Armed Rebellion in the ASEAN States
Persistence & Implications

Andrew Tan

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ARMED REBELLION IN THE ASEAN STATES

PERSISTENCE AND IMPLICATIONS

Andrew Tan

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ABSTRACT

Armed rebellions have challenged central authority in the various ASEAN states since 1975. The persistence, duration and severity of armed rebellions, particularly separatist rebellions, demonstrate the failure of at least some of the ASEAN states in achieving legitimacy for their post-independence political structures as well as continued internal weakness. The external dimensions of some of these challenges, involving neighbouring ASEAN states in some cases, have also heightened mutual mistrust among these states. This in turn has placed constraints on the development of ASEAN cooperative regionalism.
THE AUTHOR

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Andrew Tan
Singapore, 2000
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABIM</td>
<td>Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APEC</td>
<td>Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apodeti</td>
<td>Timorese Popular Democratic Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCP</td>
<td>Burmese Communist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIAF</td>
<td>Bangsa-Moro Islamic Armed Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BNPP</td>
<td>Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRN</td>
<td>Barisan Revolusi Nasional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPM</td>
<td>Communist Party of Malaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPM-ML</td>
<td>Communist Party of Malaya-Marxist Leninist Faction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPM-RF</td>
<td>Communist Party of Malaya-Revolution Faction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPP</td>
<td>Communist Party of Philippines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPT</td>
<td>Communist Party of Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fretelin</td>
<td>Revolutionary Front for a Democratic East Timor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAMPAR</td>
<td>Gabungan Melayu Patani Raya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPNG</td>
<td>Gerakan Persatuan Nieuw Guinea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICFM</td>
<td>Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRC</td>
<td>Islamic Republic Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISA</td>
<td>Internal Security Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNL</td>
<td>Karen National League</td>
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<tr>
<td>KNU</td>
<td>Karen National Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCA</td>
<td>Malayan Chinese Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MILF</td>
<td>Moro Islamic Liberation Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIM</td>
<td>Mindanao Independence Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNLF</td>
<td>Moro National Liberation Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLD</td>
<td>National League for Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPA</td>
<td>New People's Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NU</td>
<td>Nahdatul Ulama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIC</td>
<td>Organisation of Islamic Conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPM</td>
<td>Organisasi Papua Merdeka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAS</td>
<td>Parti Angkatan SeMalaysia/Parti Islam SeMalaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDI</td>
<td>Partai Demokrasi Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PKI</td>
<td>Partai Komunis Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PKP</td>
<td>Partidong Kommunista Pilipinas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNG</td>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNI</td>
<td>Partai Nasional Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPM</td>
<td>Patani People’s Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>Partai Persatuan Pembangunan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PULO</td>
<td>Patani United Liberation Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDT</td>
<td>Timorese Democracy Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UFO</td>
<td>Union of Islamic Forces and Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
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</table>
INTRODUCTION

The Persistence of Armed Rebellion in the Region

Armed rebellions have remained serious challenges to the security of some of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) states since 1975, notwithstanding the end of the Vietnam War, the rapid economic development of the region as a whole, the end of the Cold War and the cessation of support for local communist insurgencies following China's rapprochement with the region. The persistence of armed rebellion demonstrates that some states in Southeast Asia are still relatively weak and continue to have to grapple with the fundamental problem of legitimacy.

The first type of armed rebellion is armed separatism. One interesting feature of armed separatism in the region is its external dimension. For instance, Muslim separatist rebellions in southern Thailand, the southern Philippines and Aceh in Indonesia have, to varying degrees, involved co-religionists and ethnic kin elsewhere in the region as well as attracting Islamic support and sympathy from overseas. In Myanmar, separatist rebellions by armed minorities, notably the Karens, have only recently been brought under central control. The conflict with the Karens inevitably drew in Thailand, which harboured a number of Karen refugees and rebels, and which consequently suffered cross-border raids and incursions by Myanmar forces.

The second type of armed rebellion is communist insurgency, which was a major challenge during the entire period of the Cold War. Yet, despite the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Malayan Communist Party, communist insurgency still exists in the region: namely, in the Philippines, where a Maoist insurgency continues to fester and, in a much more diminished manner, in Thailand.

A third security threat, which has the potential for rebellion or terrorism against the state, emanates from Islamic religious revivalism, a challenge cited by the Malaysian and Indonesian governments as sufficiently serious to merit extraordinary administrative and military measures to contain it. While there has not been open armed rebellion
as yet, this study indicates that extremist groups exist. Indeed, Islam has assumed greater significance of late, given its worldwide resurgence. In Southeast Asia, Islam has been prominent due to the persistence of demands for separate Islamic states in Mindanao and Aceh, and the desire to impose *Hudud* laws in Aceh, as well as having increasing influence in the northeastern Malaysian states of Kelantan and Terengganu following the electoral gains of the fundamentalist Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) in Malaysia in 1999.

The rise of political Islam in maritime Southeast Asia has exacerbated centre-periphery relations; worsened ethnic and religious conflicts, particularly with Christians; and caused fissures within the body politic, especially with more modernist Muslim elements. In both Malaysia and Indonesia, the response to modernisation has been a retreat towards Islamisation, with schisms separating moderate, modernist Muslims and the more pious fundamentalists. This has put more pressure on the governments of both countries to respond to the demand for greater adherence to Islamic values and practices. In turn, this has raised doubts over their ability over the long term to maintain their multiracial secular orientation. Moreover, the spectre of Islamic extremism cannot be dismissed, if the experience of the Middle Eastern states, which have to grapple with the extremist Muslim Brotherhood, is any guide.

In addition, the mere possibility of independent Aceh and Mindanao, and perhaps a semi-autonomous fundamentalist Kelantan and Terengganu, conjure images of Central Asia and the northwestern corner of South Asia, where there are unstable and warring Islamic regimes and factions. Added to these fears has been real apprehension over the possibility that post-Suharto Indonesia could indeed fall apart, particularly if Aceh does manage to obtain independence. This could result in a situation akin to that in the former Yugoslavia, with a number of squabbling mini-states, some of which could be of a fundamentalist Islamic orientation, characterised by instability and conflict.

Another form of internal conflict is internal political instability stemming from the inability of the élites to agree on the rules of political intercourse and engagement. This reflects to some extent the failure of institutionalisation and is an indication of the essential weakness of the state in question. The civil conflict in Kampuchea, the violence accompanying the end of the Suharto regime in Indonesia, the
coups in Thailand, as well as the violent crushing of democratic forces in Myanmar, are all indications of this. However, this study will not cover such conflict, as the emphasis is on armed rebellion. In this respect, the Khmer Rouge could not be considered rebels, as they were the sovereign authority before the Vietnamese invaded in 1978. Indeed, the subsequent Democratic Kampuchea coalition which fought against the Hun Sen regime was recognised by the United Nations as the rightful authority. In any case, the Khmer Rouge ceased to be a force to be reckoned with after the UN-supervised elections of 1992, attention being focused on the political conflict between Hun Sen and Prince Ranariddh. Armed rebellions in the region have focused on either overthrowing a government and destroying existing institutions, as the communist insurgencies hope to do, or on seceding from the centre to form an independent state, which is the objective of separatists in Aceh and Mindanao.

Internal security threats in the form of armed rebellion have meant that the armed forces of the Philippines, Indonesia and Myanmar, and to a lesser extent those of Thailand and Malaysia, have had to maintain counter-insurgency capabilities since 1975. Indeed, the counter-insurgency focus of the Philippine military, unsurprising given the severity of the internal challenges, resulted in the Philippines being caught without even minimum conventional capabilities to counter China's assertion of its claim over disputed territory in the South China Sea, as occurred over Mischief Reef in 1995. On the other hand, the internal dimension is not considered important in Singapore and Brunei, although both maintain strong vigilance against internal political dissent.

This study will examine three related questions: What are the characteristics of armed rebellions in the region? What are the external dimensions to these armed rebellions? And, what are the implications for the region - for instance, for ASEAN cooperative regionalism?

ASEAN is the focus of this study, as the achievement in 1999 of the 'ASEAN Ten', with the entry of Kampuchea, indicates a regional Southeast Asian dynamic at work - one that, however, may be limited by internal weakness and strife, particularly if armed rebellions include an external element involving other ASEAN states.
Characteristics of Regional Armed Rebellions

Civil conflicts within states have erupted far more frequently that have wars between states. Indeed, K.J. Holsti noted that ‘more than two-thirds of all armed conflict in the world since 1945 has taken the form of civil wars’. They have continued to manifest themselves despite the end of the Cold War. Indeed, one article suggested that ‘while for the present, no great powers are at one another’s throats ... civil wars and snarling savageries continue on both sides of the Equator’.

What are some of the characteristics of civil war (which for analytical purposes we will equate with internal armed rebellion)? Charles W. Kegley Jr and Eugene R. Wittkopf have noted three characteristics. The first is their duration. Dan Smith commented that ‘civil conflict resembles a slow torture ... they simply continue. More than half the wars of the 1990s lasted more than five years, two-fifths lasted more than ten years and a quarter more than twenty’. In Southeast Asia, many of the armed rebellions have gone on for many years. The Karen and other ethnic rebellions in Myanmar, for instance, have gone on for some 50 years since the end of the Second World War.

The second characteristic is their severity. The Rwanda conflict was especially savage, with the loss of life totalling some 500,000 in just one month. In Southeast Asia, the most under-reported conflict has been the Mindanao civil war involving Muslim separatists and the Philippine armed forces, a conflict which broke out in the early 1970s and which has caused some 100,000 casualties and over 500,000 refugees.

The third characteristic is their resistance to negotiated settlement. Kegley and Wittkopf have commented that ‘making peace among rival factions that are struggling for power, driven by hatred,

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and poisoned by the inertia of prolonged killing that has become a way of life, is very difficult. There has been no easy solution to the Moro problem in Mindanao, given the long history of Christian-Muslim bitter animosities and conflict there and the determination of the Moros to achieve independence. In Aceh, the sense of separateness is also very strong, given the strong local identity which has been infused with Islam, the proud historical heritage of having been an important kingdom in the past, the sense of alienation and bitterness generated by the brutality of counter-insurgency operations by the Indonesian armed forces, perceived discrimination against Acehnese and what they see as rapaciousness on the part of the central Javanese government.

Another feature can also be added, that of its linkage to an external dimension. The external links between Muslim separatist rebellions is the most significant, involving co-religionists in other ASEAN states. Separatist rebellions in southern Thailand, the southern Philippines and Aceh in Indonesia all have an external dimension, involving co-religionists and ethnic kin elsewhere in the region as well as the support and sympathy of the wider international Islamic community.

Armed Rebellion and Legitimacy in Southeast Asia

The ASEAN states in 1975 were still fragile political entities, with every state facing internal political and economic problems of varying degrees. Malaysia was a tense country, still facing a stubborn communist insurgency amidst racial tensions which had exploded in the deadly May 13 riots in 1969. In Thailand, the Communist Party of Thailand was gaining strength from disaffected students and intellectuals driven underground by the violent military coup and crackdown in 1976, which ended the brief era of democratic government. There was also a stubborn Muslim secessionist movement in the south. The Philippines, labouring under the 'crony capitalism' of Ferdinand Marcos, faced a growing communist insurgency as well as a major Muslim separatist rebellion in the south. In Indonesia, Islamic revivalism and separatist tendencies in various parts of the Indonesian archipelago, such as Aceh and Irian Jaya,

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constituted serious internal security threats. Indonesia's invasion of East Timor in 1976 led to years of unrelenting counter-insurgency warfare against Fretilin guerrillas as well as the deaths of a very substantial proportion of the population of East Timor. In Brunei (which was not a member of ASEAN until 1984), the exiled republicans had found support in Malaysia, which challenged Brunei's colonial status in the United Nations in 1976 and in the same year even considered an East Timor-style solution. Myanmar, which joined ASEAN in 1997, was not unduly affected by the events in Indochina, but it did have to contend with serious armed rebellions by ethnic minorities along its periphery.

The fact that the ASEAN states (except for Thailand) have been artificially cobbled together by departing colonial powers has meant that some have relatively underdeveloped institutions and lack national cohesion. Their governments thus face the problem of legitimacy, which is accentuated in situations where that legitimacy is regarded as suspect due to authoritarian political domination by an élite, such as the military in Thailand and Indonesia, or a political strongman, such as Marcos in the Philippines. In recent times, the real fears of a break-up of Indonesia, Yugoslavia-style, given the ethnic, religious, political, economic and social fissures in that country in the post-Suharto era, have demonstrated that this problem of legitimacy is very real, at least in the case of some countries in the region.

The ASEAN states thus exhibit the classic feature of many decolonised developing countries; that is, the lack of a close fit between nation and state. They are in fact multinational or multi-ethnic states, where the dominant ethnic group invariably holds the reins of power over significant ethnic minorities that are often located at the periphery. There are further complications due to differences in religion, geography and historical experiences. The nation-building efforts of the dominant group, however, often require the subordination of the minorities, creating grievances that tend to find expression in separatism or irredentism.

Although not all internal challenges take the form of armed rebellion, political opposition to the ruling regime's legitimacy, which itself may lack a broad support base, can be strong. This frequently occurs despite the ruling regime's attempts at legitimation through various devices, such as carefully supervised general elections. These
regimes often respond to the constant political challenges to their legitimacy by coupling their own survival with that of the state.

Such phenomena may also reflect the lack of broad-based political consensus on what constitutes the state. As Muthiah Alagappa has noted:

If the idea of the state ... lacks broad societal consensus, then the physical base of the state and its organising ideology and the legitimacy of the incumbent regime are frequently contested, and internal security becomes a primary concern.\(^7\)

The importance of political legitimacy is explained by Azar and Moon:

The effective leadership strength, the people's perceived relevance of national strategy, and social and cultural integration derive from the level of legitimacy which a government or regime in power enjoys ... legitimacy relates to whether citizens are loyal and willingly support state policies - whether they accept the authority of the state and believe existing institutions are functionally competent, legally right and morally proper.\(^8\)

The lack of political legitimacy, which includes the lack of a common belief in a given political and social order, has been a major cause of the armed rebellions that have taken place or are still in progress in some of the ASEAN states.\(^9\) Some, such as the communists, have sought to overthrow the national government in favour of a regime more representative of the aspirations of the people. Others, such as ethnic minorities, do not accept the legitimacy of the central government and seek either an irredentist agenda or outright secession to form their own separate states.

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Table 1.1: Major Armed Rebellions in the ASEAN States since 1945

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Armed Rebellions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brunei</td>
<td>Partai Rakyat Brunei (1962)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>Khmer Rouge (1970-75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Khmer Rouge/Khmer People's National Liberation Front/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moulinaka (1979-92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Madiun communist rebellion (1948)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Darul Islam (1948-62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PRRI Permesta (1958-61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organisasi Papua Merdeka (1963-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partai Komunis Indonesia (1965)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aceh Merdeka (1976-79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fretilin (1976-99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GPK Aceh (1989- )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Communist Party of Malaya (1948-89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Huk communist rebellion (1946-54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New People's Army (1969- )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moro National Liberation Front (1972-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moro Islamic Liberation Front (1982-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Abu Sayaff (1993- )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Communist Party of Malaya (1948-89)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Barisan Revolusi Nasional (1960- )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communist Party of Thailand (1965- )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pattani United Liberation Organisation (1968- )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Pattani (1971- )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Vietnam</td>
<td>National Liberation Front (1958-75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Le Front Unifie de Liberation des Races Opprimees (FULRO) (1964-75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Le Mouvement pour l'Autonomie des Hauts-Plateaux (1961-75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laos</td>
<td>Pathet Lao (1951-75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Le Ligue de Resistance Meo (1946-75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>Burma Communist Party (1948- )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some 24 ethnically related armed rebellions (1948- )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The CPM, which had Singaporean members, considered Singapore to be a part of Malaya and therefore constituted a security problem for Singapore as well, although its operations there were clearly constrained by the island-state's small size and urban nature, as well as the vigilance of its internal security apparatus.

Table 1 shows the major armed rebellions in Southeast Asia since the end of the Second World War.

These rebellions reflect the absence of a basic consensus in domestic politics, and also point to the fact that many of the ruling regimes are in fact narrowly based. Suharto, for instance, seized power in the midst of a bloodbath in 1965. In Thailand, successive military coups demonstrated the military’s power and influence over politics. In the Philippines, Marcos subverted the democratic process when he declared Martial Law in 1972 and ruled to benefit a band of elite cronies. In Myanmar, a military regime seized power in 1962, and military regimes have since maintained strong, authoritarian rule. Myanmar also annulled the results of the free elections in 1990 and persecuted the victors. Not surprisingly, some of the most virulent and extensive rebellions have been communist revolts. These revolts have sought to replace the central government with an alternative regime which the rebels felt would better reflect the aspirations of the majority of the people. Much of the impetus towards communist rebellion has petered out over time, given the general economic development of the region and the subsequent success of counter-insurgency operations by the national governments.

Indeed, within the region, the anxieties following the events of 1975 in Indochina had given way by the 1980s to a growing confidence that economic development promised to enhance regime legitimacy. The process of regime legitimation has thus focused more on economic development. Regimes claim the right to rule in the name of economic development, which, it is claimed, will bring ‘resilience’ and security to the state and its population.

Moreover, the global strategic changes occasioned by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the end of the Cold War between communist and capitalist blocs, have been reflected in the region. Not only did Vietnam lose the backing of its chief supporter, the Soviet Union; it also lost any ideological reason to support communist movements. China, too, has embarked on economic modernisation with Maoist communist ideology taking a back seat. The demise of the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) in 1989 exemplified the trend. These developments were generally credited with improving the internal security outlook for the ASEAN states.

While the issue of legitimacy at the central level faded with institutionalisation, the spread of democracy and economic
development, central governments have found it hard to win the allegiance of the periphery. Most of the internal rebellions listed in Table 1.1 which are still extant are ethnically based separatist movements.

Armed secession or separatist movements, with armed insurgency wings and even control of their own territory, continue to trouble some of the ASEAN states. A major armed separatist movement continues to exist in the southern Philippines, namely the Moro Muslim rebellion. In Thailand, Malay Muslim separatist movements continue to be active, although their agenda is irredentist in nature, involving union with Malaysia. Indonesia had for years faced the thorny issue of East Timor, and to a lesser extent, Irian Jaya. There has also been long-running Muslim separatist agitation in Aceh in northern Sumatra. In Myanmar, the long-running Karen separatist rebellion appeared to be crushed by the late 1990s, although political opposition to the military regime remains strong, with the problem of legitimacy unresolved. Finally, there has been the problem of armed communist rebellions in Thailand and, more significantly, in the Philippines, while the long-running communist insurgency in Malaysia has only fairly recently been concluded.

These separatist movements are not merely based on territorial grounds; underlying their virulence has been a sense of community, which provides a network of communications and a basis for leadership. Some of the most persistent separatist movements have depended greatly on a consciousness of past importance as a state. The Muslim sultanates of Aceh, Sulu and Pattani were, until recent times, historical power centres, providing self-confidence and a network of leaders who retained their prestige. Indeed, it is the sense of being historically and culturally coherent communities that underlies their sense of nationality, of having a right to exist as separate nation-states. Their armed rebellion has been expressed in Islamic terms, not surprisingly given the central role of Islam in their communities. This has also lent a certain ‘rightness’ to their crusade, as well as allowing appeals to the broader national/international Islamic community for their support. The cases of Irian Jaya and East Timor are also interesting as both were not originally part of the Republic of

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Indonesia, having being forcibly incorporated in 1962 and 1976 respectively.

Thus, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, there remain serious challenges emanating from armed rebellion in the region. In addition, the issue of Islamic fundamentalist extremism has been raised in recent years in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. In particular, there have been several Islamic groups which envision alternative or separate Islamic states, and which may be prepared to use force to achieve their objectives, given the right circumstances and level of support. The evidence of extremist groups in Malaysia and Indonesia, and the violent activities of the Abu Sayaff terrorist group in the Philippines, are manifestations of this threat. Fears have also been raised in recent times over the broader question of Islamic fundamentalism, as well as the implications for the region should Aceh and Mindanao manage to secede and become independent states. In addition, the external dimension of Muslim separatism has heightened mistrust among states in the region.
ARMED SEPARATIST REBELLIONS

Armed separatism can be defined as 'a process whereby an ethnic group ... seeks to secede or gain autonomy from the control, de facto and de jure, of a given state, through an organised and purposeful use of force, alone or in combination with other means'.¹ A broader interpretation is provided by David Horowitz, who defines it as 'attempts by an ethnic group claiming a homeland to withdraw with its territory from the authority of a larger state of which it is part'.²

As noted earlier, these separatist movements are not based on territorial grounds alone, but are also based on a sense of community, which provides a network of communications and a basis for leadership. As McVey has noted, some of the most serious and persistent separatist movements have depended greatly on a consciousness of past importance as a state. The fact that the Muslim sultanates of Aceh, Sulu (in the southern Philippines) and Pattani (in southern Thailand) were historical power centres, enduring until recent times, provided self-confidence and a network of leaders who have retained their prestige.³

Despite decades of independence and nation-building, the issue of armed separatism has remained very much alive in the internal politics of some of the ASEAN states. There have been several major armed separatist movements in the ASEAN states since 1975: the armed Muslim separatist movements in the southern Philippines, southern Thailand and Aceh, the Free Papuan Movement in Irian Jaya, the East Timorese resistance movement and the Karen rebellion in

¹ Sukhumbhand Paribatra and Chai-Anan Samudavaniya, 'Factors Behind Armed Separatism: A Framework for Analysis' in Lim and Vani (eds), Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia, p.32.
³ Ruth McVey, 'Separatism and the Paradoxes of the Nation-State in Perspective' in Lim and Vani (eds), Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia, p.12.
Myanmar (the most significant, although a number of smaller ethnic groups have rebelled since 1948). Of these, the East Timor movement has had the greatest success, achieving independence through a UN-supervised referendum in 1999. On the other hand, the Karens have only recently been defeated by the central government in Myanmar.

In the aftermath of the communist victory in 1975, Laos also had to contend with a small-scale insurgent movement dominated by Hmong tribespeople trained and armed by the United States during the Vietnam War. The Hmong insurgents, supported by the anti-communist Lao community abroad, operated out of Hmong refugee camps in Thailand with the tacit assistance of Thai military officers. However, they failed to seriously threaten the regime. With the improvement in relations with Thailand in the 1990s and the admission of Laos into ASEAN in 1997, Thai support for insurgent activity has declined.4

Vietnam has had to contend with scattered opposition from remnants of the anti-communist regime in the south but has not faced serious internal security problems since 1975. This study will therefore exclude Vietnam, given the lack of any serious current security threat from armed rebellion there.

While some of the movements cited above are Islamic in character, their separatist demands reflect their claims to difference and the right to exist as separate nation-states. In East Timor and Irian Jaya, the resistance to Indonesian rule has been based on the forced incorporation of these areas into Indonesia, East Timor in a brutal invasion in 1976 and Irian Jaya earlier in 1962. The Christian nature of the peoples in these two areas is significant in the context of their sense of separate national identities and the rejection of the Javanese Muslim/abangan central Indonesian government and its institutions as a foreign imposition.

In all cases of separatism, one can detect the clash between the dominant group and its cultural values and the subordinate one with its own religious-cultural identification. The national identity is invariably defined in terms of the dominant group's values and culture, with other groups at the periphery tending to be left out.

Thus, Thai nationality, which revolves around Buddhism, Thai culture and language, and the Thai monarchy, is alien to the Malay

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minority in southern Thailand, who subscribe to Islam and have their own royal traditions, language, history and culture. In Thailand, the policy of assimilation, since abandoned, had resulted in the replacement of traditional adat and shariah laws with Thai laws, the introduction of compulsory Thai education, the staffing of the local administration with Thais and, until 1977, a policy of not hiring Muslims as local officials.

Similarly, in the southern Philippines, the Muslim Moros are an anomaly in a country dominated by Catholics heavily influenced by Spanish and American culture. As W.K. Che Man has pointed out, the Malay Muslims of both Pattani and Mindanao have been historically autonomous and distinct peoples, with the persistence of the separatist movements an indicator of their will to survive, their struggles for independence being characterised by periodic resurgence and recession depending on internal and external factors.\(^5\)

The case of Aceh is more complicated, but Aceh's long and proud historical tradition and strict adherence to Islam have been factors that underlie a fierce sense of independence and alienation from Jakarta. The Acehnese adhere to a much stricter form of Islam compared to the more abangan or nominal Muslim lifestyle of the Javanese, who have dominated the bureaucracy and the armed forces, much to the resentment of the Acehnese.

Similarly, the East Timorese and the Melanesian people of Irian Jaya felt threatened by the dominance of the central Javanese government, which was imposing its own ideology, values and institutions onto areas which, prior to 1975 and 1962 respectively, were not even part of Indonesia. In Myanmar, ethnic Karen and other minorities along the country's periphery have long dreamed of their own statehoods, separate from the dominant Buddhist Burmans. In all the above cases, a deep sense of alienation from the dominant central authority can be cited as the root cause of separatism.

Paribatra and Samudavanija have succinctly noted that:

In post-colonial Southeast Asia ... it has been conveniently forgotten by central governments that the constructing of what is more accurately a state-nation, merely means that external or

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Figure 2.1: Mindanao
western imperialism had been replaced by an internalized one, which is potentially more brutal and enduring.\textsuperscript{6}

It is therefore not surprising that armed separatism occurs as a means of expressing frustration and an attempt to redress the situation through the use of force. Since peaceful secession is virtually out of the question in centralised nationalistic states such as Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia and Myanmar, armed separatism is the only solution.

**The Moro Rebellion in the Philippines**

The Moro rebellion in the Philippines has been the largest and most persistent of the armed separatist movements in the region since 1975. The roots of the conflict go well back into colonial history, when the Islamisation of the Philippine islands was halted by the Spaniards, who arrived in 1565. They defeated the Moros in the north and continually attacked the Moro sultanates in Mindanao and the Sulu islands in the south for the next 350 years (see Figure 2.1). Despite these attempts, the Spaniards were never able to completely subdue the Moros due to the strength of their resistance. The Moros subsequently disputed the handover of all the Philippine islands, including Moro lands in the south, to the United States in 1898 following the Spanish-American War of that year. Anti-American resistance was crushed in a brutal campaign of pacification. After that, the situation was aggravated by a massive influx of Catholic settlers from the north.\textsuperscript{7}

By the 1960s, the Moros had become a minority in many parts of their traditional homeland, with many losing their land to the immigrant settlers through dubious legal transactions or outright confiscation. Catholics outnumber Muslims in most provinces in the south today. The problem of growing Moro landlessness was compounded by the settlement of many surrendered communist Huk rebels who were given land in the south. Violent confrontations

\textsuperscript{6} Paribatra and Samudavanija, ‘Factors Behind Armed Separatism’, p.41.

\textsuperscript{7} Eliseo R. Mercado, ‘Culture, Economics and Revolt in Mindanao: The Origins of the MNLF and the Politics of Moro Separatism’ in Lim and Vani (eds), *Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia*, pp. 168-75.
between Muslims and Catholics became so serious that President Marcos imposed martial law in 1972.8

The very real grievances of the Moros were reinforced by a growing sense of Muslim identity associated with the worldwide Islamic resurgence. New mosques were built and contacts with Islamic organisations in the Middle East, Indonesia and Malaysia were established. In 1969, the Mindanao Independence Movement (MIM) was created and it vowed to establish an independent state in Mindanao and the Sulu and Palawan islands.9 At about the same time, other radical Muslim organisations, the Union of Islamic Forces and Organisations (UIFO) and the Ansar El Islam, were also established. Overseas sympathisers in the Middle East, notably Libya, established an Islamic Directorate of the Philippines to coordinate overseas assistance. The goal of the Moros was independence; this was clearly stated in the MIM constitution, which said that ‘the policy of isolation and dispersal of the Muslim community by the government ... has been detrimental to the Muslims and Islam’ and that ‘Islam being a communal religion and ideology, and at the same time a way of life, must have a definite territory of its own for the exercise of its tenets and teaching, and for the observance of its sharia and adat laws’.10

In 1969, a group of Muslims from the MIM and the UIF0 set up military training in camps in the Malaysian state of Sabah, where they received the support of its then chief minister, Tun Mustapha, with the tacit agreement of the Malaysian government.11 Another group also apparently trained in Malaysia in areas close to the Thai border.12 A reason for the Malaysian government’s support was its desire to retaliate against Marcos’s sponsorship in 1968 of military training in Corregidor for an intended separatist rebellion in Sabah, which is claimed by the Philippines. This operation had fallen apart and became public knowledge when the trainees mutinied.13

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8 ibid., pp.160-1.
9 ibid., pp. 156-7.
10 ibid.
This support from Malaysia has been crucial to the formation of the Moro rebel armies, for the Malaysian trainees returned and went on to organise and lead separatist guerrilla armies. One of them, Nur Misuari, a former student at the University of the Philippines, founded the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1972. Misuari was able to capitalise on popular Moro resentment over the influx of Catholic settlers and the general economic poverty in the south. The MIM was dissolved in its favour, and the MNLF also succeeded in obtaining the support of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM), the Organisation of Islamic Conferences (OIC) and Libya. Large numbers of Muslims joined the MNLF as it launched a jihad against the central government.

The MNLF's military arm, the Bangsa Moro Army, conducted a bitter guerrilla campaign against the Philippine armed forces. Over 100,000 deaths occurred in a huge civil war, with over 500,000 fleeing as refugees. The scale of fighting was such that the Philippine government felt compelled to negotiate a settlement. The result was the 1976 Tripoli Agreement, which was brokered by the OIC. Misuari compromised by accepting autonomy for 13 of Mindanao's 21 provinces, rather than outright independence. However, mutual recriminations saw the agreement break down almost as soon as it was signed, and the conflict resumed. Tragically, it took years of further fighting before a truncated version of the Tripoli Agreement came into effect in 1996.

A split within the MNLF saw the setting up of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The MNLF saw a number of setbacks, with top leaders defecting either to cooperate with the government or to join the MILF. In 1982, another split occurred when another MNLF leader established the MNLF Reformist Group (MNLF-RG) with its headquarters in Malaysia, reflecting the continued tacit Malaysian support for the Moros, a result of religious and ethnic identification and also a pressure tactic to dissuade the Philippines from actively pursuing its claim to Sabah.

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14 ibid.
16 See Appendix 1.
17 Mercado, 'Culture, Economics and Revolt in Mindanao', pp. 164-5.
The MILF has been critical of the leftist orientation of the MNLF, and has sought to emphasise its Islamic credentials and identity. Its eventual objective is an independent Muslim Moro state. Led by Hashim Salamat, a religious leader trained at Cairo's Al-Azhar University, the MILF by the 1990s had become the main Moro rebel movement. It is well organised and has several imams or Muslim religious leaders as members. Its armed wing, the Bangsa-Moro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF), has grown tremendously, eclipsing the MNLF.18

The BIAF is also militarily proficient, led by officers trained by ex-British Special Forces members in Sabah in the 1960s, and bolstered by periodic large shipments of arms such as Russian-made RPG-2 rocket-propelled grenade launchers, mortars and machine-guns, and allegedly US-made Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, that were originally supplied to the Afghan mujahideen in their war of resistance against the Soviet Union in the 1980s. Many members of the BIAF also gained combat experience in Afghanistan as volunteers fighting alongside the anti-Soviet mujahideen resistance forces.19 While the MNLF is confined to isolated Sulu and draws its support from the Tausug ethnic group there, the MILF has the support of 1.6 million Maguindanaos who live on the larger island of Mindanao, as well as the largest Muslim ethnic group, the 1.9 million Maranaos.20

The MILF has clashed with government forces in over 100 incidents since 1986, with a major clash in December 1994 when the government challenged the MILF's arrangements to provide protection for a South Korean company working on an irrigation project in North Cotabato province.21 However, most of the confrontations have been small-scale clashes. The government has concentrated on negotiations with the more amenable MNLF, the most internationally visible group. It has largely left the MILF, which will not compromise on an independent Muslim Moro state, alone. The MILF has wisely avoided major clashes with the government, and has thus been able to concentrate on building up its strength throughout the 1980s and the early 1990s. Today, the MILF claims to be able to field 120,000

21 ibid., p.22.
mujahideen in four fully armed divisions, a force numerically superior to the entire Philippine armed forces but one which top Philippine commanders conceded was possible. Western military intelligence estimates put its standing army at 35,000, still a formidable force.

An effort on this scale stems from the MILF's ability to obtain funds from sympathetic Islamic organisations abroad, in Malaysia, Pakistan and the Middle East, and the fact that it has the support of Moro religious leaders. The MILF today is in control of large swaths of at least seven provinces in Mindanao, with the present Philippine government unwilling or powerless to challenge the movement. In fact, local officials have little choice but to actively cooperate with it, given its control on the ground. The MILF has its own 80-strong Consultative Assembly and draws popular support from Muslims throughout Mindanao. In short, the MILF acts as a de facto government overseeing large areas of territory in Mindanao.

In contrast, the MNLF is more secular in orientation and more willing to compromise. The overthrow of Marcos in 1986 brought to power Corazon Aquino, who was prepared to grant a measure of autonomy to Mindanao. The MILF refused to participate, and the central government proceeded to negotiate only with Misuari's MNLF. Misuari was prepared to give up his demands for a separate state, but there were practical difficulties in defining what autonomy meant, as Muslims were now a majority in only 5 of the 23 provinces of Mindanao and Sulu. Moreover, the Philippine military opposed the peace negotiations. The MILF also launched attacks on the government and even attacked MNLF units in a bid to scuttle the negotiations.

In any event, Misuari broke off talks in mid-1987 after accusing the armed forces of violating the ceasefire agreement. It was also clear to him that Aquino was not prepared to fully implement the Tripoli Agreement. Nevertheless, Aquino proceeded to establish the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao in 1990, which however is too limited in scope for the Moro rebels to accept, as it covers only four provinces and the city of Marawi, where the Muslims are in a majority.

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Misuari, however, has proved amenable to negotiations. In October-November 1993, with the assistance of the Indonesian government and the OIC, the central Philippine government met with MNLF representatives and signed an agreement to establish an autonomous region in Mindanao, as well as a ceasefire agreement. Several committees were set up to resolve the issues relating to autonomy. In a significant gesture, Indonesian president Suharto congratulated the participants and expressed his hope that the process would continue until a comprehensive peace settlement was reached. However, the main obstacle had been the insistence of the government that it was bound by the constitution to organise a referendum on autonomy, something which the MNLF was opposed to since Catholics outnumber Muslims in most of these provinces. The impasse weakened the MNLF, which suffered defections and the loss of a substantial support base to the MILF. Its military position was also weakened following the surrender of a number of its military commands in response to the Philippine government's reconciliation efforts. In March 1993, for instance, as many as 500 MNLF rebels surrendered, citing their trust in President Ramos's programmes.

The OIC and the Indonesian government have proven to be important moderating influences, and their consistent support for the MNLF led to its international prominence. The MNLF has thus been amenable to negotiations despite the fact that autonomy and not outright independence is involved. On its part, the Philippine government has welcomed the intervention and involvement of the OIC and the Indonesian government, recognising their vital moderating role and also the reality that it could not defeat the rebels on the battlefield. In December 1993, the OIC secretary-general visited Manila to discuss the outcome of the talks and he took the opportunity to commend President Ramos's 'sincere desire' to resolve the issue in a 'just and lasting way'. In a pointed snub to the Islamic-oriented MILF, he commended the efforts for peace made by 'the sole legitimate

representative of the Muslims of the southern Philippines, Nur Misuari’.29

However, a measure of the failure of Misuari to command popular support or even full support within his own ranks was reflected in the military attacks waged by renegade MNLF commands, which refused to accept the ceasefire agreement or the negotiations, launching a wave of bombings in southern cities in 1993 and 1994.30

The peace process is also hampered by the activities of the extremist Islamic movement, the Abu Sayaff (literally ‘sword bearer’) group. Founded by Amilhussin Jumaani and Abdurajak Abubakar Janjalani in 1991, this armed terrorist group is opposed to any religious accommodation with the Christians and believes that violent action is the only solution. A wave of violence broke out in 1993, with the Abu Sayaff targeting Catholic civilians in a number of atrocities.31 Although it is estimated to be only about 500 strong and unlike the MILF does not control territory or a regular army, it is well led by Muslim veterans of the Afghanistan conflict. In addition, it has been proven skilful in waging urban terrorism. The group, which operates in Sulu Island and Basilan, suffered a setback when government troops attacked and captured its largest camp on Basilan in June 1994, killing 41 guerrillas in the fighting.32 However, the Abu Sayaff group has been able to attract the sympathy and active support of a number of ex-MNLF supporters disillusioned with Misuari’s leadership, particularly his willingness to negotiate with the government.33

The Philippine armed forces concentrated on destroying the Abu Sayaff group, claiming in August 1994 that it had been ‘completely annihilated’.34 However, on 4 April 1995, 200 guerrillas of the Abu Sayaff arrived in the Christian town of Ipi and killed 57 people, setting the town centre on fire. The guerrillas took hostages

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33 GMA-7 TV (Quezon City, in Tagalog), 0930 GMT 30 June 1994, in BBC/SWB FE/2039 B/3 (9), 5 July 1994.
34 People’s TV4 (Quezon City, in Tagalog), 1500 GMT 10 August 1994, in BBC/SWB FE/2072 B/5 (17), 12 August 1994.
and retreated when government troops arrived. The attack also exposed the government's military ineptitude: after four battles, the pursuing and numerically superior government forces had failed to defeat the retreating rebels.\textsuperscript{35} The attack came at an awkward time for Ramos, with congressional and local elections to be held in May 1995, undermining Ramos's claim that the internal security situation was under control. On his part, Misuari condemned the violence and stated that the attack was meant to sabotage peace talks between the MNLF and the government.\textsuperscript{36} Misuari, however, admitted that some of his top commanders had opposed the peace negotiations and had been attracted to Abu Sayaff. More pointedly, the retreating rebels in the Ipil attack took refuge in an MNLF camp registered under the peace talks and therefore could not be attacked by government troops.\textsuperscript{37}

More seriously, the Abu Sayaff group has connections with international Muslim terrorist groups. Indeed, today's most wanted international terrorist leader, ex-Saudi Osama bin Laden, had sent the Pakistani terrorist Ramzi Yousef to train the Abu Sayaff in the use of sophisticated high explosives. Yousef had achieved infamy with daring terrorist acts, such as his bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York in 1993. Bin Laden also helped to bankroll the activities of the group.\textsuperscript{38} With training and money provided by international Islamic terrorists, the Abu Sayaff group was able to wreck havoc in the southern Philippines.

Misuari's willingness to compromise has been encouraged as much by the decline in MNLF strength as by the Islamic international community's moderating influence. The MILF took advantage of the ceasefire to build up its own strength, to the point that it is now the dominant Moro rebel group, not the MNLF. The Philippine government has tacitly acknowledged the strategic reality by refraining from challenging the MILF, with local authorities making their own arrangements with MILF officials and commanders. Thus, concurrent with the growing strength of the extremist Abu Sayaff

\textsuperscript{36} 'Murder on Mindanao', \textit{The Economist}, 8 April 1995, p.28.
\textsuperscript{37} ibid.
group and the MILF in the 1990s, moderates such as Misuari have been increasingly sidelined by the strategic realities on the ground.

Realising this, Misuari finally signed a peace agreement in August 1996, in which the MNLF would establish a council to oversee development projects in Mindanao, with a Muslim autonomous region to be established after a referendum in 1999. The MILF, however, denounced the agreement and declared that it was taking over the revolutionary movement. MILF chairman Hashim Salamat stated that ‘the Ramos-Misuari agreement does not address the Mindanao Muslims’ demand for self-rule. It is an outright violation of the Tripoli agreement’. To underline their aspirations, some 60,000 Muslims gathered in the southern town of Sultan Kudarat and issued a call for an independent Islamic state. The majority Christians also refused to accept the agreement, mounting a number of public demonstrations against it to show their opposition to any concession to Muslims. This obviously does not augur well for a lasting and durable peace.

After years of refusing to join the negotiating table despite overtures from the government, the MILF finally met with Philippine government representatives in January 1997 and agreed to begin formal peace talks. However, the MILF set a tough agenda, stating that the peace talks would discuss the ‘Bangsamoro problem’; that is, an independent Muslim state. After tough negotiations, all that was achieved was a tenuous ceasefire which officials hoped would create a more conducive atmosphere for talks on a possible peace agreement.

However, a large number of clashes in 1997 resulted in 44,000 refugees and an unspecified death toll, with the Philippine military continuing to deploy four of its six army divisions in Mindanao. In January 1999, full-scale fighting erupted after President Estrada declared that ‘if they want war, we will give them war’. The

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41 *Straits Times Interactive*, at <asia1.com.sg/straitstimes>, 6 December 1996.
44 *Straits Times Interactive*, 15 November 1997.
46 *Straits Times Interactive*, 27 January 1999.
Philippine armed forces launched a major offensive on 26 January, prompting the MILF to declare that ‘we will meet force with equal force’. Underlying the outbreak of hostilities was the perceptible failure of Nur Misuari to bring about any development to the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, enabling the MILF to exploit pent-up frustrations and recruit even more members into its ranks. Indeed, Moro landlessness had been compounded by continuing poverty and unemployment, which was not helped by the corruption of the local bureaucracy, discrimination against Muslims and the lack of regional development. Both sides have hardened their stance, with the MILF insisting on an independent Muslim state, and President Estrada stating his view in graphic terms – ‘over my dead body’.

Despite the fighting, mediation by the OIC and the Muslim World League resulted in formal peace negotiations commencing in October 1999. Encouraged by East Timor’s independence in 1999, the MILF demanded an independent Islamic state. Maintaining a hardening stance, the MILF declared that ‘the same demand will be aired, 20 years or even 100 years from now because the Bangsamoro people believe that independence is the ultimate solution to the Mindanao problem’. In response, President Estrada rejected the call for independence, saying that ‘we must keep in mind that we have only one sovereign republic, one sovereign territory and one armed forces’. In January 2000, he announced that if the MILF failed to conclude peace talks with the government by June, the armed forces would launch all-out war. The main stumbling block to meeting MILF demands was not merely the central government’s opposition to an independent Moro state, but the fact that Catholics outnumber Muslims in most provinces in Mindanao. The Catholics are not likely to acquiesce to this and would most certainly take up arms to oppose such an eventuality.

Indeed, a number of vigilante groups formed with the avowed aim of combating the Muslim separatists have sprung up in the south.

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47 ibid.
50 Straits Times, 22 December 1999, p.2.
For instance, the Black Crescent militia group was established in early 2000 in response to the continuing violence. The group is presently organising Christians in the south and arming them to fight the Muslim separatists. The Black Crescent is, however, only the latest of a number of such groups which can be found today in Basilan, North Cotabato and other areas where Muslim separatists operate. They have also played their part in increasing the level of violence in the southern provinces. For instance, the Christian vigilante group the Sagrados Corazon (Sacred Heart) has been responsible for a number of revenge killings targeted against Muslims.52

In spite of the ongoing peace talks between the MILF and the government, which had begun in 1997, armed clashes have continued. Clashes in November 1999 left a number dead on both sides, with 20,000 people fleeing the fighting. Predictably, each side blamed the other for insincerity and for affecting the peace talks.53

In late November 1999, the new Indonesian president Gus Dur entered the picture by suggesting a meeting with the MILF during his state visit to the Philippines. The meeting eventually failed to materialise following opposition from the Philippine government, but it was unlikely that Gus Dur would have encouraged the MILF to secede, given a similar problem in Aceh in Indonesia. In February 2000, peace talks with the MILF collapsed amidst fighting in North Cotabato.54 The MILF may have concluded that it could use force to press for more concessions given the current perception of a weakened Philippine president embroiled in various domestic controversies.55 The armed forces retaliated by conducting a massive attack on a major MILF base, killing over 300 guerrillas in the process.56 In response, the MILF launched a series of bomb attacks on buses, a radio station and a ferry, causing a number of civilian deaths and injuries. The fighting created a fresh refugee crisis, involving some

55 Straits Times, 25 April 2000, p.25.
18,000 people who fled to Marawi City.\textsuperscript{57} In March 2000, the Abu Sayaff group began kidnapping civilians to exchange for food and medicine.\textsuperscript{58} In response, Christian vigilantes abducted Muslims, including relatives of Abu Sayaff leaders, threatening to execute them if hostages were not released.\textsuperscript{59}

Demonstrating its links with international terrorist groups, the Abu Sayaff demanded that the US government release three Islamic militants jailed for terrorist activities in the West. They included Ramzi Yousef, who is serving a life sentence for masterminding the 1993 World Trade Center bombing in New York and plotting to bomb airliners in the United States. Another militant named was Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, a Muslim cleric jailed for plotting to bomb various targets in New York. The Abu Sayaff group stated that American citizens would be targeted if these demands were not met. It also had other demands, including the removal of all Christian crosses from public places in Basilan.\textsuperscript{60}

The daring raid on the Malaysian island resort of Sipadan Island in April 2000 gained the Abu Sayaff group worldwide notoriety. The group kidnapped 21 hostages, including twelve Western tourists - the other nine were Malaysians.\textsuperscript{61} At one bold stroke, the Abu Sayaff group was able to put the separatist agenda before a worldwide audience in an attempt to internationalise the issue. It demanded a separate Islamic state in the southern Philippines and a probe into alleged maltreatment of Filipinos in Sabah as conditions for the release of the hostages.\textsuperscript{62} At the same time, by involving the Malaysian government (since the act of terrorism took place on Malaysian territory) and foreign tourists, the Abu Sayaff leaders hoped that foreign pressure could be brought to bear on the Philippine government to stop its offensive against both the Abu Sayaff group and its close ally, the MILF.\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{58} Straits Times, 29 March 2000, p.35.
\textsuperscript{59} Straits Times, 5 April 2000, p.39.
\textsuperscript{60} Straits Times, 19 April 2000, p.40.
\textsuperscript{61} Straits Times, 27 April 2000, p.20.
\textsuperscript{62} Straits Times, 27 May 2000, p.29.
\textsuperscript{63} Straits Times, 26 April 2000, p.66.
Since embarking on its policy of kidnappings, the Abu Sayaff group has not only obtained large sums of ransom cash, it has also attracted a large number of new recruits, lured by the success of the group.⁶⁴

The Sipadan kidnappings inevitably drew the Malaysian government into the fray. The Malaysian government pledged to do its best to obtain the release of the hostages but, in doing so, incurred the displeasure of the Philippine government, which was anxious to prevent any internationalisation of the Moro issue. In late May, Malaysian prime minister Mahathir was forced to reject accusations that the Malaysian government was acting unilaterally when its ambassador met secretly with Abu Sayaff leaders to discuss the hostage issue, claiming that whatever action Malaysia took had the consent of the Philippine government.⁶⁵

In response to the challenge mounted by the Abu Sayaff group, President Estrada vowed on 7 May that ‘if they persist in engaging in terrorist acts, we will give them the full might of the armed forces’. The general security situation in the south took a turn for the worse on 30 April when the MILF formally pulled out of the peace talks. In response, Estrada stated uncompromisingly: ‘I offer peace to those who want peace, but I promise war to those who want war’. On 8 May, Nur Misuari described the situation as ‘a shambles’. Full-scale conflict ensued, with Estrada vowing that the war would go on until the MILF and the Abu Sayaff group were both crushed.⁶⁶ The armed forces threw a cordon around Abu Sayaff strongholds and also launched a series of attacks to destroy all MILF camps.

In response to the anarchy, Malaysia’s defence minister Najib Abdul Razak suggested in September that the Philippine government should talk to moderate Muslim leaders instead of relying on military force to resolve the conflict. Najib argued for a ‘comprehensive approach’ in addressing security issues in the south, taking into account political, economic and military elements to resolve the conflict.⁶⁷ Najib’s intervention was predictably not well received, but his point that a military solution would not be feasible was

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⁶⁵ *Straits Times*, 24 May 2000, p.33.
⁶⁷ *Straits Times*, 27 September 2000, p.41.
demonstrated by the fact that, despite its best efforts, the Philippine armed forces could not apprehend the Abu Sayaff kidnappers, who apparently managed to bribe themselves out of the military cordon.68

At the same time, urban terrorism began to affect the capital Manila, with a number of bomb attacks in May on shopping centres, the airport and a cinema, causing widespread apprehension among the city’s ten million inhabitants.69 On 1 August the Philippine embassy in Jakarta was the target of a bomb attack aimed at the ambassador, who was injured.70 A previously unknown Indonesian group claiming links with the Moro rebels claimed responsibility for this attack.71 Cities in the southern Philippines also suffered a number of terrorist bombing attacks.72

The spate of urban attacks as well as the continuing fighting in the south has affected business confidence and hit the economy, slowing growth and raising the prospect of a recession. Compared to 4.9 per cent growth in the same quarter in 1999, the Philippine economy recorded 3.4 per cent growth in the first quarter in 2000. Analysts also warned that the downturn would deepen if the unrest in the south was not quelled soon. Much of this slump was attributed to the poor performance of the agricultural sector, given that it accounts for just over 20 per cent of the country’s gross domestic product (GDP), with 60 per cent of the country’s rice and corn output coming from the three Mindanao provinces at the centre of the conflict.73

The economic pressure and the growing budget deficit caused by the military campaign against the separatists have in turn threatened the Philippines’ access to assistance provided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as the IMF had set strict guidelines regarding budget deficits as conditions for its financial aid.74 The economic cost, mounting casualties, urban terrorist attacks on Manila and the refugee crisis (by June there were some 500,000 refugees from the fighting) resulted in pressure on President Estrada to offer greater autonomy and to end the offensive against the

69 Asiaweek, 2 June 2000, p.31.
70 Straits Times, 2 August 2000, p.35.
71 Straits Times, 3 August 2000, p.2.
73 Straits Times, 31 May 2000, p.32.
separatists. Estrada’s response was to offer an olive branch to the MILF with the suggestion of greater autonomy, but at the same time he also rejected the demand for an independent state. This was followed by a proposal for a congressional bill to expand the existing autonomous region (consisting of four provinces) in the southern Mindanao region to ten other provinces where the MILF exerts some influence. The caveat, however, was that a referendum would have to be held to ascertain if the residents of these provinces wanted to join such an autonomous region. As the majority of residents are migrant Catholics, the chances of this happening are slim.

Moreover, the MILF is not likely to compromise over its long-term goal of an independent Islamic state. Its military strength, control of territory and the support of radical Muslims overseas have enabled it to plunge the Philippines into an all-out civil war and reprise the earlier conflict with the MNLF, which caused over 100,000 deaths and a refugee crisis, with refugees numbering over 500,000. Despite claims by the government on 23 June 2000 that it had overrun all MILF camps except for its main headquarters in Matanong, Maguindano, the MILF has clearly not been defeated. On the contrary, the dispersal of its fighters would be likely to result in generalised guerrilla warfare, including terrorism in major cities, given its widespread base of support among Muslims in the south and its access to overseas sources of weapons. In addition, there is a growing possibility that the more moderate MNLF, which had won the right to establish an autonomous region in a peace deal in 1996, could abandon the peace deal and be drawn into the fray.

Since the peace accord, the MNLF has suffered massive defections to the MILF, with Nur Misuari increasingly isolated as the political initiative went to the MILF. Moreover, the much-hoped-for economic benefits of autonomy never materialised due to widespread corruption and lack of economic resources. Charging that the government had failed to live up to its commitment to grant genuine self-rule to Muslims and foster development, Nur Misuari openly threatened to take up arms again in June 2000. He even went as far as

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75 Straits Times, 20 June 2000, p.18.
76 Straits Times, 30 May 2000, p.18.
77 Straits Times, 2 June 2000, p.47.
78 ‘Manila Claims Victory in Mindanao War’, Straits Times, 24 June 2000, p.35.
to state that his fighters were retraining and that he might even team up with the MILF, currently the objective of an all-out offensive by the Philippine armed forces. Misuari was also critical of what he claimed was a deliberate attempt by the Philippine armed forces to use MNLF soldiers integrated into the national army to fight the MILF, arguing that they should not be used in this manner as they are 'brothers'.

It has been increasingly recognised that what is feeding the rebellion in the south is not just religion but extreme poverty and unemployment. On 27 February 2000, President Estrada launched a major 24-billion-peso programme in Mindanao to address the region's socio-economic problems. Funded by the World Bank and the European Union, the programme called for the construction of roads, irrigation systems and other infrastructure projects linking Mindanao's 24 provinces, as well as livelihood projects aimed at helping MNLF fighters who have abided by the peace accord signed in 1996. A separate United States Agency for International Development programme was also launched, aimed at improving the efficiency of agriculture. This consisted of post-harvest facilities, credit and financing, production support services and research and development. Yet, all these appeared too little as well as too late, as the conditions for the development projects to proceed are simply not present, given the scale of fighting which ensued in the months after these initiatives were launched.

The Moro problem thus demonstrates all the classic characteristics of a civil war. Its severity is beyond doubt, although it has been interesting that this severity has not, until recently, captured international attention in the manner that Northern Ireland has. The second factor is its duration - the MNLF launched its struggle for independence in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but after almost three decades of fighting, the Moro problem has remained as intractable as ever. Indeed, the third characteristic - that of resistance to negotiated settlement - appears to be present as well. Although the MNLF under Nur Misuari signed a peace accord with the government, the MILF, which is the larger of the two organisations, appears determined to achieve the objective of an independent Moro state.

79 Straits Times, 10 June 2000, p.36.
Given the gravity and intractability of the situation, the Moro problem is likely to continue to bedevil Philippine domestic politics and constitute a serious domestic security challenge for the foreseeable future.

Finally, there is also the added complication of considerable sympathy from co-religionists elsewhere, particularly from Malaysia. The Sabah chief minister, Tun Mustapha, was known to have supported training camps for Muslim Moro separatist rebels prior to his downfall in the 1976 elections.\(^{82}\) However, the Philippines continued to allege Malaysian complicity in the Moro rebellion. In October 1980, the Philippines claimed that Malaysia was tolerating secessionist Moro training camps in Sabah, and that it was acting as a supply base.\(^ {83}\) In April 1982, a television programme aired in Australia claimed that British and Australian mercenaries were training the Moro guerrillas in Malaysia and that they were financed by Libyan leader Colonel Gaddafi.\(^ {84}\) There is some evidence that certain Islamic groups in Malaysia have been involved in aiding the Moros, but it does appear that the Malaysian government had simply not actively prevented them from doing so, in recognition of the potentially serious domestic political fallout from its local Muslim constituency. In any case, the Moros have also attracted support from radical states and regimes in the Middle East, not just from co-religionists in Malaysia. As noted earlier, there have also been charges that the Saudi terrorist, billionaire Osama bin Laden, has been supporting both the Abu Sayaff group and the MILF.\(^ {85}\) Indeed, the MILF itself declared in early 2000 that ten Saudi 'military consultants' had arrived to help its cause.\(^ {86}\)

The unofficial Malaysian support for the Moros has been the main stumbling block to the Philippines dropping its claim to Sabah, as the claim could be used to put pressure on Malaysia to curb the activities of its Moro sympathisers. On the other hand, Malaysia

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believes that the Philippines has been assisting the Catholic Kadazans, such as cooperating with the then Kadazan state government to import Filipino Christians to Sabah in the early 1990s to counterbalance the presence of Muslim refugees. However, large numbers of Filipino Muslims have also settled in Sabah, and been given Malaysian citizenship in an attempt to maintain Malay Muslim dominance over the state. The Malaysian government has also 'turned a blind eye' to the anti-Philippines activities of these exiles.

Philippine relations with Malaysia have therefore been complicated, given Malaysia's alleged role in fomenting the present Moro rebellion during its crucial early years. Relations between the two countries have been problematic at best. The mistrust has accentuated intra-ASEAN tensions and constitutes a significant barrier to the development of cooperative regionalism.

The Aceh Separatist Movement

Armed separatism in Indonesia has been a significant internal security threat to that country. The Aceh rebellion has been significant for its duration, resistance to negotiated settlement and sympathy from abroad, especially from co-religionists in Malaysia, southern Thailand and Libya.

Although the rebellion is heavily Islamic in nature, there are also historical, nationalistic and economic factors at work. Aceh has historically been an independent kingdom and there exist strong local pride and traditions, with Islam as a strong unifying factor and a focal point for nationalist sentiments. Indeed, Aceh was the last part of the Indonesian archipelago to fall to Dutch rule, which was not effectively consolidated until the early twentieth century (see Figure 2.2). Despite that, however, local sentiments and pride have remained strong. This was reflected in 1953, when Aceh joined the abortive Darul Islam rebellion, which had spread from West Java to the Outer Islands and which sought the creation of an Islamic state of Indonesia. More significantly, there has been much resentment over what the local Acehnese see as Javanese domination, corruption and rapaciousness. The poverty, unemployment and backwardness of the province

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87 Samad, 'Internal Variables of Regional Conflicts in ASEAN's International Relations', p.174.
Figure 2.2: Aceh

ANDAMAN SEA

THAILAND

Banda Aceh
Lhokseumawe
Aceh
Langsa
Tapaktuan
Medan

MALAYSIA

Kuala Lumpur
Melaka

SOUTH CHINA SEA

SUMATRA

SINGAPORE

0 200 kilometres
contrast with the presence of huge gas deposits exploited by the Mobil Oil Company, which has benefited mostly non-Acehnese, with the bulk of the revenue siphoned off by Jakarta.\textsuperscript{88} The resentments have been exacerbated by the differences between the pious Muslim culture of Aceh and the more secular, \textit{abangan} culture and lifestyles of the Javanese, who dominate the armed forces and bureaucracy. In addition, the transmigration programme has resulted in Javanese settlers establishing themselves in Aceh, much to the resentment of the local Acehnese.

The strong local Islamic identity and the resentment against Jakarta contributed to the founding of the Aceh independence movement (Aceh Merdeka or Free Aceh) in 1976. This movement is distinguished from the earlier Darul Islam revolt in its desire for secession and independence. While the movement appeared to have been crushed by the Indonesian authorities by 1979, continued local resentment against Jakarta's rule resulted in the revival of separatist sentiments. The brutality of the Indonesian army's response, with widespread allegations of atrocities, contributed to increased resentment and the movement thus sprang back to life. In 1989, Muslim secessionists of the Aceh Merdeka movement were able to launch a series of attacks on police posts and army installations, demonstrating the movement's continued ability to threaten internal security as well as the continued potency of the separatist agenda. The movement is led by Hasan di Tiro, who has been able effectively to use economic and religious discontent to increase support for his cause. Hasan di Tiro obtained the support of Libya, which provided military training for some 600 Acehnese.\textsuperscript{89}

The Indonesian armed forces reacted swiftly and by all accounts in a brutal fashion. The military regarded civilian Acehnese as possible sympathisers, and employed a level of force out of proportion to the actual threat. In late 1990, many headless bodies began appearing in prominent places in Aceh, a macabre military measure to dissuade the population from helping the rebels. The army destroyed homes and executed all those suspected of aiding the rebels.\textsuperscript{90}


\textsuperscript{90} ibid.
In 1991, public executions of suspected rebels were held, and Acehnese refugees fled to Penang in Malaysia as a result of this crackdown. Malaysia's refusal to surrender those accused of rebelling against the Indonesian government indicated considerable sympathy in Malaysia for its Acehnese co-religionists. While an estimated 600 Acehnese were seeking asylum in 1992, only small numbers have been deported back to Indonesia thus far. This has raised suspicions in Indonesia of at least passive complicity in the troubles in Aceh.

Despite international pressure over the crackdown in 1991-92, Indonesia refused the International Red Cross access to the province. Sporadic violence continued, with armed clashes with the separatists as well as massive counter-insurgency sweeps. The Indonesian armed forces were able to keep on top of the situation, however, and the several hundred armed separatists were mostly on the run.

By 1992, the rebellion appeared to have been more or less contained, at a cost of some 2,000 lives. However, the underlying nationalist, religious and economic factors that fuelled strong separatist sentiments have remained intact. Sporadic clashes since then have demonstrated that separatist sentiments remain alive. Indeed, General Feisal Tanjung, then commander of the Indonesian armed forces, acknowledged in September 1994 that despite almost five years having passed after the outbreak of the latest Acehnese rebellion, the province was still facing security problems.

What has enraged the Acehnese and kept alive separatist sentiments has been the acknowledged brutality of the army's actions, which has embittered relations with Jakarta and alienated the local populace. In August 1998, Indonesia's own National Human Rights Commission reported that 781 people in Aceh had been victims of military atrocities over the last nine years.

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92 Straits Times Interactive, 25 December 1996.
93 Age (Melbourne), 22 May 1991.
97 Straits Times Interactive, 3 September 1998.
The end of the Suharto regime in May 1998, following massive street protests, opened the way for more democratic expressions of dissent and emboldened the advocates of secession in various parts of Indonesia, especially in East Timor and Aceh. Not surprisingly, problems in Aceh erupted again in August 1998, when withdrawing Indonesian troops were pelted with stones. Widespread rioting also broke out. The troop withdrawal, which had been in response to accusations by human rights groups and local activists of serious human rights abuses during anti-separatist operations in recent years, was promptly reversed, with the armed forces commander declaring tersely that the length of the military's renewed security presence would depend on the province's people. Indeed, continuing counter-insurgency operations have been characterised by brutality and fear.

Sensing that perhaps the time had come to press their claim for independence more forcefully, the separatists intensified their activities in early 1999. Numerous kidappings, murders of military personnel and frequent ambushes resulted in a very nervous military. In February 1999, the resulting military operations against the rebels caused some 2,000 people to flee their villages. In May 1999, heightened expectations of independence, following the agreement by the new Habibie government to hold a referendum for self-determination in East Timor, resulted in Acehnese campaigning for a similar referendum. The armed forces responded by killing some 41 civilians. In retaliation, Aceh Merdeka stepped up its armed campaign, which included attacks on soldiers and the burning of hundreds of buildings. The spiralling violence led to a huge refugee crisis, with refugees numbering some 100,000. This led to a predictably heavy-handed military response, including the massacre of civilians. The discovery of mass graves and allegations of casual executions of civilians in Beutong Ateuh in West Aceh prompted an outcry and the despatch of a special investigation team by President Habibie.

In July 1999, Free Aceh leader Hasan di Tiro dismissed requests by Indonesian officials for a dialogue. Describing the Javanese as

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98 Ibid.
99 Sunday Times (Singapore), 14 February 1999.
100 Straits Times, 20 July 1999.
'barbaric and uncivilised', he also stated that 'there would be no solution until and unless the Javanese occupation army leaves Aceh'.

Emboldened by the result of the East Timor referendum on 30 August 1999, in which there was overwhelming support for independence, the Aceh separatist movement stepped up its own campaign. This was despite overtures from the new Indonesian president, Abdurrahman Wahid (better known as Gus Dur), who upon taking office in October 1999 ordered the military to scale down its forces in Aceh and made inquiries into allegations of military abuse, although this stopped short of the full-scale investigation demanded by the Acehnese community and Free Aceh leaders. Gus Dur himself inadvertently contributed to the situation in Aceh, given his previous support for Aceh's right to self-determination when he was an opposition leader.

Demonstrating the enhanced influence and power of the Free Aceh movement in the midst of heightened expectations of independence, local government in Aceh was shut down in October 1999 when the separatists ordered local employees to stay away from work. This was followed by the burning of the state parliament on 2 November 1999. On 4 November, a mass rally for independence was attended by some 100,000 people. On 8 November, some 500,000 people rallied for independence. Dismissing calls for dialogue, Hasan di Tiro stated that it was 'stupid' because 'Indonesia will become at least five different countries'.

Indeed, given East Timor's successful bid for secession, there are now widespread fears within Indonesia that Acehnese independence would lead to a breakup of the Indonesian state, with others (such as Riau, Maluku and Irian Jaya) demanding their own independence in such an eventuality. Thus, the Indonesian parliament on 18 November 1999 rebuffed President Wahid's proposal for a referendum in Aceh, even if it was only on autonomy and the imposition of Islamic law, and excluded the possibility of independence. The armed forces

103 Straits Times, 4 November 1999, p.29.
105 Straits Times, 4 November 1999, p.29.
106 Straits Times, 5 November 1999, p.45.
publicly pressed for the declaration of martial law to crush the gathering secessionist sentiments in Aceh.\textsuperscript{109}

Aware that such a move would inflame the situation and plunge Aceh into all-out civil war, Gus Dur has consistently rejected this option.\textsuperscript{110} At the same time, an independent inquiry reported to parliament that it had uncovered 5,000 cases of human rights abuses committed by the military in Aceh, such as summary executions, torture, abductions, arbitrary detention and killing, wilful destruction of private property, rape and sexual violence.\textsuperscript{111} Aceh’s Care Human Rights Forum stated that, since 1989, 8,000 cases of serious human rights abuses had been recorded.\textsuperscript{112} The response by the civilian authorities indicated a rift between the democratic civilian government and the military over how to handle the Aceh problem. While Gus Dur wanted a peaceful, political solution to the problem, the military wanted immediate military action to crush the Acehnese.

The Free Aceh movement has never really had the numbers or ability to hold on to large swatches of territory, unlike the much larger Moro rebel movement in Mindanao. In 1999, the Free Aceh rebels were estimated to number anywhere from 800 (a military estimate) to 5,000 (according to Free Aceh leader Hasan di Tiro). It has only thus far been able to undertake sporadic terrorist attacks and has been mostly on the run from the Indonesian armed forces. However, there has been an external dimension similar to that of the Moro rebels, with Muslim support and sympathy offered from outside Indonesia. Libya helped Hasan di Tiro in founding the movement and has also provided training.\textsuperscript{113} In recent years, there have been various allegations and reports of arms smuggled in from Thailand and Malaysia. Acehnese sympathisers in southern Thailand and Malaysia are believed to be funding the rebellion.

It was reported, for instance, that the Muslim rebels in southern Thailand have been aiding the Free Aceh guerrillas by helping channel assault rifles to them from black-market sources in Kampuchea.\textsuperscript{114} In

\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Straits Times}, 25 November 1999.
\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Straits Times}, 22 February 2000, p.45.
\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Straits Times}, 1 December 1999, p.27.
December 1999, the Indonesian home affairs minister publicly stated that Aceh rebels were smuggling in weapons from Malaysia, adding for good measure that friendly countries should be neutral with regard to Indonesia’s problems and should avoid giving any assistance to those who sought to undermine the unitary state in Indonesia. This brought an immediate denial from the Malaysian deputy prime minister Abdullah Badawi, who declared that ‘what was said about our country is very difficult to believe’, adding that ‘Malaysia had no role in any activities with the [Aceh separatist] movement’. Yet it is clear that while the Malaysian government itself is not involved in aiding the Acehnese, considerable sympathy for them does exist in that country among co-religionists. The assassination of an Acehnese rebel leader (allegedly due to an internal struggle) in Kuala Lumpur on 2 June 2000 also embarrassed the Malaysian government, as it highlighted the presence of Acehnese separatists operating freely in Malaysia.

The prospects for a long-term resolution of the Aceh problem are not good. Although the situation in Aceh cannot be said to be that of a full-scale civil war, the characteristics of such a conflict are present. The conflict has been characterised by durability, resistance to negotiated settlement and growing severity. Moreover, there is an external dimension present, in the form of a relatively stable arms supply and financial support from sympathisers abroad. More significantly, there is growing popular support, with wide sections of Acehnese society, including students, merchants, peasants, workers, civil administrators, village headmen and religious leaders, joining in the cause in the wake of the heightened expectations generated by East Timor’s independence and the promise of a referendum by the current president. In addition, there continues to be much anger and bitterness over the brutality suffered at the hands of the Indonesian military.

The Aceh problem will therefore be difficult to resolve. The newly elected civilian democratic government in Indonesia is unclear about how it wants to solve the current crisis. Clearly, a political

117 Straits Times, 2 June 2000 and 3 June 2000.
solution has to be found, as no military solution will be possible. This is not likely to be easy. Jakarta will have to begin meaningful negotiations with the Free Aceh movement. Given its deep reluctance to grant outright independence, Jakarta should find partners among moderate, credible Acehnese leaders who reflect local aspirations for autonomy but also believe in remaining within the Indonesian republic. It needs to engage in a process of reconciliation to heal the wounds of the past, such as providing justice over the human rights abuses of the military, ending discrimination against Acehnese and promoting measures to alleviate economic disparities. The central government also needs to accommodate the legitimate demands of the Acehnese by, for example, allowing the recognition of Hudud laws and meeting the aspiration towards self-government. Much will depend on the ability of both sides to come to a compromise. There are some promising signs, such as the call by the Aceh chapter of the Indonesian Council of Ulamas for a ceasefire, calling on all to do their best ‘to find an effective solution to settle the case of Aceh in a peaceful, dignified, just, civilised and comprehensive way’. In February 2000, Hasan di Tiro himself agreed to a ceasefire, reversing his earlier stand that he would not talk to the government. This ceasefire was finally signed on 12 May 2000 after months of negotiation.

Regionally, there is support for a process of negotiation and reconciliation. Despite much sympathy from co-religionists in Malaysia, the Malaysian government is wary of encouraging independence in Aceh as this would provide sustenance to possible moves towards autonomy in the PAS-held states of northeastern Malaysia, Kelantan and Terengganu. The prospect of a deeply religious Islamic state in the neighbourhood is also unsettling as it could export fundamentalism to Malaysia and beyond. The Malaysian government has therefore kept a close watch on the activities of the Acehnese residing in Malaysia, although it could not launch any crackdown, or support the Indonesian government in any active manner over Aceh, without alienating its own Muslims. In January 2000, for instance, Malaysian police swiftly arrested five Acehnese believed to be planning to attack the Indonesian embassy in Kuala Lumpur.

120 Straits Times, 13 May 2000, p.29.
There is also evidence that Acehnese activists and their local sympathisers are involved in an arms conduit to the rebels in Aceh using arms purchased on the Cambodian black market and smuggled through northern Malaysia. The Malaysian government has found it difficult to stop these activities as any attempt to do so could lead to armed clashes and subsequent accusations of being anti-Islamic.

Attempting to be even-handed and anxious that the situation should not deteriorate, Malaysia offered to mediate in the Aceh conflict. As foreign minister Syed Hamid Albar explained: 'We regard Indonesia as a close neighbour, and we can provide whatever it feels we can contribute to fulfil its wish and aspiration, in the context of bilateral relations'. Albar also indicated that 'the important thing is that we want to see Indonesia return to normal, its economy revived and Indonesia’s integrity as a nation defended at all times'. Albar later clarified his position, saying that Malaysia did not want to interfere in the internal affairs of other states, and that the offer to help was made in response to Gus Dur's request for its help to resolve the problem. In response to accusations that Malaysia had allowed Acehnese to live there, Albar also stated clearly the Malaysian government’s stand: 'We are not supporting any freedom movement involving Aceh, whether financially, materially or training-wise'.

Similarly, Singapore voiced opposition to the idea of Acehnese independence, with senior minister Lee Kuan Yew saying that 'no country in Southeast Asia will recognise it. I doubt whether America will, I doubt if China will or if Russia will, so it will become like Biafra'. He also stated emphatically that 'nobody wants and nobody sees any benefit in the breaking up of Indonesia'.

In December 1999, Gus Dur pushed for speedy trials for those suspected of human rights abuses in Aceh. While the president ruled out a referendum for East Timor-style independence, he offered greater autonomy and a bigger share of its own wealth generated through natural resources such as oil, gas, timber and pepper.

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121 *Straits Times*, 13 January 2000, p.2.
122 'Mahathir’s Aceh Dilemma', *Straits Times*, 22 December 1999, p.35.
123 *Straits Times*, 20 December 1999, p.23.
125 *Straits Times*, 13 December 1999, p.2.
126 'President Pushes for Speedy Trials', *Straits Times*, 16 December 1999.
Conducting credible and speedy trials of military personnel accused of human rights abuses has assumed great symbolic significance. The trials are seen as a test to prove to Acehnese that Gus Dur's new government is sincere about addressing both past and ongoing human rights violations by the military. The five case which are being tried are: the Bantiquiah school massacre, in which 65 civilians were massacred in July 1999; the 'Slaughter House' killings, involving the abduction, torture and killing of dozens of civilians in a house in North Aceh; the Lhokseumawe killings, involving 39 civilians shot dead by security forces while trying to break up a demonstration; the killings outside the Idi Cut mosque of seven probably innocent civilians in a suspected revenge attack by the military following the killing of seven soldiers; and the 1996 rape of a woman by a soldier stationed in her village.127

The conduct of the trials has, however, been severely criticised by a government-appointed team which investigated human rights abuses in Aceh. The Independent Commission for Violence in Aceh, which prepared evidence for the five cases, blamed the government and the armed forces for the disappearance of a senior army officer accused of ordering the shooting of 65 civilians in the Bantiquiah school massacre. The Commission further described his disappearance as 'political engineering to delay the interconnective judiciary, as well as building an image that judicial process can not take place'.128 Despite the ceasefire, fresh allegations of brutality, such as killings and rapes by military personnel, continued to surface in May 2000, casting doubts over whether Gus Dur was able to enforce his will on the armed forces.129 These incidents raise doubts over whether negotiations can yield any successful and lasting outcome.

The Aceh problem has serious implications for both Indonesia and the region. If the momentum towards secession is not checked at Aceh, Hasan di Tiro's prediction of the breakup of Indonesia could well be correct, given the heightened expectations of regional self-determination in the wake of East Timor's independence. The military,

127 Straits Times, 18 February 2000, p.42.
129 'Fresh Allegations of Brutality in Aceh', Straits Times, 2 May 2000, p.28. See also 'Soldiers, Rebels Clash in Aceh Despite Truce', Straits Times, 15 May 2000.
which sees itself as the natural guardian of Indonesia's sovereignty and integrity, is quite naturally opposed to any resolution that could result in independence. Indeed, it is opposed to a referendum on the grounds that separatism is unconstitutional, and has been openly pressuring the new government to declare martial law and send more troops into the troubled province.130

There is also a serious economic dimension, given the fact that Aceh produces a third of Indonesia's liquified natural gas exports. The political uncertainties have already affected long-term contracts and operations at the Mobil natural gas facilities in Aceh, potentially affecting foreign currency earnings at a time of major economic stress in Indonesia.131 The province also has other valuable resources, such as oil, gold, silver, pepper, rubber and timber. The secession of Aceh at a time when Indonesia badly needs these resources in facing a huge debt and economic crisis would have negative consequences on Indonesia's ability to recover.

More significantly, even if Aceh succeeded in obtaining only autonomy, that might lead to the implementation of Muslim laws. That could conceivably result in other regions of Indonesia (for instance, Sumatra) insisting on the right to implement similar laws. This would challenge the secular basis of Indonesia, which is founded on Pancasila, with most uncertain but certainly negative social and political consequences for a multi-ethnic and multireligious state.

Another consequence of the Aceh problem has been the attempt by the new government to prosecute human rights abuses committed by the military in the province. However, any attempt to charge senior military officers might lead to a military backlash against the new, democratically elected government. Failure to do so, or limiting the investigation to low-level soldiers, on the other hand, would not satisfy the Acehnese demand for justice.

There are also regional implications. The emergence of an independent Aceh would resonate in the Muslim states of Kelantan and Terengganu. The state of the latter, with its rich oil reserves and low level of economic development, has uncomfortable similarities

130 'Military Awaits the Order to Return Troops to Aceh', Straits Times, 11 December 1999, p.46.
131 'Gas Plant Caught in Middle of Aceh's Explosive Face-Off', Straits Times, 11 December 1999, p.47.
with the situation causing the socio-economic grievances of the Acehnese. An independent Aceh would have the effect of galvanising people in these areas, as well as other Muslims in southern Thailand and the southern Philippines, to make greater efforts to realise their aspirations for a more Islamic form of the state. The spectre of a brace of Muslim mini-states espousing fundamentalist Islamic values and having affinities with Libyan-style radicalism is viewed with great alarm by other states in the region. The strategic location of Aceh, at the northern entrance of the Strait of Malacca, one of the busiest sealanes in the world, has also increased concern over how the Aceh problem will be resolved. Should Aceh achieve independence, this would surely increase the demands for secession from other regions of Indonesia, demands which the armed forces could not possibly suppress all at once, and thus would lead to the breakup, Yugoslav-style, of Indonesia, with the possible scenario of several unstable mini-states locked in religious Christian-Muslim conflict with attendant negative consequences for regional stability.

**Malay Muslim Separatism in Southern Thailand**

Another Muslim separatist movement exists in the southern Thai provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Satun, which have predominantly Malay Muslim populations (see Figure 2.3). These provinces are contiguous to the predominantly Muslim states of Kelantan, Terengganu and Kedah in Malaysia, from which the 1.4 million Malays in southern Thailand derive their aspirations and succour. The difference from the Muslim separatism in Mindanao and Aceh, however, is that the aspiration is irredentist in nature, with the objective being union with Malaysia, and not the establishment of a separate state.

Seat of the ancient Malay kingdom of Pattani, the southern Thai provinces have been ruled indirectly by Siam since 1785. In 1909, the Anglo-Siamese Treaty demarcated the border between Siam and British Malaya, thus achieving for Siam a measure of international recognition for its rule over the area. The Malays, however, viewed this British recognition of Thai authority and sovereignty over them as arbitrary and unjust, and have since viewed Bangkok as an occupying colonial power.\(^{132}\)

Figure 2.3: Southern Thailand
Malay resistance to Thai integration had some support from the Malay rulers of Kelantan. During the Japanese Occupation of 1941-45, the southern provinces were briefly united with Malaya, and the end of the Second World War saw hopes of Pattani being integrated into the Malayan Federation. A Malayan-based movement called the Gabungan Melayu Patani Raya (GAMPAR) or Association of Malays of Greater Pattani, and the local, religiously led Pattani People's Movement (PPM) were formed for the express objective of irredentism. The Thai government, however, succeeded in crushing the rebellion when the leader of the PPM, Haji Sulong, was arrested and killed by Thai police in 1954.133

The fears of the Malay community were heightened by the policies of the Thai government, which sought to centralise the bureaucracy of the southern provinces, taking away power from the traditional Malay royal and religious élite. Secular Thai education was introduced, and the Thai language actively promoted. Thai local officials aggravated communal relations by their corruption and anti-Malay prejudices, often viewing the Malay population as inferior. More significantly, the Thai government's policy of assimilation raised fears of an erosion of Malay culture and values. The Thai government in fact refused to appoint Malay Muslims to the bureaucracy, a policy that was reversed only in 1977. The Muslim problem was also accentuated by the low economic status of the Malay populace, who occupied the bottom rung of society as they made their livelihood from fishing, agriculture and plantation work.

The geographical contiguity of Malaysia provides an important explanation as to the impetus to armed irredentism among the Thai Malay-Muslims. The visible economic development in neighbouring Malaysia, where kindred Malays are dominant politically and are also reaping the economic benefits of the pro-bumiputra New Economic Policy, provided an unwelcome comparison. Moreover, the free flow of people and information across the Thai-Malaysian border has enabled Thai Malay-Muslims to reinforce their cultural, ethnic and religious identity in the face of concerted attempts at assimilation.

The Malaysian government has denied any involvement in supporting armed separatist Muslim groups, as Kuala Lumpur needed Thai cooperation to combat the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM),

which still had bases in southern Thailand right up till the 1980s, when it finally surrendered. Thailand has, however, repeatedly accused Malaysia of being a sponsor of armed separatism, and alleged that the separatists operated out of bases in Perak and Kelantan.\textsuperscript{134}

For instance, the Thai military reported in November 1993 that separatists had attacked an army patrol and then ‘fled towards the Malaysian border’.\textsuperscript{135} In response, the Malaysian government declared that it would not shelter Muslim separatists responsible for terrorism in southern Thailand.\textsuperscript{136} The Malaysian government also denied that any separatist camps existed in Malaysia.\textsuperscript{137} While there is no evidence to link the Malaysian government with the separatists, the opposition PAS state government in Kelantan has openly declared that it has offered refuge to Muslim separatists, stating that ‘PAS has to offer this help because our Muslim brothers are being discriminated against in all aspects of life in southern Thailand’.\textsuperscript{138}

The Muslim separatists in southern Thailand are grouped around three significant guerrilla movements: the Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), the Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani (BNPP) and the Pattani United Liberation Organisation (PULO).

The BRN, founded in 1960, is leftists in orientation and in fact developed close links with the Communist Party of Malaya and actively promoted communist ideology among Malays. However, Confrontation in the 1960s split the movement between those supporting Indonesia and those supporting Malaysia. The BNPP, a splinter movement from the BRN, was formed in 1971. It is well organised and has support in Kelantan and from Middle Eastern organisations such as the Arab League and the PLO. The PULO was formed in 1968, and is well led by intellectuals educated in the Middle East and Pakistan. The PULO, like the MNLF in the southern Philippines, has achieved a measure of international recognition. Since 1977, PULO has attended the World Muslim League Conference as an observer. The PULO claims to have over 10,000 guerrillas (probably an inflated figure) and has been the most active of the Islamic separatist


\textsuperscript{135} Straits Times, 9 November 1993.

\textsuperscript{136} Straits Times, 15 November 1993.

\textsuperscript{137} Business Times (Singapore), 28-29 August 1993.

\textsuperscript{138} ‘Thai Separatists Offered Sanctuary’, Asian Defence Journal, October 1994, p.94.
movements. In September 1977, PULO attempted to assassinate the Thai king during his visit to Yala Province; while the attempt failed, it highlighted the real danger from the Muslim separatists. Guerrilla attacks have targeted Thai military personnel, and the sabotage of public utilities.

The PULO continued to launch sporadic attacks in the 1980s and 1990s, despite the Thai government's more sensitive handling of the Malay community and increased funding for development in the south. The Thai military has also attempted to take the initiative in the ongoing conflict. In 1990, the Thai military launched the largest-ever military operation to date against what it declared to be an estimated 200-250 separatists. The operation was a failure and PULO continued to operate quite effectively. For instance, in 1993 it launched a high-profile terrorist campaign targeting Buddhist temples, schools, railway trains and army patrols. Even the smaller BRN has been active, launching a series of attacks from 1993 to compete for the headlines. The Thai Fourth Army commander responsible for security in the south admitted that the attacks were launched by a younger generation of radicals who 'are motivated by hatred and bitterness against the injustice that prevails in the south, and have thus resorted to terrorism'. The commander, Lieutenant-General Kitti Rattanachaya, also acknowledged that the repeated attacks have affected political stability and foreign investments in the south. In January 1998, a huge security operation against the separatists was launched in response to a wave of bomb attacks. In addition, security in Bangkok was increased amidst fears that the insurgents were planning terrorist attacks on the capital.

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140 ibid., p.212.
143 See for instance, Army TV Channel 5 (Bangkok, in Thai), 1200 GMT 6 September 1993, in BBC/SWB FE/1792 B/1 (1), 13 September 1993; and Bangkok Post, 26 March 1994, p.3.
145 ibid.
Thailand's Malay Muslim separatist problem remains as intractable as ever. No easy or quick solution is possible, given the pull of kinship via a porous border with Malaysia and the presence of sympathisers in that country, who could provide the succour and financial contributions necessary to sustain the separatists.

There are some similarities between the Muslim separatism of southern Thailand and that elsewhere in the region, namely in the southern Philippines. Both identify strongly with Islam as a focal rallying point for their nationalism. In both cases, the fear of losing their cultural, ethnic and religious identity in the face of a dominant group belonging to another religion and with an alien culture, coupled with assimilationist policies and outright discrimination by the central government, as well as growing distrust, have provided the impetus for rebellion.

However, in comparison to Mindanao the scale of the fighting has been much less severe and, unlike the Moros, the Muslim separatists are not fighting for an independent state but have an irredentist agenda. The efforts on the part of the Thai government to win over the Malay Muslim population, generous funding for development projects in the south and a measure of cooperation by the Malaysian government, which has not supported the separatists, have also helped to ameliorate the severity of the conflict. Strategic cooperation against the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) had made the Malaysian government wary about assisting the guerrillas. As a result, the situation in southern Thailand is well under control. In contrast, the Moros have been able to achieve a measure of success, becoming virtually a de facto government in many parts of Mindanao.

Some of the characteristics of civil conflict can be found in the Muslim separatist movement in southern Thailand - those of duration and resistance to a negotiated settlement. However, due to the reasons noted above, the severity of the Malay Muslim separatist movement has been limited. Nonetheless, the external element is present in two forms. The first is the sympathy from co-religionists in neighbouring Malaysia. The second is the links with other Muslim secessionists in the region; for instance, the PULO has assisted in helping to arm the Aceh rebels.\footnote{\textsuperscript{147} ‘Worse to Come’, \textit{Far Eastern Economic Review}, 29 July 1999, p.18. See also \textit{Straits Times}, 3 December 1999, p.48.}
The surrender of the CPM in 1989 shifted the focus uncomfortably to the question of counter-insurgency against the Thai Malay-Muslim separatist guerrillas in southern Thailand. Malaysian defence minister Datuk Sri Najib Tun Razak pledged in 1993 that the Malaysian armed forces would patrol the border more tightly to prevent the separatists from using the heavily forested areas in Kelantan and Perak as hideouts, and declared that Malaysia would not protect or cooperate with the separatists.\(^{148}\)

In early 1997, there was an open row between the two countries over an alleged member of PULO who was caught in Malaysia. Malaysia’s refusal to extradite the suspect angered Thai military officials. The unofficial military magazine, Arthit, was scathing of Malaysia and referred to it as the ‘enemy to the South’.\(^{149}\) In January 1998, prime minister Chuan Leekpai openly accused Malaysia of harbouring Muslim separatist guerrillas, who were being trained and sent back to southern Thailand.\(^{150}\) Stung by the accusations, Malaysia arrested three wanted Thai Muslims near Kuala Lumpur and handed them over to Thailand.\(^{151}\)

There is undoubtedly considerable sympathy and support for the Malay separatists in Malaysia. The opposition fundamentalist PAS, which controls the state government of Kelantan along the border, has been particularly helpful. Indeed, PAS’s strong showing in the Malaysian general elections in 1999, in which it retained Kelantan and Terengganu as well as capturing the majority of the Malay vote, has led to dismay in Thailand, which fears that this could fuel the irredentist aspirations of the Malay Muslims in the south.\(^{152}\) This, coupled with the increasingly competitive nature of the naval build-ups of the two countries as well as tensions over fisheries and maritime boundaries, has meant that Thai-Malaysian relations have

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150 *Straits Times Interactive*, 4 January 1998.
been characterised by a measure of mistrust, with negative implications for the development of cooperative regionalism.\textsuperscript{153}

**The East Timor Issue**

The most significant internal security concern for Indonesia since 1976 had been the East Timor issue. What distinguishes the East Timor issue from the OPM and Aceh is the deep interest of Western human rights organisations and sympathisers, raised by the sensational but senseless murder of five Australian journalists during Indonesia's invasion in 1976, as well as the unusually brutal circumstances of Indonesian military operations and subsequent occupation, a process which by 1983 had resulted in the estimated deaths of some 100,000 of the 650,000 East Timorese living in the territory.\textsuperscript{154} In recent years, continuing atrocities such as the Dili massacre of civilians in 1991 continued to highlight the East Timor issue.

In itself, East Timor was a weak and resource-poor state and a prize not worth pursuing, until the Timor Gap Cooperation Treaty with Australia yielded lucrative dividends.\textsuperscript{155} While Indonesia based its claim to Irian Jaya on the ground that it was part of the former Dutch East Indies, East Timor was a Portuguese colony. In 1974, political changes in East Timor saw the emergence of a popular radical political movement called the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Fretilin), which wanted early and complete independence. Fretilin also had links with leftist groups in Portugal and Africa, raising fears in Indonesia, which had only nine years earlier thwarted a communist coup, of a communist threat at the doorstep of the Indonesian Republic. Indonesia's leaders were also acutely aware of the presence of separatist sentiments in various parts of the republic, sentiments which it feared could be fanned by a neighbouring

\textsuperscript{153} See Andrew Tan, *Intra-ASEAN Tensions* (Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 2000).


\textsuperscript{155} The treaty was concluded in October 1979 following Australia's recognition of Indonesia's annexation of East Timor in 1978. In February 1994, oil was discovered in the joint sea-bed zone. See Leifer, *Dictionary of the Modern Politics of South-East Asia*, pp.255-6.
government which espoused radical left-wing views. The Indonesian government thus gave support to the Timorese Popular Democratic Association (Apodeti), which advocated integration with Indonesia. Within East Timor itself, pro-Portugal groups coalesced around the conservative Timorese Democratic Union (UDT), which opposed Fretilin, resulting in street violence between supporters of both groups. In August 1975, the UDT attempted to seize power but failed in the face of Fretilin loyalists in the Portuguese garrison. In September 1975, Fretilin seized power in Dili, and established de facto independence. Portuguese officials fled, leaving Fretilin in charge.

Indonesia felt compelled to respond as it could not contemplate a radical government on its doorstep, one that might pose a security threat to the integrity of the republic. As Michael Leifer has noted, 'the prospect of sharing a common border with a radical state at the margin of a fissiparous archipelago' aroused concern in Jakarta.156 Perceiving that its security was at stake, Indonesia felt justified in using force and risking the alienation of the non-aligned community. Indeed, it was security considerations, not territorial ambitions or expansionism, that caused Indonesia to act as it did.

In late September, Indonesian forces began to infiltrate East Timor to assist the Apodeti and the UDT. Fretilin proclaimed independence on 28 November 1975, while the Apodeti declared East Timor a part of Indonesia. On 7 December 1975, Indonesian forces invaded East Timor, claiming that they had been invited to restore order. Faced with overwhelming Indonesian force and without any external support, Fretilin was overcome and a pro-Indonesian Apodeti leadership was installed in Dili on 17 December, with the declaration in February 1976 that Fretilin had been completely defeated. On 31 May 1976, a special session of the new East Timor People's Representative Council voted to integrate East Timor into Indonesia.157

Internationally, Indonesia's unilateral use of force shocked the world community and alarmed its neighbours. The UN Security Council adopted a resolution which recognised the rights of the East Timorese people to self-determination, deplored Indonesia's military intervention and called on it to withdraw its forces from the

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156 Leifer, Dictionary of the Modern Politics of South-East Asia, p.254.
157 ibid.
Anned SeParatist Rebellions

Singapore, alarmed at the precedent of Indonesian military action against a small neighbour, abstained in a critical UN General Assembly resolution on the matter, testing the unity of ASEAN and arousing the ire of its giant neighbour. Singapore, however, reversed its stand within a year, having made its point, in order not to antagonise Indonesia.

The international community soon came to accept the reality of Indonesian annexation. However, despite the huge application of force by the Indonesian military, Fretilin continued to put up a stubborn guerrilla resistance in the jungles and was able to maintain a vocal and well-organised émigré voice, assisted by considerable public sympathy and media interest in the West. Fretilin was also able to maintain an observer at the United Nations, which never recognised Indonesia’s forced incorporation of the territory.

This international interest was helped, inadvertently, by the brutal behaviour of the Indonesian military in East Timor, with continuing atrocities helping to keep the East Timor issue alive. As the London Times reported:

Survivors [of Indonesia's ruthless war of oppression] have been subjected to the worst excesses of a police state. To break guerilla resistance, peasants have been forced into strategic hamlets. Night raids by death squads have supplemented widespread torture and summary executions.159

In November 1991, thousands of East Timorese took part in a pro-independence march to the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili, carrying banners opposing the incorporation of East Timor into Indonesia. Indonesian troops fired indiscriminately into the crowd, killing 150-200 people. The scale of the massacre of innocent civilians shocked the international community. The official Indonesian National Commission of Inquiry into the massacre concluded that security personnel opened fire to protect themselves because of ‘riotous conditions’.160 This version was disputed by the United Nations, which announced its finding through the Ndiaye Report that the shooting of the demonstrators was ‘a planned military operation designed to deal

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158 ibid.
159 Times (London), 20 April 1991.
with a public expression of political dissent in a way not in accordance with international human rights standards'.

Significantly, Ndiaye, the UN special investigator, noted in 1995 that the 'conditions that allowed the Santa Cruz killings to occur are still present', a most damning indictment on the human rights abuses and repression by Indonesian forces in East Timor. Indeed, more incidents confirmed this. In June 1994, Indonesian soldiers defiled sacred items in a Catholic church in Dili, provoking widespread street confrontations with Timorese civilians. In January 1995, following a clash between Fretilin guerrillas and Indonesian security forces, troops entered Gariana and executed six men whom they claimed were guerrillas. Following an international outcry, the Indonesian government admitted that military personnel had 'not followed proper procedure' in that particular incident.

The international media and Western human rights groups kept up pressure on the Indonesian government through frequent reporting of these abuses. For instance, John Pilger's documentary film, Death of a Nation, which contained footage shot secretly in East Timor, helped to keep the spotlight uncomfortably on the Indonesian government's actions. Not surprisingly, foreign minister Ali Alatas attacked the international media for its 'sensational news stories' aimed at attracting world attention to East Timor.

The Indonesian government also exerted pressure on its ASEAN neighbours to prevent human rights organisations from discussing the East Timor issue in their capitals. In June 1994, a human rights conference in Manila had its foreign delegates, including exiled East Timor resistance leader Jose Ramos-Horta, barred from entering the country. Indonesia responded by praising the Philippine government's handling of the conference.

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161 ibid.  
162 ibid.  
In July 1994, Thai police surrounded the venue of a regional human rights seminar which was to discuss East Timor, in an open show of intimidation. Foreign representatives, including East Timor exiles who were to attend the meeting, were also effectively banned from entering Thailand to attend the seminar. In the same month, another seminar organised by non-governmental organisations on the same subject opened in Malaysia, causing Indonesia to voice its displeasure, stating that it was a ‘disinformation campaign’ designed to test Indonesia’s reaction. The Indonesian armed forces declared that if the forum proceeded, relations between Malaysia and Indonesia would be adversely affected. In response, the Malaysian government declared that it was not involved in the forum and that it was Malaysia’s policy never to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries.

However, the pressure tactics on fellow ASEAN states over the East Timor seminars served to heighten apprehension over Indonesia’s regional aspirations. Smaller states in the region, such as Singapore, had already voiced their fears of Indonesian expansionism. Indeed, the forcible annexation of East Timor did not encourage confidence in regional states about Indonesia’s good intentions, raising unspoken fears over Indonesia’s potential for regional domination.

The Indonesian government also took other measures in its ‘carrot and stick’ approach against the stubborn resistance. In 1994, President Suharto announced an amnesty for East Timorese rebels who surrendered. At the same time, however, a ban was announced on demonstrations in East Timor. The Indonesian government also declared that, in 1994 alone, US$265 million was spent to develop the

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local economy. However, analysts saw few signs of any improvement, with the main crop, coffee, under the control of a company linked to Indonesian generals. However, the continuing brutality of the Indonesian armed forces, the domination of Javanese in the administration, and the general poverty of the local populace, kept alive strong pro-independence sentiments. Their strong Catholic faith also sustained the East Timorese in their opposition to the predominantly Muslim Indonesian armed forces and civil administrators who presided over the province and (to the East Timorese) treated them like a conquered people.

There was also persistent international criticism and considerable sympathy in Europe, Australia and the United States for the cause of the suffering East Timorese. By 1994, Indonesia appeared to be tentatively exploring the possibility of some form of compromise. Foreign minister Alatas met with East Timorese resistance leaders in New York in October 1994, signifying that Indonesia was at least prepared to talk. There were at last signs that Indonesia had come to realise that a political, not a military, solution was needed, and that past policies had failed. The Indonesian army tightened discipline in its ranks and deployed to East Timor officers with experience in UN peacekeeping operations in Kampuchea, in an effort to bring in a more professional and sensitive military handling of the province. Military advisers in Jakarta also advocated more representation of and consultation with local East Timorese.

In case foreign observers thought these signs meant that Indonesia was prepared to give in to the demands for independence, foreign minister Alatas stated clearly that East Timor would not be given more autonomy than it already had. In addition, the military commander of East Timor rejected the public offer by the East Timorese resistance of a ceasefire and announced the deployment of a special forces battalion to wipe out the remaining guerrillas. That this failed to destroy the guerrilla resistance was dramatically illustrated by a major clash between Fretilin and Indonesian troops in

176 ibid., p.27.
177 Straits Times, 15 October 1994, p.18.
December 1995, resulting in the deaths of at least 30 Indonesian soldiers.178

Hopes of a resolution to the East Timor issue were raised with the overthrow of Suharto and Habibie’s subsequent ascension as president in 1998. Indeed, Habibie promised in June 1998 to give the province independence should it reject an offer of autonomy. The military’s response was to tacitly encourage pro-integrationist militias, in many cases armed and supported by the Indonesian military, to conduct a reign of terror against pro-independence supporters. Fretilin was not blameless either, as jailed independence leader Xanana Gusmao had issued a call to arms that gave pro-integration paramilitaries the pretext to go on the offensive. The result was more violence, culminating in a massacre of some 57 people at Liquica.179 The militias not only harassed pro-independence leaders and drove supporters of independence underground, they also rounded up tens of thousands of villagers for indoctrination sessions heavily laced with intimidation, with the open complicity of the Indonesian military.180

Open intimidation continued in the run-up to the UN-supervised ballot in August 1999 to allow the East Timorese to choose between independence and autonomy, sparking calls for an armed UN peacekeeping presence, something the Indonesian government was quick to veto.181 Nonetheless, the vote was a resounding one for independence, with 79 per cent of the population voting for it despite the open intimidation. What followed shocked the international community. Supported by the Indonesian military, pro-integration militias in East Timor rounded up hundreds of thousands of the local populace and forced many, at gunpoint, into West Timor. They also adopted a ‘scorched earth’ policy, burning houses and destroying the local infrastructure.182 Supporters of Fretilin or pro-independence supporters were taken away and in many cases simply shot. The home of Nobel laureate Bishop Carlos Belo came under attack and was burnt, forcing him to flee the province. The United Nations itself had

182 See ‘Forced Out at Gunpoint’, Straits Times, 9 September 1999, pp.30-1; and ‘Plan B: Mass Evacuation, Mass Murder’, Straits Times, 9 September 1999, p.34.
to pull out its besieged mission in Dili on 10 September as the militias went on a rampage in the capital. This caused the United Nations to issue a warning to Indonesia that it would consider ‘further action’ if Jakarta did not act quickly to improve the security situation in East Timor.\textsuperscript{183} The International Monetary Fund (IMF) suspended discussions on its economic assistance programme and cancelled a scheduled visit by IMF officials to Indonesia, citing the events in East Timor and the fact that the international community, including the IMF, could not be indifferent to what was happening.\textsuperscript{184}

The UN human rights commissioner, Mary Robinson, openly accused the Indonesian military of systematically organising the mass violence. She also recommended setting up an international tribunal to prosecute those responsible for the violence.\textsuperscript{185} The East Timor issue was also pushed to the top of the agenda at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit, which was held in Auckland, New Zealand at about the same time. A special meeting was held to discuss the issue and, while the resulting sentiments that were expressed by ASEAN leaders were respectful towards Indonesia, there was dismay over the descent into violence, with a clear consensus over the need to respect the result of the referendum.\textsuperscript{186}

The international pressure bore fruit when Habibie finally agreed to an international peacekeeping force.\textsuperscript{187} That developed into a race to put into place the UN force led by Australia, in the face of a prospective humanitarian disaster, with hundreds of thousands of East Timorese reduced to eating leaves and digging up roots, facing starvation following a complete collapse of the infrastructure.\textsuperscript{188}

In the event, the Indonesian military accepted, albeit grudgingly, the fact of East Timor’s independence and troops were pulled out quickly to prevent any clash with UN peacekeepers.

The East Timor issue has thus finally been resolved. Twenty-three years of counter-insurgency operations had ultimately proved fruitless for the Indonesian armed forces due to the tenacity and excellent leadership of the East Timorese independence movement.

\textsuperscript{183} \textit{Straits Times Interactive}, 9 September 1999.
\textsuperscript{184} \textit{Straits Times}, 11 September 1999, p.34.
\textsuperscript{186} \textit{Straits Times}, 11 September 1999, p.34.
\textsuperscript{187} \textit{Straits Times}, 14 September 1999, p.18.
\textsuperscript{188} ‘Starving Refugees Eating Leaves and Roots’, \textit{Straits Times}, 14 September 1999.
Indeed, the East Timorese had proved to be very skilled in sustaining considerable international support for their cause. In particular, they succeeded in exploiting the underlying guilt of Australians for the plight of their ally in the Second World War, during which local East Timorese had actively supported and aided Australian commandos, suffering dire consequences from the Japanese as a result. Despite the small size of their guerrilla force, which was on the run most of the time, Fretilin had not only survived intact but also emerged victorious in the end when its objective of independence was secured through the historic UN-supervised referendum in August 1999, a most remarkable achievement considering the ferocity of the Indonesian army’s operations in the province, estimated to have caused the deaths of over 100,000 civilians in counter-insurgency operations over the years. The East Timor conflict had demonstrated the usual characteristics of civil war; namely, severity, duration and resistance to negotiated settlement.

The external dimension was very much evident in this conflict. The East Timorese resistance, aided by the brutality of the Indonesian army’s counter-insurgency operations over the years, was able to sustain international (predominantly Western) interest in the conflict long after the invasion and occupation of East Timor in 1976. Indeed, mindful of the negative image of Indonesia overseas and in the midst of a severe economic crisis, Habibie agreed to a vote on independence in 1998, while the international community successfully pressured him to accept an international peacekeeping force in the face of militia violence in September 1999.

The East Timor crisis and its resolution in 1999 marked dramatic changes in Indonesia, with implications for ASEAN and the region. The involvement of ASEAN troops as part of the peacekeeping force set a precedent towards greater involvement in the affairs of neighbouring states. Initially, some of the ASEAN states, particularly Malaysia, were unsure if they wanted to be involved, fearing that this would upset military and nationalist elements in Indonesia. Others, such as the Philippines, were more enthusiastic. In the end, the desire of the international community, especially Australia and the

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189 ‘Why KL is Reluctant to Send Troops’, Straits Times, 24 September 1999, p.32.
United States, to involve the ASEAN states both to lend legitimacy to the peacekeeping operation and also as a useful foil to deflect criticism that it was a Western, or specifically Australian, operation, persuaded the ASEAN community to participate in the venture. On its part, the Habibie government also wanted ASEAN states to be involved, in order to balance the high profile taken by Australia in the peacekeeping operation.

Nonetheless, the involvement of ASEAN states raised questions over the ASEAN principle of non-interference. This principle was established at ASEAN’s founding in 1967 by relatively autocratic rulers who wanted to consolidate their regimes. In the 1990s, however, the situation had changed. Not only had Thailand and the Philippines become much more democratic; the move towards democracy following the end of the Suhartato regime signalled that the region’s largest state and ASEAN’s prime mover, Indonesia, had also joined in the regional trend towards civil society, democratisation and openness. Such developments have undermined the notion of non-interference.

More significantly, the weakness of Indonesia, given the political flux following the end of the Suharto regime, the severe economic crisis in the country, the growing demands for secession from various parts of the archipelago, and the failure to hang on to East Timor, demonstrates that the period of Indonesian dominance and leadership in ASEAN could well be over, with consequent and still indeterminable implications for the structure and future direction of regional order.

For the new state of East Timor, the devastation wrought by the militias will take many years to repair, years during which the new state will be highly dependent on international aid. Moreover, there are genuine fears that nationalist elements in Indonesia will continue to destabilise East Timor through support of pro-integrationist militias, especially those operating from neighbouring West Timor. Living next to a huge and unstable neighbour itself will be a considerable political challenge for the new East Timorese leadership. The long struggle of the East Timorese people is not over yet.

The Free Papua Movement

Apart from armed separatism in Aceh and East Timor, Indonesia has also had to contend with the Free West Papua Movement. Jakarta claimed West New Guinea (Irian Jaya) as part of its
Figure 2.4: Irian Jaya
territory, although the territory remained under the rule of the Netherlands, when Indonesia became independent in 1949 (see Figure 2.4). Local Melanesian nationalism had been strong, and there were a number of uprisings against the Dutch and also clashes against the occupying Japanese during the Second World War. When the Netherlands resumed collective rule in 1945, political participation was encouraged through regional councils and the formation of a partly elected New Guinea Council. The Suara Rakyat (Voice of the People) was formed in 1945, with the objective of achieving independence. However, the Indonesian proclamation of independence in August 1945 split the nationalists, with some supporting pro-Indonesian parties and the rest opposing Indonesia's claim by forming the Gerakan Persatuan Nieuw Guinea (New Guinea Unity Movement) or GPNG. In the period from 1945 to 1962 Melanesian nationalist identity began to emerge more strongly, and by 1961 a National Committee with strong popular support had already been formed for the purpose of pursuing independence.191

In the early 1960s the Indonesian military conducted operations against the Dutch in Irian Jaya, and in 1962, following the New York Agreement brokered by the United States, the territory effectively came under the control of Indonesia. As Michael Leifer has observed, the military pursuit of the territory 'served the interests of the armed forces in justifying an expanding budget and huge arms transfers, as well as a dominant role in public life'.192 The campaign was also important from Sukarno's point of view, as it distracted the population from domestic economic difficulties. However, as J.M. Reinhardt has noted, it additionally 'solidified the idea of an Indonesian will, and inculcated the feeling of belonging to an Indonesian nation'.193

After taking over in 1962, Indonesia proceeded to proscribe political activity among the native Melanesians. The Sukarno government quickly moved to stamp its authority and control over Irian Jaya, importing Muslim immigrants under the transmigration programme. The Melanesians were overwhelmed by the migrants, and

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192 Leifer, Indonesia’s Foreign Policy, p.61.
193 J.M.Reinhardt, Foreign Policy and National Integration: The Case of Indonesia, Monograph Series No.17 (Southeast Asian Studies, Yale University, New Haven, 1971), p.65.
saw the move as a deliberate attempt to destroy their self-identity and to assimilate them.\textsuperscript{194}

Melanesians were also displaced from government positions in Irian Jaya and numerous reports appeared of various abuses against the Melanesians. In 1965, President Sukarno announced that the local populace would not be allowed any act of self-determination, publicly ruling out any plebiscite on their future.\textsuperscript{195} In 1969, Sukarno’s successor, President Suharto, promulgated an Act of Free Choice which was in fact anything but free. Amidst widespread allegations of bribery and intimidation, a congress of 1,022 appointed delegates voted to incorporate the territory formally into the Republic of Indonesia.\textsuperscript{196}

Not surprisingly, the suppression of Melanesians by the Indonesian authorities between 1962 and 1969 increased popular opposition to Indonesian rule. In 1963, Johan Ariks led a popular rebellion, declaring a Free Papuan state. Ariks was captured in 1965 and the resistance was crushed. In 1969, mass uprisings took place but these were brutally suppressed by Indonesian troops, with the reported deaths of thousands of Melanesians. Melanesian opposition leaders who fled abroad set up a West Papuan government-in-exile in the Netherlands to campaign against the forced incorporation of the territory into Indonesia.\textsuperscript{197}

In 1965, the Organisasi Papua Merdeka (Free Papua Movement or OPM) was formed. Guerrilla warfare ensued. While the OPM is predominantly Christian, it has framed its struggle in cultural and nationalist terms, not religious ones. In 1971, the OPM declared a Provisional Republic of West Papua New Guinea, and despite the efforts of the Indonesian military, the OPM has continued to survive.\textsuperscript{198}

In 1984, the OPM staged a spectacular incident, raising a West Papuan flag on the provincial assembly building in Jayapura. The

\textsuperscript{194} Peter Hastings, ‘National Integration: The Case of Irian Jaya’ in Lim and Vani (eds), \textit{Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia}, pp.140-2.


\textsuperscript{198} For an account of the genesis of Irian Jaya’s separatist rebellion, see Hastings, ‘National Integration’, pp.129-48.
Indonesian military reaction was swift, and amidst tensions and mass arrests 12,000 refugees poured into neighbouring Papua New Guinea. The PNG government openly sympathised with their ethnic brethren, with the foreign minister implicitly criticising Indonesia by stating that ‘the people and government of my country have a very real interest in ensuring that Irian Jaya is administered in an orderly and peaceful way and that development takes place in the interests of the people who live there’. Melanesian island-states in the Pacific, notably Vanuatu, also voiced sympathy. With the help of foreign sympathisers, OPM guerrillas were also reported to have undertaken training in Libya in 1985.

The OPM also made its presence felt internationally by presenting its case for self-determination to the West. In 1987, it issued a lengthy ‘Statement Concerning the Right of Self-Determination of the West Papuan People’. The statement accused Indonesia of various human rights violations and of administering the territory like a ‘neo-colony’.

The Indonesian government attempted to use former Irian Jaya rebels to set up an alternative organisation, called the Irian Jaya Development Operation, to assist surrendered OPM guerrillas. Nevertheless, the OPM continued to be an irritant to the Indonesia authorities. The guerrillas have been making hit-and-run raids, especially along the remote eastern border area between Irian Jaya and Papua New Guinea. In 1992, the Indonesian military launched a major offensive, crossing into Papua New Guinea and destroying a rebel camp, resulting in 6,500 refugees. The OPM accused Indonesian troops of atrocities and of destroying villages in the provinces.

More recently, in 1994-95, at least 60 civilians (not counting another 37 missing) were killed by security forces in an effort to destroy the OPM. The heavy and indiscriminate use of force by

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200 Ibid., p.409.
201 See Appendix 2.
Indonesian security forces has been fairly well documented, with continuing atrocities akin to the treatment being meted out to the East Timorese.206 In October 1995, the Indonesian consulate in the PNG border town of Vanimo was reportedly attacked by OPM guerrillas, resulting in a troop build-up by Indonesia along the border and heightened tensions with Papua New Guinea.207 Renewed fighting with the OPM along the border with Papua New Guinea in December 1995 led to a wave of refugees fleeing into Papua New Guinea, thus proving false the Indonesian army's assertion that the OPM was no longer a threat.208 The OPM again captured international attention in January 1996 when an armed unit led by Kelly Kwalik seized Western and Indonesian hostages from a scientific expedition in an attempt to secure political recognition and a withdrawal of Indonesian forces.209

Continuing counter-insurgency operations have left a legacy of human rights abuses and military atrocities, similar to those suffered by the Acehnese. In July 1998, it was reported by the Indonesian Council of Churches that over 100 Irian Jayan demonstrators gathered around an independence flag were tortured, raped and massacred.210 Following Suharto's overthrow in 1998 and the emergence of a more liberal atmosphere, many Irian Jayans believed that independence, or at least autonomy, would be within reach. In February 1999, over 100 tribal leaders met with President Habibie, who promised autonomy for the province. However, the leaders clearly mistrusted his pledge, and instead issued a call for a boycott of the July general elections.211

The Indonesian military has not been able to enforce total control over a heavily jungled province, which comprises some 22 per cent of Indonesia's total land area. Indeed, guerrilla activities have continued despite over 30 years of counter-insurgency operations. It is clear, however, that the OPM does not have the resources or the scale of foreign support necessary to dislodge Indonesian authority. The

206 See, for instance, Australian, 27 January 1996.
210 Sydney Morning Herald, 14 November 1998, p.27.
211 Sydney Morning Herald, 22 May 1999.
OPM has not been able to attract the kind of international support that has been mobilised on behalf of Fretilin in East Timor.

Nonetheless, the OPM continues to attract local support due to the palpable sense of exploitation and domination by the Muslim Javanese, in a resource-rich province populated by Christian Irianese. The flood of Muslim settlers has resulted in their domination of the economy and the bureaucracy, and most of the province’s natural wealth has continued to flow to Jakarta. The province is rich in mineral and oil deposits, and has one of the world’s largest copper and gold mines at Freeport. Freeport provides nearly half the province’s gross domestic product and is also Indonesia’s single biggest taxpayer; from 1992 to 1998, it paid the Jakarta government a total of US$1.27 billion in dividends, royalties and corporate taxes. However, little of this money has come back to the people of the province. Many Irianese also hold Freeport responsible for a long list of unresolved grievances: decades of abuse by the military; the dispossession from ancient tribal lands, destruction of indigenous cultures, high levels of alcoholism and a massive influx of around a million Indonesian settlers in recent years. In many ways, therefore, the litany of grievances which stem from the perception of being treated shabbily by the Javanese majority resonates with those of Aceh, East Timor and other parts of the Indonesian archipelago.

The end of the Suharto regime and the subsequent referendum leading to East Timor’s independence galvanised the supporters of independence. On 18 November 1999, 200 Irian Jaya independence activists converged on the Indonesian parliament in Jakarta in a demonstration of their aspirations for independence for their province. Various incidents have confirmed that the level of violence is slowly rising in the province. On 2 December 1999, separatists raised the Irian Jaya flag in Timika, sparking an immediate and firm military response: 28 people involved were shot by troops. Thus, 34 years after its founding in 1965, the separatist OPM is still alive. Indeed, the Irian Jaya separatist movement pre-dated the Free Aceh movement by some 11 years, demonstrating the durability of the conflict and its resistance to negotiated settlement.

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213 Straits Times, 3 December 1999.
Gus Dur himself visited the province on 31 December 1999 and held talks with Irian Jaya leaders on how their grievances, such as human rights abuses and the need for revenue sharing and greater autonomy, could be resolved - although Gus Dur also clearly ruled out independence.\(^{214}\) However the momentum for independence could not be stopped. On 4 June 2000, a congress of 3,000 activists and tribal leaders meeting at the Papuan People's Congress in Jayapura adopted a resolution declaring independence, called on the international community to recognise the sovereignty of West Papua and stated that human rights violations would have to be resolved through an international court.\(^{215}\) The Indonesian government's response was immediate and predictable, with Gus Dur rejecting the legitimacy of the congress and the speaker of parliament, Akbar Tanjung, warning of military action.\(^{216}\) The international community was also silent, with the US embassy in Jakarta, which had sent an observer to the congress, issuing a press statement stating that 'the US government firmly supports the territorial integrity of Indonesia', and that 'the US does not support independence for Papua or any other part of Indonesia'.\(^{217}\) A spate of violent incidents followed, often involving the symbolic flying of the outlawed independence flag as an act of defiance. In a particularly serious incident in October 2000, at least 40 people were killed after riots erupted when police pulled down an independence flag.\(^{218}\)

The porous border between Irian Jaya and Papua New Guinea, and the presence of Melanesian sympathisers for the OPM in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific islands, also demonstrate the presence of an external dimension in the conflict. Indeed, the current military leader of the OPM, John Nek Nek, is a founding member of an influential political movement called Melanesian Solidarity, which counts among its members prominent figures in Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands.\(^{219}\) In addition, there is a clear religious element in the feeling of separateness and deprivation, given that

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\(^{214}\) *Straits Times*, 23 December 1999, p.36; and 'Digging for Trouble', *Newsweek*, 28 February 2000, p.12.

\(^{215}\) 'Irian Jaya Leaders Declare Independence', *Straits Times*, 5 June 2000, p.23.

\(^{216}\) 'Gus Dur Rejects Papua Congress', *Straits Times*, 6 June 2000, p.22.

\(^{217}\) ibid.

\(^{218}\) 'Troops Restore Order in Irian Jaya After Clashes', *Straits Times*, 9 October 2000, p.24.

\(^{219}\) *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 May 1999.
many in Irian Jaya are Christian while the Indonesian armed forces and the civil administrators are predominantly Muslim.

The Irian Jaya separatists certainly do not have the level of international support enjoyed by the East Timorese, whose incorporation into Indonesia had been contentious given the lateness (1976) and the manner of the incorporation of a territory which was not part of Indonesia at its inception. Yet there are uncomfortable similarities in that neither was Irian Jaya part of Indonesia at its inception. Its incorporation into Indonesia in 1962 was also the result of the application of force, although then-president Sukarno’s justification was that it was an anti-colonial struggle. Moreover it had the overt sanction of the United States at the time.

The independence of East Timor has clearly galvanised the Irian Jaya separatist movement, and has also encouraged others in Aceh and Riau. For instance, there have been increasing demands for greater autonomy in Riau, with some even advocating independence. In response, Gus Dur agreed in April 2000 that Riau could manage its oil and gas when PT Caltex Pacific Indonesia’s contract expired in 2001 - a major concession, as the lucrative oil and gas revenues have gone to Jakarta, with very little given back to the province.220

It is conceivable that, if Aceh gains independence, Irian Jaya and other parts of the Outer Islands would step up efforts to secede. Simultaneous outbreaks could not be stopped by the Indonesian armed forces. The Irian Jaya separatists are therefore watching the situation in Aceh very closely.

Minority Separatism in Myanmar

Armed separatism in Southeast Asia is not confined to Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines, with its strongly Islamic flavour in Aceh, Pattani and Mindanao and the partly religious nature of separatism in East Timor and Irian Jaya. Armed separatist movements also existed in Myanmar and Laos, but they have been largely defeated through the application of overwhelming force as well as the internal weakness of and lack of foreign support for the separatist movements. These rebellions will therefore only be treated briefly here.

220 ‘Riau to Manage its Own Oil Fields’, Straits Times, 1 May 2000, p.19.
Figure 2.5: Myanmar

Armed Separatist Rebellions

0 100 200
kilometres

Mandalay
Meiktila
Taunggyi
Keng Tung

MYANMAR

Loi-kaw
Mae Hong Son
Chiang Mai

KARENNI

Prome
Henzada
Pegu
Rangoon
Thaton
Pa'an

KAREN

Bassein
Moulmein
Ye

THAILAND

ANDAMAN SEA

MON
Myanmar has had to contend with a succession of major internal rebellions since gaining independence from Britain in 1948. The roots of these rebellions lie in the artificial construct of Burma, which was a legacy of the colonial British (see Figure 2.5). Many ethnic groups along the periphery, such as the Karen, Shan, Mon, Arakanese, Chin and Nga, did not want to be dominated by the Burmans and, indeed, wanted their own statehood, such was their sense of community. At the same time, just as in the rest of the region after the Second World War, there was a communist movement bent on overthrowing the central government and replacing it with a communist regime.

Within a year of independence, Burma had to contend with two major types of rebellion. One was the Burmese communist uprising, while the other was a series of separatist revolts by ethnic minorities. In fact, there were rebel organisations in up to 12 ethnic groups, with some of the ethnic groups split further by factions.

The Burmese Communist Party received funding and support from China, and was ultimately defeated when China began to emphasise state-to-state relations with Myanmar in the late 1980s. Some of the ethnic rebels, on the other hand, also had some sympathy in neighbouring states. The Shans and Karens had tacit support and moral encouragement from some Thai sources. Others, such as the Chin and the Nga, received encouragement from their ethnic relatives in India, and the Muslim Mons and Arakanese from religious brethren in Bangladesh, although the governments of Thailand, India and Bangladesh were in no way involved in actively aiding the insurgents.221

The basis for ethnic separatism has been described by David Steinberg, who noted that, traditionally, the minorities in Burma had exhibited considerable degrees of political autonomy. The authority of their traditional leaderships had also been maintained during the colonial period. In addition, independent civilian Burmese governments had promised local autonomy as well as constitutional protection under the 1947 Constitution to the Shan and the Karen, so that they could leave the Union of Burma after ten years should they desire to do so. Indeed, the Karen felt that their support for the British

221 David Steinberg, ‘Constitutional and Political Bases of Minority Insurrections in Burma’ in Lim and Vani (eds), Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia, pp.53-4.
against the Japanese had fostered assurances of later independence. There was also the feeling that local religions, such as Christianity and Islam, had been placed in jeopardy by the Buddhist-oriented central government. The policies of the majority Burman government, which appeared to be assimilation and dominant control, also left much to be desired. Not surprisingly, ethnic minorities felt discriminated against.\textsuperscript{222}

The ethnic insurgencies were, however, not pre-ordained. The question of what form postwar Burma should take and the place of the minorities in it had been debated at length, resulting in a draft constitution for a Union of Burma, as Burmese independence leader Aung San had felt that a unitary state was not feasible, given the many ethnic minorities. The respected Aung San was assassinated in 1947, and with him died the idea of an effective union. Indeed, since the army under Ne Win seized power in 1962, the emphasis has been on the central unitary dominance of the country by the majority Burmans.

The insurgent armies varied in size, from bands of a few hundred to standing armies consisting of thousands, such as the Karen. All, however, were characterised by their ethnic identification as well as opposition to the central Burmese government at Rangoon, the legitimacy and authority of which they bitterly contested over the next 40-50 years. Thus, for much of the period after the end of the Second World War, the ethnic rebels were able to deny the central government the exploitation of the natural resources of the regions and also forced the government to spend heavily on internal defence.

The most significant of the ethnic rebels have been the Karen. The Karen National Union (KNU) was joined by defecting units from the state's army, many of whom were Karen. The separate identity of the Karens had also been strengthened during British rule when many were converted to Christianity and also recruited into the ranks of the colonial army. Ethnic Burmese within the Japanese-sponsored Burma Independence Army had taken savage revenge against the Karens for their anti-Japanese resistance, something which left a bitter legacy after 1948.\textsuperscript{223}

By January 1949, the Karens had penetrated into Rangoon itself, but they were then driven back. Subsequently, the Karens continued to

\textsuperscript{222} ibid., pp.54-5.
Armed Rebellion in the ASEAN States

defy the central government, fighting the Burmese army to a stalemate. In 1956, the second congress of the Karen National Union (KNU) called for ‘the establishment of a genuine federal union with all the states having equal rights and the right to self-determination’, a political objective which still applies today.224

In 1990, the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Aung San’s daughter, Aung San Suu Kyi, won the general elections, but it subsequently suffered violent repression at the hands of the military regime. Students and other supporters of the NLD fled into safe areas controlled by the Karens, who took the momentous decision to help arm and shelter the student rebels. This alliance became known as the Democratic Alliance of Burma, and it established an opposition National Coalition government at the Karen stronghold of Manerplaw, close to the Thai border.225

Apart from the Burma Communist Party, the various ethnic insurgents did not enjoy any measure of active external support, particularly material support. The Burmese armed forces therefore did not require expensive and advanced weapons systems to counter them. It was not until the pro-democracy opposition to the military regime emerged that the government was shocked into embarking on a large-scale military modernisation programme that substantially expanded the size of the army and improved both its conventional and counter-insurgency capabilities.

The Karens may have miscalculated in joining with the student rebels, because this galvanised the central government into taking steps to crush the Karens once and for all. By the 1990s, it was much better prepared than ever before, following a large-scale expansion of the armed forces and the infusion of conventional weaponry from China and other sources. Tragically, however, it was internal divisions between Buddhist and Christian Karens that led to the downfall of the KNU. The Buddhist faction was unhappy over Christian domination of the Karen struggle and was susceptible to the overtures of their Burman co-religionists. Indeed, the tensions within the ranks of the Karen National Union afforded the opportunity for Rangoon to play off one faction, the Buddhists, against the Christians. In the end, Buddhist members of the KNU rallied to the central government’s

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224 See Appendix 3.
cause. There was also war fatigue in the face of an increasingly capable Burmese military, as well as inept leadership within the KNU. Led by Buddhist Karen defectors, the Burmese were able to fight their way into Manerplaw in January 1995.\textsuperscript{226}

The armed forces were able to break the back of the Karen insurgency by 1997, driving the remaining Karen rebels out of their bases in the eastern mountain ranges. The government also achieved success in suppressing the Muslim Mons and ending other insurgent activity, including that of the Shans led by the drug warlord, Khun Sa.

The victory over the Karens also coincided with Myanmar’s entry into ASEAN, a most unfortunate piece of advertisement for the grouping. About 100,000 Karen refugees continue to live just across the border in Thailand, constituting a delicate problem for a fellow-ASEAN neighbour, as a number of KNU rebels are undoubtedly among them.\textsuperscript{227} Indeed, cross-border raids into Thailand have sparked fears of a clash between the armed forces of both countries. Thai support and sympathy for the Karen refugees in Thailand has bedevilled relations with Myanmar, resulting in considerable mutual mistrust and a barrier to any deepening of cooperative regionalism.

The Karens have clearly suffered a very serious setback, but they have not been crushed. Recognising the need for more political support from overseas, the Karens established the Karen National League (KNL) at the Second International Karen Youth Conference held in December 1997 in Ottawa, Canada. The KNL’s objective is clear: ‘In this time of difficulties for the Karen people, KNL will seek to expand and deepen the cooperation with all the democratic organizations critical to our national liberation’.\textsuperscript{228} Significantly, the KNU have emphasised a political, as opposed to a purely military, approach to the Karen struggle.

After the loss of Manerplaw and control of the lucrative trade checkpoints along the Thai border in 1995, the KNU switched to guerrilla tactics, regrouping in some 300 small military bases throughout the frontier area where four million Karen villagers live in


\textsuperscript{227} Straits Times Interactive, 19 December 1998.

\textsuperscript{228} See Appendix 4.
poverty. The KNU has continued to inflict casualties on government forces, although it is clear its previous strength has ebbed.\textsuperscript{229} The KNU today can field only 4-5,000 ill-equipped guerrillas.\textsuperscript{230} Aware of the need for fresh leadership, in March 2000 the KNU ousted General Bo Mya as president of the KNU and replaced him with Saw Ba Thin. Saw is a more flexible leader compared to Bo Mya, and he has the support of younger Karens. Saw’s policy is that of ‘politics before military’, which essentially means that the Karen struggle should be seen as a political and not purely military struggle. He has promised to stress Karen solidarity (as it was lack of solidarity that led to the downfall of the KNU in 1995) and has not ruled out entering into negotiations with the central Myanmar government.\textsuperscript{231} Reflecting this new and more sophisticated approach, the KNU and KNL work closely together to try to gain more international recognition and support for the Karen cause.

International attention to this cause has come from a most unlikely source. In January 2000, a small splinter group called God’s Army took over a Thai hospital in Ratchaburi. The ten guerrillas involved were killed by Thai army commandos, but the fact that God’s Army was led by a pair of twelve-year-old twins believed to possess supernatural powers lent a certain poignancy to the whole affair.\textsuperscript{232}

The central government’s concern today is not just the stubborn KNU but also other ethnic groups. While the Karen defeat in 1995 forced the Karennis, Mons and Shans to enter into peace agreements with the central government, these agreements have failed to address the fundamental constitutional, political and economic questions of concern to the minorities. The Karenni leadership, for instance, fell out with Rangoon over the control of lucrative teak forests in Kayeh State, with the result that fresh fighting broke out in January 1996, with the Karenni joining forces once again with the Karens.\textsuperscript{233}

In 2000 the central government has also had to deal with the armies of the ethnic Wa, which have close ties with Chinese drug


\textsuperscript{230} \textit{Korea Herald}, 11 August 2000.


\textsuperscript{232} \textit{Japan Times}, 17 May 2000.

trafficking syndicates and apparently have access to People's Liberation Army support in the southern Chinese province of Yunnan. These various Wa armies are reportedly better armed and disciplined and more combat-experienced than government forces.\textsuperscript{234}

The Karen separatist rebellion has been characterised by its durability, severity and resistance to negotiated settlement, having gone on since 1948. There has always existed some measure of sympathy for the Karen in Thailand, but this has been largely limited to moral support and the links which came with illegal border trading. Thailand itself finally got directly involved as a result of border skirmishes in the aftermath of the Karen defeat and the flight of almost 100,000 Karen refugees across to Thailand after 1997. Conditions are extremely harsh in the refugee camps, which have been subjected to harassment from Myanmar forces. Within Karen territory, up to 500,000 people are estimated to have been displaced by the fighting. There have also been clearly documented cases of severe human rights violations by Myanmar troops, such as summary executions, rape, forced labour and the wholesale destruction of villages.\textsuperscript{235}

Unlike the East Timorese, or the Muslim insurgents in Aceh, Mindanao and Pattani, who have links with radical Islam abroad as well as the sympathy of co-religionists in Malaysia, the Karens have largely had to fight alone. Indeed, the West scarcely noticed their plight despite the similarity in religion and the fact that they had fought for the British cause in the Second World War. (The East Timorese are also Christian and had also aided the Australians in the same war. In contrast, however, they managed to sustain considerable international sympathy for their cause, with the very capable resistance leadership successful in exploiting the underlying guilt of Australians concerning the plight of their one-time ally.)

In general, however, Myanmar has demonstrated that it is possible to contain ethnic insurgencies provided there is the will and provided the insurgents do not receive international support for their cause. Nevertheless, the presence of violent opposition to the central government in Rangoon for so many years, and the fact that the Karens remain defiant and undefeated, are indications that Myanmar faces problems of national cohesion and legitimacy.

\textsuperscript{234} ibid., p.10.
\textsuperscript{235} Sunday Times, 30 January 2000.
The Hmong Rebellion in Laos

Laos is a small, poverty-stricken and landlocked state surrounded by larger and more powerful countries. It is also a multi-ethnic state, with more than sixty different ethnic groups belonging to several linguistic families. The major ethnic group living in the mountains is the Hmong, who differ from the majority lowlanders linguistically and culturally. The Hmong have played an important role in the political life of Laos for several reasons. First, they lived in the strategic border region between North Vietnam and Laos, a much-contested area in successive Indochina conflicts. Second, the Hmong have proven to be very tough soldiers, especially in jungle and mountain guerrilla warfare. Third, the opium they grew has been a lucrative source of income, helping finance whoever was allied with them.

During the anti-colonial struggle against the French in the First Indochina War (1946-54), the communist Pathet Lao drew its support mainly from the lowland Laotians. The majority of Hmong sided with the French, although a substantial minority under Faydang Lobliayao supported Prince Souphanouvong's Pathet Lao. The Pathet Lao worked closely with the Viet Minh in its struggle, first against the French then against the Americans. The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) recruited the Hmong into a clandestine army to fight the communists during the Vietnam War. Special Forces advisers and arms were parachuted in to help the Hmong. When the Paris peace agreement was signed in 1973, however, the Hmong were abandoned: 18,000 Hmong troops were disbanded and American advisers left.236

The Pathet Lao, which came into power after 1975, has had to contend with the small-scale insurgent movement dominated by these disaffected Hmong. The insurgency has been fuelled by mutual suspicions between the highland Hmong, who had fought with the United States in the Vietnam War, and the lowland Lao, who dominated the ultimately victorious Pathet Lao. Counter-insurgency operations from 1976 to 1979 involved both Lao government forces and Vietnamese troops stationed in the country, supported by air strikes and artillery; they are alleged to have used chemical weapons on the Hmong, such as napalm and defoliants, resulting in some

300,000 Hmong and Laotians fleeing the country. Most of these were eventually resettled in the United States, Australia, France and other countries.

Hmong insurgents, supported by the anti-communist Lao community abroad, operated out of Hmong refugee camps in Thailand with the tacit assistance of anti-communist Thai military officers reluctant to abandon their former allies. They conducted hit-and-run guerrilla warfare against the Lao and Vietnamese forces in Laos. Hmong who escaped to China also obtained assistance with military training and weapons, as China found them a useful ally in the conflict with Vietnam, which erupted in 1979 over the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea the previous year. A Lao government-in-exile has been formed in France, where a number have settled. Within Laos itself, the remaining 150,000 Hmong are living in dire poverty, forced to abandon their semi-nomadic lifestyle (as their slash-and-burn practices threatened valuable timber resources) and work in collective farms in the lowlands. This dissatisfaction bred a revival of the Hmong armed resistance, which by 1985 was able to claim as many as 7-8,000 members.

The Hmong insurgents, however, were no match for Lao and Vietnamese troops and could only engage in nuisance sabotage attacks. With the improvement in relations with Thailand in the 1990s and Laos’s admission into ASEAN in 1997, Thai support for insurgent activity has declined. From 1992, Thailand took steps to close Hmong refugee camps along the border and repatriated the remaining Hmong refugees, cutting off sanctuaries as well as sources of recruitment for the resistance. By 1994, armed Hmong resistance was reduced to isolated incidents.

Yet the resistance is by no means crushed. The Hmong-dominated Ethnic Liberation Organisation of Laos continues to exist and has an estimated 2,000 members. In 2000, there have also been a number of bombings in the capital city of Vientiane as well as other urban centres, amidst an economic crisis and rampant inflation.

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237 ibid., pp.22-3.
238 ibid., p.23.
Hmong insurgents attacked the town of Muong Khoun in January, while skirmishes have occurred in the Saysombourn area as well as in the mountains near the Vietnam border. A royalist movement led by Prince Soulivong Savang, grandson of King Vatthana (who was deposed by the communists after 1975 and died in a prison camp) has gathered momentum. In July, royalist insurgents carried out an attack in southern Laos and hoisted the pre-1975 flag before being driven back by government forces. Prince Soulivong has taken care to reach out to exiled Hmong in tours to the United States.241

There has thus been an external dimension to the internal security threats faced by both Myanmar and Laos. In the case of Laos, the large Hmong communities in the United States, Australia and France have continued to be active in anti-Laotian activities. Thai support and sympathy for Hmong and Karen ethnic rebels have also bedevilled Thailand’s relations with Laos and Myanmar, resulting in mutual mistrust which has become a barrier to effective regional cooperation, as all three are today fellow-members of ASEAN.

ARMED COMMUNIST INSURGENCY

The End of Communist Insurgency in Malaysia, Thailand and Myanmar

A second major internal security challenge has been that emanating from communist insurgency. This has continued to be a factor in internal security considerations in the post-Cold War era, especially in the Philippines and, to a far lesser extent, in Thailand. The other major communist insurgency, that of the Malayan Communist Party, appears to have been defeated by 1989 when the communists surrendered.

Armed communist insurgency movements existed in most Southeast Asian states at the end of the Second World War. The fall of the Saigon regime in 1975 revived fears of an upsurge in communist insurgency through external support provided by Vietnam and its supporters, China and the Soviet Union. Thailand, in particular, was apprehensive, given the deep social and economic problems that it faced, its long borders with Laos and Kampuchea, and the possibility of irredentism in the 16 northeastern Thai provinces, where the majority are Lao-speaking people. Thailand also faced the provision of assistance, both material and in the form of safe sanctuaries in Laos, for Thailand's own home-grown communist insurgency movement, the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT).

The CPT was founded in December 1942 and it launched its armed struggle in 1965. By 1975, the CPT had 8,000 guerrillas, drew its ideology, weapons and funding from China, and had sanctuaries and supply lines in neighbouring Laos and Kampuchea. The CPT was able to increase its strength to about 12,000 guerrillas at the height of its influence in 1977-78, when the bloody military crackdown which ended the era of democratic government in Thailand sent thousands of student activists into the jungle to join the CPT.1

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1 Clark D. Neher, 'Thailand' in Diane K. Mauzy (ed.), *Politics in the ASEAN States* (Maricans, Kuala Lumpur, 1984), pp.29-30. See also 'Thailand's Armed Forces: From
Fortunately for the Thai government, the CPT, which was dominated by ethnic Chinese, continued to be pro-China when the Sino-Vietnamese split became evident towards the end of 1978. Training and supply facilities previously available in Laos were withdrawn. Despite Thailand's establishment of close relations with China in 1978, the evolution of a Sino-Thai strategic alliance against Soviet-backed Vietnamese domination of Indochina, and a consequent reduction in support by China, the CPT in the main remained loyal to Beijing.²

The end of democratic government in 1976, which saw a brutal crackdown on left-wing and other democratic forces in Bangkok by the military regime, resulted in the flight of thousands of student activists into the jungle to join the CPT. But the CPT's stubborn pro-China attitude and the oppressive nature of the CPT's internal politics was to disillusion the idealistic students, many of whom eventually gave up the struggle and returned to their homes. Thus, by late 1979, the Thai government was able to report that CPT activities were at their lowest in years.³ By the early 1990s, the CPT had dwindled to a hard core of some 300 guerrillas, posing no significant threat to the authorities. In particular, the realisation by the Thai government and military that the conflict was a political rather than military one, led to a more enlightened approach towards counter-insurgency. Thai counter-insurgency doctrine, as outlined in Prime Ministerial Order 66/2523, placed less emphasis on military action and more on political and civic action, stressing rural development programmes, selective military action and a generous amnesty programme.

In Malaysia, the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) had a long history dating back to its founding in 1929. Its role expanded considerably when it formed the backbone of Malayan resistance against the Japanese during the Second World War. After the Japanese surrender, the CPM was to engage in a bitter conflict against the British, beginning in 1948. Thus began the Emergency, which was to last until 1960. The CPM then established sanctuaries in the Betong

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³ Cited in ibid., p.76.
area across the Thai-Malaysia border and continued the insurgency, although at a much reduced level.\footnote{Zakaria Haji Ahmad and Zakaria Hamid, ‘Violence at the Periphery: A Brief Survey of Armed Communism in Malaysia’ in Lim and Vani (eds), \textit{Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia}, p.54.}

In the 1970s, a number of damaging splits reduced the effectiveness of the CPM. A splinter group broke away in February 1970 and formed the CPM Revolutionary Faction (CPM-RF). In 1974, another group split and formed the CPM's Marxist-Leninist Faction (CPM-ML), loyal to Moscow. The CPM-RF and the CPM-ML later merged, in 1983. The main CPM remained loyal to China. Despite the factionalism, the CPM was able to attract some support from Thai Malays, who were alienated by the policies of the Thai government. It thus regained some strength and, by 1979, had 3,000 guerrillas.\footnote{Leonard C. Sebastian, ‘Ending an Armed Struggle Without Surrender: The Demise of the CPM (1979-89) and the Aftermath’, \textit{Contemporary Southeast Asia}, Vol. 13, No. 3, December 1991, pp. 272-3.}

However, its failure to win over substantial Malay support within Malaysia itself marginalised the CPM. Thai and Malaysian successes in counter-insurgency operations, mass surrenders, the increased economic development in Malaysia throughout the 1980s under Mahathir, continued infighting and the increasing age of the revolutionaries finally began to reduce the effectiveness of the CPM. In addition, while Chin Peng continued to profess pro-China sympathies, China's priorities in the 1980s were no longer the export of revolutionary doctrine but economic modernisation and state-to-state relations with the Malaysian government. Accordingly, material aid dried up, with Chinese support reduced to occasional moral support. By this time, the CPM's strength had dwindled to such an extent that it had become a peripheral issue in Malaysia-China relations. In 1985, in fact, Mahathir visited China and was assured that China would not support the CPM in Malaysia.\footnote{\textit{Straits Times}, 21 December 1985.}

Malaysia also received Thailand's assistance in combating the CPM. A border cooperation agreement signed as far back as 1961 allowed for joint operations in the Betong area of southern Thailand, the establishment of a ministerial General Border Committee, and a Regional Border Committee for military commanders. In 1977, another agreement allowed forces of both sides the right of pursuit up to 20
kilometres into each other's territory. Aware that socio-economic development was an important factor in depriving the CPM of its support base, the two governments also agreed in 1982 to cooperate on economic projects in the border region. Despite Malaysia's reticence in cracking down on Muslim separatists using Malaysia as a sanctuary, Thailand nonetheless made serious efforts to stamp out the CPM; as the CPM's membership in the 1980s was almost 50 per cent Thai, it had now become a Thai security problem as well.

With its bases in southern Thailand under constant threat of attack, the CPM-ML surrendered in 1987 to Thai authorities. The Thai government's offer of amnesty and also financial assistance to help resettle the guerrillas no doubt helped to persuade the guerrillas to give up what was clearly a futile struggle.

In early 1988, the CPM itself began negotiations for laying down its arms. The Thai government was careful not to use the term 'surrender', as the estimated 1,000 guerrillas would not be arrested. In December 1989, a Tripartite Peace Accord was signed between the CPM and the Thai and Malaysian governments; it consisted of two separate peace pacts, one with the Malaysian government and the other with the Thai government. The Malaysian government agreed to allow ex-CPM members to actively participate in politics and agreed to help them re-settle in Malaysia. Further, the Malaysian government agreed not to invoke the Internal Security Act and imprison any guerrillas upon their return, although it reserved the right to 'rehabilitate' and re-educate the guerrillas. The Thai government was more generous, granting land and financial assistance, as well as Thai citizenship, to those who chose to remain in Thailand.

The CPM insurgency appears to be buried for good, given the rapid economic development in Malaysia, which is providing increasing prosperity to significant sections of the population - particularly the Chinese, who had formed the backbone of the communist insurgency. However, it took several decades of counter-insurgency efforts to finally stamp out the revolt.

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8 Sunday Times (Singapore), 5 April 1987.
9 Straits Times, 14 December 1988.
10 Straits Times, 4 December 1989.
11 Sunday Times (Singapore), 12 May 1991.
Similarly, the Burmese Communist Party (BCP) has met its demise after years of ultimately fruitless armed struggle. Founded in August 1939, the BCP had called for armed struggle to achieve national liberation first before meeting the objective of a socialist revolution. After the end of the Second World War, the BCP prepared itself for armed struggle and launched its insurrection in 1947, targeting both cities and rural areas. The BCP had some success in those early years, as some army units and commanders defected to its cause. What protected the central government at this time, however, was the loyalty of the ethnic minorities in the Burma Army. The Karen, Kachin and Chin units bore the brunt of the fighting with communist forces in 1948.\textsuperscript{12}

But the ethnic minorities also eventually fell out with the central government. By 1959, the BCP and the ethnic minorities, including the Karens, had formed a National Democratic United Front to oppose the government in Rangoon. Like the CPM, however, the BCP made the fatal error of turning exclusively to China for help. Its Maoist China-trained cadre leadership took China's side in the Sino-Soviet split and also unleashed a mini-Cultural Revolution of their own within the BCP. Executions and defections took place as the BCP rent itself apart through its internal ideological struggle.

The central government took advantage of this internal struggle to attack the insurgents. Various 'Four Cuts' operations were launched in the Irrawaddy delta from 1968 to 1973, virtually eliminating the BCP from the Burmese heartland. The Burmese armed forces next turned to the BCP headquarters, located at Pegu Yoma. In March 1975 Pegu Yoma fell, while the two top BCP leaders, Thakin Chit and Thakin Zin, were gunned down by government troops, dealing a major blow to the BCP.\textsuperscript{13} In addition, Deng Xiao Peng's rise to power in China signalled a change of emphasis to state-to-state relations on the part of China, in line with the developmental and reformist approach which Deng brought with him. (The Maoist-oriented BCP leadership had also unwisely criticised Deng during the Cultural Revolution.)\textsuperscript{14} Chinese aid was withdrawn, with Chinese 'advisers' recalled in 1979 and arms

\textsuperscript{12} Michael Fredholm, \textit{Burma: Ethnicity and Insurgency} (Praeger, Westport CT, 1993), p.209.
\textsuperscript{13} ibid.,p.218.
\textsuperscript{14} Martin Smith, \textit{Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity} (University Press, Dhaka, 1999), pp.302-3.
supplies drying up. The CPB was then forced to participate in and tax the lucrative cross-border black-market trade and eventually to turn to opium as sources of revenue. Thereafter, the state-to-state relationship between Deng’s China and Myanmar became so close that the CPB was becoming a source of embarrassment to the Chinese government. In 1981, China offered a state pension, a house and a plot of land in China to any CPB veteran cadre who wanted to accept retirement. This offer was reiterated on a number of occasions, causing much resentment among ethnic minority rank-and-file members, who thought their leaders were being bought over and would abandon them.

In any case, the pro-Chinese orientation of the CPB had already alienated many of the minority cadres. This resentment culminated in a series of mutinies in 1989, in which ethnic Wa units seized the BCP general headquarters at Panghsang, destroyed communist literature and forced the ageing leaders to flee to China. The mutineers also took over the BCP radio station, which was renamed the Burma Nationalities Broadcasting Station. The first message from the new station lambasted the BCP leadership: ‘Your ideology is divorced from reality. The people no longer accept your narrow racial policy and the leadership provided by a small clique of people’.16

Following this event, the BCP disintegrated into small factions and, although a headquarters remained in Arakan, has ceased to be a major security threat to the central government. Despite harsh economic conditions and political repression in Myanmar, the BCP’s Maoist China-oriented leadership had failed to exploit the general dissatisfaction with the central government and instead collapsed due to its own infighting. It ultimately failed because of its own failures, not because of any government effort.

The Persistence of Communist Insurgency in the Philippines

The most serious communist insurgency movement in Southeast Asia after 1975 has been that in the Philippines. The Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) was established in 1969 in the province of Tarlac, and is a successor to the Partidong Kommunista Pilipinas (PKP) of the 1950s and the 1960s (the so-called ‘Huks’). Its

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15 Fredholm, Burma: Ethnicity and Insurgency, p.223.
16 Smith, Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity, p.376.
military arm, the New People's Army (NPA), has been able to operate in an area much wider than the PKP, which had been confined to Luzon. It attracted many poor plantation workers and farmers exploited and mistreated by wealthy landowners and their security forces. Marcos's Martial Law administration had some success in combating the CPP, with almost the entire political and military leadership of the CPP-NPA captured or killed by the time its chairman, Jose Sison, was himself captured in 1978, and subsequently exiled to the Netherlands.17

However, such was the depth of dissatisfaction at the social and economic inequalities of Marcos's government that wave after wave of leaders rose to replace those who had been either killed or captured. By 1985, the NPA was described as the 'fastest growing, most threatening and arguably most brutal communist insurgency in the world today', as its strength increased to more than 20,000 guerrillas operating in the countryside.18 This increase in support for the CPP was due to a combination of factors, including the continued exploitation of agricultural labourers and tenants, the harsh economic difficulties of the post-1970 economic decline, the displacement of smallholders during the Marcos years to make way for large-scale public and private development projects, abuses of power by corrupt bureaucrats and soldiers, and popular opposition to Marcos's repression.

The success of the People's Revolution in 1986 and the ascension to power of Corazon Aquino, however, marginalised the NPA to a certain extent. Aquino was herself representative of the victory of the people over the oppression, corruption and rapacity of the Marcos élite. In addition, the NPA was riven by infighting. In November 1993, for instance, four key leaders, including the NPA chief of staff and its secretary-general, who had responded to the government's offer of negotiations, were expelled for refusing to recognise the authority of Sison.19 The CPP was thus split into two groups, a conservative group headed by Sison, and a progressive or 'revisionist' group led by former

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19 Radio Filipinas (Quezon City, in English), 0230 GMT 1 November 1993, in BBC/SWB FE/1841 B/3 (6), 9 November 1993.
NPA chief Romulo Kintanar. Moreover, the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and the economic modernisation in China and Vietnam, created a crisis of identity in the CPP itself. Within the Philippines, the peace initiatives and the economic reforms and development begun by Aquino’s successor, President Ramos, have undermined CPP morale. Many CPP members have simply ceased to be active.

Moreover, the CPP has had no significant external support from China or any other communist state. In 1992 alone, the government was able to report the surrender of some 14,600 guerrillas. By December 1993, the government claimed that the NPA had been reduced to 8,000 in strength. Finally, in December 1993, Sison himself agreed to peace talks in the face of declining strength. The talks, however, soon broke down over Sison's insistence on injecting provisions that would recognise the existence of two sovereign states, and confirm the CPP's sovereignty over the areas under its control. The NPA continued its insurgency, turning its attention now to urban terrorism through its Alex Boncayao Brigade. The chairman of the CPP, Armando Liwanag, called on communist members to continue revolutionary warfare, stating that it was the government’s administration that was the cause of all the problems in the country. In July 1995, Sison himself declared that peace talks with the government would be suspended until Ramos’s term as president ended in 1998, citing as the reason his belief that the government was

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20 Excerpts in BBC/SWB FE/1717 B/9 (19), 17 June 1993. Jose Sison claimed ideological purity for the CPP and said that East European communist parties that fell after 1989 were ‘sham communists’, stating that the CPP had rejected ‘revisionism and the restoration of capitalism’. See ABS-CBN 2 TV (Quezon City, in English), 1430 GMT 12 January 1993, in BBC/SWB FE/1588 B/2 (8), 16 January 1993.
22 GMA-7 TV (Quezon City, in Tagalog), 0930 GMT 23 December 1993 in BBC/SWB FE/1881 B/3 (10), 29 December 1993.
23 GMA-7 TV (Quezon City, in Tagalog), 0930 GMT 23 December 1993 in BBC/SWB FE/1881 B/3 (12), 29 December 1993.
not sincere in the abortive peace talks.27 In September 1996, however, Sison reversed his stand and agreed to resume talks as the CPP continued to weaken.28

The economic growth of the Philippines, as well as structural reform fostered by the strong leadership of presidents Ramos and Estrada, have clearly helped to alleviate the insurgency. Yet the conditions which gave rise to the insurgency in the first place continue to be present. Indeed, the CPP continues to be a threat to security, with the uncovering in September 1999 of a planned urban bombing campaign which also included plans to assassinate top government officials including President Estrada.29 To date, CPP guerrillas remain active, attacking police stations and committing other acts of violence.30 While the NPA was reduced to 5,000 insurgents in 1997, a new estimate in August 2000 put the number at 11,000.31

Although a Maoist insurgency appears to be an anachronism in the post-Cold War era, there are clearly domestic factors driving the insurgency. Richard Kessler has observed that the socio-political conditions that have given rise to severe inequalities have become so entrenched that there is now a cyclical pattern of rebellion, and that even if the NPA were defeated, the situation would be no different to that following the defeat of the Huks a generation earlier.32

Echoing Kessler, W. Scott Thompson has also observed that the failure under the Aquino administration to carry out land reform (due to obstruction in the Philippine Congress dominated by landlords and their allies) means that fundamental problems remain unaddressed.33 Alan Robson has also highlighted the continued existence of the 'boss' system, whereby a handful of powerful families have dominated provincial politics in their areas. Acting very much like warlords, these families have maintained their grip through the dispensation of

28 'Exiled Sison Agrees to Talks', Straits Times Interactive, 20 September 1996.
29 Straits Times, 11 September 1999.
30 Straits Times, 4 November 1999, p.35.
patronage. The problem with this system, which Aquino and Ramos have both failed to tackle, is that it:

... endlessly diverts development capital into futile pork-barrel projects and traps the central government into a paralysing bargaining web. Election outcomes are determined by personality factors while national political debate bypasses crucial development issues and diffuses into nationalist rhetoric.34

Thus, while short-term measures by Ramos and now the Estrada government, and the ideological contradictions within the CPP, are clearly reducing the effectiveness of the CPP, fundamental problems remain. The facts that the CPP remains undefeated, coupled with the duration and severity of the Moro rebellion in Mindanao, pose serious questions over legitimacy. The Philippines is thus still a fundamentally weak state, with significant groups unable and unwilling to accept the current institutional arrangements, with the use of violence to redress grievances still considered a legitimate option.

The Situation Today

In Indonesia, the Suharto government remained wary of communism despite its emphatic victory in 1965-66, when it destroyed the PKI, then the world's second-largest communist party. In 1990, then armed forces chief, Try Sutrisno, argued that communism was still the main security threat to Indonesia.35 In 1994, a leading army commander warned that a revival of communism was possible and thus Indonesia had to be vigilant. He also warned that leftist elements were attacking the political system and exploiting religious issues to further their cause.36 Echoing this, a senior adviser to President Suharto warned that 'new-style communists' were planning to gain power through constitutional and legal means. In an interesting twist, he blamed corruption, the problems in East Timor, mass demonstrations and labour unrest on the work of these 'communists'.

The Indonesian government also accused the newly rejuvenated Partai Democrasi Indonesia (PDI) of having ties with the banned PKI.37

The talk by various leaders about the existence of a communist threat in the form of 'formless organisations', however, was clearly a move to justify the military's continued political role, and allow the Suharto government to continue repressive measures in response to the demand by the growing middle class for greater democracy. Indeed, the head of the influential Nahdatul Ulama, Indonesia's largest Muslim organisation, was openly sceptical, and described it 'as a method to divert attention from the internal problems of the government'.38 Significantly, even the armed forces' deputy chief for socio-political affairs expressed scepticism about whether the 'new-style communists' actually existed.39 The Suharto government's attempt at reviving the communist bogey, in the absence of any evidence of underground communist activity, can thus be seen as an attempt to deflect domestic criticism of the government's failings and to justify tougher measures against political opposition to the ruling regime. Despite the economic crisis and social disparities, Indonesians are not likely to return to a defeated ideology such as communism, especially as there is now a more attractive alternative - namely, Islam. The PKI is indeed finished for good.

The end of communist insurgency in most ASEAN states signalled the general demise of ideologically driven insurgency. The economic development in the ASEAN states since 1975 has ameliorated the economic and social conditions that had underlain the various communist insurgencies. This general statement, however, needs to be qualified in the case of the Philippines, where fundamental socio-economic disparities and problems remain, and a Maoist insurgency continues. Such problems can only be alleviated by stable, long-term and equitable economic development. The persistence and duration of communist insurgency has been an indicator of the lack of internal resilience and the problem of legitimacy that states in the region faced after decolonisation. This problem of legitimacy still remains in some of the states even today, for instance in the Philippines.

38 Straits Times, 23 October 1995, p.38.
There also was always an external dimension to these insurgencies. The various communist insurgency movements derived moral support from China and, to a lesser extent, the Soviet Union. Not only did they demonstrate the inherent weakness of the ASEAN states, they enabled China to benefit from the situation. While China professed that it had little choice but to at least provide some support to the insurgents to prevent them from turning to Vietnam or the Soviet Union, this did compel the states in the region to make their peace with China, given the US retrenchment since 1975 in the wake of the Nixon Doctrine and the US defeat in Vietnam. Some, such as Thailand, entered into a strategic alliance with China, while the rest of the ASEAN states felt compelled to establish friendly relations with China and to be careful not to take steps that would antagonise it.

In this sense, therefore, communist insurgency has been a constraining factor in the ability of the ASEAN states to manage the regional order since 1975. While the end of the Cold War after 1989 also coincided with the end of ideologically driven insurgency, the severity of the communist revolt in the Philippines illustrates the domestic causes of that revolt, and demonstrates the fact that ASEAN states can still have problems with their legitimacy.
Finally, there is the question of Islamic religious revivalism. The nature of this challenge and its implications for security will need to be examined, as it has been cited by the Malaysian and Indonesian governments as a sufficiently serious internal security threat to justify extraordinary administrative and military measures to contain it. While there have been Muslim secessionist rebellions in Aceh, Mindanao and southern Thailand, there has not been any armed insurrection aimed at overthrowing the central government and replacing it with a fundamentalist Islamic regime. The evidence suggests, however, that there is increasing Islamisation, accompanied by politicisation and some evidence of extremist elements that would be prepared to use force to realise their aims. Indeed, the Islamic extremist factor is probably more significant than is generally realised. Islam is becoming an important political force in the states where it is the dominant religion.

The main challenge posed by Islamic revivalism has been its political challenge to established élites and regimes. Islamic purists and fundamentalists want the social, political and economic structure to reflect Islamic tenets. Moreover, Islam is a potent mobilising symbol and focal point in harnessing political opposition to the government.

Although the Islamic revival is manifested differently in each country, certain common themes and characteristics are discernible. A fundamental tenet is that society should be organised on the basis of the Koran and the Sunna (that is, 'the way of the Prophet'). This means that the values, principles and beliefs of the Koran should be upheld in the political, economic, cultural, legal and administrative spheres.

Worldwide, Islamic revivalism is a result of the Muslim world's disillusionment with Western civilisation and its search for an alternative model that would allow for the development of an Islamic society organised according to the teachings of the Koran. The revivalism is also a reaction against modern Western-style capitalist development, with its stress on materialistic goals and individual
Armed Rebellion in the ASEAN States

desires, at the seeming expense of the human being and involving the rejection of many fundamental Islamic beliefs.

However, Islamic scholars themselves acknowledge that the primary driving force is the presence of poor social conditions. According to a leading Muslim writer, Khalid Ahmed, 'the growing gap between rich and poor, runaway inflation, unemployment, massive disillusionment with the mainstream parties and their leaders are core issues'.

The persistent and growing challenge of Muslim separatist rebellion, in the context of greater Muslim consciousness in the Malay archipelago, is an indication that the region cannot escape the consequences of the worldwide resurgence and radicalisation of Islam. The Islamic factor has proved to be a unifying factor and a focal point for the rallying of armed resistance against the government in Aceh and Mindanao. The Muslim separatists have been able to attract the support and sympathy of co-religionists in neighbouring Malaysia as well as the international Muslim community at large.

Moreover, the rise in Islamic consciousness in both Malaysia and Indonesia has raised fears in the region that extreme forms of Islam may be manifested, if the experience of the Middle Eastern countries, which have had to deal with violent extremist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, is any guide. As the Algerian and other Middle Eastern examples show, economic distress and inequalities could lead many to seek solace in more extreme forms of Islam. Worldwide, there already exists a loose network of extremist Islamic terrorists who have been prepared to use extreme force to achieve their aims. In addition, there is the worrying presence of regimes such as those in Libya and Iran, which are ready to support Muslim terrorist/separatist groups.

Indeed, the growing links with international Islamic terrorist groups is an area of increasing concern. For instance, the Islamic Moro separatist terrorist group in the Philippines, the Abu Sayaff, had been trained and financed by the international Muslim terrorist organisation led by Osama bin Laden. This indicates that the region cannot avoid the fears growing worldwide over the activities of such groups, which


are alleged to be on the verge of being able to conduct terrorist activities using weapons of mass destruction.

The Challenge of Islam in Malaysia

The Islamic resurgence in Malaysia began in university campuses in the 1970s, led by Muslim student leaders such as the charismatic Anwar Ibrahim. This Islamic resurgence was the result of a Malay search for reassurance and identity, given the secular and competitive nature of university life to which a large number of rural Malay youth were exposed when they gained entry into tertiary education under the pro-bumiputra New Economic Policy. Malay youths abroad were also caught up in the worldwide Islamic resurgence, joining international Muslim groups. Many were influenced by the radical Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. These students were later to provide intellectual vigour to Islamic resurgence when they returned to Malaysia. This has important implications in Malaysia, given that a defining characteristic of being Malay is the Islamic religion, and the fact that just over half of Malaysia's population is Malay. When Mahathir ascended to power in 1981, he supported Islamic institutions and symbols in a bid to consolidate his power. In addition, he coopted Anwar Ibrahim into his government, thus ensuring that Islamic revivalism was now incorporated into the mainstream establishment. Anwar had been a radical Muslim student leader in the 1970s, who had championed the cause of poor farmers in Baling in 1974 and had been arrested under the Internal Security Act (ISA). He brought along the support of the influential ABIM (the Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement), the largest, most formally organised and politicised of the Islamic youth movements. Members of the smaller, rival Islamic Republic Council (IRC), however, tended to support the opposition Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS).

Thus, Islamic revivalism became institutionalised within mainstream politics. This, together with the emergence of dakwah (proselytising) movements, has had the effect of influencing Malays to a more conservative lifestyle. Within Malaysia, the government has

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given Islam a more symbolic prominence. Malaysia also unhesitatingly describes itself as an Islamic nation.  

The non-governmental *dakwah* movements, however, have now assumed the mantle of Islamic revivalism, and their sometimes strident criticism of animistic aspects of Malay culture, and of the government, is viewed with alarm by moderate Malays as well as by UMNO leaders. The Malay establishment regards these criticisms as evidence of Islamic extremism and a threat to the Malay way of life, to modern economic progress and to the larger social fabric of a multi-racial society. The Mahathir government has kept a close watch on the activities of various *dakwah* groups, and has harassed those considered to be heretical and a source of religiously inspired violence. Officially termed *dakwah songsang*, or deviant *dakwah* groups, they have been seen as Islamic religious extremists. The Malaysian leadership feared that, as a consequence of the Iranian Revolution in 1978, extreme Muslim groups might seek to realise their Islamic objectives by revolutionary means. In 1979, before he achieved power, Mahathir had already warned that ‘Malay religious opportunists’ were seeking to overthrow the government through violence. Similar fears were expressed by the government over the growing influence of deviant and extremist teachings among members of the police force and the armed forces.

In 1978, Indian Hindu vigilantes caught and killed a group of Muslim fundamentalists in the act of desecrating a Hindu temple. The Kerling incident, as the case was known, raised the spectre of communal violence. Among the Malay Muslims killed was a university lecturer. The sole survivor was a medical student enrolled at an Australian university.

In March 1980, following a demonstration by thousands of farmers in Kedah, the government alleged that a hitherto unknown organisation, the Pertubuhan Angkatan Sabilullah, with close links to the PAS (a charge PAS strongly denied), had fomented the

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6 *Straits Times*, 7 July 1979.
7 *New Straits Times*, 16 December 1980.
8 *New Nation* (Singapore), 5 September 1978.
demonstration and had plans to set up an Islamic state in Malaysia. In June 1980, the leaders of two deviant groups were detained under the ISA, with the government announcing that it had uncovered a Muslim extremist plot to assassinate cabinet ministers.

In October 1980, a group of men in white robes with swords attacked a police station in Johore. A number of police and civilians were seriously injured, and eight of the attackers were shot dead. They were members of an extreme Muslim group that wanted to launch a jihad to turn Malaysia into an Islamic state.

In November 1985, members of Malaysia's internal security forces became engaged in a violent confrontation with members of an extreme Islamic group at Memali, Kedah, while seeking to arrest its leader, Ibrahim Mahmud. In the subsequent exchange of gunfire, 18 people were killed, including Mahmud. Villagers at Memali then insisted on burying the group's dead as martyrs for Islam, sparking fears that the Memali incident would set off further violent Islamic extremist challenges to the government. Although this did not happen, it served as a reminder that violent Islamic extremism exists in Malaysia.

In 1997, ten people were arrested under the Internal Security Act, with the government declaring that it had to clamp down on Shiite groups in the country because their activities had become aggressive and violent. This action signalled the Malaysian government's concern over the spread of Shiite teachings, which have been associated with Islamic fundamentalist violence in the Middle East.

In July 2000, the Al-Ma'unah cult staged a daring raid in which they took 82 automatic rifles, five grenade launchers, ten machine guns and 2,000 rounds of ammunition from a military armoury. The 15 men involved took three hostages and fled into the Perak jungle near the town of Sauk, where they were soon surrounded by hundreds of...
security personnel. The standoff ended when they were overpowered by army commandos after murdering two of their non-Muslim hostages. In follow-up operations, a further 39 members of the cult were also arrested under the Internal Security Act.

The ruling UMNO was also uneasy about the growing influence of ABIM and the opposition PAS. When Mahathir became prime minister in 1982, he solved the first problem by coopting Anwar Ibrahim into the government. However, the opposition PAS continued to challenge UMNO, forcing UMNO to take measures to improve its own Muslim identity. Mahathir, however, espouses a pragmatic version of Islam, one that fits his vision of economic growth and development, as well as social stability and ethnic harmony. The result is that his government has been constantly put on the defensive by the less compromising Islam of PAS.

The issue of Islamic revivalism and its political implications for both Malaysia and the region has not been lost on Mahathir. Internally, the Islamic tag is a powerful political instrument in the context of a widespread Islamic resurgence among Malays in general. Intra-Malay tensions have been exacerbated by allegations and perceptions of government corruption, violations of human rights through the use of the Internal Security Act and the failure to ameliorate Malay poverty. UMNO is thus susceptible to Muslim fundamentalist attacks. This religious factor has serious domestic political implications. As Trocki points out, the communal nature of the Malaysian political system means that Islam functions as a divisive and not a unifying force. In addition, the presence of considerable numbers of Malay Muslim minorities in Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines, three of Malaysia's immediate ASEAN neighbours, makes domestic political developments in Malaysia of special significance for the region.

The Al-Arqam Saga
While PAS has proved to be a particularly strong opponent because of its popular base among rural Malays, Mahathir has not

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15 Straits Times, 6 July 2000, p.22.
16 Straits Times, 10 July 2000, p.31.
18 Carl A. Trocki, 'Islam: Threat to ASEAN Regional Unity?', Current History, April 1980, p.152.
shied away from using force to destroy and discredit what he considered to be the growing threat to internal security stemming from the Al-Arqam sect.

Al-Arqam, a prominent *dakwah* movement, was led by Ashaari Muhammad, who founded the sect in 1968. Known to his followers as 'Abuya' or 'Our Father', he called for the creation of an Islamic state. The sect grew rapidly in the context of the worldwide Islamic revival, as did its business interests. In 1994, it had a growing international business empire with assets of up to M$300 million (US$116 million), with 417 business concerns in Malaysia alone.19

Al-Arqam aimed to build a self-reliant Islamic economy in Malaysia, and also operated its own communities as well as some 257 schools in Malaysia, with its own university in Indonesia. Although the sect officially had 10,000 members in Malaysia, it was estimated that it had at least 100,000 sympathisers in that country alone. Professionals and civil servants, including UMNO members, joined as members.

Ashaari himself was becoming influential by the 1990s, and appeared to harbour political ambitions. A former member of the opposition PAS (in the 1960s), he openly supported former deputy prime minister Abdul Ghafar Baba, whose son is an Al-Arqam member, in the UMNO party elections which saw Anwar Ibrahim succeed in becoming deputy prime minister. Ashaari also claimed to have regular dialogues with the prophet Muhammad and had also predicted the eventual arrival of a messiah in Mecca and a caliph (or ruler) in Malaysia.20

But the last straw came when Ashaari became overtly political to the point of stating in 1994 that he had discussed Malaysian politics with the prophet Muhammad, and that Mahathir and the deputy prime minister, Anwar Ibrahim, would meet their downfall within two years. He also stated that if a referendum was held in Malaysia, he would be more popular than Mahathir.21 In June 1994, an Al-Arqam magazine even wrote that the prophet Muhammad had come to Ashaari in a dream and ridiculed the UMNO party election as a

contest of 'thieves and robbers.' Also fuelling the concern over Islamic extremism was the arrest in March 1994 of 19 Malaysian women students of Al-Arqam in Cairo, Egypt, for their association with violent Islamic extremist groups in that country. In mid-June 1994, Mahathir declared Al-Arqam a deviationist sect that threatened state security. Mahathir further stated that action had to be taken to check the spread of its influence. He claimed that, given the growth of its influence and the setting up of its own 'army', the government could not ignore the threat it posed to the country's stability. He stated that 'these movements start off small but before long they grow and aim to take over the government just like in other Muslim countries'. Other government ministers added to the chorus. Foreign minister Abdullah Badawi declared that the sect had to be stopped because it had developed into a cult. Defence minister Najib Tun Razak declared that 'it is a very dangerous form of teaching, which, if left unchecked, would cause severe dislocation in Malaysian society'. Mahathir also declared that 'if we do not take action, we are at fault as Al-Arqam has deviated from Islam's teachings'.

In July 1994, religious authorities in Malaysia ruled the sect deviationist, giving Mahathir the moral authority to order an immediate crackdown. Al-Arqam members were arrested for distributing pamphlets and cassettes. Mahathir charged that the sect kept sex slaves and was training 313 'holy warriors' in Thailand. However, Mahathir has not been able to produce any real proof of either of these allegations. In August 1994, the sect was banned altogether under an order from the National Fatwa Council, with the Malaysian government describing it as 'the biggest security threat to the country'. The Council ruled that Al-Arqam's teachings and beliefs had contravened Islamic tenets and could lead Muslims astray. All its

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22 ibid.
23 ibid.
schools, including its religious schools, were closed. All activities of the movement were banned. In addition, it was not allowed to print or publish anything, nor could it proselytise anyone. The government declared that it would use the Internal Security Act, which provides for detention for up to two years without trial, to enforce the ban.\textsuperscript{30} Foreign followers of Al-Arqam were also banned from entering Malaysia.\textsuperscript{31}

Malaysia also won the support of its ASEAN neighbours. Singapore, Indonesia and Brunei agreed that Ashaari would not be allowed to enter their countries, and that they would help Al-Arqam followers in their territories ‘to regain the true path of Islamic teaching’.\textsuperscript{32} Shortly thereafter, the Thai government assisted Malaysia by arresting and then expelling Ashaari, who had been living in self-imposed exile in Thailand since 1988 after Malaysia had banned a book which laid down his beliefs.\textsuperscript{33}

Given the influence and size of Al-Arqam's support base, fears were expressed by observers in the wake of the government's crackdown that Mahathir might have over-extended himself. The tough government action could in fact be a self-fulfilling prophecy, as it could incite Al-Arqam followers to violence.

In the event, no violence occurred. In a surprising turn of events, Ashaari himself appeared on television before Malaysia's top religious authorities and recanted to a national audience. Ashaari declared that his beliefs were wrong and that he was repenting of his own free will.\textsuperscript{34} This astonishing turn-about by Ashaari assured the government's victory. In November 1994, Al-Arqam was formally disbanded. Deputy foreign minister Datuk Mustapha Mohamed was later to boast that the swift way that the issue was resolved was an example of

\textsuperscript{30} ibid.

\textsuperscript{31} Voice of Malaysia External Service (Kuala Lumpur, in English), 0600 GMT 6 September 1994, in BBC/SWB FE/2092 B/7 (13), 7 September 1994.

\textsuperscript{32} Straits Times, 5 August 1994, p.24. See also Antara News Agency (Jakarta, in English), 0845 GMT 4 August 1994, in BBC/SWB FE/2067 B/7 (20), 6 August 1994.

\textsuperscript{33} Sydney Morning Herald, 3 September 1994, p.24. See also Voice of Malaysia External Service (Kuala Lumpur, in English), 0600 GMT 3 September 1994, in BBC/SWB FE/2092 B/7 (13), 5 September 1994.

\textsuperscript{34} Straits Times Weekly Edition, 5 November 1994, p.10. See also Radio Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur, in Malay), 1300 GMT 15 September 1994, in BBC/SWB FE/2103 B/1, 17 September 1994 (3).
Malaysia's success in checking religious extremism without recourse to violence.\(^{35}\)

In an oblique reference to Al-Arqam, deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim identified 'religious fanaticism' as a threat to national security, and stated that stability had been preserved due 'to our readiness to act decisively when necessary'.\(^{36}\) Anwar further set out the moderate and modernistic line of the government: 'The challenge before us is to cultivate moderation in religious life and promote the teaching of universal perspectives'.\(^{37}\)

While PAS and Al-Arqam have essentially posed non-violent political threats to the ruling regimes, Mahathir had clearly taken a huge gamble with his tough action against Al-Arqam. Given Ashaari's charismatic hold over his followers, some Al-Arqam members might well have resorted to violence, a most unpalatable prospect given the size of its following. Moreover, extremist Islamic groups and regimes abroad, such as those in Libya and Iran, are prepared to support extreme fundamentalist Islamic groups in Malaysia. These facts have ensured continued vigilance by the Malaysian government against fundamentalist Muslim groups for fear they could turn violent, as has happened in other Muslim countries, such as in the Middle East. Indeed, the violent clashes with fundamentalist Muslim groups in 1980 and 1985 mentioned earlier are indications of the potential for violent Islamic extremism in Malaysia. The prospect of Islamic fundamentalism in Malaysia is also a matter for regional concern, given the religiously inspired nature of the Thai Malay-Muslim, the Philippine Moro and the Indonesian Aceh uprisings, as well as the presence of a significant Malay minority in Singapore.

**The Economic Crisis and the Anwar Episode**

The current political situation in Malaysia, following both economic recession and the sensational ouster of Anwar Ibrahim amidst allegations of sexual misconduct and corruption, is worrying for its neighbours.

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37 ibid.
While the regional economic crisis in 1997 did not affect Malaysia as seriously as Thailand or Indonesia, Mahathir's outspoken words and actions caused a collapse in international financial confidence in Malaysia. He ordered restrictions to curb what he considered to be financial speculation, attacked free markets as a recipe for the slavery of developing countries to the rich nations, and warned of a Western and Jewish conspiracy to destabilise the country. Investors dumped the ringgit and it lost 40 per cent of its value in five months.\footnote{Straits Times Weekly Edition, 6 December 1997.}

In August 1998, the looming economic crisis became enmeshed in a political crisis as well. Deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim, who had been groomed to become the next prime minister, was dismissed by Mahathir amidst allegations of corruption and sexual misconduct.\footnote{‘Anwar Sacked’, Straits Times Interactive, 3 September 1998.} It was an open secret that Anwar had wanted to ease Mahathir out and had differed with him over how to cope with the economic crisis.\footnote{‘Dynamic Duo Relays Conflicting Economic Messages’, Far Eastern Economic Review, 21 May 1998, pp.24-8.} Mahathir accused Anwar of attempting to sell out to foreign interests, especially to the IMF. Subsequently, Mahathir announced currency controls, effectively withdrawing Malaysia from the world economy in order to stabilise the domestic economy. Fundamental reforms that Anwar wanted, such as deregulation, freer markets and an end to corruption, remain problematic.

Mahathir's financial autarky at this crucial juncture was a risky and unorthodox move, particularly in the context of street violence following Anwar's sacking. The split in the Malay community has taken on religious overtones as well, as the Anwar sacking became the catalyst for many Malays to turn to the opposition PAS in protest at what they saw to be the materialistic, corrupt and inequitable nature of UMNO policies.\footnote{‘Guilty as Charged’, Far Eastern Economic Review, 22 April 1999, p.14.} Indeed, PAS itself portrayed a softer, kinder image and began to cooperate with secular groups and parties, in the hope of capitalising on the situation to improve its showing at the general elections in November 1999. Although the subsequent Barisan Nasional-Alternative coalition of PAS and several opposition parties

\begin{itemize}
  \item \footnote{Straits Times Weekly Edition, 6 December 1997.}
  \item \footnote{‘Anwar Sacked’, Straits Times Interactive, 3 September 1998.}
  \item \footnote{‘Dynamic Duo Relays Conflicting Economic Messages’, Far Eastern Economic Review, 21 May 1998, pp.24-8.}
  \item \footnote{‘Guilty as Charged’, Far Eastern Economic Review, 22 April 1999, p.14.}
\end{itemize}
did not mention an Islamic state, it is clear that PAS's goal has always been at least to put into practice Islamic law.\textsuperscript{42}

The elections turned out to be a bombshell for UMNO. Although the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition won a two-thirds majority, PAS not only won control of Kelantan and Terengganu, but also managed to increase its share of parliamentary seats from seven in 1995 to 27.\textsuperscript{43} It also made inroads into previous UMNO strongholds such as Pahang and Perak. A number of UMNO ministers and leaders lost their positions, as the majority of Malays voted against UMNO. Indeed, had it not been for the support of non-Malay voters, the ruling Barisan Nasional could well have lost the elections.

On its part, PAS had benefited from a large number of protest votes. Many Malays were genuinely shocked by the Anwar episode and the harsh treatment meted out to him. This public shaming of a leader of Anwar's standing was seen by many as un-Malay. In Terengganu, PAS was able to exploit the dissatisfaction stemming from widespread poverty in the oil-rich state. UMNO's intense use of the media to discredit the opposition also backfired, as many Malay voters instead became alienated. Many younger, middle-class professionals and religious scholars had also joined PAS, giving it a more acceptable image. However, there are also more fundamental factors. While UMNO argues that Malays should vote for it to ensure Malay supremacy in the country, such rights are already guaranteed in the constitution. Compared to UMNO, which has striven to accommodate non-Malays, PAS has a much more Islamic and Malay image, with its leaders actively promoting Malay language and dress as well as the Islamic religion. PAS leaders also have an image of integrity and of simple living, compared to the intense money politics within UMNO. In addition, there has been a growing yearning among many Malays for more emphasis on spiritual, as opposed to secular, developmental goals. In particular, while they want modernity, they do not want to compromise on the values and practices of Islam.

The excellent showing of PAS in the general elections thus demonstrated the growing influence of political Islam in Malaysian politics. There are fears among non-Malays that UMNO will now have to respond with more pro-Islam policies in order to win back its

\textsuperscript{42} See also 'PAS Time', \textit{Far Eastern Economic Review}, 18 March 1999, p.10.
support base.44 There appears to be some basis to such apprehensions, as UMNO announced in June 2000 that it would steer closer to Islam by bringing in more leaders from a religious background and embarking on religious programmes, such as holding compulsory Islamic classes for civil servants.45 Indeed, the UMNO model of modernisation has not resonated well with significant sections of the Malay community, who are concerned about the accompanying social ills and environmental degradation.46 In addition, the moves to impose aspects of Islamic law in Kelantan and Terengganu have alarmed non-Malays, who fear the implications for their freedom and values should this occur. The fracturing and division within the Malay polity has weakened the power of UMNO, which is the fulcrum of the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition, and increased the power of the non-Malays, particularly its Chinese coalition partner, the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), potentially leading to greater demands from the Chinese community.

The rise of Islam in Malaysia is thus divisive, given the multi-racial character of the country. Moreover, the loss of Malay support for UMNO and the impending leadership change in Malaysia, given the age of Mahathir, have introduced a measure of political instability. The images of a separatist Muslim Kelantan and Terengganu, or of a federal government dominated by Iran-type Muslim clerics, are far-fetched given the moderate nature of Islam in Malaysia as well as the multi-ethnic character of the country. Nonetheless, there is always an apprehension that the spread of fundamentalist Islam could spawn more extreme forms of activism, as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and other parts of the Middle East has demonstrated.

The Rise of Political Islam in Indonesia

The Islamic revival in Indonesia partly mirrors the struggle in Malaysia. However, the revival in Indonesia has been constrained by a feature unique to the country - the division between the Javanese nominal Muslims known as the abangan and the strict Muslim santri. The abangan adhere to practices which reflect pre-Islamic Hindu-Buddhist mysticism, practices which the minority santri consider to be

45 'UMNO to put on a more Islamic face', Straits Times, 23 June 2000, p.45.
un-Islamic. Abangans believe in Allah, but also worship Hindu gods and believe in spirits and magic power: the keris (dagger) and gamelan (musical instrument) are believed to possess spiritual powers. Abangan beliefs are rooted in Javanese culture and syncretic Javanese practices combining elements of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and animism are common. This abangan-santri dichotomy is the result of uneven penetration of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago.\textsuperscript{47}

Indonesian nationalists under Sukarno and the leaders of Suharto's New Order government were overwhelmingly abangan and adhered to a secularised nationalist ideology known as Pancasila. They were therefore concerned with checking and if possible reducing Islamic militancy. Through the vast military-run security apparatus, a tight watch was maintained over the influence of Islam in the political process. The dominance of abangan culture also ensured that, although statistically Indonesia has the world's largest Muslim population, it has in fact been a secular (Pancasila) rather than a Muslim state.

Pancasila, the nationalist ideology, has five principles formulated by Sukarno in June 1945 when Indonesia became independent. This broad and vague doctrine, which states as one of its principles 'belief in one God', also allows for six officially recognised religions, of which one is Islam. The other principles are internationalism, nationalism, democracy and social justice. Pancasila is an expression of religious pluralism and helps to explain the non-Islamic nature of Indonesia. Pancasila was used by Suharto to undermine Islamic political forces. Since 1975, all schools have been required to teach Pancasila. From 1979, all civil servants have been required to attend Pancasila classes and have been examined on their knowledge of the doctrine. In 1983, the government required all socio-political organisations, including political parties, to accept Pancasila as the sole operating principle. However, Islamic forces have also used the democracy and social justice principles within Pancasila as a basis for criticising the government. Leo Suryadinata's description of Indonesian politics as 'a struggle for power between the abangan and santri groups' is thus apt, although increasing Islamisation has blurred this traditional dichotomy in recent times.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{47} Leo Suryadinata, 'Indonesia' in Mauzy (ed.), Politics in the ASEAN States, p.112.
\textsuperscript{48} ibid., p.113.
In the 1950s, santri supporters coalesced in the Masyumi and the Nahdatul Ulama (NU) while the abangan supported the Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI) or the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI). Among the santri, a division is visible between the traditionalists, who tend to be narrow and conservative in outlook, and the modernists, who look towards Middle Eastern reformism as a guide to reformation in Indonesia. The latter believe that Islam can exist in the modern industrialised world.

The Masyumi's involvement in the Darul Islam rebellion from 1948 to 1960, which took 25,000 lives, led to its banning by Sukarno. The declared objective of the rebellion, which the rebels labelled a jihad or holy war, was the establishment of an Islamic Indonesia run according to Islamic laws. The strongly anti-communist Muslim mass movement contributed to Sukarno's downfall in 1965 and the military takeover by Suharto. Since 1965, however, those Muslims committed to an Islamic view of society have been disappointed by Suharto's New Order government. As Ben Anderson has noted in his study of the Indonesian general elections of 1971 and 1977, Suharto's efforts to prevent Muslim parties from gaining a significant share of political power alienated the Muslim santri. While Suharto's policies assured victory for his Golkar party in 1971, 'they helped alienate permanently significant sectors of the Muslim community, who saw themselves once again deprived of the legitimate rights and place in Indonesian society'.

In 1972, the government forced the simplification of political parties into three blocs - the government Golkar, the Muslim United Party (PPP) and the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI). In the general elections of 1977, the PPP carried 29 per cent of the national vote despite the government's efforts to constrain it, and even won in the national capital of Jakarta. In 1982, the PPP won 27 per cent of the vote, using Islam as a rallying point. Surprisingly, many Christians and abangans voted for the PPP, with Muslim student leaders increasingly absorbing non-Muslim 'radical' concepts into their thinking, in response to overwhelming government corruption and economic

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50 Leo Suryadinata, Political Parties and the 1982 General Elections in Indonesia (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1982), p.76.
inequalities. On the other hand, the PDI, a fusion of five parties, was rent by internal dissension (as the government had hoped) and became ineffective for some years.

The government's attempts to control and weaken the PPP succeeded only to a certain degree. In September 1994, the pro-government candidate for the chairmanship, incumbent Ismail Hasan Metareum, was re-elected for five years, beating off a strong challenge from the candidate supported by the NU. However, the disaffected NU declared that it might support the PDI at the next general election in 1997. Abdurrahman Wahid, the NU's leader, went so far as to state that Megawati Sukarnoputri, eldest daughter of the late president Sukarno and the then leader of the PDI, could become a future president of Indonesia. Concerned with the growing power and popularity of Megawati, the government engineered her ouster as leader of the PDI, prompting street violence in Jakarta in 1996 and raising the spectre of political instability. Despite attempts to unseat Wahid at the NU's Congress in December 1994, he not only survived, but openly accused the government of attempting to destabilise the NU and destroy his leadership.

The growing militancy and power of political Islam was reflected in the ability of its supporters to force the government to change its policy on the state lottery. Islamic religious organisations had for years campaigned unsuccessfully against this lottery. Student and religious leaders organised street protests in major cities in 1991. In November 1993, for the first time during Suharto's tenure, a demonstration was held in front of the presidential palace in Jakarta. The parliamentary committee on the lottery issue, after initially voting to uphold the lottery license, reversed its decision a week later after a further public protest and ordered the lottery to be cancelled immediately. What was significant about this issue was not so much that the scale of Islamic opposition forced the government to back down but the fact that religious and student leaders openly confessed

51 ibid.
to a larger agenda in this episode; namely, to demonstrate their displeasure with the Suharto leadership.55

Continuing social and economic problems fuelled the Muslim opposition to the Suharto government. While many Indonesians benefited from Suharto's New Order regime, many did not, with continuing poverty, corruption, unemployment and widespread economic disparities.56 Violent Islamic opposition to the central government has not been widespread, although regional separatism, notably the Acehnese secessionist movement, has taken on a strongly Islamic character. There have, however, also been sporadic reports of Islamic extremist groups. For example, in August 1994, 117 people were reported to be under investigation for an alleged attempt to set up an Islamic state.57 The military's handling of this was praised by the newspaper Republika, which lauded the 'sympathetic, persuasive and educational approach' which 'solved' the issue without affecting national stability.58 The idea of an Islamic state, however, continues to persist. In 1995, 428 people were investigated for propagating the virtues of the Negara Islam Indonesia, a doctrine espousing an Islamic state first enunciated by the leaders of the Darul Islam movement, which had resisted the Dutch and later the Sukarno governments.59

Militant Islamic opposition to the Suharto regime also manifested itself in widespread street violence, particularly against the Christians, many of whom are ethnic Chinese. In June 1996, frustration at the Suharto regime saw Muslim mobs take to the streets. They destroyed 12 Christian churches, with the armed forces doing nothing to stop them. In October 1996, 3,000 Muslims in Situbondo set fire to 25 churches, killing five Christians.60

56 Indonesia's own manpower minister reported in January 1995 that 52.5 per cent (or more than half) of the 7.33 million unemployed were young Indonesians aged 15 to 25, many with high school education. The dangers of not meeting the rising aspirations of these Indonesians are obvious. See 'Indonesia: Social Dynamite', Far Eastern Economic Review, 15 February 1996, p.21.
The fall of the Suharto regime in May 1998 and the ascension of a more devout Muslim, Habibie, as president, raised fears of greater Muslim influence in national politics. Indeed, the more democratic environment following Suharto’s ouster has led to greater political involvement by Islamic groups, whose voice had been long suppressed under the New Order regime. In November 1998, the Indonesian Council of Muslim Scholars (MUI) convened the largest Muslim congress ever, in the hope of forging unity among the various Muslim groups and increasing its influence in the evolving post-Suharto political order.61 However, infighting among the various Islamic groups became very intense in the run-up to the July 1999 elections, with various groups jostling to portray a more Islamic image.62 In the event, the results of the elections showed that one-third of the Indonesian populace voted for the nationalist and secular-oriented PDI-P led by Megawati Sukarnoputri, while many of the remaining votes went either to the ruling Golkar, or to moderate Muslim groups led by Amien Rais and Abdurrahman Wahid, both hardly considered extremist in any sense of the word. More fundamentalist Islamic parties that espoused an Islamic state were, by and large, trounced in the polls, indicating that while Islam had become more significant in the Indonesian polity, the same polity opted for moderation and rejected more fundamentalist conceptualisations, such as the adoption of Islamic law or the establishment of an Islamic state.

This, however, did not mean a defeat or retreat for political Islam, because of the crucial role of the Central Axis of Muslim parties led by Amien Rais in the formation of the subsequent government. This new government is headed by a moderate Muslim cleric, Abdurrahman Wahid. While the vice-president is Megawati, the speaker of parliament is Amien Rais, another Muslim leader. Indeed, the symbols of Islam have become better established, and the pivotal role of the Central Axis demonstrated that political Islam, albeit of a modernist, moderate form, has arrived as a force in Indonesia.

Increasing Islamisation in Indonesia has in recent years blurred the traditional distinctions between santri and abangan. Much greater recognition has been given to the symbols of Islam in Indonesian society. The rise of Islam in recent years has seen the building of more

mosques, more people going on the hajj to Mecca, more women wearing Islamic shawls, much greater success for Muslim outreach groups in universities and the general disappearance of Christians from the upper echelons of the Indonesian armed forces. The rapid economic and social changes, as well as nepotism, corruption and arbitrariness accompanying the drive for modernisation under the Suharto regime, have compelled many to seek solace in Islam. Reluctantly, many have conceded that the abangan or nominal Muslims, with their syncretic beliefs deriving from ancient Javanese tradition, are clearly on the retreat.63

**Christian-Muslim Conflict in the Malukus and Lombok**

This new-found militancy has been reflected in the Christian-Muslim violence in the Malukus, which broke out in the aftermath of Suharto’s ouster and the economic crisis. Dormant ethnic and religious animosities have emerged.64 Violence between Christians and Muslims resulted in some 1,500 deaths in 1999 alone.65 The Malukus, more popularly known as the Spice Islands, have a population of some two million, split almost equally between Christians and Muslims (see Figure 4.1). The causes of the local civil conflict lie in economic competition in the midst of an economic crisis, exacerbating resentment against the influx of mostly Muslim migrants. This resentment had been building for decades, with much unhappiness over the perceived Islamisation of both the central government and the civil service. There has also been much resentment over the lucrative contracts held by military-backed companies engaged in fisheries, forestry and mining.66 Not surprisingly, calls for independence have been made.67 While many of these grievances are clearly not religious, religion became a central issue once violence broke out.

Local Christians have repeatedly accused the military of taking sides with the migrant Muslims, a charge which the military acknowledged, with a senior officer observing that soldiers ‘have become biased because some of their relatives had been killed’.68 In

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64 See, for instance, ‘Maluku Conflict Getting Worse’, *Straits Times*, 9 December 1999.
65 *Straits Times*, 15 January 2000, p.63.
68 ‘Civil Emergency May be Declared in Ambon’, *Straits Times*, 1 December 1999, p.31.
Figure 4.1: Malukus
early December 1999, given the increasing level of sectarian violence, the governor of the Malukus requested that a state of civil emergency be declared.69 Gus Dur, however, was reluctant to sanction such a move, fearing that brutality by the armed forces could worsen the situation.

In late December 1999, violent rioting between Christians and Muslims in the capital of Ambon and outlying islands broke out after a Christian mini-bus driver was blamed for knocking down a fourteen-year-old Muslim boy. This led to the burning of the Silo Church, the largest Protestant church in Ambon, and an intensified round of killings. This fresh wave of violence resulted in thousands of refugees fleeing the fighting.70

In response, the Indonesian Communion of Churches called for international peacekeepers to be deployed across the Maluku Islands, a suggestion which was immediately dismissed by the central government.71 By January 2000, the death toll had run into thousands, with the military pouring in troops in an attempt to restore order, amidst allegations that Suharto loyalists were responsible for stirring up the sectarian violence.72 This alleged ‘hidden hand’ is, however, not likely to be the reason for the scale of violence, which is due to more fundamental reasons mentioned earlier. But the violence has been exacerbated by the role of the military, which has taken sides by lending arms or selling ammunition to Muslim groups. The police force, on the other hand, is dominated by Christians, and much of the fighting has involved army-police clashes.

Fighting has continued throughout 2000, with the crisis exposing severe strains within the government. Amien Rais attacked Gus Dur’s government for not doing enough and appeared to reposition himself as a Muslim leader despite reaching out to other minorities earlier.73 On 14 January, 300,000 angry Muslims marched in Jakarta, stoked by newspaper accounts about alleged genocide against Muslims. Many vowed to join the fight in the Malukus and others

69 Straits Times, 1 December 1999, p.31.
70 Straits Times, 30 December 1999, p.22.
threatened to launch a jihad or holy war in Jakarta itself. Amien Rais himself incited the crowd, saying that the fighting in the Malukus was a bid to weaken Islam in Indonesia and declaring that 'our patience has its limits'.

In May, hundreds of fundamentalist Muslim 'jihad' volunteers began to arrive in the Malukus to assist their fellow-Muslims in the civil conflict against the Christians. By 28 May, the governor of the Malukus estimated that 2,200 of some 10,000 volunteers from Java had arrived, accusing the former president, Suharto, of fomenting the unrest. In response, Gus Dur imposed a ban on travel to the islands, although in practice this ban is almost impossible to enforce. In June, Gus Dur finally had little choice but to impose a state of civil emergency in the Malukus, despite widespread fears that this would lead to even more military abuses and violence. By July, and without any sign of violence abating, Gus Dur stated that limited international assistance in the form of logistics and equipment but not troops might be required, despite his having rejected calls for such aid in the past. This apparent softening of his earlier position took place after television footage showed soldiers assisting Muslim militants in attacking a Christian neighbourhood. By mid-2000, the death toll had passed the 4,000 mark.

The bitterness engendered by the conflict will not be easy to dissipate, given the scope of the violence, even if some order is finally restored. The capital Ambon has become another divided city, much like Beirut or Belfast. The scope of the violence is such that the number of refugees has reached around half a million. The failure of the military to be impartial and its inability to curb the violence has raised the prospects of some form of foreign mediation or intervention. However, the Muslims are not likely to accept this, given that they are winning on the ground and have the upper hand. The military and

75 Sunday Times (Singapore), 7 May 2000, p.21.
76 Straits Times, 29 May 2000, p.25.
77 Straits Times, 24 June 2000, p.43.
78 Straits Times, 27 June 2000, p.20.
79 'Foreign Help for Maluku?', Straits Times, 18 July 2000, p.25.
80 Straits Times, 27 June 2000, p.20.
81 Straits Times, 13 October 2000, p.36.
much of the central government would also oppose such a course of action as being an affront to Indonesia's sovereignty. On the other hand, the Christians have stepped up their campaign for international peacekeepers. Even if such peacekeepers were accepted, it is likely that their role would be heavily circumscribed, given the fear that it would turn out to be another East Timor-type intervention, eventually leading to another part of Indonesia breaking away. Calls for independence have already been made on behalf of the local Christian Alifuru people, but it appears such calls are made out of despair at the current situation, as no blueprint exists for such an independent state.\(^{82}\)

More significantly, the religious conflict in the Malukus has implications far beyond the islands, given the calls for a jihad by prominent Muslim leaders such as Amien Rais and Islamic organisations such as the Indonesian Ulamas Association. The conflict in the Malukus has already shown worrying signs of spreading. Protests over the conflict in the Malukus by Muslims in Lombok have led to a number of serious riots between Christians and Muslims there, resulting in the evacuation of tourists and the collapse of the tourism industry on the island.\(^{83}\) The radicalisation of Islam in Indonesia as a result of religious conflict is a development that would lead to the emergence of more extreme and militant forms of Islam, which would only engender greater divisiveness and violence in the Indonesian archipelago.

**Summary**

The success of the Central Axis of Muslim parties in Indonesia in shaping the new political order, and the electoral success of the fundamentalist PAS in Malaysia, have demonstrated that political Islam in the region has finally emerged as a potent political force in its own right. In other cases, for instance in Aceh, the southern provinces of Thailand and the southern Philippines, Islam has also proved to be a unifying factor and a focal point for rallying resistance against the central government.

In the context of severe economic stress, social strains and political instability, and the increasing pace of Islamisation, more

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\(^{82}\) *Straits Times*, 23 June 2000, p.43.

\(^{83}\) *Straits Times*, 20 January 2000.
Armed Rebellion in the ASEAN States

Extreme forms of Islam cannot be ruled out. As the discussion above shows, extreme Islamic sects do exist in both Indonesia and Malaysia and could cause security problems by their resort to violence. Although this has so far been fairly infrequent and limited in scope, the Al-Arqam saga in Malaysia was a 'close call', given the scale of support for the sect. There is also the worrying presence of regimes such as Libya and Iran, which are ready to support extremist groups. Extreme forms of Islam are a possibility which cannot be discounted, if the experience of the Middle Eastern countries, which have had to deal with violent extremist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, is any guide. This is especially so given ongoing turmoil and social strains in the wake of Suharto's ouster in Indonesia. In Indonesia's case, however, there is also the added complication of a very severe economic crisis and secessionist sentiments in various parts of the archipelago, principally in Aceh in northern Sumatra, where Muslim separatists want an independent Islamic state ruled by Islamic laws. In addition, there are also international Islamic terrorist organisations which are ready to assist violent extremist elements. Osama bin Laden, for instance, provided training and funds for the violent Islamic terrorist group, Abu Sayaff, in the Philippines. It seems that the region cannot escape the consequences of the worldwide resurgence of Islam, and will have to deal with its growing radicalisation and militancy.
CONCLUSION

The Persistence of Armed Rebellion and Implications for the Region

Armed rebellions have been a serious and persistent internal security threat to some of the states in the region. These rebellions are a stark reminder of the problem of legitimacy that some states still face, even decades after achieving independence.

Indeed, the national cohesion of some of these states, most notably Indonesia, the Philippines and Myanmar, cannot be taken for granted. The persistence of armed rebellion - in terms of duration, resistance to negotiated settlement, and severity - in at least some areas (such as Mindanao and East Timor) clearly demonstrates the fact that they are multinational or multi-ethnic states. In such states, the dominant ethnic group invariably holds the reins of power over other significant ethnic minorities that are often located at the periphery.

There are also further complications due to differences in religion, geography and historical experience. The nation-building efforts of the dominant group, however, have often required the subordination of the minorities, creating grievances that can find expression in separatism or irredentism. In particular, the lack of development in these peripheral territories and their domination by the central, dominant ethnic or religious group have fanned discontent and an enduring sense of injustice.

At the national level, challenges to legitimacy have come from armed communist rebellions. Although the Parti Komunis Indonesia had been crushed in Indonesia in 1965, armed communist rebellions continued to be active in most non-communist states in Southeast Asia after 1975. Prior to 1989, China had been able to use the communist movements in the ASEAN states to ensure that they at least came to terms with it as well as avoided taking actions inimical to China’s interests. However, the end of the Cold War and the demise of communism in the former Soviet Union have effectively ended the ideological basis for a communist challenge to the legitimacy of the current political arrangements in the region.

In addition, the continuing modernisation in China and its rapprochement with Southeast Asia has coincided with steady economic development in the region over the past three decades, wiping out
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communist insurgency in all but the Philippines. The surrender of the Communist Party of Malaya in 1989 and the diminishing threat from the Communist Party of Thailand have meant that the only effective communist insurgency in the region is that in the Philippines. This has been fuelled by the gross socio-economic inequalities caused by a rapacious and monopolistic élite. The roots of that insurgency thus lie more in fundamental factors inherent to the Philippines, than in any intrinsic appeal of communist ideology. It follows that even if the CPP could be defeated, either on the battlefield or through its own internal contradictions, the fundamental grievances that caused the insurgency in the first place need to be effectively addressed if internal revolt and opposition to the legitimacy of the current political and economic structure of the Philippines is to be avoided.

The more serious internal security threat has emanated from armed separatist rebellion. The lack of state legitimacy has been a major cause of these rebellions. The real fears of a breakup of Indonesia, Yugoslavia-style, in the wake of the ethnic, religious, political, economic and social fissures in that country in the post-Suharto era, and the continued severity and persistence of the Moro rebellion in the southern Philippines, have demonstrated that this problem of legitimacy is very real, at least for these countries.

Armed rebellions in the region have demonstrated several characteristics. First, religion has proved to be a unifying factor and a focal point for rallying regional resistance by minority groups against central governments, which are identified with the dominant ethnic or religious group. It has also been a symbol of a deeper sense of national and ethnic identity on the part of these minority groups.

The Muslim Moro rebels have fought the Philippine army to a standstill and control large swathes of several provinces in Mindanao. In southern Thailand, there has been a much less successful Malay Muslim separatist movement, although the success of PAS in the recent Malaysian general elections has the potential to encourage Thai Malay-Muslims. Aceh has had a stubborn Muslim separatist movement that has resorted to taking up arms against the Jakarta government. In Aceh, widespread support for an independent state followed heightened expectations brought about by the fall of the Suharto regime and the talk of a referendum. In all three instances, Islam has proved to be a powerful rallying call.

Elsewhere, the resolution of the East Timor issue following years of ultimately unsuccessful counter-insurgency operations against the Fretilin rebels has ended a long-running separatist rebellion. There is,
however, still an ongoing separatist rebellion by the OPM in Irian Jaya. Suharto’s ouster in 1998 has also unleashed separatist sentiments in various parts of the archipelago. This has been accompanied by the outbreak of ethnic and religious violence, such as Muslim-Christian conflict in other parts of Indonesia (for example, in the Malukus and Lombok). Indeed, there are real fears that the heightened expectations raised by the independence of East Timor could lead to unstoppable demands for secession in Aceh and thereby precipitate a simultaneous breakup of Indonesia.

In Myanmar, the long-running Karen separatist rebellion appeared to be crushed by the late 1990s, although political opposition to the military regime remains strong, with the problem of legitimacy remaining unresolved.

Significantly, in the cases of East Timor, Irian Jaya and the Karen rebellions, religion (in the form of Christianity) has been a focal rallying point, although in the Karen case it ultimately proved divisive, due to the presence among the Karen of Buddhist adherents who resented Christian dominance.

The second significant characteristic has been that armed rebellions in the region have tended to be fairly severe, of long duration and resistant to negotiated settlement. None of the rebellions have been crushed quickly or successfully, given the presence of fundamental political, social and economic grievances which in many cases have been neither effectively addressed nor amenable to easy solutions.

The third characteristic is that, in all cases of significant armed rebellion, there is an external dimension. Indeed, external support may have played an important role in their sustenance apart from very real grievances and strong separatist sentiments. The Moros in the southern Philippines as well as the Acehnese in northern Sumatra have the support of the international Muslim community, particularly the radical Islamic states such as Libya, as well as sympathy from co-religionists in Malaysia. Moros and Acehnese have trained in Libya. The Moros have trained in Sabah as well, where significant numbers of Filipino Muslims reside. The Acehnese rebel leadership resides largely in Malaysia. The Malay Muslims in southern Thailand have assisted the Acehnese in recent years in obtaining arms, and also have the support of the PAS state government across the border in Kelantan, where they have often sought sanctuary. The Irian Jaya rebels have considerable sympathy from fellow-Melanesians in Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific. The East Timorese have had world
opinion firmly on their side for much of the last 25 years. In contrast, the Karens in Myanmar had no significant external support, and perhaps it was not surprising, therefore, that they were ultimately defeated, although internal divisions also played a significant role.

The presence of ethnic kin and co-religionists in neighbouring states has accentuated the problems of national cohesion and nation-building, as these brethren provide at least moral, if not material, support to bolster the sense of separateness on the part of the minorities. The external dimension of Muslim separatism, for instance, has involved Malaysia and has engendered some mistrust, although the federal government has made every attempt to disassociate itself from the sympathy and support shown to Muslim separatists by co-religionists in the country.

The case of East Timor also raised concerns in the region over Indonesia’s preparedness to use force. It was an uncomfortable reminder to smaller states, such as Singapore, of the potential for Indonesia’s regional dominance.

The Karens have complicated the relationship between Thailand and Myanmar, with large numbers of Karen refugees sheltering along the border on the Thai side, raising suspicions in Myanmar of Thai complicity and sympathy for the Karens. Cross-border operations conducted by Myanmar’s armed forces or its Buddhist Karen allies have only served to heighten tensions between the two ASEAN states.

Finally, there is the issue of the internal security challenge emanating from Islamic religious revivalism. This has been cited by the Malaysian and Indonesian governments as justification for extraordinary administrative and security measures against political opposition based on Islam. While mainstream Islamic parties in Malaysia and Indonesia have never been involved in violence, there have been various extremist groups in both countries prepared to use violence to achieve their aims. In the context of the worldwide Islamic revival and the presence of regimes such as Libya and Iran, which support extremist groups throughout the world, continued vigilance against such internal challenges will be necessary. Moreover, as noted above, the Islamic factor has proved to be a unifying factor and a focal point for the rallying of armed resistance against the government in places such as Aceh in Sumatra, the southern provinces of Thailand, and the Moro regions in the southern Philippines.

More worrying from a regional perspective, however, has been the very visible rise of political Islam. In Indonesia in recent years, political Islam has also become a symbol of economic protest and
The emerging social tensions have been accompanied by a more assertive Muslim political voice. In both Malaysia and Indonesia, the symbols of Islam have become better established, and the pivotal role of the Central Axis of Muslim parties in the formation of the new post-Suharto power structure demonstrated that political Islam, albeit of a modernist, moderate form, has arrived as a force in Indonesia. In Malaysia, the rise of the fundamentalist Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) was evident in the 1999 general elections, in which the majority of Muslim Malays voted for that party. PAS also took two state governments and has indicated it will implement Islamic laws. While many Malays voted for PAS in protest at UMNO and Islamic laws are not threatening in themselves, there is a clear trend towards greater piety and attention to Islamic values.

The main challenge posed by Islamic revivalism has been its political challenge to established élites and regimes. Islamic purists and fundamentalists want the social, political and economic structure to reflect Islamic tenets. Moreover, Islam is a potent mobilising symbol and focal point in harnessing political opposition to the government. In the context of severe economic stress, social strains and political instability, and the increasing pace of Islamisation, more extreme forms of Islam cannot be ruled out. Extreme Islamic sects do exist in both Indonesia and Malaysia and could cause security problems by their resort to violence.

Extreme forms of Islam are a possibility which cannot be discounted, if the experience of the Middle Eastern countries, which have had to deal with violent extremist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, is any guide. In addition, as noted above, there is the worrying presence of regimes such as Libya and Iran, which are ready to support such groups. As the Algerian and other Middle Eastern examples show, economic distress and inequalities could lead many to seek solace in more extreme forms of Islam. Worldwide, there already exists a loose network of extremist Islamic terrorists who have been prepared to use extreme force to achieve their aims. More significantly, the radicalisation of Islam in Indonesia as a result of Christian-Muslim religious conflict in the Malukus could lead to the emergence of more extreme and militant forms of Islam, which would

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engender greater divisiveness and violence in the Indonesian archipelago.

Presently, the two most serious armed rebellions in the region are the armed Muslim separatist rebellions in Aceh and Mindanao. What are the prospects for their resolution? In general terms, armed rebellions in the region have tended to be fairly severe, of long duration and resistant to negotiated settlement. It has not been possible to crush either of these rebellions quickly, despite considerable counter-insurgency efforts by the central governments concerned.

Even when moderates among the insurgents eventually tired of fighting and agreed to a negotiated settlement, as Nur Misuari and the MNLF did in the Philippines, the continued presence of deep-seated and fundamental political, social and economic grievances has meant the continuation of armed revolt - in the case of Mindanao, by the more Islamic and more numerous MILF. The problems of Moro landlessness, the many Catholic settlers in Mindanao (who outnumber Muslims in most provinces), and the long-standing religious animosities between Christians and Muslims, cannot be easily solved. Moreover, the presence of international Muslim support for the MILF, particularly from radical Muslims, organisations and states overseas, has encouraged the Moros to continue to press their claims. However, the Philippine government cannot accede to the demands for a separate Muslim state even if it wanted to, given the objections of Catholics living in Mindanao and the strong nationalistic reaction such a course of action would engender.

If the Moros declared an independent state, it is also unlikely that the rest of ASEAN would recognise such a state, as the ASEAN states would be fearful of the precedent it would set for their minorities and of the prospect of a Balkanised maritime Southeast Asia containing fundamentalist or radical Muslim mini-states. Moreover, Catholic settlers would never acquiesce to such a state and would take up arms to oppose the Moros. The Muslim separatist rebellion in Mindanao will thus continue to fester for the foreseeable future, with any negotiated settlement being a very distant prospect.

The situation in Aceh is not as severe as in Mindanao, where the MILF is already a de facto government controlling fairly large swathes of territory in several provinces. The scale of fighting has been much smaller: the Acehnese rebels have numbered in the hundreds and have, moreover, been mostly on the run from the Indonesian armed forces. It was only in recent months, following the overthrow of Suharto, the ascension of Abdurrahman Wahid (who had previously
made promises of holding a referendum on Aceh’s future) as president, and the independence of East Timor, that the independence movement was galvanised.

Independence now appears to have the support of wide sections of Acehnese society. The Aceh problem will therefore be difficult to resolve. The newly elected civilian democratic government in Indonesia is unclear about how it wants to solve the current crisis. It needs to resolve the underlying grievances of the Acehnese, by allowing some recognition of Hudud laws, introducing measures to alleviate economic disparities, and providing justice over the human rights abuses of the military, thus ending discrimination against Acehnese and meeting their aspiration towards self-government. Reaching a compromise will be extremely difficult, given the bitterness that has been engendered by brutal counter-insurgency operations carried out by the Indonesian armed forces. Yet the same armed forces, proud of its role as guardian of the Indonesian republic, is not likely to acquiesce to an independent Aceh, which could galvanise other separatist movements and lead to the break-up of Indonesia. The Aceh problem has become and will remain a much more serious problem for Indonesia than it was in the past, given the recent heightened expectations of independence.

What are the implications of armed rebellion for the region? First, a worrying possibility is the breakup of Indonesia should the unthinkable happen and Aceh follow the example of East Timor and achieve independent statehood. Acehnese independence would have the effect of encouraging separatists in Irian Jaya and encouraging other parts of the Outer Islands to press for their own independence. The Indonesian armed forces would not be able to suppress a simultaneous revolt of this nature. The breakup of Indonesia would result in a situation akin to that in the former Yugoslavia, with a number of squabbling mini-states, some of which could be of a fundamentalist Islamic orientation, characterised by instability and conflict.

Indeed, the mere possibility of independent Aceh and Mindanao, and perhaps a semi-autonomous fundamentalist Kelantan and Terengganu in Malaysia, conjure images of Central Asia and the northwestern corner of South Asia, where there are unstable and warring Islamic regimes and factions. This would also have negative consequences in terms of encouraging Islamic fundamentalism in Malaysia and the rest of the Indonesian archipelago, as well as
galvanising Muslim separatism elsewhere. Such a scenario would destabilise the entire region.

Second, the persistence of significant armed separatist rebellions demonstrates that internal security remains an important preoccupation, at least for Indonesia, the Philippines and Myanmar, notwithstanding the end of the Cold War, China’s *rapprochement* with the region, general economic development and even the spread of democratisation. Indeed, Indonesia’s first Defence White Paper in 1995 recognised that threats to stability in the medium term were likely to stem from internal rather than external sources.3

Third, the persistent and growing challenge of Muslim separatist rebellion, in the context of greater Muslim consciousness in the Malay archipelago, is an indication that the region cannot escape the consequences of the worldwide resurgence and radicalisation of Islam. The Islamic factor has proved to be a unifying factor and a focal point for the rallying of armed resistance against the government in Aceh and Mindanao. The Muslim separatists have been able to attract the support and sympathy of co-religionists in neighbouring Malaysia as well as the international Muslim community at large.

In addition, the rise in Islamic consciousness in both Malaysia and Indonesia has raised fears in the region that extreme forms of Islam may be manifested. Indeed, the presence of regimes such as those in Libya and Iran, which support Muslim terrorist/separatist groups, and the growing links with international Islamic terrorist groups, are areas of concern. For instance, the Abu Sayaff had been trained and financed by Osama bin Laden, which indicates that the region cannot avoid the activities of such international terrorist organisations, which are alleged to be on the verge of being able to conduct terrorist activities using weapons of mass destruction.4

Fourth, the external dimension of the armed separatist rebellions has regional implications. A measure of mistrust has been engendered among states in the region, despite their efforts to establish cooperative regionalism and the limited success of these efforts. The principle of non-interference, which has been a hallmark of ASEAN cooperative regionalism since 1967, rings hollow when set against the Sabah state government’s sponsorship of training camps for Moro rebels, and the ‘tit-for-tat’ response by the Marcos government in attempting to foster Sabah armed separatism through its own training programme. The fact

3 ‘ Threat to stability likely to be internal’, *Straits Times*, 20 November 1995.
that Acehnese rebels and Muslim separatists from southern Thailand have been able to seek solace in neighbouring Malaysia is also another indication that this principle is not as hallowed as it has been made out to be. All these examples point to real limits on the ability of the ASEAN states to foster the kind of confidence and trust in each other that is necessary for the building of a true regional security community.

Recent developments have dented the principle of non-interference further. Non-interference was established to protect the elite authoritarianism of the ruling regimes of countries in the region in 1967. Many of these countries have now become democratic. Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia today have functioning democracies and free presses where debate on the affairs of other states cannot be stopped. The East Timor issue also came into the equation in that, for the first time, ASEAN states (Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines) contributed troops to a UN peacekeeping operation, mounted in the troubled Indonesian province in the aftermath of violence that ensued following the referendum for independence in 1999. Reluctantly in some cases, and not without debate in the various ASEAN capitals, including Jakarta, they were involved only because of the invitation and plea for help by the Indonesian government, which wanted to prevent the Australians from dominating the operation. Indeed, there was much anger at the way Australia had led the international pressure which preceded the vote and, in Indonesia’s eyes, resulted in the loss of the province despite some 13 years of counter-insurgency operations by the Indonesian armed forces. Thus the principle of non-interference was openly breached in a manner that was not planned. The precedent is now set for other ASEAN peacekeeping missions in the region. The way has also been opened, potentially, for a more active role for ASEAN or its constituent states in resolving internal conflicts such as armed rebellions.

Finally, the persistence of armed separatist rebellion is indicative of the failure to achieve legitimacy for post-independence political structures, as well as continuing internal weakness in at least some of the ASEAN states, such as Indonesia, the Philippines and Myanmar. This internal weakness means that the ASEAN ideal of a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality is still a distant prospect, as internal weakness invites foreign involvement and intervention, as the East Timor case so graphically illustrated in 1999.
APPENDIX 1

THE TRIPOLI AGREEMENT

In the Name of God, the Omnipotent, the Merciful.

Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and Moro National Liberation Front with the Participation of the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission Members of the Islamic Conference and the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Conference.

In accordance with the Resolution No. 4 Para. 5 adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Islamic conference in its Fourth Session held in Benghazi, Libyan Arab Republic during the month of Safar 1393 H. corresponding to March 1973, calling for the formation of Quadripartite Ministerial Commission representing the Libyan Arab Republic, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Republic of Senegal and the Republic of Somalia, to enter into discussions with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines concerning the situation of the Muslims in the South of the Philippines.

And in accordance with the Resolution No. (18) adopted by the Islamic conference held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in Jumada Alakhir 1393 H. corresponding to June 1974 A.D. which recommends the searching for a just and peaceful political solution to the problem of the Muslims in the South of the Philippines through the negotiations.

And in accordance with the Resolution No. 12/7/3 adopted by the Islamic conference held in Istanbul in Jumada El-Ula 1396 H. corresponding to May 1976 A.D. empowering the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission and the Secretary General of the Islamic Conference to take the necessary steps for the resumption of negotiations.

And following the task undertaken by the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission and the Secretary General of the Islamic Conference and the discussions held with H.E. President Marcos, President of the Republic of the Philippines.
And in realization of the contents of Para. 6 of the Joint Communiqué issued in Tripoli on the 25th Zulgeda 1396 H. corresponding to 17th November 1976 A.D. following the official visit paid by the delegation of the Government of the Philippines headed by the First Lady of the Philippines, Mrs. Imelda R. Marcos, to the Libyan Arab Republic and which calls for the resumption of negotiations between the two parties concerned in Tripoli on the 15th of December 1976 A.D.

Negotiations were held in the City of Tripoli during the period between 24th Zulhija 1396 H. to Second to Moharram 1397 H. corresponding to the period from 15th to 23rd December 1976 A.D. at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs presided over by Dr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Libyan Arab Republic, and comprising of the Delegations of:


2. Moro National Liberation Front, led by Mr. Nur Misuari Chief of the Front.

And with the participation of the representatives of the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission:

The Libyan Arab Republic - represented by Dr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia - H.E. Salah Abdalla El-Fadl, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Libyan Arab Republic.

The Republic of Senegal - Mr. Abubakar Othman Si, Representative of the Republic of Senegal and Charge d’Affairs of Senegal in Cairo.

Democratic Republic of Somalia, Libyan Arab Republic.

With the aid of H.E. Dr. Amadou Karim Gaye, Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Conference, and a delegation from the Secretariat General of the Conference composed of Mr. Qasim Zuheri, Assistant Secretary General, and Mr. Aref Ben Musa, Director of Political Department.

During these negotiations which were marked by a spirit of conciliation and understanding, it has been agreed on the following:
First: The establishment of Autonomy in the Southern Philippines within the realm of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines.

Second: The areas of the autonomy for the Muslims in the Southern Philippines shall comprise the following:

1. Basilan
2. Sulu
3. Tawi-tawi
4. Zamboanga del Sur
5. Zamboanga del Norte
6. North Cotabato
7. Maguindanao
8. Sultan Kudarat
9. Lanao del Norte
10. Lanao del Sur
11. Davao del Sur
12. South Cotabato
13. Palawan

Third:

1. Foreign Policy shall be of the competence of the Central Government of the Philippines.

2. The National Defense Affairs shall be the concern of the Central Authority provided that the arrangements for the joining of the forces of the Moro National Liberation Front with the Philippine Armed Forces be discussed later.

3. In the areas of the autonomy, the Muslims shall have the right to set up their own Courts which implement the Islamic Shari’ah laws. The Muslims shall be represented in all Courts including the Supreme Court. The representation of the Muslims in the Supreme Court shall be upon the recommendation from the authorities of the Autonomy and the Supreme Court. Decrees will be issued by the President of the Republic of their appointments taking into consideration all necessary qualifications of the candidates.

4. Authorities of the autonomy in the South of the Philippines shall have the right to set up schools, colleges and universities, provided that matters pertaining to the relationship between these educational and scientific organs and the general education system in the state shall be subject of discussion later on.
5. The Muslims shall have their own administrative system in compliance with the objectives of the autonomy and its institutions. The relationship between this administrative system and the Central administrative system to be discussed later.

6. The authorities of the autonomy in the South of the Philippines shall have their own economic and financial system. The relationship between this system and the Central economic and financial system of the State shall be discussed later.

7. The authorities of the autonomy in the South of the Philippines shall enjoy the right of representation and participation in the Central Government and in all other organs of the State. The number of representatives and ways of participation shall be fixed later.

8. Special Regional Security Forces are to be set up in the area of the Autonomy for the Muslims in the South of the Philippines. The relationship between these forces and the Central security forces shall be fixed later.

9. A Legislative Assembly and an Executive Council shall be formed in the areas of the Autonomy for the Muslims. The setting up of the Legislative Assembly shall be constituted through a direct election, and the formation of the Executive Council shall take place through appointments by the Legislative Assembly. A decree for their formation shall be enacted by the President of the Republic respectively. The number of members of each assembly shall be determined later on.

10. Mines and mineral resources fall within the competence of the Central Government, and a reasonable percentage deriving from the revenues of the mines and minerals be fixed for the benefit of the areas of the autonomy.

11. A Mixed Committee shall be composed of representatives of the Central Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the representatives of the Moro National Liberation Front. The Mixed Committee shall meet in Tripoli during the period from the Fifth of February to a date not later than the Third of March 1977. The task of said Committee shall be charged to study in detail the
points left for discussion in order to reach a solution thereof in conformity with the provisions of this agreement.

12. Cease-fire shall be declared immediately after the signature of this agreement, provided that its coming into effect should not exceed the 20th January 1977. A Joint Committee shall be composed of the two parties with the help of the Organization of the Islamic Conference represented by the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission to supervise the implementation of the cease-fire.

The said Joint Committee shall also be charged with supervising the following:

a. A complete amnesty in the areas of the autonomy and the renunciation of all legal claims and codes resulting from events which took place in the South of the Philippines,

b. The release of all the political prisoners who had relations with the events in the South of the Philippines,

c. The return of all refugees who have abandoned their areas in the South of the Philippines,

d. To guarantee the freedom of movements and meetings.

13. A joint meeting be held in Jeddah during the first week of the month of March 1977 to initial what has been concluded by the Committee referred to in Para. 11.

14. The final agreement concerning the setting up of the autonomy referred to in the first and second paragraphs shall be signed in the City of Manila, Republic of the Philippines, between the Government of the Philippines and Moro National Liberation Front, and the Islamic Conference represented by the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission and the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Conference.

15. Immediately after the signature of the Agreement in Manila, a Provisional Government shall be established in the areas of the autonomy to be appointed by the President of the Philippines; and be charged with the task of preparing for the elections of the Legislative Assembly in the territories of the Autonomy; and administer the areas in accordance with the provisions of this
agreement until a Government is formed by the elected Legislative Assembly.

16. The Government of the Philippines shall take all necessary constitutional processes for the implementation of the entire Agreement.

Fourth: This Agreement shall come into force with effect from the date of its signature.

Done in the City of Tripoli on 2nd Muharram 1397 H. corresponding to 23rd December 1976 A.D. in three original copies in Arabic, English, French languages, all equal in legal power.

For the Government of the Republic of the Philippines:
Hon. Carmelo Z. Barbero
Undersecretary of National Defense for Civilian Relations

For the Moro National Liberation Front:
Professor Nur Misuari
Chairman of the Front

Dr. Ali Abdusaalam Treki
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Libyan Arab Republic and Chairman of the Negotiations

Dr. Amadou Karim Gaye
Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference

Source: Accord (No.6), at <http://www.c-r.org/acc_min/tripoli.htm> (August 2000).
APPENDIX 2

STATEMENT CONCERNING THE RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION OF THE WEST PAPUAN PEOPLE

To: The Working Group On Indigenous Populations  
Fifth Session, August 1987  
Geneva

Agenda item: 4

FREE PAPUA MOVEMENT - ORGANISASI PAPUA MERDEKA  
Driebergenstraat  
19 Deventer - the Netherlands

Madame Chairperson,

We thank you for giving us the opportunity to talk about our case: the denial and withholding of the Right of Self-Determination to the People of West Papua.

At the same time we want to express our feeling that we ought not to be here. We the West Papuan people belong, like the people in Papua New Guinea (PNG), to the Melanesian people. We are ethnically, culturally and geographically related to the peoples of PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Kanaky and Fiji. At present we are, like the Kanaky, a discriminated minority under Indonesian, respectively French, colonial rule. We are determined to continue fighting for a Free and Independent West Papua.

We would sincerely hope that you would take note of West Papuan aspirations for Self-Determination.

Madame Chairperson and distinguished members of the Working Group,

In this paper we want to elucidate our statements that:

1. THE PEOPLE OF WEST PAPUA ARE NOW ENGAGED IN A STRUGGLE FOR SELF-DETERMINATION;
2. WEST PAPUA IS ADMINISTERED BY INDONESIA AS A NEO-COLONY.
Armed Rebellion in the ASEAN States

Ad 1:

The United Nations has, after having transferred control of West Papua from a colonial power (the Netherlands), handed over our country to another colonial power (Indonesia).

The people of West Papua who were already on their way to External Self-Determination, to be realized by the year 1970*, were subjected to the Indonesian claim of becoming a part of the Republic of Indonesia, as proclaimed by the then-president Sukarno in 1963.

* The West Papuan people as an ethnic unity has the right to determine its own destiny according to point 2 of the decolonisation-resolution 1514(XV). The New Guinea Council, partly elected by the West Papuan people in 1961, had already visualized how the Right of Self-Determination should be executed.

The instruments used for the conveyance of our country to Indonesia were the New York Agreement (1962, between the Netherlands and Indonesia) and the Act of Free Choice (1969).

The Act of Free Choice was a farce: what should have been an one-person one-vote consultation of the Papuans about the future status of their nation, became an Indonesian steered mockery of the United Nations policy on decolonisation and self-determination. On this place we limit ourselves to recalling the violations of the Articles XVI (presence of a UN-mission), XVIII (method of the Act of Free Choice) and XXII (rights of the inhabitants) of the New York Agreement.

In 1969 the present Indonesian president Suharto used the Act of Free Choice to legalize the incorporation of our country into Indonesia. The incorporation was subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly of the United Nations as a valid exercise of self-determination consistent with the United Nations Declaration on Colonies.

Examining the procedure of the conveyance of our country to Indonesia and the procedure agreed upon in the New York Agreement, we can only but conclude that the United Nations has made a serious error in its endorsement of the incorporation. Especially when compared to the case of South Africa's claim on
Namibia, which was rejected by the United Nations, we are convinced that we have been the victim of the use of double standards.

Ad 2:

The Indonesians have never been interested in the people of West Papua but only in the vast lands and natural resources. The minerals in our soil and the timber in our forests are exploited on a large scale by Indonesian and multinational companies. The amount which the Indonesian government spends on education, health and other services for the Papuans, is only a trifle compared to the capital exported from our country. The revenues of the exploitation of our national resources end up in Jakarta.

With respect to the Papuans, Indonesia is only concerned about "civilizing those primitives", so we will fit in the image of a modern Indonesian state. Bearing in mind that the right of self-determination should be a continuous process, it is clear that not only in 1969 we were denied this right; since the beginning of the Indonesian domination in 1963, Papuan voices whether it concerns land rights, human rights, cultural rights or nationalistic feelings, are systematically suppressed in a brutal way.

Indonesian tactics to conquer the richness of West Papua and to subject the Papuans are 1) transmigration of Javanese into our country, 2) militarization, and 3) intimidation and brutal violation of human rights.

For many Papuans the only way to safeguard themselves from an oppressive regime they do not recognize as legitimate, is to abandon their homelands and seek refuge in Papua New Guinea.

1. TRANSMIGRATION

Transmigration is the name of Indonesia's ambitious project to resettle millions of people from the crowded Inner Islands of Java, Madura, Lombok and Bali, to the more sparsely populated Outer Islands.

Officially sponsored Transmigration into our country commenced in 1966, even before the "Act of Free Choice".
The Jakarta government no longer gives overpopulation as the principal reason behind Transmigration. The government lists 7 goals for its Transmigration program: to promote national unity, national security, an equal distribution of the population, national development, the preservation of nature, help to the farming classes, and improvement of the condition of local peoples (Survival International Bulletin, March 2, 1985).

"What Transmigration has actually accomplished is very different: The spread of poverty; forced displacement of indigenous populations from their homes, communities and lands; deforestation and soil damage at the rate of some 200,000 hectares per year; destruction of local governments, economies, means of sustainable resource use; forced assimilation programs; widespread use of military force to "pacify" areas and to break local resistance by bombing and massacres of civilians."


In our view Transmigration is no less than an invasion program. THE PAPUANS ARE FORCED TO LEAVE THEIR ANCESTRAL HOMELANDS to make room for the transmigrants. In alienating us from our traditional lands, it is not only undermining our economies, but jeopardising our entire cultural identity, which is built up on the relation between our society and our ancestral lands.

In many cases our people are threatened, and when they agree to hand over their land it is out of fear rather than desire. For instance, in Arso the people were told that those not releasing their lands would be considered as members of the Organisasi Papua Merdeka - OPM, the guerrilla force of West Papua. In Tembagapura a part of the Amungme tribe was forcibly relocated by the military into the malaria-infested lowlands. Those who fled back to their ancestral lands were arrested and again the military transported them to the lowlands. As a result of malaria and starvation women and children were the first to die.

When the Papuans finally give up their lands they are confronted with the Indonesian government's reluctance to pay COMPENSATION TO THE TRADITIONAL LANDOWNERS. Due to
discriminatory laws and due to all-pervading corruption in the Indonesian administration, compensation for loss of ancestral lands turns out to be trifle. The Irian Jaya Community Development Foundation has carried out two detailed studies of transmigration sites which are incorporated into the Smallholder Nucleus Estate Program:

"No provisions have been made for those local people who are not accepted for the program and yet whose lands have been expropriated by the projects; insufficient land remains in the hands of the local tribal people to allow them to practise their traditional system of shifting cultivation." (G.J. Aditjondro, No. 3 LLAP/YPMD/IV/1986)

Moreover JOB OPPORTUNITIES OUTSIDE THE TRADITIONAL PAPUA COMMUNITIES ARE SCARCE FOR THE PAPUANS. Employers, whether it be the government or private business, prefer Indonesians above Papuans. Thus where the Transmigration may bring new economic activities to our country, we the original inhabitants of West Papua, loose our land, loose our cultural identity, are about to become a minority in our own country, and on top of this all: we are being marginalized in a society we did not choose for.

But how can we expect the Indonesian government to bother about us, not to mention our involvement and say in the settling of foreigners in our country, when it is evident that the TRANSMIGRATION PROGRAM HAS A MILITARY ASPECT. In his book the former eastern region territorial commander Lt.-Gen. Kaphi writes:

"Thus the government must plan transmigration more carefully remembering the great importance that the program has in overall development in Irian Jaya. Especially in strategic areas such as the border regions, it is obvious that ex-soldiers or soldiers be settled as transmigrants as a 'buffer-zone'." (Kahpi, The challenge and the struggle in the land of the bird of paradise, 1985)

2. MILITARIZATION

Armed Warfare
The oppression of the West Papuan people started immediately after the Dutch left, in 1962. The then-governor Eliezer Bonay, who is also with our delegation, recalls that the prisons everywhere were full. UN officials reported, discreetly, that the local people were "treated badly". After 1962 the conflict between the new rulers and the Papuans only increased. The Indonesian authorities, having failed to subject us within a short period of time, are increasing their military activities and in a more brutal way, in an effort to gain control by sheer military force.

As an example the latest Indonesian military offensive will be described.

In the last quarter of 1986, under the codename "Operasi Sate" (Operation Skewered Meat), an offensive was launched to wipe out the Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM). During this offensive the Indonesian military executed aerial bombardments, raids and house-to-house searches, gunfire attacks from naval vessels (TAPOL, Dec., 1986).

* Because of aerial bombardments around the Wissel Lakes, in the well-populated central highlands in Wagete and Enarotali districts, many houses, churches and schools were destroyed; many people were killed and the survivors fled into the bush.

* Raids and house-to-house searches along the north coastal strip, from Ormu through Sarmi to the Memberame River, have been accompanied by arrests, disappearances, beatings and rapes.

Because the Papuans have to make room for the transmigrants and logging and mining operations, the Indonesians use brutal force against Papuan civilians.

The military actions against the people of West Papua are the last desperate efforts of a regime that in the eyes of the people has no legitimacy. Unable to get hold of the organized resistance, the Indonesians resort to attacking whole villages and killing unarmed civilians.

Like in Operasi Sate, the targets of the military attacks are quite deliberate. People are scared because they do not know whether they
will be the next victim. Being a Papuan seems to be a reason to be treated as a dangerous enemy.

Biological Warfare

In 1970, the Indonesian government introduced tape worms into West Papua for the first time in all history.

3. HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

The human rights situation in our country is a matter of grave concern. Amnesty International, the Anti-Slavery Society, TAPOL etc. continue to receive reports on violations of the human rights. The following examples, as reported by Amnesty International, reflect the alarming increase in extra-judicial executions, torture and ill-treatment and detention without charge or trial.

Extra-Judicial Killings

Arnold Ap, a distinguished anthropologist who was very popular among us because he promoted our culture, was arrested on 30 November 1983. He was held and tortured in the notorious Panorama Bar in Jayapura. Medio April 1984 the military staged an escape for Arnold Ap and his companion Eduard Mofu. Few days after, on the beach of Base-G both of them were subjected to severe tortures before they were murdered.

After having reported back to the headquarters as the only survivor of an attack on a military post by the OPM, Wilhemus Inday, a Papuan sergeant with the 753-battallion of the Indonesian army, was killed by the military.

Because of the killing of 2 Indonesian soldiers in Waena by the OPM, the Indonesian military conducted a house-to-house search on 14 April 1986. Wantonless they choose Martin Sani and his wife Sarinah Zoani to blame; the couple was killed.

Torture and Ill-Treatment of Prisoners

The 12 refugees who were forcibly deported from PNG to West Papua in October 1985, have been imprisoned and subjected to torture. One of them, Elias Kareni, had a nail driven through his toe during interrogation. Isak Waromi, who was suffering from gastric ailments and fluid in his lungs did not receive any medical attention.
Prisoners Held Incommunicado

17 Papuan prisoners who were held in the Abepura prison near Jayapura, are reported to be missing. Eyewitnesses declared that, in the night of 26-27 January 1986, 11 of them were whisked away in a Hercules airplane. It is believed that they are held incommunicado in the Kalisoso prison near Surabaya on Java. About the disappearance of the other 6 prisoners is no information at all.

4. REFUGEES*

Because of the events mentioned above (transmigration, militarization and violation of human rights) many Papuans have left their homes to seek refuge in PNG.

Since 1962, the escalation between nationalist Papuans and the Indonesian army has caused a steady stream of refugees to leave West Papua. By 1979 an estimated 10,000 West Papuans had crossed into PNG. By now most of them have been naturalized to PNG-citizens.

* Initially our delegation should be accompanied by two countrymen who recently fled away from West Papua and who are now residing in a refugee camp in PNG. Unfortunately, it appeared impossible to get permission from the PNG authorities to let them have the necessary travel documents.

Since early 1984 the situation in our country has deteriorated markedly. Following an attempted uprising in Jayapura by Papuan nationalists in February 1984, and subsequent repressive actions by the Indonesian military, a flood of refugees has poured across the border. By mid '86 there were about 12,000 refugees in 16 camps along the border; they fled their homes because of Indonesian atrocities. In August 1986 some 750 new refugees arrived. They had come from the border village of Kivirok, 2 days walk from the PNG village of Yapsi. The refugees told that the Indonesian troops had beheaded Tuberius Uropdane a catholic cathecist in their village. Others reported the rape of a number of women, arrests and beatings of men in their village (PNG Times, 5 Sept. '86).

Not all of those reaching PNG are just from the border region. Some refugees spent up to 5 weeks trekking to reach the frontier.
Many of the refugees have suffered severely on the way and some even died while on trek.

The refugee population has at a time peaked at approximately 14,000 people. Over the past 12 months the figure declined because refugees returned to their country. As a result of the "discouragement policy" of the PNG government several groups of refugees returned "voluntarily" under the auspices of the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR). For the refugees the situation in the camps is without any perspective: they are not allowed to participate in the PNG society, in the camps food provision and medical care are insufficient (more than 180 people have died of hunger and hunger related diseases), and the children cannot go to school (some already since 1984).

According to the UNHCR 2000 people have gone back to West Papua, mainly to Merauke and Mindiptanah regions in the south. They were transported in airplanes and put in so-called relocation camps. Reports have been coming to PNG of West Papuan refugees who repatriated and were subsequently tortured to death by the military. In September 1986, Ancelmus Katua, headmaster of Mindiptana high school, and Clemens Andomenen, community school teacher of Inko village, were arrested by the military KODIM 1707 and subjected to electric shock torture until they died.

Once they are back in West Papua the refugees are no longer a case for the UNHCR. But since the UNHCR is worried about their fate, the churches are asked to monitor and help.

The situation of the refugees, whether they are repatriated or not, is serious. We are grateful to the UNHCR, the International Red Cross and others for bringing some relief. However, when nothing is changed in West Papua itself, people will continue to cross the border, risking an uncertain living in refugee camps.

5. CONCLUSION

In April 1961, the New Guinea Council, partly elected by the West Papuan people, was installed. The first deed of the council was to declare that they would work towards independence. The council came out with proposals how the process of self-determination should
be executed in accordance with point 2 of the decolonisation resolution 1514(XV) and Article 73 of the Charter of the United Nations.

It was in this period that political consciousness developed among the West Papuans on a national level: the West Papuans should determine their own future as a free and independent nation.

The shift of colonial rule from the Netherlands to Indonesia, however, has abruptly broken off the fulfillment of our aspirations.

By means of harsh measures the Indonesian government is still trying to subject the people of West Papua. Transmigration, militarization, human right violations and the exodus of refugees: these are all signs of the lack of legitimacy of the Indonesian authorities among the West Papuan people.

We are determined to continue resistance against Indonesian domination. The Indonesian authorities are becoming more and more brutal in order to impose colonial rule.

When this process is not stopped, a genocide may be completed: the obliteration of the West Papuans as a people.

6. DEMANDS

On the above mentioned grounds, we the people of West Papua demand that it is acknowledged that our country is administered as a neo-colony, and therefore should be taken up as a case in the Trusteeship and in the Committee of 24 concerning decolonisation.

We, the people of West Papua, are fighting for our right to determine our own future, a future without foreign domination and oppression.

WE DEMAND OUR RIGHT TO EXERCISE EXTERNAL SELF-DETERMINATION

APPENDIX 3

AIMS, POLICY AND PROGRAMME OF THE KNU

The second Karen National Union (KNU) congress was held at Maw Ko, Nyauglebin district in June and July 1956, and attended by KNU representatives from Delta Division, Pegu Yoma Division and Eastern Division. In this congress the political aims of the KNU were laid down as follows, and they still apply today:

1. The establishment of a Karen State with the right to self-determination,
2. The establishment of National States for all the nationalities, with the right to self-determination,
3. The establishment of a genuine Federal Union with all the states having equal rights and the right to self-determination,
4. The Karen National Union will pursue the policy of National Democracy.

In spite of the internal and external situations, we continue to maintain our own state, Kawthoolei, administered by our won Kawthoolei Government since 1950, under the banner of the Karen National Union (KNU), and the well trained and disciplined Karen National Liberation Army, which were formed in the same year. We desire Kawthoolei to be a Karen State with the right to self-determination. We are therefore endeavouring to form a genuine Federal Union comprised of all the states of the nationalities in Burma, including a Burman state, on the basis of Liberty, Equality, Self-Determination and Social Progress.

We desire the extent of Kawthoolei to be the areas where the Karens are in majority. It shall be governed in accordance with the wishes of the people of the State and just in the eyes of the country and the world. The policy of the Karen National Union is National Democracy. It fully recognises and encourages private ownership and welcomes foreign investment. All the people of Kawthoolei shall be given democratic rights, politically, economically, socially and
culturally. Freedom and quality of all religions is guaranteed. Kawthoolei will maintain cordial relationships with all other states and other countries on the basis of mutual respect, peace and prosperity. Kawthoolei will never permit the growing or refining of opium or the sales and transport of illicit drugs through its territory.

APPENDIX 4

THE BIRTH OF KAREN NATIONAL LEAGUE (KNL)

Statement of Policy Objective, Characteristics and Beliefs

Karen National League (KNL) was formed at the Second International Karen Youth Conference held on December 22-26, 1997 in Ottawa, Canada. KNL defines its main policy objective, characteristics and beliefs as follows.

Our Policy Objective

The fundamental aim of Karen National League (KNL) is to contribute as a leading international Karen organization to the struggles of the Karen people for ethnic equality, freedom and democracy. This includes developing the consciousness of the solidarity among ourselves, making our national struggles better known domestically and internationally, and most importantly, fostering effective cooperation between Karen people (border, internal and international) and with other democratic movements.

In pursuit of the above noble objective, Karen National League (KNL) recognizes, supports and cooperates with any individual or organization that helps liberate and develop the Karen people and bring about democracy to Burma. KNL shall at each given moment creatively adopt appropriate tactics that will help achieve its objective. In this time of difficulties for the Karen people, KNL will seek to expand and deepen the cooperation with all the democratic organizations critical to our national liberation.

Characteristics of KNL

KNL is a product of a given historical period. It is formed to advance the Karen people in the struggle for freedom, ethnic equality and democracy. Driving its approach to struggle is the fundamental national contradiction represented by the oppression of ethnic people. The factors that help shape the character of the KNL as a truly progressive national movement is its cooperation and interaction with other democratic and liberation movements within the country and all over the world. KNL is not an armed organization. Nor will it by any means engage in any armed activity.
At this stage, we define ourselves as a struggle for national development and a movement for the advancement of democratic principles and ideals within Burma. Therefore, it is our strategic objective to help build a democratic society within a genuine union in which all the ethnic nationalities can live in harmony on the basis of political, economic and social equality.

Our Beliefs

KNL believes that a fundamental condition for Karen national liberation is democracy and an abiding culture of human rights. All citizens should be guaranteed the right to elect a government of their choice, freedom of expression, freedom from discrimination, and other fundamental human rights. They should have a central and state governments not only formally based on their will but ones that are open and transparent, and ones that consult and continually involve the people in policy formulation and implementation. Consistent with these principles is the task of ensuring equality among the diverse ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious communities.

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The aim of the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, which is located in the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies in the Australian National University, is to advance the study of strategic problems, especially those relating to the general region of Asia and the Pacific. The centre gives particular attention to Australia's strategic neighbourhood of Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific. Participation in the centre's activities is not limited to members of the university, but includes other interested professional, diplomatic and parliamentary groups. Research includes military, political, economic, scientific and technological aspects of strategic developments. Strategy, for the purpose of the centre, is defined in the broadest sense of embracing not only the control and application of military force, but also the peaceful settlement of disputes that could cause violence.

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ARMED rebellions have challenged central authority in the various ASEAN states since 1975. The persistence, duration and severity of armed rebellions, particularly separatist rebellions, demonstrates the failure of at least some of the ASEAN states in achieving legitimacy for the post-independence political structures as well as continued internal weakness. The external dimensions of some of these challenges, involving neighbouring ASEAN states in some cases, have also heightened mutual mistrust among these states. This in turn has placed constraints on the development of ASEAN cooperative regionalism.