

## The Bangsamoro Struggle for Self-Determination: A Case Study

*A nation is reborn in the Moro. Though centuries older than the Filipino nation in the North, it is long-lost in the debris and fame of the past. It last reasserted its identity decades after the entry of America. But it was not to claim past glory, rather, it was to unshackle the gory image put on it by colonialism. Alas! This was a monumental error; for the name Moro symbolizes national identity, power and belief in one true God –S. Jubair (2004), A Nation under Endless Tyranny*

The purpose of this case study is to identify the factors and ethnic boundaries that determine the ebb and flow of the Moro struggle for self-determination. It covers four (4) major parts and issues that form the critical history of the Bangsamoro struggle and peace processes through the years:

- a) Islamization and the rise of Moro communities
- b) Muslims in the Philippines: Self-image and social image
- c) Revisiting the Moro armed struggle and the instruments of peace
- d) The on-going conflict with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)

As of this writing, there is an on-going war between the MILF and the Philippine government. MILF hostilities erupted following the issuance of a temporary restraining order against the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) by the Philippine government and the MILF on August 4, 2008. Hundred, mostly civilians, have been killed and wounded, and some 500,000 Muslims and Christian alike have been displaced by the recent attacks in Lanao and North Cotabato provinces. The unstable condition in Mindanao strengthened the Supreme Court's stance not to pursue the finalization of the MOA-AD. Various groups are calling for ceasefire and the restoration of peace.

### Islamization and Rise of Moro Communities

The plight of the Moro or Muslim Filipinos is a controversial phenomenon in Philippine history. No other Philippine ethnolinguistic group has been studied as extensively as the Moros. In 1280 AD, Islam arrived in Mindanao through Arab merchants and Islamic missionaries. It was the same period that Muslim mystics and teachers arrived in Southeast Asia (Majul, 1999). The spread of Islamic roots in Maguindanao, the ancient base of the Cotabato people, around the lake region of Lanao, and as far as the mouth of Pasig in Luzon, set in motion **three interrelated processes of Islamization (Tan, 1987).**

First is the fundamental foundation ingraining the concept of the ummah in the consciousness of the people. The *ummah* refers to the community of believers who are bound solely by spiritual ties regardless of sex, status, color or residence. This ummah consciousness placed the Muslim South in the territorial world of Islam. To a large extent, the sultanate as a system derived its historic influence from this consciousness vis-à-vis datuship or rajaship whose importance was confined to kinship and jurisdiction. However, it must be noted that **the effect of the ummah on popular consciousness and culture resulted not in the social transformation of the Muslim communities in orthodox Islamic societies. Rather, it led to the development of a folk-Islamic tradition - a blend of Islam and indigenous local ethnic traditions.** This harmonious mixture manifests not only in the socio-cultural aspect but also in the political life of the people (Tan, 1987, 2004).

Second, **the political process** was embodied in both the structure and functions of the “sultanate” which helped shape and consolidate Muslim ethnic groups. The Sulu Sultanate claimed jurisdiction over territorial areas represented today by Tawi-Tawi, Sulu, Palawan, Basilan and Zamboanga (Majul, 1999). Four ethnic groups were within this jurisdiction: Sama, Tausug, Yakan, and Subanon. The Sultanate of Maguindanao, which was the second to be established in Southern Philippines, was based in Sharif Kabungsuwan’s with the local leaders who had rules prior to the sharif’s arrival. The Lanao Sultanates, while claimed by contemporary Maranao scholarship as of ancient origins contemporaneous with Maguindanao and Sulu, were actually historical entities which can be safely assumed as datuships (Tan, 1987).

The differentiation of ethnic identities is illustrated by the divergence of the Old Sultanates. The Sulu sultanate was allied with that of the Bornean Sultan. The Cotabato-based sultanate was linked more with Sumatra in Indonesia where legend says the founding father of Islamic legacy in Maguindanao. But the process of reassertion led not to a unified systems as in Maguindanao or Sulu but a constellation of royal houses which had unreconciled claims to legitimacy and historicity (Tan, 2004). From this can be traced the *ridos* or clan wars.

Therefore with the successful Islamization of the South, the historic communities by the advent of Spanish rule had evolved into three but interrelated patterns, namely: 1) the indigenous communities or the Infieles or the pagans, 2) the Muslim community or the Moros as colonial sources referred to them, and 3) the Christian community or Indios as they are known to the Spaniards (Majul, 1999). Other cultural aspects to include politics, were hardly seen as divergent among the ethnic groups whose old beginnings could be traced to common origins. Religious differentiation provided the colonists a good strategy in dealing with the diversity of cultures as well as an easy way of restructuring the colonial society.

Third, **the social process** was characterized by the particularization of populations along larger ethnolinguistic patterns and at the same time further sub-particularization of inhabitants. The trend toward fragmentation was encouraged by the following factors: first, the geographic character of the islands induced isolation and differentiation or budding off of populations; second, the absence of unifying and controlling systems allowed the process to move undeterred. It would not be until after the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century that new external forces appeared in certain parts of the archipelago, subjecting the immediate areas to a centrifugal process toward new and larger consolidations (Tan, 2004).

*Sociological theories of ethnicity have customarily been divided between two approaches, the circumstantial, and primordial. Circumstantial theories emphasize the instrumental basis of ethnicity, particularly the role of self-interested rational action, while primordial theories emphasize identity based on affective ties. The interrelated processes that brought about the rise of the Moro communities are circumstantial and primordial. The political processes are circumstantial while the social processes are primordial. The theory also pointed out failure to the criteria that determine membership within active groups. This is demonstrated in the rise and differentiation of Moro communities.*

### **Muslims in the Philippines**

There are at least **13 ethnolinguistic groups** indigenous to Mindanao that adopted Islam as a way of life. They are called Muslims in the Philippines but not necessarily Muslim Filipinos. Historically, the term Filipino came from Spain’s Christian king – Philippe to whom they

named the Philippines for. Thus for some Moros, the term Muslim Filipino meant “Muslim Christian” which is anti-theical. The three largest and politically dominant ethnolinguistic group are **the Maguindanaon (people of the flooded plains) of the Cotabato provinces (Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, North and South Cotabato); the Maranaw (people of the lake) of the two Lanao provinces; and the Tausug (people of the current) of the Sulu archipelago. The remaining ten are the Yakan, Sama, Badjaw, Kalagan, Sangil, Iranun or Ilanun, Palawani, Melebugnon, Kalibogan and Jama Mapun.** There is also a growing number of Muslim converts so called Balik-Islam movement from various ethnolinguistic groups all over the Philippines (Majul, 1985).

The terms ‘Muslim’ and ‘Moro’ have been used interchangeably. **The former refers to a universal religious identity, while the latter denotes a political identity distinct to the Islamized peoples of Mindanao.** The Spaniards originally used the term for peoples of Mindanao who shared the religion of the Moors who had once subdued Spain. ‘Moro’ was used in the same derogatory way as the term ‘Indio’ for Filipinos whom they converted to Christianity (San Juan, 2008). However, with the self-assertive attitude expressed by the MNLF in the early 1970s, the Moro term gained positive connotations among the Muslim youth. It expressed distinctiveness as a people who had resisted foreign domination. Used together with a Malay word, Bangsa (nation) as in ‘Bangsamoro’/‘Bangsa Moro’, it indicates a nationality distinct from that of the majority Filipinos. Interestingly, both the MNLF and its rival, the MILF use the term Bangsamoro to all native inhabitants of Mindanao and Sulu, whether Muslim, Christian or Highlanders (Lumad), who accept the distinctiveness of the Moro as a separate nationality from that of the Filipinos in Luzon and Visayas.

A closer look reveals that development of the Moro identity is tied to their colonial and historical past. From the mid-16th to the end of the 19th century Spain subjected most of the archipelago to colonial rule. Arab traders had visited between the 10th and 12th centuries bringing Islam to the archipelago. The Spaniards took possession of most of Luzon and the Visayas, converting the lowland population to Christianity. But although Spain eventually established footholds in northern and eastern Mindanao and the Zamboanga peninsula, **its armies failed to colonize the rest of Mindanao. This area was populated by Islamised peoples (‘Moros’ to the Spaniards) and many non-Muslim indigenous groups now known as Lumads.** It is important to understand this lumad concept, as it is central to the current hostilities in Mindanao. ‘Lumad’ is a Cebuano Visayan term meaning native or indigenous. They are neither Muslims nor Christians. There are 18 Lumad ethnolinguistic groups: Ata, Bagobo, Banwaon, B’laan, Bukidnon, Dibabawon, Higaonon, Mamanwa, Mandaya, Manguwangan, Manobo, Mansaka, Subanon, Tagakaolo, Tasaday, T’boli, Teduray, and Ubo (San Juan, 2008).

**Lumads have a traditional concept of land ownership based on what their communities consider their ancestral territories.** The historian BR Rodil notes that ‘a territory occupied by a community is a communal private property, and community members have the right of usufruct to any piece of unoccupied land within the communal territory.’ Ancestral lands include cultivated land as well as hunting grounds, rivers, forests, uncultivated land and the mineral resources below the land. The Moro armed groups and the Communist-led New People’s Army (NPA) have recruited Lumads to their ranks, and the armed forces have also recruited them into paramilitary organizations to fight the Moros or the NPA (Vitug and Gloria, 2001).

Mindanao Muslim society was organized, socially and politically, in 'sultanates' which had evolved as segmentary states whose territories increased or decreased depending on the overall leadership abilities of their sultan. In these quasi-states, lineage and kinship combined with more elaborate organizations for production and defence. Their wealth was based on maritime trade with China and the Middle East. **The sultanates provided Mindanao Muslims with an identity as peoples distinct from the inhabitants of Luzon and the Visayas. Islam was the anchor in their defiance of any group of colonizers (San Juan, 2008).**

For centuries, Spain used the Christians of the north in battles against the Moros of Mindanao, at the same time befriending some Moro rulers in their attempts to subjugate the more defiant. These tactics sowed the seeds of animosity among the various indigenous groups. Spain failed to establish political control which caused the strategic decline of the sultanates, undermining their economic base through trade blockades and war (San Juan, 2008). The Spanish colonial government imposed land tenure arrangements in Luzon and the Visayas making local people tenants on lands their ancestral lands. Mindanao and Sulu were excluded from these systems. This later changed under the American regime. But overall, the Americans dealt with these incidents through divide-and-rule. The effective use of Filipinos and Muslims against their own kind underlined the imperialistic character of colonial policy and rule (Tan, 1987).

### **Profiles of groups and organizations involved in the Moro struggle**

*It is increasingly accepted within the social sciences that ethnic boundaries are not fixed, but contingent and socially constructed (Chai, 2005). This theory explains the Moro concept as an ethnic boundary as compared to the Christian identity of the Filipino. It used to be derogatory term used by the colonizers but later adapted by the local and it evolved as a positive term. The Moro ethnic concept is socially constructed.*

This section provides a background and critical information on the major groups and the history of their involvement in the Bangsamoro quest for self-determination:

**1) Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF):** Foremost and founded in 1969, the MNLF draws its members primarily, **though not exclusively, from the Tausug, Samal, and Yakan ethnolinguistic groups.** Note here the emphasis on the mention of ethnic groups as basis for identity and recognition. Its first members were youth recruited by the traditional Muslim leadership for military training in Malaysia. Like Nur Misuari, MNLF's chairman, these young men generally had a secular education, and some had briefly taken part in left-wing student politics. When the MNLF was founded, its objective was to create an independent Bangsamoro homeland. However, **under pressure from the Islamic states, it has accepted autonomy within the Philippine state.** MNLF leaders comprised and served in the ARMM administration (San Juan, 2008).

The majority of MNLF leaders and members have accepted the Peace Agreement and subsequently participated in peace and development efforts. This demonstrates the common desire for peace and confirms that the Moro armed struggle is a struggle for responsive governance. **Like other ethnic or national groups, the Moros simply want peace, development, participation, recognition and respect.** The Agreement offered a promise of more responsive governance, not only to Muslims, but also to Christians and Highlanders in the SZOPAD. But its implementation had a very limited impact on the region, and mainly

avored the MNLF members, their families and communities in particular. The dismal performance in relation to the primary target clients – the MNLF members – suggests a failure of Phase I as a confidence building intervention. It also implies a bleak scenario for Phase II (expanded ARMM). It later proved that the performance of this Agreement did not achieve the goal of expanding the four-province ARMM to a larger one. (Although it must be noted that Basilan opted to join ARMM by virtue of a plebiscite in 2001 (Gershman, 2001).

**2) Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF):** While the MILF was officially founded in 1984, its origins were in a group led by Central Committee member Salamat Hashim that left the MNLF shortly after the collapse of the Tripoli Agreement in 1977. At first called the New MNLF, it formally established itself in 1984 as the MILF. **The organization puts much greater emphasis on Islam than the MNLF, and most of its leaders are Islamic scholars from traditional aristocratic and religious backgrounds.** The MILF claims to have 120,000 men (six divisions) regular Islamic Armed Forces of which more than 80% are well armed; 300,000 militiamen and even more. Most members come from the Maguindanaon and Iranun ethnic groups, although Maranaw recruits seem to be increasing. Again, the emphasis on ethnic groups is mentioned herein (Gershman, 2001).

The demand of the MILF is an *Independent (sovereign) Moro Islamic State*. Accordingly, the Moroland is rich of natural resources and mines, aside from the fertility of its soil, yet quite behind in economic development because of being neglected by the Manila government. Allegedly, since the annexation of the Moroland by the Philippines, a vast amount of income was generated by the government out of the Mindanao wealth on the account of the Moros themselves. On a hardline stance they claim that “unless the would-be Moro sovereign Islamic State is established, no real economic development is expected.

**3) Abu Sayyaf ("Bearer of the Sword"):** Founded in the mid-1980s, Abu Sayyaf aims to propagate Islam through jihad. Its founder and long-time leader, Abdurajak Abubakar Janjalani, was an Islamic scholar and previously a member of the MNLF. He was killed in an encounter with the military in December 1998. Since then the group has splintered into different factions, and its activities are driven more by banditry and kidnapping than political struggle. The group's main base is on the island of Basilan, and is headed there by the founder's brother, Khadafi Janjalani. Accurate data on the group's size is difficult to find. While the U.S. State Department estimates the number of Abu Sayyaf partisans at 200, the Philippine military has since upped official estimates to more than a thousand guerrillas and 2-5,000 members, many of whom have joined recently because of its success at obtaining ransoms from a round of kidnappings in August 2000. The extent of their popular support appears to be linked to their effectiveness in obtaining large ransoms from kidnapping as opposed to representing a broad-based demand for self-determination. The Philippine military and police are widely believed to have agents operating in the Abu Sayyaf for information-gathering purposes as well as for extortion activities. Philippine military officials say the Abu Sayyaf received material and financial aid as well as training from Osama Bin Laden's al-Qaeda network until 1995, and that the two groups have maintained contact since then (Gershman, 2001).

**4) Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) –** GRP is represented by the GRP negotiating panel for the peace process for either the MILF or the CPP (in the case of communist insurgents) and coordinated by the Office of the Presidential Adviser for the Peace Process (OPAPP). Under the Peace Process framework, GRP brings in the

**International Monitoring Team consisting of countries as Malaysia, Libya and Japan.** OPAPP is under the Office of the President with an office in Manila and Mindanao.

**5) Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC):** This intergovernmental organization involving representatives from fifty-six states was founded in 1969. It has facilitated negotiations between the MNLF and the Philippine government since the 1970s and has been involved in monitoring the implementation of the 1996 peace agreement. The MNLF has been an official observer of the OIC since 1977. The MILF failed to obtain observer status in 2000. Libya, Indonesia, and Malaysia are the members of the OIC that have been most active in mediating between the Philippine government and the Moro groups (Gershman, 2001).

**6) The United States Government.** Under the Treaty of Paris, ending the Spanish-American war of 1896-98, the US paid \$20 million to Spain in return for full possession of the Philippines, including Mindanao. By this time, however, a Filipino nationalist movement had ejected the Spanish authorities from all but a small enclave around Manila. Philippine independence was proclaimed and a revolutionary government established, which soon faced the might of the imperial US. **The fledgling government sought an alliance with the Moro sultanates, who refused because of a lingering distrust towards Christians that resulted from the Spanish campaigns.** The US military exploited this unease, came to an arrangement with the sultanates and concentrated their war of 'pacification' in Luzon and the Visayas. With the new Philippine nation under control, the US went to subdue Mindanao and that has been a source of historical baggage carried on to the present times.

As a colonist, the U.S. has long been a factor in self-determination issues in the Philippines. Today, however, the involvement of the U.S. derives primarily from the U.S. military alliance with the Philippines, based on the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty and its foreign aid program. The U.S. government maintains an active interest in the Abu Sayyaf in particular, and has classified the group as an official terrorist organization. The U.S. State Department's annual Human Rights Report on the Philippines discusses human rights violations by the government, the MILF, and the Abu Sayyaf. It has also condemned problems of discrimination against Muslims.

U.S. military to the Philippines after the military bases agreement was not renewed in 1992. In lieu of this, a Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) was signed in 1999 and U.S. military assistance resumed. Military assistance in the form of Economic Support Funds increased from zero in FY2000 to an estimated \$4 million in FY2001 and \$15 million are requested for FY2002. Financing for weapons purchases increased over the same period. In late October a team of U.S. civilian and military advisers went to the Philippines to train AFP soldiers to fight the Abu Sayyaf. Under a framework to assist and advice, the US American trained Filipino soldiers--and provided equipment for counterterrorism operations in Basilan. **U.S. military assistance is further linked to concerns that Mindanao may be used as a base of operations by Islamist terrorist organizations, including those with ties to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network** (Gershman, 2001).

## ANALYSIS

*Hypothesis 1: Large-scale ethnic groups will first form in societies where majority of the population still resides in small, stable and relatively self-sufficient communities, but where modernizing structural change has proceeded to the point where many individuals will migrate from these communities to larger population centers in their lifetime.* This is

true for the Christians or the Indios of the earlier times who settled in Manila. (Currently, it is true for Muslim Filipinos who reside in small, stable and relatively self-sufficient communities in Metro Manila as Taguig and Culiat. They have their own mosques and trade places there.)

Hypothesis 2 is true for the contemporary Moros, but not so pronounced for the older communities. ***Hypothesis 2. Where such groups are formed, their boundaries will be based upon a relatively simple set of criteria that meets the following conditions: 2.1. It generates a group of sufficient size to comprise a substantial portion of the population within the population center, but not significantly more than half of the entire population.*** This is true for the Muslims in Taguig and Culiat, they comprise a substantial population enough to be called a Muslim compound or “territory”. ***2.2. It aligns with a common position in the population center’s division of labor.*** They align with the common position with the population’s center’s division of labor in the center of the population. They get jobs from the city and they make a living and somehow some Moro ethnic groups are able to set themselves apart from other marginalized groups because they are hard working traders and merchants. ***2.3 It encompasses communities of origin rather than cross-cutting them.*** This is true for the various Moro communities in the city centers, they tend to be more cohesive regardless of rather than divided by linguistic ethnicities, as compared to those located in the provinces.

In further reviewing the Bangsamoro struggle, it is an imperative to subscribe to historical specification and analysis. It is necessary to list what colonial and previous government did to deal with the Moro peace. It may be noted that similar themes and issues occurred repeatedly. Philippine historians claim that the politics of identity, multiculturalism, ‘otherness,’ and ‘difference’ must be taken into account and understood in consideration with material circumstances and political processes. All propositions for social action (or conceptions of social justice) must be critically evaluated in terms of the situatedness or positionality of the argument and the arguer” (Harvey 1996, 363). Cultural ethnic traits find their efficacious valence only within the totality of social relations of a historical region and epoch (Stankovich and Carl, 1999).

The inhabitants of the Philippine islands acquired a sense of national unity after 350 years of peasant revolts against Spain culminating in the revolution of 1896-98 (Pomeroy, 1992). Filipino nationality was forged by an alliance of classes and popular sectors (not including the Moros) that established the revolutionary Philippine Republic. The dominance of a market-centered commodifying habitus persists amidst old customs and archaic practices in the regions, with 20 major ethnolinguistic groups airing their demands for recognition and for their share of the socially produced wealth (for habitus, see Bourdieu 1993). In illustrating how the politics of “postcolonial” liberalism operates in the Philippines today, George Demko, an American geographer writes that the country is characterized by sharp class divisions refracted by multifarious markers of underdevelopment. Mestizos make up 2% of the population but garner 55% of the personal income. It is obvious that **the poverty issue is tied to land. A few landowners have acquired massive wealth, while almost three quarters of the population of 90 million live in direst poverty and this is very glaring in Bangsamoro land.**

**The nature and character of the “body politic”, through the years, have always been a crucial and decisive factor in conflict resolution.** All existing studies interpreting the Moro struggle for autonomy, secession, or national self-determination point to it. In the discourses

of factors that explain cultural pluralism, the classic emphasis by traditional scholars on geographical conditions is supplemented with the critical reference to kinship, sociopolitical institutions, and religion or belief systems (March and Stankovitch, 1999). The status quo is reified when this ethnographic scheme blurs the material inequalities manifested in group antagonisms. Among the Muslims, one study observes, “contemporary national institutions are weak and splintered; thus greater reliance is placed on mutual support groups through extended kinship ties which are fundamental and are rarely, if ever, transcended even within the framework of governmental and national organizations” (Roxas-Lim 1996, 618).

Compared to industrialized urban societies today, **the Philippines shows an extremely uneven, disintegrated polity where shifting identities and mutable affiliations thrive amid economic and political vortices of strife** (Stankovitch and Carl, 1999). But through the years, what is most striking about the peacemaking processes in Mindanao is how they reflect the complexity of the Philippines’ physical geography — an archipelago with differing concentrations of conflict and social organization, where even the history of negotiations is disjointed and diverse. Moros and indigenous Lumad peoples have always asserted for their rights to their traditional lands and to self-determination (Stankovitch and Carl, 1999).

The so-called Final Peace Agreement could not and did not end all violence in Mindanao. The MNLF was only one of several groups that had taken up arms against the Philippine government. The others included the MILF and the much smaller Abu Sayyaf and Islamic Command Council, as well as the left-wing New People’s Army. In these circumstances, an accord between the government and any single rebel group — however significant — was always vulnerable to falling short of meeting the disparate aspirations not just of the other armed Moro groups but also of those of the unrepresented civil society organizations (Stankovitch and Carl, 1999).

## CONCLUSION

The Moro has dispersed identity. It has always been dispersed and semi-nomadic –which explains why the Moro heartland expands and constricts – not a unified zone with a command center. This persists despite the conceptualization of the ummah that the Muslims are all brothers in Islam. Moro peoples are manifested in their clan wars of vengeance, are a divided or fragmented sociopolitical constituency particularly in their distinct and dispersed homelands in Mindanao (mainland), Sulu, Basilan and Tawi-Tawi.

The positive theory of ethnic boundaries, which is based upon two major planks: a coherence based model of identity formation and rational choice model of action can be applied to explain the Bangsamoro struggle. The first is important in determining the boundaries towards which identity is directed, and the second in showing how such identity affects action. The coherence model of identity is an attempt to create a general, predictive model of preference and belief formation (Chai, 2005). Both MNLF AND MILF identities were based on both identity formation and rational choice model of action. Geographical and cultural roots were mentioned and given importance in the formation of the larger organizations. According to Santanina Rasul (2008) ethnicity is mainly a function of geographic location of ethnic groups. But what unites the Moros is their religion – Islam not only with Muslim Filipinos but other Muslims in the world. It is stronger than their national or ethnic affiliation.



Overall, this case study research reveals that the Bangsamoro history can explain the Muslim Filipinos' long-drawn struggle logically. They are all tied to ethnic boundaries anchored on Islam as their religion and contingent beliefs on land ownership and labor. Ethnic boundaries are further reinforced by the heritage of their colonial past and dealings with the current body politic.

Without sounding simplistic, the gist of the Moro struggle is governed by ethnic group identity and boundaries. Islam governs the Moro way of life. That is how the peopling process and the past shaped them in the various islands of Mindanao. Colonialism and governments through the years have pushed them to landlessness and disenfranchisement but nonetheless they have maintained Islamic culture and customary laws. Allah owns the land and they still have rights to it regardless of boundaries placed. Social practice and religious beliefs have clashed and the solution proposed has always been secessionism. Government on the other hand insisted on co-existence and thus implemented limited autonomy through various peace instruments. But it was not enough, the Bangsamoro peoples wanted more because their religious beliefs dictate more. Their Moro side suits them better as the rational choice rather than their Filipino side, which is illusive to most groups. Hence, the push for genuine autonomy and recently the ancestral domain framework. Recently, GRP's hesitance to sign the MOA-AD triggered violence. In this case, perception is reality and became the basis of action.

The coherence model is tested here in both the combat and peace process situation. The expected regret over pushing for the MOA is no better than not pushing for it. Is it really a rational choice for the MILF? War by popular definition to some means wastage and regret - so how did they factor expected regret in this case? They know that the military will run after them and they will be put against the wall, as it has always been the case. They know some of them will die and their families displaced. Nonetheless, common sense tells the Moro that the peace process is really bargaining deal (a deal or no deal scenario). Because more than the ethnic issue it is the economic that is largely at stake. Somehow the MILF saw that with the GRP hesitance or refusal to sign, there was NO DEAL. When the powerless saw that the other party would like to change the rules of the game they resorted to violence, regardless of the expected regret. To them it is self-fulfillment.

Jubair (2004) recognizes wisdom - no matter how it hurts - in the statement of Atty. Patricio Diaz, former Editor of the *Mindanao Kris* and this author wishes to close with this quote:

*Apparently, the leaders and the people in the Muslim Provinces have different outlook, foresight and priorities from those of the leaders and people in Christian provinces. This difference makes a big different achievements.*

*All leaders in the Christian provinces tell their people to look forward to the year 2000 and beyond. Many Muslim leaders tell their people to look back to 1900 and farther back highlighting their lost glory, the oppressions they have suffered and are suffering, and their being a different nation. Different motivations make different achievements."*

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**Annex A. Historical overview of the Moro Struggle by Prof.Datu Amilusin A. Jumaani**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>EVENTS</b>
<b>1280</b>	Presence of Muslim traders in Southern Philippines brought about by the expansion of commercial contacts between China and Arab lands.
<b>1380</b>	Tombstone dating of a Muslim religious figure in Sulo.
<b>1450</b>	Sultanate in Sulo established.
<b>1521</b>	Advent of Christianity. Portugese Navigator, Ferdinand Magellan, lands and claims the Philippines for Spain. For more than 3 centuries, the Spanish rule prevailed over the archiepelago, particularly in Luzon and the Visayas. However, the colonialist failed to conquer Muslim areas in the South, which have been characterized as having their own system of government and practices their own politics and cultures.
<b>1619</b>	Sultanate in Maguindanao from the principalities of Maguindanao and Buwayan.
<b>1835</b>	Spanish attack on the Banuwa Bangingih in Sepak island (Jolo, Sulo). Full scale attack on the island, not even a single coconut tree left standing. There was fierce resistance.
<b>1836</b>	King of Spain & Sultan Sulo, "Treaty of Peace, Protection & Commerce"
<b>1842</b>	The Commander of American Naval Expedition concluded a "Trade & Navigation Treaty between US & Sultanate of Sulo" Trade & Navigation Treaty between US & Sulo Sultan
<b>1849</b>	The Queen of United Kingdom & Ireland -peace, friendship and good understanding
<b>12 June 1898</b>	Emilio Aguinaldo declared independence from Spain and Cavite
<b>10 December 1898</b>	Spain sells Philippine to USA for 20 million Mexican dollars after losing Spanish-American War under the terms of the Treaty of Paris. US troops begin to forcibly incorporate Muslim areas into the Philippine state. The Moros did not recognize the agreement, which clinched the American takeover. The BangsaMoro homeland over which spain could not claim to have colonial authority was included as part of the territory transfered to USA. The BangsaMoro people were never consulted. They waged a fierce resistance to defend their homeland.
<b>20 August 1899</b>	USA negotiated with the BangsaMoro people under the leadership of Sultan Jamalul II. This negotiation led to the Bates Treaty signed between the Sultan and John C. Bates. The treaty was in no certain

	terms a recognition of the US of sovereign character of the BangsaMoro state and precisely distinct from Aguinaldo Republic.
<b>1902</b>	Philippine bill of July 1 of 1902-the American government recognized the distinctions between the Moro, the "Pagan" and the Christians Filipinos and adapted their methods of governance accordingly.
<b>1903-1914</b>	USA established the Moro Province.
<b>1915</b>	American governor, Frank Carpenter, tricked and virtually forced the Sulo Sultanate to renounce his temporal sovereignty at the time US halted military campaign and policy of attraction was launched.
<b>1916</b>	Battle of Bud Dadoh Jolo, Sulo, were 1000 Moros were massacred by the Americans.
<b>1917</b>	Bureau of non-Christian tribes was organized to established "mutual understanding and complete fusion" of the Muslimns into the majority segment of Filipino Christians.
<b>9 June 1921</b>	57 Moro Datus and leaders of Sulo petitioned the American authorities in Manila and Washington, part of the petition, reads: "Whereas, it would be an act of great injustice to cast our people aside, turnover our country to the Filipinos in the north to be governed by them without our consent and thrust upon us a government not of our own people, nor by our people, nor for our own people.
<b>1926</b>	US congressman Robert Bacon introduces House Bill No. 12772 during successive sessions. The bill proposed to separate Mindanao and Sulo from the rest of the Philippines and to have US permanently retain these islands under American sovereignty
<b>18 March 1935</b>	A historic assembly of more than 100 Maranao leaders passed a strong worded manifesto known as the Dansalan Declaration addressed to the US President vehemently opposed the annexation of the BangsaMoro homeland in reaction to the conspiracy of the constitutional convention organized by America to write the Philippine constitution.
<b>1946</b>	US grants Philippine independence, but they continue to determine the economic and political direction of the fledging Republic
<b>1960s</b>	The central government in Manila enforced a "homestead" policy, which propelled the escalation of Christian migration to Mindanao region. Settlers from Luzon and Visayas occupied the ancestral land of the Moros and other indigenous people in Southern Philippines. Local and foreign big business obtained titles over the Moro lands. Enraged by the "legal" land grabbing, the Moros responded with arms, which ignited a long drawn and bitter conflict between the BangsaMoro people and the Philippine government.

<b>1961</b>	Sulu congressman Datu Ombra Amilbansa introduced house bill no. 5682 entitled "An Act Granting and Recognizing the Independent of the Province of Sulu".
<b>March 1968</b>	At least 28 Moro army recruits killed in the Jabidah Massacre on Corregidor Island, triggering widespread Muslim indignation. The incident releases pent-up anger from years of prejudice, ill treatment, and discrimination. Moro student in Manila holds a weeklong protest vigil over an empty coffin marked "Jabidah" in front of the presidential palace.
<b>1968-1971</b>	<p>Moro student activism grows. Moro consciousness, based on Islamic revivalism and knowledge of a distinct history and identity, gathers steam. Political organizations emerge to culminate eventually in the establishment of the MNLF under Nur Misuari with the goal of carving an independent muslim nation in the Southern Philippines.</p> <p>Land conflicts in Mindanao escalates. Para-military groups proliferate; some attached to Christian politicians, some to loggers, and some to Muslim politicians. Hundreds of young Moros are sent to Malaysia for military training. Sabah becomes a supply depot, communication center and sanctuary for Moro rebels.</p> <p>Towards 1971, the constabulary takes control of many towns because of growing violence. Schools are closed, farms abandoned, commerce stagnates, refugees increased. The Christian led Ilagah para-military group enters the scene. One attack at a mosque in Cotabato, leaves 65 men, women and children, dead and mutilated. A BBC radio report of the massacre draws attention of Libyan leader Muammar Khadafy.</p>
<b>21 July 1971</b>	Leaders from all sectors of Moro society published a manifesto demanding that the government take action to stop the attacks. The government calls the manifesto a threst. In August, the residence of Buldon (Cotabato) fortified their town after killing some Christian loggers. The army response with a week-long artillery bombardment.
<b>Sept.- Oct. 1971</b>	The cycle of reprisals is uncontrollable. Fighting between the Baracudas (paramilitary group led by Muslims) and government troops leaves hundreds dead on both sides.
<b>Nov. 1971</b>	40 Maranao Muslims are summarily executed at a military checkpoint in Tacub. Muslims accused the government of genocide.
<b>Jan.1972</b>	The government takes 8 Muslims ambassadors on a tour of Mindanao to show that the charges of genocide are exaggerated. The third Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) in Jeddah, KSA requests the Philippine government to protect the lives and property of Muslims.

<b>July 1972</b>	A Libyan and Egyptian delegation tours the troubled areas and concludes that while no strong evidence exists of state supported genocide, there is clearly a war between Christians and Muslims.
<b>21 Sep. 1972</b>	President Ferdinand Marcos declares martial Law. One month later the first organized Moro counter offensive is launched in Marawi. The MNLF comes out into the open and claims leadership of the Moro secessionist movement.
<b>1973</b>	<p>Marcos attempts to improve socio-economic development in the South while maintaining military operations. Presidential decrees order relief and welfare projects and resettlement refugees, declare certain Morolands as inalienable. A Presidential task force for the reconstruction and development of Mindanao is constituted to rebuild areas devastated by violence. Marcos wins over key Muslim leaders outside the MNLF. The Philippine Amanah Bank is created to expand the class of Muslim entrepreneurs. The Southern Philippine Development Administration (SPDA) is created to bolster business activity.</p> <p>The 4th ICFM (in Benghazi) maintains the pressure on Marcos, but recognizes that the problem is "internal to an independent sovereign state". Marcos responds by realigning his foreign policy and organizing diplomatic initiatives to win over the Muslim world.</p>
<b>Feb.1974</b>	SouthCom unleashes full force on MNLF rebels, who have taken control of Jolo, in the biggest battle of the war. In mainland Mindanao CemCom attacks the MNLF forces in Cotabato. Abroad, the MNLF gains official recognition from Muslim countries as the representative of the Moror people. The 5th ICFM urges the Philippine government "to find a political and peaceful solution through negotiation" and officially recognized the MNLF. The war reaches stalemate.
<b>March 1974</b>	<p>The Philippine government panel holds its first meeting with MNLF chairman Nur Misuari and his deputy Salamat Hashil in Jeddah. Marcos sends negotiating panels to MNLF commanders in the field. The MNLF undergoes fierce debates on how to respond to the Marcos initiatives. The issue is settled for the MNLF by the 5th ICFM, which supports autonomy as basis for negotiations between the MNLF and GRP. The definition of autonomy comes from the working paper of the committee of four (Senegal, Libya, Saudi Arabia and Somalia) which provides for self government within the framework of Philippine national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Marcos intensifies his diplomatic initiatives, sending delegations including special emissary, Imelda Marcos to Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Algeria. The Philippine government opens embassies in Saudi Arabia, UAE, Islamic Republic in Iran, Algeria, Lebanon and Kuwait. Relations with 13 other South Asian, Middle-Eastern and African muslim nations are strengthened. The Philippine also lobbies the Non-</p>

	aligned Foreign Ministers Meeting.
<b>1976</b>	With negotiations in full swing, Marcos builds his case. He meets the OIC Secretary General, the Senagalese Amadou Karim Gaye, in Kenya; sends a delegation to the 7th ICFM (Istanbul) and the Non-Alligned Summit (Colombo); invites the committee of four to Zamboanga City and Manila; and sends Imelda Marcos to personally confer with Khadafy. In the field, local cease fires are forged, providing space to implement a "policy of attraction" Key rebel leaders are offered amnesty, livelihood projects and business opportunities as well as political positions that allow them to surrender with "dignity". Surrenderist include Amelil Malaguiook, of the Kutawato (Cotabato) revolutionary committee, and Abdulhamid Lukman, a former municipal judge who was Misuari's legal adviser in Jeddah.
<b>23 Dec. 1976</b>	Misuari and defense undersecretary Carmelo Barbero signs the Tripoli Agreement. It provides for autonomy in 13 provinces and 9 cities in the Southern Philippines. Marcos instructs Barbero to include one last point in the text; that "the Philippine government shall take all necessary constitutional processes for the implementation of the entire agreement.
<b>Jan.-Apr. 1977</b>	A general ceasefire is arranged. Marcos approves the code of Muslim personal laws, which establishes Shari'ah courts as part of the national system of courts. Talks resume in February to hammer out details of implementing the Tripoli Agreement. A deadlock arises when the MNLF insists that the 13 provinces be immediately declared a single autonomous unit. Marcos maintains that certain constitutional procedures, including a plebiscite are needed because the majority of the people in the 13 provinces are not Muslims. Imelda Marcos hurries to Libya on 12 March to solicit Khadafy's help. He suggests forming a provisional government to supervise the plebiscite. Misuari refuses to head the provisional government. On 25 March, Marcos issues proclamation 1628 declaring autonomy in the 13 provinces. On 17 April, a plebiscite is called over objections from the MNLF. Only 10 of the 13 provinces vote for autonomy. Marcos implements his own version of autonomy by dividing the 10 provinces into two autonomous regions—regions IX and XII. Negotiations breakdown.
<b>May-Dec. 1977</b>	The 8th ICFM (in Tripoli) allows Misuari, for the first time, to address the conference. Ministers express disappointment over the outcome of negotiations. By this time, however, the improved image of the Philippines is working in its favor and the ICFM simply recommends that negotiations continue. This shakes the MNLF leadership, and the split emerges. In Jeddah on 26 Dec., Salamat Hashim announces an "instrument of takeover" of the MNLF leadership, a move supported by traditional leaders Rashid Lucman, Dumacao Alonto and Salipada Pendatun. Misuari counters by expelling Hashim Salamat and charging

	<p>him with treason. Arabs supporters are equally divided: Egypt supports Salamat while Libya leans towards Misuari. Mediation by the OIC and Muslim World League fails. Not wishing to be used by the traditional politicians, Hashim transfers to Cairo and goes on to form the "new MNLF", eventually the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Lucman and Pendatun reinvigorate the BangsaMoro Liberation organization to gain support, but Arab states ignore them.</p>
<b>1978</b>	<p>Negotiations between GRP and the MNLF resume but the Philippine panel chooses to meet Hashim Salamat rather than Misuari. Meanwhile the Marcos government presents a report to the OIC on the functioning of the new autonomous regional government.</p>
<b>17-29 April 1978</b>	<p>The 19th ICFM meets in Dakar, Senegal and Misuari is recognized as the chairman and spokesman for the MNLF. Hashim cannot present because Egyptian authorities, not wishing to antagonize Libya further, prevent him from leaving Cairo. MNLF members in the field conduct kidnappings and ambushes. In Patikul, Sulo a local MNLF leader invites the AFP to a peace dialogue. When they arrived, Gen. Teodoro Bautista and 33 soldiers are shot dead. Government policy turns increasingly violent.</p>
<b>1979</b>	<p>Misuari reverts to his former goal of secession and renews efforts to convince Islamic States but to no avail. Meanwhile the Philippine panel continues negotiations with Hashim's faction in Cairo. Surrendered MNLF founder Abul Khayr Alonto joins the government panel. The 10th ICFM in Morocco affirms support for the Tripoli Agreement. Diplomatic initiatives focus on ensuring that the agreement is actually being implemented.</p>
<b>1980</b>	<p>Pocket wars and skirmishes continue. In March, Malaysia and Indonesia offer to serve as "honest brokers" arguing that the problem has regional implications that could be resolved by ASEAN. The Philippine government takes newly installed OIC secretary general Habib Chatti of Tunisia on a tour around Mindanao to meet Muslims and the new Regional Legislative Assemblies. The 11th ICFM in Islamabad requests Philippine government to implement the Tripoli Agreement.</p>
<b>1981</b>	<p>Misuari fails to convince a summit conference of heads of states in Taif, Saudi Arabia to support secession. He fails likewise to convince the 12th ICFM in Baghdad, which resolves to "make new contact with the GRP for the implementation of the Tripoli Agreement in text and spirit." Marcos "lifts" Martial Law but keeps his dictatorial powers in a bid to win further legitimacy for his regime. In May, opposition leader Benigno Aquino released from prison and allowed to go into exile in the US, visits Misuari in Jeddah and promises to support the Tripoli Agreement. MNLF forces kill 120 government soldiers in Pata island, off Jolo. In retaliation, more than 15,000 troops are sent to the island in</p>



	a massive operation that infuriates Muslim government officials.
<b>1982</b>	Marcos consolidates the Philippine diplomatic position. He visits Saudi Arabia King Khaled and OIC's Habib Chatti. The 13th ICFM calls on government "to speed the implementation" of the agreement. It also appeals to the MNLF to prepare for new talks "as a united front". The newly established Moro Revolutionary Organization, a member of the communist-led National Democratic Front (NDF) calls for a "people's war as the main form of the Moro people's revolutionary struggle". Efforts to link communist and Moro insurgencies fail, but local forces cooperate on the ground.
<b>1983</b>	The 14th ICFM in Dhaka calls on Moros to unite prior to new negotiations that will put the Tripoli Agreement into effect. MNLF military activities begin to wane but the New People's Army (NPA, armed group of the NDF) offensives in Mindanao keep the AFP engaged. Benigno Aquino returns from exile and is assassinated on arrival at the Manila Airport. Popular challenge to Marcos regime intensifies throughout the country.
<b>1984</b>	Marcos wins new battles on the diplomatic front. He sends emissaries to the 4th Islamic Summit in Casablanca and to the World Muslim congress in Karachi. In February, he holds bilateral meetings with the Presidents of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan and Singapore. The 15th ICFM reaffirms its commitment to respect the territorial integrity of the Philippines and again calls on the MNLF to close ranks. In March, Hashim's "new MNLF" officially declares itself a separate organization with the name Moro Islamic liberation Front (MILF), with a religious as well as nationalist agenda. The NPA gains in strength and starts to launch larger attacks. Mass demonstrations become spontaneous and the first nationally coordinated <i>Welgang Bayan</i> (People's Strike) shows the depth of popular opposition to Marcos.
<b>1985</b>	Armed attacks by the NPA intensify along with legal, popular opposition to the regime. Marcos schedules a snap presidential election to defuse widespread tension. The legal opposition unites Corazon Aquino, Benigno's widow, as the anti-Marcos candidate. The NDF boycotts the exercise calling the election a "sham".
<b>1986</b>	Snap elections are held, with Marcos proclaimed as winner. Days later, he is ousted after a failed coup sends millions of people to main thoroughfare, known as "EDSA" to protect mutineers from counter attack. The Marcos family is flown to Hawaii by the US government. Corazon Aquino takes her oath as President and establishes a revolutionary government. She appoints a commission to draft a new constitution, which includes provisions for autonomy in Muslim Mindanao and the Cordillera Region of Luzon.

	<p>In March, the MILF sends a message of its readiness to discuss peace with Aquino. In August, OIC and Muslim World League mediation, the MILF and MNLF agree in principle to negotiate jointly in an expanded panel. But on Sept.5 Aquino visits the MNLF camp in Sulo, to talk peace with Misuari. Misuari seizes the initiative and gains recognition for the MNLF from the government as its negotiating partner. The MILF displays political strength through a militant consultative assembly in October, but fails to elicit government response.</p>
<b>1987</b>	<p>GRP and MNLF panels meet in January in Jeddah and agree to discuss autonomy, "subject to democratic processes" Aquino turns down MNLF requests to suspend autonomy provisions in draft constitution, which ratified in February. The MILF launches a 5-day offensive to assert its presence. This prompts a meeting with GRP panel Chair Aquilino Pimentel, who requests a temporary cease-fire. Talks between GRP and MNLF breakdown as the government unilaterally implements the autonomy mandate in the newly approve constitution over MNLF objections. A Mindanao Regional Consultative Commission (RCC) is organized, and a new autonomy bill is submitted to congress. Both MNLF and MILF bitterly denounce the government's moves.</p>
<b>1988</b>	<p>Aquino meets with the RCC, and starts diplomatic initiatives by briefing Islamic diplomats in Manila about the government's peace program, emphasizing the Tripoli Agreement is being implemented within constitutional processes. Draft autonomy bills are submitted to both House of Congress.</p>
<b>1989</b>	<p>Congress passes Republic Act 6734, which creates the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and Aquino signs into law on 1 August. A plebisite is held on 19 November and the MNLF and MILF call for a boycott of exercise. Only 4 provinces-Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulo and Tawi-Tawi opt for autonomy, because of opposition from MNLF and MILF and Christian residents.</p>
<b>1990</b>	<p>Regional election are held in ARMM. A regional governor and regional assembly assume positions. Aquino signs executive orders that define central government relations with ARMM, which is officially inaugurated on 6 November.</p>
<b>1991</b>	<p>The 20th ICFM in Istanbul calls for a resumption of negotiations between GRP and MNLF.</p>
<b>February 1992</b>	<p>Fidel Ramos candidate in the forthcoming Presidential elections, meets Khadaffy in Tripoli to discuss and comprehensive and permanent solution to the war in Mindanao. In May, he is elected President and immediately issues a call for peace. He appoints a National Unification Commission (NUC) in July to formulate an amnesty program and a</p>

	negotiation process, based on public consultations. The first round of exploratory talks with MNLF is held in October in Tripoli. The NUC stars a consultation process, including a meeting with the MILF.
<b>1993</b>	Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas hosts a second round of exploratory talks. The NUC submits its consolidated recommendations in July, prompting Ramos to issue Executive Order 125 defining the approach and administrative structure for government peace efforts. The Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) is created to continue the work begun by the NUC. Formal talks between GRP and the MNLF begin in October in Jakarta. An Interim Ceasefire is signed, along with the memorandum creating support committees to discuss substantive concerns. Alatas reports the progress of negotiations to the 21st ICFM in Karachi. The MILF poses no objections to the talks. The OIC visits Sulo in December.
<b>1995</b>	Support committees meet to discuss defense and regional and security forces, education; economic and financial systems, mines and minerals; the functioning of the Legislative Assembly, Executive Council and representation in the national government and administrative system; Shari'ah courts. On 4 April, armed men believed to be members of a new Moro rebel group, Abu Sayyaf, raid the town of Ipil (Zamboanga del Sur) killing 50 people and causing millions of pesos worth of damage in looting and burning. Both GRP and MNLF issue separate statements calling for a greater commitment to peace. The government sponsors a series of Mindanao Peace and Development Summits in key cities from May to November. The GRP panel briefs Libya on the progress of the talks in October. At the end of the year, the third round of formal talks resumes in Jakarta. An Interim Agreement is signed, containing 81 points of consensus. Predominantly Christian opponents throughout Mindanao denounce this agreement. Political opposition increases. Vigilantes vow to attack if the agreement is finalized.
<b>Jan.-June 1996</b>	The government rushes to nullify politicians opposing the Interim Agreement. Consultations are held every month with local officials and members of the Congress, with Ramos himself participating in some consultations. The government organizes public meetings in Mindanao to promote the Interim Agreement. In June, Indonesia calls a consultation of the OIC committee of six. A meeting of the GRP-MNLF Mixed Committee results in Agreement to establish the Southern Philippines Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD).
<b>July-Aug 1996</b>	Members of Congress express opposition to the Interim Agreement. The Senate organizes public hearings and calls on the executive to justify its actions and commitments. The Senate agrees to support the agreement, but only with 9 substantial amendments, which dilute the powers and autonomy of institutions to be set up under the agreement. Six senators continue their opposition, and lead a group of politicians

	<p>who file a 54-page petition asking the Supreme court to nullify the agreement. Catholic Bishops express support for the agreement, subject to refinements in the text. Misuari announces his bill for the ARMM governorship. The 9th Mixed Committee meeting and 4th round of formal talks take place in Jakarta. Exploratory talks with the MILF begin.</p>
<b>Sept-Dec 1996</b>	<p>The Final Peace Agreement is signed on 2 September. The MILF distances itself from the agreement, but commits not to stand in the way of peace. In the ARMM elections, Misuari runs for governor and wins, and six MNLF leaders are elected to the Regional Legislative Assembly. Ramos issues Executive Order 371, which departs from agreement on some significant points. The government forms a new negotiating panel for talks with MILF in October. The MILF, in a display of strength, holds a huge assembly near Cotabato City from 3-5 December and reaffirms commitment to independence.</p>
<b>1997</b>	<p>GRP and MILF representatives meet and issue a joint press statement. Heavy fighting in Buldon (Cotabato) leaves more than a hundred dead and mars talks. Another meeting in early February is suspended because of renewed fighting. The committees meet again in March and agree to form an Interim Ceasefire Monitoring Committee, with Fr. Eliseo Mercado (NDU president in Cotabato) as chair. Meetings take place in April, May and June but are bogged down by continued fighting. The AFP launches its biggest offensive in June. By July, an agreement on cessation of hostilities is forged. Further meetings between the two sides follow.</p>
<b>August 1998</b>	<p>Organization of SADEM (Sulo Archipelago Decolonization Movement) for restoration of independence of Sulo Archipelago through the United Nations. Hadji Limpasan is chairman of SADEM central committee.</p>
<b>1998</b>	<p>A new President, Joseph Ejercito Estrada, He has an electoral alliance with politicians who opposed the Peace Agreement. Anti-agreement politicians do well in the local elections. MNLF leaders, save for one, lose their bids for local positions. Ten congressional representatives draft a bill to amend the Organic Act on ARMM in accordance with the peace agreement's provisions. A new government negotiating panel is constituted to talks to the MILF. In December 1998, Abu Sayyaf founder Abdurajak Janjalani dies in clash with police.</p>
<b>1999</b>	<p>New outbreaks of fighting between MILF and AFP followed by re-establishment of ceasefire. Government recognizes two MILF camps. ARMM elections are due in September. Three bills have been filed in Congress to amend the Organic Act on the ARMM, expanding it in accordance with the 1996 Peace Agreement. A plebisite on the new autonomous region is due by end of the year, but may be deferred.</p>

<b>20 March 2000</b>	Abu Sayyaf snatches 50 people from schools in Basilan province including many school children, teachers and Catholic priests.
<b>23 April</b>	Abu Sayyaf kidnaps 21 people, including 10 foreign tourists from a Malaysian resort and takes them to the Philippine Island of Jolo.
<b>30 April</b>	MILF walks out of peace talks with the government after the Army attacks rebels holding a highway near their headquarters in Maguindanao province.
<b>9 July</b>	The AFP declared it captured the MILF camp Abubakar in Matanog Maguindanao following at least one week of air and ground assaults.
<b>16 September</b>	Military assaults on Abu Sayyaf in Jolo. Four thousand soldiers were deployed.
<b>16 Oct</b>	OIC mission team from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Somalia, Senegal and Brunei - to look into the implementation of the 1996 Peace Accord between GRP and MNLF.
<b>8 August 2008</b>	Supreme Court gave a restraining order the the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain that triggered MILF hostilities in Lanao del Norte.

## **Annex B. ISSUES AND CONCERNS:**

### **1) Marginalization and the rise of private armies**

**Post-war independent Philippines** provided the local elite, including some Moros, with the opportunity to participate fully in the politics of self-rule. But for most Moros, the creation of a nation-state dominated by Christian Filipinos simply reinforced their marginalized and minority status. The establishment of a Philippine nation-state led to the birth of a national identity based on the values of the majority group, the Christian Filipinos. Whether through gentle persuasion or outright coercion through nation building, these ideals allegedly undermined the identity of certain population groups, relegating them to the political and economic periphery (until the 1970s the Philippine Constitution and jurisprudence completely ignored Muslim personal law). Integration policies enforced by **post-independence governments encouraged the landless poor of Luzon and the Visayas to**

**settle in Mindanao in order to defuse rural unrest. Thousands of settlers arrived every week until the 1960s, and competition for land, aggravated the clash of Moros and Christians. Concepts of land tenure and ownership, fuelled social tensions.** The government was alarmed with the ‘violent’ character of the Moros, and thus launched **pacification campaigns against defiant Moro leaders.** The Moros, however, felt they were asserting their right to self-determination as sovereign people under the sultanates. The struggle is fanned by their Islamic beliefs and traditions of land ownership.

The creation of private armies by both native and settler elites further increased the tensions in Mindanao. The predominantly Ilonggo (from Iloilo, in the Visayas) migrants in the province of Cotabato organized a private army called the Ilaga (Visayan for rat). To counter the terror of Ilaga attacks on Muslim civilians, members of the Moro elite organized their own heavily armed groups — the Blackshirts in Cotabato, and the Barracudas in Lanao — who responded in kind.

As a result of the influx of immigrants, the late 1960s had reduced Muslims to around 25% of Mindanao’s population, from about 75% at the turn of the century. The most productive agricultural lands had been taken over by settlers growing rice, corn and coconuts, or transnational corporations producing rubber, bananas and pineapples. Wealthy loggers grabbed giant concessions and started to deforest the island. While Mindanao contributed substantially to the national treasury, little was sent back in the form of public infrastructure and social services, especially in the Muslim areas. Soon Moro leaders could no longer mediate and Moro defiance turned into open rebellion and later on an organized secessionist movement (Majul, 1999).

## **2. Critical colonial laws and policies vis-à-vis land disputes**

**Customary law — *adat* among the Moros — is based on the notion that there can be no absolute ownership of land. Islamic principles hold that land and all creation belong to God and that human beings are trustees or stewards of God’s creation. Thus among Moros land-holding was based on the right to the produce of the land.**

The US colonial government passed several land laws which became the legal prop for dispossession of Moros and indigenous groups all over the Philippines. These laws provided for registration of land ownership through land titles and set limits on hectarage that individuals and corporations could acquire. Unregistered land automatically became open for exploration, occupation and purchase by citizens of the Philippines and the United States (Majul, 1999).

At first, very few Moros were sufficiently literate in English to understand the bureaucratic intricacies of land registration. Many refused or did not bother to register the lands they had been cultivating. However, several Moro rulers took advantage of the new law to register large territories in their own names. They became the ancestors of today’s Moro landed elite. The US authorities recognized land titles issued by the Spanish colonial regime for the lowlands of Luzon and the Visayas. In Mindanao, vast tracts of arable land occupied by Moros and Lumads were sold or leased to settlers and plantation companies.

Between 1913 and 1917 seven agricultural colonies were opened by the colonial government, where Christian settlers were mixed with the indigenous Muslims purportedly to promote ‘good working relations’ between the two groups. Government’s aim was to defuse peasant

unrest in Luzon and remove troublemakers from northern and central Philippines. Christian migrants were entitled to larger tracts of land: 16 hectares compared to the native inhabitants' ten (later reduced to eight). Moreover, a predominantly Christian Philippine Constabulary was used to quell any Moro dissent. Almost all titles granted under the Land Registration Act of 1902 were for large private holdings. By 1912 there were 159 major plantations (100 hectares or more) in Mindanao, 66 of them owned by Americans, 39 by Filipinos (mostly Christians), 27 by Europeans, and 27 by Chinese. **The Moros and Lumads became impoverished squatters on their own land.**

### **3) Revisiting the Moro armed struggle and instruments of peace**

Clearly, Moro resistance and assertion of self-determination were already widely established during/after colonial times in the early 1970s a revolutionary movement they formalize—the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). It emerged in the wake of a resurgence of Islamic identity and hardened by feelings of oppression under a Christian-dominated body politic. It was further exacerbated by a series of incidents that convinced many Muslim intellectuals and politicians that armed struggle was the only way to redress Muslim grievances. **Foremost of these incidents was the Jabidah massacre on 17 March 1968, when at least 28 young Muslim recruits to the Philippine Army were killed by their Christian superiors** on the island of Corregidor, off Luzon. Reports leaked out that the government was training these recruits to infiltrate the Malaysian state of Sabah (North Borneo) as a prelude to military invasion. But more than that, this was the origin of the notion of Muslim genocide. That the Philippine government is out to annihilate the Moros (Rasul, 2008).

Investigations failed to establish the truth and several versions of the story were told. Most Muslims believe that when the recruits learned that they were to fight against fellow Muslims in Sabah, they rebelled. Government officials denied the plan to use the recruits to invade Sabah and said they rebelled because of inadequate pay. **Whichever is the truth, the incident provoked all Muslim groups in the Philippines to cooperate, jumpstarting the creation of the MNLF (San Juan, Rasul 2008).**

Prior to the founding of the MNLF (May 1968), Datu Udtog Matalam, a prominent Maguindanaon political leader, formed the Mindanao Independence Movement (MIM). Matalam attributed the separatist goals of his movement to the Jabidah incident. The MIM's youth section was sent to train in Malaysia, and soon after some of the trainees organized the MNLF. Their leader was Nur Misuari, formerly a political science lecturer at the University of the Philippines in Manila, who returned to Mindanao after Jabidah (Moxir 2008).

Meanwhile, in Mindanao, the Ilaga and similar paramilitary groups launched attacks on Muslims in places where the number of northern Filipino migrants was growing and the Muslim population decreasing. Their aim was to evict all remaining Muslims. There are indications that these squads were supported and coordinated by the Philippine Constabulary. Their attacks were systematic, methodical and widespread. Estimates put their membership at about 35,000 by 1975. Some sources suggest that aside from Philippine military support, these groups enjoyed the financial sponsorship of timber merchants who sought the rich forests of the Moros and indigenous groups for logging.

On 21 October 1972, a month after Marcos declared Martial Law in **the Philippines, Maranaw Muslims staged a violent uprising in Marawi City.** By this time, the conflict in

Mindanao was approaching full-scale civil war, with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and its various paramilitary units conducting military campaigns against the Moros. In 1973, the newly formed military arm of the MNLF, the Bangsa Moro Army (BMA), openly emerged. The MNLF became the rallying symbol of the Moro struggle for self-determination, which aimed to defend the homeland and Islam as the way of life of its peoples. **The MNLF made it clear that their target was the Philippine government, rather than the Christian population, and by 1975 they had become a popular revolutionary movement, enjoying almost universal support from Muslims in the Philippines and abroad (Moxir, 2008).**

The armed conflict was brutal and costly: around 120,000 people were killed, more than one million were made homeless and over 200,000 Muslim refugees fled to Sabah. During the mid-1970s about 80% of the AFP's combat strength was concentrated in Mindanao and Sulu. According to the late president Ferdinand Marcos, 11,000 Philippine soldiers were killed in the first eight years of the war (1972-80). The war peaked in February 1974 in a fierce two-day encounter in the town of Jolo. The AFP shelled the town from the sea, then set it ablaze. Estimates of the numbers killed vary from 500 to 2,000, and 60,000 people were made homeless. Elsewhere, major military offensives were directed at Muslim settlements in Maguindanaon territory, while the Ilaga continued its attacks on Muslim civilians. The war dragged on and the death toll increased. **The past 27 years demonstrate the inefficacy of a military approach which defines the armed struggle as the problem, rather than the conditions that brought it into existence. The government's use of military might has only sustained and intensified the armed struggle.** To entice the Moro mujahideen (fighters) and their sympathizers to return to the fold, government offered amnesty to the rank and file, official posts to their leaders, and funds for livelihood projects. Grandiose development programmes for Muslim Mindanao were announced. In 1975, the Marcos government recognized that the conflict had reached a political and military stalemate. Moreover, oil-producing Muslim countries threatened an embargo. **Marcos called for a ceasefire and opened the door to negotiations (Rasul, 2008).**

**Marcos first organized panels to negotiate with the MNLF leadership in Jeddah and rebel commanders in the field.** This was a direct response to calls from the organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) for a peaceful solution to a conflict it had recognized as internal to the Philippines. Simultaneously, Marcos realigned his foreign policy to win over the Islamic world: recognizing the Palestine Liberation organization, opening embassies in seven Muslim countries including Saudi Arabia, and upgrading relations with 13 others. The first lady, Imelda Marcos, was sent to the Middle East as a special emissary. She laid the groundwork for social and cultural exchange with Egypt, sought the Algerian president's advice on resolving the 'Moro problem', and consolidated other high level diplomatic contacts. Eventually, she met Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, who played host to negotiations that culminated in the signing of the Tripoli Agreement in 1976. The diplomatic offensive paid off. Under pressure from the OIC, the MNLF dropped its demands for independence and acquiesced to political autonomy (Moxir, 2008).

#### **a) The Tripoli Agreement**

**The Tripoli Agreement provided for the grant of autonomy to 13 of the 23 provinces in Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan islands, and the cities located therein.** The autonomous regional government would have its own executive, legislative and judicial branches, and a regional security force independent of the AFP. **However, the agreement left out many**



**significant issues and implementation became bogged down in interpretation.** In particular, the MNLF viewed the territorial coverage — 13 provinces — as a settled issue, while the government insisted on subjecting it to a plebiscite. Several months after signing the agreement, Marcos implemented his own version of autonomy by establishing two separate regional governments which, as Senator Santanina Rasul later referred to as regional but not autonomous. Note that the government committed to one thing and went to implement another thing and thus hostilities resumed, with the MNLF accusing the Philippine government of insincerity in the peace negotiations. Some MNLF leaders argued that the agreement's primary objectives were to halt the MNLF's military successes, to gain time to factionalize MILF leadership and strengthen the AFP, and to pre-empt an oil embargo by OIC member countries disappointed with the failure to implement the agreement (Rasul, 2008). **The government claimed that it was merely applying constitutional processes in order to implement the agreement. [Note that history repeated itself in the 2008 conflict with the GRP using the Supreme Court.]**

**Later on the resumption of hostilities was accompanied by fragmentation of the previously united MNLF. Breakaway factions emerged: the MNLF-Reformist Group under Dimas Pundato, and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) under Hashim Salamat.** Government capitalized on the demoralization of MNLF members by offering amnesties and other forms of co-optation. Marcos welcomed surrendering MNLF leaders to Manila like visiting dignitaries. Lumber concessions, barter market licenses, and export-import permits worth millions of pesos were given to those rebel commanders accepting amnesty, in addition to livelihood assistance projects and political positions in the new autonomous regional governments. **MNLF organizational cohesion dissipated in a way that military force alone could not have done. The colonial tactic of divide-and-rule was applied and it proved effective for dissident sectors.** Because the root causes of the armed struggle (economic, political and cultural marginalization) were not addressed, hostilities continued throughout the late 1970s and the early 1980s (Rasul, 2008).

#### **b) The Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao under the Aquino government**

The February 1986 People Power Revolution, ended the authoritarian Marcos era and provided an opening for peace in the entire country, especially in Mindanao. Corazon Aquino's new government launched initiatives designed to bring peace and development and to democratise governance. It started talks with the left-wing National Democratic Front (NDF), whose New People's Army (NPA) had grown during the Marcos regime from a small group in Central Luzon to a guerrilla movement operating all over the country (see Profiles). To show her concern for peace in Mindanao, Aquino broke protocol and went to Jolo to meet MNLF Chairman Nur Misuari (Moxir, 2008).

Aquino appointed a 50-member commission to draft a new constitution. The body, which had token Muslim representation, drew up provisions for the establishment of autonomous regional governments for Muslim Mindanao in the South and the Cordilleras in the North. A new Congress was elected in 1987 and passed an Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), that was subjected to a plebiscite on 19 November 1989. Only four provinces — Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi — voted for inclusion in this new autonomous structure. **The Aquino Administration viewed this legislation as its blueprint for peace in Mindanao and considered it to be in compliance with the spirit of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement.** The MNLF rejected it — not only had the front been excluded from the process of drawing up the autonomy law. The autonomous region also meager

power and the plebiscite had reduced its territorial coverage from 13 provinces to four (Majul, 1999).

**While these initiatives were an improvement on the past, they were an inadequate response to the conditions that caused the Moro armed struggle. The new autonomy law did not give the Moros the means to redress the suffering and insecurities arising from relative and absolute poverty and political subordination.** The government of the area of autonomy had very little financial independence, and there was no provision to enable Muslims to overcome the effects of past deprivation. **Like the Marcos-inspired autonomous structures, the ARMM failed as a policy response.** It came to mean concessions for rebellious Muslims, not processes for democratic participation for the benefit of all. The ARMM became another bureaucratic layer providing little except position and privilege for self-interested Muslim politicians.

### **c) The MNLF Accord: Peace process under the Ramos Government**

In 1992, the Moros welcomed Fidel Ramos's presidency, who made peace with the different rebel groups — military, communist and Moro — into the cornerstone of his administration's policy. Mindanao was a primary component in Ramos's overall development vision, and he was determined to forge a comprehensive and enduring settlement, starting with the MNLF. The Ramos Administration made progress on key dimensions of the Mindanao conflict. It returned to the 1976 Tripoli Agreement as a framework, an indispensable move in ensuring the acceptance of the resulting agreement, not only by the Moro mujahideen and civilians, but also by OIC member states. This move was seen to ensure the support (especially financial) of OIC states for post-war reconstruction. After four years of tortuous negotiations, the Final Peace Agreement was signed in 1996 (Majul, 1999, Moxir, 2008).

Implementation of the Agreement was set in two phases. The first phase was a three-year transition period of confidence building that included Nur Misuari running for the ARMM governorship. This was intended to make him 'official' with a clear mandate from a recognized constituency. The second phase was explicitly designed to meet Moro aspirations by providing for substantial autonomy. Transitional institutions set up under Phase I covered the area defined in the Tripoli Agreement (the 13 provinces had become 14, owing to a redrawing of local government boundaries in 1992). Phase II would go into operation after a plebiscite to determine which areas would join a new autonomous region with greater powers than the ARMM.

The Final Peace Agreement had a mixed reception despite its presidential backing. Christian settlers in the areas affected were particularly suspicious and feared the rise of Moro authoritarianism. Ramos assured them that 'there were no hidden motives, no secret agenda, no backroom deals'. Every decision, he maintained, 'redresses valid grievances in a manner consistent with our Constitution and our laws'. But even within the auspices of the Final Peace Agreement, many key issues remained untouched: representation and rights of Lumads and Christians in a Muslim-led autonomous region, the balance between religion and secularism, reparations, economic redistribution, conflicting land claims, affirmative action policies, and the redefinition of relations with Manila. Nonetheless, the Agreement signed in 1996 represents not so much an end to the process — peace and development for the long troubled Mindanao — but as a means to that end. **As pointed out by a mediating foreign official in the final round of the peace talks in Jakarta, Indonesia in 1996, 'securing a peace agreement is one thing. Making the agreement work is another'.**

The Ramos administration is considered most successful of all (Rasul, 2008). It deliberately chose to negotiate with the Moro armed organizations separately and to start with what many had seen as militarily the weaker group. The MNLF was also the government's choice of negotiating partner because of its status locally and abroad as an organization which embodied Moro aspirations. **It had blazed the trail by uniting various Muslim ethnic groups into an armed movement with clearly defined goals.** The OIC formally recognized it as the representing the Muslims of the Philippines. By aiming for a settlement with the MNLF, the administration hoped to demonstrate to the Moro public and the OIC that their demands were being addressed (Carl and Stankovitch, 1999).

The government clearly expected that the 1996 Agreement would help bring the other insurgent groups — particularly the MILF — into the constitutional fold. For the AFP, it re-defined the military possibilities. To insurgent groups and their supporters, the Agreement would serve as an indicator of how serious the government was about finding a mutually acceptable settlement and abiding by it. The government hoped that the agreement would show how popular aspirations for social justice and self-determination could be met by peaceful political struggle — without resorting to a war for secession. But like all peace processes, the government-MNLF process was creative in its design and implementation as it was a crucial step in a what is clearly seen as a long process of constructing peace in Mindanao. In March 1999, the outlook for a successful transition turned to disappointment under the administration of President Joseph Estrada who took a more aggressive stance to rebel groups. Estrada is well remembered for his all-out war against the MILF in 2000. It ended with a peace process brokered by the Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, which ousted the Estrada government in January 2001.