

# Muslim Rebellion in Southern Philippines Revisited

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## Introduction


**L**ike other pluralistic societies<sup>1</sup> in Southeast Asia, the Philippines has been beset with the problem of how to forge unity and cooperation among its various ethnic elements. Its biggest problem in this regard is the Muslim rebellion in Southern Philippines. Since the 1960s, the Filipino Muslims have been demanding for independence (Baradas, 1972; Gowing, 1973). Many times they have taken up arms against the Philippine government to demonstrate their desire for self-determination. The problem became complicated with the intervention of Islamic countries which expressed concern over the plight of the Muslims in the country.

The Muslim rebellion in Southern Philippines is a major crisis which threatens to tear the country apart. Although the fighting in Mindanao and Sulu has in recent years receded to isolated skirmishes, it has left at least 100,000 killed, most of them civilians, nearly 1,000,000 homeless, and properties worth millions destroyed over the years. The Red Cross has reported that about 500,000 refugees are stranded in Sabah. In this paper, we shall examine why the problem exists and why measures undertaken to resolve it remain ineffective. Essentially, the paper is an attempt at a systematization and synthesis of existing materials on the Muslim rebellion in the country using a particular theoretical perspective.

## Fundamental Variables

The Muslim unrest in Mindanao has many ingredients and ramifications. But essentially it can be viewed as a reaction of the Muslims to their minority<sup>2</sup> status in the Philippine society, particularly to the increasing domination of the Christian majority in their community life. As Majul (1973) puts it, the problem is "the struggle of the Muslims for survival as a Muslim community." Likewise, Nur Misuari (1972), founder of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and first chairman of the MNLF Central Committee, defines the problem as the Muslims' struggle for the preservation of freedom, homeland, and Islam. Abulkayr Alonto, former Vice Mayor

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of Marawi City and once first Vice Chairman of the MNLF Central Committee, also views the problem as a "struggle for autonomy where the Muslims can live as Muslims, governing and protecting themselves and being respected as Muslims."

The fundamental variables which undergird the escalation of social conflict in Mindanao are differential power and ethnicity. As pointed out by Blalock (1967), Shibutani and Kwan (1977), Wilson (1973) and Blackwell (1975), unequal distribution of powers is a critical dimension of intergroup relations.<sup>3</sup> In particular, the majority groups possess superior power in contrast to the relative powerlessness of minority groups. That power is manifested in the majority group's control over the decision-making processes of society as a whole, and to some extent in the decision-making process within subgroups, particularly as they relate to structural conditions within the larger society. It is also manifested in the ability of the majority group to establish the legitimacy of its normative structure as the model governing acceptable behavior. The majority group's culture becomes imperial while that of the minority group is perceived as weak, inferior, primitive, deprived, or non-existent. Moreover, the majority groups tend to maximize their power, institutionalize and legitimize it to such a degree that they "actualize their claim" to a larger share of the scarce values and highly prized resources of the society.

In connection with differential power and ethnicity, what frequently lead minority groups to resort to aggression or to aspire for secession are the feelings that they are internally colonized by the majority group; the belief that they are disadvantaged in matters of political and economic relations; the existence of conflicts stemming from competition for scarce resources as well as from competition for civil, military, and political positions in the local and national levels; tension arising when the dominant group believes in its cultural superiority and legitimizes its power to dominate other groups on the above belief and the assertion by the minority groups of their historical achievements and cultural values as a reaction to the belief of the dominant group that it is culturally superior (Neuwirth, 1973). A look into the Philippine ethnic situations will help situate the Muslim rebellion in Mindanao.

### Philippine Ethnic Situations

Ethnic divisions in the Philippines are highly complex. Occasionally, the characteristics that distinguish one ethnic group from another are primarily racial as in the case of the overseas Chinese. But more often the distinctions are more subtle. They may include differences in language, religion, and social organization, and they may be combined with different



political affiliations, economic livelihoods and status, and ties across national borders. For instance, the Philippines is not made up simply of Americans, Chinese and Filipinos; among Christian Filipinos there are additional factions divided according to region and language. The various groups can discern how they are seriously united and divided into distinct groups that create in-group and out-group situations.

Table 1 presents a summary of the various Philippine population groups whose different geographical, historical, sociocultural, educational, religious and political backgrounds create a variety and types of majority and minority situations. Saber (1974) offered this scheme as a basis of discussion, description and analysis of the position of some selected groups or sub-groups in the total Philippine intergroup relationships. For purposes of this paper, we shall adopt his presentation.

**Table 1. Group Differentiation/Stratification of Philippine Population**

<i>Location of Group</i>	<i>Nationality, Ethno-linguistic- Cultural, Religious, and/or other Differentiating Factors</i>
<b>Mostly in Urban Areas</b>	<i>Group A - Alien or Foreign</i> Westerners: Spanish, English, Americans, etc. Orientals: Chinese, Indian, Japanese, etc.
<b>Luzon</b>	<i>Group B - Christian Majority</i> Ilocano, Pangasinense, Zambal, Pampango, Bicol, Tagalog, etc.
<b>Visayas</b>	Cebuano, Hilongo, Samar-Leyte (Waray), etc.
<b>Mindanao-Sulu-Palawan</b>	Mixed or heterogenous Christian groups originally migrants from Luzon and the Visayas and native converts in the region.

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<i>Group C - Muslim Minority</i>	
<b>Mindanao</b>	Maguindanao, Maranao, Iranon (marginal between the first two), Sangir, Kalagon, Tausog, Samal
<b>Sulu</b>	Tausog, Samal, Jama Mapun, Badjao
<b>Basilan</b>	Yakan, Tausog, Samal, Maranao, Maguindanao, Palawan Palawani, Tausog, Samal
<b>Balabac</b>	Molbog or Melebugananon
<i>Group D - Isolated Tribal ("Pagan") or Shimistic Minority</i>	
<b>Luzon</b>	Ivaton, Bontok, Apayao, Gaddang, Ifugao, Kankanai, Inibaloi, Ilongot, Igoñgot, Italon, Abaka, Isinai, Kalinga, Kalagua, Balbalasang-Ginaen, Lubuagan-Sumadel, Mangali-Lubo, Negrito, Tinguian, Mangyan, etc.
<b>Visayas</b>	Magahat, Negrito, Bukidnon, Ati, Mundo, Kubugan
<b>Mindanao</b>	Ata, Bagobo, Bila-an, Bukidnon, Kualaman, Mandaya, Mangguangan, Manobo, Mamanela, Subanon, Tagakaolo, Tirurai, Tasaday, etc.
<b>Sulu</b>	Badjao or Luaan (boat-dwelling animists, some being Islamized and Christianized)
<b>Palawan</b>	Latak, Tagbanua

Source: Dr. Saber, 1974.



Group A, Alien or Foreign, does not constitute a single social structure. The Spaniards, despite their small number, once represented the dominant power-majority over the more numerous Christian population and partly over the Muslim and Pagan groups. This was because of their superior civil, military, and religious organizations which enabled them to impose their will upon the natives. The Spaniards ruled the country for over three centuries (1570-1898) imprinting upon the natives Hispanic civilization, including the Catholic faith.

The Americans, also relatively few in number, replaced the Spanish colonial regime at the turn of the 20th century. They ruled the country for over four decades (1898-1946), leaving behind them the cultural effects that even today continue to have impact not only on the Christian group, but also upon the once resistant and Pagan minorities. American influence made Philippine civilization seemingly western.

The Chinese minority has not gained and exercised political dominance over Philippine natives as did the Spaniards and the Americans. This group was often a victim of racism, especially from the Spaniards and natives. Today the Chinese are still envied and discriminated against for their perceived continuing dominance in business and industry in most trading centers of the nation. However, the Filipino and Chinese majority-minority problem has been minimized by governmental restrictions on Chinese retail trade and the increasing shrewdness of Filipinos in business.

The Japanese, too, were once discriminated against by the Filipinos. This was due to the Japanese pre-war military and political ambition to dominate the whole of Asia. The Japanese image to a Filipino was that of an expert carpenter who turned into a ruthless soldier during World War II. However, the postwar Japanese image softened into that of a technologist and manufacturer, although the Filipino attitude is still tainted with suspicion.

The Indian, locally known as "Bombay," is not considered a threat to Filipino interests. Like the Chinese, he is viewed as a shrewd businessman, but unlike the Chinese, he is not a dominant business competition.

The native Filipino population grouped into B, C, and D belong to various racial types which tend to amalgamate because of physical contacts in past and contemporary life, especially in the mixed urban setting. Except for the most isolated tribes, lowland and coastal native groups have racial admixture with foreign stocks who are listed under Group A. For instance, many Filipinos can easily pass for Japanese, Chinese, and a variety of Southeast Asian types.

The Philippine groups are further subdivided into a variety of spoken dialects or languages. At least 87 of them have been recorded or

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studied. These belong to the family of Indonesian or Malay-Polynesian languages and many of them are similar to each other. Thus a speaker of one native tongue may understand and communicate in a number of tongues. At any rate, language integrates members of an in-group, but creates a socio-cultural gap between them and the out-group. As Saber (1974) said:

"From the colonial period to the present, the introduction of Spanish and English has played the integrative role of bridging the communication gap among the groups. In today's intergroup contacts, the National Language called "Pilipino," is increasingly a powerful influence in nation-building, along with English, the medium of classroom instruction. Two major tongues also exhibit integrative effects, and they are Ilocano in Northern Luzon and Cebuano-Visayan in Central Philippines and Mindanao-Sulu area.

"The Philippines is likewise fragmented by multi-religious identities of groups and individuals, the dominant religion being Christianity. Yet even this group is fragmented into the Roman Catholic denomination, which has the largest number of adherents, and the multi-denominational Protestant Church, and Iglesia ni Kristo."

A close rival to Christianity is Islam, adhered to by the Muslim minority. Its adherents are confined to southern and western Mindanao, Sulu, Basilan, and Southern Palawan, whereas, Christians are distributed throughout the length and breadth of the Philippine archipelago. It is well-known that the history of Christian-Muslim intergroup contact in the country is replete with accounts of conflict.

The Muslims constitute the largest minority group in the Philippines. They account for nine percent (9%) of the total Philippine population and seventy-five percent (75%) of the non-Christian Filipino tribes. At present, they comprise twenty-three percent (23%) of the people living in Southern Philippines. Most of them are found in southern and western Mindanao, Sulu, Basilan, Palawan, and Balabao. The major Filipino Muslim groups are the Maguindanaos of the Cotabato region, the Maranaos (including the Iranons) in the Lanao area, and the Tausugs and Samals in the Sulu archipelago. Although the majority of them indulge in agricultural activities, a big percentage are fishermen.

While the label "minority" implies homogeneity, the various Filipino Muslim groups are actually heterogeneous. They are found in various types of terrain; they differ in settlement patterns, complexity and sophistication in social organization, mode of dressing, custom, art, beliefs, and practices; they speak different dialects. Although they have similar basic



patterns of political organization, the sultanate, the system does not operate uniformly in all groups; and they differ in degree of exposure to foreign influence. Just as conflicts occur among the various Christian groups, differences are common among the Muslim groups. What provides them with a strong sense of solidarity is their common adherence to the Islamic faith.

### **Sources of Tension**

Majul (1976) and Gowing (1973) attribute the rebellion in Mindanao to the following fears of the Muslims: 1) fear of being alienated from Islam as well as that of losing cherished traditional values and customs, 2) fear of displacement from ancestral and traditional lands, and 3) fear of having no future in the Philippines because of a) lack of representation in the government, b) lack of participation in the formulation of national policies, and c) lack of equitable share in the economic benefits derived from the exploitation of the natural resources especially those from their areas. Such fears are largely the outgrowth of the following policies and programs of the Philippine government:

#### **1. Integration Policies**

The policies of the Philippine government with regard to all its minorities can be summarized by the term "integration." This concept has been interpreted in various ways by different people, causing some confusion. Some mistakenly interpret it as total assimilation of the minority into the majority's way of life which includes the religious and cultural aspects. Others view it as acculturation in which societies of different cultures are modified through contact and cultural borrowing or exchanges of behavior and thought patterns.

In its most common sense, integration is the process of making a social system work as one well-knit whole. A society is said to be integrated when its members, regardless of creed and ethnic origin, move freely among one another, sharing the same opportunities and privileges, bearing equal concern for one another's needs, and assuming equal duties and responsibilities in promoting the common good (McCarthy, 1973). This involves the tearing down of walls between groups, the majority group's acceptance of the minority to an extent that free cultural borrowing takes place within the social environment, and the minority group's acceptance of the majority group and the latter's culture without necessarily discarding their cultural origin or identity (Gungwu, 1974).



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As provided for in Republic Act No. 1888 passed by Congress in 1957, the integration program of the government aims to "prepare the minorities" and to "promote improved moral, social and educational standards for said cultural minorities" in order to "effectuate in a more rapid and complete manner their economic, social and moral, and political advancement into the body politic." Majul (1976) raised some questions on the program. For instance, he asked: "What is meant by fostering, accelerating, and accomplishing in a rapid and complete manner the moral advancement of the minorities into the body politic? Does this imply that the moral system of Islam is inferior to that of Christianity? Does it mean that the Muslims must change their moral values for that of another system and, if this is so, what is the alternative? Is this the system of Christianity?"

The Filipino Muslims are fearful of assimilation and would resist attempts at this (Saber, 1974). In their point of view, the integration program of the Philippine government is actually a continuation of the colonial policies of the Spaniards and the Americans which sought "perfect assimilation of the Moros with the remaining population under common law" (Gowing, 1973). As Misuari puts it, the Philippine government seeks "to destroy the national consciousness and Islamic identity of the Bangsa Moro People...through the promotion of a cultural homogeneity." In his view, Philippine schools which are generally controlled by the government and the Catholic missions are mainly concerned with the spread of knowledge that are based mostly on the values, institutions, and interests of the Christian majority, with no provision for the teaching of Muslim values and institutions to Muslim youth. Misuari calls this "cultural genocide" intended to "annihilate" the spiritual and cultural identity of the Filipino Muslims. In particular, the Philippine educational system is geared at developing the Muslim youth, "even to the extent of making him wear Western personality and culture" which are the hallmarks of the culture of the Christian majority (Saber, 1974).

### 2. The Moro Image

Related to the Muslims' fear of being alienated from Islam and of losing cherished traditional values and customs is the "Moro image." Essentially, the "Moro image" is a heritage of hatred and prejudices resulting from three centuries of warfare between the Filipino Muslims, on the one hand, and the Spaniards and their Christian converts, on the other.

Historically, the Spaniards came to the Philippines with a clear and dual role: to convert the inhabitants to the Christian faith particularly to Catholicism and to extend the imperial domain of the Spanish monarch. The Spaniards succeeded with relative ease to subjugate and Christianize the

Filipinos in Luzon and the Visayas. However, they failed to penetrate the Muslim regions of Mindanao. It was in Muslim Mindanao that the Spaniards encountered fierce resistance from the natives, with the Muslims holding their grounds until the end of the Spanish colonial rule in the archipelago, more than three hundred years later.

In their relentless campaign to include Mindanao in their domain, the Spaniards used their Christian converts to do their battle against the Muslims. This resulted in long fratricidal wars that left bad imprints in the minds of both Christian and Muslim Filipinos. The Muslims despised and hated the Christians for being easily conquered and for allowing themselves to be used by the Spaniards as instruments to attack them in the name of religion (Majul, 1973). The Christians, on the other hand, branded the Muslims as "Moros," to denote backward, treacherous savages, pirates, raiders and slavers who bear watching all the time (Gowing, 1973). This ugly "Moro image" stemmed from the brutality of the periodic raids of retaliation launched by the Muslims from the sea against coastal settlements in the Visayas and Luzon, and the efforts of the Spaniards to stigmatize the Muslim image so that the Christians will hate them (Majul, 1973). An example of such efforts was the *moro-moro* play, a popular form of public entertainment in Luzon, which often depicted the Muslims as savages who eventually became Christianized.

The American colonial rule in the archipelago reinforced the mutual hatred between the Christians and the Muslims. Even when the Muslims were already subjugated, they conducted occasional raids of retaliation against American garrisons in Mindanao and Sulu. These raids prompted the Americans to place the said areas under a special administration known as the Moro Province. Like their Spanish predecessors, the Americans were compelled to utilize Filipino soldiers to pacify the Muslims due to lack of personnel. The strategy brought the Christians and the Muslims again into bloody fratricidal strife reminiscent of the more than three hundred years of Spanish rule in the country.

The "Moro image" persists to this day among many Christians perpetuated from generation to generation by word of mouth, and by some books used until recently as textbooks in many secondary schools in the country. The image has at least two negative effects on Christian-Muslim relations. First, it perpetuates the lack of communication between the two groups. This is because the Moro stigma still elicits suspicious reactions among less sophisticated Muslims (Gowing, 1973). The Muslims are highly sensitive to the "Moro image" and many of them in recent years have insisted on being called "Muslims" rather than "Moros," believing that the latter term has derogatory connotation. Thus, the "Moro image" is a serious obstacle to Christian-Muslim harmony in the Philippines.



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Many Muslims also resent the fact that some policies of the government reflect the negative "Moro image" (Gowing, 1973). An example is the special provisions in Philippine law regarding polygyny and divorce. The Philippine Constitution upholds the Roman Catholic norm of monogamous marriage with no divorce. However, as a concession to cultural minorities who traditionally practice polygyny and divorce, the government kept on extending a temporary law permitting those practices particularly among the Muslims. The Muslims are sensitive to the fact that, implicit in such action, is the view that the Christian Filipinos are morally superior to the non-Christian Filipinos who are expected eventually to conform to higher (Christian) standards of conduct. The fact is, while only a few Filipino Muslims are actually polygynous, polygyny and divorce are sanctioned by the Quran (Muslim Holy Book) and practiced widely throughout the Islamic World. Muslims resent the condescension implied by the special law and insist that it is within their rights as a people to practice such customs.

### 3. Resettlement Policies

Traditionally, the Muslims made up a large proportion of the people in Mindanao. At present, they have fallen far below their former proportion. Seventy years ago, they comprised 31.6 percent of the population in the area (Wernstedt and Simkins, 1965). Their proportion declined to only 19.3 percent in 1972. In certain areas, the decline is more dramatic and steady. In Iligan City for instance, their proportion declined from at least eighty percent (80%) in the 1930s to only forty percent (40%) in the present decade. This change in population composition has been due to the rapid influx of Christian migrants from Luzon and the Visayas.

Christian incursion into Mindanao began in some coastal areas during the Spanish time. Migrations of Christian settlers to Mindanao were encouraged by the Spaniards to serve as civilizing influence on the "wild tribes" in the area (Gowing, 1973). For similar purposes, the American colonizers also encouraged the migrations of Christian settlers to Mindanao. Migration of Christian settlers to Mindanao continued during the Philippine Commonwealth and onward. As early as 1939, resettlement has been considered by the Philippine government as an important possible solution to land pressures in Luzon and the Visayas. The goals are the diffusion of population from congested provinces and the reduction of high tenancy rates.

Large-scale migrations of Christian settlers to Mindanao started in the 1930s (Wernstedt and Simkins, 1965). This was due to the establishment of vast resettlement areas particularly in Cotabato which was heralded as the "land of promise." Agencies created for the resettlement projects were the



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National Settlement Administration (1939), the National Resettlement and Rehabilitation Administration (1955) and the Land Authority (1963). Between 1939 to 1976, a total of 43,826 families have been resettled (Rocamora, 1979). Of that number, only 9,415 (27.7%) were actually moved in by the government. The rest went to the settlement projects at their own expense.

In 1939 alone, 97,000 hectares of lush grassland in Koronadal Valley, Cotabato, were declared by the government as public land and distributed to Christian migrants. By 1970, 17 vast settlements covering 759,968 hectares of Muslim ancestral lands were established in Mindanao (Misuari, 1972). The settlements do not include the areas covered by American corporations such as the BF Goodrich Company rubber plantation in Basilan, the Dole Philippines in South Cotabato, and the Del Monte Corporation in Bukidnon. These giant corporations utilize thousands of hectares of lands for their products. Most of the resettlement reservations of the government are in the provinces of Lanao, Cotabato, Zamboanga, and Sulu, precisely the provinces where Muslim rebels are operating today.

The original intention of the resettlement program was to reserve public lands for tenants and other landless small farmers. A change in government policy slowed down the program in 1963. Instead of the said purpose, the new land reform code of the government allotted public land for large-scale plantations. This policy was continued under the Marcos regime. The present policy of the government remains the reservation of most lands classified alienable and disposable for the promotion of export crops through large-scale farming. This policy has enabled local and foreign capitalists to have a monopoly of the exploitation of the land resources of Mindanao.

The Muslims resent the large-scale migration of Christian settlers to Mindanao and the resulting widespread alienation of their lands from traditional patterns of ownership. They even accuse the government of a conspiracy against Muslim land. As Majul (1975) puts it, "it is very difficult to erase from the minds of the Muslims that the government is a party to having more and more Christian settlers enter their ancestral home to evenly disperse them. Their belief had been nurtured by historical events and strengthened by the contemporary happenings." According to Majul, the Muslims conclude that the government heaps more benefits on Christians and therefore not radically different from the Spanish colonial government.

As early as 1935, the Muslims had expressed concern over the fate of their ancestral lands. In the famous March 18, 1935 Manifesto, they wrote: "our public lands must not be given to other peoples than the Moros... Where shall we obtain the support of our families if our lands are taken from us? It will be safe to us that law should be created restricting the acquisition of our

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lands by other people. This will avoid future trouble..." (Misuari, 1975). As shown by historical events, the appeal was left unheeded. The Philippine government continued the policy of the American colonial regime of resettling Christians in Mindanao.

In the 1970s fighting between Christians and Muslims began in Cotabato over land-related issues. Christian settlers who cultivated plots of previously unused land acquired in good faith from the government were often harassed by Muslims who demanded payment or rent for the said plots. There were also cases wherein Christians bought lands from Muslim owners, only to be faced with other "owners" who demanded for more payment. The Muslims sought payment through threat or violence such as settling fire to settlers' farms or shooting into their houses at night (Gowing, 1973). The hostilities generated by all these unfortunate incidents triggered the bloody conflict between Christians and Muslims in Mindanao in 1971-1973.

The Christian-Muslim land quarrels in Mindanao can be viewed as a confrontation between representatives of two different cultures and economic systems. Among the Muslims, land is looked upon as a property of the kinship groups whose title to it is guaranteed by unwritten tradition. Even when settled on by migrants or leased to lumbering companies, ancestral lands can be reclaimed by tribal chiefs after a short interval (O'Shoughnessey, 1972). Among the Christians, on the other hand, any individual may own a parcel of land though legal processes guaranteed by the Philippine Constitution. Thus, under the Constitution, a Christian may apply for land title and acquire legal right to a seemingly idle land that is really a Muslim ancestral property. When he asserts his legal rights, he is likely to encounter many Muslim claimants who own the land under customary rights.

Efforts of the government to protect the legal rights of Christian settlers over the lands they occupy elicited bitter feelings among the Muslims. Many of them call the national government as "the government of foreigners." Of course, this attitude is quite "natural" for Muslims who cannot forget the colonial past and who still regard the government as Christian" (O'Shoughnessey, 1972). In viewing the Philippine government as "Christian" or "foreign," the Muslims indicate their alienation from the rest of the nation.

#### 4. Political Program

Consistent with its integration policies, the political program of the Philippine government with regard its minorities has been the imposition of the modern state system down to its lowest level and a complete disregard



of the indigenous political structures. This is evident when the Philippine government created provinces, cities, municipalities and barangays (barrios) in areas inhabited by cultural minorities. The assumption seems to be that the indigenous political systems of the minorities will eventually pass away and therefore the superimposition and extension of the modern state system and its instrumentalities would be sufficient to start and carry over to the finish the process of transition.

Of all the non-Christian Filipino tribes, only the Muslims have well-developed politico-economic systems. In each of the Muslim groups, there are institutionalized authority structures which function within the community. Within the Muslim society as a whole, it is possible for individuals and groups to move between areas. This is because an ascribed status particularly that of a Sultan is recognized not only within a particular community but also within the entire ethnolinguistic group and even between ethnolinguistic groups.

The political structure of the sultanates of the various Filipino Muslim tribes are based on Islamic models. For instance, the power to rule is vested in the Sultan who wields political, religious and social authorities over his people. Of course, pre-Islamic institutions are also included in the structure, which account for variations in political practices between groups. As an example, there are more offices held in the sultanate of Sulu than those in Lanao and Cotabato. However, while the various Muslim groups manifest similar political structures, there is no over-all political authority embracing all of them. Ruling tribes are independent of each other, and their relationships are governed only by ancient contracts based on customary and Islamic laws. A look into the Maranao political structure will illustrate this point.

The basic component of the Maranao socio-political organization is the *agama* which is basically a kinship group bound together by a variety of kinship relationships, by varying social, political and religious activities, and numbering from ten to one hundred households. The *agama* (village community) is relatively autonomous and exercises self-rule. It has "the characteristic of a little state with a territory, people, a sultanate government with a strong pattern of leadership assumed by a hierarchy of officials, a mosque as a center of social and religious life, and the houses of datus for holding communal assemblies" (Saber, 1962). An aggrupation of blood related *agamas* forms an *inged* (township), an aggrupation of blood related *inged*s constitutes a *suko* (province), and an aggrupation of blood related *sukos* makes up a *pangampong* (principality, state), the highest level of the traditional Maranao socio-political organization. The whole of the Maranao society is composed of a confederation of four coequal states, the *Pat-a-Pangampong ko Ranao* (four encampments on the lake). The *Pat-a-*



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*Pangampong ko Ranao* has no central government; their relationships are governed only by ancient contracts called *Taritib* and handed over to succeeding generations.

The coming of the Spanish colonizers in the middle of the 16th century checked the spread of Islam. However, for more than three hundred years, the Spaniards failed to subjugate and put the "Moros" under central control. The failure of the Spaniards to put the Muslims under their central colonial rule is an indication of the strength, durability and stability of "Moro" socio-political organizations.

When Spain ceded the Philippines to the U.S. in 1898, the Americans continued what the Spaniards started. Steps were undertaken to integrate the Islamized areas into the national government set-up. On June 1, 1903 the Moro Province was created, a civil government supported by the military. The rule of Leonard Wood, its first governor, was highlighted by spirited campaigns against recalcitrant datus who refused to recognize American authority (Orosa, 1962). The despotic method was met with severe resistance as was the experience of Spain. On December 16, 1913, the Moro Province was replaced by the Department of Mindanao and Sulu with Frank W. Carpenter as governor. A policy of accommodation and recognition of and compromise with the indigenous culture, socio-political structure and institutions was adopted. In particular, the Moro areas were governed through existing political institutions and authority structures. Carpenter's policy of attraction "won over many prominent Muslims, and what was not attained by hundred years of warfare was secured in a few years of wise administration" (Orosa, 1962). The new policy gained ground. By February 1920, fairly peaceful conditions were established in Mindanao and Sulu. The Department was then abolished and replaced by the Bureau of Non-Christian tribes. Shortly after the Commonwealth, the Office of the Commission of Mindanao and Sulu was created and sometime in 1946 was replaced by the Division of Mindanao and Sulu under the then Department of Interior.

After the Americans abdicated political control of the country to the Filipinos in 1946, the Philippine government re-organized the Moro areas to conform to the republican state system, superimposing the structures, instrumentalities, and institutions of that political order over the indigenous systems. This produced tensions and conflicts. The process caused the reduction or loss of relative autonomy of indigenous socio-political organizations and the consequent defunctionalization of traditional positions. Decisions on a host of problems pertaining to the village or local community were increasingly taken at higher levels of state integration. At the same time, the Sultan lost his political sovereignty and judicial functions, retaining only his spiritual lordship over his people. For instance, matters such as

taxation, law enforcement and the administration of justice were already taken over by the structures and instrumentalities of the central government. Traditional Muslim elite resented the decline in their functions and powers. Their resentment aggravated when they lost to Christian politicians in the competition for the occupation of emergent higher level positions (such as governors) in their traditional areas of control, which had become saturated by Christian migrants. The 1971-1972 Christian-Muslim conflict in Mindanao, particularly in Lanao and Cotabato, was partly a consequence of the competition for leadership in those areas.

While many Filipino Muslims already recognized the structures of the central government, they resent their lack of representation in the government administration (Gowing, 1973; Misuari, 1975). They point out that before the abolition of the Philippine Congress, they were allowed but token representation. In the Senate, the highest representation was a lone Senator, while in the House of Representatives, they were represented with only four Congressmen. They also point out that the Muslims are seldom represented in the Cabinet and in the high courts. In foreign affairs, they say that it is rare for a Muslim to be appointed to the rank of an ambassador. Even in the military, they claim that the Muslims are never allowed any position of trust. Once a Muslim reaches the rank of colonel, he is prematurely retired to ease him out of the service. The Muslims also point out that in the Air Force, their people are made to serve merely as ground forces and menial workers. In the Philippine Navy, they claim that Muslims are never allowed to rise up in rank.

It is also the view of the Filipino Muslims that the national government is not exerting its utmost to advance and protect their interest (Bucoy, 1984). They point out that they do not benefit from government concerns, like the Agus Hydroelectric Projects. According to them, the Agus Dam constructions have resulted in the lowering of water level at Lake Lanao by seven meters, thereby drying up 126,000 hectares of agricultural lands. Moreover, such projects are held responsible for the ecological changes in the lake which have affected the livelihood of many Maranaos.

The Muslims also believe that the Philippine law and institutions are biased for the Christians. For instance, the study of Bucoy (1984) among the Maranaos of Marawi City indicates that 60% of the respondents (n = 20) believe that the Muslims are not treated equally and are not enjoying economic and political rights like the Christians. In this regard, the respondents cited the government's neglect of the plight of the Filipino Muslims and national policies that deprive the Muslims of their ancestral lands. The respondents also mentioned the militarization of Mindanao which resulted in deaths and dislocation of many Muslims. They even accused the national government of being a tool of foreign interests in



Mindanao. Thus, the Muslims feel that they have no future if they remain part of the Republic of the Philippines.

### **The Moro National Liberation Front**

The MNLF is an outgrowth of the aforementioned fears of the Muslims if they remain within the Christian-dominated political jurisdiction of the Philippine Republic. Such fears are the consequences of the perceptions that: 1) the integration program of the government is actually a continuation of the Spanish and American colonial policies which seek to effectuate "perfect assimilation" of the Muslims into the national body politic, 2) some of the laws of the country reflect the "Moro image" which portrays the Muslims as having "low-grade civilization" who deserve to be second-class citizens in a Catholic country, 3) the government heaps more benefits on Christians by legitimizing their displacement of the Muslims from their ancestral lands, and 4) since the government is controlled by Christians, the Muslims will suffer since no one can protect them from the whims and caprices of such elements.<sup>4</sup>

The MNLF started as the underground movement of the youth sector of the Mindanao Independence Movement (MIM), a separatist group founded by Datu Udtog Matalam of Cotabato in 1967. The leadership of the movement was initially provided by young Muslim intellectuals (professionals and college students) whose ideals paralleled those of the activists in Manila in the 1960s. In fact, the MNLF Manifesto was patterned after that of the Kabataang Makabayan (KM), a radical leftist group, whose leader, Jose Maria Sison, was a colleague of Misuari in the Department of Political Science of the University of the Philippines at Diliman, Quezon City. The MNLF was sponsored by prominent Muslim leaders, the most prominent of whom was Sultan Rashid Lucman, the Most Paramount Sultan of Mindanao, Sulu, Basilan and Palawan. Sultan Lucman eventually served as liaison between the MNLF and the World Islamic Leaders.

As early as 1967, foreign Muslim leaders took special interest in the MNLF. In that year, Tim Mustapha, Chief Minister of Sabah, worked for the recruitment of the first batch of 90 members to undergo training on guerrilla warfare and commando leadership in Sabah and Malaysia. World Islamic leaders provided the transportation, finances and logistic support of the group. After 18 months of rigorous training, the 90 trainees converged in Pulau Pankar to formally organize the MNLF in 1971. Elected Chairman was Nur Misuari, in view of his prestige as an instructor of the UP and his affiliation with Mustapha who was believed to have originally come from Sulu. Elected Vice Chairman was Abulkayr Alonto of Marawi City.

As a movement, the MNLF has parallel political and military



structures (Nable, 1979). The political structures consist of a central committee of about twenty, a political bureau, a propaganda and intelligence bureau, and provincial and barrio committees. The Bangsa Moro Army (BMA) has a field marshal who is not directly supervised by the central committee, field marshals at the provincial level, and zone-commanders at the municipal level. Potential recruits into the BMA are screened and then given six months of training, which includes political indoctrination. According to the Defense Ministry, the MNLF has a mass base of around 400,000.

While consolidation has taken place since 1972, the MNLF remains a loosely knit organization whose supporters are united in their desire for freedom from Christian domination. The geographic scope of the structure of the movement is not very clear. Earlier accounts suggested that the MNLF's organization included groups in Cotabato, Zamboanga-Basilan, Sulu-Tawi-Tawi areas but that the Lanao groups had not been integrated into the movement. Moreover, factionalism exists in the MNLF leadership. At present there are three major factions within the movement—the Nur Misuari group, the Hashim Salamat group, and the faction led by Dimas Pundato. This problem has weakened the MNLF Central Committee's hold on its field commanders. However, Nur Misuari still enjoys the full support of many Islamic Conference officials, particularly the Libyan Jamahiriya. This is partly due to the fact that as MNLF Chairman who was signatory to the Tripoli Agreement he cannot be edged out easily. Recently, attempts are being made to unite the various factions of the MNLF in response to the Philippine government's peace initiatives in Mindanao.

Four fundamental reasons spawned the organization of the MNLF: 1) the survival of the *Ummah*, 2) the preservation of Islam and their Islam identity, 3) the restructuring of their politico-administrative machinery, and 4) to seek redress for the oppression and neglect by the national government (Bragil, 1973; Misuari, 1975, Rusgal, 1984).

The *Ummah* is the Islamic community which is both territorial and non-territorial. It encompasses all aspects of Muslim societies. It is the psychological element of the Muslim community which defines the relationships in the structure and social roles of Muslims in general, the universal tie that binds all Muslims of the world which transcends diversities in race, culture, language and geography, and the tacit principle which makes it a sacred duty for each Muslim to rise to the cause of the Muslims wherever they are in the world. The *Ummah* is responsible for the intervention of the World Islamic League of Nations to rally to the cause of Muslims in trouble. The concern of the Islamic Ministerial Conference for the plight of their brother Muslims in the Philippines is reflected in ten resolutions passed by the conference to call the attention of the Philippine

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government to effect a solution to the "Moro Problem." The non-territorial *Ummah* further explains the two worlds of the Muslims — the *Dar Al Islam* or House of Islam and the *Dar Al Harb* or House of War. The latter is the principle of the Jihad or Holy War resorted to by the Muslims in defense of their religion and their *Ummah*. The declaration of Holy War by the Muslims against their enemies is sanctioned by the Quran or Holy Book.

The territorial *Ummah* embraces all lands possessed and acquired by the Muslims either by conquest or inheritance. The Muslim Filipinos' territorial *Ummah* is Mindanao and they have *vowed* to recover all territories which they have lost.

This is homeland for the MNLF. Their struggle for self-determination and control over their natural resources and their land is explained by the concept of *Ummah*. A case in point is the land conflict in Mindanao. The problem has a long history. It dates back to the Spanish times, was reinforced by the American Resettlement Policy, and aggravated by the Land Settlement Scheme of the Philippine government especially during the 1950s. The opening up of Mindanao to Christian settlers paved the way for the intensification of the Christian-Muslim conflict. The Muslims, who were once the majority in the area, were virtually pushed out of their ancestral lands. The problem became acute with the establishment of multinational firms which covered thousands of Muslim territorial *Ummah*.

Equally alarming to the Muslims were the sociocultural consequences of Christian migration to their homeland. Such migration diluted the Muslim population and exposed Muslim communities to Christian ways of life which are "antithetical to Islamic culture and civilization" (Misuari, 1974). The migration also diminished the political and economic powers of the Muslim elite. For instance, the 1971 elections saw the fielding of Christian candidates in areas traditionally controlled by Muslims. The electoral contest signalled the increased domination of Muslim political affairs by Christians. In fact, some Muslim candidates in Cotabato and Lanao lost to their Christian opponents during that election.

Within the Muslim elite, young intellectuals lost confidence in their traditional leaders who were coopted by the national government. Traditional leaders were perceived as pursuing their personal interest to the detriment of their peoples' general welfare. In particular, they were branded as "mercenaries" who used the Muslim organizations to broaden their political base. The behavior of the "loyalists" and "mercenaries" demoralized the Muslim youth and they vowed to effect major changes in the politico-administrative machinery of Muslim Mindanao through the establishment of an independent Islamic State for Mindanao, Sulu and Pawalan.

Government neglect was also a major reason for the formation of the



MNLF. Until now, the Muslims claim that taxes collected from the use and exploitation of their natural resources do not accrue to the ultimate beneficiaries of development—the Muslims. In their observation, taxes paid are remitted to the national government and are not re-channeled to the region for its development. They point out the following to support their claim: 1) The Muslims have the lowest literacy rate at 74.3 percent as against the national average of 83.8 percent, 2) Mindanao has the lowest number of hospital beds, at 6 per 10,000 population compared to 17 of Luzon and 8 of the Visayas, 3) Mindanao has the lowest number of physicians per 10,000 population at 3 compared to 5 of Luzon and 6 for the Visayas, 5) only 15 percent of the total households in Muslim Mindanao have safe drinking water, and 6) there is inequitable funding of state schools, colleges and universities in the areas (Rusgal, 1984).

A critical event which precipitated the organization of the MNLF was the Corregidor Incident of 1968 or what the Muslims prefer to call the Jadidah Massacre. The incident involved the massacre of some thirty Muslim youth recruited by the government to train in guerrilla warfare in Corregidor. The recruits were supposed to invade Sabah after their training. When the trainees were informed of their mission, they refused to obey orders on the grounds that it was not justified because Sabah was a Muslim territory. The trainees were promptly done away with. However, one survivor lived to tell the story. The incident resulted in the break up of diplomatic relations between Sabah and the Philippines. This partly explained the interest Tuan Mustapha had in the recruitment of MNLF members. The massacre became an irritant between the Philippines and the Islamic World. It became a rallying point of the Muslims' struggle for self-determination.

The Corregidor Incident was an outgrowth of the Philippines' prosecution of the Sabah claim which was initiated by President Macapagal in 1962. The move was premised on a national right based on the transaction between the Sultan of Sulu with an Australian businessman in 1878. The prosecution of the claim soured the relations between the Philippines and Malaysia. When President Marcos assumed office in 1966, he moved for the re-establishment of relations with Malaysia and participated in the formation of the ASEAN. But while the Philippine government was pursuing a "friendly" policy toward the Malaysian government, the Philippine Armed Forces were recruiting Muslims to form a special unit for infiltration into Sabah. The massacre so angered the Muslim Filipinos that they pressed for secession.

The main objectives of the MNLF are bannered in the slogan: "Islam! Homeland! Freedom!" This is premised on the views that the Muslims' religion is distinct from the rest of the Filipinos, that their land, the Bangsa

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Moro, is separate from the Filipino nation with its own identity, history and culture, and that the inclusion of their homeland under Filipino political and territorial jurisdiction is illegal and immoral (Misuari, 1975). The MNLF claims that the Bangsa Moro homeland of Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan was once independent and sovereign. It is the contention of the movement that the American policy of attraction and cooptation won over only the Muslim elite but not the masses. To the MNLF, the continuous resistance waged by the Muslim masses nullified the treaties signed by the Muslim leaders with the American colonizers. Thus, it is the belief of the MNLF that the annexation of the Bangsa Moro homeland to the Philippine state after WWII was criminal and arbitrary (Asani, 1980).

The goal of the MNLF is the establishment of an independent Bangsa Moro Republic. Such republic is generally conceived to be a "democratic system of government which never allows nor tolerates any form of exploitation and oppression of any human being by another as replacement for the sultanate and privileged aristocracy" (MNLF Manifesto, 1974). The MNLF stresses that the independent Bangsa Moro Republic will be committed to the preservation of the Islamic culture without prejudice to other religions of the indigenous population. However, it does not specify what the future might be for the Bangsa Moro Republic economically except for such broad allusions to equality (Stauffer, 1981). For instance, it does not define how the resources of Mindanao would be developed vis-a-vis the acknowledged present control of these resources by Filipino capitalists and foreign interests.

The MNLF believes in armed struggle as the primary means to achieve independence. This is based on the assumption that the Philippine government will never give up its hold on Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan. As outlined in its 1974 Manifesto, the MNLF's strategy for achieving the goals of the Moro Revolution are the following: 1) organizing and relying on the masses for support, 2) forging unity with all oppressed sectors in society, and 3) forging unity and solidarity with the Islamic and Third World countries and groups that share the MNLF cause. The MNLF denies any coalition with the New Peoples' Army (NPA). It is wary of the ideological underpinnings upon which the NPA anchors its struggle. In particular, the NPA is based on the Marxist ideology which is unacceptable to the Muslims in general.

Several military operations were launched by the MNLF in 1973. Notable of such operations were the simultaneous attacks in the provinces of Cotabato, Lanao, Zamboanga and Basilan. Another was the seige and consequent takeover of Jolo in February 1974. On April 28, 1974, amidst its successful military operations, the MNLF issued a manifesto declaring the establishment of an independent Bangsa Moro Republic. This brought the



government in bloody combat with the MNLF. In 1974, due to various pressures particularly from its patron, the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC), the MNLF acceded to sit down with the Philippine government and negotiate. The result was the signing of the Tripoli Agreement on December 23, 1976, which provided for a ceasefire and the establishment of a 13-province area of autonomy in Mindanao and Sulu within "the realm of sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines." However, due to disagreements in defining the area of extent of Muslim autonomy as well as in the manner of implementing the Tripoli Agreement, a breakdown of negotiation ensued. Following the breakdown of the negotiation, the MNLF announced its reversion to its original goal of independence.

Despite government rehabilitation and development efforts in Mindanao, the MNLF continues to have mass support. For instance, the study of Bucoy (1984) among the Maranaos in Marawi City indicates that most of the respondents (89.2 percent) believe that the MNLF works for the interest and welfare of the Filipino Muslims. Most of the respondents (84 percent) also disagreed with the description that the MNLF is a band of terrorists and opportunists who should be prosecuted. Instead, majority (83 percent) of them believe that the MNLF should be supported. Moreover, 87 percent of the respondents believe that the MNLF's goals and demands represent the legitimate aspirations of the Muslim Filipinos. This positive attitude toward the MNLF seems to be due to the role that the movement plays in the current Mindanao problem. Through the leadership of the MNLF, the Muslim Filipinos have gained national and international recognition. The MNLF has also brought to the attention of the national government and to the Islamic countries the plight of the Muslims in the country.

### **The Tripoli Agreement**

The Tripoli Agreement is a document which embodies the general principles of autonomy for the Muslims in the Philippines. The accord was signed in Tripoli, Libya on December 23, 1976. The signatories were the Philippine government through the Deputy Minister of National Defense, Carmelo Z. Barbero; the MNLF through its Chairman, Nur Misuari; the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers through its secretary-general, Dr. Ahmed Karim Gaye; and the host country, Libyan Arab Republic, through Minister Ali Abdul-sallam Treki, as chairman of the negotiations. The Philippine government entered into such agreement with the MNLF in the spirit of reconciliation to put an end to the long years of fratricidal war in Southern Philippines. The mover was also a diplomatic coup to maintain

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harmonious relations with the Islamic countries which have expressed concern over the "plight" of Muslims in the Philippines.

In a nutshell, the agreement establishes autonomy for the Muslims in Southern Philippines within the realism of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. Included in the areas of autonomy are the Muslim-populated provinces of Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte, Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, Davao del Sur, South Cotabato, Palawan, and all the cities and villages situated in these provinces. Certain rights and prerogatives are granted to the areas of autonomy (see Appendix A). These are the right to representation and participation in the central government and in all other organs of the state; the right to set up schools, colleges and universities in their areas, the setting up of their own administrative system in compliance with the objectives of autonomy and its institutions; and the right of the authorities of the autonomy to have their own financial and economic system as well as special regional security force. The agreement also grants to the Muslims the right to set up their own courts which shall implement the Islamic Shariah laws and the right to form a legislative assembly through direct election and an executive council through appointments by the legislative assembly through direct election and an executive council through appointments by the legislative assembly. However, a number of prerogatives remain with the national government. These include major areas of national concern such as foreign policy, national defense, mines and mineral resources.

The agreement likewise provides for the implementation of a cease-fire and also the following: 1) a complete amnesty in the areas of autonomy and the renunciation of all legal claims and codes resulting from events which took place in Southern Philippines; 2) the release of all political prisoners who had relations with the conflict, and 3) the return of all refugees who have abandoned their areas.

According to the agreement, details concerning the scope of autonomy are subject to bilateral discussions between the Philippine government and the MNLF. The final agreement concerning the setting up of autonomy is to be signed in Manila between the Philippine government and the MNLF with the concurrence of the Islamic Conference represented by the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission and the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The Philippine government agreed to take all necessary constitutional process for the implementation of the entire agreement.

In 1977, the negotiations for peace between the government and the MNLF broke down. The MNLF accused the national government of circumventing the provisions of the Tripoli Agreement and announced its return to its original position of independence. In particular, the MNLF



resented the national government's implementation of the Tripoli accord with respect to the following:

a) *Territorial Coverage.* Under the Tripoli Agreement, the areas of autonomy include the following - Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Zamboanga Sur, Zamboanga Norte, North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao, South Cotabato, Lanao Sur, Lanao Norte, Palawan and Davao Sur as well as all the cities and municipalities in these provinces. However, the government succeeded in reducing the areas of autonomy through a referendum in April 1977 to exclude South Cotabato and Balabagan, Palawan and its aquatic resources, and Davao. The MNLF claimed that such unilateral modifications was a blatant violation of the Tripoli accord and therefore not binding to the movement.

b) *Regional Administrative System.* Presidential Decree 1618 created two Regional Autonomous Governments for Regions IX and XII with two Legislative Assemblies and two Executive Councils. The Muslims believe that these two Regional Autonomous Governments should be fused into one in as much as its inhabitants share common cultural orientation and political aspiration. It is their view that such arrangement is more in keeping with the spirit of the Tripoli Agreement which provided for the "organization of the Regional Administrative System." They perceive the government's act of creating two Regional Autonomous Governments as a manifestation of its policy of "divide and rule." Moreover, they claim that the members appointed to the autonomous administrative systems are traditional leaders who do not have the trust and confidence of the Muslim population.

c) *Relationship Between the Autonomous and the Central Government.* Section 35 of PD 1618 provides that "with respect to legislation, National Laws shall be supreme vis-a-vis Regional Laws enacted by the Batasang Pampook." What the local legislative assembly can do is limited to the passage of resolutions addressed to the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and other national officials requesting action/approval to what has been enacted. The Muslims view this as a blatant display of lack of trust in the capacity of Muslim leaders tasked to accelerate the attainment of development in the areas of autonomy. They are not cloaked with the corresponding authority to perform their tasks. For instance, while the Regional Autonomous Governments are tasked to monitor regional development projects implemented by line agencies of the National Government, they could neither supervise nor administer the same. This is perceived by the Muslims as the conversion of the Regional Autonomous Governments into mere glorified monitoring offices.

d) *Regional Taxing Power.* While the Tripoli Agreement provided for the autonomous management of the financial and economic systems of

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the region, PD1618 provides that "the Batasang Pampook may impose taxes, fees, or charges through enactment of regional tax measures in accordance with such guidelines as may be issued by the Minister of Finance." The Muslims view this as a gross delimitation of their taxing power. It is their perception that such arrangement makes the Regional Autonomous Governments' Assemblies as "rubber stamps" and "mickey mouse organizations."

e) *Regional Security Force.* The MNLF demanded for the formation of its own Regional Security Force which shall function and adopt policies for the maintenance of peace and order in the areas of autonomy. As the MNLF envisioned, the composition of the RSF shall be Muslims in Muslim-dominated areas and Christians in predominantly Christian populated areas. The Autonomous Governments may coordinate with other police agencies of the National Government for the maintenance of peace and order in the area but the government forces may not intervene on purely local matters without explicit requests from the MNLF. Moreover, the RSF can maintain its own army — the Bangsa Moro Army. The BMA shall absorb all native Muslims in the Philippine Constabulary and the members of other paramilitary organizations in the area. Its ranking system will be similar to the AFP. Moreover, it shall enjoy all the rights and privileges of the members of the AFP. The organizational structure shall include the BMA Chief of Staff with the rank of Major General and shall be assisted by 13 staff members with the ranks of Colonel and Brigadier General. The National Government sees this as unreasonable. Even former MNLF commanders who returned to the folds of the law do not endorse the idea en toto (Rusgal, 1984). However, they feel that the Autonomous Governments should be vested with the authority and responsibility of maintaining peace and order in the areas of autonomy.

f) *System of Courts.* The MNLF has demanded for the operation of an Islamic legal system in the areas of autonomy. The National Government has acceded and has established the Shariah or Islamic courts. Moreover, it has authorized, the implementation of Muslim Personal Laws through PD 1983. However, the National Government did not accede to the creation of a judiciary system in the Muslim areas which will be headed by a chief justice and assisted by 11 deputy justices. Likewise, it has not granted the demand that in cases of conflict between Philippine Laws and Muslim Laws consultation be made with the World Islamic Courts and that their judgment be final. In the government's point of view, such demand is a violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic.

g) *Education.* The Muslims demanded for the creation of their own educational system that will be responsive and relevant to their regional needs and in conformity with Islamic education. The National Government recognizes the significance of the incorporation of regional inputs into the



formulation and development of the Muslim educational curricula, but it has not acceded to the primacy of these over national needs and aspirations. Rather, the Government has instituted reforms in the educational system by accrediting the Madrasah as an institution of learning and the use of Arabic as medium of instruction. The MNLF also demanded that the Regional Governments be empowered to control the educational programs, projects and the budget of state colleges and universities, that they issue the certificates and diplomas and the corresponding degrees which must be recognized automatically by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, and that they be given the authority to enter into agreement with foreign institutions and Islamic governments for scholarships and other grants-in-aid. While the National Government recognizes the significance of regional inputs in education, it believes that the overall educational system lies within the competence of the central administration.

The fragmentation of its leadership weakened the bargaining position of the MNLF. In the last week of January 1983, the World Muslim Congress held a peace-and-unity dialogue among Filipino Muslim leaders and rebel groups in Karachi, Pakistan. The purpose of the dialogue was to break the deadlock in negotiations for peace in Mindanao brought about by the split in the MNLF leadership.

Those who participated in the dialogue were the officials of the United Bangsa Moro Liberation Forces (BMLF) headed by Sultan Rashid Lucman. The BMLF is coalition of Lucman's BMLO and the MNLF-Dimas Pundato faction. Also present were the leaders of the multi-sectoral Muslim communities of the Philippines like Salipada Pendatun, Ahmed Domocao Alonto, Justice Mema Busran, Jolo Mayor Arminkadra Abubakar, Region IX Speaker Nur Hussein Ututalum, former MNLF commanders Al-Hussein Caluang and Abdul Khayr Alonto, Sulu Governor Tupay Loong, Sheik Abdul Hamid Camlim, Sulu princess Putri Amilbangsa, Lanao del Sur princess Tarhata Lucman, former Assemblyman Saidaman Pangarungan, and other Muslim leaders from the academe, clergy, women, business and professional sectors. Nur Misuari did not participate in the dialogue. He even warned the secretary-general of the World Muslim Congress, Dr. Iramullah Khan, that the dialogue could "undermine the efforts of the Islamic Conference of trying to bring the conflicting parties back to the negotiating table."

The absence of Misuari in the dialogue was brushed aside by the participants arguing that paragraph 4 of Resolution No. 18 of Fifth Islamic Conference held in Kuala Lumpur on June 21-25, 1974 which is the basic foundation of the negotiations leading to the signing of the Tripoli Agreement provides that the Philippines finds a political and peaceful solution to the plight of Filipino Muslims within the framework of the national sover-

eignty and territorial integrity of the Philippines, "through negotiation with Muslim leaders, including the representatives of the Moro National Liberation Front." It was the view of the participants that the resolution recognizes the Filipino Muslim leaders as the principal party in the negotiation, and the MNLF is just a part (Pangarungan, 1985).

The participants in the dialogue were unanimous regarding the urgency of a resumption of peace talks that will solve the recurring conflict in Southern Philippines. This led to the adoption of an omnibus resolution called the Karachi Declaration for Peace and Unity which pressed for the resumption of negotiations with the Philippine government and the "complete and final implementation of the Tripoli Agreement". The Karachi Declaration included the following recommendations:

1. Merger of the Executive and Legislative Councils of the two autonomous regions.
2. Appointment of the Head of the merged autonomous regions who may be called Chairman or High Commissioner.
3. Setting up of Shariah Courts and appointment of the Juris Consult and the Judges thereto.
4. Setting up of a structure for the Islamic Education by merging the Madrasah System with the Public School System.
5. Participation of the population of the merged regions in Regional Security Force that will maintain internal peace and order in the areas of autonomy.
6. Endowing the merged autonomous regions with the prerogative of exploiting, developing, and conserving the actual resources therein; and the authority to obtain domestic and foreign lands, and accept grants -in-aids, for the economic rehabilitation and development of the areas of autonomy.
7. Endowing the merged regions with certain powers of taxation and other revenue-raising prerogatives.
8. Establishing a program to bring back refugees from Sabah and elsewhere and setting up a mechanism to make them self-sufficient again.
9. Increase the participation of Muslims in the National Government and Diplomatic service especially in the case of missions accredited to Muslim countries.
10. Implementation of paragraph 7 of Resolution 18 of the June 1984 Islamic Conference of Kuala Lumpur regarding the establishment of the Filipino Muslim Welfare and Relief Agency for the purpose of extending welfare and relief aid directly to Muslims in Southern Philippines so as to ameliorate their plight and raise



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their social and economic well-being, provided the agency is being financed from the Islamic Fund and is controlled by the Committee of Solidarity Fund.

When the Karachi Declaration was presented to President Marcos, the President said with a note of sarcasm: "Let us not pretend what we are not," implying that he did not recognize the Philippine Muslim Solidarity Conference (organization of the delegation to the World Muslim Congress held in Karachi) as the proper body to deal with in the resumption of negotiations for peace in Mindanao. For one thing, Nur Misuari, who represented the Filipino Muslims in the Tripoli Agreement was not involved in the Karachi Declaration. Until now the Tripoli Agreement issue is not yet resolved. In the meantime, atrocities between government forces and the MNLF continue to hamper the development of Southern Philippines.

### Conclusion

The Muslim rebellion in Mindanao is a problem in majority-minority relations. Essentially, it is a reaction of the Muslim minority to the increasing domination of the Christian majority over their community life. As in most contemporary intergroup conflicts in Southeast Asia and in other developing countries, the fundamental variables that undergird the Muslim rebellion in Mindanao are unequal distribution of power and ethnicity. In particular, the Muslims feel that there is a deliberate effort on the part of the Christian-dominated Philippine government to alienate them from Islam and their cherished traditional values and customs, that the national government has been instrumental in their displacement from their ancestral homes and traditional lands as well as in the wanton exploitation of their natural resources by foreign corporations and local Christian capitalists, that they have no future in the Philippines because they are not adequately represented in the formulation of policies affecting them and in the administration of the government, and that they are at the mercy of their more advanced Christian compatriots in matters of professional and economic competition. Equally important is the assertion of the Muslims of their historical achievements and cultural values which make them fight for the preservation of their identity as a people.

Certain events in the past created a wide gulf between the Christian majority and the Muslim minority. Most significant of these were the Christian-Muslim fratricidal wars perpetuated by the divide-and-rule policy of both the Spanish and American colonial regimes in the country. Also important were the land settlement policies, integration programs, and

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political programs of the said regimes which were sustained by the Philippine government even after WWII. These policies and programs gave the Muslims the impression that the Philippine government does not only heap more privileges to the Christian majority but also contrives to alienate them from their Islamic culture.

Finding no international support for their demand for secession, the Muslims pin their hope of survival as an Islamic community in the Tripoli Agreement which established autonomy in "Muslim-populated" provinces in the south within the "sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines." However, negotiations for peace as mandated by the Tripoli Agreement broke down. The MNLF which serves as the official voice of the Muslims accused the Philippine government of circumventing the accord. The major areas of controversy between the Government and the Muslim leaders represented by the MNLF include the territorial coverage of the regions of autonomy; regional administrative system, the relationship between the national and local government units and other entities; the regional security force, and the regional financial and taxing powers. It is the perception of the Muslims that the autonomy granted to them is neither meaningful nor substantive. They want a complete implementation of the Tripoli Agreement. This was clear in the Karachi Declaration which President Marcos brushed aside.

The experiences of Switzerland, Mexico and the United States which contain major ethnic cleavages indicate that assimilation and pluralism are the only viable solutions to the problem of national stability. To the Filipino Muslims, the Tripoli Agreement which guarantees the preservation of their cultural identity is the only solution to their insistence on separate nationhood. But whether granting them autonomy in the spirit of the Tripoli Agreement will bring about peace in Southern Philippines remains problematic. For one thing, the MNLF which represents the Muslim leadership in the area has no clear ideology on the political and other rights of Christians and other non-Muslims in the areas of autonomy. As in the case of Beirut, a change in power relations between Christians and Muslims particularly in areas currently controlled by the former is likely to generate additional power struggles. More alarming is the MNLF's vow to recover the territorial *Ummah* "at any cost." This could perpetuate the present intergroup conflict as there are many places in the autonomous regions where the Christians have long established their families and livelihood.

Neglected in the on-going negotiations for peace in Mindanao are the Christians who constitute about 67 percent of the people in the area. In view of their being the majority in the area, they should be included in all negotiations concerning the future of Mindanao. To exclude them in the peace process will be a gross neglect of a significant aspect of the Mindanao



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conflict. In fact, the Christians of Mindanao are now clamoring for inclusion in the peace talks between the government and the Muslim rebels. It will be for the interest of its peace initiative in Mindanao if the government listens to the clamor of the Christians in the area.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> A pluralistic society is a society consisting of two or more distinct ethnic groups.

<sup>2</sup> A minority is any racial, religious, or ethnic group that has less than equal access to positions of privilege, power and prestige within a society. Or as Writh (1928) puts it, a minority is "a group of people who, because of physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination". In common usage, the terms "majority" and "minority" refer to the characteristics of "dominance" and "subordination" in the relationship between groups or to a given group's access to such scarce values as wealth, power, prestige, and influence in intergroup relations and interactions.

<sup>3</sup> This is the so-called power conflict theory.

<sup>4</sup> Informal conversations with Alhoud Syed Lingga, Chairman, Political Secretariat, Northern Mindanao Revolutionary Command of the MNLF; Dr. Milandre Rusgal, Director, Mindanao Executive Development Authority; Atty. Norma Meruhom, Muslim Professor, Mindanao State University, Marawi City; Mr. Poingan Guimba, Muslim Instructor, Mindanao State University, Marawi City. Conversations took place in U.P., Diliman, Quezon City, between May 1 and August 2, 1986.

A good discussion on the topic can be found in Dr. Rusgal's "Development and the Moro Problem," unpublished seminar paper, College of Education, U.P., 1984.

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*Appendix A*

**THE TRIPOLI AGREEMENT**

Between

**The Government of the  
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES**

and

**THE MORO NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT**

with the help of the  
Organization of Islamic Conference represented  
by the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission

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 A 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 discussion 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 Communique 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 Arab Republic and which calls for the

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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. following 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 the Delegations of:

FIRST, Government of the Republic of the Philippines, led by the Honorable Carmelo Z. Barbero, Undersecretary of National Defense for Civilian Relations.

SECOND, 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 - represented by H.E. Salh Abdalla El-Fadl  
Ambassador of the Kingdom of S. Arabia Libyan Arab Republic

The Republic of Senegal - represented by Mr. Abubakar Othman Si  
Charge d' Affairs of Senegal to Cairo Republic of Senegal

The Republic of Somalia - represented by H.E. Bazi Mohamed Sufi  
Ambassador of the Democratic Republic of Somalia Libyan Arab  
Republic

With the aid of H.E. Dr. Ahmed Karim Gaye, Secretary General  
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 was 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 Sur
5. Zamboanga 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
14. All the cities and villages situated in the above-mentioned areas.



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THIRD :

1. **FOREIGN POLICY.** Foreign policy shall be of the competence of the Central Government of the Philippines.
2. **NATIONAL DEFENSE.** The National Defense Affairs shall be the concern of the Central Authority provided that the arrangements for joining of the forces of the Moro National Liberation Front with the Philippine Armed Forces be discussed later.
3. **ISLAMIC SHARIA COURTS.** In the areas of Autonomy, the Muslims shall have the right to set up their own Courts which implement the Shari'a 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 for their appointments taking into consideration all necessary qualifications of the candidates.
4. **SCHOOLS.** 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 of the State shall be discussed later on.
5. **ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM.** The Muslims shall have their own administrative system in compliance with the objectives of the autonomy and its institutions. The relationship between this system and the Central Administrative system to be discussed later.
6. **FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS.** The authorities of the Autonomy in the South of the Philippines shall have their own financial and economic systems. The relationship of the systems with the Central Economic and Financial systems of the State shall be discussed later.
7. **REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL AFFAIRS.** 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 organs of the State. The number of representatives and ways of participation shall be fixed later.
8. **SPECIAL REGIONAL SECURITY FORCES.** Special Regional Security forces are to be set in the areas of Autonomy for the Muslims in the South of the Philippines. The relationship between these forces and the Central Security Forces of the State shall be fixed later.
9. **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.** A Legislative Assembly and an Executive Council shall be formed in the areas of 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.

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10. **MINES AND NATURAL RESOURCES.** Mines and natural resources fall within the competence of the Central Government and a reasonable percentage deriving from the revenues of the mines and the minerals be fixed for the benefit of the Autonomy.
11. **JOINT COMMITTEE TO RESOLVE THE DETAILS OF THE AGREEMENT.** 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 Fifth of February to a date not later than the Third of March 1977. The task of the 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. **CEASEFIRE.** A Ceasefire shall be declared immediately after the signature of this agreement, provided that its coming into effect should not exceed the 26th of 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 Commission to supervise the implementation of the Ceasefire.
13. **DUTIES OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE CEASEFIRE.** The Joint Committee shall be charged with the following:
  - a. a complete amnesty in the areas of the Autonomy and in 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.
14. **RESOLUTION OF 11.** 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 in Para. 11.
15. **FINAL AGREEMENT.** 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 the Moro National Liberation Front and the Islamic Conference represented by the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission and the Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.
16. **PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT.** Immediately after the signature of the Agreement in Manila, a Provisional Government shall be established in the areas of Autonomy to be appointed by the President of the Philippines, and shall be charged with the task of preparing for the election of the Legislative Assembly in the territories of the Autonomy; and administer the areas in accordance with the provisions of this



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agreement until a government is formed by the elected Legislative Assembly.

17. **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENT.** The Government shall take all necessary Constitutional processes for the implementation of the entire agreement.

**FOURTH : EFFECTIVITY.** This Agreement shall come to 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 AND FRENCH LANGUAGES, ALL EQUAL IN LEGAL POWER.

SIGNED:

FOR THE REPUBLIC OF THE  
PHILIPPINES

FOR THE MORO NATIONAL  
LIBERATION FRONT

HON. CARMELO Z. BARBERO  
Undersecretary of National  
Defense for Civilian Relations

MR. NUR MISUARI  
Chairman of the MNLF

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*Appendix B*

**RESOLUTIONS  
of the  
ISLAMIC FOREIGN MINISTERS' CONFERENCE**

1972. RESOLUTION No. 12. Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. 4 March 1972. "...deem it necessary to seek the good offices of the Government of the Philippines to guarantee the safety and property of the Muslims of the Philippines as citizens of that country."
- 1973 RESOLUTION No. 4. Benghazi, Libya. 26 March 1973. "We are aware of the fact that the problem is full of complications the more so as it concerns the internal affairs of an independent sovereign state and therefore appeal to the Philippine Government to ensure the safety and basic liberties to the Muslims guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and their country's constitution."
- 1974 RESOLUTION No. 18. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. 25 June 1974. "... recognize the complexity of the problem as it relates to an independent and sovereign state; "  
... take note of the steps taken by the Philippine Government to improve the conditions of the Muslims;  
... urge the Philippine Government to find a political and peaceful solution through negotiation with Muslim leaders, particularly with representatives of the MNLF in order to arrive at a just solution to the plight of the Filipino Muslims within the framework of the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Philippines;  
... recognizes the problem as internal problem with the Philippine Government to ensure the safety of Filipino Muslims and the preservation of their liberties in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."
- 1975 RESOLUTION No. 10. Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. 15 July 1975. "... invite the Government of the Philippines to achieve agreement on all aspects of autonomy for the Muslims in the South of the Philippines, ensuring peace and security to them and guaranteeing all their legitimate rights, while at the same time preserving the territorial integrity of the Philippines, thus enabling the Government of the Latter to exert all their efforts in the service of the people as a whole."
- 1976 RESOLUTION No. 12/P. Istanbul. 15 May 1976. "... call on the Government of the Philippines to honor its commitment to grant autonomy to Muslims in Mindanao, Basilan, Sulu and Palawan; within the State of the Philippines."
- 1977 RESOLUTION No. 7/8 P. Tripoli, Libya. May 1977. "... declare the Philippine Government responsible for protecting the lives and properties of Muslims in Southern Philippines. " .. entrusting to the Quadripartite Committee the



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- task of carrying on its Mission of mediation between the two parties in conformity with the previous resolutions adopted by the Conference."
- 1978 RESOLUTION No. 20/9 P. Dakar, Morocco. 28 April 1978. " ... note the message addressed to the Government of the Republic of the Philippines by the MNLFF reaffirming its commitment to the provisions of this Agreement with regard to the internal autonomy of the 13 provinces of the Southern Philippines."
- 1979 RESOLUTION No. 21/10 P. Fez. 12 May 1979. " ... the Tripoli Agreement is a sound basis for the solution of the problem of the Muslim of the Philippines within the framework of National Unity and Sovereignty."
- 1980 RESOLUTION No. 22/11 P. Islamabad, Pakistan. 22 May 1980. " ... recall the foregoing resolutions and decide to request the Philippines to implement the Tripoli Agreement."

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*Appendix C*

**RESOLUTION NO. 18**

**OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE AT THE  
FIFTH ISLAMIC CONFERENCE OF FOREIGN MINISTERS**

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
21-25 June 1974

**RESOLUTION ON THE PLIGHT OF THE  
MUSLIM FILIPINOS**

**PREAMBULAR**

The fifth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from June 21st to 25th, 1974:

1. RECALLING Resolution No. 4 adopted by the Fourth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers at Benghazi in March, 1973;
2. HAVING CONSIDERED the report submitted by the Special Mission composed of the Foreign Ministers of Libya, Saudi Arabia, Senegal and Somalia pursuant to the Resolution (n. 4) adopted by the Fourth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers at Benghazi;
3. EXPRESSING deep regret of the conditions in the South of the Philippines;
4. EXPRESSING a deep appreciation of the efforts of the above-mentioned Special Mission;
5. CONSCIOUS of the complexity of the problem as it relates to an independent and sovereign state but at the same time concerned at the tragic plight of the Filipino Muslims;

**OPERATIVE**

1. EXPRESSES its deep and continuing anxiety over the situation prevailing among Filipino Muslims and in the Southern Philippines;
2. CALLS upon the Philippine Government to desist from all means which results in the killing of Muslims and the destruction of their property and places of worship in the Southern Philippines;
3. TAKES NOTE of the steps taken by the Philippine Government to improve the condition of the Muslims but is convinced that the socio-economic measures proposed by the Philippine Government will not by themselves solve the problem;



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4. URGES the Philippine Government to improve and find a political and peaceful solution through negotiations with Muslim leaders, particularly with representatives of the Moro National Liberation Front in order to arrive at a just solution to the plight of the Muslims within the framework of the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Philippines;
5. CALLS ON the Philippine Government to bring about the necessary climate of confidence for a real and just solution by immediately desisting from Military operations, providing protection and security for the Muslims, repatriating refugees to their homes and halting organized Christian migration from the North;
6. APPEALS to peace loving states and religious international authorities, while recognizing the problem as an internal problem of the Philippines, to use their good offices with the Philippine Government to ensure safety of Filipino Muslims and the preservation of their liberties in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
7. DECIDES to establish a body to be called the Filipino Muslim Welfare and Relief Agency for the purpose of extending welfare and relief aid direct to Muslims in the Southern Philippines so as to ameliorate their plight and raise social and economic well-being provided the Agency is being financed from the Islamic Fund and is controlled by the Committee of the Solidarity Fund;
8. APPEALS to member countries and others to contribute generously in cash or in kind to the agency for immediate relief purposes;
9. REQUESTS the Secretary-General in consultation with the four (4) Foreign Ministers to take steps to discuss with the Philippine Government the modalities and terms of cooperation in the work of the Agency;
10. DECIDES that the Special Mission of the Foreign Ministers established in pursuance of Resolution No. 4 of the Fourth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers will remain in being to pursue these matters;
11. DECIDES to review this subject again at the next Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers;
12. REQUESTS the Secretary-General to transmit this Resolution to the Philippine Government.

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*Appendix D*

PROCLAMATION NO. 1628

DECLARING AUTONOMY IN SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES

WHEREAS, in an agreement executed on December 23, 1976 between the Republic of the Philippines and the Moro National Liberation Front with the participation of representatives of the Conference and with the assistance of the Secretary General of the Islamic Conference, it was agreed that within the realm of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines, autonomy shall be declared in 13 provinces of Southern Philippines;

WHEREAS, in subsequent negotiations held from February 8, 1977 to March, 1977, also at Tripoli, Libya, the parties were unable to agree on certain valid aspects of the autonomy to be established in Southern Philippines;

WHEREAS, the First Lady Imelda Romualdez Marcos visited Libya from March 12-22, 1977 and on the occasion of said visit had discussed with Col. M. Khaddafy, the leader of the Great First September Revolution of the People's Socialist Libyan Arab Jemehriya, the problem in Southern Philippines in the light of an impasse in the negotiations held from February 9, 1977 to March 3, 1977;

WHEREAS, in the course of said discussions, Col. M. Khaddafy proposed to break the impasse in the aforementioned negotiations with the declaration by President Ferdinand E. Marcos of autonomy for the Thirteen provinces mentioned in the Tripoli Agreement of December 23, 1976 within the realm of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines, the organization of a provisional government for such areas of autonomy, in which provisional government the concerned parties of the Moro National Liberation Front and the inhabitants of the areas of autonomy shall take part and the holding of a referendum by the provisional government concerning the manner in which the inhabitants within the areas of autonomy may wish to organize themselves administratively in accordance with the Constitution of the Philippines;

WHEREAS, on the following day, March 19, 1977, President Ferdinand E. Marcos informed Col. Muammar Al Khaddafy of his approval of the above proposals;

WHEREAS, immediately after the receipt of the telegram of President Ferdinand E. Marcos dated March 19, 1977, Col. Muammar Al Khaddafy informed President Marcos by telegram of the approval of the agreed formula by the Members of the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission of the Islamic Conference and the Islamic States supporting the endeavors of the People's Socialist Libyan Arab Jemehriya and requesting that the same be implemented at the earliest possible time;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, FERDINAND E. MARCOS, President of the Republic of the Philippines, by virtue of the powers vested in me by the Constitution, do



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hereby declare autonomy in Southern Philippines to be composed of the provinces of Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga, Zamboanga del Norte in Region 9, Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, Maguindanao, North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat in Region 12, Palawan in Region 4, and Davao del Sur and South Cotabato in Region 11.

Prior to the establishment of the Regional Legislative Assembly and the Executive Council as envisioned in the Tripoli Agreement dated December 23, 1976, there is hereby created a Provisional Regional Government in the above mentioned areas to be composed of seven (7) members appointed by the President, two (2) of whom shall be from the Moro National Liberation Front and one (1) member to be recommended by other liberation fronts in the provinces concerned. Its main functions, powers, and responsibilities are as follows:

1. To prepare for the referendum in the said areas;
2. To prepare for the election of the regional legislative assembly in the said areas;
3. To administer said areas in accordance with the existing laws and policies governing the activities presently being undertaken by the local government units therein; and
4. To exercise such other powers as the President of the Philippines may direct.

The results of the referendum of April 17, 1977 shall determine the manner in which the inhabitants of the areas of autonomy may wish to reorganize themselves administratively in accordance with the Constitution of the Philippines and the formula proposed by Col. Muammar Al Khaddafy, the leader of the Great First September Revolution of the People's Socialist Libyan Arab Jemerihiya.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the Republic of the Philippines to be affixed.

Done in the City of Manila, this 25th day of March, in the year of our Lord, nineteen hundred and seventy seven.

(SGD.) FERDINAND E. MARCOS  
President  
Republic of the Philippines

*Appendix E*

**KARACHI PAPERS (ORIGINAL MNLF STAND  
from MNLF MANIFESTO)**

- ARTICLE 1 - TITLE. This law shall be known and cited as "THE AUTONOMY LAW."
- ARTICLE 2 - DEFINITION OF TERMS. When used in the law, the following terms shall mean:
- 2.1 CONSTITUTION - refers to the Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines.
  - 2.2 PRESIDENT - refers to the President of the Republic of the Philippines.
  - 2.3 AUTONOMOUS REGION - shall mean the territorial limits as defined under Article III hereof.
  - 2.4 REGIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY - refers to the Legislative Assembly of the region of Autonomy hereinafter known or referred to as the Batasang Pampook.
  - 2.5 REGIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL - refers to the Executive Body of the Autonomous Region hereinafter known or referred to as the LUPONG TAGAPAGPAGANAP NG POOK.
  - 2.6 SPEAKER - means the presiding officer and head of the Batasang Pampook (Regional Legislative Assembly) of the Autonomous Region.
  - 2.7 LUPONG CHAIRMAN - refers to the head of the Lupong Tagapagpaganap ng Pook (Regional Executive Council).
  - 2.8 SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE - refers to an Assemblyman duly elected by the Assembly to the position of Speaker Pro Tempore who shall act as Speaker in the Latter's absence or incapacity to perform the inherent functions of the office.
  - 2.9 DEPUTY CHAIRMEN - refers to the members of the Regional Assembly Executive Council appointed by the President upon nomination by the Regional Legislative Assembly.
  - 2.10 AUTONOMOUS GOVERNMENT - shall mean the Regional Autonomous government.
- ARTICLE 3 - TERRITORY. The area of the Autonomous region shall comprise the present territorial limits of the provinces of Basilan, Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte, and South Cotabato; the cities of Basilan, Cotabato, Iligan, General Santos, Marawi, Pagadian, Zamboanga and Jolo which shall be constituted and known as



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the Autonomous Regions and shall not be increased nor diminished without the expressed consent of the Batasang Pampook (Regional Legislative Assembly) as a body.

ARTICLE 4 - SCOPE OF AUTONOMY - The Autonomous Government shall be established within the framework of national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Philippines. It shall exercise powers, functions and responsibilities in accordance with the Constitution and laws of the Republic of the Philippines.

The Autonomous government shall undertake all POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE matters within its area of jurisdiction. However, it shall not act on matters which are beyond its jurisdiction and competence and which are within the jurisdiction and competence of the national government vis-a-vis the following:

- 4.1 National security and defense
- 4.2 Foreign relations
- 4.3 Currency, monetary affairs and foreign exchange
- 4.4 Foreign trade
- 4.5 Air and sea transport
- 4.6 Postal matters and telecommunications
- 4.7 Immigration and deportation
- 4.8 Citizenship and naturalization
- 4.9 General auditing
- 4.10 Civil service

ARTICLE 5 - BATASANGPAMPOOK (REGIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY)

5.1 It shall have the Legislative Body of the Autonomous Region.  
COMPOSITION, REPRESENTATION AND TENURE OF OFFICE

For the area of Autonomy there shall be only one Batasang Pampook (Regional Legislative Assembly) whose membership shall not exceed 52 assemblymen.

5.1.1 Of the fifty two (52) Assemblymen, forty (40) will be elected at large by the people of the area of Autonomy and the remaining eight (8) shall be elected sectorally, provided that there shall be two (2) representatives each of the following sectors: professional, industrial, agricultural and youth.

5.1.2 The tenure of office of the Assemblymen shall be for a period of six (6) years and shall be elected at the same time with the members of the Batasang Pambansa. In case of vacancy in the Regional Assembly for at least one (1) year preceding a regular election, the Batasang Pampook may call for a Special Election to fill up such vacancy, provided that the Assemblymen elected for

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this purpose shall hold office only for the unexpired term until the next regular election.

### 5.2 QUALIFICATIONS, COMPENSATION, INHIBITIONS AND PRIVILEGES, ETC.

The members of the Batasang Pampook (Regional Legislative Assembly) shall possess the same qualifications, receive the compensation, enjoy the same immunities, emoluments and inhibitions accorded to the members of the Batasang Pambansa (National Assembly).

### 5.3 OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE REGIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

5.3.1 The Batasang Pampook (Regional Legislative Assembly) shall have a Speaker and Speake Pro Tempore and such other officials from among themselves who shall be elected by the members of the Assembly.

5.3.2 The Speaker of the Batasan Pampook shall be a member of the National Cabinet with the rank of Minister without portfolio.

5.3.3 The Assembly shall also have employees such as a secretary, a sergeant-at-arms and such other employees who shall be appointed by the Speaker, provided that in the case of the secretary and the sergeant-at-arms, their appointments must be concurred by the Assembly, provided furthermore that all appointments shall be made in accordance with civil service laws.

### 5.4 ORGANIZATION, MEETING/SESSSIONS AND RULES OF PROCEDURES

5.4.1 The Batasang Pampook (Regional Legislative Assembly) shall organize such committees and offices as may be necessary for the efficient performance of its powers, functions and duties.

5.4.2 Sessions of the Batasang Pampook (Regional Legislative Assembly) shall be conducted alternately in Zamboanga City and Cotabato City, provided that the summer sessions of the Assembly in the months of April, May and June shall be at Marawi City, the Summer capital of Southern Philippines.

5.4.3 The Batasang Pampook (Regional Legislative Assembly) shall also formulate and adopt its own rules of procedures including the procedures for the selection of the presiding officer and the procedure for investigation as an aid for legislation in order to attain its objectives. The same shall be adopted by 3/4 votes of all the members in session. Pending the adoption of said rules, the rules of procedures of the Batasang



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Pambansa (National Parliament) shall, as far as practicable be made applicable to Batasang Pampook (Regional Legislative Assembly).

5.5 POWERS

The Regional Legislative Assembly (Batasang Pampook) shall exclusively exercise local legislative powers as follows:

5.5.1 It shall have the sole power to enact laws and ordinances exclusively and generally applicable to the region, PROVIDED THAT such laws and ordinances shall be in accordance with the Constitution and laws of the Republic of the Philippines and provided furthermore, that the same enactments shall not contravene Islamic Shariah (Juris Prudence).

5.5.2 To nominate the appointment, transfer and/or promotion of regional directors and discipline erring regional and local officials and finally recommend to the President their dismissal from office.

5.5.3 To prepare its own budget and to review, amend, and/or approve the budgets of the Local government units and all budgets of other regional offices of line ministries operating within the area of autonomy.

5.5.4 Design, adopt and implement economic, agricultural, commercial, industrial, social education, health and infrastructure development programs and projects in accordance with general policies of the State.

5.5.5 Taxation and other revenue raising measures.

5.5.6 Establishment, operation and administration of schools, colleges and universities and manpower and youth training centers.

5.5.7 Preservation and development of Islamic cultural heritage, customs, languages and culture indigenous to the autonomous region.

5.5.8 Disposition, exploration, development, exploitation or utilization of natural resources in the area of autonomy.

5.5.9 The Batasang Pampook shall designate and establish specific areas within the area of autonomy as settlement areas and only upon such designation can they be developed and operationalized.

5.5.10 Require the appearance of members of the Executive Council and any other government official or employee in the Autonomous region before the Assembly for consultation/questioning on matters falling within the scope of their official functions and responsibilities, and

5.5.11 Such other matters as may be authorized.

5.6 All enactments of the Regional Assembly having the force of

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law shall take effect upon its effectivity clause unless otherwise declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court or unless the office of the President declare the same to be contrary to national defense and objectives.

### ARTICLE 6

#### EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

6.1

#### NUMBER AND AREA OF JURISDICTION

There shall be one (1) Regional Executive Council for the Autonomous Government which shall have administrative jurisdiction over the area of autonomy.

6.2

#### COMPOSITION AND TENURE

The Regional Executive Council shall be composed of seven (7) members to be headed by a Chairman and assisted by six (6) Deputy Chairmen with portfolio positions in the Regional Administrative structure. They shall be appointed by the President of the Republic upon nomination by the Batasang Pampook (Regional Legislative Assembly) by a vote of not less than three fourths (3/4) of its members.

To qualify for nonimations as Chairman or member of the Executive Council, by the Batasang Pampook (Regional Legislative Assembly) the nominee must have been an Assemblyman elected at large by the people of the area of autonomy. He must be a native and a resident of the area of autonomy.

6.2.1 The members of the Lupong Tagapagpaganap ng Pook (Regional Executive Council) shall serve from the date of their appointment until their lawful successors shall have been nominated and appointed. Provided that any member of the Lupong Tagapagpaganap ng Pook may for specific reasons, be removed from office by the President upon recommendation of at least three fourths (3/4) of the whole assembly in session, provided furthermore that his replacement shall also be nominated by the Assembly. Provided finally, that such removal from membership of the Lupong Tagapagpaganap ng Pook shall not prejudice his seat as member of the Assembly unless he is impeached by the Assembly.

6.2.2 The Chairman of the Lupong Tagapagpaganap ng Pook (Executive Council) shall be a member of the National Cabinet with the rank of a Minister with a portfolio.

6.3

#### FUNCTIONS

6.3.1 The Regional Executive Council (Lupong Tagapagpaganap ng Pook) shall be the Executive Body of the Autonomous Region.

6.3.2 It shall have direct administrative and general supervision and control over local government of the prov-



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inces, cities, municipalities, municipal districts and the barangays within its area of jurisdiction.

6.3.3 It shall enforce, implement or where appropriate, cause and supervise the implementation of national policies, laws and programs formulated or enacted by the Regional Legislative Assembly (Batasang Pampook).

6.3.4 It shall exercise functional supervision over regional offices of the different ministries of the government and all local government units within the area of autonomy.

6.3.5 It shall create such offices and appoint such employees and officials as may be necessary for the efficient performance of their functions in accordance with civil service laws and provided that such creation of offices shall be subject to the approval of the Batasang Pampook.

6.3.6 RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The Regional Executive Council shall be responsible and accountable to the President and the Regional Legislative Assembly for the proper and efficient administration of the region.

ARTICLE 7 - REGIONAL FINANCE AND ECONOMIC SYSTEM

7.1 The Regional Autonomous government shall have its own financial and economic system.

7.2 SOURCES OF INCOME

7.2.1 All existing national fundings, allotments, shares, grants-in-aids and others of similar nature, accruing to the present provinces, cities, municipalities, municipal districts and barangays of the autonomous region from the national revenues and incomes shall continue.

7.2.2 Taxes, fees and charges that may be imposed by the regional autonomous government in addition to or different from the national or local taxes, fees and charges.

7.2.3 All moneys and incomes realized from the engagement in economic enterprise activity by the corporate arm of the regional autonomous government.

7.2.4 Contributions from the local government comprising the region as may be provided by national or regional laws.

7.2.5 A minimum of one-sixth (1/6) of all government revenues and incomes derived from natural resources of the region.

7.2.6 All government owned or controlled corporations operating within the area of autonomy shall remit ten percent (10%) from their gross earnings on

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quarterly basis to the autonomous government for its development programs.

- 7.2.7 Thirty percent (30%) of the gross income tax (GIT) collected from private business operations within the area of autonomy shall accrue to the Regional Autonomous Government. Provided that the basis of computation of the 30% shall be after the local government shares shall have been deducted.
- 7.2.8 Transfer of the proceeds of certain national and local trades as may be prescribed by law and
- 7.2.9 Such other amounts as may be allotted in the national budget for the operation of the autonomous government and the development plans, programs and projects in the area of said government.

### 7.3 BUDGETING

- 7.3.1 PREPARATION AND APPROVAL - The Regional Executive Council shall prepare the budget of the Autonomous region on the basis of the functions, programs, projects or activities in terms of expected results, and such budget shall be submitted to the Regional Legislative Assembly for modification, review, amendment and enactment and shall take effect upon its approval.
- 7.3.2 FORM AND CONTENT - the budget of the autonomous region shall primarily consist of two parts:
- 7.3.2.1 The estimates of income certified collectively by the chief regional treasure and
- 7.3.2.2 The current operating expenditures and
- 7.3.2.3 Capital outlay.
- 7.3.3 ACCOUNTABILITY OF FUNDS - the collection, custody, use, disbursement and accounting of public funds in the autonomous region shall be governed by the existing general accounting office/commission on audit rules and regulations.
- 7.3.4 AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS - the accounts of the autonomous region shall be audited by the Commission of Audit.

### 7.4 AVAILMENT OF FUNDS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROJECTS IN THE AUTONOMOUS REGION

Request for the release of funding from the national government whether in the form of budgetary needs, aids, grants and other national support for local government units or line agencies or ministries shall be coursed through the regional autonomous government.

## ARTICLE 8 - FOREIGN POLICY

- 8.1 Foreign Policy shall be within the competence of the national government provided that the autonomous government is



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authorized to enter into contracts, incur obligations, and to receive aids from foreign governments or agencies, private entities or persons exclusively for the development of the region and its inhabitants with the approval of the President of the Philippines.

ARTICLE 9 - JUDICIARY

9.1 The present national judicial system and the SHARIAH courts shall be maintained in the region unless notified by national law. However, pending the acquisition of adequate knowledge in Shariah laws of the judges in these shariah courts, there shall be one JURIS CONSULT for each Shariah court who shall give his Shariah legal opinion on the case before the Shariah Court. This JURIS CONSULT must be a Filipino citizen and a holder of at least a Bachelor's Degree in Shariah from a reputable college or university. The offer of His Majesty's Government of the Royal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to provide Shariah consultants pending the acquisition of the Shariah skills can also be considered and accepted.

ARTICLE 10 - REGIONAL SECURITY FORCE

10.1 There is hereby organized a Regional Security Force, the manpower strength of which shall not be less than two (2) for every thousand or any fraction thereof of the population in the area of autonomy. The Regional Security Force shall be under the functional supervision of the Ministry of National Defense but administratively supervised by the Regional Autonomous Government. The personnel requirement of the Security Force shall be charged to the regular Regional Autonomous Government budget provided that all its logistical support requirement shall come from the regular issue of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

10.2 The officers and men of the Regional Security Force shall enjoy the ranks equivalent to those in the Integrated National Police (INP) and shall enjoy the same rights and privileges inherent to the position which they occupy.

10.3 The Regional Security Force is charged with the functions of maintaining peace and order and security within the area of autonomy. The regular troops of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) shall however be strategically deployed within the area in order to enable them to aid and give support to the Regional Security Force in times of emergency, provided that the emergency situation shall be determined and declared by the Batasang Pampook (Regional Legislative Assembly) and/or the President of the Philippines

ARTICLE 11 - REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION IN THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

11.1 The populace in the territory of the Autonomous Government

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shall enjoy the right of proportionate representation and participation in the national government and in all other organs of the state including government owned or controlled corporations. Such proportionate representation and participation shall be based on the ratio of Autonomous area population to the total Philippine population.

- 11.2 In the area of international diplomatic relations, specially with the Middle East/Islamic countries, qualified Muslim Filipinos may be recruited to serve with the foreign service.

### ARTICLE 12 - NATURAL RESOURCES

The exploration, exploitation, utilization and development of all natural resources in the area of autonomy can be performed only with the express consent of the Regional Autonomous Government and subject to the payment of fees accruing the Regional Autonomous Government, provided that the corporate arm of the Regional Autonomous Government may also be authorized to engage in exploration, exploitation, utilization and development of said natural resources.

### ARTICLE 13 - PROMOTION OF GENERAL WELFARE

The Regional Autonomous Government shall formulate policies, adopt measures and undertake such programs and projects for the promotion of national unity and the development of the region and its inhabitants within the framework of national sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines. For this purpose, the Regional Offices of the National Economic Development Authority and the Regional Development Council in the region shall be directly under the supervision and control of the Regional Autonomous Government.

### ARTICLE 14 - MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

- 14.1 The Regional Autonomous Government shall be Zamboanga City.
- 14.2 The Regional Autonomous Government shall at all times be a component and integral part of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and as such shall be expressly mandated by the Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines as the highest local government unit in the area of autonomy.
- 14.3 The National Government shall appropriate sufficient funds in the national budget for the operation of the autonomous governments until the latter shall have enough earnings to sufficiently cover its operation.
- 14.4 REPEALING CAUSE- Presidential Decree No. 1618 and such other laws, acts, decrees, Executive Orders, Proclamations, Letters of Instructions, Executive Orders and/or Administrative Orders and Regulations which are inconsistent with the



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Regional Autonomous Law shall accordingly be modified, amended and/or repealed.

- 14.5 SEPARABILITY CLAUSE - The provisions of the Regional Autonomy Law shall be separable and in the event any one or more of such provisions are held unconstitutional, such shall not affect the validity of the other provisions.
- 14.6 EFFECTIVITY - The Regional Autonomy Law shall take effect upon its approval by the President of the New Republic of the Philippines.

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