Ethnicity and Nation Building in Southeast Asia: A Case Study of Rohingyas of Burma, Pattani Muslims in Thailand and Moros in The Philippines

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "Ethnicity and Nation Building in Southeast Asia: A Case Study of Rohingyas of Burma, Pattani Muslims in Thailand and Moros in the Philippine", being submitted by AMALENDU MISRA, in partial fulfilment of requirement for the award of the Degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (M.Phil.) of this University, is a record of the student's original work, carried out by him under my supervision and guidance.

It is hereby certified that this work has not been presented for the award of any degree or diploma of this University or of any other University.

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C O N T E N T S

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

New Delhi
19 July 1994

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANLP	Arakan National Liberation party
BMA	Bangsa Moro Army
BSPP	Burma Socialist Programme party
CPB	Communist party of Burma
GAMPAR	Gabungan Melayu pattani Raja (Association of Malays of Greater pattani)
ICRC	International committee for the Red Cross
MIM	Muslim Independence Movement
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
NLD	National League for Democracy
OIC	Organisation of Islamic conference
PLO	palestine Liberation Organization
PMIP	pan Malayan Islamic party
PULA	pattani United Liberation Army
SLORC	state Law and Order Restoration Council
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Childrens Emergency Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

Introduction:

(i)   Colonialism, Ethnicity and Nation
        Building

(ii)   Ethnicity, Economic Development and
        Nation Building

(iii)   Ethnicity, Religion and Nation
        Building

COLONIALISM, ETHNICITY AND NATION BUILDING

If the concept of nation is seen as of European origin, its residue, nation-building can be called as a Third World post-colonial development, a phenomenon that has started haunting all the multi-ethnic states with much more propensity in the post-cold war era than ever. By branding it as an ofshoot of European colonization one goes back to that turbulent 50s and 60s of the present century when there was an universal clamour in parts of Asia, Africa and Latin American for gaining independence from European domination and 'white man's burden.' In a concerted effort people living under various colonial governments did manage to achieve their coveted goal and were enthusiastic in adopting the European model of 'nation state.' But, this new birth of Afro-Asiatic and Latin American model of 'nation state' lacked several basic components-a must for any nation to take shape, grow and withstand the challenges inherent in the creation of nation-states.

Revolution was the amalgam for uniting the independent spirit in the colonized territories. It worked as an umbrella, and simultaneously as a bond between the hitherto divided races. It (the revolution) assumed the role of an immensely powerful leveller of differences. As a result people started to transcend their narrow, parochial objectives while sacrificing for a greater goal-to end oppression. They encountered in their interaction with the colonialists to take charge of their own government inorder to uplift the quality of life for all who participated in the revolution.

In many cases revolution was openly supported and was given an intellectual base for popular participation.[1]

However in most of the cases that temporary euphoria gave way to new differences once the colonizers left the colonies. Inspite of their brutality the imperialists were successful in giving only one positive touch to their colonies, i.e., the internal administrative structure, where people belonging to various faiths, customs, and tribes were treated equally and the mapping of the political boundary encompassed all these heteregenous characters.

With the severance of colonial yoke emerged a new group of nations, which, though were distinctly different from their European counterparts in matters of homogenous ethnic composition, they could tread towards a new era under the charismatic leadership of independence war heroes, who were convinced that the only alternative to the nations' progress is the sacrifice of their own narrow personal and parochial interests. Even though challenges to their governance and authority had existed, neverthless they were successful in keeping these forces at bay. Demise of this batch of leaders and the coming up of new leadership, often through violence brought seeds of discontent. With that also emerged a nationalist ideological vacuum after the passing of the first group of 'war heroes.'

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1.   A typical Third World view of this period comes from Adolfo Gilly, who in his introduction to Frantz Fanon's _A Dying Colonialism_ (New York, 1967) writes: "Liberation does not come as a gift from anybody; it is seized by the mases with their own hands. And by seizing it hey themselves are transformed; confidence in their own strength soars and they turn their energy and their experience to the task of building, governing and deciding their own lives for themselves."

In Africa the new leadership identified itself with a particular ethno-religious group. In parts of Asia and Latin America where dictatorship and authoritarianism replaced the populist governments of the post-colonial era, the opposition to the state grew notbecause the jun a or military backed any particular ethnic group, but mostly because it was anti-democratic. When the minority groups joined in this protest, the myopic military felt it could win back the favour and faith of the majority if it concentrates its strength against the former. At times the strategy worked. But in most cases it backfired. As it is the case of Burma, where the junta is fighting many a battle with its own dozen odd ethnic minority groups.

Apart from the unfortunate developments in the Balkans' it can be argued that Europe's experimentation with nation-building was largely successful. From Roman times to the present the division of the continent on the basis of a particular race, language and culture has worked smoothly. In Asia, Africa and Latin America however the division on the fault lines of tribe, religion and ideology which crisscrossed the region has become the main negative force in the masses' march towards nationhood.

It is not as if the ethnic conflicts did not exist in the countries of Asia and Africa, but the growing emphasis (or attention given to the Third World minorities) which the ethnic groups all over the world have been getting can be seen as a post-cold war development. It is as if the war pre-occupied world has suddenly found long neglected enclaves which cries for some degree of concern. Minorities of all kin s - cultural, religious, linguistic,

ethnic and racial - are ubiquitous in today's world. Almost all states have one or more minority groups within their national territories, and minorities frequently live on different sides of state borders. Consequently the treatment of minorities presents a moral and political problem with both domestic and international ramification.[2]

While analyzing the domestic and international dimensions of ethnic minorities political behaviour and reactions inside the state and outside it can supposedly be said that the western world being the pall bearer of human rights and while practizing the concept of welfare state, has tackled the problem effectively and has been able to safely put it aside, whereas in the impoverished, underdeveloped South, it has attained an unbelievable proportion. And it has raised its head as a 'force' obstructing the smooth operation of state activities. Term it resurgent tribalism, intensified sectarianism or ethno confessionalism, in the present global politics minority related problems has become the most conspicuous phenomenon.

ETHNICITY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND NATION BUILDING

Economics again occupies a prominent place in promoting this trend. There can be no doubt about the serious consequences of ethnic conflict in case there is the absence of economic development.[3] The unending debate in the developing world on the allocation of

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2. Georgina Ashworth, ed., World Minorities in the Eighties (Sunbury, 1980), P.7.

3. Bjorn Hettne, "Ethnicity andd development an elusive relationship," Contemporary South Asia, (London), vol.2. n.2 (1993), P. 123

resources between the centre and the periphery in the 60s and 70s did succeed to some extent in quelling the dissent arising out of centre's economic negligence. Latin American policy-makers and European advisers in various African capitals neverthless were successful in addressing to this growing menace. Later these countries were pushed into the new configuration of 'weak state and dependency trap' which completely upset the internal economic structure and thus the state was unable to perform the required duty which upset the situation again. Ethnicity which only drew passing remarks in the theories of development and underdevelopment made fast inroads into it in the 80s, often outplacing the arguments put forward by traditionalists who spoke of a counter revolution in developing economies in case emphasis is put on ethnicity.

Dependency theorists and neo-Marxists too in their emphasis on external factors in a country's development and underdevelopment ignored the crucial ethnic factor in determining the development of a particular period, phase or area. In dependency economies the form of utilization of surplus production and the social position of the group appropriating it were basic elements of the social process which engendered development.[4] In other words a systematic slavery by the dominant powerful group that appropriates all the fruits of progress/development sowed the first seeds of dissent and motivated the minority to raise the fists against the state. More appropriately it can be said that ethnic conflicts in developing economies was "activated in the centre-periphery exploitative

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4. Celso Furtado, Development and Underdevelopment (Berkeley, 1964), p. 86

relations, for instance in situations of internal colonialism," [5]
as we would see in the chapter dealing with the moros of the phi-
lippines, who were motivated to fight against the state, while
calling Manila's authority over them as *internal colonialism."

The recent Indian (Mayan) uprising in Mexico against the cent-
ral authority-which is predominantly and traditionally dominated
by spanish speaking creoles and Mestizoes-though had an ethnic bias
the absence of equitable distribution of developmental funds as
the main reason behind the rebellion can hardly be ignored. In a
nation in which land rights of Indian peasants are nominally, pro-
tected by law, an uprising was far from normal.[6] The role of econo-
my as a main cause behind the ethnic conflicts in a multi-national
and multi-ethnic state has been proved since long. Neglected spati-
al developments in certain areas of these countries often pose
threats to the process of nation-building and national integration,
In these structural problems, in the subsequent phase it has been
found the economy related problems alligning with many lower, ne-
gligible and avoidable issues get the 'economic rationality' argu-
ment by the ethnic groups.

In the southeast Asian context these development-related is-
sues were the main irritants or say catalyst in projecting the di-
ssent of the numerically minority populace against the government.
Karens, Shans and Rohingya's attack against the military authority
since its (Burma's) days of independence, Acceh's repeated call to

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5. Hettne, n. 3, p.4.

6. The sunday times (london), 9 january 1994.

defy the Javanese supremacy in archipelagic Indonesian administration and the Mindanao Muslims continued suspectible attitude, first toward the authoritarian Marcos régime and subsequently to the new democratic set up established since Corazon Aquino's time are only a few such examples.

Before discussing the other important issues and concerns which has found new pastures in divided societies it becomes pertinent to understand who are the ethnic minorities and how do they identify themselves with a counter-culture within the confines of a not-so-homogenous nation.

While looking for the possible international genesis of the term "ethnic-minority" one has to concentrate on the first quqrter of this century when the League of Nations started giving its own interpretation and connotations on ethnicity, as conflicts between nations on race related grounds were becoming very common. However the mostcandid observation on the ethnic minorities in a broad socio-economic and political spectrum was given by Louis Wirth. According to him, a minority "is a group of people who, by virtue of their physical or cultural characteristics, are distinct from from other people in the society in which they live because of different and unequal treatment and who, therefore, consider themselves to be the subject of collective discrimination. Having minority status means being prevented from fully participating in the life of the society."

Perhaps, the most significant part of the above definition is "collective discriminatio." which not only has a cultural pre-

judical tinge but has been conveniently used by the minorities as an upper line of defence in the matters of politics and political rights. In the underdeveloped and developing south these non-dominant groups of a population which had and wished to preserve ethnic, religious or linguistic traditions or characteristics which were distinctly different from those of the rest of the population have resorted to armed uprising, feeling neglected and seeing the antipathy of the state in preserving their language, religion and culture. In such a situation, ethnic-links that cut across state boundaries serve as channels for outside participation in the conflict. The Bangladeshi outcry over the unfair treatment of Arakanese Muslims by Burmese junta and the OIC (Organisation of Islamic Conference) condemnation of the matter (as the victims were Muslims) proves the above parallel. In the recent past Vietnamese troops marched into Cambodia under a similar pretext (to protect the ethnic Vietnamese).

From a political standpoint, a minority to exist in reality its members should have characteristics which both unites them with each other and differentiate them from the rest of the national society, so that they form a distinct community of their own.[7] In politically advanced societies, where the economic opportunities are available equally to all (atleast above the minimum standard) the citizens of the state (irrespective of their cultural, religious and racial background) abhor this sense of a "distinct community" and absorb themselves in the national mainstream. As is the

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7. Lorenza Squarci, "What are minorities? some possible criteria," The courier, (Paris), No. 140 (July-August 1993), p.50.

case in the United States, where all the ethnically divided mass
are involved in the nation building process after losing themselves
in the proverbial melting pot.

In the Third World while there has emerged that sense of be-
longingness according to the line of arguments given by Squarci, a
serious dearth of commitment by the communities considering them-
selves to be separate entities has come about in the overall nation-
al development agenda. In multi-ethnic states assimilation works
as an antidote or as a positive obstructionist force to forge a
new identity. Where minorities are coawed into peaceful cohabition
with the majority, in a new devised plain of cultural pluralism.

The expansion of the state intervention in the peripheral
regions instead of bringing about mases into the mainstream has
also alienated a certain group of people who resent the state in-
tervention on various accounts. States' failure to provide an
'identity' to the minorities also (as we would examine in the case
of Arakanese, Patani and Moro Muslims) generated a feeling of alie-
nation resulting in separatism.

The disruption of nation-building process in Southeast Asia
is generally based on these three main rubrics:

(i) A distorted and mutiliated historical
     past. During which the colonizers some-
     times accidentaly, but in most of the
     cases deliberately created rift between
     various ethnic groups.

(ii) Issues relating to the absence of equi-
     table distribution of wealth.

(iii) Lastly, the friction between the
dominant state religion vs. the
minorities unprotected religion.

Indonesia during Sukarno era and at present under Suharto
has been trying hard to give basis to their version of 'unity in
diversity' but it has not been an overwhelming success due to the
lack of tolerance and catholicity of the state towards other ethni-
cally different Irianese or Timorese who are living a condemned
life inside the federation. If the revolutionaries of <u>Aceh Mer-
deka</u> (Free Aceh) in Aceh and Fretilin (<u>Frenté Revolucionao Timor-
ese de Libertaçao e Independéncia</u> / Revolutionary Front for an
independent East Timor) have been successful in drawing the world
attention and outcry against certain policies of Jakarta then the
Suharto government can make none responsible for this except its
own faulty decision-making of migrating Javanese into Irian Jaya
as part of its policy of transmigration has been responsible in
arousing suspicion and hostility from the local population. It is
the lack of coherence in policy making and allocation of economic
recourses to its constitutent regions that has helped this tendency
to grow.

An exact antithesis to this is the case of Singapore. This
cosmopolitan city-state having a plethora of people with separate
cultural, religious and racial identities, has become a success
story in the whole of Southeast Asia. The secrecy of this nation
state on national integration, as its first prime Minister Lee Kuan
Yew had once remarked is; "the absence of prejudice."

However, when it came to the actual implementation, very few

governments in Southeast Asia borrowed this adage of Lee Kuan Yew in their internal administration. First, because authoritarianism temporarily choked the voice of ethnic dissent. Secondly, building a welfarist democracy like Singapore demanded enormous resource which other states in the region did not posses (though the situation is rapidly changing). So, the question of nation-building with the effective cooperation of all the ethnic minorities was always pushed into the background in the hope of a gradual and automatic absorption. But it did not work that way and rocked the foundations of both state and nation in many countries of the region.

Divisive ethnic aspiration was always there in Burmese politics . In Indonesia it is alive and kicking and in the Philippines it has completely surrounded the government like an octopus.

For multi-ethnic states maintaining the unity has become a daunting task following the UN declaration of 1993 as the year of the Indigenous People. With that has come a series of new legal connotations that clearly challenges the very concept of nation on which the present states in Third World countries are based. Now that it is clear that people have the right to self-determination,more and more people and groups are putting up peaceful or violent opposition to the unitary approach of the nation-states to which they are subjected. [8]

Critics like Ali Mazrui see this new resurgence among ethni-

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8. Christian Guyonvarch, "The basis of prejudice," The Courier (Paris), No. 140 (July-August 1993), p. 52.

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cally and culturally distinct groups a "demonstration effect." [9]

The validity of this remark is ascertained if one is analyzing the problems of national reconciliation in Southeast Asia. Disgrunted ethnic groups in Burma, Thailand and the Philippines of late have been stimulated to think of self determination for their people after observing the Eritrean situation in Africa, Czech-Slovak separation in erstwhile Czechoslovakia and of course, the crisis in the Balkans which is primarily being fought to map out new and separate territories for people prophesing various faiths and belonging to different races. Ethnicity is thus seen as a consequence of change in the social, economic and political arenas. [10]

Another point which needs further elabo ation is even though ethnic minorities as an anti-state force have started clamouring for separate identity, national independence might not be the prime goal for all. For instance, all the twelve ethnic minorities inside Burma, fighting against the military régime should not be clubed together as groups aiming for complete autonomy. There exists a vast gap between the political goals of Karens and Mons. While the Mons have raised their voice for political autonomy and some economic concession in a limited way the Karens have outrightly gone for complete separation from Burma. Ethnic groups in many cases do not claim the right of national self-determination with goals of autonomy or separate statehood. [11]

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9.   For details please see Ali Mazrui, Cultural Forces in World Politics (London, 1991), Ch.(Part) III PP. 193 - 256.

10.   David Brown, The State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia (London, 1994), P. xvii

11.   Astri Shurke & Lela Garner Noble, Ethnic Conflict in International Relations (New York, 1974), P.4.

In ethnically divided states it is national integration which is seen as a precondition for nation-building. In such a situation, a common language, a set pattern of norms and values, a generally accepted religion become prime factors in forging and promoting the said unity. In countries like Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines, the national integration in language could be established by adopting new national language with the help of Roman alphabets. But when the question of a common religion or race surfaced, complexities began to arrise.[12]

The terrible race riots in Malaysia in 1969, the Muslim Moros defiance of Christian authorities in Manila in the Philippines, and the more recent attack on the Vietnamese minority in Cambodia (around Tonle Sap lake) belie the effectiveness of a common language as the gurantor of national unity, and has projected race and relition to be the newest enemies towards a nations march towards forging an unitary bond. Even countries like Indonesia who were trying to capsize the ethnic nationalist mood, by outnumbering certain ethnic minorities living in different enclaves have found that to be not so successful a method. To cite the example of Jakarta's transmigration programme, four million people from Java were scheduled to move into Irian Jaya, and one million Irianese would have become a minority in their own land (country), and their

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12. One finds a similar argument in Paul R. Brass, ed., Ethnic Groups and the State (Bekenham Croom Helm, 1985) p. 9.

tribal customs could have been flooded and supressed.[13] This transmigration programme of Suharto which was intended to solve the twin problem of population pressure from Java, and secondly, to quell any kind of secessionist movement in Melanesian-populated Irian Jaya could not be materialized more due to natural reasons than political setbacks. The Suharto government was intensely criticized in private by the Javanese settlers, who could not with-stand the epidemic-infested climate of Irian Jaya, and half of the settlers died in diseases like malaria, diarhoea etc. Thus fearing the erosion of the support base of the Javanese the government abandoned it.

In Southeast Asia atleast, the racial map is not complex as it is the cass with Africa. The largest ethnic slement in today's Southeast Asia is the brown-skinned Malay inhabiting Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines.[14] And in the mainland Southeast Asia it is the Tibeto-Burman Mongoloid stock that has dominated the ethnic composition. Admittedly this unique homogenity in racial plain should have been an asset in the national and regional reco-nstruction. Yet, violence and turmoil have made the region's poli-tics frustrating and even mystifying to try to comprehend.[15] Instead of a particular majority ethnic group clamouring for so-vereignty and autonomy it is the sub-ethnic groups who have been

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13. George Monbiot, Poisoned Arrows: An investigation in the Last Place in the Tropics (London, 1989), p. 242.

14. D.R. Sardesai, Southeast Asia: Past and Present (New Delhi, 1981), p. 9.

15. John T. McAlister Jr, ed., Southeast Asia: The politics of National Integration (New York, 1973), p.3.

giving tough resistance to the penetration of the states influence
in their region. Burma is one such place where assimilation pro-
cess has suffered a setback with more than ten sub-ethnic groups
demanding separate sovereignty.

So, even if a balance or reconciliation between divided ethnic
groups is brought about through the concept of "shared sovereignty",
as it has been Malaysia, where Indians, Chinese and Malays are
living in the true spirit of coexistence we still are left with
another crucial factor, religion which always tries to upset that
balance. As a force this has been used in nation-making and nation-
breaking process throughout the world. This crucial factor is none
other than religion. Religion has come today to serve as a hand
maiden for nationalism and nationalist aspirations. [16]

ETHNICITY, RELIGION AND NATION BUILDING

The whole of Southeast Asia which did not have any indigenous
religion to call its own, accepted and conversed itself with the
waves of new religions coming in from the Indian sub-continent.
Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic ideas that came in succession, was
compatiable in Southeast Asian society. The feeling of oneness
never got eroded by religious hang-ups/prejudices. When there was
the question of national independence or national liberation from
colonial rule people belonging to various faiths unconditionally
vowed their allegiance to the freedom struggle. In the post-inde-
pendence period however, more emphasis was paid on religion
as a modernising and force of modernity and also as a cementing bond to

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16. Robert F. Spencer, ed., Religion and Change in Contemporary
    Asia (Minneapolis,1971),P.3.

diseminate the feeling of oneness among scattered populace. study-
ing the role of religion in the building of modern southeast Asian
nation state, Manning Nash writes:

> " Religion plays a peculiar and predominant
> role in the new nations of southeast Asia.
> Fairly uncommon in their hopes for the de-
> velopment of their societies, these nations
> all strive to build modern states and economies
> to provide wide-spread education and welfare
> services,and to develop and enrich a cultural
> heritage with a distinctive symbolic cast.
> In this drive for modernization and national
> consolidation religion comes to be the focus
> of the attempt to build a national identity
> and cultural viability. Religion symbols conde-
> nse the most pervasive of collective systems,
> for religion is the belief system felt to be the
> most indigenous and valuable-continuous with
> the pre-colonial past and something greater than
> the cultural possessions of the developed modern
> nations. In southeast Asia, then, religion
> is inextricably interwined with national identity,
> cultural creativity, and the craving for modern-
> in a distinctive Asian style." 17

It is not really possible to contradict the statement of Nash
when he says that it is religion that has propelled the course of
modernization, cultural creativity and more importantly as a fix-
ture for national unity, and the primary factor of unifacation or
cohesion. However, one can argue that, religion while uniting a
certain people has helped minority groups to associate and combat
against the majority following a religion different from theirs.
As a result, some of the ethnic conflicts in southeast Asia has
become inter-cultural, inter-religious, inter-racial, inter-lingui-
stic, following cleavages that are primarily associated with

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17. Ibid., P. 105

religion.

After the drawing up of the fresh political boundaries in post-colonial Southeast Asia, many nations thought that they can develop secular nationalism as a positive essence in the nation-building process..Things worked out accordingly for some countries, but for some again, like Burma, Thailand, and the Philippines it did not. In these countries the problem arose because there was not a homogenity in the country's religious base and the miniscule minority became a deconstructing force.

Living in separate enclaves-the Christian Karens and Muslim Arakanese in Burma, Malay-Muslims in southern Thailand, northern Christians in Vietnam and Muslim Moros in Mindanao in the Philippines-have time and again rejected the claims of the state over their territories. The call for separation and tendency to defy the state's authority have been articulated on the basis of their religion.

For sometime it was believed that Southeast Asia was free from any religious hiatus which had impinged the national security of many developing nations. The hostility toward the secular government in many cases were minimal and (except perhaps Christian Karens) none of the above mentioned groups were for complete independence or autonomy. But in the changed world political scenario in which religious nationalism has found a new basis to attack the state, all these groups have found a fresh ground to fight on. Thus religious nationalism has successfully defeated secular nationalism as the most dynamic and powerful "ideology of

order," in the world that is emerging after the end of the cold war.[18]

In their selective campaign against the state Karens since the British colonial times and the Arakanese, Patani and Moro Muslims in recent times have genuinely drawn world-wide support from theocratic Christian and Islamic governments. If they have any political slogan it is against the state in whose political boundaries they are living. Their intense lobbying have had serious effect on the foreign policy formulation of the region. If one tries to analyze the basis of these religious ethnic minorities claim to secession, the startling image which emerges out of this is: the traditional bases of religion appear to have been translated into the modern and post-modern concept of nationalism and this has formed the rationalé behind the claims on the formulation of separate entities on the basis of religion.

Another assumption in the Southeast Asian context is that it is the world religious movement which has given boost, atleast to the Islamic ethnic minorities in non-Islamic states, to remain engaged in a perpetual battle against the designs of nation-building and national integration in the states concerned. Governments' response to these religious upsurges in Burma, Thailand and the Philippines at the same time has been an attack on the basis of their own religious prejudice. Unable to control this ethno-religious fervour these governments have even sought the help of out-

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18. Francis Fukuyama, "Fundamentalism's Future," Journal of Democracy, vol.4, no.4, (October 1993), p.125.

side powers and forces. The failure to isolate and contain these domestic ethno-religious conflicts have helped the not so friendly outsiders who always look for opportunities to maintain a power balance. It is here that Astri Shurke and Lela Garner Noble's question, "How can an internal conflict be exploited to serve the interests of the outside party?"[19] becomes pertinent and will be discussed while analyzing the various case studies.

Though Thailand and Malaysia have a very cordial relationship it periodically gets upset on the Thai treatment of Patani Muslims. The Mindanao Moros case is even more complex. Everytime there is a scuffle between central government in Manila and the self-styled Muslim administrators in Mindanao, the later is obliged to seek a venue for (which invariably is a Muslim third party capital be it · Tripoli or Jakarta) discussion where it remains in a lower position.

This new renaissance or enthusiasm among the Muslim minorities in some Southeast Asian nations is a very recent development. It has gained momentum being backed by fundamentalist forces inside and outside. For, fundamentalists may have started as traditionalists but have been forced, by events or history or the world at large,into activism.[20]

Is this activism a major threat to the unity of the state ? Has the situation become that perplexed so as to think of the

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19. Shurke & Noble, n.11, p.3.

20. The Economist (London), 27 March 1993.

divison of state sovereignty in the aforementioned states ? How
serious is the Islamic uprising in Burma, Thailand and the phili-
ppines ? Is the armed separatist struggle as is carried on by Ka-
rens and Moros an attempt to establish a 'national self-image' of
their own ?

Is there any basis to the allegations put forth by the Muslim
minorities in Thailand and the philippines that they have been
always treated as second-class-citizens and if they have taken up
arms-while jeopardising national security and hindering the nation-
building process-it is partly to mitigate that mind set and elimi-
nate the indifference of the state ? Any kind of conflict is bound
to be bilateral. If the Islamists have resorted to insurgency it
must have been out of frustration at seeing that nobody is prepared
to listen to them and their grievances.

Then, is the state going to accept the claims of ethno-reli-
gious rebels, while trying to set some old historic wrongs ? Is a
federalist solution, the anathema for all these ills ? The possible
answer to all these can be found after analyzing the cases one by
one in an empirical way. Maybe we can devise an alternative to
prevent the nation state from further breaking down.

(i)   Burma's racial composition

(ii)   The Arakanese situation

(iii)   Burmese junta's anti-
        Muslim policies on
        national integration
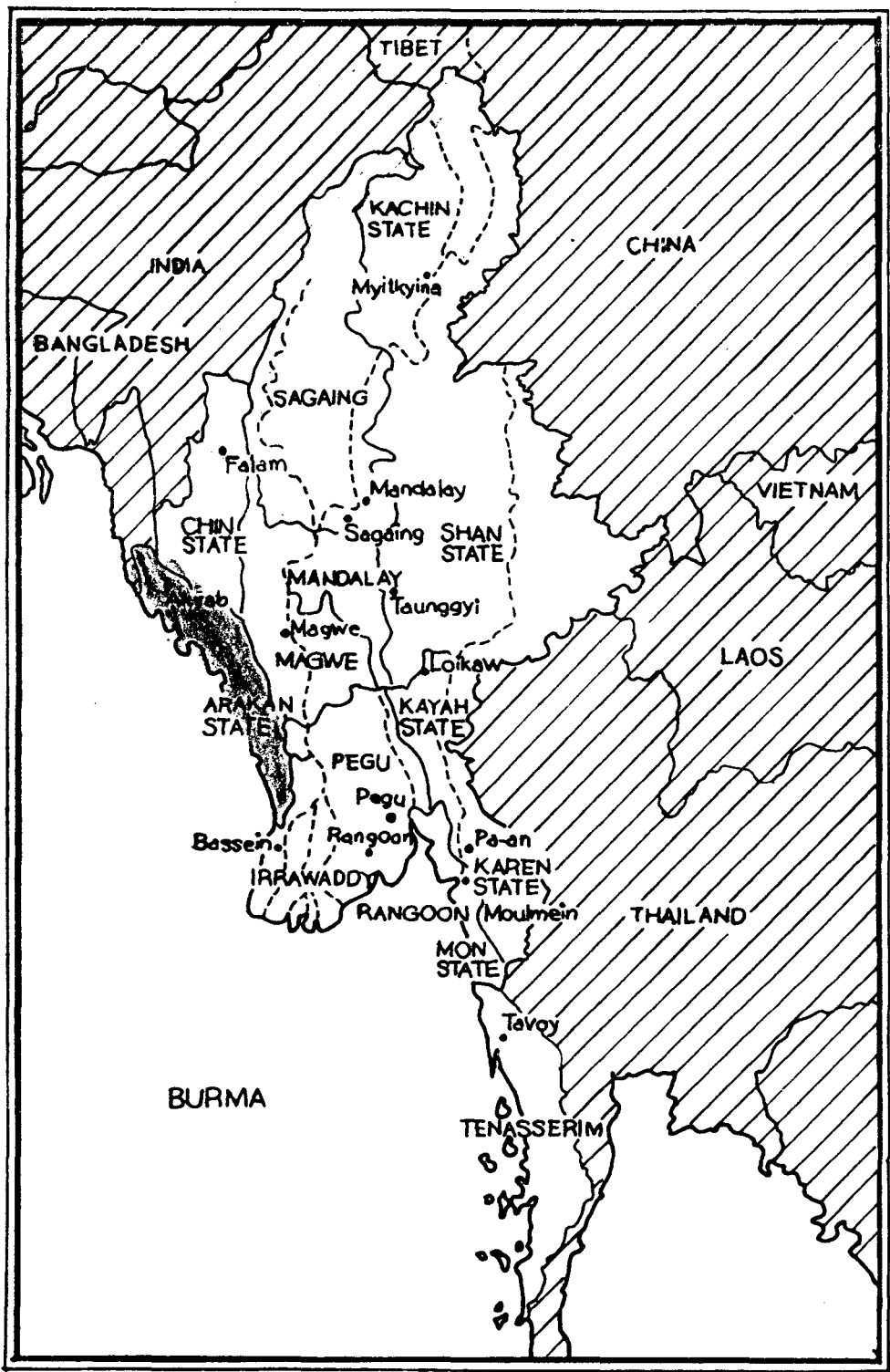
Fig.1. **Major Ethnic Groups of Burma**

Source: Martin Smith, State of Fear: Censorship in Burma.

BURMA'S RACIAL COMPOSITION

> Burma... is peopled by so many races...
> that truly we know not how many; nor who
> they are, nor whence they came. In no
> other area are the races so diverse, or
> the languages and dialectics so numerous...
>
> - C.M. Enriquéz, Races of Burma (1933)

With the onset of independence from the British rule in 1948 the Burmese adopted a constitution which in the official terminology called the new nation, the "Union of Burma," meaning that the nation is a federation of many peoples. The country which came to be named after the largest of the ethnic groups, Burmans (65 per cent of the total population) has about 70 different ethnic groups. The country is an uneasy federation. From the very beginning of its history till the present, there has always been a constant rivalry, infighting, ethnic rebellion by the scores of ethnic minorities who live in a phalanx-like geographical setting encircling the majority Burmans, who live in Burma proper, i.e., in the central regions of the country in the Irrawady and Chindwin river valley/delta.

Burma as a nation got populated by waves of migration that in different periods of its history started from Central Asia, Eastern India, Southern China etc. It is this periodic migration and the insistence of new ethnic groups to maintain its hegemony over the already settled 'ethnic groupings' which created ethnic rivalry and eventual war. In modern times the same old practice of establishing its hegemony by a majority ethnic group over other minorities has led to war, rebellion and ethnic insurgency

in the country.

The earliest of the ethnic groups to arrive in this kite-shaped country were the Mons, a minority kindred to Mon-Khmer family in language and appearance. Then around the time of Jesus Christ's birth another group belonging to the Tibeto-Burman language family called Pyu's arrived there. However the people who would dominate the whole of Burmese history from second century A.D. were the ethnic Burmans, an ethnic group of Tibeto-Burman race. They were probably pushed from their home in the North-West Chinese province of Kansu by ethnic Chinese in the second millenium B.C. to Eastern Tibet, whence they moved through Yunan to Burma over several centuries.[1]

First these new arrivals (Burmans) defeated the peace-loving Brahminical Pyus and then went on to subjugate the Mons under the leadership of King Anawartha, who established the first Burmese Empire in circa 1057 A.D. by attacking and conquering the Mon capital of Thaton. This, many analysts and historians say, sowed the first seeds of ethnic dissent which continued to haunt all the successive rulers, monarchs, democratic governments and the junta, who succeeded King Anawartha in different phases of Burmese history.

Burma's first contact with the Europeans started in the year 1519, when Antony Correa, a Portuguese General arrived in the port city of Martaban and signed a treaty with the town's viceroy, giving the Portuguese a part of trade rights. The Portuguese were

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1. D.R. Sardesai, Southeast Asia: Past and Present (New Delhi, 1981), P.35.

the first to spread the modern religious animosity among the different Burmese ethnic groups, a policy which in the following centuries was adopted by the British to keep a successful hold over a multi-ethnic society.

As was their policy in colonial India, the Britishers devised and implemented the notorious practice of 'divide and rule' in Burma to facilitate their exercise of power over the whole country. The British administration-after it came to full power from January 1, 1986, permitted autonomy to the country's many racial, religious and ethnic minorities as against the majority Burmans. Thus to maintain the status quo from the beginning of their rule the British had sought to protect the minorities from the dominant Burmans.[2]

In the British colonial administrative structure, the Karens and even Indians to some extend were accorded special treatment and were given reserved seats in the legislature to protect their interests. This deliberate discriminatory practice also found place in the British military in which only Karens, Kachins and Chins were recruited as members of British-Burma army under the Burmans. By 1930s the whole country was divided into various ethnic groups on the occupational lines. This separate identification made the several races of Burma conscious of their ethnic and cultural differences and kept the society divided.[3] As a result by

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2. Josef Silverstein, Burma: Military Rule and the Politics of Stagnation (Ithacca, 1977), p.15.

3. Ibid., p. 16.

the time the Britishers left the country in 1948, the native, indigenous government had to confront with several minorities who in no way were prepared to be in the Burmese Union or in the government dominated by the majority race, the Burmans.

The majority-minority confrontation also was a result of the nationalist struggle within the country. Throughout the British colonial period and the brief Japanese occupation, it was the majority of Burmans who were either fighting against the British or had aligned with the Japanese for Burma's ultimate independence. while the rest of the minorities stayed close to the British administration to counter or undermine the Burmese hegemony. Burmese struggle to severe the British colonial yoke was essentially led by the majority Burmans in which the other ethnic groups did not participate very much. The leaders of the nationalist struggle for independence against British were either Burmans or were identified with that group. It is highly significant that the issues of Buddhist and the Burmese language played a very important role in that movement for independence.[4]

The British who raised the hopes of the minorities during their rule in Burma did not pay sufficient attention towards their concern and aspirations when they negotiated the transfer of power to the Burmese leaders between 1945-47. On independence Burma became a country whose boundaries were a result of neither logic

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4. For details on the role of Buddhism and language on the nations politics please see;
John Cady, A History of Modern Burma (New York, 1974), Ch. 7. & Maung Maung, From Sangha to Laity: Nationalist Movement of Burma 1920-1940 (Canberra, 1981).

nor a single accepted tradition, but rather were determined by contradictory historical patterns of British colonial policy. Thus the weakness of Burma's quasi-independent neighbours (China and Thailand), and the traditional expansionist inclination of the Burman monarchs gave the country a political frontier in modern times, which it was unable to manage and control. The absence of coherence helped shape the nature of the ethnic rebellions that have been a principal feature of Burma since 1948.[5] Because the central authority in Rangoon was never at any time able to integrate the whole country and establish its authority over each ethnic groups.

The western notion or connotation of a nation state when applied to Burma, at times, sound like a misnomer. Keeping this in mind, as a requisite for successful administration over the total land area, each government of Burma since independence has attempted to create this sense of nationhood-a sharing of national values amongst all of its diverse people. Yet, these efforts to a large extent have been unsuccessful. Although the constitution terms the country as a "Union of Burma," meaning a Union of people in actuality it has remained far away from the spirit it demands.

It is the linguistic, ethnic, and religious variations, a direct offspring of the colonial administration, which hindered a national awakening, a sense of togetherness and national identity in Burma. Unlike the Philippines or Thailand where minority Muslims regularly rose against the central government over the

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5. Lim Joo-Jock & Vani S., ed., Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia (Singapore, 1984), P5.

centre-periphery distinction in economic developmental aspect, whereas in Burma insurgency was not so much a product of economic disparities.

Burma became a divided entity the day it gained independence. The preservation of the Union of Burma became the chief task of the government during the first decade of independence and there-after.[6] Some amount of consensus was brought about during this period among various leftist ethnic insurgents who were adherents of Buddhism. However during this period the two non-leftist oriented ethnic groups who raised the banner of ethnic rebellion were the Christian Karens living on the Thai frontier and the Muslims of Arakan on the border of Bangladesh.

Thus religion became the most potent argument of these two religion-charged minority groups as against the majority's Buddhism, the national religion of Burma. Though relatively small in number both Karens and Arakanese Muslims continue to pose threats to the Burmese nation. Where as the Karen insurrection is sometimes regarded as the oldest continuous rebellion in the world todya, the later emerged as an united dividing force only in the years preceding Burma's independence.

The dissent of these ethno-religious groups can also be regarded as a protest against the military rule. In the early years of independence the civilian Burmese government had promised them a degree of local autonomy (only to some minorities) and constitu-

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6. Frank N. Trager, Burma from Kingdom to Republic: A Historical and Political Analysis (Westport, 1966), P.119.

tional protection under the 1947 constitution on certain socio-
ethnic matters. However with the ascendance of the military all
these hopes had disappeared. And the religious minorities came to
feel that their religions have been placed in jeopardy by the
Buddhist-oriented military government. This perception which is
true to some extent as would be evident from the discussion below
has kept afloat the fighting spirit.

From 1962, the year, the junta came to power it is the majo-
rity Burmans who have suffered largely due to the BSPP's (Burma
Socialist programme party) "do it alone policy." In a way the re-
surgent ethnic minorities living in the outer fringes of the count-
ry have had a better standard of living than the Burmans, mostly,
by engaging in intra-border smuggling, poaching, logging and opium
cultivation.

THE ARAKANESE SITUATION:

> We, the working people, firmly resolved that
> we shall live forever in harmony, unity and
> racial equality, our sorrow through weal and
> woe in the socialist Republic of the Union
> of Burma.

> - The preamble of the consti-
> tution of the socialist
> Republic of Union of Burma, 1974.

Arakan, the eastern-coastal province of the country has a
peculiar geographical identity. With a total land area of 36,778
sq.km. along the Bay of Bengal, it includes several offshore is-
lands and it is also cut off from the rest of the country by the

heavily forested Arakan hills, which rise over 1,700m at places. perhaps it is this geographical isolation from the mainland which has given rise to a different religious-culture among the Arakanese, that is in several ways clash with the Buddhist Burman culture. As a result, any authority from outside Arakan which tried to impose its rule on the areas here has faced fierce opposition.

Arakan is the land where the Mongol and Aryan races, the Brahminist and Buddhist religions, had their closest encounters. Called Argyre, "the silver land" by ptolemy in the 2nd century A.D., its modern appellation came from the name given to it by the early inhabitants themselves - Rakhaingpyi. The Indian Aryans used the term Rakhiang in pre-Buddhist times, refering to Mongols and Dravidians "wild, uncivilised people." [7] This one time Indian view on Arakanese soon became a part of Burmese racial prejudice in future, so much so that it is a popular proverb among the Burmans that if you meet an Arakanese and a snake at the same time, you should kill the Arakanese first.

It was only during the later part of 18th centtry that Burmans first conquered these coastal races. But even then there have been murderous attacks by the Arakanese on the Burmans who till now have not been able to subjugate the former. The annexation of Arakan became a liability for Burma when it failed to main ain an effective authority over the region due to extreme isolation and poor infrastructural developmet. so, even while politically the area

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7. Wilhelm Klein, Burma (Hong Kong, 1981), P. 253.

remained a part of Burma, lack of effective communication between Arakanese and the Burmans helped the former to preserve a nationalistic consciousness, whose reflection can be found in the guerilla and insurgency movement that emerged from Arakan in the 20th century.

The majority of the Arakanese are devout Buddhists. But a large number of people in the capital city Akyab, and in the northern coast bordering Bangladesh are Muslims of Bengali descent. In mediaveal times, Bengal was a strong supporter of Arakan which when was incorporated into the shan kingdom of Ava for a short time in the 15th century, it was with Bengali assistance that it was able to break away. Since then, all of Arakan's kings, even though Buddhists by faith bore an Islamic title.[8] This happy cordial relationship in the succeeding centuries prompted many Bengali Muslims to settle in Arakan when the movement between India and Burma was not restricted.

The situation in Arakan took an explosive turn when the British left the country, and Rangoon tried to impose its direct rule on an almost-independent and separate area. As it was in the karen held areas, Rangoon's impatience to integrate various areas into the newly created nation, often without taking full account of the minorities living in those regions, complicated the situation.

During this period there existed more than one separatist groups in Arakan, who demanded the province's separation from the

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8. Ibid., P.82.

Union of Burma. The first of these groups was the Rakhine Nation-
alist Movement, a small pro-British parliamentary wing led by Sir
Paw Tun and U Kyaw Min and the other one was Arakan National Con-
gress led by U Aung Wai, an AFPFL Executive Committee member close
to Aung San, and lastly a militant nationalist faction led by U Se-
inde, which broke away from Arakan National Congress in November
1945 to form the Arakan People's Liberation Party or APLP. [9]

The brief Japanese occupation of Burma in mid-40s created a
lot of confusion in the country and Arakan slided into a hotbed of
underground activities due to the absence of an accepted authority.
The demands for Arakanese statehood became so violent and bloody
during these years that, eventually question were asked in the
British House of Commons about the state of "lawlessness" in Ara-
kan. [10] At about the same time while the Buddhist rakhins and other
Arakanese resurgent groups were fighting against Rangoon a new
separatist movement took birth whose basis or rather the call for
separation rested on religious differences with the majority
Buddhist Burmans.

Against a troubled and chaotic backdrop of the political si-
tuation in the late 1940s a fast-growing campaign was started by
the Arakanese Muslim activists who sought to establish a separate
Islamic "frontier state" in the Muslim-majority districts of North
Arakan and along the capital Akyab, where they were in a majority.

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9. Martin Smith, Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity
    (London, 1991), p. 80.

10. Ibid., p. 82.

The violence soon escalated all over Arakan towards December 1947. That month at Dubbro-Chaung village, Buthidawng, Arakan hundreds of supporters of a popular Muslim singer of the province, Jafar Hussain, aka, Jafar Kanwal, came out to the open following ond of his revolutionary songs. The Muslims of the village who had secretely stock piled their weapons at the end of the World War II, declared the formation of the Mujahid party and pledged themselves ready to begin battle for an Islamic state.[11]

BURMESE JUNTA'S ANTI MUSLIM POLICIES FOR NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Guerilla activities by Muslim Mujahid insurgents had taken place in Arakan in 1952-54.[12] The brief spell of democracy which existed in the country from 1948-1962 did not aggravate the Muslim separatist tendencies much. But following the 1962 coup the situation went out of control. With the coming of the military Burma plunged into a nation-wide revolt. A country goes underground, the headlines on Burma once again rang out as departing journalists filed their last copy.[13] From Rangoon (the epicentre of the confusion) to Burma's far flung border a new tidal wave of insurgencies swept across the country with the coming up of the military junta to power.[14]

The separatist tendency was also taking shape towards the last few years of U Nu's rule (1958-1962), because by this time the army

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11. Kessing's Contemporary Archives, 5 October 1978.
12. The Times (London), 12 February 1964
13. Smith, n.9, p. 219
14. Silverstein, n.2, p.111

had started to dominate in the civilian politics/government albeit
from behind the curtain . The ill-conceived nationalisation poli-
cies of the junta led by General Ne Win triggered off a series of
insurgency movements in the ethnic minority areas which were some-
what in the control of central authority until then. During the
first few years of military rule, the most vocal and active above-
the-ground opposition came from university students and Buddhist
monks. And it was then that the Muslim separatists in Arakan
entered into an active phase. The military junta's policy of
"Burmaisation" and citizenship law of this period required all the
Arakanese to prove their nationality. Though all the non-Burman
minorities became the victims of this new rule, the Arakanese had
utmost difficulty in proving their entitlement to Burmese citizen-
ship and also to Arakan, where they had been living for centuries.

Opposing the junta's policies to unite the Arakanese Muslims
a former Rangoon University student, Mohammad Jafar Habib, reform-
ed the earlier mujahid movement and gave it a new name; the Rohi-
ngya Independence (later Patriotic) Front. Another student, Zafar
Sani who took over the charge of regrouping the guerilla units
amongst the Muslims along the Naaf River in the far north started
an intense anti-Rangoon drive. At first, working in alliance with
the Rakhine 'nationalist' insurgent fronts, the Communist party of
Arakan (CPA), and the Arakan National Liberation party (ANLP),
but later fuelled by abundant arms supplies during the Bangladesh
liberation war, Sani's Muslim National Liberation party, had by
the early 1970's had become the second largest insurgent force in

the state after the communist party of Burma.[15]

For nearly ten years (from 1963-1973) the Arakanese Muslims remained calm and just before the introduction of 1974 constitution in 1973 the communist party of Burma (CPB), managed to reach a modus vivendi with the Mujahid's of Arakan. A pact with Rohingya patriotic Front was eventually agreed in 1973. However, by this time, the junta had full knowledge of the Bangladeshi sympathy for the Mujahid's in Arakan and had captured some caché of arms clandestinely coming to the Arakanese Muslims from the Bangladeshi side.

The 1974 constitution though tried to bring transperancy in the administration, its various clauses and sub-clauses often helped the junta to carry out its own policies of intimidation when it came to the treatment of ethnic minorities. For example, although there are clear gurantees for the basic rights of all citizens before the law "regardless of race, religion, status and sex" (Art. 26), the exercise of such rights must not be "to the detriment of national solidarity and social order."[16] The other dubious features of 1974 constitution of Burma socialist programme party (BSPP), included the realm of language and religion, the two most sensitive issues which often allowed the minority to harbour separatist sentiment. Although Article 152 (b) allowed for minority languages to be taught in schools and colleges in their respective

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15. Smith, n.9, p.219.

16. Martin Smith, State of Fear: Censorship in Burma (Myanmar) (London,1991), p.21.

areas, and Article 153 (b) of the constitution guranteed the right of every citizen irrespective of race & religion to "freely use one's language and literatu e," under the BSPP the status of minority languages was so downgraded as to put minority citizens at a great disadvantage. Similarly though the freedom of religion was technically permitted under the 1974 constitution, the activities of minority Muslims and Christians were severely curtailed.

However, the final clampdown of the junta on the Arakanese Muslims came on April 29, 1978, when under a census operation code named Nagamin the authorities started pushing the ethno-religious minorities out beyond the country's political boundaries which many analysts regard as a policy of "Brumanisation" or Burma for Burmans having the Buddhist faith and adherents of Buddhism.

That year, in the largest ever exodous in modern times some 200,000 Arakanese Muslims crossed into Bangladesh following widespread rampage, rape, shooting and murder of Muslim populace by the military. The vast majority of these refugees consisted of women, children and elderly people, mainly destitutes and whom the government of Burma regarded citizens of Bangladesh, whereas the Bangladeshi government considered them to be Burmese nationals.[17] This also led to a bilateral conflict between Burma and Bangladesh.

The Muslim refugees comprised three groups, the largest of them being the Rohingyas, who had settled in Arakan in earlier centuries. The second group were the Kamanchils, who claimed that

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17. Kessings Contemporary Archives, 6 October 1978

their ancestors had reached Burma at the end of the 18th century and the third group of the refugees were Bengali farmers and fishermen, who had settled in Burma during the British colonial period.[18]

The Burmese allegations that most of these Muslims were immigrants from Bangladesh is not altogether unfounded. The military authorities had started issuing National Identity Cards to ethnic minorities and most importantly to the Arakanese Muslims as far as since 1965. The exodus in truth contained the stories of military attrocities on majority of those who really were later immigrants. Independent estimates say at least 100,000 Bengali Muslims crossed into Arakan during the Pakistan Civil War of 1971 and as many as many more since then. Also the Burmese by the late 1977 had unearthed several documents from Arakan which gave them clues to a future instability in the region and compelled them to take recourse in initiating a clampdown on the Muslims for preventing a major backlash against the country's national interest and integrity. And this culmimated in the introduction of Operation Nagamin and the resultant exodus.

As reported by Brian Eads,[19] a journalist working for The Observer (London), responsibility for the mass exodus of Muslims from the state of Arakan lied in large part with Muslim secessionists who plotted to take the state of Arakan off the Union of Burma

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18. Ibid., 6 October 1978

19. For details please see; Brian Eads' report from Bangkok, The Observer (London), 4 June 1978

and into a federation with Bangladesh. A plot to this effect was discovered in 1977, in which a Bangladeshi military attaché in Rangoon Colonel Amin Chowdary, was found directly involved. Subsequently he was declared personà non grata by the Burmese authorities and four separatist Arakanese Muslim leaders who were his collabo ators were sentenced to death. By that time also another Islamic organization seeking to make known the grievances of Muslims in Burma, named as Ommat Liberation Front had already come into being. The junta's highandedness in this whole affair is justified if one takes into consideration the problems of national integration in a multi-ethnic society.

Bangladeshi claims of forced expulsion of Arakanese Muslims by Burmese law enforcement officers did not cut much ice among the Arakanese Buddhists, because the Buddhist neighbours of the Muslims had become tired of some religious practices of this community. This cultural and religious animosity and prejudice grew from some simple and trivial things like the Muslim's occupational practices. While the Arakanese Buddhists were vegetarians believing in non-violence, the majority of the Muslims did not respect their sentiments. In Akyab, many Muslims who have their houses along the Kaladar river work as fishermen; a profession no devout Buddhist would take up, because it would involve taking life.[20]

Prior to the 1978 operation Nagamin, Arakan had seen one of the worst Buddhist-Muslim riots in Moulmein. The Buddhists of the region like the government had started to feel uncomfortable and threatned in many ways when majority of the Muslims started to have

20. Klein, n.7, p. 84.

more than one wife-often by bringing the Muslim women from across
the border-and was considered as a ploy by the later to overwhelm
the demographic profile of the province.

Around this time there had also started a mass proselytization
campaign by Islamic religious teachers, who had infilterated into
Arakan due to poor or non-existent border posts. As a result when
the army started its offensive against the Muslims they were joined
by the area's Buddhists (mostly youngmen) in driving out the
Muslims.[21]

Opposing this policy of "Burmanisation" of the Burmese junta
Bangladesh tried to come in defence of the Rohingyas (the majority
of the three Muslim groups of Arakan) arguing - Rohingyas have
been in Burma since the 12th century.[22]

However after the angry exchange of words between Rangoon and
Dacca the exodus came to a temporary helt when on May 19, 1978,
Professor Shamsul Haq, the then Adviser for Foreign Affairs to
Bangladeshi President appealed to the UN Secretary General Dr. Kurt
Waldheim, for international assistance for refugees, whose number
he said "had reached 150,000 and might reach 200,000." As a result
Bangladesh was provided with all kinds of economic assistance to
deal with the temporary shelter of the refugees. International
bodies like UNHCR, WHO,FAO, UNICEF, International Red Cross and

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21. This was confirmed by The Observer (London) correspondent
    Brian Eads, who was covering Arakan at the height of Army's
    offensive against Muslims. In his article "New Refugee In-
    vasion Coming" The Observer, 18 June 1978 writes that, many
    Muslim families whom he interviewed in Arakan said,"Buddhists
    have threatned them with communal violence if they stay and
    neither the army nor the police will protect them."

others advanced economic assistance worth $3,000,0000 for first relief operations.

However none except some Islamic powers seemed to be interested in resolving the matter politically. Refugee repatriation started that same year after Mubarak Hussain, Secretary of the Bangladesh Foreign Ministry made several trips to Rangoon.

In the 80s-late 80s to be precise-Burma completely remained absorbed with the democratic fervour that saw the apparent eclipse of Ne Win and his BSPP, from power and the accession of a high level junta called State Law and Order Restoration Council or SLORC. Like all other Burmese ethnic groups-fighting against SLORC- some Arakanese Muslims also joined hands with Aing San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy which was launched to promote democracy and grant certain amount of autonomy to the ethnic minorities.[23]

Infuriated by the Arakanese Muslims stand, SLORC, like its predecessor, again started its drive to ascertain the citizenship in Arakan. This move was partly aimed at distracting a section of Burmans who were committed democrats and at the same time people opposing the secessionist demands. Commenting on the renewed attack of the junta on the innocent Muslim populace of Arakan a lead story in The Times (London) on 26 January 1992 said:

> "In recent weeks Burma's xenophobic military
> junta, the State Law and Order Restoration

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22. Bangladesh Times,(Dacca), 12 June 1978

23. For a full-length version of this Democracy and Ethnic group alliance see, Aung San Suu Kyi, "The need for Solidarity Among Ethnic Groups" Freedom from Fear (London-1991) pp. 226 - 231.

Council, has embarked on a campaign to subdue
the Muslims known as Rohingyas and drive them
into Bangladesh. It appears that the junta is
about to send Buddhists into Burma's western
state of Arakan, a rugged jungle-region that
was once an independent homeland."

By late 1993 Rangoon had come into agreement with all of the
nine major ethnic insurgent groups but Arakanese Muslims. SLORC
which had once vowed to wipe out Burma's ethnic guerillas, negoti-
ated various ceasefire treaties with them. They were allowed to
keep their weapons and to control their own semi-autonomous regi-
on.[24] The absence of a similar deal with the Muslims in the country's
west can be seen as a direct result of the lack of sympathy for
the Muslims in the Burmese civilian and military quarters.

Being predominantly a "Buddhist nation" the Burmese have fail-
ed to come to terms with the rights and aspirations of a religious
group which is having direct and opposite socio-cultural and poli-
tical values and practices. Burma's own official media to some ex-
tent has worked as a catalyst by generating an anti-Muslim feeling
among the majority of the populace. The official Burmese arguments
like the Muslims as "later arrivals," in the country has found
widespread audience.

The junta's claim of Arakanese-Muslims anti-state activities
and the support of outside Islamic powers to these religious mino-
rities has been proved to some extent. Of late more than 1,000000

24. Asiaweek (Hong Kong), 3 March 1994 p.17

Rohingyas have been given shelter in the middle-East where they have been dubbed as the "new palestinians." The Rohingya activists many of who had fled to the Gulf readily admit they have received moral support from senior religious leaders in Dubai and Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati.[25]

The blame also partly rests on the Bangladeshi policies. Starting in June 1978, Bangladesh engaged itself in a vigorous campaign to internationalise and Islamise the Arakanese situation. Dacca's highlighting of Burmese attrocities on Rohingyas on humanitarian grounds got a widespread appeal near all the Western governments. Even President George Bush during his term-of-office granted an assistance of $3 million to the victims of Burmese junta in March 1992. [26]

In May 1978, Bangladesh raised the issue in the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), on behalf of Burma's 2,500,000 Muslims under the plea that Rangoon is engaged in a planned move to wipe out Islam from the face of Burma. The appeal immediately struck the OIC, and a fact-finding mission was sent to the refugee-camps in Bangladesh's Cox Bazar.

Libya which has long supported many Third World revolutionary brigades and organisations was also alleged by the junta to have been involved in undermining the state authorities by providing clandestine arms supplies to various Arakanese Muslim organisations. Economic assistance also has come from many West Asian

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25. Far Eastern Economic Review (Hong Kong), 28 January 1993
26. The Times (London), 21 March 1992.

countries to the Muslims to fight against the Burmese nation. In th s newly developed network after the exodus, thousands of Muslims have since continued to go into exile in countries as far as Egypt in search of finding support bases for their cause.

The communication between the self-exiled revolutionaries and the Muslims in Arakan in recent years have been going on throgh Haj piligrimage. To curb this conduit which the junta considers might give rise to fresh anti-state activities, espionage has been added to this controversy. The Military Intelligence Service (MIS) agents of the country have allegedly secretely been following those given permission to leave for Saudi Arabia and Hajis have been arrested and interrogated on their return.[27]

The foregoing analysis show ethnicity acts as a hinderance to national unity of a newly independent multi-racial society like Burma. While on the one hand such unity is affected by the majority community's arrogance as well as indifference to the sensitivity and the aspirations of the minorities, it is also conditioned by the minority community's sudden awareness of their distinct identity and the advantages that it sometimes offer in securing external support to attain their narrow parochial interests.

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27. Smith, n.16, p26.

(i)   The basis of Thai & Malay-
        Muslim divide: some historical
        accidents.

(ii)   The structure and functioning of
        Malay-Muslim political (guerilla)
        wings.

(iii)   The gravity of the Muslim
        opposition to Thai integration
        in recent times.
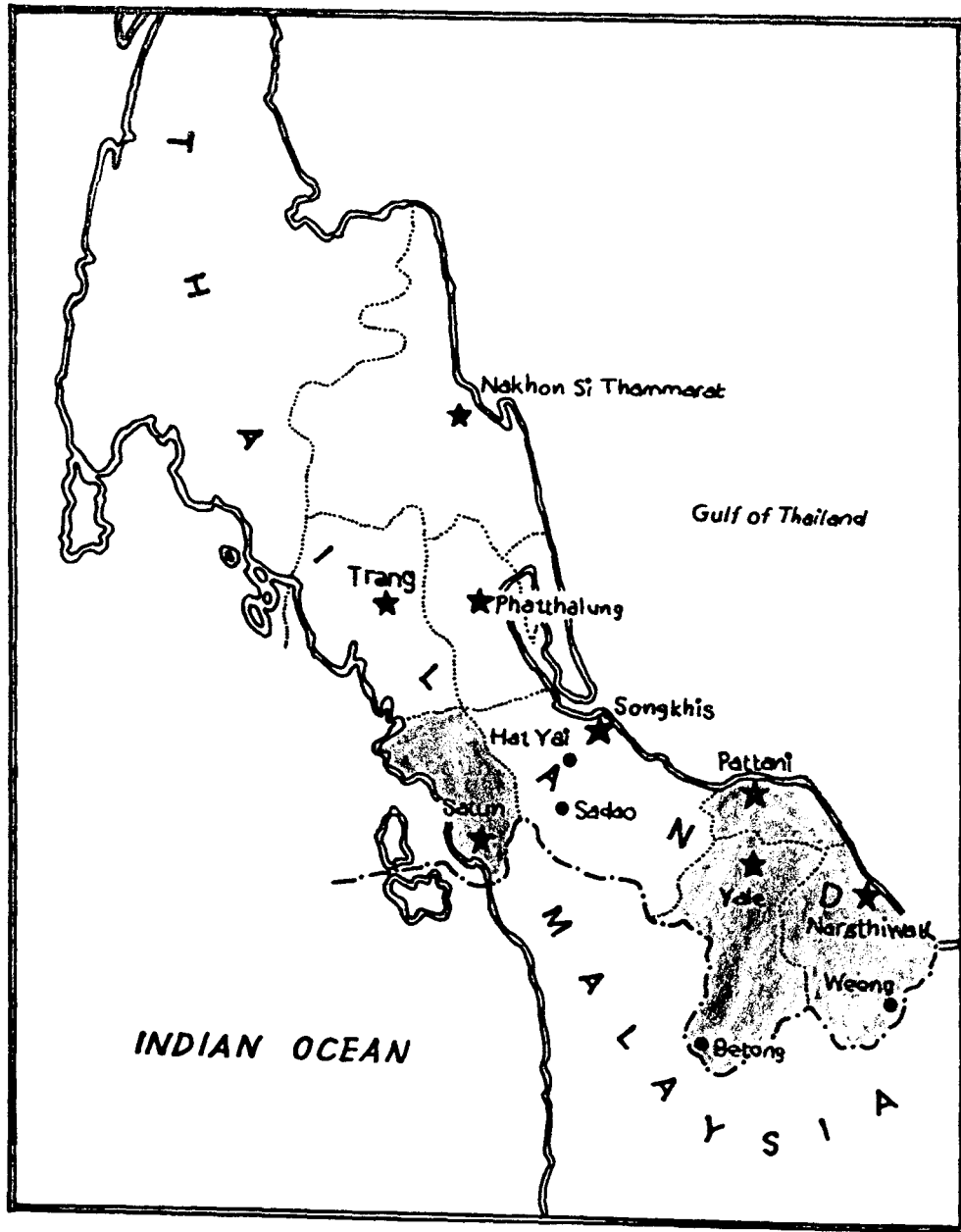
Fig.2. The Malay-Muslim population in southern Thailand (in the shaded areas).

THE BASIS OF THAI & MALAY-MUSLIM DIVIDE: SOME HISTORICAL ACCIDENTS

Perhaps Thailand is the only country in Southeast Asia where the religious homogeneity can be found in the maximum. It is predominantly a Buddhist country where only four per cent of the entire population belong to different faiths other than Buddhism. Out of these four per cent, about 3.82% belong to the Islamic faith and the rest are Christians. It is this miniscule of Muslim minorities in this overwhelming Buddhist nation state who have been most vociferous in opposing the national integration designs of Bangkok in administration and other governmental activities. Though small in number, Thai Muslims confinement to a particular geographical region of the country has helped them consolidate their position and allowed them to stand as a centripetal force.

Of these entire Muslim population nearly 80 per cent who are of Malay origin live in four southern provinces of the country, bordering the Muslim neighbour Malaysia, along the province of Kelantan. The rest of the non-Malay Muslims like Pakistani, Indian and Chinese live scattered, and as parts of the local community where they live/dwell. However the calle for armed separatism on religious lines has always come from Muslim inhabitants of Yala, Narathiwat, Satun and Pattani, the four southern-most peninsular provinces of Thailand.These Muslims who prefer to be called as

Malay-Muslims, form the second largest minority community in the country (the largest being the Chinese who have assimilated themselves into Thai mainstream gradually following the end of the second World War).

The basis of opposition, resistance and the separatist tendency among the Southern Muslims does not rest on any single factor. The main arguments put forward by these separatists in recent years has been; language, culture, religion, economy, religous practices and most importantly a separate history which the successive Thai governments have distorted for their own convenience and use.

The present day three Muslim provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat were a part of the kingdom of Pattani existing since thirteenth century. The fourth province Satun, was part of the state of Kedah (now part of Malaysia).[1] Thus the Malay-Muslims had a separate identity of their own and had absolutely no corelation with the Thai Empire. The confrontation however began from the time when the Sukhotai Empire embarked on a "southward-penetration" into the Malay peninsula. The kingdom of Pattani, Kedah, Kelantan, Trengganu (in present day Malaysia), had a tributary vassal status with the Sukhotain at the height of its glory. There were times when these vasal Muslim kingdoms enjoyed a relative autonomous status or intermittent periods of independence. With the weakening of the Sukhotai the kingdom of Pattani came effectively under the Thai control when it was annexed into Siam in 1785. A series of

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1. Muthiah Alagappa, The National Security of Developing States: Lessons from Thailand (Kuala Lumpur,1984), P.199

rebellions followed the annexation but were suppressed by Bangkok, which maintained control through a policy of 'divide and rule.' Pattani in this period was divided into seven separate mini-states and administered as thir-and-fourth-class provinces of Siam.[2]

However the first direct confrontation with the Malay-Muslims and consolidation of the Thai territory took place towards the end of the 19th century and beginning of 20th century, when Thailand was a buffer between British India and French Indo-China. It was an attempt by the Thai monarchs to restructure the political frontiers and evolve an administrative mechanism that could penetrate effectively throughout the state. As a result of this the Malay-Muslim states of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, Trengganu were relinquished from the terms of the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909.[3]

During and after the signing of the treaty there was opposition from the Malay-Muslims on the accession of Satun within the Malayan province of Kedah into Thailand. The British who were the colonial power in Malaysia then did not pay any heed to the request of Malay-Muslim ruling aristocracy of Satun for keeping it as a part of greater Malaysia, as they did not want to sour their relationship with Bangkok. There was also a feeling in the British side that any further pressure from the Thai monarchs would jeopardise the process of border demarcation that allowed the British to put Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trenggu under direct Malay-British control.

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2. Ibid., P.199. (The class in question means the rank of Pattani).

3. Tet Bunnag, The Provincial Administration of Siam 1892-1915 (Kuala Lumpur, 1982), P. 162.

Until 1909 Thailand did not face any major opposition or th-
reat from the southern provinces, largely because the pattern of
indirect rule allowed the Muslims a degree of autonomy in their
religious practices/affairs and local administration. And though
the seven mini-states (that were formed by breaking the kingdom
of pattani) were opposed to Bangkok's rule but at the same time
complete secession from the country was not in their agenda.

The year 1909 may be regarded as a watershed year in Thai
history. That year Thailand obtained the international recognition
on its sovereignty over the four southern provinces (formed follw-
ing 1902 administrative reforms), via the Anglo-Siamese Treaty and
the Malay-Muslims took the vow to fight on to do a historic wrong
right. One direct fall-out of this treaty was the decision by
King Rama V (Chulangkorn) to introduce new administrative practices,
which in the subsequent years had established a direct rule of
Bangkok replacing the British system of indirect rule, which was
in vogue in Thailand until then. The centralization of administra-
tive and the integration process had two prime aims, viz. to ensure
legality and to tap the resources , man power and revenue for the
kingdom from the faraway provinces.

In a sense it can be said that alongwith the other Thai pro-
vinces the four southern Muslim provinces had to forgo their eco-
nomic, religious and political independence with the implementata-
tion of the "Suphiban"⁴system. Unlike the inhabitants of other

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4. The Suphiban system of administration brought the whole country
   into a single administrative head directed from Bangkok. And
   laid the foundations for a kind of unitary system of government.

provinces, resistance to this move of the Thai monarch was the
maximum in the Muslim dominated south. The new administrative
policy reform was in a way beneficial to Thai speaking Buddhists,
as it helped them come in contact with other regions.On the other
hand, Malay-Muslims saw it as an imposition from above. Thus the
policy of integratin became a process of alienation for them.

Under the new administrative reforms in a country-wide scale
for the first time the traditional élites were replaced by Thai
bureaucrats. The stripping off the power from the traditional
elites did not create much uproar in other parts of Thailand, but
in pattani, satun, yala and songkhala the religious-political éli-
te was outraged, because the non-Muslim bureaucrats took over the
charge of religious political role of the inhabitants, which until
now was enjoyed by the Ulemas and small regional leaders. The new
system of administration, while allowing the continuation of Isla-
mic law in respect to family matters and inheritence, emphasized
secular law and justice in all other areas.[5] The southerners saw
this move of Bangkok as a forced cultural conversion process by
which gradually the Muslim identity would be lost in the broad
spectrum of Buddhism Thailand's principal religion.

These apprehensions were turned into reality following Thai
bureaucrats' incompetent and corrupt administrative practices in
their areas. The attitude of the bureaucrats towards the Muslim-
population always centred around one factor, i.e., the treatment

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5. Alagappa, n.1, P. 201.

of southern Muslims as an inferior race in the Thai mainstream. These bureaucrats -vehicles of Chulangkorn's nation-building and national integration process- marred his visions and left deep wounds in the Malay-Muslim community's psyche which in the later phase provided them with a cause to raise arms against the authorities.

Another reason often attributed to the failure of administration process through bureaucracy is the ignorance of the bureaucrats about the regions' language, local culture, customs. Secondly, the bureaucrats never really cared to learn the same because as was the practice then, the officials usually got transefered to different provinces in every three years time. This short-stay did not allow the bureaucrats to adapt a benevolent administrative policy even though some wanted to shun parochial attitudes towards the Muslims.

The restructuring of the provincial administration of Siam - 1892-1915, in a sense was an attempt by the Thai monarchs to integrate the nation and embark on the nation-building process. Assimilation became the clarion call of national integration during this phase. In the nation's north-east where the divided Thai population lived, bringing them to the new fold was not difficult but the Muslim-Malays detested and rejected this assimilation process because they had nothing in common with the 90 per cent or above larger majority Thais.

The national integration policies initiated by the Thesaphiban system was perceived by the Malay-Muslim community as working

towards their cultural disintegration. A case in point is the introduction of Thai language in the Muslim dominated provinces of pattani, Narathiwat, satul and Yala. While the aim of Bangkok was to establish smooth administration through a generally accepted national language the Malay-Muslims opposed it by considering it as an alien language. The integration policies of Bangkok created a dilemma for them, with the alternatives being to accept integration by all available means. To this, there were two kinds of responses which had the effect of dividing the Malay community into loyalists and separatists. [6]

The general feeling among the southern Malay-Muslims was that to learn or speak Thai would amount to loosing their own language and also their notion of nationhood. To the Malay-Muslims, the Malay language stood for both a medium of cultural expression and nationality. To the élites of the community the supremacy of Thai over their own language meant the gradual loss of their identity, culture and history.

simultaneously, the other argument put forward here can be the erosion of their linguistic identity alone may not be the only sufficient reason for the resistance against the government and its policies. But it certainly served as a tool for recreating a sense of distinctiveness a rallying point for unity to enhance their competetiveness amidst other groups and a symbol of their quest for political and economic advancement. [7]

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6. Astri Shurke, "Loyalists and Separatists: The Muslims of Southern Thailand," Asian Survey, vol. XVII, no.3 1977 pp. 237-50.

7. Lim Joo-Jock & Vani S., ed., Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia (Singapore,1984), p. 229

The third major source of discontent between Bangkok and the
Southern Malay-Muslim provinces was economic disparity. Since the-
incorporation into the Kingdom of Thailand, the economic structu-
res of these four provinces have been dominated by Thai-Chinese
capitalists, merchants and rubber plantation owners and Buddhist
Thai government officials. [8]

The economy of Narathiwat, Pattani and Satul are agro-based
as the majority of the population earn their living by working in
rice-cultivation, rubber tapping, fishing etc. Their numeral stre-
ngth however has not allowed/endowed them with the holding of the
land. All the big plantations in these provinces are owned by Thai-
Chinese. Though the revenue generated by the pattanis for the state
coffer has remained substantial over the years, structurally, the
Malay-Muslims have been in the bottom rung of the socio-economic
order in entire Thailand.

It is the economic repression of Bangkok over the Southern
Muslims which according to scholars like Nantwan Haenindera, in
the future served as one of the main dimensions in the call for
separatism. In essence, the foremost problems harassing the Thai
Muslims are those of an economic and administrative in nature. It
is the responsibility of the Bangkok government to ensure this
minority ethnic group a better standard and conditions of living,
to make them feel that they are an integral part of the nation to
premove the prevailing impression that Thai Muslims are a minority

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8. Ibid., P.219

group not worth any serious consideration.[9]

The Muslims of Southern Thailand are living like subjected people due to Bangkok's parochial economic policies, which in turn has have its effects on the nation-building process. An analysis of the economic profile of the Malay-Muslims in the four southern provinces shows that they are sandwiched and pressed between the politically powerful Thai bureaucracy and the economically power-ful Thai-Chinese traders and business community. In other words it is a vicious cycle. Since most of the wealth in this area is in the hands of non-Muslims resistance and secessionism was but natural. Thus the disparity cause by ethnic and religious diffe-rences were reinforced by economic cleavages.[10]

Realizing this as a major source of discontent among the Thai-Muslims, the central administration in Bangkok had offered a number of economic packages for the Southern Muslims in differ-ent periods of Thai history. The most illustrious of the Thai monarchs Rama V, during his reign had emphasized on economic development in the border areas as the best remedy to check cent-rifugal tendencies. In the post-Rama V period this policy of eco-nomic development as a tool for national integration was given a further boost under the administration of Sarit. Sarit sought to use socio-economic development as the primary tool of nation-building and to provide long-term legitimacy and justification

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9. Nantawan Haemindera, "The Problem of Malay Muslims," Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, vol.VIII no.1 March 1977, P. 105.

10. Alagappa, n.1 , P. 224

for his reign.[11] The above policies of sarit were partially su-
ccessful and in a way pacified the minority groups harbouring se-
paratist tendencies.

sarit's economic offensive also had a negative impact on the
overall situation in southern Thailand. The Muslims who for cent-
uries were living like a neglected lot became suspicious and appre-
hensive of government's new moves. Viewed neutrally one comes to
realize that plans of economic development for the Muslims in the
south did not really help them. A major consequence of economic
development in this region was the growing landlessness among the
Malay-Muslims. secondly, the government scheme of sung Ton-eng which
means the land resettlement programme disturbed the Muslim demog-
raphic base in the region. Under this scheme ethnic Thais were
resettled in sparsely populated and uncultivated lands throughout
the country, including the southern frontier provinces.[12] This
resettlement programme was viewed by the Malay-Muslim community
as an attempt by the central government to increase the Buddhist
population in the four provinces and to reduce their own predomi-
nance.

All these factors combined together aggravated the situatio
in southern Thailand. In the light of this the genesis of the call
for a separate homeland for the Muslims can be traced back to June
24, 1932 revolution in the country which overthrew the institution

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11. Joo-Jock & Vani S. n. 7, p. 223

12. Alagappa, n.1 , p.224

of absolute monarchy and changed the nation's political perception
overnight. In the early years of the revolution, in a major policy
change the army allowed the Malay-Muslim candidates to contest as
the elected representatives (of the populace) of the four Muslim
dominated provinces of the South. Some of them also got elected
into the provincial assembly, which gave rise to the Malay-Muslim
aspirations for greater political autonomy. However, this expect-
ation was very short-lived. With the coming of Phibunsongkram's
government (1938-1944), a new wave of nationalism gripped the Thais
whose target became the minorities. Speaking of the nationalism of
Phibunsongkram's period, David K Wyatt writes "This was a period
of mass nationalism, not just élite nationalism, a social and po-
litical phenomenon that was more nearly egalitarian in its impli-
cations than it could have been earlier under a monarchist psycho-
logy.[13]

Phibunsongkram's nationalism was a serious jolt to the Malay-
Muslims who had briefly tasted autonomy and were expecting to have
a larger say in the affairs of their internal matters. Finally
appaled by the intense nationalistic policies of phibunsongkram
in which Malay-Muslims were treated as second class citizens, or
pariahs and were forced into assimilation, a combined opposition
(including all the Muslims irrespective of their previous political
and ideological allegiance) raised its head in the coming days and
it immediately found resonance in a petition to the Minister of

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13. David K. Wyatt, Thailand: A Short History (New Haven,1982),
P. 252.

Interior , and it was submitted by Haji Sulong, Chairman of the

Islamic Committee of Pattani and few other Muslim leaders. The

significance of the petition lies in the fact that for the fitst

time the Malay-Muslims got united and gave an international colo-

ur to their political aspirations and demands which included among

other things

1. The appointment of a single individual
   with full powers to govern the four
   provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat
   and Satun with authority to dismiss
   suspend or replace all government offi-
   cials working in the area. The individual
   must be a native of the region and be
   elected by the people.

2. Eighty per cent of the government officials
   serving in the four provinces must be Malay-
   Muslims (so as to reflect the population
   ratio).

3. Malay and Siamese to be the official
   language.

4. Malay is to be the medium of instruction
   in primary schools.

5. Muslim law to be recognized and enforced
   in a separate Muslim court other than ci-
   vil court where the one time kathi sat as
   assessor.

6. All revenue collected in the four provinces
   shall only be expended for the welfare of
   the people in the provinces.

7. The formation of a Muslim Board having
   all powers to direct all Muslim affairs
   under the Supreme authority of the head
   of the state mentioned (in clause 1). 14

The main implications or the thrust of Haji Sulong's petition

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14. Nantawan Haemindra, "The problem of Thai Muslims in the
Four Southern Provinces of Thailand part I," Journal of
Southeast Asian Studies (Singapore) vol. VII,(1976) p. 208.

to the minister of interior was to grant the Malay-Muslim certain
amount of political autonomy which will help maintain the later's
cultural and religious character. Except some minor concessions
like the acceptance of the government to treat Friday as a holiday
in the Southern provinces and agreeing to make Malay as the main
mode of education the petition drew a flak. The government became
very sensitive and hostile to the proposals of autonomy because
the government's perception was that autonomy will not be the end
of the Malay-Muslim demands but would be the beginning of a move
towards secession.

The rejection was followed by the arrest of Haji Sulong and
other leaders on charges of inciting agitation for a separatist
movement. And seven years after the arrest in 1954-during the
second phase of Phibunsongkram's rule-Haji Sulong died under mys-
terious circumstances and the situation became extremely explosive
and volatile in the South. Now, over forty years after the death
of Haji Sulong, the matter, instead of becoming a footnote in hi-
story, has managed to grip the entire nation. The situation parti-
cularly headed from bad to worse during the two spells of Phibun-
songkram's rule in the late 30s and 50s. A sense of solidarity and
alienation from the mainstream emerged among the scattered and di-
vided Malay-Muslims due to Phibunsongkram's policies. The demands
for autonomy and statehood became intense with the upsurge of Thai
Buddhist nationalism, Thaization drive and a further addition to
this was the advent of Malay nationalism across the Thai political
boundary with Malaysia.

The Malay-Muslims adherence to militancy and violence to achieve

autonomy or independence in this period emerged when chances of British assistance for the establishment of their homeland did not come, as was hoped by the former. Thus by resigning from the political mainstream of the country they chose the path of vio- lence through guerilla activities.

THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING OF MALAY-MUSLIM POLITICAL WINGS:

The Southern Muslims' long and continued difiance against the state always brings to the mind the existence of a powerful gue- rilla movement, a good organisational base and finally the support of external agencies/powers to keep any kind of insrugency move- ment going. In case of the Muslims of Southern Thailand the con- ditions have been extremely favourable to pursue an anti-state agenda with the ultimate goal of achieving independence.

The first formal Malay-Muslim political organisation in Southern Thailand came into being in the post-World War II period and was named as Gabungan Melayu Pattani Raja, GAMPAR or the Association of Malays of Greater Pattani. The association launched under the auspicies of the leftist Malay Nationalist party in Kotu Bharu, Kelantan, launched its political and diplomatic offensive against Thailand, while trying to project the Malay-Muslim cause near the British imperial powers in the region. The only and ul- timate goal of GAMPAR was to secede from Thailand and join the Federation of Malay. However, GAMPAR failed miserably in drawing the attention of the Thai authorities anu also the Britishers in

Malay. Here historians put the blame on GAMPAR's top authorities for wasting a golden opportunity, due to its alliance with the leftist Malay Nationalist Party and the adherence to an extreme outlook. The British, then fighting an unofficial battle with the Nationalist Malays within Malaysia had declared a state of emergency by 1948. The border agreement between the British administration in Malay and the Thai authorities policies to supress communists further led to the arrest of GAMPAR's top leaders and by the early 50s GAMPAR had been greatly marginalised and had been fragmented to pieces.

From 1948-1957 due to the state of emergency declared in Thailand the activities of Malay-Muslims was further curtailed and a lid was put on their political aspirations. Gradually the armed separatists were relegated into petty brutality in this troubled region. But after years of hybernation with Malayan independence on 31 August 1957, and with the resurgence of Indonesian nationalism in the region, the Malay-Muslims zeal for independence was rekindled. This time around the need for a regrouping of nationalist rebels and the establishment of an organized political movement was intensely felt - to realize the hopes of a separate homeland.

Though as a political party GAMPAR was in a disaray, its revolutionary call and spirit had not died down during all those years of suppression when national emergency was in the vogue. As an upstart, in the 50s there was a mushrooming growth of Malay-Muslim liberation movements and organisations. The resurgence of militant Islam also spawned more than one Islamic liberation

movements; like, Gerkan Islam, Pattani Sabillah and Black December (having connections to similar militant organisations in West Asia, fighting with Zionist forces in Israel) to name a few. Despite the proliferation of separatist movements, only three groups/parties were sufficiently organized to engage in sustained armed struggle. Those were; Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), The Barisan National Pembessan Pattani (BNPP) and the Pattani United Liberation Organisation (PULO).[15]

The earliest of these post-Gampar parties was BRN or Barisan Revolusi Nasional. It was formed in 1960 and its leadership mainly came from radical and traditional political-relitious élite of the region. The objective of BRN was the secession of Pattani frim Thai rule and its incorporation into a pan-Malay state based on Indonesia. In many ways BRN was distinct from its predecessor. As a political organisation it had a clear ideological and policy orientation with sound operational aparatus. The BRN opted for an armed revolution and spurned the Thai constitutional system and political process by calling it oppressive and irrelevant.

The most ambitious of BRN's long term plans was not just to establish a separate homeland for Malay-Muslims of Thailand but also the formation of a pan-Malay nationalist aspiration on the principles of;

1. Malay nationalism (on the basis of oneness of God and humanitarianism).

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15. Hugh Peyman, "PULO Looks Ahead," Far Eastern Economic Review (Hong Kong),17 April 1981, P. 22.

2. The adoption of theory and practice of anti-colonialism and anti-capitalism.

3. National ideals which are compatiable with the ideology and which promote the development of a just and prosperous society sanctioned by God. 16

In its (BRN's) perception Thai rule over southern Thailand was like colonisation. Thus it involved itself with the Afro-Asian Block during this period, who were fighting to overthrow the colonial yoke. Had it been successful BRN according to its plans would have first formed a Malay-Muslim state of Pattani, combining all the four Muslim provinces. In the next phase its incorporation within the wider Malay-nations bound together by pan-Malay nationalism, from Pattani to Singapore and across the stratits of Malacca from Sabang to Merauke.

The guerilla strikes against the Thai authorities by BRN continued throughout the late 50s. But in 1961 in a strategic move the Thai authroties arrested all the main BRN leaders as they were planning for an attack. The next serious jolt to the organisational activities came shortly after that, over Indonesia-Malaysia confrontation. The final rift appeared in the BRN following one of its faction siding and supporting Malaysia and the other prefering to look towards Indonesia. As a result one breakaway group of BRN founded Partai Revolusi Nasional, PARNAS in 1965, and were backed by radical religionists. Soon there were two more

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16. For details on this please see, Undang-Undang Dasar, Barisan Revolusi Nasional Pattani (4 Wilayah) Selatan Thai, Clause 1.

new organisations who were to replace the beleagured BRN, and the-
se were, the Islamic oriented Barisan Nasional Pembesan Pattani,
BNPP and the Pattani National Liberation Movement or BNLM.

The BNPP was formed on September 10,1971 in Kelantan under
the leadership of Tengku Abdul Jala (Adan N Sai Ban). The leader-
ship was royalist in orientation and had aims of establishing an
independent pattani homeland. The BNPP was the first Malay-Muslim
political party which internationalised their cause through Islam.
Its strategy for independence often consisted of psychological,
military, political and diplomatic warfare. As a part of its psy-
chological warfare, BNPP from time to time had attacked on govern-
ment servants posted in Southern Thailand. The police, the wealthy
Chinese businessmen etc. became its main target during its opera-
tion. However the main motive of these kind of exercise was to
present the region to the rest of the world as volatile and
lawless.[17]

The survival techniques of BNPP is mostly based on the ex-
ternal power base. Across the Thai territory it has close and st-
rong links with the opposition ultra-nationalist Malaysian pan-
Malayan Islamic party (PMIP, in the Malaysian province of Kela-
ntan. But in the recent past the most strategic assistance to it
has come from some West Asian countries due to its association
with many Islamic foruls like Arab League, PLO, OIC,Islamic Sec-
retariat etc.

The exact number of BNPP guerillas is a subject of dispute
but according to independent sources the military wing of BNPP

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17. Jock-Joo & Vani S. n.7, P.241.

has around 3,000 strong guerillas, who in most of the cases are trained in the BNPP stronghold jungle areas of southern Thailand and also in several West Asian states. To internationalise their cause among the Islamists all over the world, BNPP publishes a regular newsletter in Bhahasa Malay called Berita Pattani Menggu-gat and it is sent to all the sympathisizers and subscribers who are in India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Malaysia and almost all the Islamic countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Other documents outlining their cause are also prepared from time to time for distribution at international Islamic formus and meetings. To further internationalise the issue of self-determination of Southern Thai Muslims in 1976, BNPP at the VII Islamic Foreign Minister's Conference held in Istanbul, Turkey, distributed a comprehensive document on Pattani's struggle and plight in French, Arabic, and English which created a mass-overseas base for the BNPP activities.

Around this time -towards the late 60s- in 1967 another armed separatist group of Malay-Muslims of Southern Thailand took birth in India.[18] The PULO or Pattani United Liberation Organisation as it was to be known in the coming years was strikingly different from the two earlier secessionist movements viz. BRN and BNPP. As an organisation it appealed to a broader cross-section

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18. The earliest of PULO leaders (who were studying in Aligarh Muslim University at that time) mooted the idea of establishing this organisation among the expatriate Muslim students from Thailand in India. It was formally chriestned and officially recognized among the Southern Muslims when these students returned to Thailand after the end of their education.

of Malay-Muslim population. The leadership of PULO consisted of young, foreign trained, educated intellectuals, who for a considerable period were away from the political realities of Malay-Muslims of the South because of their engagement in studies in the Indian sub-continent and in the Middle East.

The following year in 1968 PULO adopted its constitution in Mecca, which coincided with the annual Haj piligrimage of Muslims from all over the world. Apart from its emphais on education the ideology of PULO came to be known as "UBANGIA PEKEMA" after this assembly. This ideological acronym was derived from ugama, Bangsa, Tanah Air and Penkemanusiaan or Religion, Race, Nationalism, Homeland and Humanitarianism.

Since its inception PULO's intellectual base has allowed it to proliferate more easily in the Malay-Muslim society as a whole and in drawing sympathy from abroad. Since the year 1977 the Secretary of PULO has been allowed to attend the World Muslim League Conference as an observer. Its belief in violence and armed struggle has brought it close towards three revolution-for-export régimes in the Arab world like Libya, Syria and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Unlike BRN and BNPP, PULO has a separate military wing to materialize its goal. PULA or the pattani United Liberation Army claims to have around 4,000 armed guerillas and a further 6,000 trained but unarmed men, who can be called at any moment for joining in the battle, if the situation so demands. Its increasing success has made a few Thai officials believe that the PULO

has the blessing of some Malaysian governmental officials.[19]

THE GRAVITY OF MUSLIM OPPOSITION TO THAI INTEGRATION IN RECENT TIMES

In the last twenty years or so the situation in southern Thailand has aggravated substantially due to the association and intervention of several Islamic powers in the Thai internal affairs. In a sense the Islamic insurgency/nationalism has validated one of the prime questions which Astri Shurke and Lela Garner Noble had raised in their study on Ethnic Conflict and International Relations. The pertaining question was: Do ethnic links that cut across state boundaries serve as channels for outside participation in the conflict or are such ethnic ties subordinate to other considerations by interested outside parties ?[20]

In case of the Pattani or Southern Muslims the struggle for independence or secession has assumed an ethno-religious dimension riding on which the Islamic nations from all over the world have intervened in a situatio or affair which in usual connotation can be regarded as a Thai domestic malady or problem. Malay-Muslim exiles living in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan,Libya, Syria and United Arab Emirates have been working as the catalysts in giving the problem an international dimension.

The diplomatic assault by the southern Muslim separatists

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19. Rodney Tasker, "The Borders of Suspicion," Far Eastern Economic Review (Hong Kong)1 October 1982, pp. 15-16

20. Astri Shurke & Lela G. Noble, Ethnic Conflict in International Relations (New York,1977), p.1.

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against Thailand has become more pronounced in the recent times.
Probably due to their desire to demonstrate the credibility and
viability of their cause inorder to justify continued foreign
financing.

After years of relative calm, violence again struck in Augu-
st 1993 in the four Southern Malay-Muslim provinces of Yala, Pa-
ttani, Narathiwat and Sangkhala. In a series of incidents a new
party calling itself New PULO attacked on a South bound train from
Bangkok, torched around 34 schools in the region and its land-mine
attacks capsized a tour company bus. In all these arson attacks,
a faction of the Pattani United Liberation Organisation claimed
responsibility for the acts of terrorism in the South.[21] These
month-long terrorist attacks by the Southern separatists were
strangely different from the earlier guerilla tactics used by the
secessionist organisations. The main motivation in these cases
was to create differences between the Islamists and Buddhists. The
bombing of a Buddhist temple in Narathiwat shortly after separa-
tists burned down 34 schools in three Southern provinces created
fears of a flare up of Buddhist-Muslim conflict.[22]

These two attacks, first being the torching of 34 education-
al institutions and later the hand grenade attack on Wat Rat
Samosorn Buddhist temple in a predominantly Muslim held area

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21. The Bangkok Post (Bangkok), 25 August 1993.
22. The Sunday Post (Bangkok), 29 August 1993.

aded a new dimension to the existing political; religion. Two weeks after the attack on this temple, in yet another incident extremists ransacked the Koh B-tor mosque in pattani's Rangae district with the apparent motive to add fresh fule to the already existing confusion.[23]

Whoever carried out the attack or whichever separatist organisation undertook the task of internationalising the question of a separate homeland for the Malay-Muslims it spoke of the deep rooted resentment against the central government and its administration. Amongst the possible reasons behind the attack, the brutal killing of Haji Dash Thanam's (an influential Malay-Muslim religious) leaders nephew, five months ago by police in Sai Buri district was cited by local Muslim leaders as the main reason why Islamic separatists attacked the Bangkok-Su-ngain express train express train on August 23, 1993 which killed one Muslim woman, a student and left several others critically injured by automatic weapon fire.[24]

This separatist upsurge was followed by renewed police actions including unbailable arrest warrants in the Southern Muslim held areas. And a statement by the Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai, who managed to influence his cabinet on assigning the Fourth Army to handle the problems in the South, made the matters worse.

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23. The Sunday Post (Bangkok), 29 August 1993
    Commenting on this a leading intellectual of the region, Pin Yuenlae, Director of Continuing Education Department, Prince Sangkhala University at Pattani said "The grenadethrowing at the temple and the ransacking of a mosque were clearly aimed at creating chaos in the area. They wanted local Muslims and Buddhists to turn against each other."
24. The Bangkok Post, 24 August 1993.

The high-handdeness of the Thai military and brutality of Thai police has aded new fuel to the separatist tendencies. Contrary to what, it was in the past, more recently educated Malay-Muslim intellectual and political neutrals have jumped into the foray in upholding the terrorist strikes by several Malay-Muslim separatist organisations fighting for a separate homeland. While blaming Bangkok, shortly after the violence in the south, on September 30 1993, one southern M.P of New Aspiration party (NAP), Mak Sulaiman, said; a Muslim backlash is inevitable if the police continue its arrests of locals without any evidence on the arson attack.

Surprisingly these disturbances occured in the south shortly after the country's Deputy Prime Minister Supachai panitchapakdi, anounced the establishment of a Growth Triangle, as a part of Southern Seabed Developmental Programme which designated Thailand's southernmost regions (Satun, Sangkhala, Yala, pattani and Nara-thiwat), Malaysia's northwestern states (Penang, Kedah, perak and perlis) and Indonesia's special territory at Aceh and North Suma-tra, as areas in the Free Trade Zone.

Though the Thai government figures on the project spoke of a scope of "bounty of opportunities" for the areas' inhabitants, the Malay-Muslims feared the increasing state intervention in the economic field in their area would jeopardise their future and further destabilise the Malay-Muslim provinces' racial composition.

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25. **The Sunday Post** (Bangkok), 1 August 1993

Thus the ulterior motives behind the attack were to panick the government, and to prevent the latter not to enter deep into their (southern Muslims) traditional areas which would have ruined their political and guerilla operation base.

Meanwhile the work on the Thai part of "Growth Triangle" is going on in full-swing as the rebels and the government are preparing for a fresh and renewed attack from both the sides.

(i)   Historical background of the
        ethnic/religious crisis in the
        Philippines.

(a)   Spanish policy towards the Moros.

(b)   American policy towards the Moros.

(ii)   The emergence of MNLF.

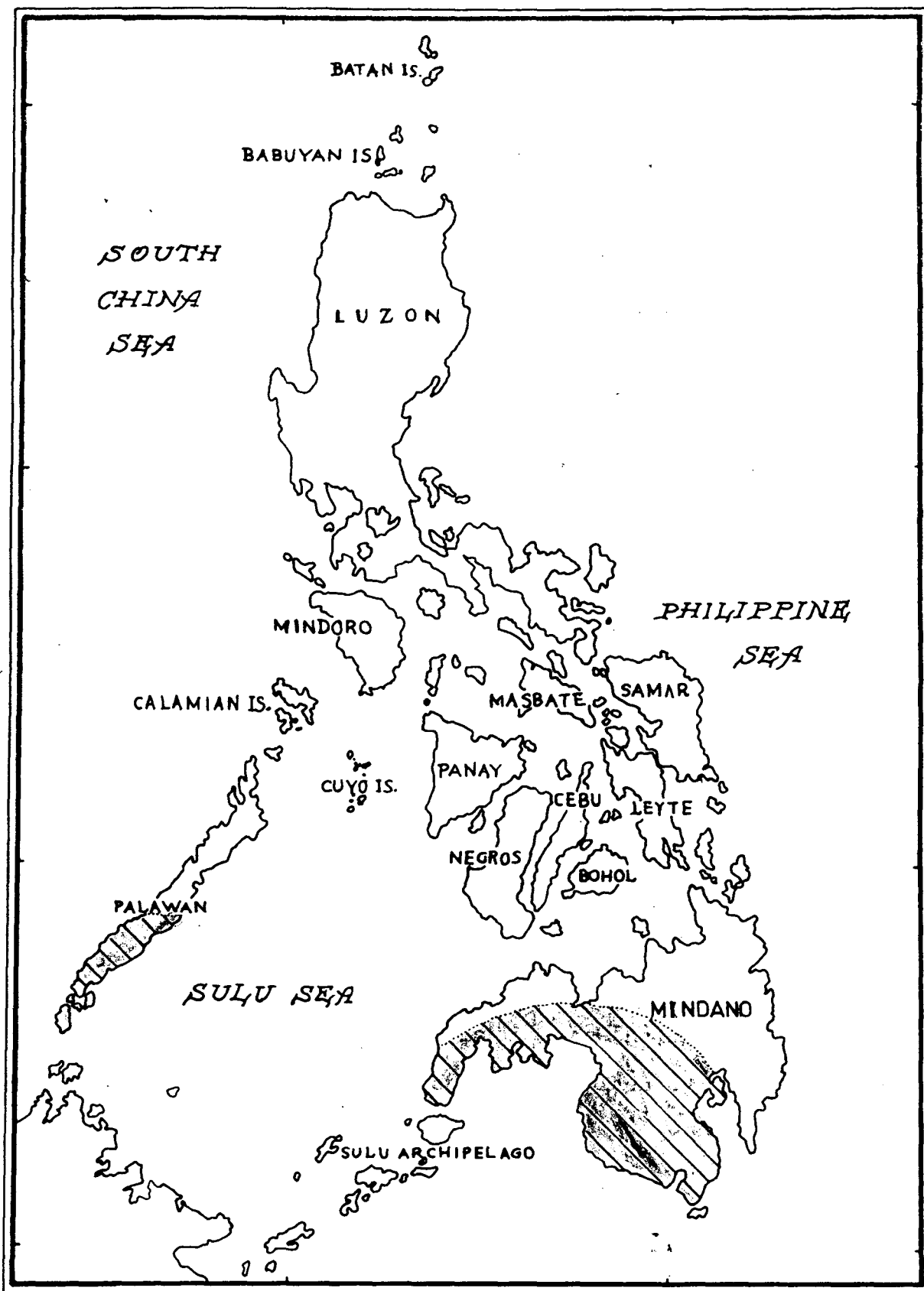(iii)   Base of the present conflict
        and its future.

Fig.3. The concentration of Muslim population in the philippines (in the shaded areas)

Source : Peter Gordon Gowing, Mandate in Moroland.

We give you permission to make...Moros
slaves and to seize their property...if
the said Moros are such by birth and choice.

- King Philip II to Legaspi, 1566

In the philippines the ethnic rivalry and the uprising of
the Muslim Moros is more of a crisis designed and created by the
colonial external powers to suit their own interests. The re-
publics tryst with ethnic insurgency goes back to the early
years of its colonisation. The entire nation was divided along
ethno-religious lines ever since the Spaniards arrived in Manila
in 1574.[1] During the brief American rule (1898-1946) too the
island republic continued to remain divided on the basis of
Islam and Christianity. Even years after emerging from the colo-
nial bondage the nation remained plagued by perpetual ethno-reli-
gious insurgency. In a way, one can say the history of the phili-
ppine republic is nothing but a never-ending strife, having its
basis on two diametrically opposite relgions, both a part of the
colonial legacy.

Though overwhelmingly Christian and the only Catholic nation
in the whole of Asian continent, Philippines nevertheless is a

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1. The Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan, on a Spanish ro-
ound-the-world expedition via South America, brought the fi-
rst Europeans to the island in 1521. But it was Miguel Lopez
Legaspi who formally claimed the Philippines for Spain in
1566, after years of war with natives that saw the death of
Ferdinand Magelland. And Manila was developed as the capital
of Spanish colony of Philippines in 1574.

homogeneous society. Nor can one call it a heteregeneous society either. If Catholicism is seen as a social institution here, Islam too has its roots in parts of the Island republic. Thus there has been a constant clash between the 92 per cent Christians and 5 per cent Muslims who have been constantly trying to establish a separate Islamic state in some of the country's southernmost provinces. Where they are numerically dominant and outnumber Christians in a one-is-to-ten ratio.

Thus one of the central themes of the conflict between Manila and Marawi [2] for the last four hundred years has been the debate relating to the "arrival" of the "first religion" in this archipelago. The Southern Philippines in particular was entirely populated by Muslims. They were a politically organized entity under a Sultanate form of government which was patterned after the Arabian Caliphate, since the Sultanate was founded in 1450 A.D. by a learned Arab Muslim said to be from Hadramaut. [3]

It is the religious prejudice of the colonisers in the philippines which became the centrifugal force in the succeeding centuries and has given rise to two strict societies and people and a high degree of instability in the country.

Fed by those colonial ideas the majority Christians have found it difficult to reconcile with the Muslims, and as a result

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2. In the day-to-day philippine politics or while talking about Christians and Muslims one generally considers Manila as the stronghold of Christians and Marawi, the capital of Mindanao province as the seat and capital of Islam.

3. Permanent Peoples' Tribunal session on the philippines, philippines Repression and Resistance (London,198) p.227.

the process of nation-building in the Philippines has been an utter failure even after four and half decades of independence.

THE SPANISH POLICY TOWARDS THE MOROS

> " By this sign (Cross) we take posession
> of the archipelago in the name of the
> King of Spain. "
>
> - Ferdinand Magellan, 1521
> (after he landed in the philippines)

The Spanish conquistadores who fought with Rajah Matanda, in the year 1570, to occupy the Manila Bay area equated their battle with the Crussade - from which Europe had just emerged/ returned - and the Muslims inhabiting in the thousand odd islands of the Philippines were hastily termed as Moros - after the North African Moors, who occupied Granada and Spain for over seven centuries.

Spaniards in contrast to their compatriot colonisers from Europe were a step ahead when it came to subjugate a certain people or land. Apart from the political conquest, importance and priority was given to the religion in the conquered land. This bears a striking similarity to the present day religious fundamentalism and can be regarded as Catholic fundamentalism of sixteenth century.

Proselytization of Christianity did help in conversing a larger chunk of Filipinos of animistic and Islamic origins

who finally became the majority religionists in the catholic nation. However, this conversion was not total. The southern parts of the archipelago still remained outside the Spanish religious yoke.

Spanish political, economic and religious consolidation over Luzon and the Visayas was soon followed by organized military expeditions to Mindanao and other Islamic principalities in the area. These expeditions though were organised to establish spanish economic hegemony in the region, in reality was kind of Christian crussade to bring the southerners into the christian fold. Interestingly, a petition to this regard was issued by the spanish officials, to the royal audience of New Spain.[4] While requesting the authorities to allow them to lead a military expedition against the moves and their enslavement. These military campaigns were the real beginnings of what was to be three hundred years of Moro wars.[5] Altogether there were six major spanish campaigns against the Moros which instead of supressing them in a way helped them to rally behind Muslim religious leaders and under the banner of Islam. However, with the onset of Industrial Revolution in Europe and assisted by gun-powder the spanish penetrated into the Moro territory towards nineteenth century and altogether seven spanish settlements were established in Mindanao.

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4. The spanish colonisers after conquering the philippines termed the country as "New Spain."

5. Lim Joo-Jock & Vani S. ed., Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia (Singapore,1984),P.171.

In these provinces the authorities chief aim apart from seeking economic concession became the consolidation of catholic christian religion.

It becomes pertinent to hote here that spanish colonialism instead of mitigating the Moros fighting spirit helped them to unite, to form a religious bond on the basis of Islam and Islamic brotherhood, which in the next century would give rise to the Muslim separatist movement in decolonized philippines.

The spanish in the philippines, clearly followed an anti-Islamic policy as far as the Moros were concerned. The instruction of the spanish Gov. Gen. Francisco de sunde to Capt. Esteban Rodriguez de Figueroa in May 1578 with regard to the treatment of Moro sultanates of sulu and Mindanao speaks of it. The said instructions are as follows:

1. Get them to acknowledge spanish sovereignty over their territory.

2. Promote trade with them, limiting their trade to the philippine Islands and exploring natural resources of Moroland with a view to their commerical exploitation.

3. Bring an end to Moro "piracy" against spanish shipping and an end to Moro raids on the Christianized settlements of visayas and southern Luzon.

4. Hispanize and Christianize the Moros, along the same lines followed with respect to other lowland Filipino (indigeneous) groups. 6

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6. Peter Gordon Gowing, Mandate in Moroland (Quezon City,1977), P.11.

However it was the fourth and the last element in spanish policy that triggered off a resistance movement which became endemic in the nations political history. In the subsequent period literal religious wars were fought between spanish colonizers and Moros. While the former persecuted Islamic religious teachers and destroyed the Islamic Institutes like mosques, madrashas etc. the latter carried jihad (holy war) to the coasts of the Visayas and Luzon where their war vessels periodically raided, killed and plundered Christian settlements. The Moros fought for home and country, for freedom to pursue their religion and way of life, and for liberty to rove the seas and for 300 years they made shamble of Spain's Moro policy.[7] spanish on their part sowed the seeds of a fanatical hatred towards Islam, which in turn became the policy of Americans who succeeded them and the independent, democratic and authoritarian governments that held power after philippines became a free country in 1946.

THE AMERICAN POLICY TOWARDS THE MOROS:

" The authorities of the Sulu Islands
have accepted the succession of the
United States to the rights of Spain,
and our flag flouts over that territory."

- President McKinley, 1899.

United States war with spain and their treatment of Filipinos after the end of spanish rule in 1898 can be described as

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7. Ibid., P.12

Americans latent "urge to empire." Having entered the race for
colonisation very late, United States did not want to give up the
authority back to the Filipinos, after the treaty signed with
Spain at Paris in 1898.[8] With the arrival of the Americans Moros
became more vulnerable than they were before, during the Spanish
colonial period. Through a crafty policy of modern diplomacy
Americans ventured into Mindanao, under the pretext of friendship
and respect for that Sultanate. This began with a treaty with the
Sultan of Sulu known as Bates Treaty. Among other things this
treaty signed on 20 August 1899 made it clear that US government
would notinterfere in the Moros' reliigion, custom and their other
cultural and religious practices. It (the treaty) also assured
the Sultan that his freedom and pregorative would be respected
and guranteed. In return Americans demanded hte Moros to accept
the US sovereignty over Mindanao. However the real American inte-
rest went far beyond that. The treaty was purely a deceptive and
expedient ploy by the American expeditionary forces to prevent
any alliance between the Sultanate of Mindanao and the Filipino
revolutionaries (who were fighting with the US forces, after the
departure of Spanish) and to neutralize the Moro forces in Mindanao,
while the American troops were engaged in the pacification campa-
ign in Luzon and Visayas. [9]

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8. The Treaty of Paris signed on 10 December 1898, provided in
   part, for the transefer to the United States of sovereignty
   over the whole of Philippine Archipelago including the Moro
   dominated areas of Mindanao and Sulu. Washington pursued a
   vigorous policy of "Americanization" in the Philippines und-
   er the Republican President William McKinley.

9. Joo-Jock & Vani S. n.5, P.174

The Moro hopes of a separate identity and homeland dried up soon after the American victory over the rebel Filipino Nationalist Forces, fighting in Luzon and Visayas. Following this victory the American Insular government ruling over the archipelago unilateraly abrogated the Bates Treaty signed few years ago. [10] And the American troops moved into Mindanao to assert their sovereignty over the Moros and their supposedly independent land.

This move by the Americans was resisted by the Moros but they soon gave up fighting after the US troops undertllk a series of genocidal campaign against the resistance army. Because it became more of a question of survival or extinction for the Moros. The severity of American design against the Moros becomes more distinct, if one takes into account a state ment of Leonard Wood, the US General in charge of American military operations in Mindanao, "I am going to be frank with you. At present your right on a nation are nothing... I believe we are here forever, unless some greater country comes and drives us away; we do not know any such country."

Though not intense anti-Islamic like their predecessors, the Americans neverthless patronised the Christians and persecuted the Muslims which aggravated the relationship between the two communities. The anti-Spanish alliance which the nationalists in the archipelago had formed irrespective of the religious basis

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10. The Bates Treaty was not a treaty at all. It had no legal or constitutional basis. For an agreement to become a treaty has had to be sanctioned by the US President and the Congress. In this treaty between General Bates and the Sultan no such pre-conditions were met.

and belief were knowingly mutilated by the Americans out of fear of possible nexus between the native Christian and the Muslim to overthrow the American government in the archipelago.

When it came to the exploitation of the mineral resources of Mindanao, the Americans, who by 1910 had around 97 plantation and companies operating there, took the help of implanted Christians, mostly from Luzon and Visayas. Thus the foundations for the treatment of Moros as second class citizens was laid not durin₃ the post-independence period as is the view held by some, but actualy in course of American occupation of the archipelago.

Some advocates of American rule argue, the brief American occupation was an attempt to develop an "integration" process. The introduction of American public school system in Mindanao and the pensionado programme through which wards of Moro ruling families and wealthy to study in American or Christian dominated Luzon often on scholarshp more or less atimed at bringing the two communities together. Lastly, the US initiative in the settlement of Christians in Mindanao under the guise of "New Opportunities for the poor" and "Land for the landless" gravely undermined the Moros sentiment and compelled them to see the archipelagic Christians with an endemic suspectibility that in the post- independence period became the basis for Islamic resistance in the southern provinces.

Against this backdrop of colonial suppression, economic exploitation and intimidation the Moros started an organised movement for Bangsa Moro or Moro nation, once Philippines attained

independence from the United States, immediately after the Second World War in 1946. The new republic simply continued with the American design in the development of Mindanao. The settlement programme was intensified and the penetration of foreign and big local capitalists continued unabated. The Moros who looked on their homeland as "Allah's gift" and as the community's patrimony were no longer regarded as the parts and elements in the development of Mindanao.[11]

The post-independent phase in Mindanao can be described as a period of "internal colonialism" which gave rise to well defined and concerted Moro ethnopolitipolitics. In this period, like Wallerstein's classification [12] the ethnic ethnic conflict; in Mindanao grew with the "inherent uneveness of development" which means; certain regions are placed in more advantageous position than others. Such centres usually become the bases for nation-building, whereas people in the backwash or marginalised region are the reluctant citizens. Their protests are often expressed in ethnic terms because this typically is the only mode of social organization known to them. [13]

In Mindanao the voices of dissent became more pronounced due to Manila's policy of economic exploitation for the upkeep and development of another people, prophessing a different religion.

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11. Joo-Jock & Vani S. n.5, P.154

12. For details please see, I Wallerstein, The Capitalist World Economy (Cambridge,1979).

13. Bjorn Hettne, "Ethnicity and development-an elusive relation ship", Contemporary South Asia (London) vol.2no.2 (1993), pp. 123-149

Thus in the southern Philippines a combination of economics and religion helped built a social foundation for the anti-state activities.

Southern philippines' participation in the development of the country's national economy can hardly be underestimated. An ADB (Asian Development Bank), report published on the region in the 80s, showed more than half of the total philippines coconut production was concentrated in the Muslim-held areas. The three major commercial export-crop of the country, like bananas, and pineapple and rubbler plantations were exclusively in Mindanao. More than half of the country's total sea-food catch came from the Mindanao waters. And lastly, all the major mineral deposits including coppeer, coal, gold, iron, nickel, lead, manganese, chromite etc. were to be found in the Muslim majority areas of southern philippines. But when it came to the distribution of the wealth from all these tapped resources Muslims got little or no share at all. As it was during the American occupation, in the post-independence period Mindanao became a region for quick generation of profits at the lowest possible cost, which usually went to the Muslim labourers working in the state or christian owned mines. To upset the land problem in the christian dominated Luzon and Visayas the new independent govt. immediately fell back upon Mindanao, which had remained sparsely populated. The resettlement of christians in the South which some critics regard was a pseudosolution saw the greatest mass-migration in the philippine history. Land hungry peasants either moved to the south voluntarily or were forced by the government to leave Luzon

and Visayas. Their influx continued unabated into the 1970s. From 1948-1970 the population of Mindanao due to the Christian migration increased by roughly five million, or 17 per cent as compared to a 90 per cent increase in the population of the country as a whole.[14]

Gradually the Muslim mases were reduced to a new povertied class. They were systematically dispossed of their ancestral lands. Coercive force was used in cases where the Moros did not acceed to sell their lands to the rich plantation owners of the country and from abroad. In a continuous erosion of identity and culture they became increasingly marginalised.

The assimilation of the Moros, who have always looked to the Malay world and to the Middle East for their cultural heritage, had been goal of the central government in Manila, ever since the country's independence. But under former President Ferdinand Marcos who ruled from 1966 to 1986, the Bangsa Moro began to move away from the secular state.[15] President Marcos in a bid to consolidate his own internal position fanned the hitherto existing Christian-Muslim animosity and when the Moros rose against the Marcos régime he impounded martial law, which justified his act near the Christians. Marcos' Moro policy compelled the Muslims to press for the establishment of a personal law system which

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14. Permanent People's Tribunal Session on the Philippines. n.3, P.242.

15. Richard Martin, "Resurgent Islam," Far Eastern Economic Review, (Hong Kong) 17 Feb. 1994.

would recognize the Muslims right to practise Islamic law in full,
enabling them legally to practice polygamy, obtain divorce, settle
inheritence, and set up their own religious courts. They also
asked for greater participation in the local government through
the establishment of a more federalized republic. [16]

To camouflage the continuing failure of the local and nation-
al leadership in bringing about an agreeable solution to the pli-
ght of the Moros the government popularized two myths viz.

> (i) The first myth presented the Moros
> as the cause of the Christian woes
> by their refusal to abandon their
> old way's which was anti-thetical
> to Christianity.

> (ii) The second myth presented the
> Christians as the prime culprits
> in the suffering and plight of the
> Moro mases.

These two ethno-religious tirades popularised by the state
gave rise to both Islamic and Christian fundamentalist fervour
and two separate religious movements were born to protect its
own religious community. Around this time in May 1968 the Moros
came out with Muslim Independence Movement (MIM) whose prime
motto became the independence of Mindanao - as the only solution
to the Muslim Moro problem. And the second Illaga Movement an
armed Christian movement whose programme of action became the
protection of Christians from the Muslim Moros. Radical literate

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16. Brian Paelan, "The Philippines: Spectre of Jihad," Far Eastern
Economic Review, (Hong Kong) 24 June 1974, P. 32

Moro students like Nur Misuari (who subsequently floated, Moro

National Liberation Front, MNLF), Nizam Abubakar, Abdul Rashid

Asari, etc. called their struggle of the time against three

"isms" i.e., federalism, fascism and imperialism. Thus with this

new leadership and new slogan a new voice emerged which solely

spoke only of the Moros and for the Moros.

The religious tone of MIM manifesto, which for the first time

clearly resolved to secede (in its aims) from the Christian do-

minated government from the North shook the foundations of the

entire nation. The manifesto which was prepared and presented by

MIM's Chairman Datu Udtog Matalam (a retired Governor of Cotabato

read:

> " The Muslim inhabitants of Mindanao, Sulu and
> Palawan, invoking the grace of the Almighty
> Allah, most gracious, most merciful, on whom
> all praise is due and whom all creation depe-
> nds for sustenance, makes manifestation to the
> whole world its desire to seced from the Repu-
> blic of the Philippines, in order to establish
> an Islamic state that shall embody their ideals
> and aspirations, converse and develop their pa-
> trimony, their Islamic heritage under the ble-
> ssings of the Islamic universal brotherhood and
> the régime to the law of nature do promulgate and
> make known the declaration of Independence
> from the Mother Country, the Republic of
> Philippines." 17

In the second phase of MIM's programme of action guerilla

training was given to some ninety Moro recruits by English and

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17. Joo-Jock and Vani S. n.5, p.156.

a few palestinian mercenaries in the forests of Malapia, along the Thai border in some place where another displaced Muslim minority, the pattanis of Thailand were having their training. The task of this armed band of MIM was to return to Mindanao and Sulu and was to organise local units of MIM's military arm, the Blackshirts (after the colour of the uniform used by these trainees abroad).

Sniffing dangers of an Islamic backlash some anti-Muslim Christian politicians from Cotabato launched a movement in September 1970, whose prime aim became to counter the MIM guerillas. One philippine Army captain Manuel Tronco, became the brain and spirit behind this **arm dé resistance**, and this Christian fighting outfit came to be known as <u>Illaga Movement</u>. Allegedly supported by the Marcos régime the recruits of Illaga Movement became the "Christian defenders," vis-a-vis the Islamic fighters of MIM and the Moros in general. From a humble beginning during which it aimed at protecting the Christians and form a self-defence organization the movement (the Illaga Movement) soon assumed a fanatical zeal and harboured a deep, hostile, anti-Islamic sentiment and came out with a new version of Moro history that fanned the tension further. [18]

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18. The Illaga version of Moro history blamed the Muslim reli- ligious practices and ideologies for the backwardness and relative poverty of Muslims in the country. It defended and idolised-to some extent-the Spaniards who introduced Christ- ianity in the philippines and blamed the Moros for resist- ing the implantation of cross in Mindanao. The tirade stem- med from a dee-rooted cultural and reliquous prejudice and ridiculed Islam and Islamists in the philippines in genral. This hastened the friction between the two co-religionists which culminated in the race-riots and Christian-Muslim war of 1972.

Around this time in 1974 prior to the declaration of martial law, Marcos government anounced plans for the lo al election in Mindanao and other Moro dominated areas, whose immediate effect was a sharp polarization between the two communities and an intense campaign by both MIM and Mllaga Movement to hold the power. Both believed their long term interest hinged upon the coming to power of their own community and politicians. The Christian politicians predicted that MIM's coming to power will result in the division of the Philippines with secession of Mindanao and the migration of Christians back to the North. MIM in its part declared quasi-jihad against Illagas, who by this time were were perceived as a threat to Moros' survival. Kidnapping banditry and looting became widespread throughout the area and further aggravated the situation. During this state-of-fear the Christians continued to receive tactical support from the government. Finally it culminated in a massacare in 19 June 1974. In which in North Cotabato, seventy Muslims inside a mosque in Barrio Manili Carmen were slain by unidentified men. Though subsequently the Philippine Constablry troppers were implicated and accused of collabo ation with the Illaga in the massacare no one was accounted for or was arrested. Conseauantly the Muslim organizations sent a memorandum to the United Nations accusing, their own government for perpetrating the religious minorities.[19]

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19. Eliseo R. Mercado, OMI, "Culture, Economics,and Revolt in Mindanao: The Origins of the MNLF and the politics of Moro separatism , in Joo-Jock & Vani S. n.5, p.159.

Amidst allegations of widespread rigging the Christian politicians returned to power in the Muslim dominated areas of the South. North Cotabato elected its first Christian government, and for the first time in its history Cotabato City and many Cotabato towns elected Christian Mayaor. Contrary to the expectations, Lannao del. Norte, a Moro stronghold reelected its Christian governor. The Christian election victory was soon followed by another massacare of Moros, this time in in Lanao del Norte proper on 22 November 1971. In this massacare, truck-loads of Muslims returning home after casting their ballot in the City of Magassay, were massacared at the Tacab Philippine Army checkpoint. This massacare left 35 dead and more than fifty mortally wounded. The twenty-one army men present in the checkpoint at the time of massacare though were acquitted afterwards in a Philippine court, they were soon freed, "for lack of sufficient evidence."

THE EMERGENCE OF MNLF

To the radical and young Moros these gruesome acts, the high-handedness of the state while dealing with the Muslims and finally the double-intention of the Moro leaders, whose only concern remained how to win government favours, that would allow them to have their feudal practices in the Moro held areas created a rift within the MIM and a breakaway faction from this Islamic front decided to form a new organisation.

MNLF or Moro National Liberation Front was founded by some young Moro professionals and students, who after these regular

bouts of violence and government indifference arrived at the
conclusion that armed revolution was the only option left for
the Bangsa Moro people, in order to vindicate their right to
homeland. [20] This is the conclusion which was reached after a
mid-1971 convention of Moro Assembly in Zamboonga City under the
Chairmanship of Nur Misuari. This decision to some extent aded
a new vigour to the movement and Moros' aspirations got a qua-
litative change. And its action against the state came to be re-
cognised with "real subversiveness." Also a kind of unanimity
an. consensus among the Moros on the future plan of action again-
st the state was reached in this convention and the assembly
reached in a conclusion to dissolve the MIM and its merger with
the new wing MNLF. But, inter rivalry during the local elections
of 1971 , temporarily overshadowed MNLF's higher aims. Because
at that time the whole of Southern Philippines was rocked by a
triangular violence, between Moros themselves in two sides and
the Christians.

In an effort to check this violence and state of lawlessness
President Marcos declared Martial Law on 21 September 1972. How-
ever the situation in the south deteroriated further. By November
 evidence was mounting that considerable supplies of arms were
arriving on the Island of Jolo as well as Tawi-Tawi group of
islands. [21] Subsequently in a manifesto issued on 28 April 1974,

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20. Permanent Peoples' Tribunal session on the Philippines,
    Philippines Repression and Resistance n.3, P.253.

21. Judy Stowe, "The Philippines: Three Dimensional Muslims,"
    Far Eastern Economic Review (Hong Kong) vol.80, no.24,
    18 June 1993, P. 25

the MNLF anounced the severance of all its ties with philippine republic calling the lattter's rule as a form of colonialism over Bangsa Moro.

The Muslims response to martial law was immediate and spontaneous in a quick succession of events, a few days after the declaration of martial law an ulema led group calling itself Iklas took over the entire campus of the Mindanao State University, in Marawi City and the University's radio station became the base for anti-Christian and pro-Muslim broadcast and the ulema sought popular support for Jihad against the Marcos government.

Branding or calling the movement a religious war or jihad against the Christian authorities, the ulemas throughout the Southern Philippines helped raise the independent aspirations of the muslims. These religious teachers also championed the prospect of an Islamic Republic when the Muslim shari'a would be the supreme command.

The young extremist elements meanwhile formed a Bangsa Moro Army, to work on the heels of MNLF to achieve independence through an armed struggle.

BASE OF THE PRESENT CONFLICT AND ITS FUTURE:

The civil war in the Moro held areas which continued unabated from 1972-76 completely ruined the area's infrastructure. Overseas economic ventures were suspended and it had an overall effect on the national economy. The effect of the war on human

lives surpassed all political casualities of the republic before.
An estimated 75,000 civilians were killed and hundreds of thousa-
nds were rendered homeless. [22] As the confrontation started to
spread from one ilsand to another the greatest Muslim migration
in the history of the philippines took place. The Malaysian pro-
vince of Sabhah became the home for these forced migrants. By
the year 1978 about 73,000 people had been registered by the Uni-
ted Nations High commissioner for Refugees. [23]

Moros' striking capability and limited success in this war
was possible due to the involvement of many Islamic powers in this
conflict who were giving direct military, political and economic
assistance to the Moros. Countries like Libya, Sudan and several
West Asian Islamic nations played the role of catalysts in Isla-
mizing and internationalising the unrest in Mindanao, by putting
it in the agenda of Organisation of Islamic conference, OIC. As
the war dragged on Marcos régime reached a conclusion that a con-
ciliatory approach isneeded t⌐ curb the Moros, otherwise the repu-
blic would disintegrate.

Though efforts in this regard had started long ago by the
government, which was intensely busy holding talks with many
traditional and conservative Islamic countries the final break-
through was made on 23 December 1976 in the Libyan capital Tripoli,

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21. For details on the casualty please see ICRC (Geneva)
Annual Report of 1976.

22. Vinasithamby Dharmalingam, "The Shadow Life of Filipinos in
Sabah," Asiaweek (Tokyo)20 April 1994, p. 36.

where the representatives of the philippine government and the

MNLF and the MNLF/BMA (Bangsa Moro Army) officials signed an

agreement which paved the way for resolving the conflict in

Mindanao and for a peaceful solution to the problem. The three

principal feature of the agreement signed at Tripoli was:

(i) A cease-fire agreement which would be
supervised by a joint commission compo-
sed of representatives from the phili-
ppines government, the MNLF/BMA and the
quadipatriate commission created by the
Islamic conference.

(ii) The creation of a mixed committee to be
composed of representatives of the phili-
ppine government, the MNLF/BMA and the
quadipatriate commisiion to brush out the
implementation and details of the Tripoli
agreement

(iii) The establishment of an Autonomous Regio-
nal Government in the thirteen provinces
of Mindanao and Sulu within the territory
of the Republic of the philippines and
subject to its "constitutional process"
by the philippines government as inclu-
ding the calling of a referendum in the
thirteen provinces covered by the agreement
to determine various question on the
Autonomous Regional Government.   24

After the conclusion of the treaty Marcos further aded that

the talk on the details of the Tripoli agreement would be held

in Libya in early February 1977, with a view to a final settle-

ment. However in a surprised move the government after the Tri-

poli Agreement decided to hold a plebicite in the sothern part

of the country. He declared this while validating the constitu-

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24. Eliseo R. Mercado,OMI, n.19, P.164.

tionality of such a step. The plebicite according to the govern-
ment was to be held in all the 13 privinces of the south to deci-
de the popular opinion on whether the mases of the region wanted
to be under the MNLF rule or not. Also, Marcos indicated that the
plebicite was to be held on a province-by-province basis, but made
it clear that if the results showed that only the five Muslim
dominated provinces of the south (Basilan, Lanao del sur, Mindanao,
Tawi-Tawi and Sulu) wanted autonomy, it would be difficult for the
government to co-ordinate the region administratively. The argu-
ment given on this regard was that because Lanao del sur and
Mindanao (on the island of Mindanao) were to the north-east of
other provinces which encompassed scattered groups of islands of
which all were not Muslim-dominated areas.[25]

This unilateral decision of the government put the peace pro-
cess off the track, because MNLF realized that it will be a loser
in such an agreement with the government. Its apprehensions got
confirmed when the plebicite went in favour of the government, and
the MNLF in retaliation again took up arms only after adhering
to the cease-fire agreement for a brief period. To counter the
growing insurgency of the Moros one group within the Marcos régime
openly spoke of "an armed solution to the problem." Juan Poncé
Enrile, the then Defence Secretary of Marcos is reported to have
state that:

> " It is futile to hope for aa negotiated
> settlement to the conflict. The time
> has passed for new talks either with re-
> bel leader Nur Misuari or with former
> mediators from the Islamic Conference,
> at least in the foreseeable future. Know-
> ing the intentions of Misuari and his group,

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25. Far Eastern Economic Review, 25 February 1977, P.23

I believe that it is futile to
expect a peaceful settlement of this
problem. Although of course, we will
still attempt to exhaust all possible
peaceful approaches. I am not optimi-
stic. I consider it a very dim
possibility. 26

In the eighties MNLF continued to strike against the govern-
men positions and Christian civilians throughout the country. But
it could not get any mileage as the republic itself was in a fre-
nzy, following the ousting of Marxos and the democratic elections.
During this phase another radical Islamic group Abu sayaff appear-
ed in the South mostly due to the absence of the main MNLF leaders
most of whom were in exile. President Corazon Aquino, who succc-
eeded the authoritarian régime of Marcos decided to settle the
Moro issue on the line of "People's Wish." In a referendum which
was conducted by her government in 1989 (which the MNLF boycotted)
only four provinces of the South voted to join the Autonomous Re-
gion for Muslim Mindanao. 27

However, violence, kidnapping continued to dominate the
Southern politics until 1093. By this time another spin-off of
MNLF, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which was conso-
lidating its position due to the absence of MNLF, started fast
recruitting guerillas into their army, which reached a surprising
fighrue of 21,000 fighters (which was double the strength of Sri
Lanka's separatist Tamil Tigers).

After more than a quarter of a century of violence there

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26. Rodney Tusker, "The Phillippines:Words of Peace Futile,"
    Far Eastern Economic Review,vol.98,no.47, 25 November 1977,P.27
27. Asiaweek,12 May 1993,P.28

seemed to be a bit of hope for a peaceful solution to the problem when the Moro separatists agreed on a cease-fire in November last year (1993). In the latest round of peace talks with the philippine government, Nur Misuari, finally agreed on a settlement in Jakarta on 7 November 1993. After detailed plans for a peace process were finalized, the MNLF shelved it demands of complete and outright independence and instead opted for "regional autonomy." [28] Also, both the philippine army and the MNLF agreed that their forces would remain in their respective places and refrain from any provocative or hostile action. [29]

It would be far too early to predict on a positive outcome. The Jakarta agreement does not speak much except the dropping of the demands of complete independence by MNLF. It must however be remembered that it is the ulemas who are very much in charge of the society in Mindanao. Misuari's agreement to a limited autonomous state does not mean much. proselytization seems to be the latest weapon of the Moros who in a desperate bid to outnumber the Chrisitian settlers are increasing their population in an arithmatic pattern .In this Islamic resurgence Madrashas imparting religio-political education have almost doubled in a short span of ten years.

One can say that the Moros, after failing to get the desired

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28. Asiaweek, 1 December 1993, p.37

29. Ibid. ,"philippines: Fresh Hope in the South," 1.December 1993, p.37

result from MNLF to which they had rendered unconditional support
are now preparing in their own to independence. substantiating
this fact, a new breed of Moro intellectuals like A. Alilayeh,
(Assistant Dean of the King Faisal Centre in Marawi City, Mindanao)
argue, "the real representatives of the Moros is neither the Moro
National Liberation Front nor the Moro Islamic Liberation Front,
these are only names. The pure representatives are the mujahiddi-
ns: they are in the offices, they are in the hills, they are
everywhere but they have no formal organisation." [30]

Thus the situation in Southern Philippines at present is un-
believably confused. The Moros seem to have gradually distanced
themselves from the MNLF and have been largely depending on nume-
rous village, town and city-based guerilla groups to express their
anguish against the government and the state.

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30. Richard Martin, "Resurgent Islam," Far Eastern Economic
     Review (Hong Kong), 12 February 1994, P. 37.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing examination of the different sub-national, ethno-religious minorities in southeast Asia, the conclusion that emerges is that there are more than one factor that are to certain extent are working as divisive forces. It would be highly erroneous and prejudicial if all the blames are put on the separatist minorities in the disintegration of the nation state. The states role or rather state aparatus' (Executive, Legislature and Judiciary) role in preserving and promoting national integration has been highly unsuccessful in most of the cases. Alienation, to quote Eric Erikson, is an "universal phenomenon." But in case of national minorities it (alienation) finds a new base. The difference between the alienation of an individual and the alienation of community, group or society is that in the case of the latter it finds manifestation in a negative way, always trying to break the fragile social fabric.

The issues involved in the growth of sub-nationalis are many. In some states it is the absence of equitable distribution of development or absence of economic rewards for a certain group. Added to it is the clamour for the recognition from the state, of their (minorities) distinctiveness, as against other dominant groups, and finally it is the religion of the minority community which provides the ultimate platform for them, to stand as separatist elements inside the state structure.

Ethnicity is a psycho-social phenomena and more recently it has found new connotation by coming under the spell of religion-Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Islamic, Jewish and Sikh faith to name a few.

The states failure to or the lack of state's "recognition" of the aforementioned broad-rubrics can be regarded as the main cause of divisive ethnic tendency and separatism to grown, as we analyzed in the three case studies. But while pointing out the fingers towards the cases where the state went wrong, one should not forget that it is equally valid to ask where the minorities went wrong in the relationship with the state ? Apart from the practical problems, more often the state due to its association with a fixed historical past is forced to take a particular course, or a marked policy arrangement which may not satisfy all the groups living within the boundaries of it. Again it is but natural that the policy formulations would always suit those people or groups who are in the majority. Altruism in politics is essential and can be found in a very diluted form in some of the western democracies, but in oriental, African and Latin American politics or to say in the Third World politics it does not really appear.

Adopting or implementing altruism into the country's body-politic is a two-fold problem. The first and foremost pre-requisite for this is a certain degree of political advancement/political consensus within the state apparatus and secondly, a fixed resource base.

In case of Third World developing and underdeveloped econo-

mies these two are the most serious hinderances which prevents
the state from devising and undertaking policies which will have
a mass approval and absorb the spirit of dissent. The policy fo-
rmation in most of these countries reflects a bias towards a pa-
rticular community, race, religious group or a region for that
matter. And when it comes to the allocation of resources of the
state between various racial, religious groups and regions or
areas the state also inclines or tilts in its response towards
one of these groups.

A direct fallout of this structural-wrong doing is the emer-
gence of hegemony or dominance of one section over the other and
at the same time the alienation of the dominated community and
its slow slide to the fringes. Gradually, this alienation leads
to the replacement of state-national loyality by ethnic conscio-
usness. Almost all the nation state in the past and in the present
times as well, had and have a tendency to ignore these subtle de-
velopments like the growth of ethno-religiousness, ethno-consci-
ousness from its very inception or beginning. And when the state
wakes up to control these tendencies the actions are termed as
"state suppression" and guerilla movements crop up immediately
from the other side to redress the minorities grievances.

According to Karl W. Deutsch, a peoples' march towards
nationhood and nation-building is greatly facilitated by commu-
nicational links, shared experience, shared values, and alter-
nately a shared sense of common identity. However, in case of
multi-ethnic and multi-national states a conspicious absence of

these factors retract the states march towards nationhood and people's initiative in nation-building. what is lacked in modern heterogeneous societies is a benevolent drive towards assimilation. In the Third World countries and in Southeast Asian in particular the assimilation initiatives-as we discussed in the chapter dealing with pattani's-has always been forcible one. And in these cases, opposition to government is always portrayed as resistance to the popular will. [1] But the question which begs for an answer is was there a popular support to the governments assimilation drive ?

Assimilation in these countries was a failure, because it was implemented in a negative and inverted way. Assimilation in its true form aims at giving equal importance to all the majority and minority groups, who willingly sacrifice some of their values and accept a new more or code that help establish a national identity, based on the principle of equality and fraternity. In case of Burma, Thailand and the philippines the policy of assimilation was undertaken not to promote a superior national consciousness but to boost the supremacy of the majority community.

Rangoon's Burmanization policy, both in the pre and post authoritarian era was simplay a continuation of a similar policy from its historical past. Burma, since the time of Anawartha was

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1. Donald L. Horowitz, "The Challenge of Ethnic conflict; Democracy in Divided Societies," Journal of Democracy, vol.4,no.4,(1993), P.19

always dominated by the majority Burman ethnic group. Independence, it was hoped by its scores of ethnic minorities will change that practice and will allow them an equal footage and equal podium in power-sharing, but it never happened. Thus the country slipped into ethnic uprisings and wars. Though the junta by changing the name of the republic from Burma to Myanmar has attempted to eliminate the traces of Burman superiority, or hegemony, the new name too means Burmans, albeit in a distorted form.

Bangkok's assimilation policies were ever more complicated and critical. There too the name of the nation denoted a particular race; the Thais. Though the resentment to this name by the country's minority was never heard of, what was despised by its non-Thai citizens was the latter's "cultural imposition." By his intense nationalism and Thaization policy Phibunsongkram directly hatched the feelings of separatism among the country's southern Muslims-the Pattanis, who always saw themselves as a separate race, more close to archipelagic-Islamic-Southeast Asian than the mainland. The forcible instruction of Thai in the Muslim areas and other subtleties were seen by the Muslims as a form of "cultural genocide." Thus they tried to foil Bangkok's assimilation efforts tooth and nail.

Whereas, in the Philippines for the occupying Americans and the post-independent governments assimilation meant outnumbering the minority Muslim Moros in their own land trhough migration and settlement. It did not stop there but contined in the form of inftration into the closed confines of Muslim society, law and religious politics. The 1979 local election was the turning point

in the Philippine history, after which Christians dictated the political terms and conditions in the Muslim dominated Mindanao and its peripheral region, resulting in national disintegration rather than national integration.

Besides the failure in forging a national identity the governments in Thailand and the Philippines systematically followed a policy of "internal economic colonization." By this there grew an uneven pattern of development and the gradual distancing of the minorities from the metropole.

Further, both the Buddhist Thais and the Christian Filipinos recklessly plundered and sipphoned off the resources from the unsteady region, where lived the country's minority. As Machiavelli has put it in his monumental work, "The Prince," "One can easily forget the patricide but not the patrimony." Exclusion of these ethno-religious minorities from their own resources created a gap like as exists between the Centre and the periphery - to borrow a phrase from the dependista economists like André Gunder Frank and Celso Furtado. Thus economic marginalisation empowered by cultural abnegation found a base in the minorities religion.

The striking similarity between these three case-studies is that the minorities' religious affinity: that is Islam. The subnationalism and ethnic uprising of the three can be called as religion propelled ethnic movements. Then the question which arises here is why is it that only the Muslims, who are vociferous in demanding autonomy or are opposing the nation-building

process in the states in which they live ? The answer partially

lies with the mindset of the Muslims. Muslims and Islamists all

over the world have always been drawn to a religio-political

umbrella on the basis of __umma__ [2] or __millat__.[3]

Like the Central Asian republics, who after the break up of

Soviet Empire looked at West Asia, all the three Islamic ethnic

groups of Burma, Thailand and the Philippines saw themselves as

a part of the distant Arabia and the latter extended all its

s upport on the former (political, economic and military). Ali

A. Mazrui, calls this unconditional help as "cultural realignment,"[4]

by which all the Islamic co-religionists are drawn towards each

other suspecting a perceived threat.

The view that Islam retards the process of development, and

thus destabilises nation-building [5] is not a recent phenomena. It

was first pointed out by Marx and Durkheim, both of whom argued

that development and secularization are closely connected and

interlinked. Thus in the twentieth century, in the countries hav-

ing an Islamic population secular nationalism has not been able

to provide a sense of national identity.

Although Thailand and Burma are predominantly Buddhist and

in the Philippines a substantial number of people are adherents

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2. 'nation':universal Islamic Cpmmunity.

3. 'millat' denotes the affinity between the Islamic co-religion-
ists.

3. Ali A. Mazrui, __Cultural Forces in World Politics__ (London,1990)p.251

4. James P. Piscatori, __Islam in a world of Nation States__
(Cambridge,1986),p.112

of Christian faith, these countries can not be termed as theocratic states.Though not completely secular, these countries neverhless espoused secularism in all the spheres of administration. However due to their inherent opposition to secularism the Islamic ethnic groups treaded on a path which ultimately led them to be branded as anti-nationals. Islamists argue that secularism has a modern bias towards the West, and dependence on Western models of development have proved politically inadequate in some societies. They also argue it (secularism) is socially corrosive and undermines the identity and moral fabric of muslim society. So, these minorities have a tendency to fall back upon Islam which offered an alternative and a kind of third way which is again very distinct from Capitalism and Communism.[6] Interestingly the Islamic Moros never aligned themselves with the Communist rebels, who were active all over the Philippines in the 60s and 70s and were fighting against Manila like them. Somehow the Islamic ethnic resurgent groups in all the three countries could never align themselves with other separatist groups which could have strengthened their movement. We also find that in their effort to gain political mileage the Islamic secessionists always ordained their movements into divinely appointed missions or <u>dar wul</u> and the revolutionaries became <u>mujahids</u> (as in the case of Moros).

Islam also is a non-accomodating religion as implied in the concept of <u>Kafir</u>. As a religion it demands absolute regard for its tenets. So it becomes difficult for it to accomodate others.

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6. John L. Esposito,"Political Islam: Beyond the Green Menace," <u>Current History</u> (January,1994) P.20.

Non-conformism, while is not the majority Muslims sentiment, it also has a distinguished place in Muslim thought on nationalism and the nation-state, so it continues to have many adherents due to its association with the politics of the community.[7] This is true of all the trhee Islamic communities which we have dealt with in the earlier chapters. The poor reputation that Islam has acquired for not being able to adopt to new circumstances is not entirely undeserved, for Muslims have put strong emphasis on the need for <u>taqlid</u>, or imitation, since at least tenth century.[8] European and American colonialism in Burma, Malaysia and the philippines inspite of the exploitation that it perpetrated, at the same time opened up the areas to a more superior civilization which prophessed liberalism. All the other communities living in these countries adopted certain values which are rational helping them to march towards progress and modernity. But the Muslims kept themselves shut from any of these changes.

The Muslim separatists version of <u>dar al Islam</u> or <u>darul</u> <u>Islam</u>, prevented them from being introduced to the secular concept of liberal nation-state which these countries tried to imbibe in their post-colonial phase. Hence emerged the dissent and opposition to the government. As mentioned earlier, Islam, by and large, could bring its co-religionists together who were affected by the state's structural adjustment programme and economic inequality.

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7. Piscatori,n.4, p. 101.

8. Ibid., p. 121.

Aligned with Islam the movements which started in a modest way became forced to be reckoned with within a very short span. Despite their rhetorical committment to democracy and pluralism, virtually all the militant groups oppose them.[9] Thus they sought separatist ideology in Burma, Thailand and the Philippines. Their call was to create a state within a state.

Equally outrageous is the call given by these ethno-religious groups for the introduction of Shari-a in the areas in which they lived. The creation of modern state itself -according to the western model- basically aimed at creating a balance in polytheistic society where an universal jurisprudence will be implemented. So Rangoon, Bangkok or Manila's reluctance to allow such practices can be will understood. Had these governments acceeded to such a demand there would have been a multiplicity of pressures from all the sections of the society to gurantee them (each) separate versions of law and administrative procedure. In such an eventuality the very concept of nationhood would have broken.

The modus operandi of these groups was never peaceful. They always took resort to religion to further their cause. And in their effort to gain autonomy from the state they though Islam was the solution. These were people who mixed nostalgia with grievance to produce a millenarian vision of an Islamic state - a vision so powerful that its pursuit justified any means.[10] So, if the

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9. Judith Miller, "The Challenge of Radical Islam," Foreign Affairs (1993) P.45.

10. Martin Krammer, "Islam vs. Democracy," Commentary (January, 1993), P.36.

state took resort to any coercive measure to maintain national integrity it is understandable. Here one needs to understand, why the Burmese junta had to implement the policy of nagamin in Arakan, which ultimately resulted in waves of forced migration of Muslims into neighbouring Bangladesh.

Again in case of Burma, the government was forced to take coercive action when it realized that in its relatively inaccessible south-western region mass-conversion of people into Islam was taking place and external Islamic aid in the form of money, material and military equipment was pumped into Arakan inorder to facilitate an Islamic liberation movement. The harsh tone of the junta, in treating the Arakan Muslims also stemmed from a historical bitterness. During the Burmese war of independence, the Arakanese Buddhists as well as the Burman nationalists sided with the Japanese, while minorities such as the Karens, the Kachins and the Muslims of Arakan remained loyal to the British. Thus emerged the national prejudice against a community, that prophessed a different religon. To distract the population from the country's political and economic difficulty, a campaign was launched against the Rohingyas, knowing it fully well that even the régimes staunchest critics would not disapprove this move.[12] This kind of practice is not only used by Third World dictatorship, or authoritarian régimes but by the liberal western democracies as well,

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11. Bertil Lintner, "Distant Exile: Rohingyas seek new life in Middle East," Far Eastern Economic Review, 28 January 1993,P.24.

12. Ibid., P.24

when a government feels it is vulnerable to the public it diverts their attention to an event of marginal importance or risk.

Islam's obsession with political independence and cultural authenticity often clashed with the nation-state which was trying to bring about a semblence of unity in all the fields. Thus, expelled by the state in which they were living they sought refuge in the world Islamic movements such as OIC and Arab League. In many a context the state knuckled under the pressure exerted by these outside forces, as was the case in the Philippines. Both Saudi Arabia and Libya were prime movers in bringing Marcos government and the MNLF together for the ill-fated Tripoli Agreement. [13] In the subsequent phase the Marcos government rescinded the treaty and launched a renewed attack on the Moros more due to the humiliatory conditions of the agreement than anything else. Also, the coercive nature of the agreement (which was like an imposition from above) was seen as a disgrace and an attack on the national sovereignty by outsiders. The Filipino intelligenstia and the neutral masses did not even utter a phrase of protest when the government terrorised the Moros. Alternatively, Burma acceeded to take back the Arakanese refugees only when the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) intervened.

Thus the argument can be that the governments in Burma, Thailand and the Philippines reacted and over-reacted in a certain way in their treatment of the Muslim ethnic minorities for the latters taking the into the folds of supra-national entities like

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13. John L. Esposito, The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality (New York,1993),P.87.

OIC. Had there been no Islamic religious colouring of the ethnic-minorities demands the state might have given some concessions. The military junta now in Burma has come to terms with almost all the ethnic-factions except of ourse the Karens who are Christians and the Arakanese Muslims.

In another context, these ethnic-minorities allowed the state to take sterner action against them when they equated their independence movement with jihad; holy war and the guerillas with mujahidins; the holy warriors. These slogans from a minority often too much for a self-respecting nation state and the state assuming this as a contrived threat kept on persecuting the minorities which could have been avoided.

The states fear of the rise of ethnic insurgency on religious lines and the ethno-religious minorities strike against the state can be seen as a "cultural clash" in a much smaller way. In the language of Samuel P. Huntington the world is at odds with itself on the differences in civilization. [14] In Burma, Thailand and the Philippines this civilizational-clash has trickled down to state vs. a minority group which espouse and translates its programme in religious terms, that is in essence anti-thetical to the state.

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14. Samuel P. Huntington , "If Not Civilizations, What ? paradigms of the Post-Cold War World," Foreign Affairs (November-December,1993),vol.72,no.5, pp. 186-194.

As the end note it can only be said that if the Burmese, Thai and the Philippine governments have reacted and devised their policies in a certain way, and which has in turn affected a particular group of people the governments action can be understood in the light of its concern for maintaining the integrity of the state. Because what remains supreme in a multi-ethnic state is the right to preserve the state. Had the governments and régimes not undertaken those measures, by now we would have been seeing many a fragmentation of that supreme entity-Nation.

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