

Profiles

Philippine Presidents

Ferdinand Marcos 1965-1986

In September 1972, shortly before the end of his second (and constitutionally, last) term as elected President, Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law – one reason he cited was the escalation of violence in Mindanao.

The regime's initial response to the MNLF rebellion was military. This failed with the added disadvantage of alienating the Islamic states of the Middle East on which the Philippines depended for oil and which were beginning to assert themselves internationally through OPEC. Negotiations between the Philippine government and the MNLF began in 1975 and led eventually to the signing of the Tripoli Agreement in December 1976. Although Marcos did not personally take part in the talks, his wife

Imelda played a prominent role in meetings with Middle Eastern governments, and in subsequent talks with Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, on implementation of the agreement.

Marcos's dictatorial rule provoked mass discontent all over the Philippines, expressed in the 1980s by huge demonstrations, general strikes and a rapid growth of support for the insurgents of the National Democratic Front. At the same time, by clinging to a monopoly of political power, Marcos had alienated his political and economic rivals. In February 1986, he was overthrown by a combination of popular uprising and military revolt.

Corazon Aquino 1986-1992

President Aquino came to power on the wave of anti-Marcos protest triggered by the assassination of her husband, former senator Benigno (Ninoy) Aquino, in 1983. She had run for election under the Unido party, but broke with its leader, Salvador Laurel, soon after her inauguration. Her administration restored a system of electoral democracy. A new constitution was drawn up in 1987, by a commission whose members were appointed by the President. Although the new system was still dominated by a fairly narrow elite, it provided considerable space for urban civil society to operate. Media restrictions were relaxed, and the number of NGOs mushroomed.

Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos



Source: Philippines Resource Centre

Aquino also embarked on peace talks with the NDF and the MNLF. The president herself went to Sulu to meet MNLF leader Nur Misuari and members of her family were involved in subsequent meetings with MNLF leaders. However, while pursuing talks, the Aquino government was also establishing institutions purportedly designed to meet Muslim aspirations, without reference to the MNLF. The government insisted on keeping all discussion within the framework of the new constitution, ratified by referendum in 1987, which the rebel groups would not accept. Thus talks with both the NDF and the MNLF broke down, for similar reasons.

The Aquino government, despite massive popular support, was politically unstable. The main threat came from factions within the Armed Forces who were displeased with the reduction in their power and status since the heady days of martial law. Many soldiers were also alarmed at the government's peace overtures to the rebels, partly because they saw it as condoning what they had been taught to believe were

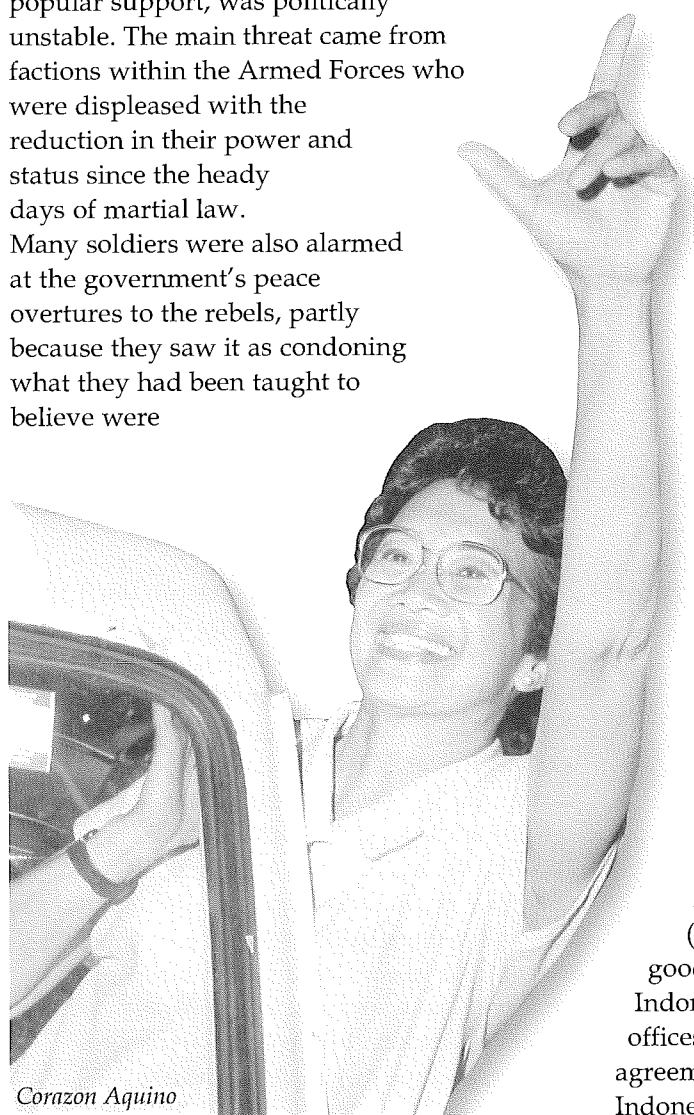
communist or secessionist threats to the nation's safety, partly because they feared further loss of power, money and status if insurgency was no longer a problem. The Aquino government survived seven military coup attempts.

Fidel Ramos 1992-1998

Ramos had run the Philippine Constabulary under martial law, but was one of the leaders of the military revolt, which ousted his cousin Ferdinand Marcos in 1986. He served the Aquino government, first as head of the armed forces and then as Defence Minister, and played a key role in suppressing the coup attempts. In 1992, he was elected president on 23% of the popular vote. His electoral vehicle was a merger of Lakas-Tao (People Power Party) and the National Union of Christian Democrats (NUCD).

Ramos had a clear programme of government, which aimed to restore political and economic stability. Under the slogan 'Philippines 2000,' he planned to turn the Philippines into a 'Newly-Industrialised Country,' while avoiding a thorough land reform. Industrialisation, financed by foreign investment, required peace, therefore a key part of Ramos's political strategy was to negotiate with the NDF, the military rebels and the Moro armed groups. For the Ramos government, peace negotiations were part of a wider agenda.

In foreign policy, Ramos emphasised political and economic co-operation in South East Asia, mainly through the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). This included developing good relations with President Soeharto of Indonesia. Ramos repaid Indonesia's good offices, in helping to negotiate a peace agreement with the MNLF, by supporting Indonesia over East Timor.



Corazon Aquino

Source: Piers Cavendish/Reflex



Source: Associated Press AP

Fidel Ramos

He was elected Vice-President in 1992, but being a member of the opposition to President Ramos, was kept at a distance from any position of real power. In the May 1998 elections, he won a landslide victory, on a populist campaign promising a government that would be more responsive to the poor. His electoral coalition, the LAMPP (Struggle of Nationalist Filipino Masses) included fierce opponents of the 1996 Peace Agreement with the MNLF. His vice-presidential running mate, former Senator Edgardo Angara, who voted against ratification of the 1996 Peace Agreement, lost the election.

Estrada has said that he intends to continue the Ramos peace programme, and has kept on some of the relevant key officials of the previous administration rather than replacing them with his own followers. However, his populist approach to politics has led him to make sabre-rattling statements aimed at the NDF and the MILF. Unlike Ramos, Estrada seems to have no clear policy on Mindanao.

A peace agreement was reached with the military rebels in 1994 and with the MNLF in September 1996. A ceasefire was agreed with the MILF in 1997. Negotiations with the NDF resulted in an Agreement on Human Rights in 1998, which was supposed to be the first in a series of agreements on a range of issues, culminating in an overall settlement. The Ramos administration also set up a number of institutions to put its 'comprehensive peace programme' into practice.

Joseph Estrada 1998 -

A former film actor, Joseph Estrada rose to political prominence as Mayor of the municipality of San Juan in Metropolitan Manila. He was a member of the KBL – the New Society Movement established by President Marcos after the declaration of martial law. As a member of the Philippine Senate during the Aquino government, he campaigned to close US military bases in the Philippines.

Joseph Estrada



The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP)

The AFP consists of the Army, Navy and Air Force (all professional) and has 130,000 troops. Through most of its existence, it has been used for counter-insurgency rather than external defence. Under martial law, the AFP gained a taste for political power. Since the overthrow of Marcos in 1986, many military leaders have gone into politics. The most successful, of course, was President Ramos. There are former military officers in the Senate, the House of Representatives and the Cabinet.

Until the early 1990s, the Philippine Constabulary (PC – well-armed counter-insurgency troops) and the Integrated National Police were also part of the armed forces. In 1991, the police became civilian, and the PC was abolished, its members joining either the police or the army.

In the mid-1970s, about 70% of the AFP were deployed in Mindanao. For Army officers a Mindanao assignment, especially in a war zone, is regarded as a passport to promotion. The urge to win promotion is thought to be one cause of the intermittent 'pocket wars' between the AFP and the MILF.

Moro armed groups

By far the most significant organisations in terms of numbers, military power and ability to articulate a political agenda are the Moro National Liberation Front and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. However, it is difficult to arrive at accurate estimates of their membership, or the number of troops under their command. Armed opposition groups have a tendency to inflate their numbers to boost their image, while government military reports usually underestimate them. Another difficulty in estimating numbers is an apparent overlap in membership in some areas, notably the Zamboanga peninsula. On occasion, members of one group have joined their friends and relatives in a military action led by the other.

Moro National Liberation Front

The MNLF was founded in 1969 with Nur Misuari as Chairman. He has led the MNLF ever since. Its first members were drawn from youth recruited by the traditional Muslim leaders for military training in Malaysia. Like Misuari himself, these young men had had a secular education, and some had briefly taken part in left-wing student politics. They were dissatisfied with the traditionalist leadership, which they felt lacked direction.

When it was founded, the MNLF's objective was an independent Bangsamoro homeland. However, under pressure from the Islamic states, it has accepted autonomy within the Philippine state.

The MNLF definition of the term 'Moro' includes any native inhabitant of Mindanao willing to accept that identity. The organisation

Nur Misuari



Source: Associated Press AP

has non-Muslim members, of whom the most prominent is a Protestant pastor, Absalom Cerveza, currently representing Christians on the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development. However, few Christians or Lumads are willing to call themselves Moro.

Officially, the MNLF's ruling body is its Central Committee. Although the charismatic and authoritarian Misuari has always been the dominant figure. He lived in exile in the Middle East from the early 1970s until 1996, making only a few brief visits to Mindanao after 1986. Owing to difficulties in communication with the exiled leadership, local field commanders in Mindanao had considerable independence in practice.

As a student, Misuari joined the leftist Kabataang Makabayan (KM – Nationalist Youth) led by Jose Maria Sison, who went on to establish the new Communist Party of the Philippines. But as the KM became more Maoist-oriented, Misuari dropped out. After the Jabidah massacre in 1968, he left his job as a lecturer at the University of the Philippines, and returned to Mindanao to lead the fight for Moro self-determination.

The MNLF's armed group is called the Bangsa Moro Army. In 1994, the Philippine military estimated that the MNLF had 14,080 fighters. The MNLF itself claims a much higher figure, as well as a considerable number of 'secret forces' or civilians in support roles.

The MNLF's main bases are in Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Basilan and the Zamboanga peninsula. It also has a presence in parts of Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani and South Cotabato. The members are predominantly, but not exclusively, from the Tausug, Samal and Yakan ethnic groups.

After the Peace Agreement with the Philippine government in 1996, the MNLF entered civilian politics and government as a junior partner of the Ramos administration and Ramos's party, Lakas-NUCD (National Union of Christian Democrats).

MNLF leaders who ran in the 1998 congressional and local elections lost, with the exception of General Secretary Muslimin Sema, who was elected mayor of Cotabato City and Hassim Amin, who represents Jolo 1st Distribution in Congress. The Ramos' party had an electoral alliance with the United Muslim Democrats of the Philippines (UMDP) as well as with the MNLF, so felt obliged to declare 'free zones' in constituencies where both were running.

At time of writing, the MNLF heads the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD), a transitional institution established under the 1996 Peace Agreement. Misuari is also Governor of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao.

Moro Islamic Liberation Front

In 1978, shortly after the collapse of the Tripoli Agreement, a group led by Central Committee member Salamat Hashim broke away from the MNLF. At first, it called itself the 'New MNLF', but in 1984 it formally established itself as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Hashim comes from an upper class Maguindanaon family. He was a leader of the Philippine Students' Union in Cairo in the

Salamat Hashim



Source: Filippijengroep Nederland

1960s when studying at Al-Azhar, a prestigious centre of Islamic learning. After returning to the Philippines in 1970, he became a founder member of the MNLF, and eventually challenged Misuari for the leadership. Hashim was a member of the MNLF panels negotiating with the Marcos government in 1975 and 1976. The organisation puts much greater emphasis on Islam than the MNLF, and most of its leaders are Islamic scholars from traditional aristocratic and religious backgrounds.

In the late 1990s, the MILF claims to have 120,000 armed and unarmed fighters and many more supporters. Recent Philippine government estimates put the MILF strength at 8,000 while western intelligence sources put it at 40,000. Most members come from the Maguindanaon and Iranun ethnic groups, although Maranaw recruits seem to be increasing. Vice Chair for political affairs, Ghazali Jafaar, says that although the MILF respects the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), 'the Bangsamoro has the final say'.

Abu Sayyaf

Abu Sayyaf ('father of the sword') was founded in the mid-1980s to propagate Islam through *jihad*. Its founder and leader, Abdurajak Abubakar Janjalani, was an Islamic scholar and previously a member of the MNLF. He was killed in an encounter with the AFP in December 1998.

Few details are known about this group, whose main base is on the island of Basilan. They appear to have little popular support. Most non-members describe it as Islamic fundamentalist, and many violent incidents in Mindanao have been attributed to it. These include an attack on the town of Ipil in 1995 killing 50 people, several explosions in churches and a grenade attack in a Zamboanga department store just before Christmas 1998, injuring 60 people.

Its members are said to be former MNLF guerrillas who volunteered to fight in

Afghanistan against the Soviet-backed government in the 1980s.

Edwin Angeles, a convert to Islam who commanded Abu Sayyaf military operations in the early 1990s, was later revealed to be a police agent. He left the Abu Sayyaf in 1995, and was killed in January 1999, soon after Janjalani.

MNLF-Reformist Group

The Reformist Group, led by Dimas Pundato, head of the Ranao Revolutionary Committee of the MNLF, broke away from the rest of the organisation in 1982. At this time, following the failure of the Marcos regime to implement the Tripoli Agreement, Misuari had revived the demand for independence. Pundato believed the MNLF should continue to aim for autonomy, but Misuari rejected his proposals. It reached a settlement with the Aquino government, and its leaders received posts in the government's Office of Muslim Affairs.

Bangsa Moro Liberation Organisation

Founded in 1970 by Congressional Representative Rashid Lucman, who intended it to be an umbrella organisation for all liberation forces, the BMLO was dominated by Muslim traditional leaders with conservative policies. After losing to the MNLF in a competition to attract aid from the OIC, the BMLO agreed to co-operate with the Marcos regime, which recognised Lucman as Paramount Sultan of Mindanao and Sulu. It re-emerged in the late 1970s after the breakdown of the Tripoli Agreement. On Rashid Lucman's death, the leadership passed to other members of his family. Nothing has been heard from the group since.

Other groups

Smaller Moro armed groups include the Islamic Command Council, the Moro Revolutionary Organisation (see below under NDF), and most recently, the Maranao Islamic Statehood movement which came to public attention in January 1999 with a raid on the market in Marawi City.

The armed left

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines

The NDF is an alliance of organisations led or influenced by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), including the CPP's armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA). The CPP, established in 1968, initiated the formation of the NDF in 1971 to build a national united front politically uniting all revolutionary forces. The declaration of martial law in 1972 brought a flow of recruits. The NDF is committed to a 'people's democratic war' against 'imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism', and to the establishment of a 'national democratic state', as a stage on the path to socialism. It issued a 10-point programme (which later grew to 12 points) as the basis for unity and co-operation.

The NDF has sought alliances with the MNLF and the MILF. NPA fighters have often had some form of ground-level military co-operation with the two Moro fronts. There were at least two NPA guerrilla fronts in Moro areas in the Lanao-Misamis region. But the MNLF has purposely distanced itself, as an alliance with the communists would have jeopardised its relations with conservative Muslim countries. The MILF is relatively more open to co-operation with the left, and has at times sought assistance from NDF-influenced groups to learn community organising methods.

Shortly before the end of President Ramos's term in office, the Philippine government and the NDF signed a Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CAHRIHL), which was supposed to be the first in a series of agreements on key issues leading to a final settlement. However, talks under the Estrada administration are proving difficult.

Since the early 1980s the NDF has sought to recruit Moros into its united front, with emphasis on building community and social activist organisations rather than on military

activity. The NDF's relatively clear programme and redistributive agenda attracted many young Moros, and resulted in the creation of a relatively autonomous, left-inspired Moro Revolutionary Organisation (MRO) in 1982. But the subordination of Moro national demands and Moro individuals in a majority Filipino organisation made it difficult to sustain momentum and membership.

Since 1992 splits and factionalisation have wracked the NDF. The CPP Central Mindanao Regional Party Committee (CMR), the body in charge of NDF organising and political work in the Moro areas, broke away from the leadership, as did several other NDF-affiliated organisations around the country. The government continues to negotiate with the NDF's leaders while trying to reach the breakaway factions. After the 1996 Peace Agreement, CPP leader Jose Maria Sison publicly denounced Nur Misuari and the peace deal.

The CMR meanwhile, has sought to redefine itself. The MRO expressed conditional support for the Peace Agreement and the SPCPD, but stressed the need to continue the Moro struggle.

Government institutions concerned with the peace process

The Ramos administration created several new institutions to address peace processes with the country's various rebel groups.

National Unification Commission

Shortly after being elected President in 1992, Fidel Ramos set up the NUC as an advisory body to formulate a general amnesty programme and outline a peace process, on the basis of consultations with various sectors of society. From October 1992 to July 1993, the NUC held public consultations at local regional and national level in 71 provinces. Discreet consultations also took place with rebel groups.

The NUC submitted its recommendations to the President in July 1993, acknowledging the profound poverty and inequality at the root of the country's conflicts. It defined 'six paths to

peace' which Ramos adopted as his declared strategy. The first was pursuit of social, economic and political reforms aimed at addressing the root causes of the armed struggle and social unrest. The second path was consensus building and empowerment for peace through continuous consultations at national and local levels. The third path was peace negotiations with rebel groups. The fourth was implementation of measures for reconciliation, reintegration into mainstream society and rehabilitation of former rebels, demobilised combatants, and civilian victims of armed conflict. The fifth path was conflict management and protection of civilians caught in armed conflict. The sixth aimed to build, nurture and enhance a positive climate for peace.

Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process

OPAPP, created in September 1993, is the lead government agency supervising the comprehensive peace process with all rebel groups. OPAPP co-ordinates government bodies specifically created to implement peace programmes, including the National Program for Unification and Development Council, the National Amnesty Commission and the Government Peace Negotiating Panels for the three main sets of rebel groups (NDF, military rebels and Moros). It has also provided staff support for the joint government and private sector Mindanao Initiative for Peace and Development.

The current head of OPAPP is Ambassador Manuel Yan, a former General who led the government negotiating team in talks with the MNLF under the Ramos administration.

National Program for Unification and Development Council

The NPUDC was established in January 1994 to provide programmes for reconciliation, rehabilitation and reintegration of former rebels, demobilised combatants and civilian victims of internal conflicts. It also provides funds to peace zones designated by the government. As of 30 June 1996, a total of 24,290,750 pesos had been released to seven

peace zones. The NPUDC is co-ordinated by a council with representatives from the departments of Interior and Local Government, National Defence, and Social Welfare and Development, as well as OPAPP.

National Amnesty Commission

The NAC is an entity under the Office of the President. It is responsible for receiving and processing applications for amnesty from insurgents, and from AFP or police personnel accused or convicted of certain crimes in connection with counter-insurgency operations. The NAC is also responsible for creating Local Amnesty Boards. The boards check that applications come from *bona fide* rebels who have not committed crimes which would exclude them from amnesty — 'crimes against chastity' (mainly rape) and common crimes committed for personal gain. Amnesty provisions exclude AFP or police personnel accused or convicted of human rights violations such as torture, arson, massacre, rape, and other acts committed for personal ends.

Philippine Congress

The Philippine Congress is composed of a 24-member Senate and a House of Representatives. It is dominated by wealthy and powerful political families whose political parties are largely coalitions of electoral convenience.

The Congress has two vital roles in implementation of the Peace Agreement: the Senate must ratify any agreement before it can go into effect; and Congress must approve the budget for any new government institutions established under the agreement. Dissent from both houses of Congress has complicated the finalisation of the Peace Agreement and its implementation.

Senate

Senators are elected on a national basis. When the terms of the 1996 Peace Agreement were announced, there were strong objections from the Philippine Senate.

Senate President Neptali Gonzales warned the executive that it could not ignore the Senate's opposition to SPCPD, because it would depend on Congress for funds. He also said the Senate would refuse to act on proposals to expand the ARMM to 14 provinces.

The protest from the Senate forced several amendments to the Peace Agreement, but even this was not enough for some. A self-styled 'Conscience Bloc' of six Senators voted against ratification of the agreement.

House of Representatives

Most of the 250 Representatives are elected in single-member constituencies, but 20% are elected through a 'party-list' proportional representation system.

This 'party list' system was intended to provide disadvantaged sections of the population with access to the House of Representatives, and to encourage the development of political parties based on programmes rather than personalities. First used in the May 1998 elections, it proved difficult to implement and ten months later, only 13 party list representatives had actually taken their seats.

Congress includes both supporters and opponents of the 1996 Peace Agreement.

Eduardo Ermita

A former Deputy Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces and Under-secretary for Defence who spent most of his military career in Mindanao, Ermita was Vice Chair of the Philippine government panel negotiating with the MNLF in Libya in 1976. He was in charge of drafting a government proposal to amend the law on the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao in accordance with the 1996 Peace Agreement.

Daisy Avance-Fuentes

A lawyer from Koronadal who has risen from relative obscurity since 1992 to become one of the most powerful Mindanao politicians. She is now Deputy Speaker for Mindanao in the House of Representatives.

Maria Clara Lorenzo Lobregat

As a Congressional Representative in August 1996, Lobregat called on government officials to fly the flag at half mast for the 'death of democracy' when the Peace Agreement was signed. Lobregat's father was a pioneer of Zamboanga City, who made the Lorenzo family one of the wealthiest and most prominent in the country. Barred from running for a fourth consecutive congressional term, she chose instead to run (successfully) as mayor of Zamboanga City. Her son Celso has taken over her congressional seat.

Muslim politicians

As in the rest of the Philippines, wealthy political families tend to dominate electoral politics in Muslim areas. Many of them trace their ancestry to the pre-colonial aristocratic class of sultans and *datu*s.

Abul Khayr Alonto

A founding member of the MNLF, Alonto was a member of its Central Committee until 1978, when he surrendered to the government. He then acquired a post in one of the regional autonomous governments established under President Marcos. His family is among the traditional Maranao elite and he remains one of the most powerful political leaders in Lanao del Sur.

Zacaria Candao

Governor of Maguindanao in 1976 who resigned to join the MNLF Negotiating Panel in Tripoli as Legal Counsel. He became a close ally of Jose Cojuangco, the powerful brother of Corazon Aquino. He eventually became the first ARMM Governor in 1989, but lost to Liningding Pangandaman in 1993. He became governor of Maguindanao again in 1995 and 1998, and is the most important politician associated with the MILF.

Simeon Datumanong

A Maguindanaon traditional leader, Simeon Datumanong was one of the panel of Muslim leaders appointed by Ferdinand Marcos to conduct dialogues with rebel leaders in the

field in 1975. In the following year, he joined the Philippine government panel negotiating with the MNLF in Libya. Marcos later appointed him to the provisional government of the autonomous region in Central Mindanao, and in 1985 placed him at the head of the Ministry of Muslim Affairs. He was replaced under Aquino. He is currently Congressional Representative for Maguindanao.

Nur Jaafar

The Representative for Tawi-Tawi is known to be a close and trusted friend of top MNLF leaders. He served as adviser to the Philippine government panel in talks with the MNLF that led to the 1996 Peace Agreement.

Mahid Mutilan

One of the leaders of the Philippine Students Union in Cairo in the 1960s, together with MILF leader Hashim. He became president of the Ulama League of the Philippines, and in 1992 established the Ompia (Reform) Party, which aimed to end corruption and reform Maranaw politics. He became Lanao del Sur Governor in 1995, and was re-elected in 1998.

Liningding Pangandaman

Diplomat who figured prominently in Marcos initiatives to win over the Muslim world in the 1970s. He eventually became ambassador to Saudi Arabia. In 1994, with support from the Ramos party Lakas-NUCD, he became ARMM Governor.

Santanina Rasul

A former Senator and graduate of the National Defence College of the Philippines, Rasul was a member of the Ramos government's negotiating panel in talks with the MNLF.

Abdulgani 'Gerry' Salapuddin

A former MNLF member who went into civilian politics after the overthrow of Marcos, Salapuddin was the first provincial governor of Basilan to come from the island's ethnic Yakan majority. Having served three terms as governor, he is now Basilan's congressional representative.

Sakur Tan

Local Governor of Sulu, allied to the Ramos party Lakas-NUCD. He is the older brother of former ARMM Vice-Governor Nabil Tan and nephew of Jolo's former Mayor, Suod Tan.

Islamic states and international institutions

Twentieth-century communication between Muslims in the Philippines and Middle Eastern states goes back at least as far as the 1950s, when these states funded young Filipino Muslims to study at centres of Islamic learning. Some Middle Eastern Islamic organisations also sent missionaries to the Philippines. Since the mid-1970s, many Filipinos (not only Muslim) have gone to the wealthier Islamic oil-producing countries as contract workers particularly in construction, health and domestic services.

The Organisation of Islamic Conference

The OIC is an organisation of Islamic states that functions on several levels. The highest body is the summit of leaders (heads of state and government). After that comes the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM), which meets more frequently. The OIC has a permanent secretariat based in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Although founded primarily on principles of Islamic unity and the tradition of the *ummah* – the one Islamic community – the OIC is politically diverse and often appears fragmented. It includes national leaders with diametrically opposed ideological orientations and national interests. Divisions within the Muslim world have greatly undercut its power on the world stage. The Arab-Israeli conflict is the central preoccupation of the OIC, but is not its only concern.

The OIC's general objectives are: to promote Islamic solidarity among member states; to consolidate economic, social, cultural and other forms of cooperation; to enable mutual consultation; to eliminate social segregation and discrimination, and eradicate colonialism in all its forms; to take the measures necessary

to support international peace and security founded on justice; to consolidate efforts to safeguard holy places, to support the people of Palestine and help them to regain their rights and dignity, independence and national rights, and to create a suitable atmosphere for promoting cooperation and understanding among member states and other countries.

The OIC first expressed concern for the Muslims in the Philippines in 1972. In the following year, it created a Quadripartite Ministerial Commission to investigate the plight of Muslims in the Southern Philippines. The Commission, composed of Libya, Saudi Arabia, Somalia and Senegal, reported to the ICFM, and its role developed from one of investigation to one of mediation. It later became a Ministerial Committee of the Six. The two new members were Bangladesh and Indonesia. Also in 1973, the OIC created the Filipino Muslims Welfare and Relief Agency to extend aid directly to Muslims in the Philippines. The agency is financed and controlled by the Islamic Solidarity Funds an OIC subsidiary organ based in Jeddah.

In 1975, OIC finance ministers established the Islamic Development Bank to encourage 'economic and social progress' of member states and Islamic communities. The Bank provides interest-free loans to the poorest member states, encourages investments and joint ventures, and gives emergency aid and assistance for Islamic education.

The bank is not very well funded. The wealthier Islamic states prefer to distribute aid bilaterally, on terms conducive to their national interest. In December 1998, the Bank organised an investment seminar in the Southern Philippines Zone of Peace and Development, with a view to encouraging investment in the region from Islamic countries.

Libya

Libya has been the main external supporter of the MNLF over the years. The bulk of MNLF funds came from Libya, and many MNLF fighters were trained there.

Gaddafi was keen to export his version of Islamic revivalism. A Libyan payroll tax supports a *Jihad* fund, which distributes money to militant anti-Israeli Muslim groups, as well as Muslims in the Philippines and Ethiopia.

In 1971, shortly after the Manili massacre, Saleh Bouyasser, the Libyan Minister for Information and Foreign Affairs, visited the Philippines and met Muslim leaders. He recommended to his government that it should help the Moro people.

In 1972, MNLF Chair Misuari went to Libya together with his deputy, Hashim Salamat. They persuaded Libyan officials to give aid for the Moro movement directly to the MNLF, rather than to Muslim traditional politicians. Libya's new, revolutionary government preferred young, energetic leaders like Misuari to the older traditional elite, who also had something of a reputation for dishonesty.

Libyan support helped the MNLF to establish a regional network in Mindanao very quickly. The MNLF central committee was based in Libya from 1974.

Libya helped Philippine Muslim leaders present their case to the OIC and became chair of the OIC Quadripartite Ministerial Commission (also including Saudi Arabia, Senegal and Somalia) on the situation of Muslims in the Philippines. Libya continued as chair for 20 years until Indonesia took over in 1993. Libya also sponsored the negotiations leading to the 1976 Tripoli Agreement, which became the main basis for subsequent negotiations.

Although Libya was the main foreign supporter of the MNLF, the Philippine government developed bilateral relations of mutual benefit to both countries. Libyan interest in the Philippines was not only economic (labour force needs and trade) but also political (against international isolation and US sanctions).

Indonesia

Although Indonesia does not consider itself an Islamic state, it is a member of the OIC. It is a neighbour of the Philippines and a fellow member of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Indonesia is also a partner in the East ASEAN Growth Area (EAGA) that includes parts of Brunei, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

The north of the Indonesian island of Sulawesi has had historic cross-border links of trade, residency and kinship with Muslim Mindanao.

Multi-ethnic Indonesia has always hesitated to support secessionist movements. In the words of Ambassador Wiryono, who facilitated negotiations between the Philippine government and the MNLF in the 1990s, 'We have our own fear of letting go... We don't want to be seen as adopting the right to secede... We have many islands and ethnic groups'.

Initially, Indonesia, like Malaysia, supported the Philippine government's position against the MNLF position in OIC forums. At the ICFM in Kuala Lumpur in 1974, Indonesia and Malaysia pushed for the 'framework of the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Philippines' to balance the call for the Philippine government to negotiate with the MNLF.

At the 6th Islamic Summit in Dakar in 1991, Indonesia and Bangladesh joined the OIC's Ministerial Committee of the Six (formerly the Quadripartite Commission) working on the dispute between the Philippine government and the MNLF. It became chair of that committee in 1993.

Jakarta hosted the talks between the Philippine government and the MNLF that led to the 1996 Peace Agreement. Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas presided over the consultation meeting called by the OIC's Ministerial Committee of the Six in June 1996 to try to achieve consensus between the Philippine government and the MNLF on the proposed SPCPD.

Malaysia

Like Indonesia, Malaysia is a neighbour of the Philippines and a fellow member of ASEAN. The Malaysian state of Sabah (in North Borneo), 1,000 miles from peninsular Malaysia, is ethnically, historically and geographically linked to Sulu. In the late 1960s, the Philippine government laid claim to Sabah as part of Philippine territory.

When the war in Mindanao began in the 1970s, Sabah's Chief Minister was Tun Mustapha, an ethnic Tausug whose family came from Sulu. He gave aid and logistical support to the MNLF. The Malaysian government, irritated by reports of a Marcos government plan to invade Sabah, turned a blind eye, although it remained wary of Tun Mustapha's political ambitions.

Throughout the war, most of the aid sent to the MNLF from the Middle East was smuggled through Sabah, and the biggest MNLF military base was there.

But although it allowed this state of affairs, publicly and within the OIC, the Malaysian government always supported the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Philippines. ■