For text of the resolution of the ICFM eight conference in May 16-22, 1977, see Selected Documents-part 1 (ISIP), 31-32; also see Misuari’s address to the conference, in Selected Documents (ISIP), Part 3, 71-84; Noble, The Philippines: Muslims Fight for an Independence State, 14; May, Moro Movement, 57; Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 308-309.
communist New People’s Army (NPA).  

The deteriorating situation of the MNLF particularly among the combatants served to create a situation that divided the Muslim rebel movement in Mindanao. The first to break away from the organization in 1978 was Hashim Salamat, who has then Misuari’s deputy and second in command. Salamat and his followers established another organization called the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The MILF was more inclined to the religious way of struggle and, because his newly formed MILF was not recognized by the OIC, Salamat opted to move the center of the organization to Pakistan. According to reports, some 500 MILF fighters were trained in Afghanistan. Salamat earned the support of religious leaders not only abroad but also in local Muslim communities. Rashid Lucman and Salipada Pendatun of Lanao and Cotabato respectively, though both in exile in Jeddah that time, supported Salamat in his new struggle. The MILF began to organize a local support system among the Muslims in Mindanao while emphasizing the teachings of Islam and creating an organization for women, youth, and the Ulama. This process of organization was followed by the creation of the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF), which served as the MILF’s fighting arm. The MILF was supported by then-Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, even as Salamat was later abandoned by Lucman and Pendatun who formed another group named the Bangsamoro Liberation Organization (BMLO).

By 1982, another similar group called the MNLF-Reformist Group (MNLF-
RG), composed mostly of the Maranao of Lanao, was founded by Dimas Pondatu.\(^{42}\) But in spite of the numerous Muslim rebel groups that emerged during those years, the OIC maintained that the MNLF was the main organization representing Muslims in the southern Philippines – with Nur Misuari as the standing leader.\(^{43}\) The reason for the emergence of many groups may have been understood as a competition for leadership, or as a result of the attraction policy of the Philippine government to encourage rebels to abandon the revolt. But one may conclude that it was a product of perseverance on the part of the movement itself. It shows the fluidity of the situation in the internal conflict that even though one organization’s capacity to pursue combat activities is in decline, a new one would emerge either to continue the struggle or push for another ideology, but the overall goal of these groups to fight for the rights of their identity group.

Another development in the underground movement was the surrender of some of the combatants. On June 7, 1978, Abul Khayr Alonto, who had been MNLF vice-chairman, surrendered to the government along with 500 combatants who laid down their arms. Alonto was encouraged by the prospect of becoming a prominent leader who would eventually join the government and enjoy the benefits of the created autonomy. Al Kaluang, also one of the hardcore leaders of the rebellion based in the Sulu area, also surrendered to the government. Both Alonto and Aluang had surrendered in the past but returned after a while to the underground movement. Alonto was appointed by President Marcos Speaker of the legislative

\(^{42}\) Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 311.
\(^{43}\) Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 312; Cesar Majul, The Moros of the Philippines, 176; Noble, The Philippines: Muslims fight for an Independence State, 16.
assembly of region 12.

In line with the policy of attraction by the Marcos regime, high salaries for high positions were offered to those who would abandon the rebellion and join government service within the autonomous governments of regions 9 and 12. By 1982, thus, about 37,000 (as claimed by the government) Muslim rebels had surrendered to the government. However, there were reported anomalies in the alleged surrender of rebels. Some reports noted that not all who surrendered were real MNLF fighters but only pretended as such to avail of the benefits offered. Some would surrender for a while and then later on go back to the underground movement claiming they were still part and parcel of the Moro struggle.44

During the opening of the Eleventh Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers on May 17-21, 1980 in Islamabad, Nur Misuari when given a chance to address the conference announced that the MNLF, under his leadership, had reverted to its original demand for self-determination and independence to solve the Moro plight in the southern Philippines. The conference once again blamed the Philippine government for not addressing the issue of the Muslims and further preventing negotiations toward achieving a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The conference remained supportive of the MNLF position and was still prepared to pursue peace negotiations in accordance with the terms and conditions stipulated in the 1976 Tripoli Agreement.45 In other words, no consensus was easy to attain between the

44 Noble, The Philippines: Muslims Fight for an Independence, 17; Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 312-313; May, Situations of Philippine Muslims, 435; George, Revolt in Mindanao, 263.
parties in the negotiations. The MNLF through its leader Nur Misuari would just seek the help of the OIC in situations where the Philippine government was deemed to be merely trying to contain the Muslim struggle rather than pursuing the mandate of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement.

On the other hand, the Philippine government, in a bid to prevent the escalation of Muslim rebellion, was frequently using the "policy of attraction" to undermine the Muslims' sympathy for the MNLF in the belief that it would weaken the Moro rebellion. On the part of the OIC, they could do nothing except to protest against the government of the Philippines for not pursuing peace in the southern Philippines, and to the extreme, provide financial and logistical support to the Muslim rebels in Mindanao. Support of any kind from abroad may have been intended for economic and social development of Muslim communities but there was no assurance that such aid would be solely used for the intended purposes and not for advancing the Muslim rebellion against the Philippine government.

CONCLUSION

This chapter showed how the Philippine government had struggled so long to pacify the Muslim rebellion in the south. The process of pacification was so complex that even the attempted peace agreements did not create a cooperative environment between the parties to the conflict. The government had been faced with a dilemma in the course of looking for options, preferably peaceful, that its strategic decisions only led to more confusion among government leaders and those that represented the Muslim communities. The national leadership has had to balance its policy with the national interest and that of the people of Mindanao
while taking steps to ensure that diplomatic relations with other countries, particularly the oil producing countries in the Middle East, would not be jeopardized by the way it handled the problem of secessionism in Mindanao.

While the Philippine government under Marcos and before him was busy formulating its economic policy, the Huks emerged in the north which became the major security threat for the newly created democratic country in the Southeast Asia region. The plan for Mindanao development was a priority in the economic policy of the central government in Manila not only for economic but also for security reasons. This policy allowed the government to use the fertile lands in Mindanao in its policy of attraction for the rebellion in the north. There was also a strong conviction that developing Mindanao would pacify Muslim isolationist tendencies. It must be remembered that during those years, the Philippines was second only to Japan in terms of economic performance. Nevertheless, the development plan through the exploration of vast lands in Mindanao benefited the rebels, or Huks, from the north.

The government was able to effectively end the Huk rebellion in Luzon but the same program created tensions between the government and the Moros in Mindanao. In short, such an ambitious plan for Mindanao had been one of the most effective options in terms of attracting combatants to end their rebellion. The Huk movement was successfully ended by offering its leaders and fighters political positions with a promise of land in Mindanao when they surrender. Consequently, as illustrated above, the policy of the government became one-sided, leaving behind the interests of the Muslim communities while giving more priority to supporting
the Christian settlers. In other words, the government program for development coupled with the resettlement of people from the north to the south may have been an effective tool to end both the rebellions in the north by the *Huks* and the Muslim rebels in the south if it was managed in accordance with the interests of both Muslims and Christians. As a result, these government programs only increased the level of insecurity among the Muslim communities, thus giving them greater incentives to rebel.

The educational program as a government policy for the integration of the Muslims into the mainstream of Philippine society was perceived to be the long-term solution to the Moro rebellion. Muslim youths, through various scholarships, were able to go to school mostly in the universities in Manila through which they landed the kind of jobs and professions they wanted. Consequently, there were many Muslims in the succeeding generations who become lawyers, engineers, doctors, nurses, and the like which enabled the Muslim community to elevate their literacy. In fact, some of these young Muslims even pursued advance studies in the developed countries, including the United States. Most of the educated Muslims, indeed, became part of the government service not only in the place where they came from, but even in the central government wherein Muslims were given a chance to be a member of the House of Representatives or the Senate. In short, education for Muslims was proven an effective tool for their integration into the national mainstream. Perhaps, the educational program for Muslims in the south is one of the primary reasons for the continued existence of "moderate groups" among the Muslims of Mindanao.
Contrary to the good outcome of the educational program for Muslims, the same also presented some disadvantages, particularly in terms of its impact on the resolution of the Muslim secessionist tendency. The process of educating the young Moros had provided a common venue for congregation and unified all the linguistic groups into one strong and cohesive organization. To the extreme, the knowledge and skills they earned from universities apparently became a tool to widen their network that enabled the same generation to bring the international Islamic community to their side. The education of Muslims would have been an effective tool for integration had the government taken advantage of the leadership skills of these educated young Muslims in furthering the goal of uniting Filipinos.

What happened, instead, was that the government efforts to develop Mindanao were perceived as a systematic way of discriminating against the Muslims. As a result, the educated leaders' connection to the outside world made it possible to internationalize the Mindanao conflict and facilitate foreign intervention in the country's internal conflict. In the end, diplomatic pressure from outside compelled the Philippine government to enter into an agreement that was to have a tremendous impact on its domestic and foreign policies. But even though the government was struggling to resolve its security problem in the south exacerbated by external factors, it could have made a promising start for the peaceful resolution of the Muslim rebellion if only the government was sincere in its commitment. Ultimately, the conflict became an interaction between the state leaders and the international community led by the OIC. Lastly, the process of wider interaction provided a greater incentive for the Moro people in the south to continue the
rebellion against the government. Thus, the decades-long effort to integrate the Muslims in the southern Philippines into the national socio-political mainstream became a problematic process.46

In the next chapter, the study examines the second major attempt at resolving the Mindanao conflict.

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CHAPTER 5
REMEDIAL NEGOTIATIONS AND THE 1996 FINAL PEACE AGREEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Internal conflict always comes with political instability in a country. Change in political leadership is a potential source of social disorder because of expected enormous changes in government policies. This instability and discontinuity of policies, particularly in the developing world, happens because a set of leaders in a new regime resists following the path of established political policy of previous regimes. The causes of change in the system can be attributed to the behavior and personality of leaders. In matters of addressing internal security issues, there is no assurance that what was virtually agreed during the previous regime between challengers and the government is carried on in the new regime. Peace negotiations have always been a victim of this adversarial behavior of leaders who always consider the government's superiority over groups which undermine the legitimacy of the state. To the extreme, the same conflict and the negotiation with rebels are commonly used for advancement of political interests that do not contribute to the overall aim of bringing peace. Some politicians use security issues to elevate their political status relative to others by making promises, commitment, and contracts in which not everything has to be true and could be implemented when they occupy influential positions in government.

In the Philippines, the fragile situation in the south has been a pasture for those leaders who, by virtue of their political position, just play around the pressing security problems. The instability of the situation in Mindanao is a product of the
inability of both the government and the rebel leaders to fulfill their commitments. Oftentimes, leaders in political authority are simply making sure that the escalation of violent conflict is contained and would not invite outside actors, although most of the time it does get the attention of other states. National leaders try to avoid intervention in order to prevent conflicts from spilling over to the regional or international level, believing it would complicate the matter. But it is unlikely that a violent internal conflict can remain an internal matter until it is resolved. When external forces become part of the actors in security issues, the complexity of interactions is heightened that the likelihood of easy resolution becomes almost impossible. Thus, the government itself has to address the concerns of the domestic audience while balancing the demands of external actors.

The 1976 Peace Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) which represents the Muslims in the southern Philippines was a covenant. It was an agreement full of promises for lasting peace, prosperity, and equality that would mitigate the effects of perceived discrimination. But promises almost always remain unfulfilled as leaders become forgetful. Leaders, after they are elected to key political positions, would only realize the "big mistake" of making undoable promises during the political campaign period once the people begin to hold them to such promises.

The 1976 peace agreement must have been several steps ahead towards attainable peace because both parties in the conflict had agreed to start building confidence in the context of ending the decades-old hostilities between the Muslims and government-backed Christians in Mindanao. Because of the stupidity of the
leaders, the clear horizon for peace over Mindanao turned out to be futile that even interventions (diplomatic) of international communities and distant powers have not worked. In this chapter, the study examines the remedial negotiations which attempted to rectify the faulty approaches to conflict resolution between the GRP and the alleged secessionist Muslims in the southern Philippines.

It was an “alleged secessionism” because the history of the Mindanao conflict shows that the Muslim rebels would only turn to making extreme demands for “independence or separation” when they saw no hope of achieving autonomy. The first section of this chapter examines significant events concerning the series of negotiations after the 1976 agreement to prevent further escalation of the violent conflict, which had evolved into a conflict between the government-backed Christians and the minority Muslims. The second section is a critical examination of the process of implementation of the 1996 Final Peace agreement between the government and the MNLF, and undertakes an assessment of the overall impact of that agreement in the context of ending the Muslim rebellion in the southern Philippines.

EFFORTS PRIOR TO PEACE AGREEMENT

The political leadership of the Philippine government at the height of tensions in the 1980s, when the dictatorship was being contested, and the political opposition brought the Mindanao conflict to the center of political propaganda. While the incumbent dictatorial rule was losing domestic support, the leadership of the opposition took advantage of attracting the rebel forces, particularly the MNLF, in order to get the people under their influence to support the candidates of the
opposition party. The MNLF, thus, expressed sympathy for the anti-Marcos movement and support for any action to oust President Marcos to be replaced by someone who would look into the plight of the Muslims. During the election campaign period in 1985, Corazon Aquino, the widow of Senator Aquino who was murdered at the Manila International Airport when he returned home from exile in the United States, promised to look at the establishment of local autonomy for the Muslims in Mindanao and Sulu in accordance with the guidelines stipulated in the Tripoli Agreement. Following this line of political propaganda, President Marcos accused the opposition party of endangering the integrity of the country by supporting the establishment of a Muslim state in Mindanao. However, the political opposition denied this and claimed that should Mrs. Aquino win, she would support full autonomy for Muslims in the south following the mandate of the Tripoli agreement, and that under no circumstances would secession be entertained.¹

When Corazon Aquino became president after a bloodless popular uprising in Manila in what is now known as the People Power Revolution of February 1986, one of the priorities of her regime was to restore peace and order in the entire country through reconciliation. Some of the jailed leaders of the New People's Army (NPA) were pardoned and released from prison. To address the Muslim rebellion in the south, a ceasefire was declared and a call was made on all armed groups to come to the negotiating table. To start the peace negotiations, a meeting was held in Malaysia but despite the ceasefire unilaterally declared by the Armed Forces, only the MNLF-RG/BMLO showed up to meet with the minister of defense. Technically,

¹Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 331; May, Philippines under Aquino, 348; May, the Moro Movement, 58-59; Majul, The Moro Struggle, 915.
the government was reluctant to talk to this group because it was the MNLF that had been pushing for autonomy for Muslims in Mindanao. Other groups may have been causing security problems but they were not recognized as the representative of the Moro people. Consequently, the Aquino administration decided to negotiate with MNLF chairman Nur Misuari. But no significant development took place on this front for months and the rebels in Mindanao, particularly in Sulu, continued fighting with the Army. It was assessed that the intention of the Muslim rebels might have been to intensify their attacks to pressure the government to possibly agree to the demands of the MNLF. These clashes prompted the government to respond quickly. By June of 1986, the first government response was to send the undersecretary for foreign affairs, Mamintal Tamano, a Muslim, to several Arab countries to request the OIC and the World Muslim League to orchestrate talks, through their leaders, between the government of the Philippines and Muslims in the south.2

The Philippine government had to do a dual task of convincing the leadership of the MNLF to negotiate and, at the same time, amending Philippine Laws had to accommodate the MNLF autonomy. The prominent figure that had been trying to persuade Misuari, who was based in Jeddah, to return to the Philippines to restart peace talks with the new administration was Butz Aquino, a brother-in-law of President Aquino. Misuari agreed to return to the Philippines for peace negotiations with the government. On the other hand, the government was making sure that in the newly drafted constitution, local autonomy for Muslims in the south was included. Indeed on October 15, 1986, the Constitutional Committee included a

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2 Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 331-332.
section of the constitution granting autonomy to Muslims in Mindanao, later called the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao or ARMM. But it was specifically mentioned that such autonomy would be created within the context of national sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines. Consequently, the Aquino administration agreed to grant autonomy to the four districts where the Muslims were a majority. At that time, Misuari agreed with the government plan and returned to the Philippines to talk personally to the President. In a development like this, outside actors are quick to respond owing to the very likely possibility that a "peace agreement" will be reached between the parties in the conflict. Neighboring countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, and the OIC were very quick to arrange subsequent meetings while preventing Misuari from pursuing his demand for secession from the republic. In the end, Misuari was compelled to accept, for the meantime, the offer of autonomy to four districts which was far better than the two districts previously created by Marcos.3 But it must be remembered that in this period, several other Muslim armed groups had emerged, and definitely such groups were not part of the government negotiations with the MNLF.

Misuari's return to the Philippines raised hopes for a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Mindanao. He was highly regarded for defending the rights of the Moros, and so, for the Muslims especially in Sulu, he was considered a hero. Following his arrival was a four-day general assembly which started on September

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3, 1986 in Jolo and was participated in by at least 2,000 armed men, civilians, and an official from the Libyan embassy in Manila. Another most significant development on the ground was the meeting of President Aquino with Misuari on September 5 in Jolo in which they agreed that the government and the MNLF would resume talks and that a ceasefire would be declared to give way to the negotiations. There was an assurance that the “peace talks” would resume in the context of attaining stability in Mindanao. Mrs. Aquino appointed Major General Jose Magno, the Commanding General of Southern Command whose jurisdiction covers the entire Mindanao area, and Agapito ‘Butz’ Aquino, her brother-in-law, who had been her emissary to Misuari in the months before the February 1986 presidential snap elections, as government negotiators.

But it seemed that peace was so elusive in this part of the Philippines. While the MNLF forces, by virtue of the ceasefire, more or less abided by the cessation of hostilities, other armed groups also claiming to represent the Moros continued to fight with government forces. In addition, the NPA threat was imminent that it could sabotage the ongoing peace talks. On the part of the MILF, which broke away from the MNLF in the late 1970s, its chairman Hashim Salamat announced that his organization would not take part in whatever the GRP and MNLF agreed upon. The MNLF-RG also announced that it was not obliged to comply with such an agreement unless their group was included in the talks. In spite of opposition from other groups, thus, Misuari traveled to several Muslim areas in order to gain the support of the local people for the peace process. But the Christians and religious sectors were skeptical about the peace talks as they suspected that secessionism for
Muslims in the south had been encouraged by the government. Consequently, Christian armed groups emerged to oppose the feared takeover of the MNLF over Mindanao.4

The first meeting attended by representatives of the Aquino administration and the MNLF was held in Jeddah on January 3, 1987, in which the OIC Secretary General was present. Both parties agreed that succeeding meetings would be held in Zamboanga for a thorough discussion of the issue of autonomy for Mindanao, Sulu, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, and Palawan through the constitutional process, which meant that the people in these areas must be consulted on whether they would accept being part of the Muslim autonomous region. However, the MNLF opposed the proposed conduct of a referendum believing it was disadvantageous to the cause of Muslim autonomy in areas where Christians were a majority. In spite of the warning from the MNLF that this constitutional process would jeopardize the negotiations, the constitution was ratified on February 2, 1987 mandating the creation of autonomy for Muslims in the south and the Cordillera on the north through a democratic process, that is, the people must be asked if they would like to be part of the autonomy.

While the ratification of the 1987 Constitution meant the establishment of autonomy in the south, thus, it also meant that people living in these areas must first be consulted through a referendum. With the historical events that had transpired between the Christians and the Muslims firmly implanted in their minds, both sides were suspicious that the side that wins in the referendum would dominate and

4 Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 332-333; Majul, The Moro Struggle, 915-916; May, The Philippines under Aquino, 351.
exercise full authority over the other. In other words, what prevailed in the minds of the people was the fear for their security that even the government could not guarantee once an attack from either side started. No matter how good the impact of the peace effort would be in terms of economic development as well as social and political stability, skepticism always prevails among the contenders to negotiations when security becomes a concern, as in the case of the Mindanao conflict. Moreover, the conduct of a referendum meant that autonomy would be limited to areas where the Muslims were a majority instead of the original demand of the MNLF for 13 provinces.5

In the subsequent meetings of both parties, the government panel insisted on negotiation in accordance with the 1987 Constitution which was ratified by the majority in a referendum. In short, as far as the creation of an autonomous area was concerned, it should go through a constitutional process that requires the consent of the people in each district targeted for inclusion in the autonomy. Technically, this was a very simple process but it was a major stumbling block to the negotiation. The constitutional process, through a referendum in which the majority of the residents of the affected areas would ratify the creation of an autonomous region in each district, became the basis for the peace process in Mindanao. In contrast, the MNLF combatants as well as the MILF forces that were inclined to a religious way of struggle, did not participate in such a political exercise. Aside from disagreements of both parties on the interpretation of the provisions of the peace accord, the government insistence on setting up a Regional Consultative Commission (RCC) to

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5 Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 333-334; Majul, The Moro Struggle, 917; Majul, The Moros of the Philippines, 177; May, the Philippines under Aquino, 351-354.
be composed of many sectors of society further compounded the situation. In essence, this option involving many actors would further complicate the negotiation process because each actor's demand has to be satisfied; otherwise, it would trigger strong opposition to an agreement.

Until May 1987, the talks never had a fruitful outcome; instead, the MNLF leadership warned that hostilities in Mindanao were imminent because of the disagreement on the terms and conditions for establishing autonomy. The government accused the MNLF of looking for an excuse to pursue its overall goal of seceding from the Republic of the Philippines. Naturally, the Christian majority frowned on the idea of secession, and the extreme reaction as a response to this would be the reversal of peace efforts and a return to armed hostilities between the Muslims and the Christians- not between the MNLF and the Government forces. Misuari, on his part, condemned the Aquino regime and as usual turned to the OIC for help to pressure the Philippine government. While Misuari was insisting on having the talks under the OIC's auspices, the government was reluctant to involve outside actors because it was difficult for the Aquino administration to deal with two camps at the same time. The regime may have been right in its move to avoid external intervention in the negotiation process, but it must be remembered that OIC member states had been significant actors in the effort at conflict resolution that the MNLF could turn to. More so, if the government alone was made to decide on the future of the peace process, the chances of success were minimal because the state would not decide on matters with strategic implications for its future interests.

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6 Moshe Yegar, op. cit, 334-335; see also Majul, The Moro Struggle, 917-920; Majul, The Moros of the Philippines, 177-178.
After neglecting consultations with the MNLF, the Aquino administration created a Regional Consultative Commission to formulate a law for the establishment of a regional autonomy for Muslims in Mindanao. In making the law, the government tried to encourage both parties to participate but the MNLF and the MILF showed no interest. After several months of crafting the law, the bill creating an autonomous area for Muslims was signed by President Aquino. The law stated that the autonomy would be established in the context of the Tripoli Agreement for the 13 provinces and nine cities, but contingent upon ratification of the population living in those areas mentioned. The regional autonomy would be sovereign over its local economy, especially on matters relating to the exploration of natural resources. Said law also mandated the establishment of local courts, the Shari'a and tribal courts, which can litigate on matters pertaining to personal issues, family, and property. Important in the law was the mandate on the Philippine government to undertake measures to allocate funds for the autonomous region. It seemed that the law's provisions were almost carefully studied to cater to the demands of the Moro people, but as noted earlier, the conduct of a referendum made it impossible to ensure the inclusion of all the 13 provinces in the proposed regional autonomy. In other words, that law was similar to Marcos's attempts to pacify the Muslim rebellion. Nevertheless, the government initiatives were seen to exert a mitigating effect on the situation in the south but would not resolve the Muslim rebellion there. The MNLF organization may have been satisfied with whatever government could give, but the emergence of several other armed groups that were not involved in the

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7 Moshe Yegar, op.cit, 335.
peace process and were capable of creating security disturbances in the area complicated the situation in the south.

In spite of what had been taking place, a referendum on Muslim autonomy was conducted in the 13 provinces on November 19, 1989. Again, this referendum was strongly opposed by the MNLF. But while the MNLF called to boycott the referendum, the political exercise was a success on the part of the Christian population and a failure on the part of the Muslims. Most of the 13 provinces, particularly those with a majority Christian population, opposed inclusion in the autonomous region. Only four of the 13 provinces voted for autonomy, these being the Muslim majority provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi which would now belong to the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). Cotabato City was chosen as the seat of governance. This was a kind of forced attempt at conflict resolution, for even in the face of open refusal of the Muslim minority to take part in the talks, the dominant Christians tried to come up with a remedial agreement in the hope of bringing about stability in the region.

The MNLF leadership called for Muslim unity for an armed struggle against the government of the Philippines. Several attacks on government troops and facilities were launched by the rebels that derailed the benign intention of government to create a mutual agreement that would pacify the Muslim rebels and communities. There were reports about an increased number of MNLF forces training militias, but more than that, it was believed that the OIC continued to support the MNLF aspiration. The support of the OIC to the MNLF was clearly stipulated during the 17th Annual Conference of Muslim Foreign Ministers held in
Amman, Jordan in March 1988, and also during the 18th Conference held in Riyadh in March 1989. The OIC had declared the failure of the Philippine government to fulfill its commitment to resolve the Mindanao conflict in the context of implementing the Tripoli Agreement.\(^8\) The fulfillment of commitments was deemed so important that when it was not implemented according to the agreement, it invited renewed conflict, sometimes with even more intensity than the previous one.

After the elections for governor and vice-governor of the autonomous region in October 1990, President Aquino signed into law the transfer of powers to the ARMM. In spite of the OIC's claim that the government had failed to fulfill the mandates of the Tripoli Agreement, the Aquino regime was confident and believed that autonomy following the terms of the Tripoli was now being implemented with the transfer of power to the autonomy by virtue of the ARMM organic law. The MNLF, which was batting for genuine autonomy based on the agreed creation of regional autonomy for 13 provinces, rejected the government move. Consequently, violence escalated anew as the Army intensified its combat operations against Moro rebels. Reports stated that all civilian villages suspected of supporting the MNLF were bombed, resulting in many deaths, damage to property, and the displacement of thousands of residents from their homes.\(^9\)

This was expected in a failed negotiation because part of the mandate of the Armed Forces was to prepare for the worst should the peace talks fail. The

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\(^8\) Majul, The Moros of the Philippines, 179-180; Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 335-336; May, The Religious Factor, 311; Madale, The Organic Law, 170-183.

\(^9\) Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 336.
government had no other option but to adapt to a changing environment and using its military might to neutralize combatants was always seen as the best option in order to restore stability in the communities. In the end, negotiations like this wind up in a deadlock because military action becomes more attractive to both parties, especially if such armed confrontation has already started and has inflicted casualties on either side. But most often, the overall situation on the ground and the future of negotiations usually change when changes in the political leadership take place.

TOWARDS CONFLICT SETTLEMENT

When Fidel Ramos became Philippine president on June 30, 1992, hopes were buoyed that the impasse would be broken because government representatives met with Nur Misuari in Tripoli in October 1992. Misuari, on his part, was ready to return to the Philippines to resume talks if these would be based on the Tripoli agreement this time around. President Ramos was determined to resume the talks and, in fact, allowed the OIC to act as an observer in the negotiations. Being a former military general, Ramos had a different approach to security issues. He ordered intensified operations against combatants who had separated from the MNLF. But the rebels responded in a different manner. There were several incidents of kidnappings for ransom, which was another development that added to the complexity of the Mindanao conflict. There was no clear evidence on who were responsible for the acts of kidnapping, but it was increasingly clear that a new and more radical threat, the *Abu Sayyaf*, had emerged in Basilan province and Sulu. Military reports said the *Abu Sayyaf* Group (ASG) emerged in 1989,
acquired training in some Arab countries, and had links to the international terrorist network Jama'a Islamia (JI). In spite of the atrocities perpetrated by the rebels, both the government and the MNLF agreed to hold a round of talks, which lasted four three days in Jakarta, in 1992. Furthermore, there was hope, this time that an agreement would be reached because the MNLF had dropped its demand for complete secession from the Philippines. Consequently, the government decided to start official negotiations with the MNLF and possibly with the MILF as well.\(^\text{10}\)

The resumption of negotiations was made possible because the demand for an Autonomous Islamic State in Mindanao was dropped by the MNLF. A ceasefire was agreed upon after a meeting in Jakarta in October of 1993. However, as the negotiations progressed, the MILF forces and the Abu Sayyaf intensified military actions against government troops and vital installations. The Abu Sayyaf moved on to its notorious role of carrying out kidnappings for ransom, particularly of foreigners. But in spite of the deteriorating conditions on the ground, the negotiation process continued. This time, Misuari agreed on terms that the transitional government in ARMM would not automatically limit the term of office of incumbent officials in the autonomous region. Concerns about education, economic, and judicial matters were initially discussed while other issues were taken up in succeeding rounds of talks. In addition to this development, the Ramos administration also looked at the situation of Muslim refugees and immigrants in Sabah.

President Ramos himself visited Malaysia and neighboring countries to

\(^{10}\) Amnesty International 1993, 240; Sales, War and Peace, 52; Moshe Yegar, op.cit, 337.
explain, among others, the side of the Philippine government on the peace negotiations with the Muslims in the southern Philippines. Ramos also opened a diplomatic extension office in Sabah to increase Philippine diplomatic cooperation with the Malaysian government. Perhaps, this was one of the best strategies of the Ramos administration in resolving the Mindanao issue in view of the fact that the Malaysian leadership was once helping the Moro rebellion by providing training for the first batch of MNLF cadres who became the leaders of the Muslim rebellion in Mindanao.

After series of talks, the stalemate was broken in June 1995 when the two parties agreed on the understanding that the agreement would be composed of two parts. The first part was that Misuari would be the Governor of the ARMM in the scheduled autonomy election on 9 September. The second part was the consequential renaming of the 13 provinces originally mentioned in the Tripoli agreement as the Special Zone for Peace and Development, for which the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD) would be established and of which Nur Misuari would be named caretaker for the term of three years. This three-year period was supposed to give Nur Misuari enough time to attract and convince the Christians to join the autonomous region. It was also the intention in this period that resources for development channeled into the ARMM would be gradually poured into the rest of Mindanao.

The Consultative Assembly with 81 members and the Darul Ifta, a religious consultative assembly, were set up to help Nur Misuari in the administration of the

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11 Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 337;
ARMM. However, a referendum would be held after three years to determine the extent of the territory to be covered by the autonomy, while at the same time keeping the four provinces in the ARMM as ratified in a 1989 referendum. A significant part of the agreement, likewise, was the integration of 7,500 MNLF combatants into the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the National Police. The rest of the MNLF forces would just lay down their arms and end their rebellion.  

This time, it seemed the agreement resembled the Tripoli Agreement of 1976, but the problem was in the treatment of the combatants. It was a partial integration since, according to some estimates, the number to be integrated was not even half of the total armed men of the MNLF. As seen later in the Muslim struggle, those left behind by the integration process eventually formed their own group, and the worse scenario was that the same group would continue to rebel against the government.

Misuari visited several communities claiming that the SPCPD, which he chaired, was the only solution to the impasse in the talks between the government and the MNLF, which means that this was just a transitional step towards the establishment of a permanent autonomy in the 13 provinces and ten cities in the southern Philippines. Misuari also hoped to get adequate funding so he would be able to oversee and improve the economy in Mindanao by upgrading vital facilities. However, President Ramos explained clearly to the people that SPCPD was not a regional government and had no authority or jurisdiction over the military and the police. In other words, the President's pronouncement indicated that the ARMM was not an autonomous region and that the authority and powers vested in the SPCPD

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12 Moshe Yegar, op. cit., 339-340; also see annex " for the full text of the agreement between the government of the Philippines (GRP) and the MNLF.
were merely an extension of the President's power. But in spite of all of these developments, the government saw the strategy as the best tool to dampen the Muslims' secessionist tendency. In short, the two parties to the peace talks had contradictory interpretations about the impending establishment of autonomy for the Muslims. The government explanation eased the Christians' insecurity about the future implications for them of the ARMM because the president would still control the supposedly autonomous areas. On the MNLF side, however, Misuari had to explain his opposition to the agreement to maintain his prestige. He claimed that agreeing to the government offer, for a while, was just the first step toward complete autonomy.

Finally, the government announced in August 1996 that the signing of the peace agreement between the government of the Philippines and the MNLF was scheduled on September 2 that year. The signing of the agreement, in theory, would mean the end of the Muslim rebellion in the southern Philippines because the rebel group had finally agreed to end the violence. For more than 30 years of the Moro struggle, an estimate of more than 100,000 lives were lost - half of them combatants, about 30 percent government soldiers, and the rest innocent civilians. According to some estimates, the government had spent no less than $3 billion for the war alone, not to mention the costs of repairing and rehabilitating damaged vital installations and properties of both the government and private entities. Nevertheless, Misuari officially assumed the post of ARMM governor on September 13. The government

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had promised a yearly budget of $380 million for the region. Observers in the conflict claimed that the two major reasons for the MNLF’s decision to end the rebellion were that the rebels had grown tired of waging war and popular support for their cause had declined. Similarly, the military and other government forces had also become war-weary, and the public’s support for the war was waning. Another factor that also convinced Misuari to forge an agreement was pressure from the OIC, even though it extended support to Misuari up to the very end of the talks.\(^{14}\)

In theory, a rebellion is ended by “negotiated settlement” the moment an agreement is signed by both parties in conflict for the cessation of hostilities. But in the case of the Mindanao conflict, the situation was different from other internal conflicts happening elsewhere. For while the MNLF had entered into a peace agreement with the government of the Philippines, other armed groups claiming to represent the plight of the Muslims had emerged in the conflict-affected region. The MILF had been posing a serious threat to government authority in the same area of autonomy while the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu and Basilan provinces including its sub-units in Central Mindanao continued to instill fear among the communities by kidnapping members of prominent families.

As armed confrontations between the Army and the ASG occurred, the MILF was often dragged into the fray as the Army’s offensives against the ASG usually took place in the MILF’s area of operations. Consequently, whenever the Army gave chase to the ASG, the MILF would be dragged into the armed confrontation because their camps, according to them, were being attacked by the Army. In the end,

\(^{14}\) Tiglao, op. cit., 24; Sales, op. cit., 61,63; Moshe Yegar, op.cit., 341.
frequent armed clashes took place in the autonomous areas. There were reports as well that some members of the ASG came from the MNLF, or those who were left behind in the integration program.

THREATS TO PEACE

The conventional wisdom about peace negotiations is that violent conflict ends when two parties enter into a peace accord. This is supported by the fact that rebels “lay down” their weapons and agree to the terms and conditions of the peace pact in the hope for a brighter future. This was exactly what happened in the Philippines. When the rebels were integrated into the Armed Forces and the Police, violence was halted, although not long enough. Understandably, the rebels were assured of economic development for their areas, while rebel leaders were offered political positions in the government to. But the Peace Accord had obvious major loopholes. At least three armed groups were deemed threats to the peace agreement: MNLF members who were left behind, the MILF, and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).

After a series of talks, the government and the MNLF agreed to end the rebellion, but it must be remembered that a number of MNLF members were not included in the integration program of the government. The integration process had accommodated only 7,500 MNLF combatants, while it was simply assumed that the rest of the rebels would lay down their arms and support their new-found autonomy. In some estimates, the MNLF had some 20,000 armed members, which means that not even half of the rebels could avail of the benefits of the integration program and be part of the national mainstream.
According to the plan, the MNLF forces who would surrender to the government must bring along with them, as a primary requirement, one firearm when they signified their intention to be part of the integration program. By strict mathematical computation, only 7,500 firearms were turned over to the government, but reports showed that most rebels owned more guns in their homes. Consequently, there was no proper accounting of loose firearms circulating in the region. In addition to this, most of those who signified their intention for inclusion in the integration program were not the original MNLF combatants. For reasons of age and the limited quota, these older fighters chose not to be integrated into the government’s armed services; instead they sent their sons as their representatives.

The neutralization of the armed men, in theory, was a success but MNLF fighters who were excluded from the integration program and had kept their firearms continued to pose a threat to security. Those who were not given a chance to join the Military or the Police felt even more discriminated against. Some of them formed their own group; some preferred to join the MILF, believing it was the true organization that would really fight for the liberation of all Muslims in the southern Philippines. Those MNLF members who were selected by the leadership to be part of the integration were happy enough, but the “threat to peace” were those who were not included in the integration program. Some of the “left behind” MNLF forces joined the notorious Abu Sayyaf while others were welcomed by the more Islamic-inclined organization, the MILF. Just a few months after the signing of the peace agreement, there were incidents of armed confrontation between the Army and the joint forces of the MILF and the Abu Sayyaf.
The MILF refused to join the MNLF in the peace negotiations with the government because it did not recognize the peace agreement as a solution to the Muslim struggle. The MILF forces consistently grew stronger not only because of MNLF members who joined the organization, but the fact that it was the sole organization left that had the support of Muslim communities, especially those who did not support Misuari’s administration. Allegations about Muslim support for the Abu Sayyaf kidnappings remained unconfirmed because Islamic law does not support kidnapping for ransom activities, including indiscriminate bombings of public places, although the ASG claimed that their actions were geared towards protecting Islam from attacks by non-Muslims. Thus, for the same reason, the religious component of the MILF struggle had marred its denial of being linked to the notorious ASG. As a consequence, there were speculations, especially among the military, that both the MILF and the ASG had the same overall goal of establishing an independent Islamic State in the south.\textsuperscript{15} This complication was exacerbated by the fact that the ASG had been operating within the same areas as the MILF. Whenever the military pursued the ASG for kidnapping, the ASG usually ran towards MILF-held areas. In the process of resolving the ASG threat, thus, the government was always trapped in a quagmire of fighting the combined forces of the MILF and the ASG.

Some of the MILF cadres had acquired military training abroad. Today, the organization has more than 25,000 combatants. The MILF also earned enormous support from the local Muslims because of its religious inclination. While the MNLF became known for its strong demand for territorial expansion of autonomy for the

\textsuperscript{15} Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 337, 341-342; Tiglao, op.cit., 24, 27-28
Muslims, the MILF fights for complete Islamic independence of areas with a Muslim majority. It must be remembered that the MNLF usually tried to escalate the violence to gain attention from outside actors, preferably the OIC member countries. For the MILF, it always claimed that fighting against government was not only for the liberation of the Muslims but a Jihad or holy war. In some studies, it was assessed that the latter part of the Marcos regime and the entire Aquino administration (1978-1986 for Marcos, 1986-1992 for Aquino) unwittingly gave the MILF ample time to build up its forces. There were only minor clashes between the MILF and the government forces during those years because both regimes were focused on negotiating with the MNLF. When the MILF split from the MNLF organization in the late 1970s, Hashim Salamat was able to organize a group of young men who were trained in foreign countries, and then sent to Afghanistan to fight alongside the Arab mujahideen against the Russians.\(^\text{16}\)

During those years, MILF strongholds were not confined to the provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, in North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, and South Cotabato. Support was also coming from the Muslims in Davao del Sur and Davao del Norte, Basilan, Sulu, and Zamboanga. The center of the MILF movement was in Maguindanao where a camp called Abubakar was located. Military training and religious enhancement activities were conducted in that area. Before its destruction during a military offensive in 2000, there were foreigners who served as trainers in Camp Abubakar, and the MILF graduated more than 200 young trainees who became commanders in the organization. The training also included making

\(^{16}\) Moshe Yegar, op.cit., 342.
homemade bombs and manufacturing arms like the "Rocket-Propelled Grenade launcher" (RPG), and ammunition. Again, the leadership of the MILF did not agree to join the MNLF in the negotiations because they believed that the creation of the ARMM would not solve the Muslim struggle. For them, the ARMM was not genuine autonomy that would give religious freedom for Muslims in the south. The MILF envisioned a federal structure in the Philippine government in which one of the states would be called Bangsa Moro (Moro Nation) for the Muslims. It must be remembered that in the history of the Mindanao conflict, there is no single event in which the government of the Philippines ever considered demands for a separate state and was thus expectedly not prepared to grant it to the MILF.\(^{17}\)

While the government was busy negotiating with the MNLF in 1996, the MILF took advantage of the time to build up its military strength. On the same year, the MILF escalated its military campaigns against government forces which resulted in many clashes in different areas, particularly in Central Mindanao. The MILF rebels were observed to be more particular in attacking vital installations such as electric power plants, irrigation facilities, and Christian communities. Selected incidents of kidnappings were also blamed on the MILF lost command group (the Pentagon) that operates mostly in central Mindanao which include the provinces of Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, North Cotabato, Lanao del Sur, and South Cotabato. Victims of kidnapping were mostly wealthy businessmen, foreign contractors, and prominent Christian families. It was believed, particularly by the Military, that the ransom money paid by victims in exchange for their freedom was used to finance the

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\(^{17}\) Moshe Yegar, op. cit., 343; Tiglao, Philippines: The Fire Next Time, 26-30; Tiglao, Return to Arms, FEER, vol 160, no. 30 (July 24, 1997): 32
logistical needs of the MILF such as the purchase of arms and ammunition. The MILF claimed they were buying arms from military personnel. Also, the MILF claimed that MNLF forces, preferably those who disagreed with the Misuari-Ramos agreement, were joining the MILF to continue the struggle for self-determination.\textsuperscript{18} Clashes between the MILF forces and the military continued until a bilateral ceasefire was called on January 27, 1997.

Oftentimes, the occasional declaration of truces did not work. Ceasefire declarations were usually shattered by incidents of kidnapping. The Military often accused the MILF of being responsible for such crimes as kidnappings, bombings, and extortion activities. It was believed that the money generated from these illegal activities was used to support the growing number of MILF fighters. Kidnapping activities were a serious concern of the government because such acts derailed the process of peace-building in the south. Whenever there was a kidnap incident, the military was forced to pursue the kidnappers and most often ended up fighting with the bigger MILF forces. This was the reason that the military consistently claimed that MILF forces were involved in the kidnap for ransom activities, while the MILF denied such allegation. On June 26, 1997, the military launched an attack and captured the second largest MILF camp, Rajamuda, located in the marsh land between North Cotabato and Maguindanao provinces. The following month, after a bloody clash in Camp Rajamuda, President Ramos ordered the military to stop operations against the MILF that led to the signing of another ceasefire agreement in July of the same year. In spite of Ramos's promise to reopen talks with the MILF,

\textsuperscript{18}Tiglao, The Hard Corps, 28; Tiglao, Moro Action Call, FEER, vol 159, no. 15 (April 11, 1996): 12
clashes continued and even worsened when it was discovered that two of the rebels killed in an encounter in October were Pakistani and Egyptian nationals.\textsuperscript{19}

As mentioned earlier, the \textit{Abu Sayyaf} (ASG) along with its small sub-units in other areas operating under a kidnap-for-ransom strategy were another threat to peace in the southern Philippines. Compared with the MNLF and the MILF, the ASG was much smaller in number but more extremist, and was a major source of provocation for the government. The ASG emerged in 1989 on the islands of Basilan, Zamboanga, and Jolo. Apart from its strategy of kidnapping for ransom, it also carried out bombings of public places and attacked government forces primarily to instill fear among the population. In return, the local people in the area where the ASG operated were forced to support them for fear of being killed. The identified first leader of the ASG was Abubakar Abdurazak Janjalani. He was born in Basilan in 1963 from a poor family but acquired education from Libya, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. He was also trained in a military camp in Libya, and fought in Afghanistan in the 1980s alongside the Afghan Mujahedeen against the Russian Army. When he returned to Mindanao, he became Uztadz or Islamic teacher in some Madrasas or Islamic schools owing to his Islamic education. He also became a preacher of Islam, in which most of his sermons during Friday prayers in the Mosque included the waging of a revolution against the government and the Christians. According to military estimates, the total number of ASG was from 300 to 500 men with complete armament, including anti-tank weapons believed to have been shipped from foreign countries. In most of the ASG raids, members of the MNLF lost command and MILF

\textsuperscript{19} Moshe Yegar, \textit{op.cit.}, 344.
aided the ASG, and then returned to their original organization once the operation was over. With these tactics, the military on several occasions concluded that the MILF and the ASG belonged to the same organization whose primary strategy was to conduct terror activities. Furthermore, the military believed that the religious affiliation of Muslims in Mindanao and Islamic institutions provided the ASG linkages with international radical Islamic organizations.20

In the early 1990s, the ASG became a major concern of the Philippine government and the international community because of its kidnapping activities targeting foreigners. Several explosions, abductions, and murders especially in Western Mindanao were believed to be part of the ASG’s notorious activities to sow terror in the south. There were also explosions in Manila that killed many innocent civilians in which the ASG was the prime suspect. In August 1991, two Christian missionaries from New Zealand and Sweden were assassinated in Zamboanga City. A year after, the ASG continued to abduct several others, mostly Christian priests or pastors. In November 1992, a doctor and his wife including their children were abducted in Basilan. In January 1993, two nuns were also abducted in Sulu, and in February of the same year two priests, one American and the other Spanish, were abducted.

These are some of the ASG’s notorious activities in the south that until today the Philippine armed forces aided by the United States army has been combating with extreme difficulty. In some instances, negotiations for the safe release of hostages succeeded because the ransom money demanded by the ASG was paid, but

20 Moshe Yegar, op.cit., 344-345;
other victims were simply killed. In most negotiations, the participation of representatives of foreign embassies in Manila was demanded by the ASG in order to make sure that the ransom money would be released to them. On June 3, 1994, the Philippine army began a massive attack on ASG in Sulu. But the ASG responded by intensifying their usual terrorist attacks on military and civilian installations. The Abu Sayyaf abducted 74 Christians in Basilan of whom 15 were killed while the rest were later released unharmed. From 1991 to 1995 alone, the ASG carried out a total of 74 abductions, 75 explosions, 58 robberies, and 50 cases of murder.\textsuperscript{21}

While the government had been suspecting linkages between the ASG and other major rebel groups, the MNLF denied any connections with the ASG. On the other hand, the MILF strongly denied any involvement in abduction activities, saying such form of warfare was not allowed by the MILF rules of engagement. However, the military organization confirmed reports that MILF rebels were providing sanctuary to the ASG especially when they were on the run and evading confrontation with the Army. The Army, in most of their operations, was restrained from pursuing the ASG whenever the latter ran to MILF-controlled areas, as the government did not want to escalate conflict with the MILF. Ceasefires between the GRP and the MILF had been providing ample time and safe grounds for the ASG to regroup because the MILF usually disallowed the Philippine army from operating in their complex. This is why the military confirmed the allegation that the MILF was providing safe haven to the ASG. The extent of MILF support for the Abu Sayyaf was not clear, but it was evident that the ASG could move freely within MILF territory.

\textsuperscript{21} Moshe Yegar, op. cit., 345-346
In recent years, the ASG's terrorist activities created stumbling blocks to peace talks between the GRP and the MILF. Abductions of innocent civilians forced the military to pursue the kidnappers and, in the course of the operation, the military would end up clashing with the MILF. The ASG ran towards the MILF complex so that the succeeding encounters of the Army were consequently not with the ASG but with the MILF forces. In this light, the ceasefires failed. Another complex situation was the unavoidable participation of civilians in the course of negotiations with the terrorists. Negotiations were usually carried out by civilians on behalf of the terrorists. In most cases, the local politicians became spokespersons of the Abu Sayyaf in negotiating the release of hostages. According to unconfirmed reports, local politicians involved in the negotiation process for the release of the hostages were given a share in the ransom money. In short, kidnappings became a source of income for those involved.

There was also another small group operating in the most southern part of Mindanao, the Abu Sofia group. This group had about 30 to 40 members that were ill-equipped compared with the ASG, and was responsible for the abduction of a Korean engineer in 2002 in Sarangani province. The army launched several offensives against the Abu Sofia but in most operations, the rebels managed to escape and avoid confrontation with the army. Perhaps, this group was not out to inflict casualties, as the ASG used to doubt, but only to get the ransom money they demanded. A small piece of document captured by the Philippine Army Special Forces during an attack launched against the Abu Sofia group in Sarangani province—where this author was part of the operation—revealed at least three main
components of the kidnapping syndicate.

The outermost layer was a group of people who comprised the group's negotiating team. They were responsible for making contacts with authorities, negotiating for ransom money for the release of the hostages. The second inner layer was the security team composed of both civilians and armed men. The civilians served as look outs or messengers, and gave information on the movement of government security forces. The armed group, on the other hand, was responsible for the propaganda system and fighting government troops when it was unavoidable. The innermost layer in the system was the hard core team. The team was composed of a small group responsible for keeping the hostages in a secret location. All these three layers of the kidnapping syndicate had proportional shares in the ransom money. This was one of the reasons the military considered the ASG one of its most difficult adversaries in more than a decade. The increased ASG atrocities invited foreign intervention. The United States government, especially after the 9/11 incident, has been very active in supporting the Philippine Armed Forces in combating the terrorist organizations in the country. But in spite of the many developments on the ground that threatened the peace process, the government was determined to continue the integration of MNLF combatants into the Armed Forces and the Police.

INTEGRATION OF MNLF COMBATANTS

The Final Peace agreement signed in September 1996 provided for, among others, the integration of the 7,500 MNLF forces. Those fortunate combatants included in the program were selected based on the recommendations of different
field commanders. However, not all of them were original MNLF combatants. Some were sons of old members; some were younger relatives who could afford the military training conducted by the Philippine Army and the National Police. As of today, the government has made substantial progress its treatment of the MNLF combatants. Some of those who belonged to the first batch of integrees are now ranked major and in a few years, they will be promoted to the next higher grade.

But despite the success in bringing a considerable number of MNLF into government service, the integration program has its share of shortcomings. In the course of the integration program’s implementation, problems cropped up that led to failures in the process. It must be remembered that there were many MNLF fighters left behind in the integration process whose disposition was not clear. Since the integration began, incidents of renewed armed hostilities between the government forces and the disgruntled MNLF members had increased. Similarly, the ASG and the MILF intensified attacks on government installations to signify their opposition to the agreement, while the NPA also escalated atrocities in some other areas outside the autonomous region.

The Final Peace Agreement was carefully planned in the context of attaining, more or less, the needs of the Muslims. It provided implementing structures and mechanisms consisting of two phases of implementation. Phase 1, a three-year transitory period, started immediately after the signing of the agreement. Under the transitory phase, the Special Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD) was created. The Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD), chaired by the MNLF chairman, was established to oversee the development efforts in the
Zones of Peace. Moreover, a consultative Assembly (CA) was established to ensure close coordination between concerned agencies. The integration of the MNLF combatants into the Philippine Armed Forces and the Police was included in Phase I of the implementation. The three-year transitory period culminated with the holding of a plebiscite in the SZOPAD areas for purposes of getting the peoples' approval on the amendments to the Organic Law and determining which provinces and cities would agree to be part of the ARMM. After the plebiscite, the conduct of Phase II was started. MNLF chairman Nur Misuari took office as governor of the ARMM and concurrent Chairman of the SPCPD on September 13, 1996. The surge of international aid to Mindanao in support of the peace agreement and the integration of MNLF forces into the military and the police raised optimism that the long-awaited peace and development was finally within reach in the southern Philippines. But beyond skepticism on how former foes could be joined together in one organization, the government was determined to continue and implement the provisions of the peace accord.

Paragraph 20 of the Peace Accord provided for the integration of the 5,750 members of the MNLF into the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), and 250 of them into the auxiliary services. Paragraph 19, on the other hand, provided for the integration of 1,500 MNLF members into the Philippine National Police (PNP), and another 250 members in the auxiliary services. These were the numbers agreed upon by both parties, although the government was aware that the total number of MNLF integrees was not even one-third of the total number of MNLF combatants.  

22 OPAPP, Report on the Implementation of the 1996 Final Peace agreement between the Government of
In short, this process of neutralization of armed groups is unstable because, in the case of the MNLF fighters, there was no clear disposition of members who were excluded from the integration process.

The 'partial integration' of the combatants reduced, to some extent, the number of loose firearms in the areas of conflict but, by and large, it has had little impact on the primary objective of ending the violent conflict in Mindanao. The number of MNLF integrees represents only about 30 percent of the total strength of MNLF forces. On the other hand, the agreement provides for a mechanism designed to mitigate the discrepancies by putting the burden on the government. In other words, it holds the government responsible for exerting "utmost effort" to establish the necessary conditions that would ensure the eventual integration of a maximum number of MNLF combatants into the Special Regional Security Force (SRSF) -- to be created later -- and other agencies and instrumentalities of Government. This was done, albeit not fully implemented. Moreover, a special socio-economic, cultural and educational program to cater to the needs of MNLF forces not absorbed into the AFP, PNP, and the SRSF was to be established. Such program was meant to prepare the MNLF forces and their families for productive endeavors; provide them with educational opportunities, technical skills and livelihood trainings, and above all, give them top priority for hiring in development projects. But, for reasons of educational attainment, most members landed jobs related to manual labor in construction companies. Others served as bodyguards of local politicians.

On the matter of integration, the agreement waived all requirements and

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*the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro National Liberation front, (Pasig City: March, 2004), p.52*
qualifications for MNLF members to pave the way for their integration into the AFP and PNP, subject to existing laws, rules and regulations. Those who were to be integrated into the Philippine army, most of whom had low educational qualifications, were to be organized initially into separate units within the transition period of three years. Until such time that mutual confidence was developed among former MNLF members and their Army colleagues, they were to be gradually integrated into different regular units of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Most of them were to be deployed in the areas of autonomy.

Under the integration program, every aspect of disarmament, demobilization, and integration was to be addressed in accordance with the existing policies of the AFP and the PNP. The Joint Integration Board (JIB) composed of AFP and MNLF representatives was organized to ensure the smooth conduct of the integration process, which include among others, the recruitment of qualified MNLF combatants, their training and deployment, and employment of MNLF integrees. To ensure strong control and effective command, an MNLF representative, in coordination with the AFP, was appointed and assumed the duties, functions, and responsibilities of Deputy Commander of the Southern Command for separate units of the MNLF members joining the AFP.

PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION

In October 1996, President Fidel V. Ramos signed Administrative Order (AO) No. 295. The AO provided guidance on the integration of the MNLF members into the AFP. As mandated, 5,750 MNLF combatants were to join the AFP and 1,750

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23 See appendix "F", 1996 Final Peace Agreement paragraph 20b.
were to be integrated into the Police. All other matters regarding the integration program which were not covered by this order were to be prescribed by the President as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

AO No. 295 mandated the Department of National Defense, through the Armed Forces of the Philippines, to take charge of implementing the MNLF integration program. The implementation of said program consisted of three phases, as prescribed by the Armed Forces of the Philippines, namely: (1) the processing phase; (2) individual training phase; and (3) the on-the-job training (OJT) phase. The entire integration program was to be completed within the prescribed three-year transitory period starting in November 1996 until September 1999.24

a. Processing Phase

Even as it has been criticized for allegedly favoring those who have strong connections to influential persons in the MNLF leadership, the processing phase, has the primary objective of determining from the list of MNLF combatants qualified individuals for training as candidate soldiers or officer candidates of the AFP. In this phase alone, the implicit selection process created further problems, as the MNLF combatants who were disqualified from undergoing military training as well as those “left behind” for screening felt rejected and were thus angered by the mechanics of the recruitment process. Some MNLF members protested and insisted that they did not have to go through a process of military training because they were already trained beforehand in the organization. However, the AFP has its own requirements and training the MNLF integrees was apparently designed to ensure

they had the skills needed of a member of the Philippine military.

In order to comply with the mandate to train a total of 5,500 MNLF cadres, an additional 2,500 MNLF combatants were made ready to serve as alternates in case some principal candidates were disqualified based on the standard guidelines set by the AFP. From there on, the Philippine Army was tasked to organize a team to undertake Personal and Equipment Survey of the MNLF candidates in coordination with the MNLF leadership. Under the guidelines, all candidates whether officer candidates or soldiers were required to bring their individual firearm surrender this to the authorities. In the policy guidelines, anyone who failed to turn over a firearm (preferably a long firearm) would be disqualified and denied entry into the military services.

The policy of turning in individual high-caliber firearms contributed to the goals of disarmament, but it has contributed to the deterioration of the overall process of ending violence in the south. In the campaign to reduce the proliferation of illegal firearms, the policy succeeded. Numerous firearms, more or less equal to the number of MNLF candidates for integration into the AFP and PNP, were recovered from the organization. But everyone knew that most candidates owned more than one firearm, and because he was only obliged to turn over one firearm, others were kept at home. Thus, the disposition of uncollected loose firearms remained unresolved. Moreover, some of these firearms that were handed over to the authorities were not the real firearms of MNLF combatants, but rather bought in order to qualify for the integration process. And not all who came for processing, including officers, were real MNLF combatants as a good number of them had only
substituted for the real combatants after paying some amounts of money.\textsuperscript{25}

b. Individual Training Phase

MNLF combatants selected for integration underwent an orientation and internalization period designed to develop mutual trust and understanding between and among the trainees and the AFP members. This period marked the start of the tactical training and other skills for military service. Apparently, there was not much difference in the manner of training the MNLF trainees in the rebel movement from the standard training for regular recruits entering the military services, except that the MNLF trainees were allowed to use some of the training time for religious activities. There were a total of 5,340 candidate soldiers (CS) who underwent a six-month Basic Military Training (BMT) conducted in three batches in different training centers of the Philippine Army. But the bulk of the MNLF trainees were later trained in Central Luzon, about a thousand kilometers away from their homes in Mindanao.

Similarly, the 160 MNLF officer candidates took a 48-week “Officer Candidate Course” which started in January 1997 at the Officer Candidate School (OCS) in Tanay, Rizal-- some 50 kilometers southeast of Manila. OCS was one of the premier training schools established by the AFP to train candidates to be incorporated into the officer corps. Upon completion of the coursework, another 24 weeks was prescribed for “on-the-job training” for smooth transition from being former rebels to being members of the Philippine Army. At this time, the MNLF officer candidates

\textsuperscript{25} The author was privileged to have genuine knowledge on the personality of few integrated MNLF combatants, when he served as instructors of MNLF during their military schooling at 4\textsuperscript{th} Army Training Group in mid- 2007.
saw the real environment in the field, which was where they were to be eventually deployed. Fortunately during this period, the first batch of MNLF trainees (ordinary soldiers) had completed the training. When the 160 MNLF officers were deployed in different units of the Philippine Army, these former MNLF fighters-turned-soldiers were already serving as members of the regular army. In the end, it created a chance for the MNLF officers to handle and lead former comrades with whom they used to fight side-by-side against government forces. In July 2006, the original number of 160 officers had increased to 220 because the second batch of officer candidates had also completed their OCS training.\(^{26}\)

c. On-the-Job Training (OJT) Phase

The OJT phase provided an opportunity for the MNLF officer candidates to experience the actual environment in the field before being deployed to their actual assignments. The officers were also tasked to command and lead the newly enlisted personnel belonging to the first batch of integrees. They initially composed the organized 47 separate rifle companies and ten (10) engineer companies. The 24-week OJT program officially ended in January 1998 and, subsequently, officer candidates were commissioned and called to military duty in the same period. Some officers continued their OJT until the completion of the 2\(^{nd}\) and 3\(^{rd}\) batch of integrees, while others were deployed in different units of the Army both in the infantry and engineer battalions.

Many commanders of Army battalions in the field during the OJT were very much impressed by the performance of the candidates. In fact, one battalion

\(^{26}\) Based on the updated reports of the Philippine Army as of 10 July 2006.
commander explicitly explained that some of the temporarily assigned candidates in his unit were even better than those who were already performing as officers in the Philippine Army.  

Perhaps, the experiences of the MNLF members in the field made them excel especially in matters related to combat tactics. However, many of the ex-MNLF candidates did not have adequate educational qualifications compared to those who have undergone the regular process of joining the AFP.

During the OJT period, AFP guidelines emphasized the inculcation in the minds of the MNLF of love of country, nationalism, military discipline, respect for law and order, observance of the chain of command, and understanding their duties and responsibilities in the Army as government servants. These were practically changing the minds of the MNLF members from being warriors and insurgents to being law-abiding citizens of the Republic. The transformation process was impressive but did not include trainings that would transform the MNLF combatants into productive individuals of society. It must be remembered that after surrendering to authorities, the former combatants virtually declined to engage in violence. The real motivation of the MNLF in ending rebellion and joining the AFP was that they had grown war-weary. At the time they abandoned armed struggle, they expressed preference for living in peace with their families than going to war again.

Many MNLF members preferred to be assigned to the engineering battalions because it presented very little chance for them to fight again. In the engineering battalions, they may be best utilized for the government’s socio-economic

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27 Interview conducted at headquarters of the Philippine Army on 12 July, 2012.
development programs. They can also help enhance government efforts for reconciliation, with those integrated into the Army tapped to help negotiate with and convince other armed groups to do what they did. In fact, one of the officers claimed that *the government or the AFP in particular is not thinking wisely for utilizing the MNLF in combat*, noting that *the success may be limited to win in battle, but it would be best if the AFP or the government is aiming strategically for the gradual resolution of the violent conflicts in the Philippines.*

The integration program as prescribed in Letter of Instruction (LOI) number 41/96 PAGSASANIB (integration) mandates that all integrated MNLF combatants, both officers and enlisted personnel, shall be provided equal opportunities as other regular AFP members for further professional training and military schooling, including foreign schooling, in accordance with the AFP training and education programs and policies. This policy is most impressive and may raise everyone's expectations, but the chances of the MNLF integrees going on foreign schooling were minimal, if not impossible. Only a few MNLF officers had the required educational attainment to qualify them for inclusion in the highly competitive foreign schooling for AFP officers. To date, no MNLF officer has been sent for schooling abroad.

**d. Deployment and Employment of MNLF Returnees**

The final stage of the integration program was when the trainees, both officer candidates and enlisted personnel, completed the OJT period, which marked the beginning of their services to the Armed Forces. The integrated MNLF members, just

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29 Letter of Instruction 41/96, issued by the chief of staff, Armed Forces of the Philippines, (Quezon City, October 1996)
like any other AFP regular members, may be assigned to other units of the AFP. In the course of assignment, the AFP encountered problems with some members of the MNLF integrees who, for personal and individual reasons, failed to adapt to the military culture and refused to report to their new unit assignments. In short, they did not want to perform jobs that required them to be away from their families.

In July 2006, the Philippine Army reported that 189 MNLF officers were serving the Army faithfully, while 31 others were facing charges for committing various offenses including deficiency in military schooling, absence without official leave (AWOL), and other administrative misdemeanors. For MNLF enlisted personnel, only 3,989 were actively serving the Army and a total of 1,541 were dismissed for various offenses. Similarly, of the 1,500 former MNLF combatants fully integrated into the PNP, only 1,449 integrees were still on duty status while 51 were on inactive status. Of those deemed inactive, 15 were deceased, 21 dismissed for various offenses, 13 dropped from rolls of the PNP, and two suspended. Most of the MNLF integrees on active status were deployed in the ARMM area.

The statistics show that authorities needed further study on the integration program as one of the major components of the Peace Agreement. The intent to neutralize the MNLF combatants by integration to the AFP and the PNP was carefully planned and proven an effective way of violence reduction, but the process and the implementation need further comprehensive studies. Deployment and employment of former combatants should not only be focused on combat duties.

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30 Documents taken from OG3, Force Integration Branch: Updated Philippine Army Records on MNLF integrees.
31 OPAPP, op.cit., p.19-20
Employing them for community development and other socio-economic activities could be more productive, not only in the conflict-affected areas but also in the rest of the country.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSES TO PROBLEMS

The 1996 Final Peace Agreement mandated the government of the Philippines to exert utmost efforts to establish favorable conditions that would ensure the eventual integration of the remaining MNLF forces into the AFP, the Police, and other line agencies of the government. This policy ensured that the MNLF combatants not integrated into the AFP, and their families, would have access to better livelihood opportunities and eventually uplift their socio-economic status.

On February 14, 2002, the PNP approved the request of the MNLF executive council for the conversion of the 250 quota intended for auxiliary services (a civilian position) to Police Officer-1 in the Philippine National Police. But due to budgetary constraints, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) approved a funding only for 150, an amount earmarked for auxiliary services and not for regular PNP members. In March 2004, only 62 of the 144 recommended for absorption to the auxiliary services possessed the required eligibility to qualify for integration. Nevertheless, in an expression of commitment to fully comply with the terms and conditions of the 1996 GRP-MNLF Peace Agreement, the PNP requested the higher authority to issue temporary appointments for MNLF members who lacked the required eligibility. In June 2005, a total of 5,750 MNLF combatants had been

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32 See appendix "F", 1996 Final Peace Agreement, paragraph 20a
integrated into the AFP, and 1,500 MNLF combatants into the PNP.\textsuperscript{33} Moreover, the attrition case of the 474 MNLF members had been reviewed by the Joint AFP-MNLF Integration Board, and declared vacant for replacement by new MNLF candidates. In July 2006, no new batches of ex-MNLF combatants were trained to fill the vacancy, but the Philippine Army was prepared for the recruitment process in the event a directive was released for this purpose.

The decreased number of former MNLF combatants in the military service can be attributed to a number of factors. Notably, the dismissal of members from the service was a result of deficiencies in military schooling and absence without official leave (AWOL). Also, some MNLF were killed along with army troops during encounters with the remaining rebels fighting the government. Apparently, being deficient in academic modules during schooling can be attributed to the fact that most of the MNLF members' academic backgrounds were either low-level, which does not satisfy the required academic qualification, or their education was aligned to the Arabic educational system. Military institutions did not create a favorable situation to accommodate the former MNLF combatants' educational background; instead, training centers continued to impose the same academic standard as those required of regular members of the AFP taking military courses.\textsuperscript{34}

On the other hand, most of the AWOL cases among MNLF enlisted personnel can also be attributed to many factors. According to one of the officers of the Philippine Army directly in charge of the administration of MNLF integrees, some

\textsuperscript{33} OPAPP, op.cit., p.11
\textsuperscript{34} Program of instruction (POI) prepared by the Training and Doctrines Command, Philippine Army for Officers taking Infantry Officer Advanced Course (IOAC) for calendar year 2006.
MNLF members did not report back because of their failure to adapt to the military profession, which required duties in places away from their families. Some preferred not to continue their service to the AFP for financial reasons. Being a member of the AFP, former MNLF can avail of financial loans from loan institutions, provided that payment for such loans was automatically deducted from their monthly pay and allowances. It turned out that those who availed of too many loans eventually had only a little amount left from their monthly pay and allowances.\(^{35}\) Consequently, they preferred to return to the countryside, hide and evade responsibility for their debts. Such a decision to leave was due to the fact that even if they continued to serve the AFP to the best of their ability, it seemed pointless to them as they had nothing to send to their families. Apparently, MNLF integrees were not oriented on financial benefits and the consequences of mismanaging the same.

The military career and educational enhancement are both important in the military profession, but the experience of the MNLF was different. For instance, MNLF officers assigned to the Corps of Engineers were sent for schooling in a different military specialization which made it more difficult for them to cope with courses not familiar to them. In the Philippine National Police, MNLF members who did not meet the prescribed 72 credit units earned in college underwent an educational program formulated by the PNP and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). Those high school graduates that lacked units in college were given criminology classes for a maximum 1,200 training hours to satisfy the

\(^{35}\) Interview with the Officer at headquarters of the Philippine Army, Makati City on July 10, 2009; Major Radam Sansawi, former MNLF combatants now in the Army since 1996 after the signing of the Peace Agreement, interview by the author, headquarters Philippine Army, Makati City, September 4, 2012.
requirement for enlistment in the regular police. Those who did not finish secondary education were given a crash education program in the form of seminars and trainings. These crash courses were credited by the Commission on Higher Education as equivalent to 72 units in criminology. In short, the situation of the MNLF combatants both in the academic and administrative aspects needed continuing attention from the government while acknowledging their distinctiveness from others who have undergone regular academic schooling.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR FORMER COMBATANTS

The existing laws, policies, rules and regulations that govern the military institutions did not apply to the MNLF integrees. In the Peace Agreement, the necessary requirements and qualifications for the entry of MNLF combatants into the PNP and the AFP were waived. But such policy apparently only applied to entry requirements. Once they had become full-time members of the military organization, they were covered by the rules and regulations of the military. Consequently, as they continued to serve in the military, the MNLF integrees needed higher educational qualifications to cope with the prescribed standard policy set in the Military and Police institutions. The government was quick in dealing with this problem, issuing a Joint Memorandum Circular signed by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) on January 24, 2002.

The joint memorandum provided the implementing guidelines for the OPAPP-CHED Study Grant Program for rebel returnees. The aim of the grant was to expand MNLF access to college education. The Study Grant was open not only to
MNLF members but also to qualified rebel returnees from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the New People’s Army (NPA), including their next of kin who cannot afford to study in college due to financial constraints. It is apparent at this point that states in conflict, like the Philippines, are compelled to exert utmost efforts for the education of its citizens since education is the best long-term solution to poverty and rebellion. Education is time-demanding and very expensive, but sustaining forces to counter rebellion is more expensive and certainly deadly.

In May 1999, at the level of the Philippine Army, a set of implementing guidelines on the educational program for MNLF integrees was formulated. The program sought, among others, to upgrade the education, skills, ethical values, and professional military career of the MNLF integrees. This policy was also in support of the government’s peace initiative to attract other threat groups to join the mainstream of society through the forging of similar agreements with the government. In the report of the Philippine Army on July 2006, 86 MNLF officers availed of the program and completed their college education, while 37 were still on schooling status at different institutions, and later graduated with baccalaureate degrees.

Despite the efforts made to upgrade the MNLF’s educational deficiencies, many still failed to pass the necessary requirements in their succeeding military schooling. To address this problem, the Philippine Army issued a directive on July 6, 2006 implementing the enhanced or modified approach to training of the MNLF integrees.\textsuperscript{36} The system was simply adopting the “buddy system” in any training and

\textsuperscript{36} Philippine Army directive on Modified Approach to Training of MNLF Integrees, (Makati City, HPA)
military schooling for the MNLF members. Students who needed assistance were provided with a 'buddy' to help them meet academic needs through tutorial assistance. Buddies were also enrolled in a training or course, and either competent members of the MNLF integrees or Muslim officers or enlisted personnel underwent the procedures for regular entry to the AFP. These efforts were appreciated. But for the sake of peace and development, critics noted that institutions should exercise leniency and accommodate minor discrepancies rather than enforce a strict imposition of standard norms.

In early 2000s, a group of officer-integrees requested for the deferment of their schooling and demanded for a 'separate special class' for them because they could not compete with others who had good educational backgrounds. But a separate class for MNLF integrees, according to the trainers, could jeopardize the original intent of integration. Ultimately, many failed to finish their course work, thus hindering their promotion to the next higher rank. It is evident from the foregoing that the strict imposition of a new system for rebels, such as the MNLF integrees, tends to create and increase incentives for renewed misunderstanding. In the end, failure to acknowledge these weaknesses means derailing the original intent of a peace agreement.

CONCLUSION

Peace in Mindanao has been elusive. The 1976 Tripoli agreement should have been a good starting point for peace, but it never had a chance to be implemented. Instead, it became a center of political disputes between the incumbent regime and the opposition party. Marcos, for the sake of pleasing the OIC,
played around with political and legal issues concerning the implementation of the autonomy. The opposition party, then led by Corazon Aquino, entered into an unpublished promised of cooperation with the MNLF. When she became President, owing to the same vague interpretation of the terms and conditions stipulated in the agreement, she was not able to forge a final peace accord with the MNLF. Instead, her administration became busy addressing other security issues such as the series of coups perpetrated by military rebels who were her former allies in toppling Marcos in February 1986. Issues about the security situation in the south were left behind, and violence continued in almost every part of Mindanao. At this time, the MNLF concluded that the Aquino administration was not interested on fulfilling her promise of a peace deal, made during her campaign for the presidency for the 1986 snap presidential elections, with the Muslims in the south.

It seemed that the 1976 peace agreement was easy to understand and its contents easy to interpret in the context of attaining peace in Mindanao. On the other hand, the same piece of document was not easy to understand when the attainment of a solid peace became a second priority. This complex situation was exacerbated by the fact that other groups had emerged and were relentlessly creating chaos in order to sabotage the negotiations. In short, political leaders were just going around critical issues, and pushing away obstacles to a peace agreement was not in their priorities. As a consequence, the MNLF leadership tried to seek the help of outside actors, such as the OIC, to pressure the government of the Philippines to implement the Tripoli agreement, while the MILF and ASG continued to escalate the violence. In the end, the government became overstretched for
having to address many concerns from different actors. Nevertheless, during the administration of Aquino, she could do nothing more than negotiate for the declaration of a truce as a remedial solution to the Muslim rebellion, which did not work.

When Ramos became president in June 1992, he inherited the problem in Mindanao. However, in spite of numerous stumbling blocks to the peace talks, he managed to forge a final peace agreement with the MNLF in September 1996. He was able to bring relative peace in Mindanao when his administration agreed to integrate the 7,500 MNLF members into the Armed Forces and the Police. He was able to formulate policies for the development of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. However, for lack of supervision from the central government, development initiatives had minimal impact on the region.

The usual problem of corruption prevailed among the leaders of the ARMM. Similarly, while the integration process was going smoothly, the enormous tasks of rebuilding the war-torn areas and coordinating development efforts in the SZOPAD areas were too difficult for the MNLF, who found themselves in a totally different and unfamiliar environment in governance, public service, and administration.\(^{37}\) Nur Misuari was blamed by the central government for failing to efficiently administer the region. Succeeding leaders of the ARMM followed the same pattern of administration in which those who held positions were benefited by the financial aid that poured into the region.

Another factor that exacerbated the political situation in the ARMM was the

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\(^{37}\) Benedicto R. Bacani, op.cit., p.16
presence of many armed groups. While the MNLF lay low and was cooperating with the government, the MILF and the ASG continued their struggle for full autonomy, not the goal agreed upon between the GRP and the MNLF. It can be learned from the Ramos administration that peace attained through “negotiated settlement” could reduce the number of losses on both parties, but remained fragile when a considerable number of rebels was left behind on the ground. In addition, even if there was an agreement forged, it did not give assurance of stability if leaders were not sincere about it.

The perceived failure in ARMM governance became a “focal point” where both sides blamed one another as primarily responsible for the deteriorating peace agreement. The MNLF organization blamed the national government for failing to enact a new organic law within the three-year transition period and neglecting its responsibility to provide material resources for the development projects in the SZOPAD areas. The SPCPD which was intended to coordinate development in the SZOPAD areas turned out to be good only on paper and did not have powers to manage the resources. The Consultative Assembly consisting of the local government officials and representatives of ARMM provinces and cities was supposed to provide a roadmap for development, but it did not function as expected because of lack of support from the national government. The absence of clear-cut working relations between the national and the local governments in the SZOPAD areas was a problem too.

Perhaps, the integration of the MNLF members into the military and the police was the most commendable accomplishment of the Ramos administration.
Although there were apprehensions about the loyalty of the MNLF, at least the military was able to decrease the number of loose firearms in the Muslim communities. With the economic development initiatives and the incorporation of the MNLF, violence was temporarily minimized. The Muslims, particularly those benefited by the government program, were able to compare what it was like to live in peace than with violence. The impact of such a comparison among the Muslim communities was that those in the government service, especially the MNLF members who adopted and embraced the military culture, lost their interest in rebellion. There were few MNLF members who did not continue their service to the military for certain reasons, but these were considered minor.

The process of integration was carefully done as foreseen obstacles were addressed beforehand. To ensure smooth transition to soldiery, a separate command, although not known to many, created by a joint committee became a useful link between the higher command of the military and the MNLF members. Among those taken care of by the unit, in coordination with the military, were the educational programs for the MNLF members who needed to go for civilian schooling. In the end, aside from gaining a college degree, the intellectual knowledge they gained from school made them competitive with their contemporaries in the military. Technically, the rebellious attitude was eventually ejected from the minds of the former rebels. But the problem did not end with getting a college degree. The environment in the military institutions was not the same as that in schools and universities. Even those who finished their degree faced difficulty in adapting to the rigid training and strict compliance to standard rules. In the end, not all MNLF
members, especially those in the officer corps, stayed long in the service.

Recently, the government of the Philippines has been negotiating with the MILF. While the outcome of the peace negotiations is still unclear because it does not include several significant actors on the ground such as other rebel armed groups, local influential leaders, and so on, it is clear that MILF forces would still be integrated into the military. Prospective management of MILF combatants, should they be accommodated like the MNLF, could be critical in the context of ending the rebellion in Mindanao. The same consequences can be expected if government institutions refuse to bend the established standard policies and norms a little bit. Also, a similar economic development approach is seen as attractive, but without proper supervision in the implementation process, particularly how the funds are to be channeled, the likelihood of repeating the same problem is very high.

It must be remembered that incumbent leaders of the ARMM are no longer former MNLF members, as originally intended. Also, even if these traditional political leaders have been in position for so long, they have been struggling to bring peace and development in the region. In short, their proven incapacity to lead the Muslims and establish peace and development in the area of conflict necessitate further analysis. Moreover, the intent of national leaders for a peaceful resolution of the decades-old armed conflict in Mindanao needs to be reevaluated. In the next chapter, the strength of these significant variables in looking for a viable solution to the Moro rebellion is discussed.
CHAPTER 6

CONSEQUENTIAL EVIDENCES AND ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

The preceding two chapters have shown how complicated and difficult it is to end a violent internal conflict like the one in Mindanao. Attempts to pacify the combatants in the armed conflict have been very difficult because of challenges that impede initiatives for conflict settlement. States facing a similar internal security problem cannot do more than establish truces with groups that try to undermine and question the legitimacy of a government.

Establishing a "ceasefire" is understood to be an immediate course of action because it is the best option for limiting the escalation of violence and presumably provides an opportunity for a return to normalcy. It is also a way to provide an opportunity to establish safe grounds where parties to the conflict could start talks for a negotiated settlement. Contrary to the general notion that truces create a favorable environment towards negotiations for conflict settlement, however, the same temporary halt of confrontation is also understood in the Philippines as giving "safe time" for both parties to rebuild, consolidate, and reorganize their forces in preparation for any eventuality, that is, in the event of a breakdown of the peace talks or the resumption of war.

The Mindanao armed conflict showcases the vicious cycle of violence. Today, the same conflict between government forces and the Muslim rebels has created a puzzle among analysts and observers about its persistence, one that has almost
evaded resolution despite years of negotiations coupled with several actions to mitigate the disastrous effects of violence on the people. Why is it that, for so long, this problem could not be remedied or ended? In spite of numerous studies on internal conflict, what is it about the Mindanao conflict that renders it elusive to settlement? What are those aspects of conflict resolution that need further study in the context of the Mindanao armed conflict which analysts may have failed to consider? Or what lies beyond the traditional ways of ending violence as far as the Muslim rebellion in Mindanao is concerned?

It is commonly accepted that there is no universal set of approaches for many conflicts around the world. However, in the context of attaining a longer peace in intrastate conflict-stricken states, there are fundamental similarities of conflict dynamics among countries. In essence, the approaches of countries may differ to some extent, but the critical underlying circumstances beyond the obvious reasons for armed conflict seem identical in all countries with internal problems involving non-state armed groups (NSAG). This chapter attempts to present a holistic picture of the nature of conflict between the Moro people and the government of the Republic of the Philippines. It provides a detailed analysis of the conflict which considers important aspects, beyond obvious reasons, that have a potential for the recurrence of violence.

The first part, among others, is a brief discussion of how analysis fits to explain the complexity of the Mindanao armed conflict, followed by a general analysis of two significant occasions that offered an opportunity for conflict resolution -- the 1976 and the 1996 peace agreements. The final section analyzes
the implications of a “peace deal” that seemingly does not address the rightful audience. It is important for any attempt to investigate an internal conflict, like the Muslim rebellion in the southern Philippines, to address the right audience or at least consider other crucial factors in dealing with rebel combatants and the people supporting the underground movement that are lightly considered, if at all, in the process of conflict settlement. Conflict resolution is a long and tedious process that requires an analysis of the history and the current complex environment attendant to the conflict. Without understanding the dynamics of the process that would reveal the entanglements of a highly complicated situation, analysis may only be limited to what are openly seen, thus restraining the research from uncovering important determinants with potentials for the recurrence of violence.

COMPLEXITIES IN THE MINDAO ARMED CONFLICT

To some analysts, it is a common understanding that conflict and war are part of the history of human existence. But in the context of resolving differences, however, human beings have learned a lot from their experiences in conflict or war with one another. The Mindanao armed conflict is one of several cases of internal conflicts that have puzzled analysts. There have been many studies seeking to understand the nature of conflict and identify possible solutions to the more than four decades of armed hostilities between the government of the Philippines and the Muslims in the south of the country. Most studies on the Mindanao armed conflict have pushed for more traditional ways of ending violence based on its identified root causes as economic deprivation, discrimination of minority groups, and unfavorable treatment of disadvantaged groups in Philippine society. However, it is
this study's position that analysis must not only be limited to understanding the causes, also known as “proximate causes,” of conflict because even the recommended approach to the same armed conflict may pose a threat of reversal, especially when the question of implementation is involved. The root causes of the Mindanao armed conflict may have been identified but the ways on how it may recur, after it is ended, have yet to be determined.

In the survey of literature, it is common among analysts to consider “historical hatred” as the primary cause of a prolonged conflict that makes conflict resolution almost unattainable. This “hatred” is ingrained in the people of every generation, making it very difficult to remove from peoples’ minds. Ancient hatred, as others call it, has many reasons to prevail. In the case of the Mindanao armed conflict, the Muslims and Christians can coexist in peace and development because everyone is aware of the benefits of living in a healthy and peaceful environment even as ancient hatred has prevailed between them over a period of time.

There is no doubt that “ancient hatred” has exacerbated the complex situation in Mindanao that even the leaders themselves have become timid and uninterested in resolving the armed conflict. To some extent, the animosity between the Muslims and Christian settlers is a product of a misconception that has caused both parties to suspect one another of being a threat instead of an ally. Consequently, the result of such “hatred” has been a fragile peace and security that every armed confrontation pushed further toward a more serious and complex situation. Surely, every armed confrontation has displaced innocent civilians who were forced to leave their livelihood behind, which generally meant a downturn in
the economy and the living conditions of affected communities. To this effect, every concern in the armed confrontation is sometimes superseded by a more pressing situation that demands a clear government economic policy, leaving behind the issue of peace settlement. The sheer complexity of the Mindanao situation has thus given rise to numerous calls for an end to the violence and a clear remedy to address the physical needs of the people. Indeed, the armed conflict has grown more complicated as to be better understood as a social problem that can be linked to the theory of social disorder. Analysts argue that groups, ethnic or religious, would rise up and clash once dissatisfactions occur within society.\footnote{James C. Davies, "Toward a Theory of Revolution", \textit{American Sociological Rev.} 27, no.1 (Feb. 1962), 6; Ted R. Gurr \textit{Why Men Rebel?} (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970), 46; Edward E Azar, \textit{The Management of Protracted Social Conflict: Theory and Cases} (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1990), 2.} In this light, the question of economic deprivation has been the fundamental basis for studies on the Mindanao debacle.

Dissatisfactions among the general public are shaped by many factors. But whatever they are, public discontent would only lead to a social movement such as rebellion against a government when it is shared by all other groups and thus solidifies into a common grievance.\footnote{Ivo K. Feierabend, et al., "Social Change and Political Violence," in \textit{Anger, Violence, and Politics}, eds. Ted Robert Gurr, et al. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1972), 108.} As long as grievances remain confined to a certain group against another group, bigger armed conflict is unlikely because the grievances are directed only against a group and not towards the government. An intergroup conflict is sometimes even more difficult to understand because of its potential to escalate. In the southern Philippines, the \textit{rido} or conflict between families or clans is almost as oppressive as "vertical conflict" or conflict between the
government and non-state armed groups (NSAG).

The *rido* in Mindanao, until today, is considered a serious problem.³ It is very difficult to address because it is being used by interest groups to serve their vested interests. A supposed interaction between two groups becomes complicated by the participation of many actors with diverse interests. Actors' participation in a *rido* may be triggered by many factors. There are those who may be involved due to internal linkages that cannot be avoided, such as family ties, friendship, and other personal connections that bind one group to another. Others may have been intentionally forced to participate and become accessories to the conflict owing to personal interest. But with all these actors' involvement, the worst scenario that can become a potential stumbling block to finding a solution to *rido* is the participation, either by intention or by force, of groups that fall under the category of "spoilers of peace."

Indeed, *rido* or clan conflict in Mindanao may be difficult to understand, but the more critical scenario is the collaborative participation of government security forces in intergroup conflict that can either inhibit the escalation of violence or promote a more complex situation. For example, military units where a *rido* occurs can prevent the escalation of violence by just not allowing the hostilities between groups to escalate. The bad side, on the other hand, is when government security forces through their "bad leaders" are perceived to be favoring either one of the groups. On the contrary, when a clan conflict is confined within the interaction of disputing families, studies show that it could be resolved internally through the

³Astrid A Tuminez, "The Land is Ours: Moro Ancestral Domain and its Implications for Peace and development in the Southern Philippines," SAIS Review 27, no.2 (Summer –Fall 2007): 87.
customary laws of Moros. Even the role of women in dealing with rido can be a key to resolving the conflict.⁴

On several occasions until recently, rido in Mindanao has been used as an excuse for authorities to either intervene or not intervene in the conflict. Intervention of security forces on the ground, where rido is occurring, is one critical factor influencing the future of clan conflicts. Based on historical evidence, whenever a dispute is between or among Muslim clans or families, the tendency of government security forces is to neither intervene nor mediate in the conflict because, in their view, it is pointless to mediate in rido since it is a war involving Muslims against Muslims. On the other hand, if a dispute over land, for instance, arises between Christians and Muslims, the tendency of the security forces is to side with the Christian communities.⁵ Therefore, a single incidence of rido can generate a vertical conflict between Muslims and the security forces because the Muslims’ feeling of alienation and resentment is magnified. To the extreme, Muslims would rather look for groups they can rely on for their own security because they see no hope of ever getting any protection from government security forces.

Engaging many actors with different agenda makes any effort to bring lasting peace on the ground difficult. However, as discussed earlier, the capacity to identify and understand the behavior of the leaders is critical to understanding the dynamics of these groups. Even the spoilers of peace have their own leader who uses his

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⁵ The Author is privileged to grow up in the areas of armed conflict, and serving the Armed Forces of the Philippines since 1991 to date; Colonel Amenkadra Undog, a Regiment Commander of the Philippine Army Special Forces in 2011, interview by the author, Fort Bonifacio, Makati City, August 29, 2012.
followers to pursue the goal of derailing efforts to bring peace through peaceful means - usually by the use of the military option - to a conflict-affected area. But whatever the reasons a group is trying to push forward, a leader is influential enough to generate considerable local support because he knows that inadequate back-ups from the community would potentially derail any action.

In a rebellion, leaders could be from within its armed component or are purely civilian members of the organization who could influence the majority of the followers. In the case of the Muslim rebellion in Mindanao, traditional leaders from communities, religious leaders, or incumbent political leaders play a critical role, apart from the armed groups, in the fight for self-determination. On the other hand, a legitimate group like the military which is mandated to fight for and defend the rights of many is forceful enough because its leader is acting on the basis of the constitutional mandate to protect the people and the country.

A government facing internal security problems must understand the dynamics and complexity of conflict, particularly appropriate ways of dealing with groups that try to undermine the legitimacy of the state. This study argues that state-level leaders who fail to consider the capacity of "group leaders" or "local leaders" of an organization to lead their followers would, in the long run, fail to resolve the long-standing internal conflict. In the same manner, governments whose leaders are not interested in dealing with the problem caused by internal threats are prone to instability because the government system itself comes into question. On the contrary, when state-level leaders are determined to deal with and look for means to find solutions to internal armed conflict, such as rebellion or secession, the
chances of success in ending the problem are highly probable because state leaders' influence, after all, is more powerful than that of a sub-state government. On several occasions, this complicated but traceable linkage of processes has been observed in the long history of the Mindanao armed conflict.

During the presidency of Fidel V. Ramos from 1992 to 1998, the strength of his leadership was tested when he engaged the MNLF rebels through diplomacy. According to Ruben Torres, a former cabinet member who was Ramos's chief negotiator with the MNLF, his first challenge in the administration of Ramos was when he was tasked to engage the MNLF through peaceful negotiations. Torres was very confident to talk to the rebels because he knew that the President was sincere in making peace and allowing development to take root in Mindanao by bringing the MNLF combatants to the socio-political mainstream. Similarly, the MNLF combatants and the local people supporting them were determined to engage in and support the negotiations because they knew that Torres had a direct line of communication to the President.6

The result of the national leadership's determination was seen when the government was able to forge a peace agreement with the MNLF in 1996. The peace agreement was made possible because "the government exerted more efforts to realize a peace settlement of the armed conflict in Mindanao."7 In contrast, when a state leader decides to end a rebellion by the use of force (military victory), then his followers, particularly the state's military and police organizations, would support

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7 Fidel V. Ramos, former Philippine President, interview by the author, Makati City, September 4, 2012.
him in light of his constitutional mandate as commander-in-chief of the entire Armed Forces. This scenario was seen in 2000 when then-President Joseph Estrada employed military power against the Muslim rebels in the belief that such an option was more attainable in ending the rebellion in Mindanao. Even though the "all-out war" policy of the Estrada administration was heavily criticized, the military successfully launched a series of massive military offensive operations that led to the capture of major MILF camps.

The strength of leadership concept has been proven powerful, many times, in the case of the Mindanao armed conflict. Whenever the national leadership wanted to end the violence momentarily at certain critical moments, strict observance of a ceasefire has worked despite misgivings on the part of the security forces, or if the other party was not openly amenable to it, the government usually opted to declare a unilateral suspension of military offensives (SOMO) to give way to a possible negotiated settlement. In contrast, whenever the President, with his advisers for example, failed to consider other options than the use of military action, then such a policy has had chaotic consequences for the conflict-affected areas in Mindanao. Usually, the military option as a policy toward the Mindanao armed conflict diminishes the credibility of the state because continuous fighting has had a tremendous deleterious effect on peoples' lives and properties. In short, domestic support for a government approach to Muslim rebellion in Mindanao is dependent on how the people perceive the likelihood of success without endangering, on the part of the Moro people, their security, culture, identity and religion; and on the part of the Christian majority their security, livelihood, and probably the territorial
integrity of the country.

This study suggests that an investigation to understand and address the Mindanao armed conflict should put more emphasis on the ability of the government to attain a longer peace. Although lasting peace can be achieved in some other ways, the government has a greater responsibility to end the violence through peaceful means than any other group that are particularly responsible for bringing chaos to the conflict-affected areas. On several occasions, the attempts of past governments to find a concrete solution to the conflict were almost close to realization because the avenue for cooperation was wide enough to accommodate Moro grievances. What made those opportunities for conflict settlement unrealistic was the unstable and unclear government stance, especially when the national policy on the peace process was challenged by unscrupulous individuals or groups that did not want the government to have a peace settlement with the Muslim rebels. Historically, a small group or a single personality has proven capable of diverting the strategic decision of the national leadership, hence derailing a peace negotiation.

In 2008, government efforts to bring an end to the Muslim rebellion peaked when it was about to sign an initial step towards a peace settlement, at least between the government forces and the MILF. The national leadership's capacity to implement its strategic decision was tested when the jointly crafted Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD),\textsuperscript{8} hammered together after years of

\textsuperscript{8} The MOA-AD is another version for a peace deal and a product of long years of negotiations by the Philippine Government panel and the MILF which would be a prelude to conflict resolution in Mindanao.
study and negotiation, was rejected and declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court itself. All members of the negotiation panel had been carefully selected by both parties to the conflict. The Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) chose the members of its panel on the basis of their knowledge of the conflict and their ability to come up with a formula for resolving more than four decades of Muslim rebellion in the south.

The head of the GRP panel was Hermogenes Esperon, a former Chief of Staff of the Philippine Armed Forces who was well-versed on the situation in Mindanao. He and his panel members were expected to find a viable solution to the conflict. On the other hand, the MILF also carefully selected the members of its negotiating panel on the basis of their loyalty to the Bangsamoro to ensure that their decision would represent the voice of the majority of the Muslims. But again, all their efforts turned futile when the Supreme Court junked the crafted MOA-AD.

It must be noted that the Supreme Court ruling was preceded by reports of the Chief Executive’s intention not to sign and thus to reject the MOA-AD, according to information relayed to the public by the solicitor general on September 2, 2008.\(^9\) To this effect, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo dissolved the peace panel talking to the MILF the following day. On October 14, the Supreme Court ruled with finality that the MOA-AD, being unconstitutional, cannot be used further as a tool for peace in Mindanao. Skepticism prevailed as to how the contents of the MOA-AD were crafted and finalized without the knowledge of the President since she herself

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rejected the agreement. What is clear, however, is that the President's decision was preceded by negative reactions to the MOA-AD of some very vocal local political leaders in Mindanao. In response, the MILF announced that it would launch offensive actions on government, hence the series of more intensified clashes that ensued in different areas of Mindanao.

Amid these armed confrontations, the Amnesty International reported that both the government security forces and the rebels had violated international human rights and humanitarian law by targeting civilians. There was also an attempt to arm civilians, particularly on the Christian side, who were targets of MILF attacks. In fact, some politicians both Muslim and Christian were properly equipped with high-powered firearms using the security problem to legitimize the arming of their respective private security organizations. In a highly militarized community, this effort encourages a scenario that only raises further the level of divisiveness among the people rather than enhancing unification of efforts toward unconditional reconciliation and peace.

The instability in Mindanao has sometimes gotten less attention because it has become an integral part of daily living in that region, but it reflects the inability of the national leaders to address the pressing security issues caused by the long history of Muslim rebellion in the south. Contrary to popular belief, it is the more than 40 years of armed conflict that has impoverished the resource-rich region of Mindanao, and not the commonly held thinking that the widespread poverty there has been the cause of Muslim rebellion. As observed in Mindanao, when the security

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issue is a problem, all other aspects of governance and society are affected and become part of or accessories to the problem. The worst thing that has happened many times, and continues to this day as a result of unresolved animosities, is when the security of every group, whether Moro or Christian, has been perceived to be threatened because everyone believes they are responsible for their own security. In other words, this observation of the Mindanao armed conflict validates the common argument that a volatile situation becomes more complicated when the security of a group is not guaranteed, forcing that group to take steps toward protecting its own because its very survival is non-negotiable.\textsuperscript{12}

Today, the administration of President Benigno Aquino III, along with his effort to rid government of unscrupulous individuals, is determined to come up with a peaceful means to end the violence in Mindanao. As before, the peace panels of both parties are working hand in hand to craft a formula that is acceptable to the Filipino people. The most important thing the panel is doing now is undertaking a careful analysis of several studies that have tried to uncover the very reasons for elusive peace in Mindanao, and consulting with different ethnic groups. A significant development in this process is the signing of the New Political Entity (NPE) framework for the \textit{Bangsamoro} on October 15, 2012.\textsuperscript{13} The \textit{Bangsamoro} or Moro nation is a new term in the process of negotiation intended to replace the ARMM previously established in the context of the government peace agreement with the


\textsuperscript{13} The NPE is a framework and prelude to a peace deal conceived between the government of the Philippines and the MILF, \url{http://opapp.gov.ph/resources/2012-Framework-Agreement-on-the-Bangsamoro}, last accessed October 10, 2012.
MNLF in 1996. The implications of the NPE for the 1996 Peace Agreement and the overall effort to resolve the Mindanao conflict have yet to be seen. What is clear is that the MNLF members are unhappy with the NPE that has been crafted with the MILF. Also, the recently organized Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), an MILF breakaway group, apparently disapproves of how the negotiations between the government and the MILF are being pursued.

INVESTIGATIONS ON THE MUSLIM ARMED STRUGGLE

Most studies suggest that violence occurs when the needs of the society are not satisfied, which is usually measured through the public’s demands and/or expectations. But in the case of the Mindanao conflict, it does not follow that the Muslims will take up arms against the government when their demands are not met. This author has observed that even if the demands of the minority Muslims are not granted or fulfilled according to what they actually need, they do not usually resort to violence. Instead, they remain silent and strive to maintain their strength and cohesiveness. Except for a few instances especially in recent years, the Moro people have remained calm whenever their demands during peace negotiations did not get a favorable response from the government of the Philippines.

In contrast, they become active and organized when they realize that their very existence is threatened in the face of a series of massive military operations, and thus join hands to defend themselves against the government military units conducting offensive attacks. It is important to note, at this point, that many studies

have tried to dig deeper into the decades-old Mindanao armed conflict in order to understand its nature and root causes. Despite these efforts, however, the Mindanao conflict has persisted, thus bringing up the question of why it is so. This is the main theoretical puzzle that needs to be answered.

One of the most pioneering studies on the Moro resistance to Philippine society is that which brought about the creation of the Commission on National Integration (CNI) in 1957. The CNI was created by the Philippine Congress in the wake of an investigation conducted by three Muslim lawmakers in 1954 which ultimately concluded that a broader but direct strategic solution to Muslim rebellion must be adopted by the state. Education and economic development was the core of the recommendation forwarded to the Philippine government.\(^\text{15}\) It was probably the first comprehensive study about the Moro rebellion which offered a strategic solution to Muslim aggression in the south. But even as the study was very helpful in addressing Moro aggression, the implementation of its recommended solution became problematic.

Educational programs for minority groups were aggressively pursued with the aim of integrating the new Muslim professionals into Philippine governance. But perhaps due to the perceived continuing discrimination against the Moros, such educational program that helped raise the level of intellectual capacity and network of the Muslims became a window of opportunity for the Muslim radicals to increase their leverage in bringing the Mindanao armed conflict to the international arena. While education has contributed to Muslim upbringing, it has also been used not

\(^{15}\) Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 244; McAmis, Muslim Filipinos, 43.
only for the original purpose of building common governance but has also facilitated the internationalization of and subsequent intervention of foreign parties in the Mindanao conflict. The intervention of outside actors, it must be pointed out, is not always beneficial to the recipient state as it can bring more confusion to an already complicated situation.16

Economic development was the second recommendation of the CNI which was also vigorously pursued by the government. Underdevelopment in Mindanao was identified as one of the main causes of the Muslim rebellion that required both the attention of the Philippine government and the international community. The conventional wisdom among analysts and observers was that poverty had given rise to the common grievances among the people which had encouraged aggression. According to this view, the Muslims may have resorted to fighting the government for secession because they felt the effects of extreme poverty as a consequence of government prejudices against them.

However, the truth of the matter was that poverty was all over the country and that despite their serious grievances against the government, not all ethnic groups wanted to secede from the Philippines. Moreover, Mindanao had been flourishing economically even when the people of Mindanao started resisting foreign interventions that began at the dawn of the Spanish colonial period in the 16th century. In other words, Mindanao, then and now, compared with other regions of the country, is not far in terms of economic performance and potential. History shows that there are other factors beyond economic issues that are fueling the

16 Brown, The International Dimension of Internal Conflict, 575.
recurrence of the armed conflict. It has been observed that the attitude and behavior of both the national and local leaders can prolong armed conflict or cause the reversal of a supposed peace settlement. This can be seen in the national policy, particularly in how the government responds to different threat groups in each region.

The Muslim rebellion in Mindanao has certain similarities to Muslim aggression in other parts of the world, particularly in Arab states. Poverty has been a problem in the Muslim world but it has not been the main reason for Muslim rebellion. Mohammed Hafez has observed that Muslims rebel for two main reasons, namely: (1) they encounter an ill-fated combination of political and institutional exclusion; and (2) it is their response to reactive and indiscriminate repression of governments.\(^{17}\) In other words, the Mindanao problem can be understood not as a primarily aggressive reaction to economic deprivation caused by impoverishment or in recent studies “failed modernization,” but rather as the Moro people’s response to a system that threatens their organizational structure, their security, and their religion, Islam, which is deeply integral to their way of life. This phenomenon can be seen as causing the shrinking of Muslim territory and misrepresentation in the national government. In fact, the new generation of Muslims see no reason for them to be oppressed because “all they want is to live in peace and prosperity, give their children a good education without losing Arabic education, and freely exercise their right to religion, Islam.”\(^{18}\)

\(^{17}\) Hafez, *Why Muslim Rebel?* 199-200.

\(^{18}\) Police Senior Superintendent Nickson Muksan, a Muslim, native of Jolo and working in the Philippine National Police, interview by the author during a focus group discussion on Mindanao
The Moros of the southern Philippines obviously have a religious link to the Muslim world. This linkage was established through international trade, religious affairs, and other means, like Islamic education and religious pilgrimage to Mecca. Acknowledging the resemblance of Muslim Filipinos with Muslims in the Arab world should create a wider understanding of the nature of Moro resistance to Philippine governance. If there is freedom and independence of religion in the country, it is also important to understand that any action tantamount to or perceived to be threatening the existence of Islam could be a potential source of discontent and grievances among the Muslim communities. Of course, Islam as a religion is widely respected in the Philippines, but this is not enough to conclude that the practice of Islam in the country is free from interference. What is equally important is respect for the lives of the people who believe in a certain faith. For instance, the mere conduct of combat operations that hampers religious practice in a Muslim community can be perceived as a systematic disrespect for Islam.

A single act of conducting combat operations in a Muslim area in times of "Ramadan" or in times that distract religious congregations from their activities could be easily interpreted as an attack on religion not only by the local Muslims but also by every Muslim around the world who may learn of such an incident. Everyone can claim that no one is violating religious practices in the Philippines, but complaints about the burning of mosques and the slaughter of forbidden animals, like dogs and pigs, inside a mosque or religious site during military operations show that violations exist. The actual situation on the ground most often does not reach
the attention of national leaders who have the potential to correct misdeeds at the local level.

A vigorous campaign to educate Filipinos about the Moro people in the south could offset the adverse impact of poorly performing security forces on Muslim communities in the areas of conflict. It is true that in times of conflict or war, anything can happen, but good and effective implementation of rules, regulations, and laws can temper the effects of violence. As noted earlier in this study, it is safe to assume that 80 to 90 percent of all Filipinos, including lawmakers and national leaders, have inadequate knowledge about the Muslims in the south and the government's policy on the Mindanao conflict. Nevertheless, in recent years, studies are helping to educate Filipino readers about the Mindanao armed conflict, but still only a few are well-informed about this matter since there is no serious educational campaign about conflict resolution in academic settings at all levels and in other institutions of government. This has naturally helped perpetuate the practice of stereotyping against the Moros of Mindanao.

Intellectual findings in several studies may differ in approaches but all are geared toward understanding the root causes of the conflict situation in Mindanao. There are those who have attempted to assess the fragility of the 1996 peace agreement between the GRP and the MNLF. In an academic paper, Jacques Bertrand views the 1996 pact as a genuine and great opportunity for conflict resolution, but that its inability to account for the effects of weak institution, corruption, and controversy over the exercise of political power within the autonomy has made it very difficult to attain sustainable progress, thus leading to the failure of the
agreement.\textsuperscript{19} In other words, the transitional process from national supervision to autonomy neither benefited the Muslims nor the non-Muslims. This finding may prove useful in crafting a better system for future efforts to end violence in the south, especially once a peace accord is forged with the MILF following the signing of the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro on October 15, 2012. Corruption, a common finding in all studies, is seen to have been a key stumbling block in the realization of the 1976 and 1996 Peace Agreements. Corruption, by the way, is not only observed in the local ARMM but is also seen to be prevalent in the national socio-political system and deemed a main source of economic impoverishment in the country.

The 1996 Peace Agreement, by and large, did not change the living conditions of the people in the area of the autonomy, and this is seen by many observers as the reason for the failure of that agreement.\textsuperscript{20} If the principal motivation for the conflict settlement was to bring an end to violence which would understandably reduce the number of loose firearms, then the 1996 agreement succeeded to a certain extent as numerous firearms were turned over to the government; still, the security of most people living in the conflict-affected areas remained uncertain because a much larger number of MNLF firearms remained unaccounted for. There was even a report that most of the genuine MNLF firearms were transferred to the ownership of the MILF.

The MILF has been observed to be capable of generating popular support.

\textsuperscript{19} Jacques Bertrand, "Peace and Conflict in the Southern Philippines: Why the 1996 Peace Agreement is fragile?" Pacific Affairs 73, No. 1 (Spring, 2000): 37-54

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
Today, the MILF is considered a major threat to national stability because of its capacity to launch major attacks on government. Up to this date, there remains a big doubt on whether the national leaders are aware of this “complex situation” in Mindanao which has been affecting the national policies on peace and security, foreign relations, and economic development. It is argued in this study that without addressing the security issue in Mindanao, the Philippines will remain problematic in its quest for achieving a competitive status on a par with that of some of its more progressive neighbors. Similarly, the Muslims through their leaders must exert more effort and show the entire world that they are capable of governing themselves consistent with the principles of good governance in a democratic society, free of corruption, free from malicious power struggles because there is due process, and most of all, faithful to the tenets of governance that is for all Muslims and non-Muslims in Mindanao. This way, the Bangsamoro or Muslim nation can proudly show that although they are comprised by many ethnic groups with many names, they have only one common goal of liberating the people of Mindanao from social injustice, extreme poverty, corruption, and disunity and preserving their Islamic way of life.

ARMED GROUPS AND FIREARM CONTROL

There are at least three main groups claiming to represent the plight of the Moro people. The MNLF, which agreed to have a peace deal with the government in 1996; the MILF which is currently negotiating with the GRP for an expanded autonomy essentially different from the GRP-MNLF agreement; and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), with its affiliates, which is the most notorious and violent of all three
groups. Although the ASG is considered a terrorist group with links to international terrorist networks, it has also claimed to represent the Muslims in the south. At the back of all these armed groups are the different ethnic groups of Muslims in different parts of Mindanao who, in general, support the Bangsamoro's fight for self-determination. In recent years, the presence of small armed groups controlled by politicians has also added to the bands of armed elements taking part in the eruption of violence in the area. On the side of non-Muslims, the presence of civilian armed groups has been a major concern of security forces. These paramilitary forces are used by politicians for security and for advancing their political ambitions. Other than these groups, the New People's Army (NPA) has been threatening the security of Mindanao. The NPA, which advocates communism, also has wide support from non-Muslim communities, especially among the economically disadvantaged communities in Mindanao's Christian-dominated provinces.

The Military and the Police are the armed components of the government whose primary task is to maintain peace and order, and to protect the people and the state. In the course of performing their sworn duty to the country, the regular Armed Forces has been struggling to appropriately address the security threats in rural areas. This is the primary reason that the paramilitary Civilian Volunteer Organization (CVOs) and the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Units (CAFGUs) were commissioned to help maintain peace and order and defend villages against rebel attacks. Most of the time, conflicts are touched off by a direct encounter between the rebels and the paramilitary forces. Other than the empirical contributions of the paramilitary forces to security, their existence is justified by the
fact that maintaining civilian armed elements is much cheaper than enlisting young men for regular military service.\(^\text{21}\)

CVOs and CA FGUs are legitimately supported by government forces because they are protecting the civilian villages where they live from attacks by threat groups. This scenario makes "arming civilians" justifiable on the basis of self-defense. However, an internal problem usually arises when these civilian armed troops assume full responsibility for the security of their respective communities rather than putting full confidence on leaving the security matter in the hands of the military and the police. As a consequence, the role of the security forces has been taken over by these civilian armed groups that have less education and training, thus making them prone to committing abuses. The participation of paramilitary forces in internal security operations has been proven effective only if properly managed and supervised by the regular security forces. But military and police supervision of these civilian armed forces cannot be guaranteed at all times. Sometimes, these CVOs and CA FGUs are tapped by political leaders for their own security and political ambitions, with minimal military intervention. It is important to note, at this juncture, that when a public servant, such as a local politician, is mostly surrounded by armed elements, he tends to assume a militarist thinking instead of that of a political leader who ensures the delivery of basic services to his constituents.

The management of armed groups, like the rebel forces in Mindanao, is very

\(^{21}\)A CVO or CA FGU is receiving only a subsistence allowance amounting to about $2.10 a day from government or private companies while their firearms and ammunitions are usually provided by the armed forces.
difficult. For some analysts, there is a need for government to enhance the amnesty program to accommodate all combatants into the mainstream of society.\textsuperscript{22} Applied in Mindanao, this concept has been proven effective in reducing and controlling loose weapons in exchange for a better future for rebels. Former MNLF combatants especially the leaders, for example, were given political positions in government in preparation for further integration into the socio-political mainstream, while other members were asked to lay down their firearms so they can be accommodated in the regular security forces. But amnesty may turn problematic when the process cannot be sustained for certain reasons. In the case of MNLF integration, there were many questions on its implications for conflict resolution.

After the 1996 peace agreement was signed, each of the 7,500 MNLF combatants was required to turn in at least one high-powered firearm in order to be absorbed into the Armed Forces and the Police. The signing of the peace deal was undoubtedly a success, but the process of integration was a failure because only a portion of the loose firearms was recovered; others remained in the possession of MNLF members who were "left-out" in the integration process.\textsuperscript{23} Some MNLF members joined the MILF forces who continued the struggle for full autonomy. Also, a significant number of those integrated were dismissed from the military service after few years for reasons of mismanagement, while the former combatants themselves felt they still did not belong to their new organization, the AFP and the PNP.

\textsuperscript{22} Maj Gary J. Morea, "From Enduring Strife to Enduring Peace in Mindanao", \textit{Air and Space Power Journal} (May–June 2008): 192.

\textsuperscript{23} Maj. Nasser P. Lidasan, "The Integration of MNLF and MILF Combatants into the Philippine Armed Forces: Implications to Conflict Resolution" (master's thesis, University of Bradford, 2006), 68.
In consonance with the idea that arms or weapons make a group capable of waging an armed struggle against the government, an amnesty program for rebels could be an effective tool for bringing the former rebels back into the mainstream especially if the government is fully capacitated for such implementation. Also, the amnesty approach has been proven useful in halting violence. However, based on the MNLF integration process, an amnesty program would have been an effective way of addressing the Muslim rebellion if the rebels were assured by the government of their security and economic welfare or, at least, if the things promised to them were truly implemented. The integration of rebels was very costly and closely examined to ensure that the Philippine government could sustain it in the context of firearms control. If conflict settlement with a certain group is carefully done in the context of ending a rebellion, this study argues that no matter how many threat groups are confronting the government, they will all subscribe to conflict settlement through peace negotiations because they see no reason to continue fighting the government. In other words, what is important in ending a rebellion is a commitment from the government to provide conditions that prevent the rebels from entering a new phase of rebellion.24

A country like the Philippines that is bombarded by internal threats from NSAGs must consider two important things in addressing rebellion, namely: (1) the capacity of the government to effectively implement a good amnesty program, followed by reconciliation; and (2) the ability of the government to show and assure the rebel organization of their security and future economic disposition, usually

coupled with the offer of positions in government. If this set of approaches is not attained in the context of integrating combatants, then the armed conflict will simply persist. Furthermore, countries with experience in internal conflict are prone to corruption not only on the side of the rebels but also in government, both at the national and local levels, as they take advantage of the dynamics of the armed conflict. In the Philippine experience, the role of local actors usually determines the outcome of the reintegration and reconciliation process for former combatants.

RESETTLEMENT AND LAND DISPUTE

The movement of populations has been identified in many studies as the primary root of the Mindanao armed conflict. This claim is supported by historical evidence that the Philippine government has been systematically and collectively pursuing the marginalization and minoritization of indigenous Filipino Muslims and other ethnic groups in Mindanao.25 The voluntary but government-supported migration of people from Luzon and the Visayas to Mindanao especially in the 1960s has led to the shrinking of Muslim territory, eventually turning them into a minority in their homeland. Since then, the Muslims have been struggling to recover the vast lands they lost to the settlers. The Philippine government encouraged the resettlement of the Christians in Mindanao with lesser consideration of its implications for the lives of indigenous people who have been resisting foreign occupation by the Spaniards, followed by the Americans, and then the Japanese. Until today, the question on ancestral domain is still the main issue in the peace

negotiations between the GRP and the MILF. So far, it is the same resettlement areas where most armed confrontations have taken place.

The same issue of land ownership lies at the very root of the violence in the Bangsamoro that requires careful consideration in every peace negotiation. Nevertheless, the author has observed that the Muslims no longer require the government to return the whole area that historically belongs to them (areas formerly belonging to the sultanate of Sulu and Mindanao), but are willing to settle for a territory slightly larger than the present ARMM. Unlike the early years of the Muslim struggle for independence, Muslims today are by and large amenable to coexisting with the Christian settlers, provided that they (the Moros) can freely practice their religion, culture, and political system aligned with Islamic ways of governance. It means they can agree to a settlement, provided that they can freely observe their customs and traditions according to the teachings of Islam in the proposed territory (Bangsamoro) even if it is under the jurisdiction of the Philippine government.26 In short, any arrangement that does not address the territorial aspirations of the Muslims is likely to fail in the long run because the Moros believe that land, which was unceremoniously taken away from them during the period of Christian resettlement in their ancestral domain, is vital to their existence and can alleviate their living conditions.

The issue of land ownership has been behind many incidents that turned a volatile situation into an open armed conflict. In some parts of Mindanao, Christian villages have been targeted by Muslim armed groups, presumably connected to the

26 Personal interview with traditional leaders of Muslims, Cotabato City, June 23-25, 2012.
MILF, over a land dispute. After the failed MOA-AD deal between the MILF and the GRP in 2008, the MILF launched attacks to assert their bid to reclaim land that had been occupied by Christians in the province of North Cotabato since the early 1970s. The armed confrontation escalated in many areas of Mindanao. The violence, however, did not last long but the damage to lives and properties was considerable enough to affect the economy in the region. During the period of intense violence, several civilian communities were targeted by armed groups. Again, the renewed violence happened because the negotiation process at the national level failed to forge an agreement acceptable to the majority of Filipinos. This means that a complex situation in the areas of armed conflict and the dynamics of the process related to the peace negotiations at the national level are interlinked.

As the armed conflict evolves, the people in Mindanao have gradually learned to co-exist, sometimes even trying to forget a history weighed down by suffering, violence, and discord. A problem arises, however, when an attempt to break the volatile situation by the threat of armed confrontation cannot be remedied peacefully. Even a supposed isolated situation in one area concerning the issue of land ownership can be a triggering mechanism and spontaneously becomes a rallying point for the Moro struggle for self-determination. In fact, the MILF has been pushing for secession, rather than just local autonomy, to put an end to armed skirmishes. Again, in a situation that involves renewed armed confrontation between the military and MILF fighters, the most alarming is the fact that the Moro people, openly or discreetly, are observed to be united in fighting one common enemy -- the government. During the 2000 “all-out war” policy of the government
against the MILF, even Moros abroad participated in the armed conflict by providing financial support to the local Moro fighters.27

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

A closer examination of the historical roots of the Mindanao armed conflict confirms the difficulty of looking for an appropriate formula toward longer peace. Throughout its long history of animosity, however, the Mindanao conflict opened parallel opportunities for a peaceful resolution. As discussed in Chapter III, the Mindanao conflict has been an impediment to Philippine economic progress. Observers have noted that one major obstacle to development is the internal security issues of the country, such as the Moro secessionist movement and the New Peoples Army (NPA). In the context of addressing these internal threats, military campaigns aimed at containing them have been draining the resources of the country.

The nation’s political elite generally disagrees with this observation as it usually considers corruption by a problematic leadership as the key factor dragging down the national economy and keeping the nation poor. This study, however, is of the view that the failure of the Philippine government to resolve its internal security problem is a major factor in the country’s almost stagnant development. Nevertheless, the protractedness of the internal security problem is not primarily due to the poor leadership of and relations between political elites but, rather, stems

27 "Several Muslim organizations in the Middle East, particularly in Saudi Arabia, have been created to help one another while abroad, but in times of crisis in Mindanao, all generated funds are diverted to help the Mujahideen fighting the Philippine military in Mindanao". This is a testimony of, at least 4, oversees Foreign workers (OFW) interviewed by the author in Maguindanao province from June to September, 2012.
from their differing perspectives on how to approach the same internal threats. The effort to resolve the Mindanao armed conflict, for example, has less support from lawmakers and policymakers in the country. But despite the skepticism among national leaders, international organizations have shown keen interest in mediating and supporting efforts to resolve the armed conflict.

No matter how wide the available opportunity for peace, attempts at conflict resolution to end a rebellion are likely to fail without full support from the people in government because spoilers often have the upper hand over the peace advocates. This scenario has been observed on several occasions in the Mindanao peace negotiations. Most efforts of government have been rendered futile due to a lack of consensus among national leaders, and if an initiative succeeded in gaining their support, it has often been unknowingly directed towards the wrong audience because of the difficulty in accommodating many groups that are fighting the same government. In the end, attempts to derail peace negotiations by unscrupulous individuals often succeed. Moreover, when the government focuses on one group in a peace settlement, such effort usually earns little support from both Muslims and Christians because it is perceived as unfair to other affected groups, thus further aggravating perceptions of injustice.

The benign intentions for progress of a government whose country is beset with internal threats are prone to being misinterpreted. As experienced in Mindanao, a single government effort for development in areas dominated by Christians could be interpreted as unfair treatment against the Moros who are equally in need of government's basic services. Again, the worst that can happen is
when there is no sense of ownership, among the targeted communities, of a massive
government development effort in their areas. In other words, national economic
development efforts not fully supported by the local people could exacerbate and
further encourage aggression rather than mitigate it.

The CNI, as earlier discussed, has so far been the most pioneering effort in
terms of the Philippine government response to the Muslim separatist tendency. It
was a genuine and noble government initiative to address the Moro rebellion, but it
did not prosper because it became one-sided in the course of implementation. Its
development programs were particularly directed towards uplifting the economy of
selected areas while skipping the Muslim-dominated communities. In the end, it
only helped to strengthen feelings of marginalization among the Muslims. No doubt
the CNI was a genuine policy that was supposed to fulfill the educational, social,
physical, and psychological needs of Muslim Filipinos. During its implementation,
however, its benign intention was not fulfilled in the context of conflict settlement. It
has been argued by scholars that when the basic needs of the people are satisfied,
social unrest is not likely to erupt in the society.28

In Mindanao, the Moro people’s needs are not only in terms of material
things for the daily sustenance of their families. Their religious obligations and the
need to realize Islam’s fundamental relationship to their lives is a must. Islam is a
way of life for the Moros that cannot be taken for granted in any Muslim community.
In Mindanao, the constitutional mandate on the separation of church and state is
legally observed. But this policy alone is already in conflict with the Islamic political

system that does not distinguish the separation of Islam from the national government. This does not mean, however, that there is no room for cooperation between the Christian and Muslim Filipinos in Mindanao. Islam as religion in the Philippines is a religion of peace-loving people. What is critical in keeping the peace from turning into violence is respect for one another, regardless of religious affiliation. Otherwise, even the most educated members of the minority will turn violent if oppression against their group continues.

As discussed in Chapter Four, educated Muslims in the Philippines have historically turned into charismatic figures that have strengthened the Moro struggle for self-determination and have extended their networks to the international community, instead of becoming a group of intellectuals who would lead the integration program. Studies show that rebel groups in internal conflict will step up to the next phase of rebellion, that is, from condemning government's inattention to their grievances to questioning the very legitimacy of the government.29 In the case of the Mindanao armed conflict, the rebels move from the issue of identity to secessionism when they feel discriminated against and relegated to the margins in the country's development efforts.

Lessons of the past indicate that downgrading the level of rebel claims could be very difficult because it can serve as a justification for further pressuring the government into granting previous demands. In negotiating with Muslim rebels like the MILF, anything less than what they are asking for is always unacceptable. As a result, bargaining becomes a burden on the side of the dominant power, the

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government. In some instances, the national leaders become aggressive when diplomatic means fail, hence a potential source of national policy change. Another critical phase during a peace negotiation is the change of national leadership. This study is of the view that latent conflict can become an open war when a leadership change gives way to state leaders who believe that the use of force is more beneficial than giving in to the demands of the rebels. When normal politics can no longer satisfy the groups' concerns and grievances, thus, it inevitably breaks down.30

This is exactly why a window for conflict settlement is sometimes closed because of the aggressive behavior of Philippine leaders. During the Marcos administration, there was a massive campaign to curve the growing violence in the country even to the point of using military power in response to Moro rebellion in the south and the communist insurgency in almost every province not populated by Muslims. The employment of military rule earned countless criticisms but it continued to prevail for years because of the determination of Marcos to impose what he thought best for the Philippines. Nevertheless, all changes in government politics always offer opportunities for ending violence in Mindanao.

a. From A Virtually Open Policy to Military Rule

The declaration of Martial Law in September 1972 was seen as an aggressive policy of the government towards minority groups. But beyond its perceived oppressive implications for peoples' freedoms, its main goals of eradicating loose firearms while addressing the economic needs of the country may have been another way to achieve stability in the entire country, and a great opportunity for

resolving armed conflict in the Philippines. Strict implementation of firearms control and management can especially dampen the secessionist movement in the south. Martial law in itself was a critical government option, especially when the government system became synonymous to military rule that carried out political repression and the curtailment of the people’s rights.

In contrast, a state faced with internal security threats sometimes needs to tailor its policy to equally address national security and economic concerns. For instance, Singapore during its early stage of development curtailed some of its peoples’ rights while successfully pursuing economic development for its people. In that context, the important thing to consider is that for as long as there is a reduction of disparities among groups that also harbor an ambition for recognition at the highest possible level, the likelihood of violence is minimal.\textsuperscript{31} This means that equal treatment of different groups is vital to preventing the rise of one group against another group, or by extension, against a government.

\textit{Military rule} in the Philippines was supposed to address the problem of rampant violence and the growing rebellion in the south. To curb the surge of violence especially in the rural areas, the original intent of Martial Law must have been appreciated, but it soon became a gateway for rebels to use the system itself in generating substantial popular support. Its implementation was perceived by many as inimical to human rights because of the abuses and atrocities committed by the security forces. Forced disappearances and illegal arrests were the most popular violations that were blamed on the government. In the Muslim communities, one of

the most common complaints was the systematic action of the Christian settlers, aided by government forces, to force the transfer of populations by attacking villages and burning houses. Such action was tantamount to encouraging revolt because the Moro people felt unsafe in the hands of government authorities. In fact, it was the primary reason that the Moros supported the common initiative to send young Muslims to foreign countries for military training.

During that time, the MNLF was only in the early stages of arming its fighters as an appropriate response to an oppressive government. The MNLF, like other similar groups in recent years, claimed it was fighting for the oppressed Muslims and, on this platform, became a huge organization contesting government policy toward Muslims in the south. Consequently, the supposed benign intention of Martial Law became ineffectual as many groups fought Marcos's dictatorial regime for its gross violations of the rights of Filipinos. The Muslims were determined to fight military rule which, as alleged by many, did not address the aspirations and grievances of the Moros but rather systematically employed a policy that favored only a few groups in society. The plight of the Muslims was neglected, and it became a primary responsibility of the MNLF or the "Black Shirts" to fight for the rights and security of the Moros.

Even with the growing tensions between the government and rebel forces, there was an opportunity for conflict resolution later in 1976 – which may have been a ripe moment for the government to take advantage of the Muslims' eagerness to proceed with the peace negotiations. In the midst of military rule, the Muslims through the MNLF became cooperative and, in time, supportive of the
"Tripoli Agreement" forged between the GRP and the MNLF. But such opportunity did not materialize owing to discrepancies especially in how the leaders interpreted the provisions of the agreement. In such a situation, the role of national leaders and elites including those in the areas of conflict –traditional Muslims leaders and leaders in Christian resettlements – play an important part in the sudden turn of the volatile situation into violence. The armed confrontation between MNLF combatants and government forces allowed the "forceful and secured" occupation by settlers of the lands claimed by the Muslims as theirs. This process lent Muslim leaders the charismatic power to lead the Moro people in asserting and fighting for self-determination.

Marcos ruled the country as an autocrat for 14 years, disbanding the legislature and creating a new constitution which rendered the former constitution entirely obsolete. Initially, the move was appreciated especially by those who were opposed to the traditional elite political leadership. Marcos removed the traditional elites from their seats of power. But unfortunately, Marcos packed the government with his relatives and friends, making the whole structure of governance aligned to his selfish political interests. Still, such a drastic change initially gained significant appreciation both from the local population and other countries. Marcos stabilized the economy by attracting foreign investors and incurring loans on behalf of the state. He was able to bring basic services to the populace, although arguably fewer services were extended to rural areas in Mindanao, by building roads, sewer systems, irrigation systems, hospitals, and schools. As this developed, however, his political ambitions also soared. Widespread dissatisfaction with his regime started
to spread among the population as he permitted massive fraud that resulted in billions of dollars taken from international aid and funneled into his own private accounts or those of his cronies.\textsuperscript{32}

Thus, the original intent of stabilizing the economy and security in the entire country was left to the discretion of a few in the seat of power. Most of their approaches were merely preventive actions aimed at deescalating tensions instead of addressing the grievances of the people, particularly the Muslims in the south. As a consequence, neither the military campaigns of the Marcos regime nor the government's socioeconomic programs addressed the root causes of the Moro rebellion.\textsuperscript{33} Until now, local political leaders are observed to be acting as if there is no power above them. They build up a protective posture primarily for their own security instead of the government security forces providing a secure environment for local communities. Unfortunately, the military always offends up supporting local power leaders not only because it is part of their mandate but more importantly because it helps ease the burden on the security requirements of communities facing threats from NSAGs.

\textbf{b. The Return of Democracy}

Another great opportunity for conflict resolution came during the fall of the Marcos dictatorship and the return of democracy in 1986. After President Corazon Aquino assumed the presidency in the wake of Marcos's fall from power in a popular uprising at the national capital, she started looking for a way to continue the talks


\textsuperscript{33}Yegar, \textit{Between Integration and Secession}, 282.
with Moro rebels. Her brother-in-law, Agapito 'Butz' Aquino, was the one directly tasked to find ways to engage the Muslim rebel groups, particularly the MNLF and the MILF. In addition, leaders of the Moro rebels, who were in the Middle East, were encouraged to return to the Philippines for ceasefire talks, even as initial efforts to orchestrate a joint meeting with them failed. Instead, the rebel groups escalated the clashes to pressure the government on their original demand for autonomy within the context of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement.34

By authority of the President, the Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines was amended and, at the beginning of 1987, ratified by the people in a nationwide referendum. Included in the new Constitution was a provision for the creation of autonomous regions, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and another in the Cordillera region, within the context of national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Philippines.35 Also, Misuari's insistence on full independence for Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan (MINSUPALA) had been neutralized by some ASEAN nations; he likewise dropped the MNLF's long-standing demand for separation and agreed, instead, to full autonomy for the Moro people. This shift in MNLF demands was also influenced, in part, by the OIC.

What complicated the negotiation for peace was the inclusion of a referendum as a means of implementing autonomy. At that critical point in the talks, the government insisted on the constitutional process, which meant that the grant of autonomy for Muslims was subject to a political exercise in which the people would be asked whether or not they wanted to be part of the autonomy. The MNLF

34 Yegar, Between Integration and Secession, 332.
35 Section 15, Article 10 of the 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines.
opposed this method, convinced that Christian-dominated areas would most likely reject their inclusion in the Autonomous Region. Again, another great opportunity for conflict resolution became an avenue for further escalating the conflict. The government security forces were ordered to stand ready to use military power in case peaceful negotiations failed. On the other hand, the Muslim rebel forces had strengthened their forces and resources in preparation for war.

But the deadlock was broken after the term of Corazon Aquino. Of all the attempts to end the armed conflict in Mindanao, the period during the presidency of Fidel V. Ramos was the most promising for conflict resolution. The signing of the 1996 Peace Agreement was made possible with the government's resolve to end the violence while encouraging economic development and reconciliation. Aside from engaging the Moro secessionists, the government also engaged the military rebel forces, who had launched several coup attempts in the previous administration, so they would refrain from using the military option to undermine the newly regained democracy in the country. The government offered amnesty, which meant that all rebels would be pardoned if they chose to lay down their arms and rejoin the national mainstream. The program was not only directed towards former military men who had participated in several coups as well as the Moro rebels but also extended to the communist armed group, the New People's Army.

In Mindanao, the integration of the MNLF combatants into the government's armed services was the most tangible accomplishment of the Ramos administration in addressing the secessionist tendency of the Moro people. The effort to neutralize the armed rebellion in Mindanao was in consonance with the general objective of
development for the most depressed communities in conflict-affected areas. Mindanao was declared a "zone of peace and development." For a while, because of the integration of the combatants into the armed forces and the police, there was relative peace in the areas of conflict. The success in bringing down the MNLF threat was made possible because President Ramos was determined to have peace and development in Mindanao.36

The government, however, failed to consider the implications of a negotiation that did not address other armed groups operating in the same areas of conflict. For failing to encourage the MILF to participate in the peace process, the relative peace did not last long. In fact, the problem with the MILF was inherited by succeeding administrations. Today, the MILF is asking for wider territory and autonomy with more political, economic, and social powers. The realization of MILF aspirations would depend not only on the outcome of the peace process, hopefully a peace accord, but the process thereafter.

On the part of the MNLF organization, combatants integrated into the AFP were enjoying the fruits of being in government service with minimal commission of misdemeanors. This, despite the fact that some of them were silently questioning army regulations which were fully applied to them even though they could not cope with such regulations due to fundamental deficiencies, such as low educational attainment, that really put them in a disadvantaged position while in the service.37

The benign intention of existing policies of the Armed Forces is to

37 Personal interview with former MNLF combatants who are now already bringing the rank of Major in the army, 29 June 2012 at fort Bonifacio, Makati City, Philippines.
professionalize its ranks. Most recently, some of the former MNLF officers and men were recalled from their previous unit assignment in Mindanao as part of the rotation policy, which applies to all army personnel. However, former MNLF combatants are more useful and effective in the performance of their duties when they are actually deployed in areas where they came from. They can be more useful in Muslim communities where they have the opportunity to speak on behalf of the government, rather than in areas not familiar to them. There are many unpopular Muslim traditions and beliefs in Mindanao which only the Muslim integrees in the AFP and the PNP know about. Besides, assigning the former MNLF combatants to areas outside the ARMM is a violation of the Department of National Defense policy stipulated in DND circular 05 dated September 30, 2003 and section 20, paragraph b of the 1996 peace agreement.

c. Questions over Ancestral Domain

In spite of the controversy over its legality, the stalled MOA-AD could be a step forward for longer peace in Mindanao. The GRP-MILF panel that worked hard to craft the MOA-AD for years had been looking for a means to realize peace and development in Mindanao. In addition, teams of international observers were also helping the government ensure strict adherence to the established ceasefire in Mindanao and facilitate peace negotiations. However, the supposed prelude to longer peace failed to materialize because of an unclear policy that has made the Christians and non-Muslims suspicious of the government’s real intention for the MOA-AD. As expected, the MOA-AD did not earn substantial support from the majority of lawmakers, policymakers, and Christian elites in Manila.
For fear of being under the control of the MILF in the long run, some Christians in Mindanao were opposed to the supposed signing of the MOA-AD. The government, at the last minute, had to turn its back on the MOA-AD followed by the declaration of the Supreme Court that it was unconstitutional. Consequently, this was followed by a series of intensified armed confrontations between the MILF mujahideen and government forces. It must be remembered that almost the entire Muslim community, as claimed by many, fully supported the crafted MOA-AD as a way to address the Moro peoples' questions about territory for conflict settlement.\textsuperscript{38}

The failure of the MOA-AD, however, has not meant a total deadlock in the Mindanao conflict settlement. The GRP-MILF has remained firm in its resolve to continue the stalled peace negotiations. On the part of the Muslims, they usually conduct a general assembly to get the consensus of the Moro people. The most recent assembly of Muslims was on 6-9 July 2012 at the MILF's Camp Darapanan in Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao where thousands of Muslims from all sectors of society came to take part in the consultations as well as show the integrity of the Moros and their eagerness for peace in Mindanao. Such peace assembly was witnessed by several international organizations, ambassadors of Muslims countries, and the International Contact Group (ICG).

This study is of the view that this cohesiveness of the Bangsamoro people is worth looking into, other than paying close attention to the instruments of war (weapons or armaments), since the huge domestic support for the Moro people's cause has the potential for fueling and perpetrating a rebellion. As long as the end

\textsuperscript{38} Personal interview with at least 10 Muslim leaders in the province of Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, North Cotabato, and Lanao Del Sur from June 2 to July 8 2012.
goal of any initiative is for the Bangsamoro, historical evidence shows that Muslims from all parts of Mindanao are united for a common goal. This observation is crucial to an understanding of the Mindanao conflict because in many forms of aggression, minority groups would resort to engaging in collective action—be it peaceful or violent. But such collective action in contemporary politics must be empowered with resources that enable minority groups to compete with, or "put-up a fight" against, powerful opponents.39

Today, the current administration is very optimistic that it can reach a settlement with the MILF for a lasting peace because it addresses the issues raised by the Bangsamoro. On October 15, 2012, the government of the Philippines and the MILF panel signed the "framework agreement" for the Bangsamoro or the New Political Entity (NPE) which would replace the ARMM created in the context of the 1996 Peace Agreement between the MNLF and the government of the Philippines. The NPE has raised hopes, though with opposition from some groups especially the MNLF, that it would allow the return to normalcy in the conflict-affected areas of Mindanao. The NPE is a genuine document that clearly emphasizes a mechanism, similar to previous ones that would address the questions of Muslims in the south. However, the question of how the government can be effective and capable in this endeavor, especially in regard to the implementation process, remains to be seen.

What is clear at this time is that the MNLF is unhappy with the signing of the "Framework Agreement," and has warned of a renewed armed struggle in the south. Likewise the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), which bolted from the

d. Economic Development and Lasting Peace

The economic development approach is a noble and proven important long-term solution to insurgency, such as the one in Mindanao. However, it encourages separation or secessionism if directed only toward a certain group in society. Development in one area may be a source of discontent that encourages rebellion or secession because of feelings of neglect and resentment toward government among groups that do not benefit from such an effort. Ted Gurr, in his classical work, asks the question, 'Why do men rebel?.' His analysis is anchored on the physical and
psychological needs of humankind. His "frustration-aggression approach" links the incidents of political violence and rebellion directly to feelings of deprivation that arise out of unfulfilled expectations. In other words, this theory can be linked to questions about secessionism wherein discriminated groups are more likely to resort to separation preferably through violent means if they see no chances of success through peaceful means.

The very foundation of Moro aggressiveness is rooted in an initiative that is supposed to address poverty but is not directed towards the right recipients. Karl Cordell and Stefan Wolff recently observed that one reason for the occurrence of violence in Mindanao is the fact that the governor of the area supposedly created for the rebels, on behalf of the Muslims, has never been a member of the MNLF. The rebel groups may have experienced waning support from the people but a sustainable settlement of the Mindanao conflict is unlikely because the way the armed group is treated is critical to Mindanao conflict settlement, even as this study is convinced that, by and large, the civilian component of the rebellion will play an important role. Also, when the living conditions of the Muslim people are not enhanced by a peace agreement which is presumably aimed at developing Moroland, violence is more likely to recur in a short span of time after such an agreement is forged because discontent remains prevalent. In short, there is a strong correlation between economic development initiatives and the cessation of violence, even as the persistence of armed struggle is beyond such relationship. In Mindanao,

substantial aid has poured into the area but the inability of an old system to implement such a concept has been a major obstacle to ending the secessionist tendency of the Muslims. An old system could mean the traditional ways of channeling development aid which, arguably, are not aligned with the original intention of changing the people's mindset from aggressiveness to one of cooperation.

The Muslim rebellion in the south could be addressed in many ways, but the most appreciated option is a negotiated settlement because of the generous idea that promises economic development for ordinary people and not the wealthy or elites. However, negotiations are much more credible when they are religiously pursued in the context of a fair, honest, and meaningful search for peace. In the long history of Mindanao conflict management, peace agreements have been forged but, most often than not, the implementation process for such pacts have created even more intense conflict due to differences in the interpretation of the agreement's provisions. In the final analysis, however, the vagueness of the provisions in the pact has merely been used by some influential individuals to further their own political ambitions.

The generous international and local efforts to mitigate the effects of armed conflict among the population should have been sufficient and appreciated not only because of the humanitarian consideration but also because they relieved the displaced people from the miseries of hunger. However, it must be noted that such relief operations which extended financial or food assistance to internally displaced people (IDPs) in affected areas were only a temporary relief to mitigate the costly effects of violence. International aid, on the other hand, could be a potential source
of corruption. The undesirable behavior of local officials handling international aid could derail the real intention of the humanitarian assistance in helping displaced persons to recover from the miseries of violence.

In some instances, truckloads of rice for displaced civilians believed to be moving towards evacuation centers were seen a few days later in local markets being sold by local traders at a lower price. The question of how this food aid, supposedly free, came into the possession of local traders was not clear. What was evident, instead, is that the humanitarian mission for IDPs can be, and has in fact been, a source of corruption among a group of people who may have influence in the process of food distribution. Usually, corruption remains unchecked as majorities of the people in Mindanao, especially the Muslims, are silenced and unable to publicly express their concerns over the corrupt practices of local executives out of fear of retaliation from more influential personalities.

In the same context of tempering the effects of violence, if change through economic development is the government's goal, greater community participation from both Christians and Muslims in determining and implementing development projects would help ensure that projects are implemented as envisioned, thus allowing peace and a development attitude to become ingrained in the minds of the people. But again, this can only be done if the security of the people is guaranteed as to encourage them to openly report any mishandling of efforts to mitigate or stop the armed conflict in Mindanao. As long as the people are hesitant to participate in

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42 Personal interview with Locals affected by conflict in Datu Piang, Maguindanao on 10 June 2012.
this complex situation out of fear of retaliation, the government's economic development effort will continue to be used for the personal interest of unscrupulous individuals and lasting peace may ultimately prove elusive through economic development.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Philippines has been embroiled in the security problem brought about by the Muslim rebellion in the south, which has evolved into a more complex situation. It is for this reason, however, that investigations into the conflict have become more complicated so that, due to the inaccessibility of data, most findings are based on available information and fail to consider what has been prevailing in the areas of conflict. For a more valid and unbiased conclusion, studies must be based on a deeper analysis of information obtained at the very area of the conflict where critical data are available. Policy recommendations, therefore, should originate from a critical analysis of the situation in the area of conflict and not from elsewhere. Critical to this is the ability of a research study to penetrate the general population's situation and their perspective in the context of addressing discontent and grievances. In the long run, studies conducted on the basis of accessible data at the outer layer of the conflict areas may miss the importance of addressing the rightful audience, and may also fail to address the empirical puzzle surrounding the persistence of armed conflict. This study does not claim to offer a straightforward solution, but it does bring to light some important variables that the Philippine government may take into consideration so that attempts to resolve the conflict for longer peace in Mindanao may be attained.
a. **Security Sector**

Most research work on the Mindanao conflict loosely considers the important role of arms or weapons in the cycle of violence. Among others mentioned in this study, it is the ready availability of weapons that complicates the situation and makes conflict resolution even more difficult. No doubt, the Muslims in the south have grown up in the belief that only their weapons could save them in times of security crisis. In some Muslim communities, a weapon is a status symbol; the more weapons one has, the more respect one earns in a society that gives him power. Nevertheless, this study is quite confident that even in the face of many weapons, conflict resolution remains possible because there is a rationale behind the proliferation of weapons in a society.

Muslims in the south have acquired many weapons in numerous ways. There are those with the financial capacity to personally buy weapons from illegal sources. There are communities, such as clans, who by virtue of their common goal of protecting their families from unlawful attacks, opt to generate funds from each family with which to buy their weapons. Similarly, those occupying political office take advantage of their position to acquire more weapons from government security forces on a loan basis. This is justified by claiming that they themselves are fighting, alongside the military, against MILF combatants or other lawless elements and that their security must also be protected. Of all these mechanisms, the most threatening is the claim of government officials that they are entitled to arm themselves because their lives are threatened as a consequence of their official functions. This means

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44 Uztadz Daud, serving as underground political leader in the Bangsamoro, interview by the author, Maguindanao province, June 5, 2012.
that the capacity of government’s armed services to maintain the security of people in government is in question.

Arming civilians may be an option against any threat to life but it could be the most critical of all stumbling blocks to conflict resolution, economic development, and the preservation of peace. Before the massacre of 58 people in Maguindanao in 2009, for instance, the government had authorized civilians to arm themselves in preparation for possible attacks by, in the case of Maguindanao province, the MILF. This mechanism became a legal basis for the local politicians to build up their own security. What happened was that the government, in good faith, supplied arms to perceived allies because the military themselves believed that it was one way of reducing the burden of deploying more forces to these areas.

This approach, however, has been found to be defective. Other than the discipline that should be ingrained in these civilian armed elements, those holding guns, like the military, need proper training. As observed in Mindanao, once the civilian sector such as local politicians is armed, there is a decline in the delivery of effective services to constituents because these local leaders apparently shift more attention to assuming a military role rather than that of public servants in their political jurisdiction. In the most daring massacre in Maguindanao where 58 people were killed on 23 November 2009, most of the firearms and weapons recovered from the suspected Ampatuan clan came from the Armed Forces. All other suspects were civilian volunteers armed with high-powered firearms with no clear military

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45 Executive Order 546, section 2, August 2006: The PNP is authorized to deputize the "Barangay Tanod" or people serving as local security forces, as force multipliers in the implementation of peace and order in the areas of conflict.
personnel supervising them.

This incident makes it imperative to review the policy on arming civilians, especially politicians, in the context of attaining peace in Mindanao. Perhaps, reducing the number of loose firearms, if they cannot be completely removed, may contribute to attaining the aspirations of the people, both Muslims and Christians, for peace and development. Moreover, the virtually open policy on selling guns should be studied. In the Philippines, one can own a gun by buying it from a gun store as long as one undergoes a seminar and other administrative orientations. In developed countries such as the United States, owning a gun is legal, but this model could not be adopted in the Philippines, a country smarting from the effects of internal armed conflict.

Arms should be controlled if the Philippine government intends to minimize criminality caused by the use of readily available firearms. If there is a stricter policy on the control and management of guns, then the likelihood of having a society with lesser criminality is high. In this case, conflict resolution would not be so difficult since it reduces the complications brought about by loose firearms, which are then only in the possession of rebels. Also, through this scheme, the local politicians may become advocates of peace instead of being accessories to the conflict by acting like members of a military organization.

Lastly, the security sector must undergo a reform to tailor its activities to the security needs of the peace process for lasting peace in Mindanao. It must be noted that one reason the military is sometimes having difficulty in tailoring its operational activities in Muslim-dominated areas is that these communities are
difficult to penetrate. For reasons beyond political control, these communities are infiltrated by an “exclusive organization,” such as the MILF, the MNLF, and other armed groups like the BIFF which recently bolted from the MILF.

In light of crafting a strategic policy to address such organizational exclusiveness where anyone who looks suspicious is not welcome, one suggestion is to study the possibility of increasing the number of Muslims in the military organization, rather than just suspecting young Muslim men of being rebels or of being supportive of the rebellion. After all, the 1987 Philippine Constitution itself mandates that “the officers and men of the regular force of the armed forces shall be recruited proportionately from all provinces and cities.” Finally, sincere and vigorous training and education on social awareness may ease the feeling of uncertainty on the part of the officers and soldiers of the AFP and the PNP about the culture, traditions, and beliefs of the Muslims in the south. In the end, military units deployed in the Muslim-dominated areas for whatever missions would face these communities with more credibility because the presence of Muslim soldiers attests to their sense of belongingness in the military and to the sincerity of military units toward the Muslims.

b. Political Sector

The issue between government goals and Muslim aspirations has been strongly linked to the political system in the country. This problem has been classified by many as a political problem that needs a political solution. In this context, political figures are critical in the future of the armed struggle of Muslims in

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46 Philippine constitution, article XVI, section 5.
Mindanao. This study, however, is convinced that the situation may reach a point where both parties in this decades-old conflict would finally agree to end the violence by forging a peace agreement. On October 15, 2012, the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro was signed by both the government of the Philippines and the MILF panels. However, as in the past, a binding written document does not guarantee the end of aggression because of many technicalities that can be exploited by spoilers of peace that could thus derail the direction of the implementation of such an agreement. Political leaders are crucial in getting the full support of the people. The national leadership, for example, may influence all government sectors to support the peace process because it is designed, among others, to maintain the territorial integrity of the Republic and preserve a popular democracy. On the other hand, leaders of government sectors can also be a potential source of disagreement.

For several decades in the history of Mindanao, local leaders particularly in the Muslim areas have failed to implement the essence of good governance. This study believes this issue can be addressed through the dedicated supervision of a credible system by the central government. Moreover, if there is autonomy, whether it is the existing ARMM or the proposed expanded autonomy in the GRP-MILF negotiations, it is more appreciated by the people when the essence of autonomy is felt instead of having autonomy only on paper. An autonomous region that does not address the real question of minority is most likely to fail in the long run because the conditions for a rebellion remain. In Mindanao, the people living in the conflict-affected areas expect positive change in the political system so that it is a system
appropriate for a multi-ethnic society.

Contrary to common understanding, change in the Philippine political system should be viewed as a step towards peace and security, not as a threat to national security. The 1996 peace agreement championed by Ramos was made possible through the work of national leaders, policymakers, and most of all the lawmakers who, by virtue of their mandates, saw to it that autonomous regions (the ARMM and the Cordillera region) were included in the Philippine Constitution that was ratified in 1987. Because the law accommodates the creation of an autonomous region, the peace negotiations prior to the forging of the 1996 agreement earned meaningful support from the population and the international community.

Beyond entering into an agreement, the central government should bear the responsibility to help the autonomous area (ARMM) or the proposed Bangsamoro in the GPH-MILF negotiations to ensure a government that accepts responsibility and accountability to its people. The general observation is that current ARMM governance is weak. This is a fair observation supported by the fact that institutions in the current ARMM must be reformed in order to address the needs of its citizens. The people have complained that the 1996 Peace Agreement has not improved or changed their lives.

What went wrong in the ARMM could be summed up as poor governance and the failure to implement the essence of autonomy. Probably, it is also a good idea to see to it that political leaders in the ARMM are capable of running the ARMM. This is

47 Philippine constitution ratified in 1987, after the fall of Martial Law.
48 David Gorman, during his remark on the comparison of Mindanao and Aceh, 13 July 2012 at Development Academy of the Philippines.
possible through a systematic campaign to educate the people and the supposed leaders, even if they come from the rebel groups, on good governance. In this way, unscrupulous leaders may be checked and wane naturally. This is a huge task because the national government itself is bombarded with corruption, but to a certain degree, a move towards good government may resolve the unstable ARMM in the south. After all, the political will to promote genuine autonomy should be pursued without hindrance while ensuring the establishment of a mechanism to have the ARMM, buttressed with a realistic budget, included in the national investment priorities.49

c. Education, Socio-Cultural Sector

Education, as discussed earlier, has not addressed the overall integration of Muslims into Filipino society. However, putting aside the historical disadvantage of Muslim educational programs in the past, a good education in the 21st century environment should be a primordial concern of every state to see to it that there is equal access to education among its entire citizenry. Today, there are a number of educated Muslims occupying positions in politics, education, agriculture, and other sectors of government. On the other hand, it is this study's view that the complex situation in Mindanao has been further aggravated by knowledgeable individuals with divergent agenda. The assortment of numerous actors has given the government so much difficulty in dealing with the security problem in Mindanao. But this complex environment could be well-addressed by strong and firm leaders committed to having a united Filipino nation. Sometimes, dealing with educated

49 Bacani, Beyond Paper Autonomy, 60-61.
individuals is even more difficult, especially when an approach does not provide a clear and unbiased policy.

In Mindanao, the problem could be blamed on a system that unknowingly promotes feelings of discrimination and inequality. Educated Muslims are qualified to occupy key positions but representation in the central government has been disproportionate. In essence, the decision making process in regard to the Muslims is most often plagued with criticism, especially from the Muslim minority, because strategic policies are conceived without the consent of knowledgeable Muslims themselves. In the end, the divisiveness of communities is unwittingly highlighted instead of being able to promote stronger, cohesive, and progressive governance with reasonable representation from key sectors of society. Again, these faulty systems have been noted and strategic attempts have been made to address the same, but they have been neglected for whatever reason by individuals who have influence over the situation.

The Madrasa educational system, for instance, has doubtlessly existed since the time when the Muslim people in Mindanao adopted Islam as their religion and Arabic as the medium of instruction in their schools. In 1973, the Department of Education and Culture ordered the use of Arabic as a medium of instruction for Grade I and Grade II in areas dominated by Muslims, then in the provinces of Sulu, Basilan, Zamboanga del Sur, the Lanao areas, and all areas of Cotabato (now Maguindanao, [North] Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, South Cotabato, and Sarangani provinces).\[50\] Aside from minimal implementation of the program for whatever

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\[50\] Department Order no. 25, series of 1973, Department Education and Culture.
reasons, this national policy should have been appreciated if said program was also available in schools throughout the country. Although Arabic as a language may not be used in schools in Christian-dominated areas, basic knowledge about the existence of Islam in the southern Philippines should at least be taught to Filipino children so that the next generation is equipped with knowledge on the Arabic language and Muslim values rather than suspecting Madrasahs (in today's generation) as a breeding ground for terrorism.

During the ARMM period, the Department of Education after a series of studies and consultations has directed schools, particularly in the Muslim autonomous region, to adopt the implementing guidelines on the Arabic curriculum. The Department of Education has mandated public schools and other private Madrasah to implement the Refined Elementary Madrasah Curriculum (REMC), the Arabic Language and Islamic values (ALIVE) for public schools and the Refined Standard Madrasah Curriculum (RSMC) for private Madrasahs. The policy covers pupils from Grade I to Grade VI. This educational policy also allows the smooth transition of a private Madrasah into becoming a public school with the ALIVE program.51 This is another attempt to acknowledge the exclusive educational needs of the Muslims while maintaining the national identity as Filipinos through the preservation of cultural heritage. However, its full implementation has yet to be seen. More so, as earlier suggested, the target audience should include the majority Christians so that the level of awareness about Muslims, Islamic values, cultural practices, and other traditions of Muslims in the south would be enhanced and

51 Department Order no. 40, series Of 2011, Depart of Education of the Philippines.
would facilitate easy resolution of major barriers between Muslims and Christians in the country.

Finally, an education program on peace studies is much needed in revitalizing the environment, that is, a self-sustaining program aimed at addressing differences or even common disputes among groups of people. In essence, the *culture of violence* that many believe to be a compelling mechanism for prolonged armed conflict will be transformed into a *culture of peace* that will be ingrained in every generation of Filipinos. In the end, future generations in the country will be one that does not distinguish or discriminate against anyone according to ethnic affiliation. If this is achieved, the probability of attaining a solid peace is very high.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused on the complexity of armed conflict in Mindanao that showcases the difficulty facing negotiated settlements and its implications for government. It has shown that to attain a lasting peace, the government must be patient and flexible enough to accommodate the demands of minority groups but firm enough so as not to jeopardize the integrity of the state. The response of government, usually, is dependent on the intensity of the conflict and the extent of damage to the communities. The establishment of ceasefires is a potential source of peace, but what makes them more disadvantageous is the failure to explore all possible avenues to peace as actors exploit the emerging confusion that eventually leads to renewed and persistent violence, and even the scrupulous leaders become too timid to overcome the few spoilers of peace.

It is true that truces sometimes provide enough space for both parties to
prepare for the next intensified fight, but that is only because the temporary cessation of violence is not followed by a systematic means of pursuing peace through fair and dedicated negotiations. In other words, the general notion about the bad effects of truces can be tempered by a serious effort of leaders to push for a genuine advocacy for peace.

It is evident, in this chapter, that the complexity of the Mindanao situation is a product of the vicious cycle of violence. Approaches to this armed conflict have generated many questions based on the empirical evidence that violence as a result of armed confrontations between government security forces and the Muslims rebels has persisted for decades. For this reason, the results of studies and investigations on this phenomenon have not been given the opportunity for serious implementation, or if implemented, have failed to address the supposed rightful audiences. In the end, mediocre implementation of approaches to the problem has been exploited by spoilers who have no intention of finding a genuine resolution to the conflict.

A *rido* or conflict between Moro clans, for example, has been used to hide the real security issues in the areas of conflict. When a conflict is classified as a *rido*, its early resolution, more often than not, is left to the conflicting parties, thus requiring minimal pacifying efforts from the government. In the end, a localized conflict that is classified as a "*rido*" eventually escalates into a bigger conflict that calls for major participation from the same government security forces.

There are at least three major questions that need to be addressed on the matter of family or group war. When there is an armed confrontation between
Muslim families, what should the government security forces deployed in the area do? When there is an armed confrontation between Christian families, what should the military do? And if there is an armed confrontation between a group of Muslim families and a group of Christian families, what must the security forces do? These questions, by and large, may be rhetorical in nature, but answering these questions may ease the tension between and among the people in Mindanao regardless of their ethnic or religious group. In times of war, spoilers always prevail because the majority peace advocates become reluctant and choose to be silent out of fear for their own security.

To bring about an urgent peace that would mitigate the effects of violent conflict, national leaders are often forced to craft a policy that is supposed to meet the needs of the country for peace and development. Unfortunately, it usually does not address the issues that would ensure the continuity of peace and security in the areas of conflict. The spoilers of peace most often take advantage of the complicated environment to successfully carry out their aim of derailing the peace process. In the end, even the brightest people tend to stay away from mediating negotiations because of the unclear policy on the conflict in Mindanao. The government, however, may not be blamed for every failed settlement as the government policy on implementation has been manipulated by unscrupulous individuals, whose success in derailing negotiated settlements in the south has helped enable the perpetuation of the “on and off” cycle of fighting between the government security forces and the Muslims rebels.

No doubt the government strategic approach to this prolonged conflict has
been studied and implemented, though analysts have seen anomalies in implementation. In addition, policies towards the Mindanao conflict have been challenged by intervening factors, such as kidnappings for ransom targeting foreigners and selected businessmen. Succeeding responses to these intervening factors should not create new opportunities for turning the volatile situation in the conflict-affected areas into an open war. That way, the true essence of conflict settlement may be attained as the ultimate goal of the country. Also, clan disputes should not be treated as small localized conflicts best left to the warring parties to resolve. The 1987 Constitution mandates the Armed Forces to protect the country and the people regardless of ethnic origin or religious affiliation. Security forces should use this as a legal tool for taking action to settle these disputes rather than simply waiting on the sidelines until a confined dispute erupts into a war between the Muslim rebels and the Armed Forces of the Philippines. In short, mediation should come even before disputes between groups start to build up, and the government approach should be firm enough to stand against the rigorous threats to peace and security. Policy makers, lawmakers, and state leaders should base strategic decisions not on emotional biases but on a careful analysis of empirical evidence with a view to attaining peace, development, and unity among the people.

In the final analysis, it appears that the spoilers have so far prevailed because the country, in general, has failed to appropriately address the perverse intentions of a few but influential and unscrupulous individuals. The government, however, is in a position to impose what is good for the people in accordance with existing law and an evidence-based approach. Therefore, an attempt to derail a peace initiative
must not be allowed to succeed because the lessons of the past can serve as a basis for evaluating the causes of failed approaches to this conflict.

Beyond all these observations, a serious campaign to educate the people and, if possible, all sectors of governance about the lessons of the past would be helpful in the pursuit of negotiated settlements. After all, as long as differences prevail over unity in the country, the Mindanao conflict will not go away. Failures in the past should serve as lessons that guide the leaders in the struggle for peace in Mindanao. The complex security environment is oppressive and a primary source of prolonged conflict, but the complexity of the same situation could be addressed appropriately by both the dynamic structure of the government and the strength and vision of its leaders.
CHAPTER 7
SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The first chapter of this study highlights the role of local actors entangled in the process at the state level as a significant determinant for ending the Mindanao armed conflict. On the same note, this study is aligned with the moral principle that peoples of a state should not fight each other in order to maintain the nation's territorial integrity and sovereignty which, in turn, propel national economic prosperity. As long as the Philippines is bombarded with challenges posed by internal security threats from distinct groups, the prospects for a better Philippines and a national economy that is highly competitive in the international system in the 21st century remain unclear. It is true that the complex situation in the southern Philippines has been ingrained in its long history of hatred and divisiveness, but the opportunity for conflict resolution also runs parallel to the Mindanao conflict.

In fact, in almost every outbreak of major conflict between the government forces and the Muslims, the opportunity for settlement has been there. Even as the conflict intensifies, the international community has been playing an important role in bringing the violence to a temporary halt. Efforts are temporary in nature because the opportunity for outside players to become effective tools for attaining longer stability that can last beyond ceasefires has been neglected in the context of peace and security, social justice, economic development, and equality.

The 1976 peace agreement, better known as the Tripoli Agreement, was among the official accords that may have brought more stability to Mindanao. But
the systematic move to mislead the true direction of the peace accord became one of the stumbling blocks to the realization of what had been mandated in the peace agreement. In the end, the Tripoli Agreement became a means to simply contain and suppress the supposed escalation of the conflict in Mindanao. Some of the leaders of the Moro rebels were absorbed into the government system by assuming political positions while others were given a chance to start a new life in the business sector. This system, by and large, temporarily halted the violence primarily due to the absence of leaders in the rebel movement, but more dynamic and charismatic leaders eventually emerged to continue the armed struggle.

The country, with its policy of containment, has been put in a bad light in the eyes of the international community. The OIC, for example, openly blamed the Government of the Philippines for failing to implement the mandates of the Tripoli Agreement. Because of diplomatic pressure from Islamic states, the country tried to ameliorate the effects of the Muslim rebellion in the south by devising a mechanism that would make the situation more manageable, with greater focus on the welfare and safety of Muslim communities in the affected areas. Even if this policy was not popular, the government was compelled to satisfy the interest of external actors while arguably addressing the domestic demands. A peace settlement through the implementation of the Tripoli Agreement, thus, became second priority, giving way to the government's top priority which was now the implementation of a mechanism to mitigate the regional implications of the conflict. In fact, the succeeding approaches to the same security problem in the south were pursued in

compliance with the very basic legal demands of the 1976 Tripoli agreement.

Similarly, the 1996 Final Peace Agreement was conceived for the supposed realization of the 1976 Tripoli agreement mandates. It was expected that the 1996 final peace agreement where the parties affirmed the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, would "constitute the full implementation of the Tripoli Agreement."² There was no major question on the process of negotiation, especially the provisions of the agreement, up to the point where the MNLF combatants joined the security forces. The biggest question was on the process of implementation. Aside from the inability of the mechanism to incorporate the critical aspect of integrating the combatants into the mainstream of Philippine society, the future sustainability of such efforts was not favorably considered.

The integration of former combatants, for example, should have been the model for succeeding efforts in addressing similar problems posed by other armed groups. But instead, the remaining firearms and weapons of MNLF combatants during the integration process were never given serious attention. In the end, the ready availability of the weapons left behind by the MNLF combatants served to strengthen other groups that were not part of the integration. Also, in the course of developing a solid military organization with the integration of former rebels into the national security and police forces, the scheme became problematic. The system in the Army became less lenient in its policy toward former MNLF combatants. In the latest inventory of records, only about half of them remain in the service out of

² For the details of the mechanism, see the contents of the 1996 Final Peace Agreement forged between the GRP and the MNLF.
the original 6,000 combatants who were integrated into and became officers and men of the Philippine Army.  

STUMBLING BLOCKS TO A LONGER PEACE

A number of factors have been observed to play a critical role in further complicating the Mindanao internal conflict to the extent that every effort to forge a peace settlement in Mindanao is almost unrealistic.

First, the situation in Mindanao became a vicious cycle of violence because of stumbling blocks that have been, wittingly or unwittingly, enabling the persistence of the armed conflict. The most critical of these factors is that the people themselves seem to easily forget the historical events that make any negotiations even more difficult. The historical hatred between the Moros and the Christian Filipinos has become a source of potential prejudices in the treatment of the problem, most especially in the decision making process that determines the future endeavors of the country. It is this author’s observation that most of the strategic decisions concerning Muslims in the south has been tainted by suspicions, such as the suspicion that granting Muslim autonomy would be a prelude to secession, that gain more consideration than making an evidence-based policy that addresses the needs of all affected groups.

In short, the failure of the past peace agreements to end the Muslim Rebellion may have been due to the same reason that their implementation was not really meant to fulfill them but that the mechanism was being used simply to go around the technicalities. This study has emphasized earlier that the oppressive effect of

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3 This data is based from the recent records of the Philippine Army, August 2012.
ancient hatred can be tempered by more open understanding of one another, especially among policy and decision makers, or simply by making decisions for the sole purpose of attaining cooperation rather than crafting a policy out of suspicion. As long as the suspicion that Muslims would secede when they have the power to do so prevails, the attainment of lasting peace in Mindanao and the rest of the country is not likely to come in the near future. The idea of cooperation and not conflict should be more effective when it really comes from the leaders that determine the direction this country will take. In this way, even the long years of misery, hunger, discrimination, and dislocation of people may finally come to a natural end because the leaders are determined to do what is best for the people, regardless of ethnic or religious affiliation.

Second, the proliferation of *loose firearms* is one of the most identified causes of the persistence of armed conflict. Owning a weapon is sometimes justifiable especially when an individual is concerned for his own security. What is crucial to this matter is how to transform a society that believes in the *usefulness of guns* into a diverse society where the value of *guns or weapons* naturally loses its attractiveness. The latest estimate shows that in the new Bangsamoro (formerly ARMM) alone, there are least 3,190 assorted firearms in the possession of the MILF; 330 in the hands of the ASG; 310 in the hands of the MNLF (these belong to the MNLF cadres who were left out during the 1996 integration); about 140 in the hands of criminal gangs; 1,340 in the possession of wanted persons; and 24,400 assorted low-powered firearms in the hands of the general public for a total of 29,710 loose
firearms. The Philippines, like other countries, has learned from experience that the availability of weapons as tools of war serves as a catalyst for another round of armed conflict. It is understood that a peace deal should consider the final disposition of weapons owned by the combatants. But without a serious and sincere effort of the government to account for loose firearms other than those in the possession of rebel combatants, the likelihood of ending violence may not be attainable.

In the case of the recently forged Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro, it is acknowledged that the huge number of firearms poses a serious concern. Skeptics doubt whether or not the GRP-MILF panel could address the issue of “other armed groups” through the implementation of mandates under the framework agreement. Another potential challenge to the successful implementation of the agreement is the final disposition of the MILF combatants and their families who have lived in areas not covered by the Bangsamoro. Can they be covered by the peace deal even if they are not living within the Bangsamoro? Another important concern is the effective disposition of the MNLF combatants (who entered into a peace agreement in 1996) who have maintained several camps with appropriate firearms and weapons. As long as the proliferation of firearms and weapons remains unchecked, the volatility of the situation remains a major concern in tempering the oppressive effects of a recurrent violent conflict. In essence, thus, a peace deal that lacks the capacity to implement effective firearms control and management may be rendered ineffectual because violent armed conflict can occur.

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4 Firearms and Explosive Ordnance, PNP presented in the seminar workshop/ focus group discussion on the MILF Normalization, OPAPP, Pasig City, 29-31 November 2012.
spontaneously when such weapons, as tools of violence, are accessible.

Third, *insincerity* is a potential variable that this study has considered in the failure of at least two agreements to prevent the recurrence of armed conflict in Mindanao. On this premise, this study holds that the peace mechanisms, including those minor initiatives for conflict settlement, were meant principally to "contain" the violence from further escalating rather than effecting a genuine settlement that would finally end the conflict. Consequently, the process of conflict settlement in subsequent negotiations became more complicated because the demands of the disadvantaged groups, the Muslims, had become more exacerbated by the effects and memories of the previous settlement effort.

Aside from the fact that the 1976 Tripoli Agreement was not meant, in general, to address the questions and sentiments of the Bangsamoro, the same peace deal dictated the difficulties that the 1996 Peace Agreement encountered and tremendously affected the supposed success it sought to achieve. It is true that it is hard to appease everyone in a society bombarded with internal security problems, but a serious and religious implementation of what has been agreed upon may ease, and in fact, tempers minor problems stemming from unforeseen events that were not considered during the policy planning.

In the current negotiations between the GPH and the MILF, the primary factor causing apprehension among the people about the capacity of the *framework agreement* to resolve the problem in Mindanao is the historical experience that has corrupted the minds of the general public. The current security threats being faced by the *framework agreement* are anchored on the assumption that the other threat
groups are skeptical about the sincerity of the peace process. The MNLF, for example, is questioning the legality of the process, apprehensive that those agreed upon in 1996 may simply be swept aside by current framework agreement. The framework agreement clearly stresses that the ARMM and, by extension, the 1996 Peace Agreement was a failure. This stand of the government was reiterated by the President himself when he remarked on the beauty and strength of the current Framework Agreement even as he acknowledged the huge task that lies ahead in finalizing the “annexes” to the deal.

The newly created Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighter (BIFF), an MILF breakaway group, has also expressed its discomfort with the framework agreement for the same reason that the organization is still unsure whether said Agreement can genuinely and effectively address the plight of the Muslims. On this aspect, these two formidable forces cannot simply be disregarded as both can transform the relatively peaceful environment into a situation beyond the control of the peace panel or even the government. The mishandling of these pressing issues may ruin the Moro people’s confidence, somehow regained in this latest effort at resolving the conflict, in the peace process and the government’s overall goal of finally ending the violence in the south. The feedback from Muslim communities is that the “wait-and-see” attitude of armed groups such as the MNLF, the Special Operations Group (SOG), the BIFF, and even the communist-driven New People’s Army can also be addressed and brought to the negotiating table with the same sincerity shown to the MILF in fulfilling commitments and promises.

Fourth, weak government impartiality is commonly argued as a source of
instability in a state. The Philippines may not fall under this category but because its inability to resolve the problem in the south creates the impression that it is a weak state. Aside from this unfavorable international perception, the Government is also vulnerable to criticism especially from the minority groups in society. To offset this misconception, however, the approach of government should be transparent enough so that its impartiality in dealing with issues of national interest may gain the upper hand. In Mindanao, the Bangsamoro people always tend to look at the perceived prejudices against them not because of the perception itself but because of the need to find out whether they are being assessed and treated fairly and sincerely, an attitude developed over a long history of oppression and marginalization that has brought them so much uncertainty and misery.

In times of crises involving Muslims and Christians, it is always perceived, with a high degree of truth, that the government supports the Christians rather than taking an impartial approach to the problem in the context of attaining peace. Government forces, for example, are always perceived to be favoring the Christians rather than protecting everyone, including the Muslims, with efforts to prevent armed confrontation between groups of people. As discussed earlier, when the conflict is between Muslim families or clans, the security forces tend not to get involved by simply adopting a hands-off policy toward the problem, thereby ignoring the need to halt such hostilities. However, when the conflict is between Christians and Muslims, the security forces tend to take the side of the non-Muslims.

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This observation has been proven in the context of investigating the deeper causes of the conflict in Mindanao. The government should guard against allowing the same misdeeds of local authorities, as in the case of the ARMM, that tend to indefinitely prolong the conflict. In other words, the perceived weakness of the government is not due to an inability to end its internal or domestic security problem but is rather the consequence of a policy on Mindanao that has failed to address concerns about the strict observance of impartiality, accountability, responsibility, transparency, and responsiveness in the context of fair treatment of all constituents, regardless of ethnic or religious inclination.

After all, Islam in general or the Muslims in the Philippines in particular have a proud tradition of generosity and maximum tolerance in order to be able to live in peace and security. But they usually turn violent when they feel discriminated against and treated unfairly, which convinces them that they are included in the economic, social, cultural, and educational programs of the country. On several occasions such as the 1976 and 1996 peace agreements, the author has observed that most of the steps taken after the signing of the agreements were conceived to mitigate the effects of violence, and if possible, contain it and prevent its escalation to the point of inviting international intervention. There may be wisdom in not involving outside actors, but the policy of containment is entirely different from the initiative to bring about an enduring peace. As usual, in the globalized 21st century, the regionalization or internationalization of local conflicts is normal and difficult to prevent. What is more serious is the implication of such interventions for the ability of a government to solve its own problems. In the case of the Mindanao conflict, the
involvement of outside actors in domestic efforts to end the violence somehow discredits the ability and sincerity of the Philippine government in addressing the sentiments of the Bangsamoro and fulfilling its international commitment under the Tripoli agreement.

THE CONSEQUENITAL EFFECTS OF A PROLONGED ARMED CONFLICT

The protracted armed conflict in Mindanao has affected almost every sector of Philippine society. In the international setting, the Philippines has been trying to resist international pressure to resolve its internal security problem. It must be remembered that even as the Mindanao problem has been confined within national boundaries, it has links to the outside world not only due to Mindanao's economic and security ties with other countries but more importantly because the Moros of Mindanao, by virtue of their Islamic faith, have a strong connection to the Arab world. International rules, however, dictate that the internal affairs of every independent state should be the sole responsibility of that state. In the Philippines, the policy of being independent has always been the core principle in dealing with internal security threats but the strong connections among Muslims around the world have made it difficult for national leaders to regulate and prevent the intervention of outside actors. In fact, certain strategic decisions of the country in the past were triggered by outside pressure, as demonstrated by then-President Marcos's decision to enter into a peace deal with the MNLF in 1976 under pressure from the OIC and Marcos's apprehension over the threat of a potential oil embargo should he fail to do so.

In short, the persistence of armed conflict allows international actors to come
in and exploit the situation. There is no question about the benign intentions of intervention, such as providing economic and security aid to affected groups and even governments because this should be allowed in the spirit of interdependence, but international threat groups can also take advantage of the same complex situation. The ASG, linked to al-Qaeda, has been playing a crucial role in the internationalization of the Mindanao conflict, raising the level of conflict from purely domestic issues to something that needs the intervention of international security forces. Experience shows that even with the presence of U.S. armed forces, the threat has remained active until recently. This goes to show that prolonged armed conflict must be addressed effectively so that its further escalation to a degree beyond the control of internal security forces may be prevented. As long as armed conflict exists, the likelihood of outside intervention remains high because the natural energy that attracts foreign interventionists is driven by their own vested interests aided by domestic pressure on government to end the violence.

Domestic support for any means of conflict resolution in Mindanao is imperative for government to succeed. What makes the uncertainty common on the part of the general public is that the footprints of unsuccessful peace deals in the past are still fresh in the public's memory, thus affecting the level of cooperation the general population is willing to extend to government. The people, by and large, are very much eager to see the end to the conflict but every peace negotiation is always plagued with skepticism on whether the same failures in the past will be repeated or whether armed skirmishes will escalate anew in the offing. In essence, there is greater urgency today to effectively resolve this armed conflict and halt the violence.
once and for all in the near future, for the confidence of the population in the legitimacy of government efforts to genuinely address the Mindanao conflict is waning. This situation is entirely affecting the way people look at the capacity and competence of the system to address this internal problem that has plagued the country for decades. If there is a question on the legitimate power of the government system, the tendency of elites and non-state actors is to derail the peace process because they do not see the realization of the expected outcome.

The persistence of the armed conflict is so oppressive that even state actors tend to do away, secretly or openly, with legal procedures in the implementation of rules and regulations. This condition is perceived normal when the demand of the pressing security condition on the ground is stronger than just the standard performance of duties and functions. In the spirit of reconciliation, for example, security forces can always abide by the national political goals of the country even if such a policy is perceived to bend normal procedures. In contrast, however, the situation in Mindanao has shown that the national policy is not followed at all times in the local scene.

One factor that has the potential for causing the recurrence of armed conflict is the disconnection of policy at the national level from the reality on the ground. This study has observed that a single violation, intentional or unintentional, of security forces, for example, can lead to a situation where a latent conflict can explode into an open armed conflict. This has, in fact, happened many times in Mindanao precisely due to the consequential effects of war fatigue. After all, security forces can always justify their actions, even if such is not in conformity with and a
violation of the national goal of peace, such as the current administration's "the supremacy of the peace process" policy. When a law enforcement operation is launched, by and large, it becomes a part of the official functions of the Police. When a security operation is conducted by the Army, it is justified on the basis of the military's mandate to ensure the security of the people and the state. This paradox in the performance of legal mandates, where security forces tend to go around the legalities relating to the overall goal of conflict settlement has been a source of potential armed conflict in Mindanao. On many occasions, in fact, this complex situation which developed due to the persistence of Muslim armed rebellion in the south has been the most common source of recurring armed conflict in that region.

At the local scene, politicians and elites have also been affected and victimized by the same armed conflict. The author has observed that the local leaders and elites who may have influence over the settlement of the conflict have become timid that they themselves are hesitant to take appropriate actions. When the armed confrontation becomes intense, the tendency of local leaders and elites is to take shelter with the security forces. As a consequence, they tend to forget and neglect their primary responsibility to the general public and rush for options that would ensure their own security instead of that of the entire area. Local politicians are prone to becoming military-minded than political leaders who would look at the welfare of the people. They tend to aggressively pursue a policy that favors them, rather than that of the common good. Rather than advocates of peace, these politicians tend to become "spoilers of peace" as they often fall for malicious allegations and essentially look after their own selfish interests. This scenario makes
conflict settlement elusive because settlements are overshadowed by the dynamics of the same conflict which have turned the politicians from political leaders to virtually military commanders.

Local politics in the south has been influenced and dictated by the same demands for security assurance. A political position, no matter how low, is deemed so precious for it vests a politician with power. In this context, power does not only mean political power which can influence the future of the society, but also a power to control and exploit available resources that would guarantee the security and prestige of a politician's own interests. When a political leader occupies an official government position, he has the power over the political territory over which he has jurisdiction, which means that everyone who is within that area secure his good graces to be able to share in such power. Even the security forces have to nurture their linkages to local politics because local power leaders have strong connections with the national government which often makes the final decision on the promotion of security commanders on the ground. In the end, the system is just an interaction between and among local actors in the areas of conflict within the umbrella and supervision of the national political leadership. This system is what makes a leadership ambition (hunger for power) most important in society because majority of the elites and local leaders see it as a tool for securing their tenure and enhancing their political and financial strength rather than providing service to the public that put them in office.

In short, the process of economic development and political maturity is abandoned because the overriding concern becomes the security of political leaders.
By the way, politics may have failed to consider issues of economic development because politicians themselves, owing to the position they hold in government, usually do not see and feel the effects of an impoverished society. Incidentally, the protractedness of the armed conflict in Mindanao has forced influential people there to become greedy that their political interest must be secured and assured even at the expense of others, sometimes resulting in the killing of prospective political opponents.

Because of this complex system ruled by the vested interests of politicians with little regard for the welfare of the majority, local governance has been perceived as a mechanism for the continuing oppression of the disadvantaged. While these local politicians' insensitivity to the plight of ordinary people, armed groups continue to build up in such areas due to the general loss of trust over the system. The security forces may continue to prepare for any eventualities while the rebel combatants continue to exploit the situation in order to gain more support from the general public. As a consequence, the relative action of the rebel combatants is a collateral implication of a political system that is self-serving and unresponsive to the needs of the people. As a human rights leader in Cotabato once said, "when they are not in a position, they (the politicians) are the ones concerned about finding a way to ensure that each group lives in peace and security but they tend to forget promises and pledges and continue to oppress the people once they are in political power." In other words, all other consequential effects of the armed rebellion in Mindanao are a product of the Mindanao conflict that has persisted for

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6 Head of an NGO interviewed by the author in Cotabato City, October 22, 2012.
decades partly because it is benefiting certain people.

COMMERCIALIZATION OF THE ARMED CONFLICT

The commercialization of a conflict is the stage in the armed conflict spectrum when the means of resolution is overshadowed by the beneficial effects of the protractedness of such conflict. Usually, the benefits are only for a few but influential individuals or groups. It is a process of the transformation of conflict into a more complex environment, wherein the occurrence of violence becomes the status quo and peace settlement becomes a second consideration. In short, the persistence of armed conflict becomes a natural phenomenon accepted by the general public not only because many do not think it can be remedied but also because those who may have the capacity to conceive of a possible settlement become hesitant and instead become interested in the benefits they can derive from this complex environment. In essence, the immoral effect of violence is superseded by its lucrative outcome and benefits to only a few.

It is these politicians who can be categorized as bad leaders or individuals who just go with the status quo and do not think of a remedy, and instead exploit the national support and economic aid from external sources that have poured into the region for their own welfare. This badness is not by itself of cultural origin but is a consequence of the complex environment that has developed from the prolonged armed rebellion in Mindanao. As observed, when armed conflict becomes intense, even the victims themselves and the stakeholders in the conflict-affected areas become hesitant and are unable to think wisely for the common good. In effect, this complex situation is a major impediment to making conflict resolution a priority. In
a situation like this, conflict resettlement is no longer in the list of priorities and the recurrence of armed hostilities is always possible because "there are people becoming more powerful when there is a conflict."\(^7\)

Nevertheless, in the history of this Muslim armed rebellion in Mindanao, there have been many instances when the opportunity for a longer peace on the ground was attainable. The international community has been actively involved in trying to help resolve the armed conflict. There have also been instances when a small group of peace-loving individuals has tried to be heard in order to realize the so-called *peace and security* which the people are longing for, but most often than not, the force of energy dragging them to the complex situation has been much stronger than the power of those who want to explore the possibility of cooperation rather than conflict. When the complexity of the armed conflict prevails, leaders usually resort to either of only two options, namely: (a) to remain fence sitters who do not see any possible remedies to the conflict and just go with the normal flow of the policy of exclusion; or (b) possibly favor initiatives that would be beneficial to their interests. This is essentially what makes the Mindanao armed conflict close to *commercialization*, as the few gains made by a few in the course of the conflict have superseded the perceived losses stemming from the failure to resolve it.

A typical example of this scenario is the *kidnapping for ransom* activities carried out by a few armed groups. Even if it is an immoral activity, the financial gains from the ransom become a source of power and livelihood for the kidnappers, their followers, and their support network. This is exactly how and why the small

\(^7\) BGen Leo Ferrer, Senior Military Adviser (SMA) OPAPP, workshop on Normalization Concept for the MILF, Fort Bonifacio, Metro Manila, September 12, 2012.
but notorious Abu Sayyaf Group or ASG has been steadily active in the status quo by exploiting the dynamics of the Muslim armed rebellion. Kidnapping in Mindanao has gained international attention not for the crime itself but for the personalities behind it who are linked to international terrorist groups.

BEYOND THE COMMON ROOTS OF ARMED CONFLICT

This study, among others, is convinced that the way the armed rebellion has persisted in Mindanao goes beyond the common causes of armed struggle. In this regard, thus, no matter how many peace deals are forged in the future, the potential for repeating the same mistake is always present if the lessons of the past are not taken into consideration. As discussed earlier, an initiative that deals with this long conflict must learn to investigate the prevailing complex situation beyond what conventional wisdom about the Muslim rebellion dictates. A peace agreement can be forged by any head of state as long as he is determined to do so, but it does not prevent the recurrence of armed violence for as long as the state is unable to realize that there are other factors beyond the usual culprits, such as the insincerity of both sides in honoring the provisions of a peace agreement, that can trigger a recurrence of armed hostilities. Again, there are common roots of rebellion such as economic deprivation that compels discrimination, prejudices, and aggression against a minority group, as well as the unfair distribution of wealth and resources, but even if these factors are mitigated, the threat of recurrence of violence or a prolonged armed rebellion is more likely in the absence of a sincere and dedicated process that may temper the oppressive effects of renewed armed conflict.
a. **ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION**

In recent years, investigations show that the Mindanao problem is primarily fueled by the same problem occurring in other parts of the world, that is, the basic needs of the people are not met and they are economically deprived. Consequently, studies indicate that the Mindanao conflict is essentially economic based and that options may focus on the economic situation of the Moro people in order to understand the surge of violence in the south.⁸

In most Muslim dominated provinces, poverty remains the primary factor causing discontent among the Moro people. Economic surveys reveal that Maguindanao province is considered the poorest among the country's poorest provinces. Incidentally, Maguindanao is the center of gravity of the MILF armed organization. On the same note, this is the same reason that most analyses point to the economic issue as the root of the rebellion, and thus encourage economic development as a solution.

Along this line, the Philippine government and the international community have been pouring economic aid coupled with several capacity-building activities in the conflict-affected areas of Mindanao. Countless development aid have poured into the areas of conflict over the last decade in order to address the perceived primary root of the armed rebellion. In contrast, however, the intensity of the armed confrontations in these areas has not changed and may even have moved up to higher level during the years of development activities in the affected region. Apparently, Muslims believe, with a high degree of truth, that they have been

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⁸ Astrid A. Tuminez, "The Land is Ours: Moro Ancestral Domain and its Implications for Peace and development in the Southern Philippines," SAIS Review 27, no.2 (Summer -Fall 2007): 79.
neglected in the economic development programs of the government.9

In short, those development activities of the government did not reach the ordinary people. Perhaps one reason that most people, especially the Moros, remain discontented with government's development projects is that they do not see or experience the impact of such projects, or to the extreme, only a few have benefited from such aid. On the same note, corruption among those who may have first-hand knowledge of such aid is an important factor in the mishandling of development funds. This, of course, can be blamed on weak institutions that lack the capacity to check and control the undesirable intentions of unscrupulous individuals or groups.

Local institutions must be strengthened if only to ensure that economic programs are implemented according to expectations so that taxpayers' money does not fall into the hands of few unscrupulous individuals. If it is true that economic progress is the answer to this security problem, then it is the mishandling of local funds or internal aid by those authorized to handle such funds that causes the continuous feeling of dissatisfaction among the people. In essence, ordinary people continue to feel uncertain about the true intentions of those in government who are entrusted with the responsibility of implementing development programs, and can easily equate their continuing neglect to government oppression. As always, what follows next is the threat of violence because of economic development programs that have not in any way enhanced living conditions of ordinary people and has instead enriched only a few individuals who are in positions of authority.

Perhaps, this is also the main reason that most observers, scholars of conflict,

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9 Interview with local Muslim leader, Municipality of Buluan, Maguindanao, October 21, 2012.
and the minority Muslims view those development activities as only centered in Christian-dominated areas because only the Christians in the conflict-affected areas seem to have felt the effects of economic progress while the Moro people’s needs and expectations remain unanswered. Indeed, the issue of armed rebellion is fuelled not by the perceived deprivation of people of their right to better living conditions, but by the deteriorating conditions caused by the malicious actions of selfish individuals. If those who have control over resources can exhibit goodness and altruism and the same can be reciprocated by the recipients of their acts of magnanimity, then it can probably spell the beginning of a more enduring peace in Mindanao.

b. RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

It is common for minority groups to use the issue of discrimination against them to demand for fair and just treatment from their government. In Mindanao, the issue of racial discrimination is not new. In fact, one of the main issues exploited by those who stand to gain from the Mindanao conflict is the government’s unfair treatment of the Moros that has raised the level of discontent in most Muslim communities. This observation, perhaps, is not so much of concern in areas dominated by the Muslims or areas where the local political leaders are Muslims because whoever the leader is, the workers or employees in local governance are Muslims. Rather, this situation is more pronounced in areas where Muslims comprise the minority and are subjected to rampant stereotyping because most people in these areas refuse to open their minds to minority groups. In the same way, Muslims in other areas of the country dominated by non-Muslims, such as the
national capital of Manila, suffer the same discrimination from most Christians and different national agencies. This is one reason that most Muslims are skeptical about joining communities other than their own, especially for job-seeking purposes, because they know that their chances of not being discriminated against are slim. This process, however, may not have any significant impact on society as a whole, but it is a potent force for continuous divisiveness rather than coexistence among Filipinos under one government and one flag.

In Manila, Muslims from Mindanao are commonly discriminated against, for being a Muslim is a great factor weighing on the likelihood of being accepted for employment. At the height of the government's "all-out war" in 2003, Muslims who sought refuge in Manila had great difficulty not only because they were in a place not familiar to them but also because getting a job was not easy. As such, this compels Muslims to hide their identity as such, no matter how educationally qualified they are. A good example is that of Engineer Ricky Lidasan who, when he moved to Manila after passing the licensure examination for Mechanical Engineers, had to pass himself off as a Roman Catholic by indicating this as his religion in his job application forms in a year-long job hunting so he can be accepted in a job he preferred.

In short, discrimination against people belonging to the minority, including the Moros, continues to this day. Investigation shows that this practice stems from a misconception that has been planted in the minds of those who have been victimized by a system and/or processes or who have refused to understand the

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10 Interview with professional doing own business in Taguig City, Metro Manila, October 30, 2012.
11 Engineer Ricky Lidasan, interview by the author, Makati City, June 30, 2012.
reality about Muslims in the south. After all, our perception of one another can be a source of misunderstanding that, more often than not, causes severe tension between Christians and Muslims. When groups of people have no confidence in one another, it can lead to a level of violence that is no longer manageable at the local level and requires the national government to take action and intervene with policies advocating peace and cooperation. In essence, local leaders can become victims of misperception resulting from the long history of armed conflict in Mindanao. Without carefully understanding this complication, the danger of the recurrence of armed conflict remains because the complexity of the situation can always be perceived, especially by the disadvantaged groups, as government oppression against them.

Perhaps, one way to temper the oppressive effects of "stereotyping" against the Muslims is to assert the leadership advocacy on cooperation rather than mistrust, and coexistence in a diverse society rather than divisiveness. This is easier said than done, but once national leaders have the so-called "political will," then success is attainable as far as resolving the Mindanao conflict is concerned. Perhaps, education coupled with strong government determination to address the issue of discrimination can, in the long run, resolve issues that continue to derail efforts toward cooperation. After all, it is evident that Muslims are *peace-loving* people when not oppressed, and that discrimination is a only a product of misperception that has generated biases against the Moros. Again, the prevalence of discrimination against Muslims in the south is a result of cultural ignorance and a systematic process that encourages indifference rather than unity and is not by itself an
irreversible strain in the culturally diverse island of Mindanao. A situation like this is always vulnerable to exploitation by individuals or groups who see the persistence of armed conflict as a beneficial enterprise.

c. INEQUALITY

As in other countries experiencing an internal security problem, the Philippines has always been accused of cultivating a system that only cares for a few while neglecting the welfare of the majority, including minority groups such as the Moro people in the south. Among the major issues that Muslims are fighting for against the government is the alleged unbalanced development effort in the south, with major projects being implemented only in the Christian-dominated provinces. To some extent, this allegation is supported by facts as a survey of the areas in Mindanao that are occupied by the Muslims and the provinces occupied by the Christians, also referred to as settlers, there is a great disparity between the government’s economic development programs in these two areas. In most areas of populated by the “settlers,” massive irrigation projects, for example, are well-established but not in the Muslim provinces.

Again, the government may not have the intention to segregate Muslim communities but this is the natural product of mistrust, corruption, and instability in these areas. In the investigation of this study, this complex situation whose roots can sometimes be easy to trace is a product of the long-persisting animosities between individuals or groups of people which have only further divided Philippine society. As discussed in the previous chapter, the government did not abandon the Muslim-dominated areas. In fact, since the early stage of the Muslim rebellion, the
government has been pouring resources to help the local government uplift the local situation of extreme economic impoverishment to some degree of development. Most often, however, development projects could not be implemented without considering the demands of the armed groups or the vested interests of unscrupulous local actors.

This situation remains the same until today, especially in the depressed areas of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). There have been development efforts in these areas but the pace of development is painstakingly slow. Because of this prevailing situation, persistent allegations that the government is only for few and not for the disadvantaged majority continue. More than anything else, the Muslims, most of whom continue to live in poverty, are thoroughly convinced that they are and cannot be part of the system and will never have the opportunity to share in the economic growth of the country. In essence, it is commonly perceived in Muslim circles that the government, not the unscrupulous individuals, is incapacitated to resolve poverty, unequal access to education, and the social injustice the Moro people have endured for decades. Again, this entire complex situation is a result of the prolonged armed conflict whose oppressive demands have tended to carry away even the best and most educated individuals, especially when armed confrontation occurs.

Some scholars, like David C. Schwartz, see and interpret collective mass actions through the lens of a political process of the state. He conforms to the idea that political phenomenon originates in the minds of humans that compose collective actions such as a revolution. He argues that virtually all revolutionary
organizations are formed by "persons who have previously socialized to accept a political system" but later, the same political system may have alienated them that their loyalties were never effectively tied to the government system. In the case of the Bangsamoro, however, they may not have totally subscribed to being integrated to the Philippine society, but in recent years, these people have been observed to be cooperating with the national government agenda. In fact, attempts at conflict resolution have been supported not only by the armed combatants but also by the civilians.

On a final note, the inequality may be beyond the imagination of whoever leads the country but it is commonly perceived as such because the consequential effects of armed conflict have corrupted the minds of the people, especially those directly affected by the same armed conflict. There is no government, even a tyranny, that would encourage rebellion because it is perceived as a threat to leadership. But because of the inability of the Philippine government to close the long history of armed rebellion in Mindanao, the system has been accused of corruption because of the perceived inequality; of oppressing the Muslims because of unfair treatment of the Moros whose security is not guaranteed which, in turn, endangers their identity; and of insincerity because of fears that it has no genuine intention to resolve its internal security problem in Mindanao. If these factors are not checked, the tendency to promote divisiveness is more likely while making reconciliation work becomes more difficult, leaving the question of what the future

holds still in the hands of the country’s leaders.

THE FUTURE OF THE MINDAO CONFLICT

Analysis in this study points to the conclusion that the internal conflict in Mindanao between the government of the Philippines (GPH) and the Muslims can be peacefully ended. Most of the time in the course of negotiations, it has been observed that both parties were agreeing to end this prolonged armed rebellion. What makes it difficult to realize the so-called “longer peace” is the set of stumbling blocks that is as hard to resolve as it is to understand it. Implementing an agreement is a huge task but in the case of the Mindanao armed conflict, insincerity has played a vital role. Insincerity is hard to break, especially if it involves a change in the system, not only because it may involve huge resources on the part of the government but also because trust and confidence are hard to build between formerly opposing forces. The challenge in this case, thus, is the fulfillment of the commitments made by both the GPH and the Muslim combatants without necessarily reckoning every strategic decision from the mistrust of the past.

Again observation shows, among others, that the role of the security forces is crucial as far as reconciliation is concerned. Reconciliation does not only mean embracing one another’s views to jointly address differences, but also taking appropriate actions on the ground so as to prevent the possible breakdown of attained peace and harmony between both sides. For all intents and purposes, security forces can always find a way to prevent the escalation of every minor dispute with the potential to break an established settlement. In contrast, as discussed earlier, the same security forces can always justify responses according to
the mandates of their organizations but such actions must be aligned with the principle of the supremacy of peace.

Political leadership is also an important determinant of the future of armed conflict in Mindanao. There is no doubt that the current administration was able to come up with a peace deal through the Framework Agreement with the MILF because the President is dedicated to and sincere in bringing peace to Mindanao and local political leaders are cooperating with the national leadership even if it hurts their vested interests. In contrast, local politicians themselves being catalysts of peace can also be a source of potent force which could derail the overall goal of the National government for longer peace. A state leader’s behavior is critical to the implementation of policies in addressing security issues at the local level. In the case of the Mindanao armed conflict, leadership change could mean a major shift of approach which often threatens the relatively achieved peace. The absence of open armed confrontations can always slide back to instability.

When a state leader does not want to continue the policies and programs of the previous administration, this could have a contagion effect down to the lowest level of society. Leaders at the local level are obedient to national policies and the implementation of previous strategies can easily be discontinued by the national government by the simple issuance of an executive order or by simply cutting off the appropriate support for such a policy. This is exactly what happened, as discussed in this chapter, with the change of leadership resulting in the change of domestic policy on the internal conflict in Mindanao. Instead of pursuing peaceful negotiations to at least come up with a working framework for the restoration of
normalcy, the areas were once again turned into a battleground after several years of negotiations.

In short, the recurrence of violence in society can be understood as a product of wrong and problematic leadership exploiting the complex environment on the ground. After all, the same political leaders can always justify their actions that are contrary to conflict settlement, taking the rebellion and the security problem as the baseline. It has been seen in many countries faced with a security problem that selective actions benefiting a few or only a selected group are perceived to be oppressive and detrimental to the common benefits of peace. Applied in Mindanao, this situation has always caused the reversal of relative peace to open armed hostilities. A small but dynamic group can be a potential triggering mechanism that may determine the future of a peace settlement. In the case of the Mindanao conflict, the ASG and the BIFF – although considered isolated groups – are potential threats to the Framework Agreement if they continue to be excluded from the peace process. The apprehension, among the general public, about the strength of the Framework Agreement and the “wait-and-see” attitude among other armed groups in the areas of conflict can be tempered by a religious and sincere implementation of the impending peace agreement between the GPH and the MILF.

For now, there are at least three peace accords in the history of the Mindanao armed conflict and important lessons that can be derived from the same in understanding the likelihood of achieving a more sustainable and longer peace in this part of the world. Those experiences can serve as a tool to guard against repeating the same mistakes of the past conflict settlements. In an internal conflict
such as the one in Mindanao, the role of the government is to take more part in conflict resolution because of its dominance in all aspects of society. Even if the decision of the national government is a bit favorable to the minority and somewhat hurts the national interest, the national government – being the dominant force – must extend its leniency if only for the sake of a peace settlement. When a government insists on a constitutional basis, the rule of the majority, the democratic process, or a system not amenable to change through constitutional amendments, the likelihood of attaining a longer peace is unlikely because the will of the minority is eventually ignored. Such policy equates to a more complex environment that leaves no room for conflict settlement because the needs of the minority are not addressed.

Ending the Muslim rebellion in Mindanao, however, is achievable because the parties to the conflict themselves are willing and open to negotiation. A peace accord, after the framework agreement, could be forged sooner or later but the caution for sincerity remains and should serve as the basis for achieving an enduring and solid peace in Mindanao. This study views the future of this armed conflict with great caution in the knowledge that the longer the conflict exists, the higher its impact on the national economy. In other words, the protractedness of the conflict is always detrimental to the interest of every Filipino in terms of achieving cooperation and unity under one country. It must be remembered that for so long, hatred rather than cooperation has prevailed between the majority Christians and the minority Muslims which has encouraged enmity, distrust, and endemic violence over a long period. Our leaders at all levels of society must have a wellspring of
knowledge by now on all the loopholes in the decades-long quest for a peaceful and progressive nation if only to bring the unstable Mindanao situation into a long-lasting and sustainable peace because there may finally be, as Johan Galtung calls it, positive peace.13

Apparently, if this conflict is not halted sooner, the longstanding vision of coexistence under one government will inevitably fail because it is more expensive to force groups to live together when they are incompatible. This study is concerned that the prolonged armed conflict would allow a situation that would place the government of the Philippines at a disadvantaged position, especially if that situation is not addressed at the earliest time. In the 21st century and with the advent of modern technology which facilitates easy and fast coordination through modern communications systems, the educational literacy of people in the contested areas has improved substantially and, combined with the power of media, would drag the virtually "commercialized conflict" into modern warfare. These include, among others, the battles for legality over issues of self-determination and the strong possibility of the internationalization of the conflict.

To the extreme, the high level of awareness among the Bangsamoro, owing to the growing number of educated Moro people, and their secessionist tendency would bring the conflict to a level beyond the legal framework of the Philippine Republic. In the end, the international community would ultimately favor the Muslim minority which would eventually create a strategic environment favoring separation. Secondly, legal battles are more disadvantageous to a dominant power

today because minority groups usually get more attention and sympathy from distant power countries in the context of promoting the basic rights of an oppressed minority. Consequently, internationalization of the conflict would prevail because the long history of the inability of government to address its internal problem would affect its credibility and legitimacy. When that stage of the Mindanao conflict is reached, the renewed claim for full independence is more likely because the socialization of a conflict has been proven an effective tool for minority groups. In short, the protractedness of the armed conflict, if it is not brought to its final closure sooner, may result in the Philippines losing the contested areas in Mindanao to the Moro people because insincerity prevails over confidence and mistrust dominates over the need for open mindedness among the primary actors in this armed conflict.


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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: TIMELINE OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Before 1521  pre-Spanish period
1521-1898  The Spanish period
1898-1946  The American period
1899-1902  The Philippine –American war
1899-1903  US military occupation of Mindanao
1903-1906  The existence of Moro Province
1914-1920  Existence of department of Mindanao and Sulu
1942-1945  Japanese occupation
1972-1986  Martial Law period
1973-1996  Existence of the MNLF
1984-to date  Existence of the MILF
2011-to date  Existence of the BIFF

Peace Agreements

1976- Tripoli Agreement Between the GPH and the MNLF
1996- Final Peace Agreement between the GPH and the MNLF
2012- Framework Agreement between the GPH and the MILF
Addressed to the Congress of the United States of America:

Whereas a group of politicians, leading blindly certain elements of the population who have a faith and culture different from our own, as well as widely different political aspirations, have raised a clamor and outcry against the continuation of American sovereignty in the Philippine Islands, thereby jeopardizing our hope of prosperity, liberty, and economic security, through the possibility that the congress of the United States of America might in opportunely withdrew its sovereignty from these Islands, permitting thereby to be created an independent government under which the Mohammedan or Moro Nation would be destroyed or placed under a galling yoke, we the following representatives of the Moro Nation, do, in the name of same Creator, worshipped by Christian and Mohammedan alike, set forth the following solemn declaration of our rights, principles and intentions for which we pledge our lives and fortunes:

Assuming that in the course of time the United States of America will grant complete independence, or a larger measure of autonomy to the Philippine Islands, and due to the fact that the insecurity of political tenure of the United States and the threat of political domination of our people by the Christian Filipino majority in the Islands of Luzon and the Visayas is holding back the economic development of our country, and causing no little unrest and unhappiness to our people, we hereby submit the following suggestion for the solution of our present difficulties to the consideration of the Congress of the United States of America.

First. We are not seeking temporary or palliative measures. We ask for a solution which will be permanent and lasting in its effects. Therefore, we propose that the Islands of Mindanao and Sulu, and the Island of Palawan be made an unorganized territory of the United States of America.

In order that we may be fair to the Filipinos and in order that they may not raise an outcry to the effect that we wish to dismember the Philippine Islands, we propose that 50 years after the independence may have been granted the rest of the Philippine Islands, a plebiscite be held in the proposed unorganized to decide by vote whether the proposed territory will be incorporated in the government of the Islands of Luzon and Visayas, remain a territory, or become independent.

This would apply the principles of justice and equity to all elements of the population and imply a government through the consent of the government.
Second. That a simple form of government be designed for the new territory, taking into consideration that through lack of education in English or Spanish our people can not hope to exercise suffrage for at least two generations, and with the following objects in view:

(1) Justice and equity for Christian, Mohammedan, pagan, and foreigners alike. In order to attain this we must have Americans in high places to act as referees between our tribal and religious demarcations.

(2) No domination of one element over another

(3) Freedom of speech and religion

(4) Every opportunity for American capital to develop the natural resources of our country, thereby affording our people the opportunity to progress in the arts and sciences and in agriculture, as well as to use lessons of the schoolroom after leaving school. At present, there is no outlet for the talents and energies of our youths, owning to the economic prostration of our country.

(5) That the school system be reformed under American teachers and made suitable to the needs and prejudices of the Mohammedan population

(6) That we do not vote in elections for the president of the United States, for the reason that we do not wish to otherwise than trust to the mercy and justice of the United States.

Whereas we enjoy none of the above benefits in their fullest measure, and

Whereas we do not even enjoy the right of petition and redress of wrongs which the Constitution of the United States insures to its citizens, owning to the fact that we have addressed petitions without number to the Governor General even when he has been disposed to grant our desires he has found himself helpless to aid us, owning to the provisions of organic act known as the Jones Law:

Therefore we, in the representation of nearly half a million Mohammedan residents of Mindanao and Sulu, do solemnly affirm and declare-

That we are loyal unto death to the United States.

That in proof of this loyalty we have pledged ourselves by the most solemn oath known to the Mohammedans, do die rather than submit to domination by Christian Filipinos from the North, and, if necessary, to die in order that the United States Congress, which therefore has lent a deaf ear to our petitions, may now hear us.

That in the event that the United States grants independence to the Philippine Islands without provision for our retention under the American flag, it is
our firm intention and resolve to declare ourselves an independent constitutional sultanate to be known to the world as the Moro nation. It is the duty of the Congress of the United States to make provision at once for the security and protection promised to us when we surrendered our arms to the United States Army. This promise is just as sacred as any alleged promises you have made to the Christian Filipinos. You have left us defenseless, and it is your duty to protect us to return to us our weapons you took from us, and which we freely gave you, relying on your promises.

That while it is not our desire to do so, by disregarding our rights and wishes while at the same time conceding political and economic favors to the Christian Filipinos, favors which are in turn used against us, you are forcing us surely and steadily to recourse to desperate and bloody measures, which are abhorrent to us, in view of our loyalty to the American Flag, our Governor General, and our gratitude to the United States for the liberty and security of life which we enjoyed until you delegated your power and authority to the Christian Filipinos.

We complain that we have not one representative in the Philippine Legislative elected by direct vote of the people. Our meager representation is through representatives appointed by the Governor General, who must have the approval of a senate controlled by the Filipinos. Hence such representation is a farce.

We complain that the Philippine Legislature appropriates 1,000,000 per annum for pro-independence propaganda, thereby forcing us to contribute through taxation without representation to the efforts of certain Christian Filipinos to sever the bonds between us and the United States, all of which is not in accordance with our wishes.

We complain that when our people, including women and children, have been shot down by constabulary or otherwise maltreated investigations have been conducted in such a manner as to gloss over the truth.

We complain that in spite of the large volume of evidence of misgovernment of our people presented to the Wood-Forbes Commission and subsequently to the Governor General, nothing whatever has been done to assure our people that reforms meeting with our approval would be undertaken, for the reason that the power to institute reforms lies in yourselves and not in the Governor General, the hands of the latter being tied by the provisions of the Jones Law.
We complain that the petitions are being circulated which our people by means of pressure from official sources are obliged to sign. These petitions are for the purpose of leading the people of the United States to believe that we are disloyal to the United States and to our Governor General, which such is not the case. Even provincial governors and other high officials prostitute their offices for this purpose. Therefore, we are forced to take concerted and violent action in order to avoid being misrepresented. Even Americans who sympathize with our aspirations and loyalty to the United States are forced to discuss the situation in whispers, if they dare discuss it at all, for fear of reprisals. Surely this is not in accordance with ideals of American justice and fair play.

We complain that the effort is being made to submerge our civilization and culture through the assimilation of our people by the Christian Filipinos. As a means to this end colonies or Christian Filipinos financed by the Government are being injected into our midst to later cause such complications as have caused untold misery in the Balkan States and European Turkey. (Moros returning from pilgrimages to Mecca or visits to Borneo bring in a fairly steady stream of information as to affairs in the other east), and which constitute a problem today which again threatens the peace of the world.

Had we the machinery of government and taxation in our hands, as have the Christian Filipinos, we could also send missions to Washington to present our side of the question, but having neither we can only offer our lives in order that you may understand and act accordingly.

Therefore, we hereby solemnly and respectfully petition the Congress of the United States for redress and amelioration of our present economic and political situation, and ask you, in the name of your God and our God, who is one and the same, that you promptly grant us our request in order that this, the land of our forefathers, may not be gain drenched in the blood of Mohammedans and Christians who should be dwelling together in peace and amity in the shelter of the American flag.

Zamboanga, P.I.

February 1, 1924

Among the signatories:

1. Sultan Mangigin of Maguindanao
2. Hadji Panglima Nuño
3. Datu Sacaluran
4. Maharajah Habing
5. Abdula Piang
6. Datu Benito of Lanao

Source: copied for the documents kept by MILF leadership on 20 July 2006.

APPENDIX C: THE MANIFESTO OF THE MUSLIM INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

In The Name of ALLAH, The Most Gracious, and Most Merciful.

PREAMBLE

The Muslim inhabitants of Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan invoking the grace of the almighty Allah, the Gracious, Most Merciful, on Whom all praise is due and Whom all creation depends for sustenance, make manifestation to the whole world its desire to secede from the republic of the Philippines, in order to establish an Islamic State that shall embody their ideals and aspirations, conserve and develop their patrimony, their Islamic heritage, under the blessings of Islamic Universal Brotherhood and the regime of law, justice and democracy, and the recognized principle of the law of nations, do promulgate and make known the declaration of its independence from the mother country, the Republic of the Philippines.

TERRITORIES

The Islamic State shall comprise the contiguous southern portion of the Philippine Archipelago inhabited by the Muslims, such as, Cotabato, Davao, Zamboanga and Zamboanga City, Basilan City, Lanao, Sulu, Palawan, and the adjoining areas or island which are inhabited by the Muslims or being under their sphere of influence, including the maritime areas therein.

PEOPLES

The Muslim inhabitants of the Republic of the Philippines, numbering some four millions (4,000,000) with culture and history of their own are distinct from the affluent Christian majority, and for the reasons abovementioned, its integration into the Philippine body politics being impossible.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES
1. That it is a recognized principle underlying the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration of Human Rights of the rights of all people constituting the minority in a given state for self-determination;

2. That the Islamic World Congress has affirmed the above principles, particularly on the rights of the Muslims who are in the minority in non-Muslim state for self-determination;

3. That the systematic extermination of the Muslim youth-like the Corregidor Fiasco-the policy of isolation and dispersal of the Muslim communities have been pursued vigorously by the government to the detriment of the Muslims;

4. That Islam, being a communal religion-an ideology and a way of life, must have a definite territory for the exercise of its tenets and teachings, and for the are observance of its laws;

5. That economic progress, social development, and political independence are the cherished and inviolable dreams and aspirations of the Muslims, and the realization of which can be better be served and promoted by and among the selves; and

6. That under the present state of things, the Muslims are capable of self-government or political independence they being endowed with sufficient number of professionals with academic, technical and legal training.

Now, therefore, it was decided that a government shall be organised and established for the Muslims inhabiting the aforesaid particular areas of Islands of Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan, and the outlying territories which are all under the sway of the Muslims, said government to be independent from all states and be equal with all others under the laws of civilised nations; and

Be it further known that said government for the Muslims shall be known and referred to as-

THE REPUBLIC OF MINDANAO AND SULU.

Pagalungan darul Islam, Cotabato, Philippines, May 1, 1968

PRINCIPAL SIGNATORY:

(sgd.) EX-GOVERNOR DATU UDTOG MATAL

We, the five million oppressed Bangsa Moro people, wishing to free ourselves from the terror, oppression and tyranny of Filipino colonialism which has caused us untold sufferings and miseries by criminally usurping our land, by threatening Islam through wholesale destruction and desecration of its places of worship and its Holy Book, and murdering our innocent brothers, sisters and folks in a genocidal campaign of terrifying magnitude;

Aspiring to have the sole prerogative of defending and chartering our own national destiny in accordance with our own free will in order to ensure our future and that of our children;

Having evolved an appropriate form of ideology with which the unity of our people has been firmly established and their national identity and character strengthened;

Having established the Moro National Liberation Front and its military arm, the Bangsa Moro Army, as our principal instrument for achieving our primary goals and objectives with the unanimous support of the great mass of our people; and finally

Being own in firm control of a great portion of our national homeland through successive and crushing victories of our Bangsa Moro Army in battle against the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Marcos dictatorship, thereby declare:

1. That henceforth the Bangsa Moro people and revolution, having established their Bangsa Moro Republik, are throwing off all their political, economic and other bonds with the oppressive government of the Philippines under
the dictatorial regime of President Ferdinand E Marcos to secure a free and independent state for the Bangsa Moro peoples;

2. That we believe arm struggle is the only means by which we can achieve the complete freedom and independence of our people, since Marcos and his government will never dismantle the edifice of Philippine colonial rule in our national homeland of their own accord;

3. That the Moro National Liberation Front and its military arm, the Bangsa Moro Army, shall not agree to any form of settlement or accord short of achieving total freedom and independence for our oppressed Bangsa Moro people;

4. That the revolution of the Bangsa Moro people is a revolution with a social conscience. As such it is committed to the principle of establishing a democratic system of government which shall never allow or tolerate any form of exploitation and oppression of any human being by another or of one nation by another;

5. That those Filipinos who may wish to remain in the Bangsa Moro national homeland even after independence shall be welcomed and entitled to equal rights and protection with all other citizens of the Bangsa Moro Republik, provided that they formally renounce their Filipino citizenship and whole heartedly accept Bangsa Moro citizenship; their property rights shall be fully respected and the free exercise of their political, cultural and religious rights shall be guaranteed;

6. That the Bangsa Moro people and the revolution are committed to the preservation and growth of Islamic culture among our people, without prejudice to the development and growth of other religious and indigenous cultures in our homeland;

7. That our people and Revolution recognise and adhere to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and, in addition, they shall respect and adhere to all laws binding upon the nations of the world;
8. That the Bangsa Moro people and Revolution are committed to the preservation and enhancement of the world peace through mutual cooperation among nations and common progress of the people of the world, accordingly, they are committed to the principle of mutual respect and friendship among nations irrespective of their ideological and religious creed;

9. That our people and the Revolution, upholding the principle of self-determination, support the right of all peoples of all nations in their legitimate and just struggle for national survival, freedom and independence;

10. That the Bangsa Moro and the Revolution shall, in the interest of truth, guarantee the freedom of the press;

11. That, in order to accelerate the economic progress of our war ravaged Bangsa Moro homeland, our people and revolution shall encourage foreign investment under terms and conditions beneficial to our people and the investors. Accordingly, those foreign investors in the Bangsa Moro homeland who may decide to continue their economic activities under the revolutionary regime shall be welcomed;

12. The Bangsa Moro and the Revolution are committed to the principles that they are a part of the Islamic World as well as of the third world and of the oppressed colonised humanity everywhere in the world.

Therefore, we hereby appeal to the conscience of all men everywhere and the sympathy of all nations of the world to help accelerate the pace of our people's legitimate right to obtain their national freedom and independence. Such recognition and support must be concretised by accepting the Bangsa Moro Republik as one the members of the family of independent and sovereign nations in the world and giving official recognition to the Moro National Liberation Front.

Done in the Bangsa Moro Homeland, this 28th day of April 1974.

Hajji Nur Misuari,
Chairman,
Central Committee, MNLF

January 3-4, 1987
Joint Statements of the Philippine Government and the MNLF Panels

The two panels agreed to continue discussion of the proposal for the grant of full autonomy to Mindanao, Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Palawan subject to democratic processes.

In the meantime, the MNLF panel proposes that President Corazon C. Aquino will issue an executive order suspending pertinent provisions of the draft constitution on the grant of autonomy to Muslim Mindanao in the scheduled plebiscite on February 2, 1987, to allow the MNLF to undertake democratic consultations with the people of Mindanao and its islands, and that the Philippine Government panel shall present this proposal to President Aquino for her approval.

MNLF Panel
NUR MISUARI
Chairman

Philippine Government Panel
AQUILINO PIMENTEL, JR.
Chairman

Witnessed by:
S. S. PIRZADA

Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference

OIC Headquarters,
Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,
January 3, 1987

Summary of the points taken up in the meeting between the Philippine and the MNLF Panels held at the Organization of the Islamic Conference Headquarters, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on January 3, 1987

The two panels have taken up the following points:

1. The substantive part of the talks will be held in Manila, Zamboanga or any other place in the Philippines mutually acceptable to both parties. For this
purpose, a joint commission composed of three members from each side shall be created to discuss and draft the mechanics and details of the proposal to grant full autonomy to Mindanao, Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Palawan. The Joint Commission is tasked to do everything possible to complete its work within ninety (90) days from February 9, 1987.

2. The provincial committees shall be created to monitor and implement the observance of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities between the Philippine Government and the MNLF.

3. The MNLF proposed some form of reorganization involving certain political and governmental institutions to enhance a conducive atmosphere for further talks. The MNLF proposed that an Executive Order be immediately issued for this purpose.

4. The Philippine and the MNLF Panels agreed to propose the immediate formulation and implementation of a comprehensive economic and social development program in priority areas mutually agreed upon.

5. Both panels agreed to jointly pursue the dissemination of accurate and comprehensive information regarding the Bangsamoro issue as part of the vital pursuit of democratic processes in arriving at a just and lasting solution to the Bangsamoro problem.

6. The Philippine panel agreed to exercise its best efforts to provide a secure and peaceful atmosphere to enable the MNLF to undertake consultations with the component peoples in the proposed area of autonomy.

7. The Philippine panel likewise agreed to propose to the authorities of the Republic of the Philippines to provide security to the three-man representative of the MNLF Panel to the Joint Commission referred to in Paragraph 1, above, and to their staff in the discharge of their duties as members of the Joint Commission. Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, January 3, 1987.
Joint Statement of the MNLF and the Philippine Government Panels

The two panels met in the evening of January 3, 1987 at the Headquarters of the Organization of Islamic Conference in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and agreed to:

1. Create a Joint Commission which will discuss and draft the mechanism and details of the proposal for the grant of full autonomy to Mindanao, Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Palawan subject to democratic processes. The Joint Commission shall be composed of three members from each panel and shall initially meet in Manila on February 9, 1987. It shall endeavor to complete its work within 90 days from said date;

2. Create provincial committees to monitor and implement the observance of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities between the Philippine government and the MNLF; and

3. Propose the immediate formulation and implementation of a comprehensive economic and social development program in priority areas mutually agreed upon.

Both panels express their sincere gratitude and appreciation to King Fahd Ibn Abdul Aziz, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, for graciously allowing this meeting to be held in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
The MNLF Panel hereby conveys its heartfelt gratitude to Her Excellency, President Corazon C. Aquino of the Republic of the Philippines, for sincerely addressing the aspirations of the Bangsamoro people and for sending a Philippine panel most suitable for this delicate negotiation.

The panels also wish to thank the Organization of Islamic Conference, thru its Secretary-General H.E. Syed Shariffuddin Pirzada, for continuing to provide its good offices in assisting the parties in their efforts to achieve a peaceful and lasting solution to the Bangsamoro problem.


MNLF Panel                  Philippine Government Panel
By:                        By:
NUR MISUARI               AQUILINO PIMENTEL, JR.
Chairman                  Chairman

APPENDIX F: THE TRIPOLI AGREEMENT

In the Name of God, the Omnipotent, the Merciful.

Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and Moro National Liberation Front with the Participation of the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission Members of the Islamic Conference and the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Conference.

In accordance with the Resolution No. 4 Para. 5 adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Islamic conference in its Fourth Session held in Benghazi, Libyan Arab Republic during the month of Safar 1393 H. corresponding to March 1973, calling for the formation of Quadripartite Ministerial Commission representing the Libyan Arab Republic, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Republic of Senegal and the Republic of Somalia, to enter into discussions with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines concerning the situation of the Muslims in the South of the Philippines.

And in accordance with the Resolution No. (18) adopted by the Islamic conference held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in Jumada Alakhir 1393 H. corresponding to June 1974 A.D. which recommends the searching for a just and peaceful political solution to the problem of the Muslims in the South of the Philippines through the negotiations.

And in accordance with the Resolution No. 12/7/S adopted by the Islamic conference held in Istanbul in Jumada El-Ula 1396 H. corresponding to May 1976 A.D. empowering the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission and the Secretary General of the Islamic Conference to take the necessary steps for the resumption of negotiations.

And following the task undertaken by the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission and the Secretary General of the Islamic Conference and the discussions held with H.E. President Marcos, President of the Republic of the Philippines.
And in realization of the contents of Para. 6 of the Joint Communiqué issued in Tripoli on the 25th Zulgeda 1396 H. corresponding to 17th November 1976 A.D. following the official visit paid by the delegation of the Government of the Philippines headed by the First Lady of the Philippines, Mrs. Imelda R. Marcos, to the Libyan Arab Republic and which calls for the resumption of negotiations between the two parties concerned in Tripoli on the 15th of December 1976 A.D.

Negotiations were held in the City of Tripoli during the period between 24th Zulhija 1396 H. to Second to Moharram 1397 H. corresponding to the period from 15th to 23rd December 1976 A.D. at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs presided over by Dr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Libyan Arab Republic, and comprising of the Delegations of:


2. Moro National Liberation Front, led by Mr. Nur Misuari Chief of the Front.

And with the participation of the representatives of the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission:

The Libyan Arab Republic - represented by Dr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia - H.E. Salah Abdalla El-Fadl, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Libyan Arab Republic.

The Republic of Senegal - Mr. Abubakar Othman Si, Representative of the Republic of Senegal and Charge d'Affairs of Senegal in Cairo.
Democratic Republic of Somalia, Libyan Arab Republic.

With the aid of H.E. Dr. Amadou Karim Gaye, Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Conference, and a delegation from the Secretariat General of the Conference composed of Mr. Qasim Zuheri, Assistant Secretary General, and Mr. Aref Ben Musa, Director of Political Department.

During these negotiations which were marked by a spirit of conciliation and understanding, it has been agreed on the following:

First: The establishment of Autonomy in the Southern Philippines within the realm of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines.

Second: The areas of the autonomy for the Muslims in the Southern Philippines shall comprise the following:

1. Basilan
2. Sulu
3. Tawi-tawi
4. Zamboanga del Sur
5. Zamboanga del Norte
6. North Cotabato
7. Maguindanao
8. Sultan Kudarat
9. Lanao del Norte
10. Lanao del Sur
11. Davao del Sur
12. South Cotabato
13. Palawan

Third:
1. Foreign Policy shall be of the competence of the Central Government of the Philippines.

2. The National Defense Affairs shall be the concern of the Central Authority provided that the arrangements for the joining of the forces of the Moro National Liberation Front with the Philippine Armed Forces be discussed later.

3. In the areas of the autonomy, the Muslims shall have the right to set up their own Courts which implement the Islamic Shari'ah laws. The Muslims shall be represented in all Courts including the Supreme Court. The representation of the Muslims in the Supreme Court shall be upon the recommendation from the authorities of the Autonomy and the Supreme Court. Decrees will be issued by the President of the Republic of their appointments taking into consideration all necessary qualifications of the candidates.

4. Authorities of the autonomy in the South of the Philippines shall have the right to set up schools, colleges and universities, provided that matters pertaining to the relationship between these educational and scientific organs and the general education system in the state shall be subject of discussion later on.

5. The Muslims shall have their own administrative system in compliance with the objectives of the autonomy and its institutions. The relationship between this administrative system and the Central administrative system to be discussed later.

6. The authorities of the autonomy in the South of the Philippines shall have their own economic and financial system. The relationship between this system and the Central economic and financial system of the State shall be discussed later.

7. The authorities of the autonomy in the South of the Philippines shall enjoy the right of representation and participation in the Central Government and in all other organs of the State. The number of representatives and ways of participation shall be fixed later.

8. Special Regional Security Forces are to be set up in the area of the Autonomy for the Muslims in the South of the Philippines. The relationship between these forces and the Central security forces shall be fixed later.

9. A Legislative Assembly and an Executive Council shall be formed in the areas of the Autonomy for the Muslims. The setting up of the Legislative
Assembly shall be constituted through a direct election, and the formation of the Executive Council shall take place through appointments by the Legislative Assembly. A decree for their formation shall be enacted by the President of the Republic respectively. The number of members of each assembly shall be determined later on.

10. Mines and mineral resources fall within the competence of the Central Government, and a reasonable percentage deriving from the revenues of the mines and minerals be fixed for the benefit of the areas of the autonomy.

11. A Mixed Committee shall be composed of representatives of the Central Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the representatives of the Moro National Liberation Front. The Mixed Committee shall meet in Tripoli during the period from the Fifth of February to a date not later than the Third of March 1977. The task of said Committee shall be charged to study in detail the points left for discussion in order to reach a solution thereof in conformity with the provisions of this agreement.

12. Cease-fire shall be declared immediately after the signature of this agreement, provided that its coming into effect should not exceed the 20th January 1977. A Joint Committee shall be composed of the two parties with the help of the Organization of the Islamic Conference represented by the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission to supervise the implementation of the cease-fire.

The said Joint Committee shall also be charged with supervising the following:

a. A complete amnesty in the areas of the autonomy and the renunciation of all legal claims and codes resulting from events which took place in the South of the Philippines.

b. The release of all the political prisoners who had relations with the events in the South of the Philippines.

c. The return of all refugees who have abandoned their areas in the South of the Philippines.

d. To guarantee the freedom of movements and meetings.

13. A joint meeting be held in Jeddah during the first week of the month of March 1977 to initial what has been concluded by the Committee referred to
Para. 11.

14. The final agreement concerning the setting up of the autonomy referred to in the first and second paragraphs shall be signed in the City of Manila, Republic of the Philippines, between the Government of the Philippines and Moro National Liberation Front, and the Islamic Conference represented by the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission and the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Conference.

15. Immediately after the signature of the Agreement in Manila, a Provisional Government shall be established in the areas of the autonomy to be appointed by the President of the Philippines; and be charged with the task of preparing for the elections of the Legislative Assembly in the territories of the Autonomy; and administer the areas in accordance with the provisions of this agreement until a Government is formed by the elected Legislative Assembly.

The Government of the Philippines shall take all necessary constitutional processes for the implementation of the entire Agreement.

Fourth: This Agreement shall come into force with effect from the date of its signature.

Done in the City of Tripoli on 2nd Muharram 1397 H. corresponding to 23rd December 1976 A.D. in three original copies in Arabic, English, French languages, all equal in legal power.

For the Government of the Republic of the Philippines:

Hon. Carmelo Z. Barbero
Undersecretary of National Defense for Civilian Relations

For the Moro National Liberation Front:

Professor Nur Misuari
Chairman of the Front
Dr. Ali Abdusaalam Treki  
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Libyan Arab Republic and Chairman of the Negotiations  

Dr. Amadou Karim Gaye  
Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference  

Source: Conciliation Resources Website: www.c-r.org/accord/min/accord6/tripoli.shtml, retrieved on 30 June 2006
APPENDIX G: FINAL PEACE AGREEMENT

September 1996

In The Name of God, The Omnipotent, The Merciful

The final agreement on the implementation of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) with the participation of the Organization of Islamic Conference Ministerial Committee of Six and the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Conference.

Whereas, the President of the Republic of the Philippines, His Excellency Fidel V. Ramos, has pursued a peaceful settlement of the armed conflict under the principle of peace with honor and to serve the paramount ends of national unity, solidarity and progress for all Filipinos;

Whereas, the MNLF, led by Professor Nur Misuari, inspired by their quest for peace and prosperity, had in the past asserted the right of the Moro people to freely determine their political status and freely pursue their religious, social, economic and cultural development;

Whereas, the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), upon the request of the GRP initiated the First Formal Peace Talks between the GRP and the MNLF during its Third Ministerial Conference in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which resulted in the signing of the Tripoli Agreement on December 23, 1976, the document which served as a basis for a just, lasting, honorable and comprehensive solution to the problem in Southern Philippines within the framework of the Philippine Constitution;

Whereas, by the Grace of the Almighty God and owing to the bold and innovative initiative of the Philippine Government, under H.E. President Fidel V. Ramos, and the
dedication and perseverance of his duly appointed representatives, headed by the Presidential Adviser for the Peace Process Manuel T. Yan, coupled with the highly positive and laudable response of the MNLF leadership under its founding Chairman, H.E. Professor Nur Misuari, a peace process has been conducted and pursued successfully for the last four (4) years, with the most constructive and beneficial participation of the OIC Ministerial Committee of the Six, headed by its distinguished Chairman, H.E. Ali Alatas, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, and his four (4) able assistants as facilitators of the talks, namely: H.E. Ambassador S. Wiryono, H.E. Dr. Hassan Wirajuda, H.E. Ambassador Pieter Damanik, and H.E. Ambassador Abu Hartono, and the OIC Secretary General, H.E. Hamid Algabid, and his deputy, H.E. Ambassador Mohammed Mohsin, and with special mention to Libyan Ambassador, H.E. Rajab Azzarouq;

Whereas, the parties acknowledge the valuable role of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in promoting and upholding the rights, welfare and well-being of Muslims all over the world;

Whereas, the parties likewise, acknowledge the role of the OIC Ministerial Committee of the Six comprising the nations of Indonesia as Chair, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Senegal and Somalia in the search of a just, comprehensive and durable peace in Southern Philippines;

Whereas, in accordance with the Statement of Understanding signed in Tripoli, Libya on October 3, 1992 and the subsequent Statement of Understanding signed in Cipanas, West Java on April 14, 1993, the parties agreed, through the good offices of the Great Libyan Arab Jamahiriyah, inspired and guided by its great leader, H.E. Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, the Government of the Republic of Indonesia under the wise and able leadership of H.E. Bapah President Suharto, and H.E. OIC Secretary General, Dr. Hamid Algabid, to hold formal peace talks to discuss the modalities for the full implementation of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement in letter and spirit; to include those portions of the Agreement left for further discussion and the transitional implementing structure and mechanism;

Whereas, the parties affirm their solemn commitment in the aforementioned Statement of Understanding as well as the Memorandum of Agreement signed in the
1st Round of Formal Peace Talks held in Jakarta, Indonesia on October 25 — November 7, 1993; the Interim Agreement signed in the 2nd Round of Formal Peace Talks held in Jakarta on September 1-5, 1994; the Interim Agreement signed in the 3rd Round of Formal Peace Talks held in Jakarta on November 27 — December 1, 1995; the Interim Agreement signed in the 4th Round of Formal Peace Talks held in Jakarta on August 29, 1996; and in the nine (9) meetings of the Mixed Committee held in various places and dates in the Philippines and Indonesia;

Whereas, all these agreements resulted from the consensus points reached by the Mixed Committee and the Support Committees (Support Committee No. 1 - National Defense and Security; Support Committee No. 2 - Education; Support Committee No. 3 - Economic and Financial System, Mines and Minerals; Support Committee No. 4 - Administrative System, Right of Representation and Participation in the National Government, and in all Organs of the State; Support Committee No. 5 - Shariah and the Judiciary; and the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Transitional Implementing Structure and Mechanism in meetings held in various places in the Philippines and Indonesia;

Whereas, the parties have rationalized and consolidated all the agreements and consensus points reached, with the assistance of the Mixed Committee and the various support committees established for the purpose, into a final peace agreement;

Whereas, the parties affirm the sovereignty, territorial integrity and the Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines; and

Whereas, this final peace agreement constitutes the full implementation of the Tripoli Agreement.

Now therefore, the Parties do Hereby Agree on the Following:

I. Implementing Structure and Mechanism of this Agreement

1. Phase I shall cover a three (3) year period starting after the signing of the peace agreement with the issuance of Executive Order establishing the Special
Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD), the Southern Philippine Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD), and the Consultative Assembly.

During this phase, the process of the joining in of MNLF elements with the Armed Forces of the Philippines will start. The joining in of MNLF elements with the PNP as part of the regular police recruitment programme will also take place in this phase.

2. Phase II shall involve an amendment to or repeal of the Organic Act (RA 6734) of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) through Congressional action, after which the amendatory law shall be submitted to the people of the concerned areas in a plebiscite to determine the establishment of a new autonomous government and the specific area of autonomy thereof.

a. While peace and development programs are being implemented in the SZOPAD, a bill to amend or repeal the RA 6734 shall be initiated within Phase I (1996-1997). The bill shall include the pertinent provisions of the final Peace Agreement and the expansion of the present ARMM area of autonomy. After a law shall have been passed by Congress and approved by the President, it shall be submitted to the people for approval in a plebiscite in the affected areas, within two (2) years from the establishment of the SPCPD (1998).

b. The new area of autonomy shall then be determined by the provinces and cities that will vote/choose to join the said autonomy (1998). It may be provided by the Congress in a law that clusters of contiguous Muslim-dominated municipalities voting in favor of autonomy be merged and constituted into a new province(s) which shall become part of the new Autonomous Region.

II. The Transitional Period (Phase I)

Phase I shall be implemented as follows:

3. There shall be established a Special Zone of Peace and Development in the Southern Philippines (SZOPAD) covering the provinces of Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte, North Cotabato, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, Davao del Sur, South Cotabato, Sarangani and Palawan and the cities of Cotabato, Dapitan, Dipolog, General Santos, Iligan, Marawi, Pagadian, Zamboanga and Puerto Princesa. Within the next three (3)
years, these areas shall be the focus of intensive peace and development efforts. Public and private investments shall be channeled to these areas to spur economic activities and uplift the conditions of the people therein.

4. There shall be established a Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD), composed of one (1) Chairman, one (1) Vice Chairman and three (3) Deputies, one each representing the Muslims, the Christians, and the Cultural Communities. They shall be appointed by the President.

5. The SPCPD shall be assisted by the Darul Iftah (advisory Council) which shall be created by the Chairman of the SPCPD.

6. The local government units in the area including the ARMM, shall continue to exist and exercise their functions in accordance with existing laws.

7. Appropriate agencies of the government that are engaged in peace and development activities in the area, such as but not limited to the Southern Philippines Development Authority (SPDA), shall be placed under the control and/or supervision of the Council as its implementing agencies to ensure that peace and development projects and programs are effectively accomplished.

Based on the foregoing, the following agencies or entities will be placed under the control and/or supervision of the SPCPD, to wit

a. The Southern Philippines Development Authority (SPDA) may be attached to the SPCPD and be placed under the latter's direct supervision insofaras SPDA offices and projects in the SZOPAD are concerned. The SPCPD can exercise a further degree of control over SPDA by allowing the Council to submit recommendees to the President for appointment as officials of SPDA;

b. The Regional and Field Offices of the Office of Muslim Affairs (OMA) which are situated and operating within the Special Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD), shall be placed under the direct supervision of SPCPD, provided that the coordination, linkages and complementation between the central OMA and SPCPD shall be defined by a Presidential issuance;

c. The Regional and Field Offices of the Office of Southern Cultural Communities (OSCC) which are situated and operating within the Special Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD), shall be placed under the direct supervision of SPCPD, provided that the coordination, linkages and complementation between the central OSCC and SPCPD shall be defined by a
Presidential issuance;

d. Task Force Basilan, which shall be reorganized into the Basilan Development Task Force, to undertake development activities in Basilan shall be placed under the control and supervision of SPCPD;

e. Task Force MALMAR, to be reorganized into the Central Mindanao Development Task Force, to undertake development activities in Central Mindanao shall be placed under the control and supervision of SPCPD;

f. Sulu Development Task Force — an interagency task force that shall be organized to undertake development projects in Sulu shall be placed under the control and supervision of SPCPD; and

g. Special Development Planning Group — this is an ad hoc body composed of staff officers and planning experts from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and other concerned agencies which could be organized to support directly the staff planning requirements, shall be placed under SPCPD.

The foregoing enumeration of agencies or entities shall not preclude the President from exercising his power or discretion to delegate, subject to existing laws, certain powers or functions to the SPCPD, or to place other agencies or entities under the control and/or supervision of the latter.

8. The SPCPD, in consultation with the Consultative Assembly, utilizing the funds from the National Government, shall monitor, promote and coordinate the development efforts in the area, including the attraction of foreign investment, specially from OIC member countries and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

9. The powers and functions of the SPCPD and the Consultative Assembly are derivative and extension of the powers of the President. The powers referred to here are only those powers of the President that could be delegated under the Constitution and existing laws.

10. There shall be established a Consultative Assembly with 81 members composed of the following:
a. The Chairman of the SPCPD shall be the head and presiding officer of the Assembly;

b. The Governor and the Vice Governor of the ARMM, the 14 Governors of the provinces and the 9 City Mayors in the SZOPAD;

c. 44 members from the MNLF; and

d. 11 members from various sectors recommended by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and people’s organizations (POs).

11. The Consultative Assembly shall exercise the following functions and powers:

a. To serve as a forum for consultation and ventilation of issues and concerns;

b. To conduct public hearings as may be necessary and to provide appropriate advice to the SPCPD; and

c. To formulate and recommend policies to the President through the Chairman of the SPCPD and make rules and regulations to the extent necessary for the effective and efficient administration of the affairs of the area.

12. The OIC shall be requested to continue to extend its assistance and good offices in monitoring the full implementation of this agreement during the transitional period until the regular autonomous government is firmly established and for this purpose, help generate broad international support for the Zone of Peace and Development.

13. A Joint Monitoring Committee composed of members coming from the GRP and the MNLF, with the help of the OIC, shall continue to meet to review and identify agreements that can be immediately implemented, and monitor the implementation of this Agreement during Phase I.

14. The provisions of the 1994 and 1995 Interim Agreements and subsequent agreements entered into by the GRP and the MNLF that would not require legislative action shall be implemented during Phase I.

15. The funds for the operations of the Council and the Assembly shall be initially sourced from the funds of the Office of the President. Funding for
development programs and projects shall come from the appropriations of Congress as may be drawn from the General Appropriations Act. A supplementary budget for the year 1996 will be recommended to Congress for the purpose.

16. The term of the SPCPD and the Consultative Assembly shall be for a period of three years and may be extended by the President upon recommendation of the Council itself.

17. The term of office of the SPCPD and the Assembly shall coincide with the three-year term of office of the officials of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) elected in 1996.

18. The powers and functions of the Council shall be as follows:
   a. To take charge in promoting, monitoring and coordinating the improvement of peace and order in the area;
   b. To focus on peace and development efforts more particularly in the depressed areas and cause the implementation of peace and development projects;
   c. To provide support to local government units as necessary;
   d. To exercise such other powers and functions necessary for the effective implementation of its mandate as may be delegated by the President;
   e. To assist in the preparation for the holding of elections, referenda or plebiscite and people's initiative in the area as may be duly deputized by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC);
   f. To cause the creation of such offices or instrumentalities as shall be necessary for the effective and efficient administration of the affairs of the areas. There shall be approval from the Office of the President for budgetary purposes.

19. The joining of the MNLF elements with the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Provision of Security Protection for Certain Officials of the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development:
   a. During the transitional phase (Phase I), there shall be a program or process to allow the joining of MNLF elements into the PNP and to be part of the PNP in accordance with guidelines and procedures under existing laws. The Philippine Government shall allocate one thousand five hundred (1,500) PNP vacancies for this purpose to be filled up by MNLF elements during the transition
period, and another two hundred fifty (250) items for special or auxiliary services.

b. The processing of MNLF elements will start upon the establishment of the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD). The police training programs to be undergone by the joining MNLF elements shall be as prescribed by existing laws and regulations, and shall be conducted by the PNP.

c. The concerned officials of the Council (e.g. the Chairman and his Deputies) shall be provided security and protective assistance by the national government, as the security situation warrants and as part of confidence-building measures. An AFP/PNP security detail shall be immediately and particularly assigned to the Council. This special AFP/PNP security detail shall be composed of former MNLF regulars who shall have been granted AFP or PNP appointments and duly integrated into the AFP or PNP. This security detail shall be of appropriate size in accordance with the needs of the situation, without prejudice to augmentation by regular AFP or PNP units as the need arises and in coordination with the AFP and PNP commanders concerned. This security detail which shall not be utilized for law enforcement, but solely for the security and protection of SPCPD officials concerned, shall conduct themselves in accordance with existing policies and regulations in order to prevent undue alarm to the population during movements of concerned officials.

d. To have good coordination between the AFP and PNP on the one hand and the SPCPD on the other, a liaison system will be set up composed of the AFP, PNP and SPCPD senior officials.

20. The joining of the MNLF forces with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP):

a. Five thousand seven hundred fifty (5,750) MNLF members shall be integrated into the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), 250 of whom shall be absorbed into the auxiliary services. The government shall exert utmost efforts to establish the necessary conditions that would ensure the eventual integration of the maximum number of the remaining MNLF forces into the Special Regional Security Force (SRSF) and other agencies and instrumentalities of the government. There shall be a special socioeconomic, cultural and educational program to cater to MNLF forces not absorbed into the AFP, PNP and the SRSF to prepare them and their families for productive endeavors, provide for educational, technical skills and livelihood training and give them priority for hiring in
development projects.

b. In the beginning, the MNLF forces will join as units distinct from AFP units. They will be initially organized into separate units within a transition period, until such time that mutual confidence is developed as the members of these separate units will be gradually integrated into regular AFP units deployed in the area of the autonomy. Subject to existing laws, policies, rules and regulations, the appropriate authorities shall waive the requirements and qualifications for entry of MNLF forces into the AFP.

c. One from among the MNLF will assume the functions and responsibilities of a Deputy Commander of the Southern Command, AFP, for separate units that will be organized out of the MNLF forces joining the AFP. The Deputy Commander will assist the Commander of the Southern Command, AFP in the command, administration and control of such separate units throughout the aforementioned transition period. The Deputy Commander will be given an appointment commensurate to his position and shall be addressed as such.

d. The government recognizes the skills, capabilities and achievements of the MNLF and its capacity to develop its members for the highest echelons of military and civilian leadership. The ranks and grades of MNLF forces joining AFP shall be subject to the decision of the President in his capacity as Commander-in-Chief of the AFP along the principles of universality, non-discrimination, equity and preferential treatment for the poor and underprivileged.

e. The government shall take affirmative measures to continually improve the capabilities of those MNLF forces joining the AFP to enhance their opportunities for professional advancement in the military service. It shall undertake initiatives to provide professional training and military schooling in foreign countries to former MNLF members absorbed into the AFP in consonance with the education and training programmes with the AFP.

f. All other matters regarding the joining of MNLF forces into the AFP not expressly covered by this Agreement shall be prescribed by the President in his capacity as Commander-in-Chief of the AFP.

III. The New Regional Autonomous Government (Phase II)

The following provisions shall be implemented after a law amending or repealing the Organic Act of ARMM shall have been enacted by Congress and approved by the
people in the concerned areas in a plebiscite therefore. Accordingly, these provisions shall be recommended by the GRP to Congress for incorporation in the amendatory or repealing law.

A. Executive Council, Legislative Assembly, Administrative System and Representation in the National Government

Executive Council

21. Executive power shall be vested in the Head of the regular Autonomous Government duly elected at large by direct vote of the people of the Autonomous Region. There shall also be a Vice Head of the Regional Autonomous Government also elected in the same manner. The Head of the Regional Autonomous Government may appoint three (3) Deputies. The Head, the Vice-Head and the three (3) Deputies shall comprise the Executive Council of the area of Autonomy.

22. The President shall exercise general supervision over the Regional Autonomous Government and all local government units in the area of Autonomy through the Head of the Regional Autonomous Government to ensure that laws are faithfully executed.

The Head of the Autonomous Government shall exercise general supervision over all local government units in the area of autonomy to ensure that national and regional laws are faithfully executed, and see to it that they act within their assigned powers and functions.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

23. Legislative power shall be vested in the Regional Legislative Assembly.

24. The Legislative Assembly shall be composed of members elected by popular vote, with three (3) members elected from each of the Congressional Districts.
25. There shall be sectoral representatives in the Legislative Assembly whose number shall not exceed fifteen percent (15%) of the total number of elected Members of the Legislative Assembly coming from the labor, disabled, industrial, indigenous cultural communities, youth, women, non-government organizations, agricultural, and such other sectors as may be provided by Regional Law to be appointed by the Head of the Autonomous Government from among the nominees of the different sectoral groups; provided, however, that the youth representative shall not be less than 18 years of age nor more than 21 years of age at the time of his appointment.

26. The people's initiative, by way of a plebiscite or referendum, is recognized.

27. The Regional Legislative Assembly shall exercise legislative power for application in the area of autonomy except on the following matters, to wit

a. Foreign Affairs;    e.  

b. National Defense and Security;  

c. Postal Service;  

d. Coinage, and Fiscal and Monetary Policies;  

e. Administration of Justice except on matters pertaining to Shari`ah;  

f. Quarantine;  

g. Customs and Tariff;  

h. Citizenship;  

i. Naturalization, Immigration and Deportation;  

j. General Auditing, Civil Service and Elections;  

k. Foreign Trade;  

l. Maritime, Land and Air Transportation and Communications that affect areas outside the autonomous region; and  

m. Patents, Trademarks, Tradenames and Copyrights.
28. The Legislative Assembly may create, divide, merge, abolish or substantially alter boundaries of local government units in the area of autonomy in accordance with the criteria laid down by law subject to approval by a majority of the votes cast in a plebiscite called for the purpose in the political units affected. It may also change the names of such local government units, public places and institutions.

29. Any member of the Legislative Assembly who accepts an appointment and qualifies for any position in the Government, including government-owned-and/or-controlled corporations or institutions and their subsidiaries, shall automatically forfeit his seat in the Legislative Assembly.

30. No member of the Legislative Assembly may personally appear as counsel before courts of justice or quasi-judicial and other administrative bodies. Neither shall he directly or indirectly, be interested financially in any contract with, or in any franchise or privilege granted by, the Government or any subdivision, agency or instrumentality thereof, including any government-owned-and/or-controlled corporation or its subsidiary, during his term of office. He shall not intervene in any matter before any office of the government for his pecuniary benefit or where he may be called upon to act on account of his office.

31. In case of vacancy in the Legislative Assembly occurring at least one year before the expiration of the term of office, a special election shall be called to fill the vacancy in the manner prescribed by law; provided that the member elected shall serve for the unexpired term.

32. The Legislative Assembly shall elect from among its members a Speaker and such other officers as the rules may provide. The Speaker shall appoint the personnel of the administrative organization of the Legislative Assembly.

33. The powers, functions, responsibilities and structure of the different Departments, agencies, bureaus, offices and instrumentalities of the regional government including regional government-owned-and-controlled corporations in the areas of the autonomy shall be prescribed and defined by the Regional Legislative Assembly.

34. No person shall be elected member of the Legislative Assembly unless he/she is
a. A natural-born citizen of the Philippines;

b. At least 21 years of age on the day of elections;

c. Able to read and write;

d. A registered voter of the district in which he/she shall be elected on the day he/she files his/her certificate of candidacy; and

e. A resident thereof for a period of no less than five years immediately proceeding the day of election.

35. Every member of the Legislative Assembly shall take an oath or affirmation of allegiance to the Republic of the Philippines before taking his/her seat.

36. The Legislative Assembly shall adopt its own rules of procedure by a majority vote of all its Members including the selection of members of its standing committees and the suspension or expulsion of its Members.

37. A majority of all the Members of the Assembly shall constitute a quorum to do business, but a smaller number may adjourn from day-to-day and may compel the attendance of absent members in such manner, and under such penalties as the Assembly may provide.

38. The Legislative Assembly or any of its committees may conduct inquiries or public consultations in aid of legislation in accordance with its rules. The rights of persons appearing in or affected by such inquiries shall be respected.

39. The Legislative Assembly shall keep a Journal of its proceedings and a record of its caucuses and meetings. The records and books of account of the Assembly shall be preserved and be open to public scrutiny. The Commission on Audit shall publish an annual report of the itemized list of expenditures incurred by the Members of the Assembly within sixty (60) days from the end of every regular session.

40. The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly shall, within ten working days from approval thereof, submit to the President and to both Houses of Congress a certified true copy of all laws and resolutions approved by the Legislative Assembly.

41. No member shall be questioned or be held liable in any other place for
any speech or debate in the Assembly or in any committee thereof.

42. The Chief Executive of the Autonomous Government shall approve the budget of the Autonomous Region. If, by the end of any fiscal year, the Legislative Assembly shall have failed to pass the regional appropriations bill for the ensuing fiscal year, the regional Appropriations Act for the preceding fiscal year shall be deemed automatically re-enacted and shall remain in force and effect until the regional appropriations bill is passed by the Legislative Assembly.

43. No provision or enactment shall be embraced in the regional appropriations bill unless it relates specifically to some particular appropriation therein. Any such provision or enactment shall be limited in its operation to the appropriation to which it relates.

44. The procedure in approving appropriations for the Legislative Assembly shall strictly follow the procedure for approving appropriations for other departments and agencies of the Regional Government.

45. A special appropriations bill shall specify the purpose for which it is intended, and shall be supported by funds actually available as certified by the Regional Treasurer, or to be raised by a corresponding revenue proposal therein.

46. Discretionary funds appropriated for particular offices shall be disturbed only for public purposes to be supported by appropriate vouchers and subject to such guidelines as may be prescribed by regional law.

47. All money collected on any regional tax levied for a special purpose shall be treated as a special fund and paid out for such special purpose only. If the purpose for which a special fund was created has been fulfilled or abandoned, the balance, if any, shall accrue to the general funds of the regional government.

48. Trust funds shall only be paid out of the regional treasury upon fulfillment of the specific purpose for which said funds were created or received.

49. Except as provided by its rules, the Legislative Assembly shall meet in open session. Regular session shall commence on the 4th Monday of April and shall continue to be in session for such number of days as may be determined by the Assembly until thirty (30) days before the opening of its next regular session.

50. The Legislative Assembly shall meet in special sessions at the request of one-third (1/3) of all its Members or by call of the Chief Executive. Such special sessions must be convened with specific agenda.

51. No bill shall become a law unless it has passed three (3) readings on
separate days and printed copies thereof in its final form have been distributed to its Members three (3) days before its passage, except when the Chief Executive certifies to the necessity of its immediate enactment to meet a public calamity or emergency.

52. Every bill passed by the Legislative Assembly shall, before it becomes a law, be presented to the Chief Executive. If he approves the same, he shall sign it, otherwise, he shall veto it and return it with his objections to the Legislative Assembly, which shall enter the objections at large in its journal and proceed to consider it. If, after such reconsideration, two-thirds (2/3) of all the Members of the Legislative Assembly shall agree to pass the bill, it shall become a law. In all such cases, the veto shall be determined by yeas and nays, and the names of the members voting for or against shall be entered in the journal. The Chief Executive shall communicate his veto of any bill to the Legislative Assembly within thirty (30) days after the receipt thereof; otherwise, it shall become a law as if he had signed it.

53. The Legislative Assembly may request the presence of the Chief Executive, Vice-Chief Executive, Cabinet members or their deputies, as the rules shall provide, for questioning on matters falling within the scope of their assigned powers and functions.

54. Subject to the rules of the Legislative Assembly, the legislative power to inquire on matters relating to the exercise of administrative functions by an agency of government within the Autonomous Region shall be in the form of written questions.

55. The Chief Executive shall submit to the Legislative Assembly not later than two (2) months before the beginning of every regular session, as the basis of the regional appropriations bill, a budget of expenditures and sources of financing, including receipts from existing and proposed revenue measures.

56. The fiscal year of the Autonomous Region shall cover the period January 1 to December 31 of the same year.

57. The Legislative Assembly may not increase the appropriations recommended by the Chief Executive for the operation of the Autonomous Government as specified in the budget. The form, content and manner of preparation of the budget shall be prescribed by regional law; provided, however, that pending the enactment of such regional law, the budgeting process shall be governed by existing national laws and rules and regulations prescribed by the Department of Budget and Management.
58. The Chief Executive shall have the power to veto any particular item or items in an appropriation or revenue bill, but the veto shall not affect the item or items to which he does not object. The veto may be reconsidered by the Assembly by a vote of two thirds (2/3) of all its Members.

59. The financial accounts of the expenditures and revenues of the Autonomous Region shall be audited by the Commission on Audit.

60. No money shall be paid out of the Regional Treasury except in pursuance of an appropriation made by regional law.

61. No regional law shall be passed authorizing any transfer of appropriations; however, the Chief Executive, the Speaker of the Assembly, and the Presiding Justice of the highest Shariah Court may, by law, be authorized to augment any item in the Regional General Appropriation Law for their respective offices from savings in other items of their respective appropriations.

Administrative System

62. The Regional Autonomous Government shall have the power to enact its own Regional Administrative Code and Regional Local Government Code consistent with national laws and the Constitution provided that it shall not in any way diminish the powers and functions already enjoyed by Local Government Units.

Right of Representation and Participation in the National Government and in all Organs of the State

GENERAL PRINCIPLES:

63. Representation in the National Government by the inhabitants of the Autonomous Region may be effected through appointment or elections and must be subject to standards and guidelines prescribed for the position. When representation is done by appointment, the inhabitants of the Autonomous Region will be appointed by the President of the Philippines to herein specified positions which are policy determining, highly technical, primarily confidential and
supervisory upon recommendation by the Head of the Autonomous Government.

64. Right of representation shall not be construed in such a way that applicants from the Autonomous Region, especially Muslims, and Cultural Communities, for lower positions in the above organs of the government cannot be appointed anymore thereto.

Manner of Representation and Participation

EXECUTIVE

65. It shall be policy of the National Government that there shall be at least one (1) member of the Cabinet (with the rank of Department Secretary) who is an inhabitant of the Autonomous Region to be recommended by the Head of the Autonomous Government.

66. It shall likewise be a policy that there shall be at least one (1) official in each of the departments and the constitutional bodies of the national government who shall be appointed in executive, primarily confidential, highly technical policy-determining positions, from among the inhabitants of the Autonomous Region upon recommendation by the Head of the Autonomous Government. The Head of the Autonomous Government shall participate as ex-officio member of the National Security Council on all matters concerning the Autonomous Region and such other matters as may be determined by the President.

67. Government-Owned and Controlled Corporations (GOCCs) or institutions and their subsidiaries in the area of autonomy: where Government-Owned and Controlled Corporations (GOCCs) are operating mainly or with a subsidiary in the area of autonomy, as a policy, the Regional Autonomous Government shall be given some representations in the Board of Directors or in the policy-making body of said GOCCs or their subsidiaries consistent with their respective charters.

LEGISLATIVE

68. It shall be the policy of the National Government that the Regional
Autonomous Government shall have one (1) representative in Congress as a Sectoral Representative. This is aside from the representatives/congressmen elected from the congressional districts located in the autonomous region.

**JUDICIAL**

69. It shall be a policy of the National Government that at least one (1) justice in the Supreme Court and at least two (2) in the Court of Appeals shall come from the Autonomous Region. For this purpose, the Head of the Autonomous Government may submit the names of his recommendees to the Judicial and Bar Council for consideration. This is without prejudice to the appointment of qualified inhabitants of the Autonomous Region to other positions in the judiciary in accordance with their merits and qualifications.

70. The GRP shall endeavour to cause the appointment, as a member of the Judicial and Bar Council, a qualified person to be recommended by the Head of the Regional Autonomous Government.

71. The GRP shall request the Supreme Court to create the Office of the Deputy Court Administrator for the Area of Autonomy, and to appoint thereto a qualified person recommended by the Head of the Regional Autonomous Government.

**CIVIL SERVICE ELIGIBILITIES**

72. The civil service eligibility requirements for appointment to government position shall be applicable in the Autonomous Government. As necessary, the Civil Service Commission shall hold special civil service examinations in the region to further increase the number of eligibles therein. For a period not longer than five (5) years from the establishment of the Regional Autonomous Government, the GRP will endeavour to provide for appropriate civil service eligibility to applicants in the Autonomous Region, provided, the minimum educational qualifications for the position are met.
B. The Establishment of the Special Regional Security Force for the Autonomous Region

(Phase II of the Implementation of the Tripoli Agreement)

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

73. When the new regular Autonomous Regional Government shall have been established, there shall be created or constituted a PNP Regional Command for the new Autonomous Region, which shall be the Special Regional Security Forces (SRSF) as referred to in Paragraph 8, Article III of the Tripoli Agreement.

74. The Regional Legislative Assembly may enact laws governing the PNP Regional Command for the Autonomous Region/SRSF consistent with the constitutional provision that there shall be one police force in the country which is national in scope and civilian in character.

75. The PNP Regional Command for the Autonomous Region/SRSF shall be composed of the existing PNP units in the area of autonomy, the MNLF elements and other residents of the area who may later on be recruited into the force.

76. The powers and functions of the PNP Regional Command for the Autonomous Region/SRSF, which shall be exercised within the territories covered by the Regional Autonomous Government (RAG), shall be the following:

a. Enforce all laws and ordinances relative to the protection of lives and properties;

b. Maintain peace and order and take all necessary steps to ensure public safety;

c. Investigate and prevent crimes, effect the arrest of criminal offenders, bring offenders to justice and assist in their prosecution;

d. Exercise the general powers to make arrest, search and seizure in accordance with the Constitution and pertinent laws;

e. Detain and arrest a person for a period not beyond what is prescribed by law, informing the person so detained of all his rights under the Constitution and observing the inherent human rights of the citizens; and
f. Perform such other duties and exercise all other functions as may be provided by law.

77. The PNP Regional Command for the Autonomous Region/SRSF shall be charged with the maintenance and preservation of peace, law and order, and protection of life, liberty and property in the region in consonance with the Constitution.

Organization of the PNP Regional Command for the Autonomous Region/SRSF

78. It shall be civilian in nature or character.

79. It shall be regional in scope of operations.

80. It shall be headed by a Regional Director who shall be assisted by two (2) Deputies, one (1) for Administration and one (1) for Operations.

81. It shall have regional, provincial, and city or municipal offices.

82. At the provincial level, there shall be a provincial office, headed by a Provincial Director.

83. At the city or municipal level, there shall be an office/station which shall be headed by a Chief of Police.

Powers of the Head of the Regional Autonomous Government over the PNP Regional Command for the Autonomous Region/SRSF

84. Act as the Deputy of the National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM) in the region and shall be the ex-officio Chairman of the Regional Police Commission (REPOLCOM).

85. Exercise operational control and general supervision and disciplinary powers.

86. Employ/deploy the elements of the Regional Command through the Regional Director.
87. Assign/reassign officers and other personnel through the Regional Director.

88. Recommend to the President the appointment of the Regional Director and his two (2) Deputies.

89. Oversee the preparation and implementation of the integrated regional public safety plan.

90. Impose, after due notice and summary hearings of citizen's complaints, administrative penalties on personnel of the Regional Command except Presidential Appointees.

CREATION OF THE REGIONAL POLICE COMMISSION

91. There shall be created a Regional Police Commission (REPOLCOM) by the Regional Legislative Assembly consistent with the Constitution.

92. The REPOLCOM shall be under the supervision of the NAPOLCOM.

93. The Chairman of REPOLCOM shall be an ex-officio Commissioner of the NAPOLCOM.

C. EDUCATION

THE INTEGRATED SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

94. The Regional Autonomous Government shall have an educational component comprising of existing schools, colleges and universities in the present area of autonomy and such other schools and institutions in the future expanded area of autonomy, with the possible inclusion of state universities and colleges (SUCs) to be decided later on. The relationship of the Regional Autonomous Government educational body with the national educational system shall be that of a system and sub-system with emphasis on the autonomy of the sub-system. In the event that SUCs should be included as part of the educational component of the
Regional Autonomous Government, the autonomous government recognizes the fiscal autonomy and academic freedom of the SUCs as mandated by their respective charters.

95. The Regional Autonomous Government educational system shall, among others, perpetuate Filipino and Islamic ideals and aspirations, Islamic values and orientations of the Bangsamoro people. It shall develop the total spiritual, intellectual, social, cultural, scientific and physical aspects of the Bangsamoro people to make them God-fearing, productive, patriotic citizens, conscious of their Filipino and Islamic values and Islamic cultural heritage under the aegis of a just and equitable society.

THE STRUCTURE OF EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

96. The elementary level shall follow the basic national structure and shall primarily be concerned with providing basic education; the secondary level will correspond to four (4) years of high school, and the tertiary level shall be one year to three (3) years for non-degree courses and four (4) to eight (8) years for degree courses, as the case may be in accordance with existing laws.

CURRICULUM

97. The Regional Autonomous Government educational system will adopt the basic core courses for all Filipino children as well as the minimum required learnings and orientations provided by the national government, including the subject areas and their daily time allotment. Teaching materials and curriculum contents shall promote solidarity, unity in diversity, Filipino and Islamic values.

98. The addition of more required learnings and instructional materials shall be the prerogative and responsibility of the Autonomous Government.

99. The minimum requirements and standards prescribed by Department of Education Culture and Sports (DECS), Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) will be followed by the Autonomous Region.
100. The same textbooks of the National Government will be used by schools in the Autonomous Region. The formulation, shaping and revision of textbooks are the responsibilities of the Regional Autonomous Government and the National Government and within agreed norms, academic freedom and relevant legal limits, the formulation and revisions shall emphasize Islamic values or orientation, in addition to Filipino values which include Christian values and values of indigenous people, modern sciences and technology as well as the latest educational thrusts. Having adopted the core curriculum of the national government in consideration of achieving the highest quality of education, students and graduates of the education system of the Autonomous Region shall be fully accredited when they transfer to non autonomous regions.

101. The integration of Islamic Values in the curriculum should be done gradually after researches and studies are conducted.

102. The teachings of Islamic Values, as well as Filipino values, shall be incorporated in Good Manners and Right Conduct in appropriate grade levels including the tertiary level subject to agreed norms, academic freedom, and legal limitations.

103. Muslim culture, mores, customs and traditions which are mainly based on Islam, as well as the cultures, mores, customs, and traditions of Christians and indigenous people, shall be preserved through the regular public and special schools in the Autonomous Region, considering that schools are perpetuating vehicles of the values of the people.

ADMINISTRATION OF EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

104. The management and control, and supervision of the entire educational system in the area of autonomy shall be the primary concern of the Regional Autonomous Government, consistent with the declared policies of national educational bodies. The national education bodies shall monitor compliance by the regional educational system with national educational policies, standards and regulations in collaboration with the educational authorities of the autonomous region. The head of the educational system of the Regional Autonomous Government shall have the right to participate in policy and decision making activities of the national educational bodies.

105. The Regional Autonomous Government shall be represented in the
Board of SUCs in the region as co-chairman or at least, co-vice-chairman, as may be provided by law. Appointment to SUC Boards shall be made by the President of the Philippines.

106. The Regional Autonomous Government will be responsible for specific administrative, management functions and powers, educational supervision and school administration, and regulation over private schools.

107. The organizational structure of the educational system in the autonomous region shall follow the basic structure of the national educational system. The Regional Legislative Assembly may add special structures, if necessary. It shall follow whatever organizations of the curricular years as found in the national set-up.

108. Locally funded programs will be the responsibility of the Regional Autonomous Government.

109. The selection, recruitment, appointment and promotion of teachers and employees shall be the responsibility of the Regional Autonomous Government in accordance with general qualification standard prescribed by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) provided that the Regional Autonomous Government can initiate regionally-defined standards which are not below national standards.

110. The selection, recruitment, appointment and promotion of elementary, secondary and tertiary education employees shall be the responsibility of the Regional Autonomous Government in accordance with general standards of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) and other recognized bodies.

111. Primary disciplinary authority over officials and employees of the Regional Autonomous Government will be the area of concern of the Regional Autonomous Government in accordance with Civil Service Commission (CSC) rules and regulations. Administrative sanctions deemed appropriate and reasonable as determined by the Civil Service Commission will be the area of concern of the Regional Autonomous Government.

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

112. Religious instruction in public schools should be optional, with the written consent of the parent/guardian, taught by the authorities of the religion to which the student belongs, and should not involved additional costs to the government in accordance with national policies.
MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

113. Filipino and English shall be the medium of instruction in the areas of the Autonomy; provided that Arabic shall be an auxiliary medium of instruction.

114. Regional languages may be used as auxiliary official languages in the region as well as auxiliary medium of instruction and communication.

115. Arabic shall be recognized as a medium of instruction in Madaris (schools) and other Islamic institutions.

116. Arabic shall be taught as a subject in all appropriate grade levels as presently required in the existing laws for Muslims, and optional, for non-Muslims.

MADRASA EDUCATION

117. Existing Madaris, including Madaris Ulya shall be under the Regional Autonomous Government educational system as presently organized in the area of autonomy.

118. Madaris teachers shall receive compensation out of the funds of the Regional Autonomous Government provided they are employed in the public schools.

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND SPECIALIZED EDUCATION

119. The Regional Autonomous Government educational system shall develop the full potentials of its human resources, respond positively to changing needs and conditions and needs of the environment, and institutionalize non-formal education.

120. The educational system shall respond positively and effectively to the changing needs and conditions of the times as well as regional and national needs of the environment through the proper use of the latest educational technology, development, planning, monitoring, evaluation, and appropriate and timely educational intervention as well as linkages with national and international institutions.
121. The Regional Autonomous Government educational system shall institutionalize non-formal education in scope and methodology, to include literacy, numeracy and intensive skills training of the youth and adult, to allow them to participate actively and productively in the mainstream of regional and national life.

**SCHOLARSHIP GRANTS AND ASSISTANCE**

122. Universities and colleges in the areas of autonomy may seek and receive overseas donations for educational purposes.

123. The Regional Autonomous Government educational system will handle, by administrative arrangement with the national DECS, CHED, and TESDA scholarship programs, both local and foreign, including those provided by the autonomous region pursuant to the provision of existing laws.

124. Disadvantaged but deserving students will be given financial assistance by the Regional Autonomous Government out of funds given by the national government for the purpose and from other sources of funds.

**FUNDS FOR EDUCATION**

125. Funds for education constituting the share of the Regional Autonomous Government as contained in the General Appropriations Act should be given directly to the Autonomous Government

D. **THE ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL SYSTEM, MINES AND MINERALS**

126. The Regional Autonomous Government in the area of autonomy shall establish its own Regional Economic and Development Planning Board chaired by the Head of Government in the area of autonomy. The Board shall prepare the economic development plans and programs of the Autonomous Government.

127. The pivotal role of banks and other financial institutions for development in the area of autonomy is recognized.
128. The Regional Autonomous Government in the area of autonomy has the power to promote tourism as a positive instrument for development provided that the diverse cultural heritage, moral and spiritual values of the people in the area of autonomy shall be strengthened and respected.

129. The Regional Autonomous Government in the area of autonomy shall have the power to grant incentives including tax holidays within the power and resources in the area of autonomy.

130. The Regional Autonomous Government in the area of autonomy advocates equal opportunities for all the inhabitants of the area of autonomy regardless of ethnic origin, culture, sex, creed and religion.

131. In enacting tax measures, the Regional Legislative Assembly shall observe the principle of uniformity and equity in taxation and shall not impose confiscatory taxes or fees of any kind.

132. The Regional Autonomous Government in the area of autonomy shall have the power to enact a Regional Tax Code and a regional Local Tax Code applicable to all local government units within the area of autonomy.

133. All corporations, partnerships or business entities directly engaged in business in the area of autonomy shall pay their corresponding taxes, fees, and charges in the province, city or municipality in the area of autonomy where the establishment is doing business.

134. All corporations, partnerships or business entities whose head offices are located outside the area of autonomy, but doing business within its territorial jurisdiction, either by using, exploiting, and utilizing the land, aquatic and all natural resources therein, shall pay their income taxes corresponding to their income realized from their business operation in the area of autonomy through the province, city or municipality where their branch offices are located. In case the business establishment has no branch in the area of autonomy, such business establishment shall pay through the city or municipality where its operation is located.

135. The Regional Autonomous Government in the area of autonomy as a corporate body, may contract domestic loans.

136. The Regional Autonomous Government recognizes the pivotal role played by banks and other financial institutions in the economic development of the area of autonomy. Toward this end, the Autonomous Government shall:
a. Encourage the establishment of banks and bank branches in the area of autonomy;

b. Encourage the entry and establishment of off-shore banking units of foreign banks in the area of autonomy.

137. The Regional Autonomous Government may accept foreign financial and economic grant for the development and welfare of the people in the region.

138. The Regional Autonomous Government may issue its own treasury bills, bonds, promissory notes, and other debt papers in consultation and coordination with the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

139. The Regional Autonomous Government may contract foreign loans within the purview of national laws and pertinent monetary and fiscal policies.

140. In the pursuit of the region's economic growth, development and welfare, the autonomous government shall have the right to formulate economic and financial policies and implement economic and financial programs, taking into account national laws and policies.

141. The Regional Autonomous Government in the area of autonomy shall encourage, promote and support the establishment of economic zones, industrial centers, and ports in strategic area and growth centers to attract local and foreign investments and business enterprise.

142. The Regional Autonomous Government in the area of autonomy shall undertake encourage, promote and support the establishment of economic zones and industrial centers. And, in order to attract local and foreign investments within the area of the zone and outside but within the area of autonomy, the government in the area of autonomy may grant incentives to investors as may be defined in an Autonomous Investment Act to be formulated by the Regional Legislative Assembly within one year from its organization.

143. The residents in the area of the autonomy shall have preferential rights over the exploration, development and utilization of natural resources in the area of autonomy respecting existing rights on the exploitation, exploration, development and utilization of natural resources.

144. The Regional Autonomous Government in the area of autonomy shall enjoy fiscal autonomy in budgeting its own revenue resources and block subsidies granted to it by the National Government and foreign donors. Budgeting includes planning, programming and disbursing of funds.
145. The National Government shall appropriate for the area of autonomy a sufficient amount and for a period (both to be determined later) for infrastructure projects which shall be based on a development plan duly approved by the Regional Autonomous Government taking into account national policies.

147. In the regulation of the exploration, utilization, development, protection of the natural resources inclusive of mines and minerals, except strategic minerals which will be defined later, the government in the area of autonomy shall enact rules and regulations and shall impose regulatory fees, taking into account national policies.

148. An Islamic Banking Unit shall be established in the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas which shall be staffed by qualified Islamic banking experts nominated by the Governor of the Regional Autonomous Government. The Governor of the Regional Autonomous Government shall nominate at least three (3) qualified persons from the area of autonomy, from which nomination the appointing authority shall appoint the Head of the Unit. The same procedure shall be observed as regards the rest of the positions in the Unit.

149. The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas shall have a Regional Office with full banking service in the capital of the government of the Autonomous Region to respond to the growing needs of the banking community in the area of autonomy which shall be established within one (1) year from the establishment of the Autonomous Government. The Governor of the Autonomous Government shall submit a list of qualified recommendees to the appointing authority from which the staff of the regional office may be chosen; provided that those staff who are now occupying and already appointed to positions in the regional office are considered as recommended by the Governor of the Regional Autonomous Government.

150. The Regional Autonomous Government shall establish a body in the area of autonomy with the same powers as the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) consistent with the Special Economic Zone Act of 1995.

151. All current year collections of internal revenue taxes within the area of autonomy shall, for a period of five (5) years, be allotted for the Regional Autonomous Government (RAG) in the Annual General Appropriations Act; provided that:

   a. The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) shall continue to collect such taxes and the BIR Collection Districts/Offices concerned shall retain such collections and remit the same to the RAG through an approved depository bank within thirty (30) days from the end of each quarter of the current year;
b. Out of said internal revenue tax collections, fifty percent (50%) of the tax collected under Section 100 (Value-added tax on sale of goods), 102 (Value added tax on sale of services), 112 (Tax on persons exempt from value-added tax), 113 (Hotel, motels and others), and 114 (Caterers) of the National Internal Revenue Code (NIRC), as amended, in excess of the increase in collections for the immediately preceding year shall be shared by the RAG and the local government units (LGUs) within the area of autonomy as follows:

(1) Twenty percent (20%) shall accrue to the city or municipality where such taxes are collected; and

(2) Eighty percent (80%) shall accrue to the RAG.

In all cases, the RAG shall remit to the LGUs their respective shares within sixty (60) days from the end of each quarter of the current year.

Provided, however, that the provinces, cities, municipalities and barangays within the area of autonomy shall continue to receive their respective shares in the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA), as provided for in Section 284 of the Local Government Code of 1991.

Provided, finally, that the five-year (5) periods herein abovementioned may be extended upon mutual agreement of the National and Regional Autonomous Governments.

E. SHARI’AH AND JUDICIARY

152. The Regional Legislative Assembly of the area of autonomy shall establish Shari’ah Courts in accordance with the existing laws.

F. TOTALITY CLAUSE

153. This Peace Agreement, which is the full implementation of the 1976
Tripoli Agreement, embodies and constitutes the totality of all the agreements, covenant and understandings between the GRP and the MNLF respecting all the subject matters embodied herein. This Agreement supersedes and modifies all agreements, consensus, covenants, documents and communications not referred to or embodied in this Agreement or whose terms and conditions are otherwise inconsistent herewith. Any conflict in the interpretation of this Agreement shall be resolved in the light of the Philippine Constitution and existing laws.

G. EFFECTIVITY CLAUSE

154. This Agreement shall take effect immediately upon the signing hereof by the parties, unless otherwise provided herein.

Done in the City of Manila on the 2nd day of September 1996.

For the GRP:

H.E. Ambassador Manuel T. Yan
Chairman of the GRP Panel

For the MNLF:
H.E. Professor Nur Misuari
Chairman of the MNLF Panel

With the participation of the OIC Ministerial Committee of the Six and the Secretary-General of the OIC

H.E. Mr. Ali Alatas
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia/Chairman of the OIC
Ministerial Committee of the Six

H.E. Dr. Hamid Al-Gabid
Secretary-General of the OIC

Source: United States Institute of Peace web site:
APPENDIX H: MAP OF MINDANAO AND PALAWAN

Map illustrates the area supposedly covered by the 1976 Tripoli Agreement entered into between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

Source: Encarta World Maps
Source: Encarta World Maps
VITA

Nasser Pendatun Lidasan
Graduate Program in International Studies
Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia, USA

Personal Details
Permanent Address: Mapantig, Isulan, Sultan Kudarat 9805, Philippines
Telephone Number: +62 82 321-9327; Mobile: +63 9155149216
Email Address: nasserlidasan@yahoo.com; nlida001@odu.edu

Education and Trainings

- BS in Civil Engineering (Licensed) - Notre Dame University, Cotabato City, Philippines- 1990
- Officer Candidate Course- AFP Officer Candidate School- 1992
- Advance English Language Course- Ateneo De Manila University, Quezon City, Philippines-2004
- Ford Foundation International Fellowship - 2005 to 2006
- MA in Conflict Resolution- University of Bradford- United Kingdom- 2006
- Candidate, PhD in International Studies (Major in Conflict and Cooperation)- Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia, USA- 2013
- Fulbright Scholarship Program- 2010 to 2011

Work Experience

- Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations- Special Forces Regiment (AIRBORNE), Philippine Army- 2003
- Military Instructor- Training and Doctrine Command, Philippine Army- 2007
- Executive Assistant for Security- Office of the Chief of Staff, Armed Forces of the Philippines-2009
- Research Assistant- GPIS, Old Dominion University- Norfolk, Virginia, USA- 2011
- Division Chief- RDD, Office of the DCS for Education and Training, J8- 2012

Skills

- Conflict Resolution, Management, and Mediation
- Defense and Security Management