

and insisted on an autonomy based on the Tripoli Agreement, and the fighting once again broke out.

Although the Tripoli Agreement brought most Muslims' demand for regional autonomy, it however, created factionalism in the Muslim struggle. Consequently, the reassertion for a separatist ideal established the: Muslim Reformist line under Dimasangkay Pundato of Lanao; the Muslim Islamic Liberation Front, led by Udtadz Hashim Salamat of Cotabato (later on Moro Islamic Liberation Front) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, led by Nuruladji Misuari of Sulu.⁵⁹

The Philippine Government has long been trying to resolve the conflict in Mindanao as early as 1946, primarily through assimilation and autonomy as well as a combination of others military, political, economic and social means. The decades-long struggle, however, continues as the MILF wages an on-again/off-again fight for independence amidst the Government's peace efforts.

From 1971-1976, the damage due to the separatist war was considerable: "towns and villages were razed to the ground; thousands of families were displaced; properties and harvests were destroyed; on a conservative estimate, 60,000 lives were lost; and about 300,000 refugees moved to neighbouring Sabah."⁶⁰

Others point to a higher estimate of 120,000 people who have been killed and some \$3 billion worth of damage over the Mindanao conflict.⁶¹ At present, the Philippine Government still maintains some 35,000 troops, 25,000 policemen, and a 25,000 strong para-military unit on the island.⁶²

In a protracted intra-state conflict, such as the case of Mindanao, the proliferation of small arms has been recognized as a factor that aggravates the situation. The direction and intensity of the conflict is influenced by the massive availability of arms.⁶³ Thus, it is important to look into the proliferation of small arms in Mindanao.

III. Vectors of Small Arms in Mindanao An Overview

In 1998, the Philippines had about 330, 000 loose firearms in the possession of gun

⁵⁹ Samuel K. Tan " Islam and Christianity in the Philippines", p. 8.

⁶⁰ Eliseo R. Mercado, "The Moro People's Struggle for Self-Determination" in Mark Turner, R. J. May, Lulu Respall (eds.), *Mindanao: Land of Unfulfilled Promise* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1992), p. 160-1.

⁶¹ Antonio Lopez, "Mindanao's Chance".

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Luc Van de Goor, Kumar Rupesinghe, Paul Sciarone, *Between Development and Destruction: An Enquiry into the Causes of Conflict in Post-Colonial States*, Palgrave, 1996, p. 26.