

# American Foreign Policy Council

## PHILIPPINES

### QUICK FACTS

Population: 99,900,177

Area: 300,000 sq km

Ethnic Groups: Tagalog 28.1%, Cebuano 13.1%, Ilocano 9%, Bisaya/Binisaya 7.6%, Hiligaynon Ilongo 7.5%, Bikol 6%, Waray 3.4%, other 25.3%

Religions: Roman Catholic 80.9%, Muslim 5%, Evangelical 2.8%, Iglesia ni Kristo 2.3%, Aglipayan 2%, other Christian 4.5%, other 1.8%, unspecified 0.6%, none 0.1%

Government Type: Republic

GDP (official exchange rate): \$160.6 billion

Map and Quick Facts courtesy of the CIA World Factbook (Last Updated July 2010)



*Since 1972, the overwhelmingly Catholic Philippines has experienced long-running Muslim secessionist insurgencies in the Southern islands of Mindanao and in the Sulu archipelago. Government abuses, crippling poverty and low levels of human development have fueled Muslim demands for an independent homeland. Yet the three primary insurgent groups currently active there are woefully divided along tribal and ideological lines. Since 2002, the United States has stepped up military assistance to the Philippine government, and since 2004 it has deployed some 500 Special Forces personnel to the southern Philippines to provide intelligence support and training. Nonetheless, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) are hobbled by corruption and stretched thin—preoccupied with confronting a low-level communist insurgency in the rest of the*

*country.*

## ISLAMIST ACTIVITY

There are three main organizations fighting—to various degrees—in the southern Philippines: The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and the Abu Sanyayf Group (ASG). They are riddled with factionalism, leadership contests and disputes over tactics.

### *Moro National Liberation Front*

Nur Misuari, a Manila-based Muslim academic, founded the MNLF in the early 1970s, and for the next decade it served as the sole revolutionary organization for the indigenous Muslim population, known as the Moros. The MNLF was an ethno-nationalist movement, and predominantly secular, although it included Islamist elements. The group received considerable material and financial support from Libyan leader Col. Muammar Qadhafi, who's *Green Book* espoused leftist Muslim anti-colonialism.<sup>1</sup> The MNLF was also aided by the senior minister of the neighboring Malaysian state of Sabah, Tun Mustapha, who was angered by Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos's claims to the territory, once part of the Sultanate of Sulu.<sup>2</sup> The MNLF was closely allied with the communist New People's Army, which launched its own insurgency at the same time, prompting a declaration of martial law and the country's subsequent deterioration.

In 1976, Qadhafi attempted to broker a peace agreement, but the government showed little interest in implementing the proposed autonomy deal. After the failed talks, the MNLF became internally divided and suffered significant battlefield losses. They were never a serious military threat to the Republic of the Philippines again. In 1996, the MNLF and the government signed the Tripoli Accords, which established the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).<sup>3</sup> Nur Misuari became the governor of the region, which included only five provinces; the other eligible provinces having failed to pass plebiscites. Some two thousand MNLF combatants were integrated into the AFP and the national police.<sup>4</sup> The ARMM agreement was never fully implemented and the ARMM region never achieved the promised political and eco-

conomic autonomy. Rampant corruption and inept leadership also hobbled the ARMM, and remain prevalent to this day.

In 2001, the MNLF executive committee voted to replace Misuari, who in turn staged a short-lived rebellion against the government. The rebellion was quickly put down and Misuari captured, thereafter living under house arrest until 2007 (though he was never formally charged). The MNLF lost control of the ARMM government in the 2006 elections, and the organization has fallen apart since. Though Muslimin Semma formally heads the Executive Council, Misuari and his loyalists do not recognize his authority. In 2007, certain MNLF units picked up arms again, joining forces with the Abu Sayyaf.<sup>5</sup> The organization has shed its secular image, now espousing a “light” version of Islamism.<sup>6</sup> Yet, the MNLF remains deeply factionalized and unable to accept the fact that they are no longer the vanguard of Moro aspirations. That mantle has fallen to the 11-12,000-strong Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

### *Moro Islamic Liberation Front*

Salamat Hashim, a Muslim scholar educated at Egypt’s Al Azhar university, broke away from the MNLF in 1978 and formally founded the MILF in 1984, basing its headquarters in the *Jamaat-Islamiya’s* compound in Lahore, Pakistan. The MILF saw itself as part of the global *jihad*, inspired by the influence of the *mujahideen* in Afghanistan.<sup>7</sup> From the start, the MILF was far more Islamist than the secular ethno-nationalist MNLF; and its avowed goal was to establish an Islamic homeland for the Moros.<sup>8</sup> The MILF began as a small group, whose growth and popularity caught Philippine forces by surprise. The MILF rejected the 1996 MNLF-Government peace pact that established the ARMM and benefited by mass defections from MNLF ranks.<sup>9</sup> By 1999, the MILF had over 11,000 men under arms and controlled vast swaths of central Mindanao. Yet it was never able to broaden that base of support throughout the Sulu archipelago, where the ethnic Tausig-dominated MNLF remained strong.

Starting in 1996, members of the nascent terrorist organization and regional al-Qaeda affiliate, *Jemaah Islamiyah*, began to conduct training for their members and MILF combatants in MILF camps.<sup>10</sup> Al-Qaeda dispatched a handful of senior trainers, such as

Omar Al-Faruq, to MILF camps to increase the group's military capacity. Nonetheless, in 1997 the MILF and Philippine government under President Fidel Ramos, who had just concluded an autonomy agreement with the MNLF the previous year, began formal peace talks. The year 2000 election of President Joseph Estrada, however, led the government to revert to a hard-line stance. Estrada ordered the country's military to resume operations against the group, culminating in the capture of the MILF's main base camp. Peace talks resumed in 2001, following Estrada's ouster via a popular uprising. His successor, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, resumed peace talks with the MILF in 2002. Nonetheless, in 2003 peace talks broke down and wide-scale fighting erupted, with Philippine military personnel seizing several large MILF camps.

Following the mid-2003 death of Salamat Hashim, the MILF has been led by Chairman Ebrahim Murad and Vice Chairman Aleem Abdulaziz Mimbintas. Murad has *de facto* accepted a broader autonomy agreement, cognizant that the MILF could not win an independent homeland on the battlefield. Formal talks over autonomy began in 2003, and in November 2007, a draft autonomy agreement over the MILF's "ancestral domain" was finally concluded.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, Christian lawmakers in Mindanao, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and hard-line members of the cabinet rejected the agreement in December 2007. The country's Supreme Court found it to be unconstitutional in August 2008.<sup>12</sup> As a result, widespread fighting resumed. Although President Arroyo pledged to restart talks, formal talks never resumed before her term ended in May 2010. The breakdown of talks led to renewed fighting by the MILF and attacks on Christian villages in 2008-09, which left 400 dead and thousands displaced. The stalled peace process also saw the withdrawal of the small Malaysian-led contingent of peace monitors at the end of 2009. Formal talks faltered in 2010, as President Arroyo completed her lame-duck term in office.

The MILF remains the largest Muslim group, strongly represented amongst the Maguindanao and Maranao ethnic groups, though it has little following among Tausigs. The MILF is a much weaker organization than it was at its peak in 1999-2000, and there are signs of increasing factionalism as negotiations for autonomy

have floundered (detailed below). In February 2011, as the administration of President Benigno Aquino, Jr. prepared to resume formal negotiations with the MILF, a hard line commander quit the MILF and vowed to resume offensive military operations.<sup>13</sup> The MILF previously was known to receive funding from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf sources, although the scope of this aid is not publicly known. Of late, however, it is said that money for the MILF from these sources is said to have dried up, with the group forced to increase its self reliance. The MILF engages in criminality, such as extortion and a limited amount of kidnapping. The MILF has, in the past three years, also been increasingly linked to marijuana cultivation. The MILF remains a somewhat cohesive guerilla-based resistance movement, but the resignation of a senior commander, Ustadz Ameril Umbra Kato, in mid-2010 and his subsequent charges that the current MILF leadership is revisionist portends greater sectarian conflicts. The MILF's hardliners have always been wary of Murad's peace negotiations with the government, and contend that the protracted nature of the talks is indicative of the government's lack of good will. More importantly, the peace process has dissipated the military preparedness and combat capability of the MILF. There are reasonable concerns that other field commanders will join Kato and quit the peace process.

### *Abu Sayyaf*

The third Islamist organization active in the Philippines is the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), an organization which vacillates from terrorism to criminality. The ASG was founded in 1991 by a veteran of the Afghan *mujahideen*, Abdurrajak Janjalani, apparently with seed money from al-Qaeda.<sup>14</sup> Osama bin Laden's brother-in-law, Muhmmmed Jamal Khalifah, moved from Quetta, Pakistan where he ran a branch of the Rabitat (Muslim World League) that was funneling aid to the *mujahideen*, to the Philippines.<sup>15</sup> From 1991 to late-1994, he ran branches of two Saudi charities, the Muslim World League and the Islamic International Relief Organization, in Mindanao and Sulu—organizations that Philippine security forces saw as conduits of aid for the various Moro secessionist organizations.

From 1991-1995, the Abu Sayyaf, which was mainly com-

prised of ethnic Tausig defectors from the larger and more secular Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), began a spate of bombings, assassinations and kidnappings against non-secular targets, including churches and Christian missionaries in Sulu province. Following the loss of support from al-Qaeda in 1995, the group degenerated and became synonymous with bold kidnapping attacks, such as the April 2000 raid on the Malaysian island of Sipidan and the May 2001 assault on the Philippine resort island of Palawan. Together, these attacks netted the group some 50 foreigners, which it proceeded to hold for ransom.

Between 2000 and 2001, the ASG took some 140 hostages including school children, teachers, priests and western tourists, and was responsible for the death of 16. Starting in 2003, the ASG all but ceased kidnapping and—in conjunction with members of the Indonesian-based terrorist organization *Jemaah Islamiyah*—resumed a campaign of terrorist attacks, including the bombing of a ferry in February 2004 that killed 116. Between 2004 and 2007, the few kidnappings that the group did perpetrate resulted in executions, not ransoms. The shift had much to do with the consolidation of power carried out in 2003 by Khadaffy Janjalani, the younger brother of the organization's founder, who sought to return the group to its secessionist roots, as well as with the neutralization of several other leaders following the onset of U.S. training and assistance to the Philippine military in early 2002.

By early 2005, several top JI leaders were known to be in Jolo, protected by the ASG. An August 2006 campaign by the Armed Forces of the Philippines, supported by a contingent of U.S. Special Forces troops who provided training and intelligence, led to a sustained offensive against the ASG through mid-2007. In September 2006 and March 2007, two top ASG leaders, Khadaffy Janjalani and Abu Solaiman, were killed. The ASG quickly degenerated with a spike in kidnappings from 2007-2010.

The current leadership of the ASG is somewhat unclear. Isnilon Totoni Hapilon, the group's 43-year old hardline commander on Basilan, and Radullan Sahiron, a 72-year old former MNLF commander based in Jolo, Albadar Parad and Umbra Abu Jundail (aka Gafur Jumdaile and Dr. Abu) remain the best known figures in the group's hierarchy. But the organization boasts no sin-

gle identified leader. The size of the ASG is estimated to be between 300-400 at any given time. However, it is often supported and bolstered by disaffected MNLF combatants, such as Habier Malik, whose leaders negotiated a peace pact with the government in 1996, but which has come under strain in recent years.<sup>16</sup> The ASG has increased kidnapping since 2007, and has frequently beheaded individuals for whom ransom is not paid. Nonetheless, the ASG targets U.S. forces when possible, such as the October 2009 IED attack in Jolo that killed two U.S. Special Forces soldiers.<sup>17</sup>

The Philippines lacks any truly broad-based Islamic movements. The Muslim Brotherhood is not strongly represented in the country, nor do the Philippines have any large mass-based Muslim civil society organizations, such as Indonesia's *Nadhalatul Ulama* or *Mohammadiyah*. The MILF does have significant control of or support from the Islamic clergy. There is no shortage of Muslim-based NGOs—indicative of Philippine society at large—but these remain small, under-resourced and often operating along ethnic lines. Muslim civilians have proven to be every bit as factionalized as their armed counterparts. The MILF has tried to establish an umbrella organization for these Muslim and Islamist NGOs, known as the Meredeka coalition, but with limited success. Moreover, there is no Muslim or Islamist political party at the national level. Although the MNLF ostensibly acts like a political party, and will contest elections in the ARMM region, it is weak and factionalized. Since 2006, it has not governed the ARMM.

## ISLAMISM AND SOCIETY

Islam came to the Philippines via Yemeni traders who spread the religion throughout the Malay and Indonesian archipelagos. Spanish colonization led to brutal clashes, and the Muslims—known as Moros, a derivation of the Spanish word Moors—took great pride in their resistance to colonial domination. When the Philippines became an American colony, the Moros continued their fight for independence, and only after U.S. military intervention was the southern Philippines pacified.

At the end of WWII, when the U.S. was preparing Philippine

independence, Moro leaders requested that the United States give them their own independent homeland. The U.S., however, never acknowledged this request, and the Muslim region was incorporated into the Republic of the Philippines. Decades of Christian migration fundamentally altered the ethnic balance, and in vast swaths of the region, Muslims became the minority. By most every measure of human development, however, the Muslim region lags behind the rest of the country.

With these shortcomings has come a measure of support for radical interpretations of the Islamic faith. There is some support in Philippine society for all three of the organizations mentioned above, although it is not as strong as those leaders appear to believe. Each organization, over time, has alienated sections of the Muslim population.

For example, on the Sulu archipelago, and in particular Jolo Island, there is support for the Abu Sayyaf—albeit for no other reason than that it is a closely-knit society based on clan and kinship. The group is not popular, nor does it have a positive message or social agenda. The ASG simply has a vehemently anti-Christian, anti-state, and anti-American identity. It relies on kidnappings for much of its funding. Almost all kidnapping victims are Christians. On the few occasions that the ASG has kidnapped Muslims, it has tended to execute them, because they were working on U.S.-funded projects. When the ASG does receive foreign funds, kidnapping ceases and bombings resume. This cyclical pattern makes the group of limited appeal, attractive to only a small segment of ethnic Tausig society. By and large, the ASG is rejected by both Muslims and Christians because of its conduct, but clan-based loyalties and kinship ties sustain them. To date no authoritative polling has been done to quantify the level of support the ASG enjoys, either in the Sulu archipelago or in the Philippines at large.

The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) likewise has become more marginal and internally divided, and no longer can be said to serve as the vanguard of the interests of the Moro people. The MNLF no longer has broad representation among all the major



Moro tribes and ethnic groups, and has become a predominantly Tausig organization. Most MNLF members and supporters in Mindanao joined with the MILF, something that the MNLF has simply not accepted.

Politically, the MNLF is divided between the followers of Nur Misuari, who was released from house arrest in late 2007, and the supporters of the MNLF's Executive Council, under the leadership of Muslimin Semma.<sup>18</sup> These divisions are real; in 2007, some MNLF field commanders unilaterally quit the peace process and joined up with the Abu Sayyaf. Though the MNLF leaders were able to contain that dissension, there is widespread dissatisfaction towards the government, and a general belief that authorities have failed to fully implement the accord. This is a strong theme of MNLF statements and political rhetoric. Interestingly, the MNLF was traditionally a secular organization, though nearly all of its members were Muslim. That is less true today, when the MNLF has much more of a Muslim identity and Islamic consciousness. The MNLF appears not to have extensive funding (authoritative estimates are unavailable), though individual members are often quite wealthy. The MNLF is fundamentally a weaker organization than it was in the 1970s and 1980s and institutionally the party has been gutted.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is the largest armed Islamist organization in the country. It was treated by the government as a fringe element in the early 1990s, when Manila was engaged in talks with the MNLF. The government never imagined a) that there would be mass defections from the MNLF, doubling the MILF's ranks; and b) that the MILF would use the region's mosques and religious leaders to effectively recruit and garner popular support. The MILF works very closely with the Islamic clergy across Mindanao, and has deputized many clergy to serve as Islamic judges in the shadow government that the MILF runs in the territory under its control. The MILF is the leading voice for the Maranao and Maguindanao tribes, as well as a handful of smaller tribes such as the Yaccans on Basilan Island. The MILF has very little support amongst the Tausigs in Sulu or Tawi Tawi. It controls significant territory in Lanao del Sur, Cotabato, Maguindanao,

Sultan Kudarat, Sharif Kabungsan and Sarangani provinces, as well as territory in provinces in other parts of the southern Philippines. It has lost large chunks of territory since 2000, some at the hands of government operations, and others simply by the spread of roads and other aspects of economic integration.

Despite all this, the MILF should be in a much stronger position than it is currently. In the areas it controls, the group provides little in the way of social services. It has some *madrassas* and a small medical corps, but is not able to match—or compete with—the resources marshaled by the Philippine state. In some ways, the MILF actually alienates the very community it seeks to represent. The MILF is a largely horizontal organization, and individual base commanders often compete over turf; i.e., what villages they can tax. There is also growing concern about the peace process; while most Muslims in the region do blame the government for the breakdown of the peace process in late 2007, that the MILF has been unable to deliver on its promises is also disheartening. There are hard-core elements of the MILF who have picked up arms since November 2007 and resumed fighting, and who are, at the same time, trying to discredit the moderate leadership of MILF chairman Ebrahim el Haj Murad. In July 2010, one of the most conservative religious commanders, Ustadz Ameril Umbra Kato, quit the organization, and has subsequently attracted the organization's more radical youth, unhappy with the stalled peace process, away from the fold.<sup>19</sup> In short, the longer the peace process drags on, the more the hardliners are vindicated. The MILF claims to be 12,000 to 15,000 members in size,<sup>20</sup> although circumstantial evidence suggests the organization is significantly smaller and weaker today. The protracted peace process similarly has weakened the MILF's battlefield preparedness.

Islam is growing at a grassroots level as well. There is constant construction of new mosques occurring in the southern Philippines. However, most of these structures are today very small and built at the village level. In contrast with the 1990s, when a large portion of new mosque and *madrassa* construction was known to be funded by Saudi and Gulf charities, today it is difficult to discern from where funds for such new construction is coming.

Since 9/11, there has been significantly more scrutiny on the flow of foreign funds into the Muslim South. A number of financiers and middlemen have been arrested in the past few years. Philippine authorities have also arrested a number of foreign nationals suspected of supporting terrorism. In one infamous case, Philippine intelligence officials arrested a Saudi national, but he was quickly released before he could be interrogated after the Saudi Arabian embassy appealed to President Arroyo.

With the crackdown on JI in Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as stepped up maritime border patrols, the Philippines is less important as a training center. The maritime border region between Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines is much less lawless than in the past. Malaysia has increased maritime patrols off of Sabah state, while Australia provided the Philippines with six coastal patrol craft. Regional and U.S. intelligence officials now see the Southern Philippines as being a much less hospitable place for terrorist training.

One of the most interesting trends in the Philippines is the spread of “*Balik Islam*”—literally, “return to Islam.” *Balik Islam* is a movement of Christian converts to Islam. Islam is the fastest growing religion in the Philippines. Conversion takes place through two general processes. One is the conversion of workers while overseas in the Middle East,<sup>21</sup> often for financial reasons (since being a Muslim can lead to better job opportunities). The other, which takes place in the Philippines, is via the network of *Balik Islam* centers scattered throughout the archipelago, primarily in slum areas of cities. For instance, of the 1,890 *madrassas* in the Philippines, only 1,000 or so are in Mindanao; the remainder spread across the rest of the country. The center of *Balik Islam* is in the northern city of Baguio, on Luzon island. Much of the funding for *Balik Islam*’s *da’wa* work comes from the Gulf.<sup>22</sup> *Balik Islam* preaches a Salafi interpretation of Islam, and encourages its members to live in exclusive parallel communities.<sup>23</sup> A radical fringe of *Balik Islam*, the Rajah Solaiman Movement, has worked closely with the ASG and been implicated in a number of terrorist acts.

There are two major organizations that lead the *Balik* Islam movement, the Islamic Studies Call and Guidance (ISCAG) and Islamic Wisdom Worldwide Mission (IWWM). Both have been substantially funded from Middle East and Gulf sources. The IWWM is the successor organization of a front foundation used by Osama bin Laden's brother-in-law, Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, who was forced out of the Philippines in late 2004, which was thought to have been used in the planned terrorist operations of Ramzi Yousef and his uncle Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. ISCAG was established in the mid-1990s in Saudi Arabia by a group of primarily *Balik* Islam converts. ISCAG is a rapidly growing NGO and has been featured in the press, due to its rapid expansion of operations and sponsorship of mosque and madrasa construction. The organization has come under more scrutiny by state authorities after its original head, Humoud Mohammad Abdulaziz al-Lahim, was forced out of the Philippines in April 2002 on allegations of sponsoring terrorism. He is currently based in Saudi Arabia, where he continues to fund-raise for ISCAG.<sup>24</sup>

## ISLAMISM AND THE STATE

The Philippine government has never had policies that discriminated against Islam and the spread of Islamist institutions. Indeed, Islamic courts for family law are active in the country's south. Mosque and *madrasa* construction generally proceed unhindered. Overall, Islam is the fastest growing religion in the country, and as mentioned above, the *Balik* Islam movement is robust.

This has led to extensive contacts between the Philippines and the broader Muslim world. The country has observer status in the Organization of the Islamic Conference, or OIC; has increased the number of *hajj* pilgrims; and has allowed foreign aid organizations, *da'wa* organizations and Islamist charities to have access to the country. There is no shortage of civil society organizations in the Philippines, including Islamic NGOs. The presidential administration in Manila likewise has an office of Muslim affairs, and Muslims are viable candidates in political elections.

Muslims in Mindanao and Sulu have been angered at the loss of

ancestral domain to Christian migration, heavy-handed government responses to Muslim secessionist movements, and a lack of political will or commitment to the peace process. There is concern that the government's extensive counterterrorism cooperation with the United States since 9/11 has led to a hardening of its official positions in the peace process, even as it has sought a military solution against the Abu Sayyaf. The United States has pledged continued military assistance to, and cooperation with, the Philippines for the foreseeable future. The government's failure, and one which the United States has played into, is that it maintains a "divide and conquer" approach to the three different Muslim groups and has never come up with a holistic solution to the Muslim south. And the country's Muslims themselves are divided and unable to present a common negotiating platform. President Aquino seems unwilling to push through a bold peace deal that would give Muslims meaningful autonomy, and there is little support for such a deal in the Philippine Congress. As such, low-level violence and insecurity can be expected to continue to pervade the southern Philippines.

## ENDNOTES

[1] On October 7, 1971, Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi stated that if “the genocide still went on against the Muslims in the Philippines,” he would assume responsibility” for protecting them. That year he established the Islamic Call Society (ICS) to support Islamic revolutions around the world. The ICS became a major force in Libyan foreign policy-making and had offices not just in Africa, but also in Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Khadhafi, through the ICS, became the major patron of the MNLF. See Saleh Jubair, *Bangsamoro: A Nation Under Endless Tyranny*, 3rd ed. (Kuala Lumpur: IQ MARIN SON BHD, 1999), 150.

[2] The Philippines has never legally renounced its claim to Sabah, though it has de facto done so through its diplomatic ties with Malaysia.

[3] The ARMM was established on November 6, 1990 by *Republic Act 6734*. It was legally possible to do so because of the promulgation of a new constitution in 1987 that allowed for the establishment of autonomous regions.

[4] Deidre Sheehan, “Swords into Ploughshares,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 20, 2001, 30-31. This USAID program is known as the Livelihood Enhancement and Peace Project. For more on this project, see Dan Murphy, “Filipinos Swap Guns for Rakes,” *Christian Science Monitor*, March 5, 2002.

[5] Veronica Uy, “Duereza to MNLF: Deal with Malik,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, April 16, 2007.

[6] Author interviews with MNLF leaders, Sulu, Zamboanga and Cotabatao, June 2007.

[7] Salamat Hashim, *The Bangsamoro Mujahid: His Objectives and Responsibilities* (Mindanao, Bangsamoro: Bangsamoro Publications, 1985), 18-19.

[8] Derived from the MILF’s old webpage, <http://morojihad.stcom.net/milf.html>.

[9] Rasmia Alonto, “Interview: We Assert our Legitimate Rights to Self-Determination, That Is, Independence,” in Salamat Hashim, *Referendum: Peaceful Civilized, Diplomatic and Democratic Means of Solving the Mindanao Conflict* (Camp Abu Bakre As-Siddique: MILF Agency for Youth Affairs, 2002), 45; Rigoberto Tiglao, “Hidden Strength: Muslim Insurgents Shun Publicity and Grow in Power,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 23, 1995.

[10] Indonesian National Police (INP), “Interrogation of Mohammad Nasir bin Abbas,” Jakarta, Indonesia, April 18, 2003.

[11] In addition to the five provinces of the ARMM, the MILF demanded an addition 1,478 villages, while the government contended that only 618 villages were majority-Muslim. Ultimately

the two sides agreed on 712 villages. See “Philippines in ‘Separatist Deal,’” BBC, November 15, 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7096069.stm>.

[12] Manny Mogato, “MILF: Peace Talks now in ‘Purgatory,’” Reuters, August 31, 2008.

[13] MILF Admits Major Split Ahead of Talks,” Agence France Presse, February 5, 2011.

[14] For the history of the Abu Sayyaf, see the author’s *Balik Terrorism: The Return of the Abu Sayyaf* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, Army War College, September 2005).

[15] National Intelligence Coordinating Agency, “Mohammad Khalifa’s Network in the Philippines,” n.d., 2.

[16] Veronica Uy, “Duereza to MNLF: Deal with Malik,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, April 16, 2007.

[17] “2 U.S. Soldiers Killed In Philippines Bomb Blast,” CNN, October 2, 2009.

[18] “Special Report: Nur Misuari, Muslimin Sema and the Future of the MNLF,” *The Mindanao Examiner*, April 28, 2008.

[19] MILF Admits Major Split Ahead of Talks,” Agence France Presse, February 5, 2011.

[20] Rigoberto Tiglao, “MILF Boasts Bigger, Better Army,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, June 9, 2000.

[21] Overseas foreign workers are the backbone of the Philippine economy. Although, they only comprise six percent of the population, their share of the country’s GDP is 11 percent. There are over one million OFWs from the Philippines in the Middle East.

[22] Though dated, the best study of the Balik Islam phenomenon is Luis Q. Lacar, “Balik Islam: Christian Converts to Islam in the Philippines, c. 1970-98,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 12, no. 1 (January 2001), 39-60, esp. n4, 57.

[23] Simon Montlake, “In Philippines, A Watchful Eye on Converts,” *Christian Science Monitor*, November 28, 2005.

[24] For more, see Marites Dañguilan Vitug, “The New Believers,” *Newsbreak*, May 27, 2002; Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, “Troubled Return of the Faithful,” *imagazine* IX, no. 2 (April-June 2003); Johnna Villaviray, “Muslims Identify With ‘Terrorist’ Ideals,” *Manila Times*, November 19 2003; and ISCAG’s website, available at <http://www.islamicfinder.org/surf.php?ht=http://www.angislam.org>.