THE IMPACT OF MILITANCY ON LIBERATION MOVEMENTS:
THE CASE OF MINDANAO

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Abstract: The conflict in the southern Philippines is regarded by many as one of the longest internal conflicts in the world. Beginning from the 16th century when Spanish colonial domination commenced, the conflict had persisted for five centuries. Recently, however, there are positive signs that this conflict will come to an end. On October 15, 2012, the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) signed the historic Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) in order to finally put an end to the decades-long conflict. Under the FAB, the Bangsamoro people will have a new political autonomy that will be called “Bangsamoro Government.” This will replace the existing autonomy in Mindanao, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). Malaysia, the third-party facilitator for more than a decade, played a significant role in the making of this landmark agreement. The research presented here has been undertaken with the objective of exploring various approaches in search for a lasting peace in Mindanao. It examines the impact of militancy in the quest for peace, starting from the Spanish era until the current administration. This research revisits how the Moros resisted the Spaniards and Americans during the colonial era, and the Philippine forces after independence. Although there were efforts by previous administrations to solve the conflict, they did not achieve lasting peace because the root causes of the conflict were not properly addressed. The researcher employed a document-based study and a historical-analytical method because the conflict is very much anchored in its history. Without this, readers could not understand the root causes of the problem and the historical development of the inclusion of Mindanao into the Philippines. The data for this study are collected from both primary and secondary sources such as books, articles, journals, newspapers, government reports, non-governmental organisations’ reports, policy statements, press releases, and signed-agreements.

Keywords: Agreement, ARMM, Bangsamoro, FAB, Framework, Liberation, Militancy, Mindanao, and Moro

Introduction and Historical Background

The Mindanao conflict in the Southern Philippines has been regarded as one of the longest internal conflicts in the world. The World Bank through the writing of Salvatore Schiavo-Campo and Mary Judd has indicated that ‘persisting for some five centuries, the Mindanao conflict is the second-oldest on earth, after the conflict between North and South Sudan which can be dated to the 10th century’. However, as both Sudans have signed their final agreement in 2011, resulting
in the granting of complete independence to the South, Mindanao may now be regarded as the oldest conflict on earth.

This conflict started from the 16th century when the Spanish colonial domination began in the islands of what is now known as the Philippines.¹ Prior to the coming of the Spaniards in 1522, Islam was already the dominant religion in these islands. Books of different authors, including Christians, attest that Islam came to the Philippines long before Christianity. There are even evidences that some Muslim traders or Arabs have come to the islands as early as 10th century. Majul’s book, regarded as the most authoritative account on Muslim history in the Philippines, noted that “there is evidence that Arab ships, or rather, ships captained by Arabs, had reached China from some island in the Philippines during 10th century”.²

Muslim communities had already been established as early as 13th century. The account of Che Man stated that there were reports from Chinese sources dating from the Yuan Dynasty (1280-1368) that trade activities between China and Sulu occurred because Sulu at that time was a commercial centre that even Arab, Thai, Indonesian, and Indian traders used to visit.³

In the middle of 15th century, Islamic Sultanate in Sulu was already flourishing. It was also during this time that Islâm penetrated the coastal and mountainous areas in the Philippines that eventually led to the establishment of religious institutions.⁴ This development was attributed to the arrival of Muslim Malays from Sumatra at the beginning of the century. Rajah Baguinda, the prince of Sumatra, is widely credited with the establishment of the Muslim dynasty on the island. According to Majul, Baguinda married a woman from the Sulu Muslim chiefs that led him to consolidate powers in the community. This presence of a Muslim ruler guaranteed the preservation of the work of previous Muslim missionaries and paved the way for other locals to embrace Islâm.⁵

The coming of the Spaniards to the islands took place only in 1522 when the Portuguese-born explorer Ferdinand Magellan led a Spanish expedition and reached the so-called “Philippines”.⁶ Spain set out to Christianise the local populations, most especially the Moros,⁷ and wanted to expand its trade in this part of the world.⁸ This resulted in fighting because locals in the area defended their identity and religion.

Historians popularised the “Moro Wars” to refer to the long war between the Moros and the Spaniards. It was a period of bitter fighting that lasted for 350 years.⁹ Despite the superior might and the punitive military campaign of the invaders, the Moros managed effectively to defend their territory and identity. Through their well-established sultanates, the Moros were able to organise effective resistance for more than three centuries. Hence, Mindanao and Sulu remained outside Spain’s effective grip until its departure at the end of the 19th century.
The United States of America came into the islands in 1899 when Spain ceded the Philippine Islands to America by virtue of the Treaty of Paris.\textsuperscript{10} What became the main contention, however, was the inclusion of Mindanao and Sulu to the agreement where in fact the islands had never been under Spain’s control. The Moros believed that Spain had no legal and moral right to include these islands to the treaty.

As a sign of protest and resistance, the Moros built cottas (citadels) all over Mindanao. This, on the other hand, provoked the Americans to unleash their military might. The expedition to the area of Lake Lanao is one to mention. It was authorised under Colonel Frank Baldwin to punish the insubordinate Moros. On May 2, 1902 the first battle between the Moros and the American forces occurred in the area of Bayang.\textsuperscript{11} The US forces were composed of the 27\textsuperscript{th} Infantry and 25\textsuperscript{th} Mountain Battery with their more advanced weaponry. The Moros, on the other hand, were just in the numbers of about 600,\textsuperscript{12} and having only swords, arrows, axes, and very few outdated rifles behind bamboo-made forts. The fort was overrun in a day with the death of four hundred Moro fighters, including the Sultan of Bayang and the Sultan of Pandapatan. On the American side, only 10 soldiers died and 44 were wounded.\textsuperscript{13}

In 1946, the Philippines gained its complete independence from the United States, inheriting the long-standing conflict in Mindanao. Like its predecessors, the policies of the new government were hostile to the Moros. For instance, the Jabidah Massacre that took place on March 17, 1968 was the first to highlight the bellicose treatment of the government to the Moros. This massacre took the lives of 64\textsuperscript{14} young Muslim trainees in the Philippine Army (PA) by their Christian superiors. According to the lone survivor, Jibin Arola, the trainees wanted to back out upon discovering that the real mission of their training was to invade Sabah and not to fight the Communist insurgency, as they were told during their recruitment.\textsuperscript{15}

ILAGA-related massacres were another hostile incidents that led to the death of hundreds of Muslims. Ilonggo Land Grabbing Association, or popularly known as ILAGA, was a militant group primarily concerned with taking land from the Muslims through force and killings. It also enjoyed the support of Christian investors, logging magnates and the military constabulary in the Philippines.\textsuperscript{16} For just two years, the group had perpetrated more than 20 massacres all over Mindanao that led to the death of hundreds of Muslim civilians and destruction of houses and mosques.\textsuperscript{17} Not only that, the group also mutilated bodies of victims, such as carving out ears, slashing nipples, plucking out eyes, and marking bodies with a cross.\textsuperscript{18}

These series of massacres created a great havoc in Mindanao and became an excuse for President Ferdinand Marcos to declare Martial Law. This supposed to suppress the growing insurgency in Mindanao, but it turned out to be the worst
policy that led to the death of thousands of civilians, mostly Muslims. During its height, President Marcos ordered a massive military deployment to Mindanao. At one time, it was reported that 80 percent of the total military strength of the Philippines was concentrated in Mindanao.\(^\text{19}\)

One indication of severity of the conflict was the cost of the war. It was estimated that 60,000 to 80,000 civilians, mostly Muslims, were killed.\(^\text{20}\) There was another report that as many as 1 million Muslims became homeless, and about 200,000 to 300,000 Muslim refugees fled to Sabah that until now, with the exception of few, have not returned to their different villages.\(^\text{21}\) Further, despite the fact that the Philippine government assigned 80\% of its military strength to Mindanao, the Muslim rebels managed to kill as many as 10,000 Philippine soldiers.\(^\text{22}\)

Apart from the above, there were also reports of illegal detentions and torture by the military forces. An investigation conducted by the Fact Finding Mission to North Cotabato, Mindanao in February 2003 disclosed that aside from forced evacuations due to indiscriminate bombings and strafing of civilian areas, other human rights violations were common, including killings, arbitrary arrests and detention, widespread looting and the destruction of property and religious sites.\(^\text{23}\)

The Martial Law continued for more than 20 years. It only ended when Corazon Aquino, and later Fidel Ramos, came to power and entirely changed the policy of “war” into “peace.” Nonetheless, hostilities again occurred when President Erap Estrada declared an “all-out-war” policy against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). This resulted to another years of conflict throughout Mindanao and displaced around 1 million people.\(^\text{24}\) When Gloria Macapagal Arroyo came to power in 2001, she initially changed her predecessor’s policy into “all-out peace”. Again, this policy was subverted when she ordered the attack on the MILF’s Islamic Centre, the Buliok Complex, while the late MILF chairman was delivering an Eidul Adha sermon. This attack displaced almost 400,000 people.\(^\text{25}\)

In light of the above discussions, the conflict in Mindanao clearly indicates that urgent and genuine solution is needed in order to prevent more bloodshed.

**The Impact of Militancy on the Liberation Movements in Mindanao**

This section examines the impact of armed struggle by the liberation movements and its contribution towards attaining peace in Mindanao. The researcher proposes maintaining a robust military as an essential condition for enhancing prospects for peace. This proposition is based on the analysis of gains and losses that both the government and the liberation movements incurred during their conflicts.

Prior to the formation of various liberation movements in Mindanao, most notably the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) with its armed-wing Bangsa Moro Army (BMA), the Bangsamoro people in general were vulnerable to aggression from the Christian settlers. This was evident during the massacres
perpetuated by the ILAGA that individual Moros could not resist, nor were able to defend themselves against the well-organised and well-armed vigilantes. Even whole villages could not protect themselves. Conversely, when the BMA was formed, massacres and land grabbing were minimised and eventually stopped.

During the early years of Martial Law, when fighting was virtually all over Mindanao, it was again the substantial achievement of the BMA that pressured President Marcos to travel to the Muslim countries, most notably Libya and Saudi Arabia, to convince the Moros to stop the war and start negotiation.\(^26\) To a great extent, BMA was successful in controlling the large proportion of Mindanao and Sulu, and successfully engaged the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in the battlefield. It was reported that most of the 114 officers of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA), the country’s highest military academy and training school, were killed in just a year.\(^27\) Congressman Eduardo Ermita, a member of the government panel, disclosed the damages that BMA had inflicted on the government:

Over a period of 26 years since 1970, more than 100,000 persons were killed in the conflict in Southern Philippines… The AFP has spent about P73 billion in connection with the Mindanao conflict since 1970… Sixty-one percent of our Army and Marine battalions… more than 40 percent of our artillery capability and 50 percent of our armour assets… 63 percent of our tactical aircraft [were committed to the Mindanao conflict]…\(^28\)

Further report revealed the general situations in the following statement:

- In the three years since Martial Law was imposed, military spending has increased from US$80 million per year to US$325 million, much of it in Mindanao.
- Estimates of the military dead in three years range from 1,500 to 3,000. Because the rebels usually withdraw from the battle with their dead and wounded, no estimate of their casualties is available.
- Roman Catholic priests in Mindanao estimated civilian casualties at 13,000 in three years.
- According to Government figures, the fighting in Mindanao and Sulu has displaced 1.5 million people, Muslim and Christian.
- The military estimates that from 1,000 to 2,000 rebels are mobilised on the 400 square miles of Jolo Island – and perhaps triple that figure elsewhere in the South. Muslim rebel sympathisers say that there are 20,000 to 30,000 dissidents and supporters who, they say, are stockpiling weapons and training…\(^29\)
These heavy casualties and economic cost forced the government to initiate a move to convince MNLF chairman Nur Misuari towards negotiations. One of the concrete moves was the sending of his wife Imelda Marcos to Tripoli, Libya to request the assistance of Muammar Qaddafi to broker a ceasefire and peace negotiation between the government and MNLF. Subsequently, in the year 1976, the Tripoli Agreement was signed. This was a landmark agreement as genuine autonomy was almost achieved. In the agreement, both agreed to establish autonomy in Southern Philippines for the areas of Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte, North Cotabato, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, Davao del Sur, South Cotabato, Palawan, and all the cities and villages within; the implementation of Islamic Shari‘ah; the setting up of schools, colleges and universities; the setting up of Regional Security Forces; and above all, the allocation of an employment quota in the Central Government to the Moros. This means that Muslims would have their representative in all branches and departments of the national government, including the national assembly, foreign services, Supreme Court and Court of Appeals, the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Cabinet, the National Advisory Council, and the National Security Council.

In 2000, when former President Estrada declared “all-out-war” against the MILF, the AFP launched one of the biggest offensives it had assembled since the height of the liberation movements in Mindanao in 1972-1973. In one battlefront alone, it was reported that the AFP assembled an array of twenty-seven 105mm and 155mm howitzers, which it fired at the same time to blast MILF positions. However, despite of this heavy bombardment, with thousands of infantry on the ground, the government suffered heavy casualties. Among others, MILF forces managed to destroy three Simba-type tanks; shot down one Huey helicopter; killed 71 and wounded hundreds of soldiers; and confiscated 50 M-16 Armalite rifles, four M-60 machineguns, two mortars, and three grenade launchers. These severe losses prompted President Gloria Arroyo, the successor of Joseph Estrada, to convince Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad to mediate the talks with the MILF.

On August 5, 2008, intense fighting erupted once more. Despite the civilian clamour for ceasefire, the government declared that there would be no truce until the MILF commanders surrendered. The government forces used their might, but only to displace 750,000 civilians and suffer heavy casualties. More than 500 troops and Christian villagers died, and more than 100 million pesos (USD 2,500,000.00) were spent for ammunitions. Another P 251,590,992 pesos (USD 5,990,261) were allocated for the compensation of the destruction of crops, livestock, fisheries, bridges, roads, and schools. All these damages forced the government to reverse its decision and eventually declared a unilateral ceasefire.
This was reciprocated by the MILF’s ceasefire declaration that finally brought the two sides back into negotiation.

Clearly, MNLF and MILF forces posed a formidable challenge to the government. Although both organisations also suffered losses and casualties, but the fatalities and damages they had inflicted to the government forces were indeed seen as a milestone achievement and a clear sign of being a strong organisation.

In the case of the MILF, it has built its reputation as a strong movement and reached a higher level of revolution, especially in terms of military strength. Apart from having more than 500 Afghan-trained cadre officers who served as training directors and heads of the Special Forces, MILF claimed to have trained more than 100,000 mujāhideen with about 70 percent of them armed since its inception. The International Crisis Group believed that the organisation had trained around 122,000 men who could be mobilised to back up the movement’s 10,000 to 15,000 armed regulars. In addition to that, MILF’s Salamat Hashim Islamic Memorial Military Academy (SHIMMA) has trained 533 men and women officers since its foundation in 2004.

The chairman and the vice-chairman for military affairs of the MILF recently confirmed these reports. During my interview with MILF Chairman Al Haj Murad Ebrahim, he proudly declared that the MILF has been running its own ‘modest’ arms manufacturing centre inside its vast jungle. Vice-chairman Aleem Aziz Mimbantas further revealed that most of the RPG2 and ammunition that they supply to their fighters are locally made from their own arms manufacturing centre. Thus, according to both, the MILF can sustain lengthy battles against government forces.

Acknowledging its military strength, all major and satellite camps of the MILF have been recognised by the government. AFP has to coordinate with the MILF forces before entering the areas. They even respect the perimeter defence of those camps. For example, Camp Darapanan in Maguindanao and the satellite camp Dārul Īmān in Lanao del Sur are just few kilometres away from the AFP checkpoints and barracks. The MILF forces even established their own barricades and checkpoints few blocks from the government’s position. During the 1998 visit of former vice-president Gloria Arroyo to Dārul Īmān, the organiser had to spend few months just to arrange the security personnel of the visitors. The vice-president wanted to have the PA with her, but the MILF insisted on using its own military forces for her security.

Above all, mainly because of its military strength, the organisation has confidence to demand “Bangsamoro Sub-State,” a demand that is little short of independence and appears to need constitutional amendments. It is indeed a tough demand but the government seems to agree. The government and the MILF signed the landmark Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB)
on October 15, 2012 that outlines the creation of an autonomous political entity in Mindanao.\textsuperscript{46} This will be called “Bangsamoro Government.” Negotiations between the two Parties are still on-going, but initial agreements indicate that the two Parties agreed to establish a new regional government for the Bangsamoro people. Details of the Agreement are still being drafted through the Four Annexes of the FAB.

If all goes well and the final Comprehensive Compact on the Bangsamoro (CAB) is signed, the Bangsamoro Government will replace the current Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). Under the agreement, the new government will have ministerial form; internal security forces; its own revenue sources; its right to explore, develop and utilise natural resources; and most importantly, the Sharī’ah Court will be strengthened and expanded in terms of its jurisdiction. The level of confidence generated by its strong military forces facilitated the fulfilment of these demands. As Datu Michael Mastura, a senior panel member of MILF, emphasised, “the panels demand only what the commanders in field are able to prove and defend. We will definitely not ask beyond our capabilities. We are just the voice of our commanders. The more we are strong on the ground, the more we can demand.”\textsuperscript{47}

These achievements were made possible mainly because of the MILF’s gain in the ground. It appears that MILF has reached a higher level of fighting capability. As Vitug and Gloria commented, “MILF no longer considers itself a guerrilla group. They see themselves engaged in a semi-conventional war, which means they have the numbers of weapons to guard a huge, immobile camp.”\textsuperscript{48} Due to their strong military forces, the government has been forced to address the conflict. Serajul Islam, the author of \textit{The Politics of Islamic identity in Southeast Asia}, echoed the same proposition when he concluded:

\begin{quote}
The Moro liberation movements in Mindanao indicate that it has always been led by a strong organisation... The MNLF was a very strong organisation with 30,000-armed civilians... The MILF is also not a weak organisation as it has the support of nearly 60,000-armed civilians. Therefore, the Philippine government has been compelled to open negotiation with the MILF.\textsuperscript{49}
\end{quote}

However, many professionals, together with some ‘ulamā,’ argue that armed-struggle is neither the best nor the most viable way to regain liberty and right to self-determination. This group thinks that peaceful means – like dialogue, education and participation in elections – are more effective than armed-struggle. If Moros were in Congress, the argument continues, they could initiate a Bill that would legalise their demand. This, according to them, would be more effective.
This argument appears oblivious of history. Prior to the ceding of the Philippines to the American government, the Moros objected to be part of the ceding because they claimed they were not part of the Philippine Island that Spain had conquered. Datu Piang, a famous Moro leader, wrote a letter to the United States, saying that “You may remember, too, or have read, that in all the years Spain was here she never really conquered the Moros. Therefore, at the Treaty of Paris after the Spanish-American war, Spain had no right to give the Moro country to the United States, neither right of discovery or conquest.”

These grievances, however, did not receive any attention. Instead, America and Spain pursued the ceding and subsequently the former began asserting its sovereignty and authority over Mindanao.

In 1934, when the constitution of the transitional Commonwealth Government was about to be drafted and emplaced in the Philippines, the Moros wrote another letter to the American Governor-General during the 1934 Constitutional Convention. Haji Abdul Hamid Bogobong, one of the prominent Moro leaders, together with the more than 200 leaders from Lanao, asked Governor-General Murphy to include the rights of the Moros in the new constitution.

1. We want to request His Excellency, the Governor-General, that a law be passed that our religion, Islam, taught us by Prophet Mohammad be not changed, or curtailed in any way and that we must not be forbidden to observe our religion.

2. We want to request that all the land of Islam (the Moros) unoccupied in the province of Lanao, forest or not forest, be given to us and that we should be given a time of twenty years to apply for them and at the end of that time the rest still unoccupied may be given to the Christian Filipinos.

3. We want to request that all appointive government positions in Lanao be given to the Mohammedan Filipinos and the appointing of Municipal President or Municipal District presidents be continued.

4. We want to request that the practices, traditions and customs of our people should not be stopped and prohibited and decisions of Kitab (Mohammedan Law) should not be curtailed or invalidated by the Christian officials.

The main purpose of the letter was to embody and safeguard the rights of the Moros in the constitution. If this request could not be granted, the Moros want not to be part of the Commonwealth Government. As Bogobong continues:

Should you not agree with us and should this request be not embodied in the Constitution of the Commonwealth, we would request you (the American Governor-General) to separate Mindanao and Sulu from the Independent Philippines because we want to be independent and we
do not agree with you (the Christian Filipinos) and have never agreed together ever since and we do not want to leave away from the rule of Americans until we become educated. If the [followers of] Islam be force(d) to do what we do not want, we must pray that Lanao should be melted so that we will (be) forever and entirely eradicated.\textsuperscript{53}

It is very clear that the Moros wanted peace with the Christians as long as their identity and religion are safeguarded in constitution. It is very important to note that no provisions regarding armed-struggle were ever mentioned in the letter. The most severe remark they expressed was to pray that Lanao be ‘melted’ if their demands were not considered. In the second point, it was notably very kind-hearted for the Moros to give their land to the Christian Filipinos after the specific period of time they asked. Again, all these favours went unheeded.

Furthermore, when it was known to the Moros that America would grant independence to the Philippines, the Moro leaders hastily sent another letter to the American government asking them to exclude the Moros from the jurisdiction of the soon-to-be independent Philippines. With undying hope, Hadji Bogabong and more than 100 Moro leaders signed the “Dansalan Declaration”:

\begin{quote}
We would like to inform you (U.S. congress) that because we have learned that the U.S. is going to give the Philippines independence … we want to tell you that the Philippines … is populated by two peoples with two different religious practices and traditions. The Christians Filipinos occupy the islands of Luzon and the Visayas. The Moros predominate in the islands of Mindanao and Sulu. With regard to the forthcoming Philippine Independence, we foresee what the condition we will be in and our children when independence is granted these islands. This condition will be characterised by unrest, suffering and misery … one proof of this is when Lanao had its (Christian) Filipino Governor many leading Moro Datus were killed for no apparent reasons.\textsuperscript{54}
\end{quote}

The destructive war that is transpiring today is a product of the earlier biased policies. The Moros did try all possible peaceful means to safeguard their rights and freedom, but only to gain nothing other than being incorporated into the Philippines with complete disregard of their rights in the constitution. In other words, armed-struggle was only initiated when all peaceful means were exhausted.

Recalling the situation during the colonial era, had not the Sultans and Datus prepared and resorted to armed-resistance, perhaps there would be no single Moro community in Mindanao and Sulu today. Had not the courageous Moro fighters sacrificed their lives and properties, perhaps there would be no Moro minorities in the Philippines today. In reality, although the Moros did not win
against the powerful invaders, they still managed to safeguard their own religion and identity.

Coming to the post-Philippine independence period, the liberation movements proved to be an effective means to resist aggression. During the time that the Moros had no military might, they were just taken for granted by the government. Barely two years after the merciless killing of more than 60 trainees in the Jabidah Massacre, many more massacres and atrocities were perpetrated in Mindanao. On top of them, President Marcos declared Martial Law in which the effect was more brutal and devastating.

Abul Khayr Alonto, the former MNLF vice chairman, commented as follows: “the biggest stumbling block, really, is the anti-Muslim prejudice of the Christian Filipinos. They do not respect us enough to negotiate with us. But now we are fighting – and for the first time they are having to listen to us.”55 This comment reinforces the proposition of the political analyst Rizal Buendia who observed that the “Muslims in the Philippines, at first, took the peaceful track in carving the nation-state.”56 However, when it became evident to them that it would not be possible to regain independence within the framework of the Philippine legal system, the MNLF was organised to lead the armed struggle.57

The above discussion shows that the various liberation movements contributed to the relative peace in Mindanao. All the episodes of fighting that resulted in so much suffering eventually became an instrument for the Moros to be respected. The government came to recognise that the Moros had legitimate grievances.58 Further, the government began addressing the grievances of the Moros by providing them avenues to obtain a secular education while not neglecting their own religious education; appointing a few Muslims to various departments, including foreign affairs; creating a commission – the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos – that would cater the needs of the Muslims, most especially in relation to performing hajj; declaring the two Muslim festivals – eidul fitr and eidul adha as national holidays; and above all, the creation of the ARMM to provide relative autonomous government in Mindanao. All these provisions were made as a direct response to the armed-struggle waged by the liberation movements.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

This essay focused mainly on the impact of armed struggle in the liberation movements in Mindanao. As the conflict has been hounding the country for five centuries starting from the coming of the Spaniards, there is an urgent need in the world of academe to examine different angles that could lead to a lasting peace in the whole country.
• The researcher highlights the importance of strong armed forces to the liberation movements in Mindanao on their quest for self-determination.

• This proposition does not only help their voice to be heard, and to have a strong bargaining position during the negotiation, but it also helps them to uphold the supremacy of law should they succeed in gaining independence or autonomy.

• Achieving peace also needs strong governance that can eradicate corruption in society, despite the presence of powerful clans who maintain private armies. Most importantly, this can also help to deliver justice to everyone regardless of status in the society.

Notes

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1. The term ‘Philippines’ did not exist before the Spaniards came because there was no unified state then in these islands; only independent chiefdoms or sultanates. The term ‘Philippines’ only came when Spaniards effectively conquered some part of the Islands and collectively called as such in honour to the king of Spain, King Philip II.


5. Ibid.


8. These objectives of colonisation were clearly stated in the Spanish “official policies” towards the Moros. American historian Peter Gowing clearly quotes the instruction of Francisco de Sande, the third Spanish governor and captain-general of the Philippines, to his Captain Esteban Rodriguez de Figueroa on the siege of Sulu in 1578. See Peter Gordon Gowing, Muslim Filipinos: Heritage and Horizon, (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1979), 29-30.

10. Macapado Abaton Muslim, 54.
11. Peter Church, 57.
16. Ibid., 94.
17. Salah Jubair, 138-139.
19. Macapado Abaton Muslim, 2.
20. Ibid.
22. Macapado Abaton Muslim, 2.
26. Marites D. Vitug & Glenda M. Gloria, 29-34.
27. Macapado Abaton Muslim, 114.
31. Salah Jubair, 224.
32. Ibid.
38. Lotfi, one of the Afghan-trained Cadre Officers, interview by the author, Camp Bushra, Butig, 29 January 2011.
39. International Crisis Group, 4-5.
40. SHIMMA printed documents, provided by Oshama bin Ali, Director General of the Academy.
41. Al Haj Murad Ebrahim, the Chairman of Moro Islamic Liberation Front, interview by the author, Camp Darapanan, Maguindanao, 6 February 2012.
42. Aleem Abdul Aziz Mimbantas, Vice-Chairman for Military Affairs, Central Committee of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, interview by the author, Camp Bushra, 28 January 2012.
43. Joint Acknowledgement of the two MILF camps by the GRP, 10 February 1999, Da‘wah Center, Crossing Simuay, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao.
49. Syed Serajul Islam, 139.
51. Quoted in Macapado Abaton Muslim, 54.
52. Quoted in Macapado Abaton Muslim, 83.
53. Quoted in Macapado Abaton Muslim, 84.
54. Original copy of Hadji Bagobong’s letter to the American Government, known as “Dansalan Declaration.”
55. Quoted in Peter Gordon Gowing, 220-221.