

Towards a Social Policy for the Muslims in the Philippines

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A problem faced by many of the developing countries which gained their independence after World War II had been how to develop a common national identity among culturally discrete and, in some instances, racially different groups. This is one of the many connotations of the term "problem of integration."

During the colonial regime, the governors generally showed little or no interest in developing in the colonies that kind of national loyalty which might in time question or challenge the existing political relationships between the mother country and the colony. Indeed, the governors found it more expedient to develop a native elite that would remain loyal to the colonial power. To maintain such loyalty, they encouraged this elite to learn the language and adopt some of the cultural habits of the colonials and gave it some limited political participation.

The different cultural or racial groups were integrated by means of the coercive powers and some symbols of the colonial power as well as by some benefits—economic, social services, and so on. With independence, greater political participation of the population, and the emergence of a native political elite, it is to be expected that the problem of cultural sentiments would enter into the thinking of policy-makers. Conflicts between distinct cultural groups were found to ensue especially when such groups had different mythologies and separate historical experiences before the advent of colonialism as well as when they produced politically ambitious leaders. In retrospect, it became very clear that the colonial integration was something imposed from without and was not due to a consensus from within. The integration thus secured revealed its weaknesses upon the departure of the colonial power. Consequently, it appeared clear that a new form of integration would

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have to be made. However, this would have to be based on more relevant principles which would, in the long run, be a function of the nature, will, and capacity of the new political system charged with it. At bottom, however, the term "integration" refers to a technique to preserve the congruence of at least three elements: a group of individuals or communities, a definite political system, and the integrity of a well-defined territory.¹

The problem of integrating the Muslims in the Philippines within a wider political entity is as old as the Spanish presence in the Archipelago. A great deal of the success of the Spaniards in preserving the colony called "Filipinas" in an area almost coextensive with the Archipelago stemmed from the fact that they were able to make the political and cultural unity of the inhabitants coincide to a large measure. In brief, the *Indio* was not only a subject of the Spanish monarch but also a Christian. Consequently, it becomes clearer why one of the reasons Jose Rizal was exiled to Dapitan was that he had endangered the "national integrity" by his attack on the friars, which was, in the long run, also an attack on the Church and the Spanish Monarch which was a defender of the Faith.

With respect to the Muslims, the Spanish authorities spared no expense in men and materials to Christianize them, while, at the same time, transforming them into subjects of the Spanish King. It was only during the last quarter of the 19th century that some Spanish colonial administrators adopted the policy of forcing the Muslims to accept Spanish sovereignty only regardless of religious conversion. Expectedly, certain religious orders objected to such a policy, insisting that only by becoming Christians would the Muslims eventually become loyal subjects. In brief, the Spanish concept of integration for nearly three hundred years was to make the Muslims adopt the religion and, to some extent, the adopted culture of the majority of the natives in the Archipelago who were expected to be loyal to Church and State. Under the concept of integration, territorial integrity would coincide with political and cultural loyalty. But, as is well known, the Spaniards were not entirely successful in their efforts at thus integrating the Muslims. Moreover, by the end of the last century, in spite of colonial exhortations and clerical appeals to the religious ties between Spaniards and Filipinos, various forces pushed the Filipinos to decide to sever political relations with Spain and devise a novel form of political loyalty, by the process of revolution. Clearly, cultural or religious links were not enough to secure political obedience to the colonial government.

The Americans followed another policy of integration. They were willing to allow the Muslims and other minority cultural groups to keep their own religion and other cultural traits provided that they desisted from certain practices, such as slavery, which clearly violated the United States Constitution. The Americans desired to raise the educational level as well as the economic status of the Muslims to enable them to participate more meaningfully in the political process of the colony in anticipation of the time when self-government would be granted to the Filipinos. A belief of American administrators was that it would be easier to accelerate the integration of the Muslims into the colonial setup by the introduction of Christian Filipino teachers, professionals, civil servants, and settlers into the Muslim areas. But some aspects of the implementation of this belief, especially the introduction of settlers, aroused a great deal of resentment. In any case, the American experiment with various administrative devices failed to produce the desired integration. For one, this failure can be explained by the fact that the Americans did nothing to modify the traditional structure of leadership or to bring about economic reforms to really uplift the depressed economic level of the Muslim masses. But to be pointed out is that it is probably the American concept of religious freedom and tolerance that led many Muslims to moderate their resentment against the Americans as a colonizing power.

The above short historical digression reveals that the so-called Moro Problem (actually a constellation of problems) was not primarily or solely that of peace and order. The breakdown of peace and order or armed conflict in Muslim areas was usually the effect of the opposition between attempts at integration, on one hand, and the efforts of Muslims to preserve their culture and a traditional way of life, on the other. To emphasize in this latter aspect was the effort of traditional leaders to uphold their traditional prerogatives and authority over their followers and certain areas. To put it simply, such leaders looked at the colonial power as their political rival.

Generally speaking, Filipino national leaders during the Commonwealth Period and early years of the Republic viewed the Muslims almost in the same manner that the Spaniards and Americans did, that is, as a group of people that had to be made subject to the central government based in Manila. It was a view that disregarded the history of the Muslims and more so the manner in which the Muslims were brought into the body politic. The fact is that the Republic was the successor state to a colonial territory dominated by Spain and later on by the United States. The unity of

the territory was dictated in an international conference while the integration of the majority of the inhabitants who became Christians was due initially to Spanish institutions which were later on modified politically by the Americans. The political boundaries of the Commonwealth and Republic ignored the relevance of ethnic and cultural claims while being unable at the same time to solve the economic and educational disparities between the Christian majority on one hand and the minority ethnic or cultural groups on the other.

The Filipino national leaders who came into prominence, constituted a virtual elite which had inherited the colonial mantle as well as many of the colonial's mental habits or attitudes towards the Muslims. More than this, they assumed that their culture, in content as well as in its effects regarding material and social improvement was superior to that of the Muslims. Upon this assumption lay their claim to legitimately dictate to the Muslims what was good for them and what role they should play in the new indigenous political setup. Consequently, it is too easy to attribute the neglect of Muslim feelings and aspirations during the early years of the Republic solely to the imperatives of rehabilitation, nationalistic issues *vis-à-vis* the Americans, and the internecine squabbles between politicians and political parties.

Since the political elite was drawn mainly from the majority group classified as Christian, it was expected that the Christians would consider the government as theirs or at least an institution which their leaders controlled. The attitude of the Muslims was understandably different. To them, the government was a Filipino government, that is, a government that was Christian and foreign. This attitude had deep historical roots like the Moro Wars between the Spaniards, who were aided by the Christianized natives, and the Muslims. In any case, such an attitude constituted by itself a problem to a government that did not want to identify itself along religious, ethnic, or linguistic lines. But the government did not do much to change or correct this attitude — possibly because it did not fully comprehend its premises and implications.

It was around the early 1950's that a recurrence of the breakdown of law and order in some Muslim areas began to merit national attention. The immediate causes were internal and external. Among the former were rivalries between Muslim leaders, general unemployment, land disputes between Muslims, the lack of proper institutions to conciliate differences between Muslim families, and the absence of effective government agencies to settle differences between Muslims and Christians. The external factors have to do

mainly with the large influx of settlers from other provinces to traditional Muslim lands as well as chronic government neglect of the socioeconomic status of Muslims. All these is not to neglect the fact that some Muslim politicians saw fit to exploit tensions between Muslims and Christians to squeeze concessions from the political party in power or the national government. Corollariwise, Christian politicians in the municipal level in Muslim traditional areas did their best to get the aid of government officials in their competition with Muslim politicians. On account of cultural ties, many national leaders were inclined to sympathize with these Christian political leaders.

Initially, the government dealt with the problem of law and order as one to be solved by the police or the military. Any form of disorder in society is normally viewed by any government as a challenge to it, a view that inclines it to assert its authority and power. What the government initially failed to perceive was that the problem of the breakdown of law and order was merely a symptom of a social malaise that had deep historical and psychological roots. It was thus, in time, that Filipino statesmen and cooler heads in Congress, prodded by a few vocal Muslim politicians, came to realize that the so-called Moro Problem was actually a constellation of problems involving historical, political, educational, religious, and other social dimensions.

In 1954, a special committee, formed by Congress to study these problems, recommended the creation of the Commission on National Integration which came into being in 1957. The title of the law is interesting in its details, for it clearly reveals what was desired to be accomplished. It is as follows: "An act to effectuate in a more rapid and complete manner the economic, social, moral and political advancement of the non-Christian Filipinos or national cultural minorities and to render real, complete, and permanent the integration of all said national cultural minorities into the body politic, creating the Commission on National Integration charged with said functions."²

The Commission had various functions in Muslim and other non-Christian areas, among which were: to establish industrial and agricultural enterprises as well as plants and cottage industries; to construct and operate irrigation systems, power structures and electrical systems; to aid farmers gain more agricultural expertise; to secure homesteads for the landless and resettle them; to establish more public schools; to build more roads; to construct more civic centers; to train the people in different professions and help them secure employment in the civil service as well as private establishments; to

extend legal services; to enhance the organization of municipal governments; etc. In the late 1960's, the Commission, in order to effectuate better all the above, established various divisions: provincial extension and field services, legal cultural and educational, and a tribal research center. An achievement of the Commission was that it helped about 3,000 students, mostly Muslims, to work for college degrees. But its attempt to help in the land cases of the minorities was nullified by the general ignorance of the claimants and the slowness of the courts. Its resettlement projects were hampered by the chronic lack of funds. Politics entered the picture and to some extent the office of the Commission became a dumping ground for the protégés of politicians. Neither did it receive the full amount appropriated by law.³ In brief, while the law creating it was well-intentioned, the Commission never got the support it really needed. In any case, it was so short-lived to be given a fair evaluation.

It cannot be overemphasized that the law creating the Commission represented, for the first time in the Republic, a social policy towards the Muslims and other national minorities. As stated, the policy was "to foster, accelerate and accomplish by all means and in a systematic, rapid and complete manner the moral, material, economic, social and political advancement of the non-Christian Filipinos, hereinafter called National Cultural Minorities, into the body politic" (Section 1 of Republic Act No. 1888). However, a close study of this policy invites certain questions: First, what is meant by fostering, accelerating, and accomplishing in a rapid and complete manner the moral advancement of the minorities into the body politic? Does this imply that the moral system of Islam is inferior to that of Christianity or that the Filipino Muslims need to know more about their moral system, that of Islam, such that it is necessary to foster and accelerate its internalization among them? Does it mean that the Muslims must change their moral values for that of another system and, if this is so, what is this alternative system? Is this the system of Christianity or is it that of the body politic? If it is that of the body politic, then what are the moral components of this civic system? Second, why is it desirable to have the Muslims and other minorities advance into the body politic? Is this what is desired by the minorities or is this what some lawmakers believe will solve the multiple problems of the Muslims and other minorities? Third, does the policy assume that all others, except the minorities, are already well-advanced into or integrated into the body politic? If so, then the definition of what constitutes the body politic and its components had been laid down by the majority without an understanding with

the minorities. If not, then it becomes obvious that the problem of integration into the body politic refers not only to the minorities but to the majority as well, that is, it is a problem referring to all citizens. In an important manner, the problem of integration has to do with the development of a national culture and securing loyalty to it on the part of all segments of the population, whether majority or minority.

Undoubtedly, the socioeconomic advancement of all the minorities is a desideratum to which they will aspire. But the question may be raised as to whether this will bring about integration. In brief, the social policy of the government was stated without a well-thought-out framework of reference. However, the existence of such a framework would not, by itself, guarantee the realization of the aims of the law as long as the government administration represented a power structure controlled by a political elite whose interests were not national in scope and orientation but sectional in character. In a state where there are diverse ethno-linguistic or cultural groups, any socio-cultural change involves a political process. Such a process might be resented if the groups do not participate in it or at least are not consulted as to its direction.

It is the belief of some thinkers that should all the different ethnic or cultural groups in a country reach the same level in socioeconomic development, conflicts between them will disappear. The basic assumption here is that all workers in the same country have the same interests—interests transcending cultural differences. Certainly, such a situation might moderate tensions but other factors need to be considered, for historically speaking, workers have been divided by conflicts, and violently, too.

Setting aside some of the accomplishments of the Commission on National Integration, the fact that the secessionist movement among the Muslims began to germinate in the late 1960's shows that it failed to integrate the bulk of the Muslim population into the body politic. To understand better the Muslim secessionist movement, it is worthwhile knowing some of the general causes that normally lead minority ethnic or cultural groups to aim at secession. They can be summarized as follows:

1. the feeling of the ethnic or cultural minority groups that it is internally colonized by the majority group;
2. the belief of such groups that they are subordinate to the dominant group in matters of political and economic relations;

3. the existence of conflicts stemming from the competition for scarce resources in areas where the minority groups live, as well as from the competition for civil, military, and political position in the national level;
4. tensions arising when the dominant group believes in its cultural superiority and despises the cultures of the minority groups while, at the same time, legitimizing its power to dominate the others on the above belief; and
5. the assertion by the minority groups of their historical achievements and cultural values as a reaction to the belief of the dominant group that it is culturally superior.⁴

But there is something more to the assertion that a secessionist movement represents an effort to preserve a culture or deeply cherished traditional values—it promises a better life in both the material and spiritual planes. Moreover, the actual struggle itself is used as the very technique to reinforce cultural differences from the others while the sacrifices as well as the demand that blood must be spilled are rationalized within the value system of the culture. Another way to reinforce culture in the struggle is to show that it is shared with other peoples who do not belong to the body politic the struggle is directed against. The struggle thus achieves, in the modern world, an international character which serves as an added ingredient to its claim for legitimacy.

Before going into specifics regarding Muslim fears and aspirations to discover how some of these had generated an atmosphere conducive to disobedience of government, a few facts about the Muslims must be recalled. First of all, the Filipino Muslims do not constitute one single ethno-linguistic group. Totalling around three million, they are divided into about twelve groups living in various islands in the Philippine South. The major groups are the Maguin-danaos of the Cotabato region, the Maranaos (including the Iranuns) in the Lanao area, and the Tausugs and Samals in the Sulu Archipelago. Although the majority of them indulge in agricultural activities, a big percentage are fishermen. In the past, there had been frictions among them, and some of their chiefs had fought each other. Furthermore, some Muslim groups can be said to be more sophisticated in their Islamic institutions than others. They also manifest differences in their customary law (*adat*), mythologies, and art forms.

But the Muslims in the South have much more in common than what appears to the eye. They recognize each other as Muslims and

are keenly aware of their differences in religious sentiments from other inhabitants of the country. They pray in each other's mosques and are aware that they belong to a larger religious community transcending linguistic, racial, and regional barriers. In the past, their leading families had intermarried for dynastic purposes. Now, with better communication, intermarriage among the social levels is progressively increasing. In the past, they had allied themselves against a common enemy. At present, their educated segments are cognizant of the fact that they have a communality of interests. They all feel that they should have common leaders; but this is recognized by them as difficult on account of deep-seated political rivalries of their past leaders. At present, no Muslim can truthfully claim that he is the leader of the Muslims in a political or religious sense. At most, the old politicians or traditional chiefs can only speak for certain segments of the population in a more or less well-defined area.

Regardless of the existence of many leaders and the absence of a single organization that can authoritatively speak for all Muslims, it is possible to know the fears and aspirations held in common by the Muslims, in spite of linguistic and regional differences. Various studies in the last few years have pinpointed such aspirations which any serious student of Philippine Muslim affairs can easily list down. Former Senator Mamintal Tamano succinctly summarized the fears of the Muslims as follows:⁵

1. fear of being alienated from Islam as well as that of losing cherished traditional values and customs;
2. fear of displacement from ancestral homes and traditional lands; and
3. fear of having no future in the Philippines because of (a) lack of more participation in the formulation of national policy, (b) lack of more participation in the government administration, and (c) lack of a greater share in the economic benefits derived from the exploitation of the national resources especially those from their areas.

To these must be added the fear that an uneven advance between the educational and technical progress of the majority and minority groups might leave the latter at the mercy of their more advanced compatriots in matters of professional and economic competition.

By a logical transformation, it is not hard to get at the positive equivalents of the above fears and to know what the aspirations of the Muslims are. To pinpoint the source of such aspirations, how-

ever, it is also important to know the aspirations relative to the social structure of the Muslims. The *Ulama* or learned men in religious affairs are, understandably, those most concerned with the religious situation. Conscious of the minority status of the Muslims, the *ulama* would desire more guarantees that Islam will survive. They therefore desire an atmosphere of religious freedom and tolerance. They are not interested in having non-Muslims become Muslims. What is important to them is that there should be no harrassment or discrimination against persons on account of religious differences. More importantly, they desire that Muslim children be given more chances to know the faith better and grow up with an Islamic consciousness.

The old traditional leaders and their families would certainly like to retain their past prerogatives and positions of dominance, and these can only be maintained if there is a national recognition of their status. At the least, they desire to be given more opportunities to have access to the political process to enable them to maintain their positions. But due to various social changes brought about by more access to education and the professions, more communication, and more mobility, there is now a new group of professionals and educated Muslims who desire to take over the position of the past political elite in Muslim traditional areas. A few years ago, the technique of the old leaders was to act as patrons to such professionals or, simply, to co-opt them. There is also at present a rising group among the young who desire a radical change in the traditional social system which they assert is not really conducive to the preservation of Islamic values since they insist that many elements in the traditional structure are pre-Islamic in origin. This group is most conscious of the need for education, social mobility, and modernization within an Islamic context. Moreover, it is this group that is in a better position to understand the development needs of the New Society and therefore will be able to functionally relate their activities to government programs.

Finally, there is the mass of Muslims whose living is based on agricultural pursuits and fishing. Like their counterparts in the other provinces, they desire some form of economic security by owning some land or implements to pursue their trade. Like all other Filipino families they desire more education for their children and increased medical and sanitary services. Essentially, they hope to realize more benefits from their economic efforts. Like all other citizens in the country, they all value peace and order to enable them to pursue their activities effectively.

Considering all the above, a factor that must be carefully considered in any policy-making that will affect the Muslims is that they deeply cherish their religion and community-cohesion. Their culture in the past had given them psychological stability, a sense of dignity, and a sense of individual worth. Their communities had been a source for increasing their human dimensions, and these communities had certainly given them a sense of direction. In their struggle against all forms of colonialization, their religion and cultural values had served them well as a source of identity and strength. The existence of the Muslim community is to be taken as a given within the Philippine state. This makes Philippine society a plural one. The question here is whether it is desirable for the Philippines to be a truly pluralistic society where different cultural groups, while maintaining their cultural identities, all share in the national power and where, in spite of criss-crossing loyalties, all are held together by a common loyalty to a wider community—the nation. Here a question arises whether, in spite of a diversity of cultures, there can exist a national culture which will represent cultural goals of another type and higher level. Another question is how this national culture, while transcending the diverse local cultures, can be enriched by these very cultures. Ultimately, the political dimension is how to maintain a balance or harmony in a complementary manner between loyalty to a cultural group and the nation state.

The alternative to the legitimacy of cultural pluralism in the Philippines is either the killing of all the Muslims, or ethnocide, which involves the slow destruction of their religion and culture by heightening discrimination against them as well as by rewarding those who in fact abandon Islam. The first alternative will be objected to vehemently by many non-Muslims since it will violate their moral principles. It is also against national policy. Moreover, it will generate a fiercer resistance on the part of the Muslims against the government. The second alternative will deny the nation the contributions of a highly spirited people who can be a potential source of energy. In any case, both alternatives are bound to generate international condemnation.

Consequently, it is much wiser to accept the legitimacy of cultural pluralism within the context of a national structure. The acceptance of this principle has various implications. First, the idea of internal colonization must be completely abandoned. Second, the cultural values of the various ethnolinguistic minorities must not be disparaged. Third, the cultural development of such groups must be further encouraged within a national framework of educational,

economic, scientific, and social transformation. Needless to say, the New Society has by declaration and deeds begun to accept the legitimacy of cultural pluralism.

It is true to some extent that the modern state is normally inclined to replace cultural heterogeneity with national cultural homogeneity; but this inclination can be checked or moderated under certain conditions and by a firm policy on the part of the government. Indeed, uniform loyalties can exist side by side with local cultural loyalties provided certain favorable conditions are created. One of these conditions is to let the minorities have an economic stake in the nation. This can be brought about by at least three factors. The first two have to do with a national economic policy while the third deals specifically with a minority group like the Muslims. Regarding the first, what is needed is the reduction of gross economic inequalities between all the citizens. The second provides equal benefits to all in terms of opportunities and state services. These two factors, while preventing class warfare or economic discrimination, will enable all nationals to feel that they all belong to the national community for the reason that they are not exploited in it but are equal beneficiaries. It is this feeling that will make them more receptive to develop or adhere to a national culture. The third factor has to do with giving Muslims opportunities to own land and gain a peaceful trade. The present Land Reform should be applied to them while strict measures are enforced to prevent the coming of additional settlers from Luzon and the Visayas to traditional Muslim areas. What many government officials are wont to forget is that there are thousands of landless Muslims. The fact is that, at present, the Muslims, on account of their relative backwardness, cannot compete with the incoming settlers. Furthermore, timber concessions should not be granted further to Manila-based capitalists but should be used for the benefit of the Muslims in the area. More government-owned industries should be established in Muslim areas with the policy of employing Muslims or giving them on-the-job training to develop in them the necessary skills to be thus employed. Employment in government industrial firms will lead Muslims to have a stake in the ordered condition of their employer, which is the government. Private industrial firms in Muslim or nearby areas should also be encouraged by the government to employ more Muslims or train them for employment, unlike the present condition in Iligan City where only an insignificant number of Muslims are employed in its industries. Also, part of the curriculum in the public high schools in Muslim or nearby areas can be geared along industrial or technical

lines to enable Muslim graduates to easily gain useful employment.

The economic uplift of the region where Muslims and Christians live will be greatly determined by the success of and heightened government support for the Southern Philippines Development Administration (SPDA). The SPDA's emphasis is on regional development, and it will serve to increase the economic interrelations between Muslims and other citizens in the country. The SPDA should be supported in its efforts at nurturing correct and healthy attitudes among the Muslims regarding job placement, in its orientation in economic development towards the entrepreneurial aspect rather than just serving as an employment agency, in its utilization of ethnic skills other than that of the craft level, and in its aid to Muslims even if they are no longer staying in their traditional areas.⁶ This last aspect of the SPDA together with its other programs will hopefully bring about the desired economic interdependence of Muslims and Christians in the country. When all citizens need each other economically in intimate terms, their separation will spell economic hardship if not disaster for all of them. In brief, all citizens of the country should participate in the nation's economic institutions without discrimination such that they will need each other. One of the ingredients of the national culture should deal with the economic expectations of all citizens.

Undoubtedly, a good educational program can bring about to a large measure the integration of the Muslims in the sense of developing loyalty to the national community. From an important point of view, such a problem of integration refers to all individuals and groups in the nation and not only to the Muslims and other cultural minorities. In any case, the national educational system must be geared, among numerous other things, to bring about mental attitudes among all individuals and groups to bring about harmonious relations between them, as well as a new form of national solidarity. The educational system must be an agency for change towards the good and towards greater modernization. In specific terms, the system must not encourage stories or elements in the lower school levels that are derogatory to the beliefs and customs of the Muslims and other culture groups. Texts must not portray some cultural minorities as superior to others but must emphasize the communality of the interests of all groups and how they tend to enrich the national culture through their values and art forms. In the teaching of Philippine History, the texts must accommodate the history of the Muslims as part of the Filipino struggle against colonialism and imperialism. This means that Muslim heroes

must also be considered as Filipino heroes while the Muslims struggle against foreign invaders as a precious heritage of all Filipinos. To be noted, nevertheless, is that in the last few years the New Society had made dramatic steps on this score which bodes well for the future.

The problem of initiating more Islamic schools (*madrasahs*) should be left to the initiative of the Muslims themselves and their religious organizations. However, the government can encourage these schools to raise their standards and enrich their curricula to accommodate national requirements. In this manner, the graduates can easily transfer to public high schools and then go to college should they so desire. To be pointed out is that the *madrasahs* are effective tools to raise the literacy of the Muslims while increasing their civic virtues.

Any attempt on the part of any strong government to integrate cultural groups, in the sense of getting them to adhere to a national culture, is normally bound to create some tension in such groups if they regard the government as a power structure controlled by the majority cultural group. The cultural groups will surely feel that their functional autonomy or integrity is threatened, and they will surely try to preserve certain cultural values in a manner betraying suspicion of government motives. But if the government has the consent of the governed, and better still, if it represents the result of a consensus, such suspicions will be eliminated since the governed in some way participates in the political process. Apropos to this is to have Muslims as government officials in their areas while allowing a bigger number of them to serve in institutions or agencies in the national level. The strengthening of local governments with Muslims at their head will represent the beginnings of a limited form of autonomy. But of paramount importance is that the Muslims must not be allowed to fall once again under the power and influence of the old traditional elites and politicians. This is not asserting that all of these persons are wicked or incompetent; what is suggested is that the old political structure based on dynasties and which cannot be responsive to the requirements of the New Society must give way to a new leadership based on merit and professional or technological qualifications and achievements. However, should scions of the families of the traditional leaders have the proper qualifications based on the above criteria, then Muslim society should not deny itself of their talents. To deny them their potential services would be a form of discrimination, if not penalty, for belonging to the old traditional families on account of the accident of birth. A problem

among Muslim societies is that authority or power as such' had always been a cherished social value. It is a value that is not only pre-Islamic but even anti-Islamic. What needs to be developed among Muslim leaders is the Islamic concept of trust (*amana*) wherein all authority or power is conceived to be a trust held only for communal benefits as against personal, family, or dynastic interests. The internationalization of a great deal of Islamic values among the Filipino Muslims will indeed make them better and more valuable citizens. However, this is a function of the *madrasahs*.

In some ways there is a danger in giving too many privileges to cultural minorities of socially backward groups to enable them to catch up with the rest of the population in matters of education and skilled positions. This has been called "favorable discrimination." It is a situation that might lead some persons to have a vested interest in belonging to such groups, and in the competition for certain jobs individuals from other groups can be penalized. A negative reaction can thus ensue from these other groups. What is undesirable is for Muslims to keep an identity associated with past discrimination and under-privileged status.⁷ It is necessary therefore to help the Muslims in such a way that once they catch up with the rest of the population, such privileges would be discontinued. But certainly, at present, they need an initial push as a corrective to the past.

But just as, if not more important than economic and educational programs is the freedom and opportunity to preserve their cultural identity. As Dr. Khurshid Hasan Hyder put it:

The important thing to ensure, however, is that minority, or different religious and ethnic groups within a State, should have the opportunity and freedom to preserve their cultural identity. If this can be achieved within a political framework which promises to keep intact those cultural elements in which they differ from other groups, more specifically the majority group, then separate cultural groups may be prepared to merge into a larger political and national community as an integral but distinguishable part of it. But if the minority groups feel that this is not possible, then internal pressures will irresistibly drive them towards an insistence on their separate nationhood, coming to demand self-determination in their own right.⁸

Muslims in every age and clime have considered their Holy Law (*Shari's*) as their cherished and distinguishable characteristic. Thus, in the situation Muslims in the Philippines now find themselves, it is wise to formally recognize among them the personal and family provisions of this law. Actually, the Muslims are following this law in matters of marriage, divorce, and inheritance. What is imperative is

the formal recognition by the government of the applicability of Muslim personal and family law as part of the laws of the land although applicable only to Muslims. This recognition will signify that the Philippines will be the first country in the world with a Christian majority which had taken such a step within the context of cultural pluralism, religious freedom, and tolerance. Needless to say, such an action of the Philippines will have very favorable reactions on a great part of this globe. In any case, it is an inexpensive venture for the government. The proposed code, prepared by a Presidential Commission, is now with the government ready for the President's signature.

To be noted is that the proposed code deals only with Islamic law; it does not deal with the customary law (*adat*) since the different Muslim ethno-linguistic groups differ in this respect. Muslim leaders, especially the religious ones, moreover, do not appear as enthusiastic to preserve elements of the *adat* as much as they do for the religious law. Agitation on the part of Muslims have principally revolved on their identity as Muslims and not on other grounds. Thus tensions, if any, between the religious law and the *adat* can be left to the groups to resolve which, in any case, are inclined to give preference to the religious law.

A brief paper like this cannot fully exhaust all the ramifications of a social policy suggested for Muslims. But it is not gainsaying to assert that under all the above-mentioned programs a great deal can be accomplished to bring about peace in a beautiful land that has seen so much pain and destruction of human resources. The programs will also ensure that the Muslims will not anymore remain isolated groups. Actually, cultural interaction with other groups and exposure to modernizing influences within an Islamic context is necessary for the growth of Muslims. Possibly, too, many of the cultural traits and values of the Muslims may beneficially influence their neighbors especially if they have something of value to share with them by way of example. Islam has its virtues and history is a testimony to this. With a national culture, which is in a process of becoming, the Muslims will, in effect, belong to two complementary cultures. In an atmosphere conducive to the expansion of human dimensions, there is no reason why the Muslims and other cultural minorities will not serve as positive and willing agents to preserve the integrity of a state of which they are not simply members but conscious and willing members. The New Society has the will and the resources to bring about such a situation; and having definitely taken the first dramatic steps towards such a goal, it must continue.

NOTES

¹Compare Myron Weiner, "Political Integration and Political Development," *Politics in Transitional Societies*, ed. Harvey G. Kebschull, pp. 263-72.

²Republic Act No. 1888 (as amended by Republic Act No. 3852).

³*Cf.* Leothiny Clavel, *They are also Filipinos*, pp. 62-64.

⁴Compare Gertrud Neuwrith, "Separatist Movements in Multi-ethnic and Multi-racial Societies," *Meeting of Experts on the Concept of "Race", "Identity", and "Dignity"*, UNESCO, Paris, 3-7 July 1972, pp. 6-7.

⁵This is a paraphrase with some amplification from a quotation taken from "Loyal Muslims and Alternatives to Rebellion," *Dansalan Research Center Reports*, Volume I, No. 3 (January 1976).

⁶*Cf.* Abdulkarim Sidri, "Points for consideration in Evolving an Economic Policy for Muslims in the Philippines," typewritten manuscript.

⁷Compare Max Cluckman, "New Dimensions of Change, Conflict and Settlement," *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. XIII, No. 4 (1971), p. 560.

⁸Khurshid Hasan Hyder, "Pre-Independence Movements Which Have Used Culture as a Part of the Struggle for Independence," *Meeting of Experts on the Concept of "Race", "Identity", and "Dignity"*, UNESCO, Paris, 3-7 July 1972, p. 2.