

The abu sayyaf group in its philippine and international contexts

[Religion](#), [Islam](#)



The Abu Sayyaf Group in its Philippine and International Contexts by Jeffrey M. Bale I. Introduction On 18 October 2003 President George W. Bush delivered a speech to the Philippine Congress, in the course of which he pledged that the United States and Philippine governments would “ bring Abu Sayyaf to justice. ” He noted that the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) was made up of “ killers” who “ torture and behead their victims, while acting — or claiming to act — in the name of God, ” but insisted that “ murder has no home in any religious faith” and that “ these terrorists must find no home in the Philippines. ” He then emphasized that “ Philippine security forces have the right and the duty to protect local communities and to defeat terrorism in every form, ” since “ there can be no compromise with terror. ” Bush summed up the portion of his speech devoted to terrorism by stating that he and Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo had “ agreed to update our defense cooperation” after completing “ the comprehensive review of Philippine security requirements announced last May. ” He then said that the United States was willing to “ provide technical assistance and field expertise and funding” in support of “ a five-year plan to modernize and reform” the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). This was merely the latest indication of the willingness of the United States Government (USG) to support attempts by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) to suppress the ASG. These cooperative efforts commenced in earnest after American security personnel investigating the 1993 World Trade Center terrorist bombing learned that the suspected bombmaker, Ramzi Ahmad Yusuf, had subsequently spent time in Manila organizing a clandestine cell, manufacturing explosive devices, and planning other terrorist actions against

the United States. After the Philippine security forces reported that al-Qa`ida operative Yusuf had met with leading members of the ASG, the US Department of State (DOS) was prompted to list the group on its initial 1997 list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs), a list whose purpose is to facilitate the freezing of assets of the terrorist groups listed, the criminalization of material support for them, and the exclusion of aliens associated with them, and the ASG has since appeared on every updated annual FTO list. USG support for the GRP's anti-ASG actions was reaffirmed again in the wake of the 1998 bombings of two US embassies in Africa, in which some of Yusuf's associates were implicated, but renewed cooperation between the two governments did not reach its present levels until after the catastrophic al-Qa`ida-sponsored terrorist attacks on American soil on 11 September 2001. On 24 September 2001, less than two weeks after those attacks, the ASG was one of the 27 organizations and individuals whose assets were officially frozen by the American government. Shortly thereafter, President Macapagal-Arroyo visited the US to meet with President Bush. She took the opportunity to emphasize the susceptibility of the Philippines to terrorism and to proclaim her vigorous support for American military actions in Afghanistan. As a result, she obtained an extensive aid package of loans and grants, along with 92.2 million dollars worth of military aid, which was then equivalent to around 10 percent of the Philippine military budget. In February 2002 the US sent over 600 troops to the southern Philippines, including 160 Special Forces soldiers, to participate in the initial "Balikatan" ("Shoulder-to-Shoulder") exercises alongside select units of the AFP. The objectives of these exercises were 1) to improve the "interoperability" of

Philippine and US forces against terrorism; 2) to enhance the combat capability of infantry battalions from the AFP's Southern Command (Southcom), based in Zamboanga City; 3) to ensure better quality in intelligence processing; and 4) to upgrade joint Philippine-American capabilities to wage effective civil, military, and psychological operations. The Terms of Reference for this exercise were as follows. US forces were to advise, assist, and train the AFP in connection with operations against the ASG, above all in Basilan and Zamboanga. This initial training exercise was to be conducted by 660 US and 3800 AFP troops over a period of six months, but only 160 American soldiers organized into 12-man Special Forces teams were to actually be deployed with the AFP in the field. They were not to participate actively in combat operations, but could engage the enemy to defend themselves. Even so, US forces have since been aiding Philippine troops in pursuing ASG hostage-takers, several of whom have been killed in firefights, and a handful of American soldiers have also died due to a helicopter accident and a terrorist attack. In 2003 the "Balikatan" exercises were further extended and widened in scope, to the point where they eventually involved additional US troops. The increased levels of US financial and military assistance to the GRP and the carrying out of joint military operations directed against the ASG were justified on the basis that this particular terrorist group constituted an especially significant terrorist threat, not only to the Philippine government but also to the national security interests of the United States. The reputation of the ASG, as it appears in often sensationalistic media accounts, is indeed a fearsome one. Apart from the group's indiscriminate bombings, high-profile seizures of Filipino and

Western hostages, and sometimes brutal treatment of those hostages, captured soldiers, and civilians in general, the ASG is widely portrayed as the local Philippine branch of 'Usama bin Ladin's transnational al-Qa`ida network. US Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz has gone so far as to suggest that it would be a serious blow to al-Qa`ida itself if the ASG was cleared from its stronghold on Basilan Island. But just how dangerous is the ASG? Does it seriously threaten American national security interests, either at home or abroad? Is it, above all else, an operational component or affiliate of an extensive al-Qa`ida network in Southeast Asia? Is it likely to cause large numbers of casualties, possibly by means of the employment of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), in future terrorist actions? The purpose of this study is to shed light on these controversial matters by examining the origins, doctrines, and activities of the group in some detail in an effort to assess the real extent of threat it poses, particularly in the area of WMD terrorism. To some extent, the answers to these crucial questions depend upon the general perspective that one adopts. If one views the ASG primarily within the context of transnational Islamist terrorism, at first glance it does indeed seem to be a worrisome organization with documented prior ties to al-Qa`ida. On the other hand, if one views the group primarily within the context of the modern Muslim secessionist movement in the southern Philippines, or even within the much narrower context of the small-scale violence that is perpetrated on an almost daily basis by diverse armed Tausug gangs on the islands of Basilan and Jolo, the ASG scarcely seems worthy of being singled out as a high-profile target in the worldwide " War on Terrorism. " II. Islam and the Moro Secessionist Movement in the Philippines

The Roots of the " Moro Problem" The above subheading is not meant to be willfully misleading but rather intentionally ironic, since any reference to the " Moro problem" echoes the short-sighted perspective that has all too often been adopted by Spanish governors, American colonial officials, and a succession of Catholic Filipino administrations, whereby the Moros — i. e., Philippine Muslims — are themselves viewed as the source of the problems in the southern regions of the country. Instead, this section will focus on the roots of the contemporary problems facing the Moros, problems that have existed for so long and remain so endemic that they served as the underlying basis — though not the immediate stimulus — for the emergence of the modern Muslim secessionist movement in the late 1960s. The single most salient fact about the Moros is that they comprise only about 5% of the present-day population of the Philippines. The overwhelming majority of that nation's citizens are Christians, above all Roman Catholics, making the Philippines the only predominantly Christian country in Southeast Asia. In and of itself, this would not necessarily constitute a problem, but the historical process by which the Christians came to dominate the Moros politically, demographically, socially, economically, and to some extent culturally has created a legacy of bitterness that persists to this very day. The term " Moro" has long been an appellation for the Islamized groups from the very same Malay racial group as both the Christian majority in the Philippines and the bulk of the inhabitants of nearby Indonesia and Malaysia. Hence the division between Christian " Filipinos" and Muslim " Moros" is neither ethnic nor predominantly social and cultural (in the broadest sense of that term), but rather historical and above all religio-cultural. Indeed, it is

important to emphasize that the term " Moro" was originally applied by the Spaniards to Muslim occupants of the Iberian Peninsula, the descendants of a succession of tribal invaders from Islamic North Africa, against whom they had fought a sometimes brutal seven-century struggle for supremacy — the so-called Reconquista — culminating in the capture of Granada in 1492. The very same name was then later applied to those recalcitrant Muslims that the Spaniards encountered in the Philippine Archipelago after Miguel L pez de Legazpi's fleet dropped anchor in Manila Bay in 1565, and it generally retained the same pejorative significance until Philippine Muslim nationalists appropriated it proudly for themselves, in the process transforming it into a positive appellation. The Moros are currently subdivided into thirteen cultural-linguistic groups, of which the three largest are the Maranao and Maguindanao, who mainly inhabit the western and southern portions of the large island of Mindanao, and the Tausug, whose homeland lies in the Sulu Archipelago. Even so, all thirteen of these languages and dialects, several of which are mutually unintelligible, belong to what has been termed the " Central Philippine Subgroup of the Malayo-Polynesian (Austronesian) Linguistic Family, " and they are also related in varying degrees to the languages spoken by the major Filipino Christian groups (Ilocano, Visayan, and Tagalog). Islam in the Philippines, from its Origins to the 1960s The Malays, who are generally considered to be a subgroup within the larger Mongolian racial group, first began to overrun the " island world of Southeast Asia" — which has served as " a cultural crossroads for millennia" and been justly characterized as " the world's most diverse ethno-linguistic mosaic" — in the first millennium of the pre-Christian era. They apparently arrived in the

area either by sea or after crossing over an earlier land bridge from continental Asia into the Indonesian archipelago. Their preexisting culture, about which little is known, gradually underwent a process of adaptation in this new geographical and ecological niche before falling under the influence, via traders and dynastic outposts, of the great civilizations of China and India. Some Chinese merchants had settled on the Luzon coast by the year 1000, and during the fifteenth century certain of these settlements were temporarily administered by Yuan Dynasty officials. Moreover, two Indianized imperial dynasties that had established a lucrative tributary relationship with China, the Buddhist, Sumatra-based Srivijayas in the ninth century and the Hindu, Java-based Majapahits in the fourteenth century, established temporary footholds in the Philippine Archipelago, especially along the western littorals of both Luzon and Mindanao. By the time the Muslims arrived in significant numbers to settle, they found local princes (rajas) and hereditary chieftains ruling small armed village communities (barangays), organized around extended families and cognatic descent groups, that fought amongst themselves, subsisted on agriculture, fishing, or trade, and worshipped a pantheon of ancestral and animistic gods, at the summit of which was Bathala, the Supreme Creator of Earth and Man. The pre-Islamic Malay social structure was a tripartite one consisting of the chieftains and their close retinues and relatives, their commoner subjects, and debt bondsmen with a theoretically temporary unfree status. It was into this cultural and political vacuum that Islam spread. Geographically, the Philippines occupied a somewhat marginal position in relation to the rest of Southeast Asia, and it was to some extent outside the major maritime trade

routes linking the Middle East, South Asia, and China. Muslim traders first arrived in the region from Middle Eastern core countries during the eighth century, following in the footsteps of their pre-Islamic Persian and Arab counterparts, and between the ninth and the sixteenth centuries they largely controlled its maritime trade. They visited Borneo as early as the tenth century, and began settling in the Sulu Archipelago beginning in the thirteenth century. In the fourteenth century they were followed by Muslim preachers, many of whom were Sufis, who initiated the process of Islamization in both Sulu and Mindanao by erecting mosques and actively propagating the faith. This original trickle of Muslim settlers turned into a flood after the Portuguese seized control of Melaka (Malacca) in 1511, forcing many members of the Muslim elite to flee and take refuge elsewhere. Some reached as far as Luzon, where they began to spread northward and establish other local dynasties. Because of their superior military tactics and technology, these Muslim newcomers were quickly able to defeat or co-opt existing rulers and either displace or assume authority over previously established groups, especially in the desirable coastal and lowland regions. Those chieftains and inhabitants who were unwilling to submit to the authority of the interlopers withdrew into the difficult terrain of the hinterlands, which was both easier to defend and comparatively undesirable. The descendants of these displaced groups, who are now known as "tribal peoples," have survived up to the present day, albeit as marginalized elements within modern Philippine society. All over the Malay region, including the Philippine Archipelago, "the fusion of itinerant Arab blood and with [that of] local royal stock had produced ruling dynasties." According to

local genealogical accounts known as tarsila, written on paper in Malay using the Arabic script, the Muslims soon established three sultanates, one in Sulu and two in Mindanao. The Sultanate of Sulu, which developed into the most powerful and richest state in the region prior to the arrival of the Spaniards, was allegedly the product of a union between an Arab traveler named Sayyid Abu Bakr and the daughter of Baguinda, a local émigré princeling from Sumatra. The Sultanate of Maguindanao was supposedly founded by Sarip Kabungsuwan, the offspring of a royal family driven from Melaka and a Meccan dignitary (sharif), and through this latter individual was purportedly linked by ancestry to the Prophet Muhammad. The Sultanate of Buayan, located further upstream in Mindanao, apparently emerged when Kabungsuwan's daughter married the Buayan chieftain, but because its rulers were of lower royal status they adopted the title raja. In contrast to the pre-Islamic period, during which local chiefs only occasionally extended their power beyond the confines of their own cognatic descent groups (bangsas), the coming of Islam resulted in the establishment of a "separate, society-wide aristocracy" whose members claimed descent from common ancestors. Within these regions Muslim religious laws, religious rituals, and social customs were gradually superimposed, often imperfectly, over the traditional substratum of customary law (adat) and pagan beliefs. However, the religion of Muhammad did not erase the pre-Islamic identities of the newly-Islamized Malays. The preexisting social structure comprised of local chieftains — now known as datus — commoners, and debt bondsmen was essentially retained. The principal differences were that regional rulers were now called sultans, and that Islamized datus increasingly sought to buttress their political

authority by tracing their ancestry to earlier sultans, if not the Prophet himself, and to secure their religious authority by appointing respected but loyal religious scholars (ʿulama) to administer the shari`a and adjudicate other religious matters in the areas under their control. Also, slavery became a very important institution in Moro society, and the fact that most of the chattel slaves who were captured in battle or kidnapped were " infidels" gave all Muslims, even the lowliest debt bondsmen, a sense of social superiority vis-À-vis " outsiders" and a heightened degree of social solidarity that papered over their de facto intragroup differences in social status. At the same time, the establishment of Muslim sultanates in the Philippines helped integrate that region into the wider Islamic world by means of increased trade and the occasional forging of alliances. As W. K. Che Man has emphasized, the Islamization of Sulu and Mindanao " resulted in an ideological bond among different groups of people in the region which led to the emergence of a new sense of ethnic identity that distinguished Muslim from non-Muslim populations. " This new sense of identity was further reinforced when the Moros were forced to contend with foreign colonization and incorporation into a single, Christian-dominated national state. The problems of today's " Moros" derive from three sources, the Spanish conquest and Hispanization of Luzon and the Visayas, the American colonial occupation of the Philippines and attitudes toward " Moroland, " and the policies later adopted by the independent Philippine government that finally emerged in the wake of World War II. The Spaniards, profoundly traumatized by their own long historical struggle against Muslim invaders in Spain, brought their crusading mentality to the Philippines, where they soon

transferred it to the Hispanized, Christianized inhabitants in Luzon and the Visayas. De facto Spanish policy toward the Moros was succinctly spelled out as early as 1578 by Governor Francisco de Sande, who ordered the commander of the first military expedition sent to Mindanao and Sulu to force the Moros to accept Spanish suzerainty, reorient their trade in the interests of the Spaniards, end their piracy, and begin their Hispanization and Christianization, " in line with the pattern followed with respect to other Filipino groups. " Given these objectives, it is not surprising that the Spanish then waged an intermittent succession of " Moro Wars" against the Muslims in the south for some 300 years. Cesar Majul argues that the effects of the " Moro Wars" instigated in the Philippines by the Spaniards " cannot be overemphasized, " since they " contributed to the tensions and conflicts that exist today" between the country's Christians and Muslims. Indeed, this combination of successful subjugation and Hispanization in the north and failed attempts to subjugate and Hispanize the south created unprecedented political, social, religio-cultural, and economic distinctions between Christian Filipinos and Muslim Moros, despite their underlying ethno-cultural similarities. According to Majul, this circumstance thereby " helped to define [Moro] attitudes and relations to all non-Muslim foreigners as well as non-Muslim Filipinos, " and eventually provided a basis and rationale for the modern Muslim nationalist and separatist myth that the Moros had always constituted a separate, unsubjugated people with respect to the Filipinos. The Americans further exacerbated these historically-contingent distinctions. In their efforts to prevent first the Spaniards and then Filipino nationalists from forging an anti-US alliance that included the Muslims, they initially

promised not to interfere with Moro autonomy. Indeed, in August 1899 Brigadier General John C. Bates of the US Army signed a formal agreement to that effect with Jamal-ul Karim II, Sultan of Sulu, and for a few years thereafter followed a policy of strict non-interference in Moro affairs. After suppressing the nationalist insurrection in the north, however, the Americans began trying to extend their policy “ to develop, to civilize, to educate, and to train [Filipinos] in the science of self-government” to Moroland, thereby precipitating a series of Muslim revolts that were not fully quelled until 1913. The fighting was fiercest, it should be noted, on the island of Jolo, a Tausug stronghold, where two major battles were fought. Although the Americans quickly initiated a series of beneficial development projects and honestly endeavored to accommodate Muslim customs and religious laws whenever possible, they inevitably ended up imposing — or at least superimposing — various “ infidel” laws and customs on the Moros. Moreover, despite periodically encouraging the Muslims to see themselves as a separate people under US sovereignty and protection, usually for cynical political reasons, in the end they allowed the Muslim south to be incorporated in toto into an independent Philippine state dominated by Christians. Many Moros understandably felt like second-class citizens in this new state, controlled as it was by their historic enemies. The independent Philippine Commonwealth (1935-1946) — and later the GRP (1946-Present) — although never motivated by religious zeal, bent on conversion, or determined to institutionalize formal religious discrimination, nonetheless adopted certain policies that adversely affected Muslims. This was perhaps inevitable, given that the Hispanized Filipinos who ran the new government had been imbued

by the Spaniards with a hostile and condescending attitude toward the Moros, whom they generally regarded as backwards and troublesome. So it was that in their efforts to integrate the Muslims, government officials broke with more enlightened American colonial policies, which had aimed to mollify the Moros by amending the substantive application of civil and criminal law, and instead endeavored to impose a uniform system of "modern" laws that in many respects violated traditional Islamic laws and customs. Rather than according full legal recognition to these traditional practices, they initiated a series of piecemeal exemptions that satisfied no one. Moreover, every young person — including non-Christians — had to have a baptismal certificate to enroll in the new public schools, and Muslim students were not allowed to wear veils or take off from school on Muslim holidays. Finally, in the new national education system, textbooks and lessons employed Christianized examples that were insensitive to, or at least dismissive of, Muslims, and that inadvertently ignored or demeaned the south. To provide only a couple of illustrative examples, these texts glorified (Christian) nationalist heroes like José Rizal whilst ignoring Muslim warriors like Sultan Kudarat, and emphasized the post-1896 period and the geography of the north. Hence what might have become an effective tool of national integration ended up being an instrument of divisiveness. Indeed, local government in the south continued to be run, if not by incompetent northern officials banished to "undesirable" frontier locales like Sulu, then by shrewd but often corrupt datus who opted to augment their traditional authority by accepting government posts. Most of the influential datus were friendly to Manila, which provided them with new bases of power and wealth, and relatively

unconcerned about the well-being of their own people. As a result, the overwhelming majority of Muslims gained almost nothing substantive from independence. A series of isolated Muslim revolts in the 1950s, in particular those of Abdulmajid Panoniongan and Tawan-tawan in Lanao and the prolonged Tausug insurrection of Hadji Kamlon in Sulu, belatedly caused the GRP to create a Commission on National Integration (CNI) and sponsor new development projects in the south, but these were generally underfunded and poorly-designed. Worse still, the nationalist government set in motion its own program of encouraging the internal migration of Christian settlers — including former Hukbalahap guerrillas who had agreed to surrender — from the overcrowded northern and central provinces to the so-called “land of promise” in Mindanao, a policy that had a disastrous demographic and political impact upon Muslims. The establishment of Christian “agricultural colonies” in Mindanao dated back to 1912, during the American period, but this process of north-to-south migration was continued under different guises and even accelerated after independence, and it was then resumed by the GRP after World War II. In 1903, 76% of the population of Mindanao was still Muslim, but by 1980 that proportion had been reduced to 23%. In short, Muslim ancestral lands were increasingly falling into the hands of Christian settlers and their descendants, in part due to rapid demographic change *per se*, which tilted the balance in local elections towards Christians, and in part due to the imposition of new government policies that effectively discriminated against Muslims (e. g., the requiring of new government-issued titles to all land, including Muslim ancestral holdings that had for centuries been handed down informally from one generation to the next). At the same

time, traditional subsistence agriculture in the south was increasingly replaced with export-oriented production by large, foreign-owned corporate enterprises, which further drove the Moros to the economic periphery. This combination of built-in structural and cultural disenfranchisement provided the tinder of Muslim discontent that only a single spark of overt violence directed against Moros might serve to ignite. The Rise of the Modern Muslim Secessionist Movement, 1968-1972 The incident that did more than any other to precipitate the rise of the modern Muslim secessionist movement was the so-called "Jabidah Massacre" of March 1968. The standard version of the story is that dozens of Muslim conscripts who had been recruited and secretly trained by AFP special forces personnel in preparation for the launching of sabotage and guerrilla operations in the Malaysian province of Sabah, located on the northeastern tip of the island of Borneo, were executed in cold blood near their training base on Corregidor island after they had complained about shabby treatment and demanded to be allowed to return home. Many aspects of the firsthand account provided by the supposed lone survivor of the massacre, Jibin Arula, who some suspected of being a Malaysian secret agent, could not be verified by investigating Philippine congressmen such as Benigno Aquino. Yet it is generally accepted that between 28 and 64 of the disgruntled Muslim recruits from this Jabidah Unit were in fact killed, ostensibly to prevent them from leaking information about "Oplan Merdeka" ("Operation Freedom"), a secret project sponsored by President Ferdinand Marcos to destabilize Sabah. More importantly, and irrespective of the actual facts, the Moros were collectively outraged by this purported crime and almost universally viewed it as a prime example of the

government's blatant disregard for their lives and interests. Nowhere was this more true than in Sulu, from whence the mostly Tausug recruits originated. Furthermore, this incident infuriated the Malaysian government of Tengku Abdul Rahman, which understandably felt betrayed by its Philippine counterpart, with whom it was then negotiating over the status of resource-rich Sabah. Rahman therefore promised Moro leaders such as Rashid Lucman, a Congressman and member of the Muslim Association of the Philippines (MAP), that his government would help train and arm Moro youths willing to oppose the Marcos regime. Sabah state minister Tun Mustapha Harun, a Tausug, also set up a "special office" to train and provide logistical support to Muslim rebels. In May 1968 Datu Udtog Matalam, an influential traditional leader who was then governor of Cotabato province, founded the Muslim Independence Movement (MIM). The MIM, which in its political manifesto promoted the creation of an independent Islamic state and openly accused the GRP of the "systematic extermination" of Muslim youth, was the first openly secessionist organization to emerge in the postwar period. In 1969 the initial group of Muslims recruited by Lucman and the MIM were sent to Malaysia for military training, an event that established a pattern whereby foreign Muslim regimes and organizations intervened in Philippine domestic politics on behalf of the Moros, albeit not generally covertly. Yet the influence of the MIM remained limited because it revolved around a handful of older aristocratic leaders, and it disintegrated in all but name when Matalam met with Marcos and surrendered in December 1972. Other organizations controlled by established Muslim leaders also arose in the wake of the "Jabidah Massacre," including the Ansar El-Islam group founded

in 1969 by ex-Senator Domocao Alonto. In the meantime, however, a whole new generation of Muslim student leaders had been forged in Philippine universities during the late 1960s and early 1970s, in particular at the University of the Philippines (UP) in Manila. Ironically, many of these leaders had been the recipients of government scholarships that were intended to further the long-term development of the Muslim south by educating and training a new Moro elite. These student activists were not only influenced by the dramatic wave of student protests that crested throughout the world in 1968, but were also radicalized by dramatic international and national events that sorely troubled their consciences, such as the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, the 1968 coup in Indonesia, the " Jabidah Massacre, " and increasing incidents of vigilante violence against Muslims on the island of Mindanao. Originally, they had joined together with left-wing student activists from Catholic families to protest against government policies and economic exploitation, but in 1968 Moro students sent to welcome Indonesian General Abdul Harris Nasution at Manila airport were attacked by their Maoist counterparts from the Kabataang Makabayan (KM: Patriotic Youth) group, who had gone there to protest the arrival of a figure they considered to be a " US puppet. " Shortly thereafter several new Muslim organizations were formed by Moro student leaders and professionals, including Macapanton Abbas' Union of Islamic Forces and Organizations (UIFO), Dr. Alunan C. Glang's Muslim Progress Movement (MPM), UP instructor and ex-KM member Nur Misuari's Philippine Muslim Nationalist League (PMNL), and many others. In May 1970, many of these activists convened the first Muslim Youth Assembly in Zamboanga City, at which they adopted an anti-government

posture. At around the same time, Lucman founded the Bangsa Moro Liberation Organization (BMLO), which at first brought together traditional leaders such as himself, Abbas, and Matalam with younger student leaders such as Misuari and Abul Khayr Alonto. The BMLO was the first group to organize itself along explicitly Islamic lines by establishing both a Consultative Assembly (in Arabic, Majlis al-Shura) of the Moro People and an Islamic judicial tribunal run by `ulama to enforce the shari`a. It was specifically intended to serve as an umbrella organization for all Muslim liberation forces, and in practice it also functioned for a time as the control mechanism for Muslim recruits being trained in Malaysia. However, it was not long before the growing rift between the older and younger generations of leaders — the latter, not without reason, viewed the former as “ feudal” and a party to the oppression of the Moros — split the BMLO. Soon after, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) emerged openly to contest the leadership of the Moro secessionist movement, and it eventually managed to obtain the support of Libya and other Muslim countries at the expense of the BMLO. In response, the traditional BMLO leaders agreed to cooperate with the Marcos government. They argued that their revolt had been intended to force the GRP to acknowledge the legitimacy of Bangsamoro grievances. In 1973 Abbas, Gibril Ridha, Napis Bidin, and other BMLO figures joined the Presidential Task Force for the Reconstruction and Development of Mindanao (PTF-RDM, later incorporated into the Southern Philippines Development Administration), which had been established to restore peace and order in Moroland and rehabilitate rebels through selective amnesty. In May 1974 Marcos acknowledged Lucman to be “ Paramount Sultan of Mindanao and

Sulu, " and the following month Sultan Lucman and other Moro leaders organized a GRP-funded conference at Mindanao State University on " Government Policies and Programs for Muslim Mindanao. " This conference adopted a resolution demanding Moro autonomy, not armed struggle, secession, and independence. Hence many younger radicals viewed the BMLO as a cynical instrument used by the government to weaken and divide the Moro movement. Nevertheless, the autonomy resolution passed at this conference, signed by 20, 000 Moros, was then attached to the report of the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission (QMC) at that same month's meeting of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) in Kuala Lumpur, and it became the basis for Kuala Lumpur Resolution No. 18, which urged the GRP to undertake a peaceful political solution to the Moro problem by negotiating with established Moro leaders. Even this limited demand for autonomy was too much for Marcos, who labeled Lucman as an enemy. Lucman, Abbas, and Pendatun then left for Saudi Arabia, where they attempted without success to unite with the MNLF. Meanwhile, by 1971 relations between Christians and Muslims had reached crisis proportions on the island of Mindanao, especially in the provinces of Lanao del Norte, Cotabato, and Lanao del Sur. Both Christian settlers and Muslims had formed vicious paramilitary vigilante groups, the latter apparently in response to those of the former. The Christian vigilantes were known as Ilagas (" Rats"), and were allegedly linked to Governor Arsenio Quibranza of Lanao del Norte, Ilongo settlers, Tiruray tribal peoples, and Philippine Constabulary (PC) units in Cotabato. They began carrying out attacks on Muslim inhabitants in an effort to terrorize them and force them to leave their lands, which once abandoned could then

be occupied by Christians, and in most cases the GRP took no action to curtail their depredations. Yet this strategy backfired in the south, unlike in Luzon where similar vigilantes were operating, since the Muslims created their own paramilitary squads in response. The two most famous were the Barracudas, who were purportedly linked to Nacionalista Party Congressman (and Quibranza's rival) Ali Dimaporo of Lanao del Norte, and the Blackshirts, who were allegedly linked to the MIM. Although ostensibly formed as self-defense groups, they too soon resorted to committing crimes and atrocities, in this case against Christians. By the end of 1970, growing vigilante violence had severely disrupted the economy of the region and displaced over 30,000 Muslims and Christians, and by the end of 1971 the number of evacuees had risen to 50,000. Several high-profile atrocities had by then been perpetrated, including the June 1971 "Manili massacre," in which the Ilagas murdered 65 Muslims inside a mosque compound in Barrio Manili, North Cotabato, an incident that was understandably viewed as a religious travesty by Muslims. Hostilities in the region escalated greatly on the eve of the November 1971 elections, as a result of which political power shifted further in favor of the Christians. This in turn stimulated further hostilities, and in 1972 there were sporadic clashes between the Ilagas and AFP, on the one side, and the Barracudas and Blackshirts, on the other. Moreover, the scale of anti-Moro violence increasingly attracted the attention of overseas Muslim states. In 1971, after the visit of Libyan Foreign Minister Abu Yasir to Mindanao, the Islamic Directorate of the Philippines (IDP) was created by traditional Muslim leaders to serve as a center for receiving foreign aid destined for the Moros. Its chairman was Cesar Majul, and its leaders signed

a declaration of unity proclaiming their readiness to “ defend Islam, the Homeland, and their people against all forms of aggressions against the Ummah. ” Soon after several IDP organizers, including Sultan Lucman, Senator Domocao Alonto, and Senator Salipada Pendatun, visited Libya as representatives of the Moro people in an effort to secure Mu` ammar al-Qadhdhafi’s aid. The Libyan leader promised to provide “ all forms of assistance” to the Moro liberation movement. In September 1972, the increasing violence in Mindanao provided Marcos with a pretext to declare Martial Law, and shortly thereafter Abbas went to Jidda to present the Moro case to the Munazzamat al-Mu` tamar al-Islami (OIC: Organization of the Islamic Conference), where he turned over a 200-page report to the OIC Secretary-General at the time, Malaysian leader and Marcos foe Tengku Abdul Rahman. At around the same time, Misuari and Salamat Hashim went to Libya in order to follow up on that regime’s aid promises and to introduce the MNLF publicly to both the Moros and overseas Muslims. Together they were able to convince Libyan officials, who shared their revolutionary zeal and had already visited Sabah to deliver financial assistance to the Moro movement, that Libyan aid should thereafter be provided to the MNLF rather than traditional elitist politicians. This caused the BMLO leaders to accuse Misuari and his colleagues of betraying them, and precipitated an open schism between them. In January 1975, having acknowledged this de facto transfer of leadership within the Moro movement, Marcos sent his own negotiator, Alejandro Melchor, to Jidda to negotiate with MNLF leaders. Finally, at the Sixth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held in that same city in July 1975, the MNLF under the leadership of Misuari was given formal

recognition by the OIC. The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) So it was that by the early 1970s the MNLF had become the principal Muslim movement promoting armed struggle, secession from the Philippines, and independence for Moroland. The nucleus of the MNLF was first formed in 1969 by a group of young, secular-educated Moros that were among the first recruits sent to Malaysia for military training, and who then established a seven-member committee with Misuari as Chairman and Abul Khayr Alonto as Vice-Chairman. Initially the existence of the group was kept secret, since younger leaders like Misuari, Otto Salahuddin, and Ali Alibon wanted to dissociate the MNLF from other organizations controlled by members of the compromised traditional elite. It was only in mid-1971, at a special Moro assembly convened by Misuari in Zamboanga City, that he and other "progressive elements" from the original "Group of 90" trainees in Sabah officially announced the establishment of their new organization. Several MNLF leaders then stood as candidates in local elections against traditional leaders in order to test their strength, but when they failed to win these electoral contests they committed themselves fully to armed struggle. Things quickly came to a head after Marcos' 21 September 1972 declaration of Martial Law, which by centralizing the regime's power and restricting the range of legitimate Muslim political activity only succeeded in precipitating an outright insurrection and open warfare. Just over one month later, on 24 October, several hundred Moros from groups led by both traditional and secular elites, including an `ulama-led outfit called Iklas, attacked the headquarters of the Philippine Constabulary in Marawi City and temporarily seized control of the Mindanao State University campus. Although

government troops quickly regained local control, the unrest subsequently spread into rural and urban areas throughout the Moro provinces, and the liberation struggle had begun. The MNLF was eventually able to convert these sporadic clashes between Moro rebels and the Marcos regime into a full-blown war, which developed into the most serious internal conflict since the Hukbalahap ("Huk") Rebellion of the later 1940s. At the height of this war, the MNLF fielded between 15,000 and 30,000 fighters. The MNLF did not fully develop its secular-oriented organizational structure until 1974, when the group's leaders, then residing in Libya, formed a 13-member Central Committee headed by Misuari. This committee, which functioned as a de facto executive body or strategic directorate, directly oversaw various offices devoted to specialized tasks such as intelligence, propaganda, and finances. MNLF leaders also established a Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal, which functioned as the group's judicial branch, and a National Congress, which in theory served as a legislative branch but in practice almost never met. Underneath the Central Committee was the general staff of the MNLF's military wing, the Bangsa Moro Army (BMA), and several Provincial Committees whose purpose was to manage the tasks of mobilization, recruitment, training, and waging war against GRP security forces in different areas of Moroland. The Provincial Committees in turn oversaw the activities of BMA units and lower-level Barrio Committees. However, it should be emphasized that the MNLF, despite its elaborate paper organization, was a "loosely knit" rather than a "well-structured" organization that never forged a clearly established chain of command, in large part because the Central Committee, based overseas, was unable to communicate effectively with the

Provincial Committees and field units of the BMA that were ostensibly subordinate to it. Consequently, each Provincial Committee and its diverse Barrio Committees acted mainly on their own initiative, carrying out their recruitment, training, and combat activities without specific directions from the Central Committee or close interaction with their counterparts in other provinces. In some instances, the BMA forces operating under the direction of particular Provincial Committees combined forces with those of nearby provinces, but in spite of this the role of the Central Committee was generally limited to establishing broad policy guidelines and organizing external support. Most of the MNLF's financial support was made available by the secularized revolutionary regime of Libya and the Sabah state government of Tun Mustapha Harun, which also provided its fighters with supply bases, logistical aid, and training facilities, but some also reportedly came from the OIC-affiliated Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF) or from alms (zakat) collected from believers by Muslim government agencies, foundations, companies, and charities. Ideologically, the MNLF was essentially a nationalist and separatist organization with an Islamic coloring rather than a group inspired primarily by religious sentiments. According to its own manifesto, the goal of the MNLF was to carry out a revolution to liberate "the five million oppressed Bangsa Moro people" from the "terror, oppression and tyranny of Filipino colonialism" and establish an independent Bangsa Moro Republik by means of armed struggle. It further emphasized that this revolution was a "revolution with a social conscience" that would be committed to "establishing a democratic system of government which shall never allow or tolerate any form of exploitation and oppression of any

human being by another or of one nation by another. " It would offer equal rights to all, presumably including Christians and pagans, provided that they " formally renounce[ed] their Filipino citizenship and wholeheartedly accept[ed] Bangsa Moro citizenship, " and would adhere to international human rights norms and promote the principle of self-determination. In the entire manifesto, there are only a few perfunctory references to Islam. The MNLF claimed that it would resist those colonialists who " threaten[ed] Islam through wholesale destruction and desecration of its places of worship and its Holy Book [the Qur`an], " that it was committed to the preservation and growth of Islamic culture, " and that the Bangsa Moro Republik would be " a part of the Islamic World as well as of the Third World and of the oppressed colonized humanity everywhere in the world. " Thus the rhetoric in this manifesto had a distinctly leftist rather than an Islamic or Islamist coloration, which later led some critics of Misuari's policies to accuse him of being " un-Islamic" and a " communist. " Despite this, along with some vague talk about " Islamic socialism, " the MNLF publicly sought to distance itself from the communist New People's Army (NPA), and in 1975 reportedly spurned NPA efforts to forge a military alliance. This was because MNLF leaders felt that the two movements were ideologically incompatible, and that such an alliance might weaken the Front's relationship to key supporters in the Islamic world. Shortly after entering the fray, the MNLF managed to consolidate many, though certainly not all, of the previously disparate Muslim forces then resisting crackdowns by the GRP's security forces and the depredations of Christian paramilitary groups. Between 1973 and 1976 the AFP waged a full-scale war against the MNLF and other rebel groups in an

effort to suppress the Muslim secessionist movement in Moroland. After suffering serious losses in several pitched conventional battles, the MNLF shifted its tactics with the assistance of Libyan and Malaysian military experts and thence adopted a more mobile form of guerrilla warfare. Despite Marcos' deployment of ever-larger military forces in Mindanao, in the end the MNLF managed to fight the government to a virtual standstill. At this point both parties were willing to allow the Libyan regime to broker the so-called Tripoli Agreement of December 1976, which provided for the establishment of a Muslim autonomous region comprising Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Palawan, and the Muslim areas of Mindanao " within the realm of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines. " In exchange for a ceasefire and the renunciation of outright independence, Misuari and the Moros would be allowed to establish their own administrative, educational, and economic systems in the new autonomous zone, as well as have " the right to set up their own Courts which implement the Islamic Shari`a laws. " Efforts to secure Muslim autonomy, as opposed to outright secession, were also supported by conservative Muslim governments and the international bodies they had founded, including both the Saudi-sponsored Rabitat al-`Alam al-Islami (IWL: Islamic World League) and the Pakistan-based Mu'tamar al-`Alam al-Islami (IWC: Islamic World Congress). Although both sides shrewdly signed the agreement to signal their reasonableness, profound disagreements remained over the terms of autonomy. On 24 March 1977 Marcos issued a decree formally proclaiming autonomy for the thirteen provinces listed in the Tripoli Agreement and calling for the establishment of a provisional government that consisted of a

majority of MNLF members with Misuari at its head, but insisted that the process be ratified by the holding of a referendum in the affected provinces. Misuari, who was aware that Muslims constituted a majority only in Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, and Lanao del Sur and that Christians were unlikely to vote for autonomy in a referendum, rejected the GRP's offer and instead demanded that Marcos issue an executive decree placing the MNLF in charge of the autonomous region. The referendum was nevertheless held on 17 April 1977, and the result of the vote was a resounding defeat for the MNLF, which in turn led to a resumption of hit-and-run fighting and government offensives in 1977. In that same year, cleavages within the MNLF came to a head and precipitated serious schisms within the group's Central Committee. These schisms were in part a reaction to Misuari's autocratic and secretive style, but they also reflected growing ideological and policy differences. The first member of the MNLF leadership to break with Misuari was co-founder, Central Committee member, and chairman of the organization's Foreign Affairs Committee, Salamat Hashim. At a December 1977 meeting during the annual Hajj (Pilgrimage) in Mecca, the aristocratic Hashim and 57 of his supporters in the MNLF attempted to carry out an electoral coup against Misuari, who they accused of deviating from "Islamic" objectives and "evolving towards [a] Marxist-Maoist orientation, " an attempt that was supported by other influential members of the traditional Moro political elite, including Rashid Lucman of the reformed BMLO, Domocao Alonto of Ansar El-Islam, and Salipada Pendatun of the MAP. This internal MNLF power grab also reflected broader intra-Arab disputes, since the anti-Misuari faction was supported by conservative states like Anwar al-Sadat's Egypt and Saudi

Arabia, whereas Misuari was backed by revolutionary " Arab socialist" regimes such as those of Libya and Syria. Misuari not only refused to recognize the results of this " election, " which resulted in Hashim declaring the creation of the New MNLF in December 1977, but managed to discredit and marginalize his rival by characterizing him as a traitor to the parent group. In March 1984, Hashim's New MNLF transformed itself into a separate organization with a pronounced Islamic orientation called the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Another MNLF co-founder, vice-chairman Abul Khayr Alonto, resigned and surrendered to the government in March 1978, together with many of his followers. He supposedly did so because he was increasingly unhappy with Misuari's ongoing maneuvering for complete independence, but some observers have also suggested that, as a descendant of Lanao sultans, he strongly opposed Misuari's belief in the need for a revolutionary transformation of traditional Moro society. Lastly, in March 1982 Dimas Pundato announced the formation of the Moro National Liberation Front-Reformist Group (MNLF-RG) after an MNLF organizational reform proposal he and others had submitted to Misuari was rejected and he and his supporters were dismissed from the MNLF. Three months later the Reformist Group met in Tawi-Tawi, where they rejected Misuari's leadership and called for autonomy rather than independence. The new organization, which received support from Saudi Arabia and Malaysia, promoted an explicitly Islamic ideology based upon the Qur`an and the accounts of the Prophet's sayings (hadith), and sought to establish an Islamic society throughout Moroland by gradually implementing the shari`a. Perhaps not coincidentally, the split between Misuari, Hashim, and Pundato also reflected

and coincided with the three major Muslim ethno-cultural groups represented within the MNLF. According to Che Man, "[t]he Maguindanaos and the Maranaos, who incline towards the preservation of the Moro traditional system, are supporters of Salamat Hashim and Dimas Pundato respectively, " whereas " the Suluanos, many of whom advocate egalitarianism, are behind Nur Misuari. " Misuari stubbornly broke off all negotiations with the GRP in April 1977, then resumed his struggle for Moro independence. This time, however, the government managed to get the upper hand militarily. Although the MNLF manifesto had demanded secession from the Philippine state and complete independence for the Bangsa Moro people, AFP successes in the field eventually compelled Misuari to modify his demands and accept autonomy. After the fall of the hated Marcos regime, he met personally with President Corazon Aquino in Jolo on 5 September 1986. The two sides agreed to cease hostilities and lay the groundwork for formal negotiations, but these too soon broke down. Finally, after protracted diplomatic wrangling between the GRP, the MNLF and other Moro groups, and diverse foreign interlocutors, a peace agreement was finally signed on 2 September 1996 by the representative of Fidel Ramos, Aquino's successor as President, and Misuari himself, formally ending the 25-year MNLF armed struggle and authorizing the creation of a Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD) to oversee development efforts within the Special Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD). Following a three-year transitional period in which slow progress was made, Misuari was elected almost unopposed in 1999 as the head of a newly-formed regional government of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Perhaps not surprisingly, this series of compromises with the Philippine state precipitated a new round of intragroup conflict and caused dissident, radical factions within the MNLF to break away from the parent body and form their own separate organizations. Along with several autonomous MNLF formations that later became known as "lost commands," the chief beneficiaries of these splits ended up being the MILF and the ASG. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) As noted above, the MILF originated as an anti-Misuari faction within the MNLF before its formal establishment as a separate organization in 1984. Its leader was Salamat Hashim, a Maranao aristocrat and scholar who had gone to Cairo in 1959 and studied for several years at al-Azhar University, the most prestigious center of Islamic learning in the world. There he was exposed to "Arab socialist," traditionalist, fundamentalist, and Islamist doctrines at a time when the pan-Islamic revolutionary ideas of Egyptian President Jamal `Abd al-Nasir (1954-1970) served to inspire innumerable Middle Eastern student activists, and he personally organized a clandestine anti-GRP resistance cell from among other Mindanao students based in Cairo that was "explicitly and exclusively Islamic in character." In 1967 or 1970 Hashim returned home and, using his government post as a provincial librarian as a cover, helped arrange for the training of batches of Moro recruits in Malaysia and thereafter became one of the co-founders of the MNLF. After Marcos' 1972 declaration of martial law the veteran activist went underground, and in 1974 he joined Misuari in Tripoli. During his 25-year sojourn overseas in various Middle Eastern and Asian Muslim countries, Hashim established close connections with many influential Islamic religious and political figures in his efforts to secure foreign

support for the MNLF and later the MILF. It was not until 1987 that he surreptitiously returned — this time for good — to the Philippines. Nor was Hashim the only “Islamic student revolutionary” who later played a key role in the MILF. Several other MILF leaders were likewise scions of aristocratic Maranao families who had studied overseas at Islamic universities, usually in culturally and religiously conservative countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt (especially after the September 1970 death of Nasir), Pakistan, and various Gulf states. Given these circumstances, and their perceived need to distance themselves from the more secular orientation of the MNLF, it is not at all surprising that the MILF’s leaders ended up espousing a socially conservative and explicitly Islamic worldview. According to Hashim, the reconfiguration of the New MNLF into the MILF was carried out to “underscore Islam as the rallying point of the Bangsamoro struggle.” In a letter to the Secretary-General of the OIC, he elaborated further on this theme: “All Mujahideen under the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) adopt Islam as their way of life. Their ultimate objective in their Jihad is to make supreme the WORD of ALLAH and establish Islam in the Bangsamoro homeland.” Yet it was not the MILF’s declared intention at the outset to rise up against the Philippine government and wage an armed struggle in order to create an independent state, albeit perhaps only for tactical reasons. Instead, its leaders slowly and carefully built up their forces and gradually Islamized the “liberated” areas under their direct control in preparation for the future creation of an Islamic state in Moroland, whose establishment they viewed as a longer term process. Indeed, in an early 1980s MILF programmatic statement describing its four-point policy of Islamization, organizational strengthening, military

build-up, and economic self-reliance, the group initially envisioned a three-phase strategy that its leaders expected would last for fifteen years, but this relatively short time frame was subsequently extended until the year 2050. However that may be, as time wore on the group's underlying ideology became increasingly radical. This may have been due in large part to external influences rather than specific responses to internal developments within the Philippine archipelago. In the early 1980s, even before the formal establishment of the MILF, the New MNLF sent three batches of its carefully-selected field commanders to undergo military training at camps in Afghanistan, of whom at least 360 underwent a year-long course of military instruction and 180 eventually joined the mujahidin to fight. Part of their training apparently involved ideological indoctrination as well as hands-on military training, and given their exposure to this transnational jihadist milieu it is likely that many of these individuals returned with far more radical interpretations of Islam than they had when they departed. Moreover, by the mid-1990s key personnel associated with 'Usama bin Ladin's logistical network in the Philippines were collaborating closely with elements of the MILF, and by the end of the decade foreign members of al-Qa`ida were reportedly training fighters in the principal MILF camps. These Islamist radicals from overseas must have affected, whether directly or indirectly, the views of the MILF members and supporters with whom they were interacting. It is therefore not surprising to learn that more moderate Muslims, including traditional leaders, many younger professionals, " progressives, " and the poor, were highly critical of the attempts by MILF leaders and the younger Islamist `ulama with which they were allied to impose stricter and more

puritanical interpretations of Islam on the Moros residing in their camps and "liberated" zones, as some Philippine Muslims were secularized but most still practiced a syncretistic type of "folk Islam" that incorporated noticeable pagan and Sufi elements. Even the MILF's organizational structure, which was considered more effective than that of Misuari's looser group, reflected its pronounced Islamic orientation. Like the MNLF the MILF established an executive body known as the Central Committee, but like the BMLO it formed both an Islamic judicial organ — in this case one dubbed the Supreme Islamic Revolutionary Tribunal — and a "legislative" Consultative Council (Majlis al-Shura) where policies could be debated and discussed by the organization's leaders. Under the administrative authority of the Central Committee are a Secretariat subdivided into various functional offices and three (later more) vice chairmen, one for Political Affairs, one for Islamic Affairs, and one for Military Affairs. This last official is responsible for overseeing the operations of the group's armed wing, the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF). A similar but somewhat less elaborate organizational structure was also set up by the MILF at the provincial level. The BIAF subsequently evolved from a loosely-organized guerrilla force into a 12,000-15,000 strong semi-conventional army consisting of a regular infantry force operating under the direction of MILF Chief of Staff Al Haj Murad; an elite Internal Security Force (ISF) headed by Abdul Aziz Mimbantas, another graduate of al-Azhar, whose functions include policing MILF areas and ensuring that the Qur'an is properly observed; and a Special Operations Group (SOG), established in 1999, which in spite of the public denials of movement spokesmen is generally considered to be the terrorist section of the MILF. On the ground,

mainly on the island of Mindanao, the MILF operated what Hashim characterized as a "parallel government" in opposition to the "enemy administration" (i. e., the GRP bureaucracy) in the areas under its control, an apparatus that revolved around 13 major and 33 lesser camps in the countryside and also functioned inside Moro ghettos in urban areas (such as Campo Muslim in Cotabato City). Some of these were armed camps that functioned exclusively as military and logistical bases, such as Camp Omar in Maguindanao, but the two largest — Camp Abubakar in North Cotabato and Camp Bushra in Lanao del Sur — were extensive, economically self-sufficient entities that housed entire Muslim communities and were intended to serve as exemplars and living models of the "Islamic state" and Islamized society that the MILF eventually hoped to establish throughout Moroland. For example, prior to its partial July 2000 capture by the AFP Camp Abubakar had developed into a vast 5, 000-10, 000 hectare complex that extended for forty miles and included parts of seven villages, and within its confines the MILF had gathered together a self-contained Islamic community with a mosque, a religious school, a prison, a military training academy, an arms factory, a solar power source, sophisticated telecommunications equipment, family housing, markets, a fruit nursery, and agricultural plots. Ironically, some of these amenities were financed with development funds provided by the GRP, in part to co-opt the MILF and in part to help the security agencies monitor activities inside the camp itself. This munificence on the part of the government may seem curious given that the MILF originated as an illegal underground armed movement whose members were subject to arrest and detention without trial. However, the MILF has in fact had a long, complex,

and shifting history of interactions with the GRP. Initially, Hashim's New MNLF faction claimed to oppose Misuari's program of secession and outright independence and to be willing to accept "meaningful autonomy" within the bosom of the Philippine state. However, this may have been more of a stratagem to allow the new faction to appear more moderate and thereby gain the support of conservative Muslim regimes and international organizations, most of which had preferred to negotiate with the GRP in order to resolve the Moro problem peacefully and had thus generally sought to restrain the more radical demands of Misuari. Once it became clear that these foreign Muslim supporters were generally unwilling to transfer their support from the MNLF to the New MNLF, Hashim and his supporters bided their time and continued to adopt a moderate public position whilst secretly building up the organizat