

CHAPTER IV

BANGSAMORO STRUGGLE

A. Origins and Factors of the Filipino Muslim Armed Struggle

The tenacity of the Filipino Muslim armed struggle is an intriguing fact in Philippine history. The Filipino Muslims tested the energies of the Spanish government for over 300 years and challenged the military power of the United States for almost half a century. More importantly, however, they have seriously tested the Filipino capacity to rule and to unite, something that had stood the test of time, except perhaps in 1986 with the fall of the Marcos regime. The determined efforts of the Spanish government and the Christian Filipinos to stop Muslim raids north of Mindanao made the Muslims "conscious of their own weaknesses" and the need for new strategies.⁹⁵

With the arrival of the United States in 1898, the history of the Philippines began to be reshaped, particularly in the southern islands, as the Muslims (Moros) tried to reassert their ownership or rights to Mindanao. Tan argues that there were four factors responsible for the many uprisings, incidents, and movements in the Philippines during the first four decades of the twentieth century:

American colonialism, a system of control which reduced traditional leaders to virtual impotence; religious beliefs, which refer to prevailing Muslim conviction that Muslim welfare and destiny were in the hands of God; government policies, that consisted of theories of action used in relation to the Muslim problem; and local rivalries, which refers to persisting

⁹⁵ Samuel K. Tan. *The Filipino Muslim Armed Struggle 1900-1972*. Manila: Filipinas Foundation Inc., University of the Philippines, 1977. P. 11

feuds in Muslim societies involving families, clans or datuships.⁹⁶

As the situation deteriorated, the Moros found they could not match the Americans in battles on the seas off northern Mindanao, as they realized that gunboats were much more effective. Clashes between the Americans and the Muslims became more severe on land as the U.S. military went about establishing colonial rule throughout the Philippines.

Anti-American, Christian, Government, and Internal Rivalries

The anti-American nature of Muslim violence was basically antimilitaristic. The American military was in the process of simply enforcing the colonial system and the Muslims did not suffer from any economic impositions or exactions.' The Moros anti-American reaction was, therefore, not the result of colonial exploitation but primarily the product of Muslim ethnic pride, which was combined with an enthusiastic sense of freedom and individualism. American militarism in Mindanao, therefore, developed a type of elitism that challenged or even threatened the Muslim warrior's code of honor. In contrast, the Muslim warrior tradition was "mainly rooted in the building of the warrior qualities of courage and individualism".⁹⁷ The frustrations of an unyielding U.S. military, combined with the added impetus of a Christian takeover led, according to Tan, to the "anti-Christian character of Muslim movements [which] was essentially related to Muslim anti-colonialism. Anti-Christianism, therefore, became a necessary element in the Muslim struggle against American militarism."⁹⁸

Adding to the constant pressure the Americans and Christians placed on the legitimacy of the Moros was the vigorous enforcement of

⁹⁶ Samuel K. Tan, "*The Filipino Muslim Armed Struggle 1900-1972*". Manila. Filipinas Foundation Inc, University of the Philippines. 1977. p.25.

⁹⁷ *ibid.* p.19.

⁹⁸ *ibid.* p.36.

government policies that affected Muslim customs and practices. The policies included disarmament, taxation, compulsory military training, compulsory education, the anti-slavery law, and the court system, all of which caused severe disturbances.⁹⁹

Collectively, the anti-American, anti-Christian, and anti-government disturbances were external conflicts in the sense that they represented Muslim answers to three inter-related challenges to Muslim societies from the outside world. The ability and capacity of the Muslims to meet these challenges were affected substantially by the internal problems and dissension similar in nature to the conflict patterns in the Islamic world.¹⁰⁰ It can be argued that internal rivalries and conflicts in Muslim societies during the early years of the U.S. regime seriously hampered the capacity of the Muslims to challenge such a united group as the superior force of the colonial government.

Resettlement Programs, Opening the Frontier

Mastura has argued that in 1913 and the years that followed, several agricultural colonies in different parts of Mindanao were established. Among their principal objectives were the following:

Politically, they were organized to show that the Christian homestead seekers and the non-Christian communities of Mindanao could live together as neighbors in peace and harmony; Economically, they were established to hasten the development and cultivation of large tracts of fertile agricultural land in Mindanao, thereby making the region contribute to national development through economic production.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Samuel K. Tan, *"The Filipino Muslim Armed Struggle 1900-1972"*. Manila: Filipinas Foundation Inc, University of the Philippines. 1977. p.33

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.* p. 50

¹⁰¹ Datu Michael O. Mastura, *Muslim Filipino Experience*. Manila: Ministry of Muslim Affairs, 1984. p. 243.

It is important to mention that these objectives "achieved for the government the fundamental policy to incorporate the region into a united Philippines, to be governed under common political institutions. By doing so, the government opened the way for voluntary and involuntary migration. However, the inflow of settlers was so severe that by 1948, where once the indigenous population predominated, they now had become the numerical minorities. Crystal has argued that "the Moros ... lost their lands to the settlers through the operation of law. Their displacement and dispossession in their own ancestral lands was legal."¹⁰²

As the ownership of land depended on land title, it became harder for the Moros to lay valid claims on their ownership or right to their ancestral properties. Hayase has added: "the American colonial government made it a principle of policy to encourage the taking up of small landholdings".¹⁰³ To be fair to the Americans, they did do their best to give the Moros the opportunity to press claims to land ownership. However, in most cases the actual size of allocation was rather small compared with the Christians who, according to Crystal, "on the other hand, used the legalities of land titling to, unwittingly or otherwise, land grab from local inhabitants".¹⁰⁴

Collier has summed up the Mindanao situation by arguing that:

The militarization, lawlessness and land grabbing which are such important parts of the Mindanao story provide us with more of a clue about the nature of society and

¹⁰² Rey Crystal. "Overview of Land Settlement Schemes in the Philippines", in Population Resettlement Program in Southeast Asia, edited by G. W. Jones and H. V. Richter. Canberra: Australian National University, 1982, p. 101.

¹⁰³ Shinzo Hayase, "Tribes, Settlers and Administrators on a Frontier: Economic Development and Social Change in Davao, Southern Mindanao" Ph.D. dissertation, Murdoch University, Western Australia, 1994, p. 242.

¹⁰⁴ Rey Crystal, "Overview of Land Settlement Schemes in the Philippines", in Population Resettlement Program in Southeast Asia, edited by G. W. Jones and H. V. Richter. Canberra: Australian National University, 1982, p. 101.

revolution on the island. Rather than seeking to restore traditional institutions, it seems possible that revolutionaries in frontier societies are attempting to create structures of their own to fill an institutional vacuum.¹⁰⁵

Immediately before independence in 1946, the Moro leaders submitted a memorandum to the U.S. government stating "[they did not] want to be included in the Philippines independence".¹⁰⁶ The United States did not accept the proposal, and thus in 1946 the newly independent Philippines had two major religious communities in Mindanao, that is, the Muslims and the Catholics.¹⁰⁷ The Philippines, therefore, became a united nation, as Selochan has pointed out:

On 4 July 1946, the U.S. granted independence to the Philippines, in keeping with its promise of self-determination for the islands. The Philippines thus became the first independent democratic country in Asia. At independence the Philippines political system was modeled on that of the United States, where the constitution required the armed forces to uphold civilian supremacy.¹⁰⁸

However, the task of Philippine unity - from the beginning of U.S. colonization to the handing down of independence - has not been easy. One of the main reasons for the disunity has been the levels of

¹⁰⁵ Kit Collier. "The Theoretical Problems of Insurgency in Mindanao: Why Theory? Why Mindanao?" in *Mindanao: Land of Unfulfilled Promises*, edited by Mark Turner, R.J. May, and Lulu Respall Turner. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1992, p. 209.

¹⁰⁶ Syed Serajul Islam. "The Islamic Independence Movements of Patani of Thailand and Mindanao of the Philippines", *Asian Survey* 38, no. 5, May 1998 . pp.441-57.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Viberto Selochan, "The Military and the Fragile Democracy of the Philippines", in *The Military and Democracy in Asia and the Pacific*, edited by R.J. May and Viberto Selochan. Bathurst, NSW: Crawford House Publishing, 1998, p. 59.

internal conflicts which persist amidst the poverty and economic problems associated with civil unrest.

Internal Conflicts and the Post-Independence Period

Internal conflicts have been a major determinant of political, social, and economic problems in the Philippines. In the case of Mindanao, the major problems underlying internal conflicts are mostly associated with the high incidences of poverty, particularly among the Muslims and the indigenous Lumads. However, to fully understand the main factors behind internal conflicts, it is important to look at the communities involved. Kaufmann has divided internal conflicts into two main categories: intra-community conflicts, and inter-community conflicts.

Intra-community conflicts are primarily about ideology, while intercommunity conflicts are driven primarily by ethnic divisions. Intra-community conflicts are disputes within a single national or religious community. By contrast, inter-community conflicts are disputes between groups that see themselves as distinct ethnic, clan, or religious communities. One community may see the state as an expression of its particular identity to the exclusion of others, while others may demand special rights or a degree of autonomy from the state, or even see to secede to form their own state.¹⁰⁹

Across Mindanao, militants have applied concerted pressure on non-Muslim communities, as they seek to impose their "rightful" claims. However strong the movement's causes are, one of the necessary components of their strategy is to obtain the support of

¹⁰⁹ Chaim Kaufmann. *"Intervention in Ethnic and Ideological Civil Wars"*, in *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics*, edited by Robert J. Art and Kenneth N. Waltz (Boulder, Colorado: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), p. 386.

other Muslims, a task that has proven quite difficult. Kaufmann has implied that the key to gaining support:

Is the flexibility of individual loyalties, which are relatively fluid in ideological conflicts, but almost completely rigid in ethnic wars. In ethnic conflicts, there is no loyalty competition. While not everyone may be mobilized as an active fighter for their own group, hardly anyone ever becomes a supporter of the opposing ethnic group. In ethnic wars, however, neither side can afford to surrender any settlement because the enemy is likely to "cleans" it by massacre, expulsion, or colonization, thus reducing or eliminating its value even if recaptured later.¹¹⁰

Post-Independence Tensions

The Moros continued their struggle for an independent Mindanao in post-independence Philippines. Rather than accommodating the demands of the Moros, the new Philippine government continued its colonial policy and adopted more regressive measures. It encouraged further migration of the Christian population into Mindanao. By the 1960s, the influx of settlers from northern and central Philippines made the Moros a virtual minority in their own land.¹¹¹

The modern movement for Muslim separatism originated among a small set of Philippine Muslim students and intellectuals in the late 1960s. It gained popular support after two major incidents.

¹¹⁰ Chaim Kaufmann, "Intervention in Ethnic and Ideological Civil Wars", in *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics*, edited by Robert J. Art and Kenneth N. Waltz. Boulder, Colorado: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999, pp. 386-88.

¹¹¹ Syed Serajul Islam. "The Islamic Independence Movements of Patani of Thailand and Mindanao of the Philippines", *Asian Survey* 38, no. 5 (May 1998). pp.441-457.

Firstly, the "Corregidor Massacre" of Muslim military trainees raised emotions and caused an outcry from within the Muslim community. This was followed by "numerous demonstrations and manifestos demanding clarification from the government for the death of the Muslim youths allegedly trained [on Simonul Island] for what was known as the Jabibah forces".¹¹² Secondly, with the rise of instability on Mindanao, "the eruption of sectarian violence in Cotabato in [the early] 1970s, emerg[ed] as an armed secessionist front in response to the declaration of martial law by Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos in 1972".¹¹³ Mindanao at this point was in a state of conflict that began to cause concerns for the local population as the island showed severe signs of poverty in most of its provinces.

Tan contends that what followed was:

The Mindanao crisis of 1971-72 which refers to the condition or state of extreme tension, fear, danger, insecurity, and utter distress which pervaded throughout the mainland off Mindanao for a considerable period of time and which brought about social, economic, personal, and political problems. The situation was precipitated by a series of circumstances, problems, incidents, and violence in Muslim areas as well as in the Christian communities of Lanao, Cotabato, Zamboanga, Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi.¹¹⁴

Hence, the Muslim problem became extremely critical, and the solution apparently lay in the Christian and Muslim emancipation from undesirable traditions and on the redefinition of national goals along economic and social lines. However, the problems of Mindanao were

¹¹² Samuel K. Tan, *The Filipino Muslim Armed Struggle 1900-1972* (Manila: Filipinas Foundation Inc, University of the Philippines, 1977), p. 117.

¹¹³ Thomas M. McKenna. "*Muslim Rulers and Rebels*" (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 3.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.* p.50.

not just affecting the Muslims, they were also seriously hampering the livelihood of the rest of Mindanao's population. Ferdinand Marcos made the situation worse in his quest for a third term in office in a nation that was in a constant state of conflict and economic difficulties.

Martial Law

Marcos believed that in a developing country where the military was not occupied with external threats, it should assist in developing the country. Constitutionally deprived of seeking a third term, Marcos declared martial law in 1972 and facilitated the military in playing a larger role in government.¹¹⁵ During the martial law period, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) became a powerful and dominant force in society and a political instrument for maintaining the corrupt and administratively inefficient regime of Marcos in power. However, for the MNLF, martial law presented a threat to the way of life of the Muslim community. To protect their community, they engaged the AFP in a bloody war that commenced soon after martial law was declared. Intense fighting only abated after the Tripoli Agreement (to be discussed later) was signed between the Marcos regime and the MNLF in 1975. Under the agreement, autonomy was promised to certain Muslim dominated provinces. Marcos, however, did not adhere to the agreement and sporadic fighting between the AFP and the MNLF continued throughout the period his regime was in power.¹¹⁶

The conflict that Mindanao has faced since the 1970s is closely tied to the economic problems the Philippines is facing at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The alienation and anger of the Muslims is fostered by the stagnation of the Muslim areas; and the MNLF, and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) insurrections reflect the discontent of most Muslims, particularly youths. By its oppressiveness,

¹¹⁵ Viberto Selochan, "*The Military and the Fragile Democracy of the Philippines*", in *The Military and Democracy in Asia and the Pacific*, edited by R.J. May and Viberto Selochan (Bathurst, NSW: Crawford House Publishing, 1998), p. 59.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, pp.111-112.

the martial law regime of Marcos created the circumstances for the people of Mindanao to realize their own situation. The Lumads, the Muslims, and the Christians began helping each other against martial law, and out of this was born the need to evaluate each other's point of view. However, the divisions have prevailed and persisted, particularly among the Muslims, as more factions have emerged to fight for what was perceived as their just cause. What began as one "Front" soon became a series of new factions, each seeking their own autonomy or independence.

Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)

The perceived anti-Muslim strategy of the state spurred the formation of the MNLF, an underground organization founded by Nur Misuari. At an organized meeting in mid-1971 Misuari became chairman, with the major goal of the MNLF being the liberation of the homeland of the Philippine Muslims from the Philippine State. However, the MNLF never controlled all the rebels fighting the government, and was, in fact, a loosely knit group.¹¹⁷ Rosario-Braid has argued that the MNLF rebellion, which broke out in 1972, was the result of benign neglect by Christian leaders who failed to recognize the worth of Filipino Muslims.¹¹⁸ The Moros, for their part, have been vocal in their demand for recognition of their distinctness as a people. Their political development reached its maturity under the leadership of the MNLF, which originally recommended independence from the colonial grasp of the Philippine State through armed struggle. They wanted their own "Bangsamoro Republic". In the face of these Moro and Lumad claims of their respective rights to self determination, the Christian population has had to rethink its position. Although they constitute the majority population, it does not seem appropriate any

¹¹⁷ Thomas M. McKenna. “ *Muslim Rulers and Rebels* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 157.

¹¹⁸ Florangel Rosario-Braid, "The Lessons of Philippine Peace Process" (Toda Institute, 2000). <[http:// www.toda.org/ conferences/ hu...gg-hon- papers/ f.rosariobraid.html](http://www.toda.org/conferences/hu...gg-hon-papers/f.rosariobraid.html)>, accessed on 30 June 2000.

more to speak in simple terms of majority rule. There are fundamental rights, interests, and sensibilities involved that should be considered.

The Tripoli Agreement

The Tripoli Agreement signed on 23 December 1976 between the Republic of the Philippines (RP) and the Moro National Liberation Front with the participation of the Quadripartite Commission of the Islamic Conference (OIC) changed the history of Mindanao. The OIC is composed of the foreign ministers of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Arab Jamahiriya of Libya, Senegal, and Somalia.¹¹⁹ Explaining the aims of the Tripoli Agreement, Dusnia, cited in Mastura, stated that it was: ... not a treaty or an international agreement, it [was] rather a record of understanding between the Philippines Government and an organization of its own nationals to establish a region autonomy in Southern Philippines within the framework of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of the Philippines. The Tripoli Agreement marked the first step in negotiations between the MNLF rebels and the Philippine Government. However, it failed because of differences over the means of implementation and indecision on the part of the Marcos government. It was apparent that Marcos had used the Tripoli Agreement as a means of temporarily defusing the armed conflict, and weakening the MNLF. However, despite the failure and difficulties of its implementation, the "Tripoli Agreement became the benchmark for future negotiations between the MNLF and the government".¹²⁰ The OIC is still engaged in the affairs of Mindanao. On 16 October 2000, the head of the OIC, Alwi Shibad of Indonesia paid a visit to "get first hand information on the progress of the 1996 Peace Agreement".¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Datu Michael O. Mastura " *Muslim Filipino Experience* (Manila: Ministry of Muslim Affairs, 1984), p.274.

¹²⁰ Jacques Bertrand, "*Peace and Conflict in the Southern Philippines: Why the 1996 Peace Agreement is Fragile*", *Pacific Affairs* 73, Issue 1 (Spring 2000): p. 37.

¹²¹ Xinhua News Agency, 16 October 2000, p. 100. Comtex <<http://www.comtexnews.com>>.

Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) first announced its independent existence (as distinct from the MNLF) in 1984. The establishment of a rival Moro "liberation front" resulted from a political division between Hashim Salamat and Nur Misuari, the chairman and vice chairman respectively of the MNLF. McKenna mentioned that "the rift which had been developing for some time, first became public in December 1977, after the collapse of the second round of talks in Tripoli, Libya, aimed at implementing the peace accord and cease-fire agreement".¹²² On 10 July 2000, President Joseph Estrada declared that the military had overrun the MILF headquarters, Camp Abubakar, in Mindanao. The capture of Camp Abubakar, according to Estrada, sped up government efforts to bring genuine and lasting peace and development in Mindanao.¹²³

Abu Sayyaf

The Abu Sayyaf, a group that "has strong links with Saudi terrorist Osama bin Laden",¹²⁴ is the latest indication of a 300-year-old tradition of armed Muslim opposition to the Philippine State. Its aim is to establish an independent Islamic state in Mindanao. From about 1992, the Abu Sayyaf was regarded as a nuisance which posed no major threat to security in this turbulent part of the Philippines. Less than two years later, Abu Sayyaf, now translated as "swordbearer", graduated from being an individual letter-writing irritant into a group of

¹²² Thomas M. McKenna. *Muslim Rulers and Rebels* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 207.

¹²³ Xinhua News Agency, 10 July 2000 Comtex
<<http://www.comtexnews.com>.>

¹²⁴ Deidre Sheehan, "Estrada's Mindanao/Troubles Grow Worse", p. 52.

feared fundamentalist guerillas or "extremist bandits".¹²⁵ In 1993, a ceasefire agreement with the MNLFF appeared to be holding in much of Mindanao. However, the Abu Sayyaf "was [found to be] responsible for a series of hostilities, including the June 1993 kidnapping of 70 Christians, and the December 1993 bombing of a Philippines Airlines 747".¹²⁶ The Abu Sayyaf is still very active and has caused many concerns for the Philippine Government. On 23 April 2000, the extremist group kidnapped and held 21 mostly international businessmen from a Malaysian resort off Jolo Island. The kidnapping created outrage and received regular news coverage in the Philippines and the international press.¹²⁷ These kidnappings continue and have brought renewed Philippine Government initiatives to combat the problem. In an article in *Asiaweek*,¹²⁸ it was stated that if Manila does manage to destroy the Abu Sayyaf, it would close a chapter on a lingering Muslim insurgency that has long ravaged the Philippine south. Furthermore, the peace movement in Mindanao has gained momentum. With the added commitment of both the government and the people of Mindanao, it is very possible that peace will become a reality.

The Peace Movement

Rosario-Braid has emphasized that the "peace-movement started as a struggle against exploitation, inequalities in distribution of resources, and violation of human rights".¹²⁹ The insurgencies in the

¹²⁵ Mark Turner, "Terrorism and Secession in the Southern Philippines: The Rise of the Abu Sayaff", *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 17, no. 1 (June 1995): pp. 1-2.

¹²⁶ Jeffrey Riedinger, "The Philippines in 1994: Renewed Growth and Contested Reforms", *Asian Survey* 35, no. 2 (February): 209-17.

¹²⁷ Marivi Soliven Blanco, "Moro-Moro in Mindanao", LegManila.com, July 2000, <http://www.legmanila.com/aa/article/690.asp>

¹²⁸ *Asiaweek*, "The Nations: Philippines Getting Tough", 2 October 2000.

¹²⁹ Florangel Rosario-Braid, "The Lessons of Philippine Peace Process", Toda Institute, 2000. <<http://www.toda.org/conferences/hu...gg-hon-papers/f.rosariobraid.html>>, accessed on 30 June 2000.

Philippines point to major tensions in Filipino values. The Moro separatist insurgency is rooted in the neglect by government and exploitation by the Christian majority of the Muslim communities in the Philippine south. Filipinos acknowledge the validity of the complaints of rebel groups. However, according to Mahangas (cited in Romero), they do not accept the armed-struggle approach to solving these problems.¹³⁰ For this reason, the various rebel groups have had very little public support. Interestingly, Rosario-Braid found that a "majority of the Muslims were on the government side; a majority of the objectors represented the Christian faith".¹³¹ As a result, a positive outcome of the communication campaign was public awareness that the Lumads or indigenous people, consisting of several millions, and not the Muslims, actually dominated Mindanao. Although never advocating armed struggle, the Lumads and their affiliate organizations indicated their desire to attain genuine autonomy within the Republic of the Philippines. They want to govern themselves in accordance with their own traditional laws. The Lumads, the Moros, and the Christians view one another not in numerical terms but as distinct peoples with their respective histories, identities, and dignity. As inhabitants of Mindanao, they also have a common destiny. The problem, however, is how to arrive at a common vision.

¹³⁰ Segundo E. Romero, "*Changing Filipino Values and Redemocratisation of Governance*", in *Changing Values in Asia: Their Impact on Governance and Development*, edited by Han Sung-Joo (Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 1999), p. 205.

¹³¹ Florangel Rosario-Braid, "*The Lessons of Philippine Peace Process*", Toda Institute, 2000, <[http://www.toda.org/conferences/hu ... gg-hon-papers/f.rosariobraid.html](http://www.toda.org/conferences/hu...gg-hon-papers/f.rosariobraid.html)>, accessed on 30 June 2000.

Arena of Peace and Development

Hopes of a lasting peace flickered into life in 1996 when President Fidel Ramos convinced the oldest Muslim insurgents, the MNLF, to lay down its arms in exchange for limited autonomy. However, his successor, Joseph Estrada's hardline stance with the remaining guerillas altered the course of the peace process in Mindanao. Investment in Mindanao has all but ground to a halt. It is all the more salutary because the economy of the region was slowly improving. The 1996 Peace Accord and the formation of the East ASEAN Growth Area (EAGA) were attracting investments.

On 2 September 1996, the Philippine Government and the MNLF signed an historic Peace Agreement after decades of war that had exacted tens of thousands of deaths and hundreds of thousands of refugees in Mindanao, and the nearby Malaysian state of Sabah. The Peace Agreement ushered in a new arena or front, not only for the MNLF and the Philippine Government, but more so for the people of the southern Philippines - Muslims and Christians alike. The arena being defined was that of peace and development. In the language of the leadership of both the MNLF and the Philippine Government, it was a path more difficult than the path of war. The coverage of this new arena was the fourteen provinces and the nine cities that comprise the Special Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD). It is no accident that the same provinces are considered the poorest of the poor in the country in terms of minimum basic needs.

Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD)

After his appointment by President Ramos to the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD), Nur Misuari was elected governor of the ARMM in 1996, a move that practically solved the MNLF problem. The SPCPD was set up as an executive body with a chairman, vice-chairman, and three members representing each of the three communities in Mindanao, that is, Muslims,

Christians, and Lumad.¹³² While Ramos reached a peace agreement with the MNLF, the underlying tension that generated the insurgency is likely to remain for some time. The government still maintains dialogues with the MILF, which continues with sporadic ambushes, kidnappings, and threats of separatism.¹³³ By placing Misuari in charge of both institutions, it was believed that the peace settlement would gain recognition among the Muslim community and demonstrate to non-Muslims that autonomy could benefit all groups." Romero has argued that "the foundation for the solution of the separatist problem was in the form of the ARMM, formed in 1989 and inaugurated in 1990 following a plebiscite in which four provinces with predominantly Muslim populations opted to constitute the region: Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi."¹³⁴

The high poverty incidence in the said region inevitably makes the tasks and mission of peace and development difficult. In addition, while the national core dominates in the satisfaction of formal business requirements, it is also likely that political instability in Mindanao and periodic kidnappings of foreign nationals in peripheral regions provide strong personal reasons why foreign investors have attempted to avoid such areas." Sheehan sums up the situation: "It's tough tempting investors to a place where kidnappings and bombing seem to be everyday events and half the passengers on your flight pick up their guns with their luggage after the plane lands."¹³⁵

¹³² Carolina G. Hernandez, "The Philippines in 1996: A House Finally in Order", *Asian Survey* 37, no. 2 (February 1997): pp. 204-212.

¹³³ Segundo E. Romero, "Changing Filipino Values and Redemocratisation of Governance", in *Changing Values in Asia: Their Impact on Governance and Development*, edited by Han Sung-Joo (Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 1999), p. 206.

¹³⁴ *ibid.*

¹³⁵ Deidre Sheehan "Philippines, Held to Ransom", p. 20.

Land of Unfulfilled Promises

According to Xinhua News Agency, the peace and order situation in the Philippines is not encouraging.¹³⁶ While the military is deploying more troops to the battle against the MILF in Mindanao, the formal talks with the Abu Sayyaf have yet to open. As the internal conflicts drag on, foreign investors are pulling out their money from the country as well. Whilst there have been obvious difficulties in appeasing the internal conflicts, the Philippine Government is committed to the peace process and has been since the fall of Marcos in 1986. During the early 1980s, the situation in Mindanao deteriorated steadily. Although martial law was lifted in 1981, it was maintained in Mindanao. On 17 October 1983, the Philippine Government "was forced by the depletion of its foreign exchange reserves to declare a 90-day moratorium on the amortization of its external debt, marking the onset of the worst balance-of-payments crisis in post-war Philippine history".¹³⁷

Visiting Mindanao on the eve of the 1986 elections, in a campaign speech Corazon Aquino described Mindanao as a "land of unfulfilled promises, a war zone, a land forced into fratricidal strife, a land where every day Filipino kills brother Filipino, a land of avaricious exploitation".¹³⁸ However, in this arena of unfulfilled promises can President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, who has announced from the start of her presidency that she has no intention of suffering the humiliation dealt her predecessor, Joseph Estrada, in year 2000, succeed in bringing peace to Mindanao. President Arroyo stressed that Estrada "succumbed to Malaysian and European pleas to

¹³⁶ Xinhua News Agency, 24 May 2000. Comtex
<<http://www.comtexnews.com>>.

¹³⁷ James K. Boyce. *The Philippines: The Political Economy of Growth and Impoverishment in the Marcos Era* (London: MacMillan Press, 1993), p. 257.

¹³⁸ R.J. May, "The Wild West in the South: A Recent Political History of Mindanao", in *Mindanao: Land of Unfulfilled Promises*, edited by Mark Turner, R.J. May, and Respal Lulu Turner (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1992), p. 135.

hold the troops back" ¹³⁹ and allowed Libya to broker a ransom deal. Arroyo has refused all negotiations and ordered 5,000 troops into the scattered Sulu archipelago to, in the words of operational commander Brigadier General Romeo Dominguez, "rescue and destroy". ¹⁴⁰

Economic Development

The Philippines is, to all intents and purposes, a "weak state". Like most countries in Southeast Asia, it is a creation of colonialism, marked by uneven economic development.¹⁴¹ For Mindanao to attain peace and economic stability, Mindanaons have to continually push for reforms by advocating their concerns to the Philippine Government. Together with economic growth will come employment and a much better standard of living for all the communities in Mindanao. The major social problem facing the Philippines is the need to provide a consistently better performance in the future as regards employment and the distribution of income without sacrificing, but rather, enhancing growth.¹⁴² That civil unrest and widespread poverty in Mindanao and the rest of the Philippines reflect a failure of development policy is well recognized.

According to Balisacan:

The heavily capital-intensive, import-substituting development strategy which the country adhered to for several decades engendered inefficient industries, effectively penalized agriculture and labor intensive

¹³⁹ Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, cited in Alex Perry, "Crossfire", Time, 11 June 2001, p. 28.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.* p. 28.

¹⁴¹ Julius Caesar Parrenas, "Leadership Succession and Security in the Philippines", Contemporary Southeast Asia 15, no.1 (June 1993): 64-79.

¹⁴² UNDP (United Nations Development Program), *Sharing in Development: A Program of Employment, Equity, and Growth for the Philippines* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1974), p. XXIII.

exports, impeded backward activities, and stifled the country's competitiveness in the world market.¹⁴³

Under Development in Mindanao

Burton, furthermore, has argued that "Mindanao, despite its vast and rich natural resources and great economic potential has remained underdeveloped over the years".¹⁴⁴ People in the agricultural sector bear the heaviest share of the poverty burden as poverty in the Philippines is largely an agricultural phenomenon.¹⁴⁵ Once rural productivity fails to expand sufficiently, the urban industrial sector is likely to experience a shortage of food and/or capital goods.¹⁴⁶ The reduction of debt, or increasing the period for payment will not deal with the underlying problem: the basic structures of current international economic relations need to be overhauled. Mindanao seems to be trapped by underdevelopment which not only keeps the living standard of the employed low, but also perpetuates the hunger of the increasingly large unemployed segment of the population. As the size of the population of Mindanao continues to grow, there seems to be a genuine lack of family planning programs. The only advice development experts seem to be able to give is to cut down the population, so that reduced resources may be sufficient to feed it.

¹⁴³ Arsenio M. Balisacan. *Poverty, Urbanisation and Development* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1994), p. 3.

¹⁴⁴ Erlinda M. Burton. *Decentralisation of Local Governance* (RIMCU, Cagayan De Oro City: Xavier University, 1994), p. 5.

¹⁴⁵ Solita Collas-Monsod, "The War Against Poverty: A Status Report", in *The Philippines: Directions in Domestic Policy and Foreign Relations*, edited by David G. Timberman (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1998), p. 91.

¹⁴⁶ UNDP (United Nations Development Program), *Sharing in Development: A Program of Employment, Equity, and Growth for the Philippines* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1974), p.21.

Minority and Majority Relations

It is to be noted that in the 1996 Peace Agreement, in the operations of the SZOPAD, in the socio-economic upliftment of the Southern Philippines, the thrusts of government programs and projects and those of donor countries encompass the non-Muslims (Christians that include the Lumads - natives). It is to be noted, too, that the conflict in the South concerns the plight of the Muslims who have been long neglected and long been discriminated. In short, this is a minority problem. It is thus to be treated as such in a manner that the solution addresses primarily the concerns of the Muslims without prejudice to the Christians in the area who already belong to the majority in the first place. It is a situation in which the majority (the national government) is offering assistance to the minority not only in terms of development projects but more importantly the means and the opportunities for empowerment to rise to the level of competitiveness with the majority. In a sense, it is to establish a right equation in the majority-minority relationship. Sadly, this is not what is happening in the South: the equation is kept lopsided. So the problem persists more to the liking of the solutions being undertaken. One Muslim Filipino writer puts this in a perspective: "The development and peace for Muslim is an offering, a gift by the majority to the minority: it is in bad taste when the majority still gets a share of its own gift."

For the moment, the country's political leadership disallows any change or modification in what it perceives as a "dismemberment" of the Philippine Republic. As if this is not enough, it imposes homogeneity of the Filipinos as a nation in spite of the existence of multi-cultural and multi-religious communities, which altogether prove the contrary. Nowhere does this come closer to the truth with the plight of the Muslims.

Given the position and the disposition of the Philippine government vis-a-vis the Muslims in the country, the present conflict in

Muslim Mindanao is essentially a direct statement on how colonial relations have persisted into the modern times. The claim of the Muslim political groups for independence could only be the most viable option to break away from such a relationship. On the one hand, the acceptance of the Muslim political leadership, particularly the MNLF, and the ongoing peace negotiations with the MILF for autonomy is strongly indicative of how they could allow their existence within the territorial integrity of the country provided they exercise control over their lives as well as their destiny. Thus, independence is perceived by the Muslims as a matter of substance in opposition to the government's political definition of it, that is, the existence of another state.

There are a number of governments that have intermittently confronted problems on minorities and have resolved or contained them in the course of time. But where there is the problem on Muslims as the minority, the issue dies hard. Not only does the problem involve religious sensitivities but more importantly on the reconciliation of two systems of law – one that is secular oriented and the other immutably sacred. And in the Philippine situation, the meaning of territorial integrity and sovereignty leaves no room for another system of law such as the Shari'ah. Just like autonomy, the incorporation of the Muslim Personal and Family Law into the Philippine Law serves only to reinforce the sovereignty of the latter. This is the main point of conflict, and resiliency of both sides could only serve to induce and sustain a breaking point with violence.

Altering the Equation: Encounter of Civilizations

During the height of the Muslim armed struggle under the Marcos era, a part of the major counter-insurgency steps taken was the acknowledgement of Islam as national heritage, an indispensable element in the search for national identity and nation-building. There was likewise a heightened consciousness regarding the Muslims not just as mere numerical entities but warmly qualified as being significant minority. What could have been a fresh look at Muslim-Christian

relationships was marred by the fact that the advocate of such a radical view was no less unacceptable than the idea itself. It was all too difficult to go along with the policy Marcos was espousing at that time, as he was having an acute contradiction in his delusions to hold on to power. Besides, while the recognition of Islam and the role of Muslims in Philippine history, past and present, stood on good merits, they were only good in serving the ends of the military campaign against the Muslim armed struggle. And like the rest of the projects and programs on making up for neglect of the Muslim communities, the idea just died out to insignificance.

Perhaps, what had been initiated by Marcos propagandists on Islam and the Muslims may be reconsidered under the present situation. To a large extent, the idea succeeded in becalming the storms of war and appealed to most of the educated, leaders, and professionals among the Muslims who were convinced of the kind of justice that has finally come around. Though there may have been some lessons learned from the “tricks” of the Martial Law period, the idea itself holds a great amount of truth in rendering a finer perspective on the status of the Muslims in the country.

As the military options, going hand in hand with impact development projects, have not resolved entirely the Muslim problem, it becomes a challenge to take on “the road less travelled”. And since approaches and methods are consequent of perceptions and attitudes, it is thus quite an exercise of objectivity to take into account rethinking or re-feeling of the matter at hand as the first of the imperatives in the efforts to find a lasting and comprehensive resolution to the Mindanao conflict.

In consideration of the foregoing proposition, what is necessary is to take a bold step in challenging the traditional view that Islam is a mere punctuation in the pages of Philippine history. Despite the earlier contacts of the natives with Islam of more than two hundred years prior to the coming of the Europeans, there is little said and the least of

appreciation on its contribution to the making of a civilization in this part of the world. Indeed, it is sad to note that even the most respected Filipino scholars and historians have one page to tell of Islam that is often dismissed as an accident of the historical forces, bestowing as it were greater importance to more ancient religious experiences in the Indo-Malaysian world.

The conflict situation in Muslim Mindanao is proof of how Islam has come to seal the social transformation of the people who have accepted it as a reference point in their lives. To view Islam as a mere event in the unfolding of human history through time is to take on a perspective that it could be relegated to the past and may only be considered in as far as it serves the interests of the present disposition.

It is often said that Islam is “a way of life”. It is a popularly accepted description but hardly understood. “A way of life” is taken to mean as valid and as applicable to other modes of living and understanding life. It is suggestive of the possibility that Islam could somehow be altered in time. This is not hypothetical nor a presumption. Efforts have been undertaken to introduce such change in Islam. But recent events in the Muslim world have proved that Islam possesses a quality of permanence and by this token it directs or determines the dynamics of history, rather than be swept away and buried in the layers of human existence.

By “way of life” carries with it the notion of Islam as a “civilizing force” that is universal in time and place. The restlessness of Muslim communities throughout the world particularly in the Southern Philippines is borne by the immutable Islamic principles on the kind of civilization that needs to be created in the contemporary context.

The tensions, violent and destructive as they have been, underlie the basic failure in appreciating Islam as the normative element of culture and civilization. This may also be the situation in which non-Muslim societies find themselves in, as they inter-relate with other

communities, especially with the Muslims. In this manner, the common ground of the encounter is forced upon religion wherein even the commonalities are in themselves a cause for the differences. This is not to say, however, that such efforts at inter-faith dialogue is short of the measure in forging better understanding and goodwill among the religious communities. On the contrary, this is a major factor in considering a more constructive encounter, that is, on the level of culture or civilization. On this level, the experience could dwell on a synthesis of new ideas, of alternatives in technologies that secure the development of mankind in an atmosphere of peaceful co-existence and cooperation. The Golden Age of Islam in the Middle Ages has attained this level. There is optimism on a similar level of encounter as the quest for world peace and security continues.

In the Philippines, the challenge lies not in integration of a minority into the mainstream life of the majority. It is to effect a synthesis, of acknowledging the element of Islam in the evolution of the Filipino identity and a national spirit and the crucial role of the Muslims in the struggle to keep the freedom of every Filipino. This may be an idea that may take a long way to realize, but as civilization is a manifestation of the peak of human perfection, all roads will lead ultimately towards this destiny.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Datu Amilusin A. Jumaani. 2000. “*Muslim-Christian Relations in the Philippines: Redefining the Conflict*”. Posted by Taher G. Solaiman at <http://www.philosol.nl/A01a/Jumaani-redefining-oct00.htm> 26 November 2006.

B. Philippine Government Recognition on the Importance of Islamic Education

The government's development policy towards Muslims in the Philippines is concentrated on integrating them through education. Despite the changeable politics in the Philippines, the Islamic education of the Muslim minority continues to improve. Its change and growth can be seen in the educational programs implemented by the government in Muslim Mindanao since early 1970. With these developments, Islamic consciousness has grown up as Islamic institutes of high learning had been established, some madaris have been accredited by the government, Shari'ah law has been offered in other government universities and Islamic studies and Arabic language have been taught in public and private schools in certain regions. For the government, the success of the Islamic educational projects would forge national solidarity and heightened the Islamic sophistication of the Muslims, as some scholars believed that Islam could be used as an instrument for modernizing its followers.¹⁴⁸

The development of the Islamic education in the Philippines became an important instrument in solving the so-called Muslim Problem in the Philippines. It helps to ease the tensions that mark the nagging Muslim government relation which has already accounted for the loss of thousands of lives and property, millions of money and psychological chasm among the people. The government was aware of the situation and in order to face the problem, the state embarked on the following programs as a touchstone of its policy of integration:

¹⁴⁸ Alizaman D. Gamon. "*Islamization of Education in the Philippines.*" from [http:// i-epistemology.net/v1/ education/ 98-islamization-of-education-in-the-philippines.html](http://i-epistemology.net/v1/education/98-islamization-of-education-in-the-philippines.html) Retrieved on 7 May 2017 p.3

1.) Commission on National Integration (CNI)

The first educational program created by the government was through the Commission on National Integration (CNI). This Commission was created under Republic Act No. 1888 (amended by R.A. No. 3858) on June 22, 1957, purposely “to accelerate the progress of Muslims politically, economically and to promote their incorporation into the nation’s government and social systems.”¹⁴⁹ Ironically, young Muslims from different tribes who were educated through this government scholarship became politically conscious of the positions of Muslim communities and also gave them a chance to form an organization to set aside ethnic and linguistic differences in order to attain a common Islamic identity.

The CNI was abolished in 1975 for failure to achieve its main objective, “the Moro integration into mainstream of national body-politic.” To mention some of the reasons for its failure are: First, the government’s paternalistic approach toward the cultural minorities reaffirmed rather than alleviated the cultural minorities from their disadvantage position.¹⁵⁰ Second, the authorities failed to follow an effective strategy to solve the critical problem of inter-group between the Muslims and Christian Filipinos. Third, the policy of integration caused genocidal effects to the Muslims. According to Peter G. Gowing and Robert D McAmis, “The policy of the Philippine Government toward Muslim Filipinos is integration not genocide, but certain features of the integration policy are genocidal in their effects...they (Muslims) fear the philosophy behind the integration policy because it is really a philosophy of assimilation...(which was) resisted by the Muslim Filipinos precisely because it threatens psychological genocide,

¹⁴⁹ Cesar A. Majul. “*The Contemporary Muslim Movement in the Philippines*” (Manila: Saint Mary’s Publication, 1978), p.32.

¹⁵⁰ Kenneth E. Bauzon. “*Liberalism and the Quest for Islamic Identity*,” p. 71.

which in many ways is more difficult to contemplate than physical genocide.”¹⁵¹

2.) Mindanao State University (MSU)

The Mindanao State University was the first state school established by the government to provide high education for Mindanao residents in a Muslim area. MSU has been established with the following goals: 1) To perform the traditional functions of a University such as instruction, research and extension services; 2) To help accelerate the program of integration among the peoples of Southern Philippines, particularly the Muslims and other cultural minorities; and 3) To provide trained manpower skills and technical knowledge for the economic development of the Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan (MINSUPALA) regions.¹⁵²

MSU is truly an academic institution of higher learning which provides a special opportunity for young Muslims to pursue their secular education, side-by-side with their Arabic and Islamic studies. To meet the educational needs of the Muslims, the MSU was officially transformed into university system based on Executive order No. 3. This Order reorganized the entire MSU system by extending its colleges and established six external units in all four political regions in Southern Philippines, namely: MSU- Iligan City, MSU-General Santos City, MSU-Maguindanao, MSU-Tawi-Tawi, MSU-Jolo and MSU-Naawan. All the external units, except Iligan and Naawan are offering the baccalaureate program in Islamic Studies major in Islamic law and jurisprudence and Islamic History. To ensure the University's commitment in the preservation of the Muslim Filipino culture, the University created the Research Center to conduct research to preserve

¹⁵¹ Peter G. Gowing. and Robert D. McAmis. “*Irresistible Forces, Immovable Objects,*” in Gowing and McAmis, eds., *The Muslim Filipinos* (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House), p. vii-viii.

¹⁵² Ahmad M. Hassoubah. “*An Educational Institution's Attainment of its Goals: The Case of Mindanao State University, Marawi City, School Year 1993-94.*” (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis) p. 47

the rich culture of the Muslims. The rapid development of the University includes the establishment of the King Faisal Center for Arabic and Islamic Studies, the College of Law with a permit to offer a Shari‘ah course, and the Shari‘ah Center. The MSU College of Law successfully produced a numbers of civil and Shari‘ah lawyers and judges to the Shari‘ah courts.

3.) King Faisal Center for Islamic, Arabic and Asian Studies (KFCIAS)

King Faisal Center for Islamic, Arabic and Asian Studies (KFCIAS), formerly known as the Institute of Asian and Islamic (Arabic) Studies was established in 1973, as a separate academic unit of the Mindanao State University. This Center was established primarily for the purpose of promoting Arabic, Islamic and Asian studies in the Muslim areas of Southern Philippines so as to hasten the social, cultural and economic upliftment of the Muslims and other cultural minorities and to facilitate their integration into the mainstream of the national body politic.

As such the Center seeks to emphasize Islam not only as part of the rich Philippine culture but also as a complete way of life which is consistent with all important scientific endeavor and technical competence. At present, the KFCIAS is offering the master in Islamic Studies, major in Muslim Law for postgraduate studies. This program is open to graduates of bachelors degree in Islamic studies and to holders of any baccalaureate degree who finished at least a secondary (Thanawiyah) diploma from any reputable madrasah in the Philippines or abroad, provided, however that an applicant must satisfy the requirements prescribed by the MSU graduate school and that he is able to speak and write English. This program is designed to produce skillful graduates in Muslim law who can serve not only as judges of the Shari‘ah courts but also as practitioners therein and as future scholars and researchers in the field of Islamic law and jurisprudence to help mold a just and progressive Muslim society in Muslim Mindanao.

For baccalaureate, the Center is offering the following courses: 1) Bachelor of Arts in Islamic Studies, major in Islamic History and Islamic Law and Jurisprudence; 2) Bachelor of Science in Teaching Arabic; and 3) Bachelor of Science in International Relations. Aside from these courses, there are extension projects conducted by the KFCIAS in promoting its goals and objectives as an Islamic educational institution of higher learning. Some of them are: 1) Special Course on Islam for Professionals and Students; 2) Pre-School Program; 3) Special Course for Imams; 4) Special Course in Bahasa Malaysia; and 5) Special Qur'an Reading class for beginners and advanced Reading for students.

4.) Mindanao State University (MSU) - Shari'ah Center

The Mindanao State University established the Shari'ah Center through the Board of Regents (BOR) Resolution No. 210, series of 1982, in recognition of the on-going and growing interest and concern for Islamic Law in the Philippines. With the signing into law in 1977 of Presidential Degree No. 1083, otherwise known as the Code of Muslim Personal Laws of the Philippines, the subsequent opening of the College of Law at the Mindanao State University in 1981 which offers Shari'ah subjects, and the offering of a bachelor's degree in Shari'ah and a master program in Muslim Personal Laws by the MSU-King Faisal Center for Islamic and Arabic Studies, the Shari'ah center is conceived to help in intensifying knowledge and understanding of Islamic Law and Jurisprudence. The center is also tasked to assist the College of Law and the King Faisal Center in the research, preparation and development of teaching and reading materials for Shari'ah subjects. In the same manner, the center is envisioned to serve as a support institution to the Shari'ah Courts in the better understanding and smooth implementation of the Code of Muslim Personal Laws.

The major program conducted by the Center is the Shari‘ah education and the legal outreach program. Under this program, the Shari‘ah Center will sponsor the following activities: trainings, long and short-term courses, lecture series, seminars and conferences. It also serves to offer counseling and consultation services on Shari‘ah legal matters. To achieve its goals and make it as the leading Shari‘ah research institution in the country, it created the Shari‘ah research program to study the branches of the Shari‘ah law, the ‘adat laws and their relevance to the Philippine laws and to annotate the cases decided by the Philippine Shari‘ah courts. The publication program of the Center is designed for the publication of researches, studies and proceedings conducted under the continuing Shari‘ah Education and Legal Outreach Program and the Shari‘ah Research Program.

The Shari‘ah Center has established a link with various governments and private institutions and agencies, more particularly with the Law Center of the University of the Philippines, the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, the Supreme Court, the Philippine Shari‘ah Courts and the Office of Muslim Affairs, with the principal aim of starting the gigantic task of collating, shifting and reconciling Shari‘ah principles and the Philippine legal system. Likewise, the Center will keep on developing its link with other Islamic international Institutions, organizations and foundations in Southeast Asia and Middle East.

5.) Institute of Islamic Studies – University of the Philippines

The Institute of Islamic Studies (IIS) was created as an integral part of the Philippine Center for Advanced Studies (PCAS), through, Presidential Degree 342 on Nov. 22, 1973. With the abolition of the Center by Executive order No. 543 issued by the President of the Philippines, on July 9, 1979, the Institute was re-established as a separate unit of the University of the Philippine.

The Institute was established with the aim of providing the university students, both Muslims and non-Muslims, an opportunity to

participate more fully in nation life and development. More specifically, it intends to create deeper understanding and more rapport between the Muslims of the Philippines and the rest of the University of the Philippines national community. Moreover, it aims to shed light on certain portions of Philippine history and to place in proper perspective the role of the Islamic cultural heritage in shaping the Philippines and neighboring Southeast Asian countries. It is envisioned that the Institute will serve as a meeting place for scholars interested in Islamic history and culture from Asia and other parts of the world.¹⁵³

The Institute of Islamic Studies provides both graduate and undergraduate courses on Islamic studies. In accordance with its regulations an applicant for admission should have at least a bachelor's degree and it is preferable if he is competent in Arabic. Students who have no background in Arabic and Islamic studies shall take the Elementary and Intermediary Arabic as well as of undergraduate courses in Islamic studies.

To meet the Institute's objectives and to realize the government's desire to see its Muslim constituents integrated with the national body-politic through education, the Institute renders the following services:

1. Conduct of lecture series whenever necessary on Islamic history, law and religion including contemporary events affecting the lives of Muslim Filipinos;
2. Undertaking of commissioned researches regarding Muslim communities, Islamic heritage and compilation of said data;
3. Translation of documents from English or Tagalog to a local ethnic language, viz., Tausug, Maranao, Maguindanao, Sama and Yakan;
4. Publication of IIS Newsletter (Sahiyfah), journal and occasional papers/monographs; and
5. Extension services on areas of Faculty competence.

¹⁵³ UP-Institute of Islamic Studies, Information Brochure.