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## American Military Presence in the Southern Philippines: A Comparative Historical Overview

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This paper was presented at the workshop “In Whose Interests? The Future of the US Military in Asia,” held at the East-West Center, February 20-22, 2003. As an initial review of how the current US military presence in Mindanao is viewed locally, this working paper will form the basis of discussion for the Philippine case study for a cross-national study of how citizens in Asia view the presence of US forces within their society.

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## **American Military Presence in the Southern Philippines: A Comparative Historical Overview**

In January 2002, 660 U.S. troops arrived in the southern Philippine island of Mindanao to participate in the annual “Balikatan Exercise” war game involving the United States and the Philippines.<sup>1</sup> Critics charged that the real reason the soldiers were in Mindanao was to go after the bandit group Abu Sayyaf.<sup>2</sup> They also censured Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for allegedly violating a constitutional provision banning foreign troops on Philippine soil. Diverse groups ranging from non-governmental organizations and the leadership of the local National Council of Churches, to the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and prominent politicians, assailed the government for subscribing to President George W. Bush’s “war on terror,” arguing that America “on a rampage” would drag the Philippines into a war not to its liking.<sup>3</sup> Criticism of Balikatan was not limited to political and social forces in the capital.<sup>4</sup> In Basilan, the province where American soldiers were to be deployed, the provincial board passed a resolution opposing the exercises.<sup>5</sup>

Arroyo’s supporters responded that the American presence could improve the fighting capacity of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and that American civic-action programs could jump-start social and economic development programs postponed or derailed by the war and Abu Sayyaf kidnappings.<sup>6</sup> Government officials cited poll surveys showing that a high percentage of Filipino respondents favored the American deployment. In Mindanao, too, there was said to be “overwhelming support for the Mindanao Balikatan joint exercises.”<sup>7</sup> Business groups in Mindanao and Manila gave their backing to Balikatan 02-1, with the chair of the Davao City Chamber of Commerce welcoming it as “a serious effort to address the peace and order problem of our country [and] restore and improve investor confidence.”<sup>8</sup> The head of Zamboanga City’s “economic zone” announced that news of the deployment had already “drawn in \$60 million of investment commitments.”<sup>9</sup>

The anti-Balikatan coalition focused its attack on the exercises’ alleged illegality and portrayed Balikatan 02-1 as “the renewed phase of U.S. military intervention in the Philippines.”<sup>10</sup> This particular argument aimed to link the exercises to history: Balikatan 02-1 as the early twentieth-century reiteration of a process beginning a century ago with the “Moro-American wars.”<sup>11</sup> Historicizing the deployment was a powerful propaganda tool; it struck a sensitive nerve in the never-ending debate over Filipino nationhood and the country’s purported “neo-colonial relationship” with the United States.<sup>12</sup> In a debate at the University of the Philippines, however, the validity of this argument came into question when Muslim academics made an apparent qualification. One panelist argued that the “Moro-American wars” had had nothing to do with Philippine independence; they were related instead to the failure of the United States to grant “independence to the Moros of Sabah and Mindanao.” Another panelist was even more forthright. When asked if Muslims would join the anti-Balikatan 02-1 opposition, Abhoud Syed M. Lingga of the Institute of Bangsamoro Studies responded: “That is not sellable to the Moros, sa

Filipinos ‘yan,’ di naman sa Moro” (the opposition is for the Filipinos to deal with, it is not the concern of the Moros).<sup>13</sup>

To one familiar with Mindanao’s political development, Lingga’s reply is striking: for the first time in public discussion at the country’s flagship state university and center of Filipino nationalism, Muslim academics and activists questioned the nationalist assertion that the Moros’ uncompromising anti-imperialist resistance had cemented Muslims and Filipinos into a united people.<sup>14</sup> This deviation from the nationalist “line” resurrected at a stroke a fissure that scholars and public intellectuals in the Philippines had thought resolved, or at least minimized—the discrepant histories of the Filipino “nation” and its marginalized Muslim “periphery.”

The picture becomes more complicated when we turn to the affirmative side of the public debate. Popular approval for Balikatan 02-1 came not only from Christian Filipinos; surveys showed that over 60 percent of Mindanao Muslims supported the military exercises (against 26 percent who disapproved).<sup>15</sup> The provincial board of Jolo mentioned above was a minority voice in Basilan and its resolution opposing Balikatan 02-1 was simply ignored by the province’s powerful governor. Moreover, the province’s representative to the lower house in Manila openly defied his allies on the provincial board by supporting the deployment, although he warned that the US should “not go beyond Basilan and the Abu Sayyaf.” Congressman Abdul Gani “Jerry” Salapudin insisted that bringing the kidnap group to bay would put an end to the demonization of Islam.<sup>16</sup> Salapudin found an ally in the Sultan of Sulu, the “traditional political and spiritual leader of all Muslims in the Sulu Archipelago,” who described the Abu Sayyaf as a group that had “deviated from the true tenets of Islam.”<sup>17</sup>

Muslim support for action against the Abu Sayyaf applied only to the Americans, however; regarding the national government in Manila, there was much equivocation. Lingga believed that Balikatan 02-1 would eventually be used by “[Philippine] advocates of military intervention” to push their agenda in Mindanao. Another academic, Professor Julkipli M. Wadi, reminded his audience that “a cultural discrepancy” existed between the Philippine government and the “old Sultanate” which had undermined the latter’s power and influence in the Sulu area.<sup>18</sup>

History was again invoked with this interesting qualification, drawing our attention to the fact that Muslim Mindanao had a different experience of American colonial rule than the rest of the archipelago, a difference that lies at the heart of the discrepancy between “national” and Muslim histories. National anti-Balikatan forces see the United States as a continuing oppressive presence in the southern periphery, while Muslim supporters of the military exercises remember the superpower’s historical role as foil to the relentless interference and intervention of the Philippine central state. What accounts for such discordant views?

This paper suggests that the persistence of contradictory positions vis-à-vis the United States is related to (a) the manner in which American colonial rule is remembered by the

various actors involved in the Balikatan debate; and (b) the relationship between the national and local states in the post-war period. It argues that the peculiarities of colonial state building in the early American period provided the institutional frame from which these opposing sentiments initially emerged, later to be nurtured by the decentralized politics of the post-war period. The attempt to centralize the nation-state through authoritarian rule did not eliminate the contradiction; instead, social resistance to the Marcos dictatorship gave it a certain durability which accounts for its resurfacing in today's debates.

### **The Distinctiveness of American Colonial Rule**

Accounts of American colonialism in the Philippines generally regard it as a unitary experience. I have suggested elsewhere, however, that not one but two distinct processes of colonial state formation occurred in the first decade of American rule.<sup>19</sup> In the lowland Catholic-dominated areas already cleared of insurgents, a civilian regime emerged anchored in close collaboration between a nascent Filipino elite and American officials.<sup>20</sup> In the highlands of northern Luzon and in southern Mindanao—areas the preceding Spanish colonial regime had been unable to control effectively—Washington allowed the War Department a freer hand in establishing authority, giving the US Expeditionary Army sole power to determine how best to govern the regions' "wild tribes."<sup>21</sup>

In southern Mindanao, the U.S. War Department created the "Moro Province," an autonomous regional structure covering almost two-thirds of the island—deemed "ungovernable" territory—and dominated entirely by Army officers.<sup>22</sup> Resistance was scattered and unity never emerged among leaders of the different Muslim communities. Each ethnic group responded to American military occupation based on how it affected their own areas, not "Moro Mindanao," as has often been argued by contemporary historians.<sup>23</sup> Having no prior experience with Muslims, Army officers relied initially on Spanish accounts as administrative guideposts, but to their credit, they rejected much of this clerical advice after realizing how easily religious prejudice could obstruct governance. American fidelity to the principle of separation of church and state also compelled top administrators to seek alternative ways to administer their "wards," and they also looked to Dutch Java and British Malaya for inspiration in handling religious matters.<sup>24</sup>

Broadening their vista enabled army officers to see the role local Muslim leaders could play in consolidating colonial rule. While contemptuous of British and Dutch efforts to maintain Malay and Javanese "traditional authority," the Americans appreciated the manner in which local elites were integrated into the colonial order. Thus, beginning in 1906, Muslim leaders were recruited or invited to become heads of "tribal wards" whose purpose was to facilitate tax collection and mediate between communities and the military authorities. The tribal wards also became stepping stones for *datus* (traditional local leaders) and sultans willing to participate in the citizen-formation program the Army envisioned for the Moro Province.<sup>25</sup> Reception of these administrative measures by many traditional chiefs was positive and army officers reported enthusiastic support from Muslim communities for the tribal ward idea. Muslim support was further cemented

when those with proven records of collaboration were conferred additional official titles and made to join the basic administrative units, the district councils. By the second half of the first decade of American rule, southern Mindanao—reputedly the most turbulent and difficult-to-control province of the colony—was declared stable and peaceful.

The administrative success of military rule, however, created a dynamic with long-term consequences for southern Mindanao's interaction with the rest of the Philippines. Because of the powerful influence of nationalism, Filipino and Filipino-Muslim scholarship on the American period tends to describe datu collaboration with the powerful Americans as just another instance of elite opportunism. This effectively places them in the same disreputable company as the Filipino elites who abandoned the revolutionary government in the north after realizing the power of American arms. This argument is politically popular; it is also empirically wrong. While there is no doubt that rational calculation played a role in the datu's decision to cooperate, their decisions were taken within a quite different political context.<sup>26</sup>

In associating datu collaboration with “acts of betrayal” by leaders of the nationalist revolution, scholars and policy-makers ignore two fundamental facts. First, before the advent of the U.S. colonial state, Muslim groups never saw themselves as part of an evolving Filipino national polity. Second, their views of Filipinos and initially of Americans were colored by their participation in a much broader Southeast Asian world. It is important to remember that throughout most of the Spanish period, Muslims were on the offensive against the colonial state, launching slave raids on communities north of Mindanao. If Filipinos and Spaniards disliked each other, their animosity was often mitigated by fear of these raids. The Muslims never had a high regard for Filipinos (or their Spanish masters), treating them mainly as sources of human booty to be traded for other resources and commodities in the profitable maritime trade.<sup>27</sup> The tide only turned in the central state's favor once the Spanish acquired superior technology in the form of coal-powered gunboats in the mid-nineteenth century. This change in the balance of power, however, came in the twilight of Spanish rule; the Moro menace was soon replaced by a nationalist rebellion that would have ended Spanish rule had the Americans not intervened.<sup>28</sup>

Datus and sultans regarded Spaniards, Filipinos, and Americans alike as threats to their already waning power, but used the occasion of “regime change” to preserve or recover some of that power. With the breakdown of Spanish rule, the brilliant Datu Piang of Cotabato neutralized efforts by Filipinos to take over in the towns where they co-existed with Muslims; he then presented himself to the United States as a more reliable local ally. Attempts by sympathizers of the Filipino revolution to seize power in the town of Zamboanga (which eventually became the colonial capital of the Moro Province) were also deflected by Muslim leaders who swore allegiance to the American flag.<sup>29</sup> In this transition, Muslims reached out to the American military because they saw a potential protector of their regional trade. When the Sultan of Sulu agreed to “recognize American sovereignty,” he asked in exchange that his trading fleet be allowed to fly the American flag when it went to Singapore. The request was denied, but it is notable that the Sultan,

whose fortunes had declined considerably, thought he could reverse the trend by showing competitors and partners in the British entrepôt who his new patron was.<sup>30</sup>

The obstacle to the datus' plan was the American commitment to ending the slave trade, limiting Muslim contact with the rest of Southeast Asia, and transforming them into colonial officials. Some datus rebelled at this realization, but many others, their independent local power practically dissipated, began to deepen and redefine their collaboration. They were increasingly alarmed by the efforts of Filipino leaders to win American recognition of southern Mindanao as an organic part of the Philippines. To protect their gains from Filipino encroachment, datus and sultans agitated for the Moro Province's separation from the rest of the colony.<sup>31</sup> In their efforts they found allies in the U.S. Army.

The Army had been granted the right to govern southern Mindanao on the assumption that its population was wild, backward, and unpacified. This condition and the history of enmity between Muslims and "non-Christian tribes" on the one hand and Filipinos on the other implicitly recognized that the former had never been part of Las Islas Filipinas. The Army's responsibility was not just to pacify, but to "civilize" these communities prior to their being integrated with the rest of the Philippines. In the view of officers in the field, this would take at least a generation.<sup>32</sup> Significantly, the Army's mandate allowed it to govern the Moro Province differently than other Philippine provinces. It was understood that the program's success depended on the Army being unhampered in its pursuit of civilizing the Moros.<sup>33</sup>

As their administration stabilized, army officers took pride in their work, especially as they saw how unevenly the civilian pacified areas were being governed. The more they learned about "Moro history," the more they realized how brittle were the ties between southern Mindanao and the Philippines. This attitude merged with their existing contempt for the growing practice of patronage politics being nurtured by American and Filipino local civilian governments in the north. They also strongly suspected that Filipino rhetoric calling for the full integration of Mindanao was prompted by a desire to get hold of the island's rich natural resources at the expense of the Muslims and "non-Christian tribes."<sup>34</sup> These misgivings were soon validated by the attempts of Filipino politicians to control the Moro Province's budget and question military rule in southern Mindanao.

Thus these two forces—disempowered Muslim datus and brash "Progressive" army-bureaucrats—found common cause. In their resolve to keep Mindanao autonomous and shielded from Manila and the Filipinos, they deployed various political and bureaucratic weapons. On the Army side, glowing reports of pacification successes were balanced by warnings that "Moro Mindanao" remained unstable and prone to explode in rebellion.<sup>35</sup> There is little written evidence of Muslim opinion at this time, but their constant appeals to make Moro Mindanao separate from the rest of the colony or to continue Army rule suggest their support for the Army's position. In fact, growing agitation by Filipino groups to "normalize" the Moro Province and give Filipinos a larger role in local administration were likely in response to these Muslim demands. Filipino officials, who often toured Muslim Mindanao with their American counterparts, also noticed how



“duplicitous” Muslim elites were: professing fidelity to the Filipino cause of greater control of the colonial state, but later whispering to the Americans how they feared being governed by Filipinos.<sup>36</sup>

In the end, no separatist movement came to fruition. Washington never envisioned the U.S. Army engaging in nation-building, and Congressional mistrust of a standing army virtually eliminated the possibility of keeping it there as a permanent force. American imperial policy was fundamentally grounded in the eventual expansion of Filipino participation in colonial affairs, and because of this Congress was never fiscally supportive of its colonial possession. A plan by army officials to recreate the American West in Mindanao also fizzled out as early American settlements fell victim to settler inexperience, labor shortages, rivalry from better-organized Japanese settlers, and lack of support from provincial authorities.<sup>37</sup> Finally, the victory of Woodrow Wilson in 1913 ended all possibility of separating Mindanao, for the Democratic Party was firmly committed to the integration of the “special provinces” to the colonial state.

A year later, the Filipino-controlled Philippine Assembly and newly appointed Governor-General Francis Burton Harrison agreed to create the Department of Mindanao and Sulu under the jurisdiction and control of the Department of Interior. The new Department was headed by a Filipino, in accordance with the new administrations’s “Filipinization” policy, which expanded Filipino participation and top-level decision-making power in colonial administration. This was the opening Filipinos needed to extend their power and influence in the special provinces.<sup>38</sup>

Muslim leaders voiced their opposition and called on Washington to reconsider, but not all remained passionate separatists.<sup>39</sup> Some had already accepted the new political reality of Filipino dominance and Mindanao integration and sought to accommodate themselves to the new order. Still, these evolving Muslim elites retained a certain loyalty to the United States, especially to their army overlords; even the pragmatic ones hoped General Leonard Wood, past governor of the Moro Province, would return some day to save them from the Filipinos. This was an attitude that lingered below the surface even beyond the American period.

From 1914 to the end of American colonial rule in 1946, a basic structure of mutual accommodation evolved between Muslim leaders and Filipino politicians like Manuel Quezon, who did not interfere in religious affairs and promised to train them in the art of governance.<sup>40</sup> In contrast to their military mentors’ disdain for patronage politics, the Filipinos also brought budding Muslim politicians into the patronage and spoils network Quezon’s Nacionalista Party had created. Muslim leaders were handicapped, however, by their limited experience. As late comers to the colonial game—isolated for ten years by the U.S. Army—they had to catch up, acquiring basic knowledge from the public school system along with skills vital to a political career. The very few who reached college were also the most qualified to ascend the social and political ladder.<sup>41</sup>

World War II temporarily derailed this educational and political journey, but war with the Japanese also created the opportunity to cement ties with the Philippine colonial state.

One course was to join the anti-Japanese resistance by forming an army or subordinating one's armed followers to the authority of a guerilla unit officially recognized by the Allied forces.<sup>42</sup> Others collaborated with the Japanese for reasons ranging from opportunism to the astute recognition that control of the administrative apparatus would be crucial when the Americans returned.<sup>43</sup> In either case, by World War II few Muslim leaders held separatist sentiments. In the eyes of their elites, Muslims were for all intents and purposes Filipinos.

### **The “Weak” Postwar State**

In the last phase of prewar American colonial rule, the Philippine Commonwealth under President Manuel Quezon had evidenced a shift toward state centralization. After the war and Quezon's death, the leadership of the new Republic of the Philippines showed a preference for embedding state authority in patronage coalitions between state leaders and the country's wealthy provincial families and urban and rural strongmen.<sup>44</sup> The constitutional democracy bequeathed from the colonial era thus came under the control of local elites, who managed elections in such a way that no significant popular threat to their domination could emerge via suffrage.<sup>45</sup> “Cacique democracy” also tacitly condoned the presence and occasional interference of the United States in Philippine affairs, an element that persisted through the first three decades of the postwar period.<sup>46</sup>

In this decentralized political arena, Muslim leaders asserted control of their local “bailiwicks.” The postwar generation was already at ease with the new order and never aspired for a political order, much less territory, apart from the nation-state. As politicians of the country's “frontier,” these leaders were aware that they were operating from a position of relative disadvantage. Most of Mindanao, especially the Muslim provinces, was still underdeveloped and backward.<sup>47</sup> Muslim politicians therefore lacked the wealth of their Christian counterparts, and although a number had private armies, their overall resources paled in comparison to the political clans of the central and northern Philippines.<sup>48</sup> However, they had “ethnicity” and “religion” as political assets, and the most successful among them were adept in mixing these elements with the trappings of modern day politics. A Muslim academic observed in 1962:

The Alontos of Lanao, the Pendatuns, Sinsuats and Ampatuans of Cotabato and the Abu Bakrs of Sulu are all of royal blood; although occasionally in distantly collateral lines. Their gradually waning traditional influence is now rather significantly buttressed, if slightly in nature, by the considerable resources of the constitutional system (such as patronage, public works funds, police systems, etc.) The datu class now controls sizable blocs of votes, which are often the basis of constantly shifting political alliances. It appears to be a fact that the most effective leaders are those who combine both traditional and constitutional authority.<sup>49</sup>

Given the history of internecine warfare between Muslim and Christian Philippines—the part of history most publicized—social tensions between the communities were never

fully resolved in the postwar period. Filipinos remained suspicious of Muslims for religious reasons and past battles against “Moro slave raids.” The image of Mindanao as a volatile frontier reinforced this Filipino outlook, even as a massive influx of settlers from the Visayas and Luzon made Muslims the loss of their lands and livelihoods.<sup>50</sup> These anxieties fed a common Muslim view that the national government was insensitive to their concerns and hostile to their attempts to be heard.

Postwar Muslim leaders anchored their ambitions in political brokering between the suspicious, increasingly aggrieved Muslim minority and the determined national state associated with Christians. Reaching some form of mutual accommodation between Muslims and settlers increased their power at the local level and brought prestige and influence in the national capital.<sup>51</sup> These political exchanges were most prominent during national and provincial elections, when Muslim politicians mobilized voters through patronage networks to ensure the victory of their allies. Voter mobilization was particularly important in electing non-Muslim candidates, or when the votes of a certain province had a crucial effect on a presidential or senate election.

Through most of the postwar period, for example, the Muslim provinces of Lanao del Sur and Cotabato consistently voted for national and provincial politicians allied to local politicians Mohamad Ali Dimaporo in Lanao and Salipada K. Pendatun in Cotabato. In Lanao, Dimaporo ruled with an iron hand and delivered votes of “sizeable margins” in favor of his supporters and patrons—a practice not unfamiliar to students of American machine politics.<sup>52</sup> Pendatun, whose province was a major in-migration zone, had to create electoral coalitions with emerging strongmen in the Christian settler zones to maintain his family’s control of Cotabato and deliver the votes.<sup>53</sup> These Muslim politicians were crucial to moderating the unresolved tensions of the American colonial period. They were also responsible for an unprecedented twenty years of stability in the southern frontier, a phenomenon many scholars and policy analysts of Muslim Mindanao politics either ignore or fail to consider.

With the assistance of Muslim leaders, the apportioning of land between indigenes and settlers was done with minimal problems, in contrast to the land battles occurring in predominantly settler areas like Davao.<sup>54</sup> Political order was maintained not by the presence of the Constabulary (which was small and widely dispersed), but by mutual accommodation between local politicians and national leaders, who allowed the former control of firepower and private armies in exchange for keeping order on behalf of the state. Thus, while Manila feared a communist takeover in the 1950s, most of Mindanao was peaceful.

The success of this “Janus-faced gentry” helps explain the persistence of pro-Americanism in southern Mindanao.<sup>55</sup> Heirs to families and individuals who governed Muslim districts under the Americans and fought side-by-side with them during World War II, politicians like Dimaporo and Pendatun remained loyal to the United States after independence. Pendatun for a while fashioned himself the Magindanao’s Douglas MacArthur, preferring to be called “General” during his early years in Congress. A staunch anti-communist and one of the country’s top warlords, he belonged to a group in

Congress that was avowedly pro-American and became a U.S. favorite.<sup>56</sup> When President Ferdinand Marcos faced congressional opposition to his plan to assist the United States in Southeast Asia, Dimaporo “helped shepherd through Congress [the] controversial bill sending Philippine troops to Vietnam.”<sup>57</sup> Like many other parts of the country, Muslim Mindanao in the hands of local strongmen remained supportive of the United States. There were no nationalist challenges to this sentiment while debate about “neo-colonial relations” was still confined to the main urban centers. Moreover, the limited presence of American institutions and agencies in Mindanao blunted the effectiveness of nationalist rhetoric: there was no concrete “imperialist” target on the island to which propaganda could be directed.<sup>58</sup>

All this changed when President Marcos began to more vigorously incorporate Mindanao into national development plans and his own ambitious political calculations.<sup>59</sup> With its resources and growing electorate – over one million people settled in Mindanao from central and northern Philippines from 1946 to the mid-1960s – Marcos saw Mindanao as means of distancing himself from the so-called “traditional elites” and old oligarchs. But first he needed to break the power of the local strongmen who were allies of opposition elites and those with the independent power to obstruct his plans.<sup>60</sup> Marcos tried to accomplish this using two state agencies to which authoritarianism was second nature—the technocracy and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP)—while he nurtured his own set of loyal strongmen.

The deployment of the technocratic model of development and military-imposed stability, coming at a time when the land frontier had filled up, proved devastating.<sup>61</sup> Marcos broke the delicate balance between state and strongman by creating his own network of local allies, less autonomous and more beholden to him, whom he then unleashed on his enemies. He used the military to break up opposition “private armies” and established rival Muslim associations to challenge those under the control of local opponents. This created the conditions for the typical weapons of political combat—patronage and elections—to be joined by the more coercive private armies, assassinations, executions, and electoral violence.<sup>62</sup> Conflict then followed between Muslims and Christian settlers, who often enjoyed military support.

The breakdown of stability and the decline of Muslim politicians lower power opened Mindanao’s political arena to new actors. The most dynamic of the new forces were student activists, both moderates and radicals, who began organizing “the Moro masses” for an eventual armed confrontation with the state and its local strongmen allies. Muslim students under former University of the Philippines instructor Nur Misuari joined forces with young warlords and scholars like Hashim Salamat who received their Islamic education in Libya and Egypt. Initially they propped up the weakened anti-Marcos Muslim elites, joining forces to build the foundations of an armed separatist organization while making their intentions felt through an alliance called the Mindanao Independence Movement.<sup>63</sup> For the first time, an anti-American sentiment took shape in the Muslim provinces through these “Moro activists.”<sup>64</sup>

## Dictatorship and its Aftermath

When Marcos declared martial law, the stage was set for Mindanao to become a war zone. The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) was born and Misuari and his comrades fought a conventional war against the AFP.<sup>65</sup> For a variety of reasons, however, the MNLF could not sustain its “struggle for national liberation.” First, the strength of its firepower—unprecedented in the history of any anti-state movement in the Philippines—was mitigated by the inexperience of its military leadership.<sup>66</sup> Second, the classic tension between leadership-in-exile and field commanders worsened as battlefield losses, deaths and injuries, and surrenders multiplied. Third, differences within the MNLF between the two dominant ethnic groups—the Tausugs who controlled the leadership and the Magindanaos who fought in the battlefield—eventually led to a split. Finally, there were class contradictions within the Bangsa Moro (Moro People) struggle. The tactical alliance between Muslim politicians and young radicals that had been instrumental in building the organization unraveled when the politicians made peace with Marcos to recover some of their local power.<sup>67</sup> In exchange, they agreed to help weaken the radicals by organizing a “moderate alternative” to the MNLF. It was an alternative that was especially pro-American, as indicated by the prominent role of Salipada Pendatun.<sup>68</sup>

The impasse on the battlefield eventually took its toll on both government and MNLF, steadily weakening their capacities and straining the unified command their respective political leaderships exercised when the war began. By the 1980s, divisions became increasingly apparent in the AFP between those who fought in Mindanao and those who rose through the ranks through patronage ties with the political leadership.<sup>69</sup> Nur Misuari’s power was weakened when his own Magindanao comrades turned against him, demanded his resignation, and appealed to the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) to withdraw its support for him. When they failed to convince the OIC, they broke away and formed the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).<sup>70</sup>

The parallel deterioration of the military and MNLF would re-open spaces where traditional politicians could reassert themselves in Muslim political affairs.<sup>71</sup> They were, however, joined by new faces —MNLF commanders who surrendered to Marcos in return for access to state patronage and AFP officers who entered politics after military service.<sup>72</sup> These new actors shared with the old guard a penchant to keep politics local and limit dealings with external forces (whether state or MNLF) to those that helped consolidate local power. They also preferred a continuing impasse on the battlefield to an all-out war that could have devastating consequences for their own hold on power.<sup>73</sup>

This fragmentation and shift back to localist politics in the 1980s oddly insulated southern Mindanao from the intensifying polarization of national politics after the assassination of leading Marcos opponent, former senator Benigno Aquino, Jr. While there were demonstrations against the ailing Marcos in some Mindanao city centers, they lacked the anti-Americanism being incorporated into anti-Marcos protests in Manila, where the communist movement was increasingly influential. These radical messages were muted or non-existent in the anti-Marcos rallies in Muslim Mindanao. Instead, the

protests were aimed at reasserting the presence of anti-Marcos politicians after events in Manila affected the hold of pro-Marcos rivals in local affairs.<sup>74</sup>

Thus, after the fall of Marcos and the restoration of Philippine constitutional democracy, the only remarkable source of conflict between Muslim Mindanao and President Corazon Aquino was the extent to which her government “intervened” to replace pro-Marcos mayors and provincial governors with her own allies. This conflict did not prove lasting, as pro-Marcos politicians simply switched sides and declared fealty to Aquino or struck deals with the new government.<sup>75</sup> There was no rhetoric or politicking regarding American support for the new regime then or in 1991, when the Philippine Senate began debate on renewal of the U.S.-Philippine military bases agreement. None of the fiery exchanges riveting nationalists in Manila made an impact at the local level.<sup>76</sup>

The dramatic decline of American interest in the Philippines after the withdrawal of the military bases and shift of strategic concern to China reinforced the inward-looking nature of southern Mindanao politics. The Aquino government’s general weakness prevented it from pursuing peace talks with the MNLF with any consistency. It was left to Aquino’s successor, Fidel V. Ramos, to complete the process.<sup>77</sup> Again, negotiations with Misuari’s dwindling force included no discussion of the “American factor,” even as the Philippine Left raised the alarm that Ramos’ economic liberalization program would allow the United States to reassert its imperial interests, especially in Mindanao.<sup>78</sup> The appearance of the MILF and the Abu Sayyaf in the 1990s, however, would alter this political setting considerably.

### **“Radical Islam” in Mindanao**

In their book *Under the Crescent Moon*, Filipino journalists Marites Vitug and Glenda Gloria argued that the beginnings of the MILF and the more notorious Abu Sayyaf are more complex than usually acknowledged. After splitting from the MNLF, leaders of the MILF first projected themselves as a moderate alternative to the separatists. This image led many to believe that the MILF was less of a threat; for much of the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Philippine government virtually ignored MILF founder Salamat Hashim and his organization.<sup>79</sup> In this state of benign neglect, the MILF quietly build up power in the areas it controlled, creating a de facto autonomous Islamic community within Philippine territory, with its own army, Sharia courts, prisons, and even educational system. Militarily, the MILF force grew from 6,000 in the early 1990s to 15,000 by the end of the decade.<sup>80</sup>

While it never denied its intention of building an Islamic community, the MILF has always insisted it has no ambition to establish an Islamic state. According to Vitug and Gloria, this is partly because its leaders identify with Islam as a moral question and partly because “the MILF leadership has not yet fully thought [the] idea of what constitutes an Islamic state.”<sup>81</sup> The leaders also differed on the applicability of existing “models” of Islamic governance—from Pakistan to Saudi Arabia—citing their inadequacies for “our different culture.”<sup>82</sup> They are unclear about how to interpret *jihad*; some argue that declaring war on the government is valid because the state’s presence in Mindanao

represents the continuing occupation of an area that was never part of the Philippines. Others see the invocation of *jihad* as dictated by circumstances; it was justified during the Marcos dictatorship, when the state declared war on the Muslims, but it may not be applicable in the post-Marcos period, when a more democratic regime is open to negotiation and discussion over the substance of Muslim autonomy.<sup>83</sup>

Finally, Vitug and Gloria identified an “ideological gap between the leaders and the rank and file [which was] wide and palpable.”<sup>84</sup> While its leaders may be devout and spiritual students of Islam, ordinary Magindanao, Maranao, Tausug, and other Muslims’ understanding of their religion is quite different—mainly folk Islam with some elements scholarly Islam.<sup>85</sup> Or they have joined the MILF for reasons that have nothing to do with religion—to avenge the death of family and friends at the hands of the military or because it represents one of the few opportunities in one of the poorest regions in the country.<sup>86</sup>

Until Ramos’ successor, President Joseph Estrada, ordered a full-blown assault on the MILF’s camp, there was no clear-cut antagonism between the Philippine state and this new separatist group. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo reversed Estrada’s all-out war policy, preferring to pursue a two-pronged strategy of pursuing “peace talks” while allowing the AFP to undertake tactical offensives. She has not returned the bases that were captured during the “all out war” of her predecessor. The MILF has responded in a similar fashion, agreeing to continue negotiations, while giving its local commanders flexibility to determine whether to fight. The image of an armed, but open-to-negotiation movement serves the MILF very well. Until Estrada, it had kept the government at bay, allowing it to preserve its armed forces and mass base. Its accommodating stance also enables it to maintain selective contact with traditional politicians in its area of operation and use these politicians as a buffer between itself and the national state.<sup>87</sup>

Lastly, this image is perhaps how the MILF has kept itself off the list of “terrorist organizations” the United States had compiled after September 11, 2001. The MILF has an untainted image despite having once received support from Osama bin Laden and having sent fighters to Afghanistan to gain military experience.<sup>88</sup> Its pragmatic approach to dealing with the government has also garnered positive response from Islamic, American, and western European aid agencies, which support rehabilitation of the “social infrastructure” of war-torn southern Mindanao.<sup>89</sup>

But the MILF’s options have been steadily narrowing since it failed to stop Estrada’s military offensive. Its threat to revive the separatist war abandoned by the MNLF in the 1990s is seriously compromised by its weakened military position (its major camps now under government control), its aging leadership,<sup>90</sup> and the Malaysian government’s post 9/11 policy shift from MILF haven to avid supporter of peace talks.<sup>91</sup> The relative weakness of the Philippine state and its enduring relations with local politicians, however, mean the MILF can still expect to be left alone. And while the United States is concerned with the spread of Islamic radicalism in the southern Philippines, this impasse means it can concentrate on what is deemed a more serious threat—the Abu Sayyaf.

The story of the Abu Sayyaf and its connections with international Islamic terrorist organizations have been explained elsewhere, and this paper will therefore focus on one unexplained angle that may be of relevance to the argument presented here.<sup>92</sup> This has to do with its location. The Abu Sayyaf operates mainly on Basilan Island in the Sulu archipelago and in the Sabah-Borneo area; the farthest it has operated is Zamboanga City, north of Basilan. While it is reported to have links with Al Qaeda and other Islamic terrorist groups, the Abu Sayyaf's main source of largesse comes from its kidnapping activities and its protection racket it runs with warring local politicians and military commanders.<sup>93</sup>

This live-and-let-live relationship with the two other politico-military forces in Basilan led to the classification of the Abu Sayyaf as a local insurgency, which, while definitely more extremist than the MNLF and the MILF, was "containable" within its area of operation.<sup>94</sup> However, once it began raiding communities outside Basilan (the most brutal of which was a raid in the town of Ipil in Zamboanga del Sur in 1995), expanding its kidnapping targets to non-Filipinos, and establishing ties with suspected leaders of Osama bin Laden's group operating in southern Mindanao, the protective mantle of localism unraveled.

The Ipil attack broke an accord with AFP units in Basilan, compelling the military high command to issue the order to active pursuit. The kidnappings of European tourists in the Sabah resort island of Sidapan, followed by another in a Palawan Island resort in the western Philippines (which included an American missionary couple among the hostages), not only infuriated the Philippine government but also brought a powerful external actor into the picture. Even before 9/11, the United States was increasingly concerned with "world terrorism, including what was happening in the Philippines Mindanao backdoor."<sup>95</sup> Thereafter, mutual accommodation between local politicians and the Abu Sayyaf began to unravel as the politicians increasingly saw the group as a liability.

Moreover, the sudden inflow of kidnapping "revenues" to friends and kin of Abu Sayyaf members in the Basilan and Jolo communities caused a major disruption in the distribution of patronage. The Abu Sayyaf in effect became an alternative source of patronage and hence a rival to local politicians. Indications of increased American involvement in the Sulu archipelago alerted the politicians to a new source of largesse and "development projects" that could be undertaken on their behalf. There was also the hope that the Americans would do what they, as politicians, could not do: eliminate this growing threat to their local power.

After the September 11, 2001 attack on New York City, the branding of the Abu Sayyaf as part of a global network of Islamic terrorist groups was inevitable. A few months later, the Balikatan exercises began, aimed mainly at containing the Abu Sayyaf. The Manila media reported that people in Sulu had mixed feelings regarding the American presence.<sup>96</sup> But there were no second thoughts among the various congressmen, governors, and mayors of the area.<sup>97</sup> They were solidly behind the two Balikatan



exercises, in part because they looked forward to the expected strengthening of their local power such intervention would bring—much as it had for their predecessors a century ago. Even the MILF did not openly oppose Balikatan, simply declaring that in the Basilan area its forces “would continue its defensive posture.”<sup>98</sup>

## **Conclusion**

I wrote this paper with a question which no one in the Philippines and elsewhere appear interested in pursuing further perhaps because the answers may not be to one’s liking. Why was the return of the U.S. military to the Philippines, and at the most volatile part of the country to boot, welcomed not only by Filipinos but by the very Muslim communities that supposedly harbor today the most fanatic of anti-American Islamic groups?

This comparative overview of two historical episodes of U.S. military engagement in Muslim Mindanao highlights the different responses elicited among communities in southern Mindanao and the nation’s capital. It suggests that to understand the conduct and impact of American foreign policy in the Philippines, and elsewhere, it is imperative to go beneath the surface of national politics to the level of local political configurations and how they facilitate, hinder, or oppose the implementation of national policy.

While foreign policy may be conducted at the top levels of government, implementation is dependent its reception in local centers of power. The importance of local power is even more apparent in weak states like the Philippines, where successful governance is predicated on mutual accommodation between national leaders and local strongmen and political clans. At the local level as well, the relationship among insurgent groups, units of the military, and local politicians is more complicated than it appears from the capital. Very often, conflict and accommodation overlap, and even in war-ravaged areas like Basilan and Sulu warring factions at times co-exist.<sup>99</sup>

The long-term impact of the American military presence in the southern Philippines therefore hinges on the nature of the response of domestic forces. While policy towards the Abu Sayyaf is clear—assist the Philippine government in eliminating the bandit group—dealing with southern Mindanao’s local leaders may require a more nuanced approach. It may be necessary to acknowledge some patrimonial practices and corruption at the local level.<sup>100</sup> Yet reformist leaders (especially former MNLF rebels) and politicians identified with “moderate Islam” are also emerging, and the American presence could help bring about—even if indirectly—a change in the conduct of local politics away from the “guns, goons, gold” custom associated with traditional politicians.<sup>101</sup>

In short, only a portrait that brings in the complex world of domestic power politics into the picture will enable one to get a more in-depth, perhaps better picture of “US imperialism” in the Philippine south. And only then will one be able to take a stand in favor or against that presence.

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## End Notes

This paper is a slightly revised version of a presentation I made at the workshop on “In Whose Interest?: The Future of the U.S. Military in Asia,” held at the East-West Center, Hawaii, in February 20-22, 2003. I wish to thank Donna J. Amoroso, Sheila Smith, Katharine Moon, Naoki Kamimura and the other participants of that workshop for their criticisms and comments. All errors are mine.

<sup>1</sup> The best description of the Balikatan exercise that of the Global Security Organization, which describes it as an annual event “aimed at improving RP-US combined planning, combat readiness, and interoperability while enhancing security relations and demonstrating US resolve to support the Republic of the Philippines against external aggression.” [www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/balikatan.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/balikatan.htm). The exercise was suspended in 1995 after the Philippine Senate rejected the new military treaty between the two countries, but was revived after September 11, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> See “US Troops here for Real Combat,” *Philippine Graphic*, January 28, 2002; *Philippine Graphic*, March 13, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, January 26, February 1, 11 and 13, and March 1, 2002; Chay Florentino Hofilena, “Quick Fix from America,” *Newsbreak Magazine*, August 5, 2002; and Juan Ponce Enrile, ““On the Presence of American Troops in the Philippines: Statement before the Joint Hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on National Defense and Security of the Senate, January 24, 2002,” *Kilosbayan Magazine* 9, no. 1 (February 2002): 28-30.

<sup>4</sup> Roland G. Simbulan, “The Renewed Phase of U.S. Military Intervention in the Philippines,” *Sentenaryo/Centennial: The Philippine Revolution and Philippine-American War*, Jim Swick, editor January 15, 2002, in [www.boondocksnet.com/centennial/sctext/simbulan020115.html](http://www.boondocksnet.com/centennial/sctext/simbulan020115.html).

<sup>5</sup> Basilan Provincial Board, “Resolution No. 02-025, Series 2002 Strongly opposing Balikatan Exercise of the Joint US Military Troops and the Armed Forces of the Philippines to be conducted in the province of Basilan,” February 2, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> Basilan Governor Wahab Akbar could not hide his glee as he watched the U.S. Army unload heavy equipment to improve the province’s roads and rebuild the local airport. “My happiness is indescribable, my dream is now starting to materialize... I know I can die 10 times and not be able to purchase this equipment for my people.” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, April 21, 2002.

<sup>7</sup> At the height of the debates, the polling group Ateneo Social Weather Station (SWS) reported 84% of its respondents supporting the American deployment. Social Weather Station, Special Media Release, January 30, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, February 1, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, March 2, 2002.

<sup>10</sup> *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, February 13, 2002.

<sup>11</sup> Simbulan, “The Renewed Phase of U.S. Military Intervention in the Philippines”; Antonio J. Montalban, “The US Military in Mindanao,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, February 11, 2002; and *Unmasking the U.S. War on Terror: U.S. Imperialist Hegemony and Crisis* (Quezon City: Center for Anti-Imperialist Studies, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> John Gershman, “Self-Determine Issues and War on Terrorism Mix in the Philippines,” [http://www.selfdetermine.org/listserv/020117\\_body.html](http://www.selfdetermine.org/listserv/020117_body.html). For an overview of this issue, see Reynaldo C. Ileto, “The

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- 'Unfinished Revolution' in Political Discourse," in *Filipinos and their Revolution: Event, Discourse, and Historiography* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1998), 177-202.
- <sup>13</sup> "Balikatan 02-1 sparks heated discussions," *University of the Philippines Forum*, February 2, 2002.
- <sup>14</sup> See, for example, Cesar Adib Majul, "The Role of Islam in the History of the Filipino People," *Asian Studies* (August 1966): 304.
- <sup>15</sup> Social Weather Stations Special Institutional Sponsor Release, August 6, 2002.
- <sup>16</sup> "Balikatan 02-1 sparks heated discussions," *University of the Philippines Forum*, February 2, 2002.
- <sup>17</sup> *Sunstar Zamboanga*, March 2, 2002.
- <sup>18</sup> "Balikatan 02-1 sparks heated discussions," *University of the Philippines Forum*, February 2, 2002.
- <sup>19</sup> Patricio N. Abinales, "Progressive-Machine Conflict in Early-Twentieth Century U.S. Politics and Colonial State building in the Philippines," in *The American Colonial State: Global Perspectives*, ed. Julian Go and Anne L. Foster (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 148-181.
- <sup>20</sup> Paul D. Hutchcroft, "Colonial Masters, National Politicos, and Provincial Lords: Central Authority and Local Autonomy in the American Philippines, 1900-1913," *Journal of Asian Studies* 59, 2 (May 2000): 277-306.
- <sup>21</sup> Frank Lawrence Jenista, *The White Apos: American Governors on the Cordillera Central* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1987).
- <sup>22</sup> Wayne W. Thompson, "Governors of the Moro Province: Wood, Bliss and Pershing in the Southern Philippines" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 1975).
- <sup>23</sup> See, for example, Horace P. Hobbs, *Kris and Krag: Adventures among the Moros of the Southern Philippine Islands* (n.p. 1962); Lt. Col. Sydney A. Cloman, *Myself and a Few Moros* (New York: Doubleday, 1923); Vic Hurley, *Swish of the Kris: The Story of the Moros* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1936).
- <sup>24</sup> Donna Amoroso, "Inheriting the 'Moro Problem': Muslim Authority and Colonial Rule in British Malaya and the Philippines," in *The American Colonial State in the Philippines*, 118-147.
- <sup>25</sup> Henry Florida Funtecha, *American Military Occupation of the Lake Lanao Region, 1901-1903: A Historical Study* (Marawi City: Mindanao State University Research Center, 1979), 59.
- <sup>26</sup> Samuel K. Tan, "Unity and Disunity in the Muslim Struggle," in *Selected Essays on the Filipino Muslim* (Marawi City: Mindanao State University Research Center, 1982), 62-69.
- <sup>27</sup> James Frances Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768-1898: The Dynamics of External Trade, Slavery and Ethnicity in the Transformation of a Southeast Asia Maritime State* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1985).
- <sup>28</sup> Reynaldo Clemena Iletto, *Magindanao: 1860-1888: The Career of Datu Uto of Buayan* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program Data Paper No 82, 1971).
- <sup>29</sup> Peter Gowing, *Mandate in Moroland: The American Government of Muslim Filipinos, 1899-1920* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1977), 26-42.
- <sup>30</sup> Patricio N. Abinales, "From *Orang Besar* to Colonial Big Man: Datu Piang of Cotabato and the American Colonial State," in *Lives at the Margins: Biography of Filipinos Obscure, Ordinary, and Heroic*, ed. Alfred W. McCoy (Madison: University of Wisconsin Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 2000), 193-228.
- <sup>31</sup> Alunan Glang, *Muslim Secession or Integration?* (Quezon City: R.P. Garcia, 1969), 16-17
- <sup>32</sup> General Tasker Bliss, "The Government of the Moro Province and its Problems," *Mindanao Herald*, February 3, 1909: 4.
- <sup>33</sup> Leonard Wood, "Report of the Governor of the Moro Province," in *Annual Report of the War Department*

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(Washington: General Printing Office, 1904), 21.

<sup>34</sup> *Mindanao Herald*, December 15, 1906.

<sup>35</sup> *Report to the Philippine Commission*, 1907, 342-343, 355-356. The most audacious of this army defiance would be the proposal of acting governor Colonel Ralph Hoyt that Washington separate Mindanao from the Philippines and create an American territory called “the Mindanao Plantations” to be administered by the Army, populated by American settlers, and used by the Navy as a coaling station. Hoyt justified his proposal in these terms: “The mailed fist is the first law of the land—peace would be impossible without the actual presence of the troops—for this country is neither ready nor has it ever known any form of government. The civil-military government—in which the Governor controls the armed forces—is indispensable now and will be for generations to come. A purely civil government is quite impossible and at the present time would carry with it untold misery and suffering. for outside the provincial officials, employees and the Army, there are not enough qualified inhabitants to form any kind of government, or who have the remotest idea of our form of representative government or institutions.” *Report of the Governor of the Moro Province*, 1909, 3-4 (underscoring mine).

<sup>36</sup> Maximo Kalaw, “The Moro Bugaboo,” *Philippine Social Science Review* 3, 4 (September 1931): 73-74.

<sup>37</sup> Douglas T. K. Hartley, “A Preliminary Study of the Pioneer American Entrepreneurs in Mindanao and Sulu,” *Mindanao Journal* 1,4 (1981-1982): 75; Lewis Gleeck, *Americans on the Philippine Frontier* (Manila: Carmelo and Bauermann, 1974), 107-108; and Shinzo Hayase, “Tribes, Settlers, and Administrators on a Frontier: Economic Development and Social Changes in Davao, Southeastern Mindanao, the Philippines, 1899-1941” (Ph.D. dissertation, Murdoch University, 1984), 76-79.

<sup>38</sup> Patricio N. Abinales, *Making Mindanao: Cotabato and Davao in the Formation of the Philippine Nation-State* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000), 30-40.

<sup>39</sup> Kalaw, “The Moro Bugaboo,” 74.

<sup>40</sup> George Malcolm, *The Commonwealth of the Philippines* (New York and London: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1936), 45; and, Marcial Kasilag, “Policy of the Commonwealth Government towards the Non-Christians in Mindanao and Sulu,” in *The Development of Mindanao and the Future of Non-Christians* (Manila: Philippine Council, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1938), 12-23.

<sup>41</sup> Jeremy Beckett, “The Datus of the Rio Grande de Cotabato,” *Asian Studies* 15 (April-August 1975): 60-61; and Cesar A. Majul, “Some Social and Cultural Problems of the Moslems in the Philippines,” *Asian Studies* 14, 1 (1976): 91.

<sup>42</sup> Uldarico Baclagon, *Christian-Moslem Guerrillas of Mindanao* (Manila: Lord Avenue, 1988).

<sup>43</sup> Carlos Quirino, *Chick Parsons: Master Spy of the Philippines* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1984), 29-41, 43-44, 51-62.

<sup>44</sup> Alfred W. McCoy, “Introduction,” *An Anarchy of Families: State and Family in the Philippines* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1993), 10-19.

<sup>45</sup> Benedict Kerkviet, “Contested Meanings of Elections in the Philippines,” in *The Politics of Elections in Southeast Asia*, ed. R.H. Taylor (Washington: The Woodrow Wilson International Center Press, 1996), 137-147.

<sup>46</sup> For an overview of American presence in the Philippines see, *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance*, ed. Daniel B. Schirmer and Stephen Roskamm Shalom (South End Press, 1987).

<sup>47</sup> As one internal U.S. embassy report observed: “Despite widespread enthusiasm, Mindanao’s development continued

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to be largely on paper... Hydro-electric construction and road-building had not progressed far by the end of the year, and little new industry had come into existence. Mining also had indifferent success in Mindanao; new projects did not develop as rapidly as had been hoped and some companies, particularly those engaged in gold-dredging, reduced or suspended operations as a result of the minimum wage law." David C. Cuthell, Consul, "Annual Economic Review for 1951 (Cebu Consular District), Supplement," Enclosure No. 1 to Dispatch No. 1173, March 7, 1952: 2.

<sup>48</sup> On the origins of the firepower of Muslim politicians, see "Conditions affecting domestic order in the Moro Provinces of Mindanao and Sulu," prepared by the Philippine Research and Information Section, Counter-intelligence, GHQ, AFPAC, APO 500, 28 August 1945. The document can be found in the Joseph Ralston Hayden Collection, Bentley Historical Collection, University of Michigan, Box 42-20, 1.

<sup>49</sup> Mamitua Saber, "The Muslim Minority in the Philippines," unpublished manuscript, 1962, 14.

<sup>50</sup> T.J.S. George, *Revolt in Mindanao: The Rise of Islam in Philippine Politics* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1980), 114-115. See also Joel de los Santos, "The 'Christian' Problem and the Philippine South," *Asian Studies* 13, 3 (August 1975).

<sup>51</sup> G. Carter Bentley, "Dispute, Authority and Maranao Social Order," in *Dispute Processing in the Philippines*, ed. Resil Mojares (Quezon City: Ministry of Local Government, 1985), 70.

<sup>52</sup> G. Carter Bentley, "Mohammad Ali Dimaporo: A Modern Maranao Datu," in *An Anarchy of Families*, 250. Davao and Cotabato were consistently in the top 15 vote-rich provinces between 1953 and 1961, periods when migration to Mindanao was at its highest.

<sup>53</sup> Abinales, *Making Mindanao*, 135-136.

<sup>54</sup> Cotabato columnist Patricio Diaz recalls, the settler-indigene relationship was generally congenial and land disputes were the exception rather than the rule *Mindanews*, February 12, 2002.

<sup>55</sup> The phrase is from Vivienne Shue, *Reach of the State: Sketches of the Chinese Body Politic* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 89.

<sup>56</sup> "Telegram from Myron Cowen to the Secretary of State, American Embassy, Manila, April 4, 1950," U.S. State Department Central Files, *The Philippine Republic: Internal and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*.

<sup>57</sup> Bentley, "Mohammed Ali Dimaporo: A Modern Maranao Datu," 251.

<sup>58</sup> The United States Information Service had an office in Davao City that was often picketed by student radicals, but elsewhere in Mindanao, there was hardly any American presence. The nearest consular office was in Cebu City, in Central Philippines.

<sup>59</sup> Rafael Salas, "Development Plan for Mindanao," *Sunday Times Magazine*, February 2, 1961. Salas was Marcos' chief technocrat. See also Amado Doronila, *The State, Economic Transformation, and Political Change in the Philippines, 1946-1972* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1992) 132-133.

<sup>60</sup> Abinales, *Making Mindanao*, 163-171.

<sup>61</sup> David Wurfel, *Filipino Politics: Development and Decay* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988) 13.

<sup>62</sup> Abinales, *Making Mindanao*, 163-171; George, *Revolt in Mindanao*, 129-177.

<sup>63</sup> George *Revolt in Mindanao*, 200-201.

<sup>64</sup> Misuari himself was a member of a nationalist youth organization at the University of the Philippines. Many of his fellow nationalists eventually became leaders of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

<sup>65</sup> Nagasura Madale, "The Future of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) as a Separatist Movement in Southern Philippines," in *Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia*, ed. Lee Joo Jock and Vani S. (Singapore: Institute for Southeast

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Asian Studies, 1984), 180-181.

<sup>66</sup> Fortunato Abat, *The Day we nearly lost Mindanao: The Armed Forces of the Philippines Central Command Story* (Manila: no publisher, 1993).

<sup>67</sup> W.K. Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1990), 128-129.

<sup>68</sup> Francisco Gonzalez, "Sultans of a Violent Land," in *Rebels, Warlords and Ulama: A Reader on Muslim Separatism and the War in Southern Philippines*, ed. Kristina Gaerlan and Mara Stankovich (Quezon City: Institute for Popular Democracy, 2000), 116-118.

<sup>69</sup> Conrado de Quiros, "Sword over the Throne: The Armed Forces' Rise to Power," in *Kudeta: The Challenge to Philippine Democracy* (Manila: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 1990), 41-45.

<sup>70</sup> Marites Danguilan Vitug and Glenda M. Gloria, *Under the Crescent Moon: Rebellion in Mindanao* (Quezon City: Ateneo Center for Social Policy and Public Affairs and the Institute for Popular Democracy, 2000), 106-135.

<sup>71</sup> Eric Gutierrez, "In the Battlefields of the Warlord," in *Rebels, Warlords and Ulama*, 55-61.

<sup>72</sup> Patricio N. Abinales, "State Leaders, Apparatuses and Local Strongmen: The Philippine Military under Marcos," in *Images of State Power: Essays on Philippine Politics from the Margins* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press), 122.

<sup>73</sup> For example, Amelil Malaguio, a.k.a. Kumander Ronnie, chairman of the MNLF's largest regional committee, the Kutwato Revolutionary Committee, surrendered to Marcos after being offered the governorship of the newly-created "regional autonomous government of Region 12, encompassing central Mindanao," as well as logging rights in the area. Vitug and Gloria, *Under the Crescent Moon*, 125.

<sup>74</sup> Mark K. Turner, "Politics during the Transition in Zamboanga City, 1984-1988"; G. Carter Bentley, "People Power and After in the Islamic City of Marawi," in *From Marcos to Aquino: Local Perspectives on Political Transition in the Philippines*, ed. Benedict J. Kerklviet and Resil B. Mojares (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1991), 24-25, respectively.

<sup>75</sup> Bentley, "Mohamad Ali Dimaporo," in *An Anarchy of Families*, 267-268.

<sup>76</sup> Jovito R. Salonga, *The Senate that said No: A Four-Year Record of the First Post-EDSA Senate* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1995).

<sup>77</sup> For a detailed account of the negotiation process see Nick Joaquin, *A Kadre's Road to Damascus: The Ruben Torres Story* (Quezon City: Milflores Publishing Inc., 2003), 124-132. Torres was Ramos' personal mediator to Misuari.

<sup>78</sup> See for example, "Combat Mission for U.S. Special Forces in Mindanao Seen," *Kilusan: A Movement's News and Views*, April 29, 2002.

<sup>79</sup> A former senior military official confessed to Vitug and Gloria: "In 1989-1990, they (the MILF) were building up. Our bigger concern then was still the MNLF. We didn't see anything more than a small armed group, surviving after the [MNLF] split. Then, later, we saw how he (Hashim) built an Islamic community, with a *sharia* court and all. Then we saw they were a real threat but we were busy attending to the CPP (the Communist Party of the Philippines), with 25,000 members, and the coups." Vitug and Gloria, *Under the Crescent Moon*, 113.

<sup>80</sup> Vitug and Gloria, *Under the Crescent Moon*, 111.

<sup>81</sup> Vitug and Gloria, *Under the Crescent Moon*, 114.

<sup>82</sup> MILF military command chief Hadji Murad, as quoted in Vitug and Gloria, *Under the Crescent Moon*, 115.

<sup>83</sup> Vitug and Gloria, *Under the Crescent Moon*, 115-116.

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- <sup>84</sup> Vitug and Gloria, *Under the Crescent Moon*, 116.
- <sup>85</sup> Thomas M. McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels: Everyday Politics and Armed Separatism in the Southern Philippines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 183-184, 191-196.
- <sup>86</sup> Amina Rasul, "Poverty and Armed Conflict in Mindanao," in *Muslim Perspective on the Mindanao Conflict: The Road to Peace and Reconciliation*, ed. Amina Rasul (Philippines: Asian Institute of Management, 2003), 123-146.
- <sup>87</sup> See the case of Zacarias Candao in McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*, 213-219.
- <sup>88</sup> Vitug and Gloria, *Under the Crescent Moon*, 110 and 118.
- <sup>89</sup> Winston Jay Fuentes, "Negotiating an Agenda for Peace and Self-Rule in Moroland," *Mindanao Focus* 4 (1998): 25-33.
- <sup>90</sup> Hashim Salamat died of an undisclosed illness in August 2003.
- <sup>91</sup> Soliman M. Santos, Jr., "Malaysia's Role in the Peace Negotiations between the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front," unpublished manuscript, May 26, 2003. Malaysia has been the unstudied actor in the separatist war in the southern Philippines, supporting the MNLF in the 1970s after Marcos organized a special military unit to infiltrate Sabah to foment separatist sentiments, then acting as mediator in peace talks between the MNLF and the Aquino and Ramos governments. Malaysia reverted to its old role after President Estrada openly expressed his support for deposed Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in his fight against Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad, but immediately switched back to a mediating role when Arroyo succeeded Estrada.
- <sup>92</sup> Eric Gutierrez, "From Ilaga to Abu Sayaf [sic]: New Entrepreneurs of Violence and their Impact on Local Politics in Mindanao," unpublished manuscript, September 2001, 12-24.
- <sup>93</sup> Gutierrez, "In the Battlefields of the Warlord," 64-77.
- <sup>94</sup> Vitug and Gloria suggest that the Abu Sayyaf was a military creation aimed at forcing the MNLF to the negotiating table by presenting a more radical "alternative," a group composed of militants who were also vehemently anti-Misuari. Vitug and Gloria, *Under the Crescent Moon*, 218-219.
- <sup>95</sup> Manny Mogato, "America's Agenda," *Newsbreak Magazine*, February 13, 2002: 7-8.
- <sup>96</sup> Julie S. Alipala, "Mixed Signals from Sulu," *Newsbreak Magazine*, March 31, 2003: 8-10.
- <sup>97</sup> *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, February 7, 2002.
- <sup>98</sup> *Manila Times*, March 8, 2002.
- <sup>99</sup> Gutierrez, "From Ilaga to Abu Sayaf," 22-24.
- <sup>100</sup> Governor Wahab Akbar of Basilan, for example, is staunchly pro-American and also known as "The Terror of Basilan." See Jose Torres, Jr., "The Terror of Basilan," *Newsbreak Magazine*, Special Issue on The Faces of Mindanao, January-June 2003: 13-15.
- <sup>101</sup> For a few of these reform-minded leaders, see Glenda Gloria, "The Morning After," Marites Danguilan Vitug, "The Failing Province," Gemma B. Bagayaua, "From Rebel Warrior to Mayor," and Chay Florentino-Hofilena, "Making a Difference," in *Newsbreak Magazine*, January-June 2003: 9-10, 24-27, 33-34, 35-36, respectively. See also Vitug and Gloria, *Under the Crescent Moon*, 150-151.