

## Exploring the Dynamics of Islamic Influence in the Philippines: Past, Present, and Future Perspectives

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### Keywords

Islamization,  
Religious Influences,  
Philippines

### Abstract

This study offers a meticulous examination of the past, present, and future trajectories of Islamization in the Philippines, yielding insightful findings that significantly contribute to the scholarly discourse on the topic. By meticulously analyzing historical contexts, socio-political dynamics, and religious influences, alongside employing a rigorous multi-methodological approach encompassing qualitative analysis, quantitative data, fieldwork, archival research, and expert interviews, this study unveils nuanced insights into the country's complex nature of Islamization processes. The exceptional results of this study not only shed light on key trends, patterns, and drivers shaping Islamization but also provide invaluable guidance for policymakers, stakeholders, and scholars seeking to navigate the evolving landscape of religious dynamics, social cohesion, and national development in the Philippines.

### Kata kunci

Islamisasi, Pengaruh  
agama, Filipina

### Abstrak

Studi ini menyajikan analisis yang cermat mengenai jalur Islamisasi di Filipina dari masa lalu, masa kini, hingga masa depan. Temuan dalam studi ini memberikan kontribusi penting bagi wacana akademik terkait topik ini. Dengan menganalisis konteks sejarah, dinamika sosial-politik, dan pengaruh keagamaan secara saksama, serta menggunakan pendekatan multi-metodologi yang ketat, termasuk analisis kualitatif, data kuantitatif, penelitian lapangan, riset arsip, dan wawancara dengan para ahli, studi ini mengungkapkan wawasan yang mendalam tentang sifat kompleks proses Islamisasi di negara ini. Temuan yang dihasilkan dari studi ini tidak hanya menjelaskan tren, pola, dan faktor utama yang membentuk Islamisasi, tetapi juga memberikan panduan yang berharga bagi para pembuat kebijakan, pemangku kepentingan, dan akademisi yang ingin memahami lanskap yang terus berubah terkait dinamika agama, kohesi sosial, dan pembangunan nasional di Filipina.

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### Introduction

The Islamization process began in the Philippines and occurred from the numerous intriguing observations that could provide insight into the introduction of Islam to the Philippines. Many studies of Islamization in the Malay-Indonesian region

have been conducted, and these studies are frequently linked to the unwavering contributions of Arabs, Chinese Muslims, Indian missionaries, and commerce. Azra (2004) explores the networks between Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern scholars that facilitated the spread of Islamic reformist ideas in the Malay-Indonesian world during the 17th and 18th centuries. Ricklefs (2012) provides a detailed historical account of Islamization in Java, Indonesia, from the early 20th century to the Present, highlighting the resistance and opposition movements. Through commerce and cultural interactions with Muslim traders from nearby countries like Malaysia, Indonesia (Rosidi, 2021), and Brunei (Tarif & Kurniawan, 2021), Islam expanded throughout the Philippines. Although the date of Islam's entrance to the Philippines is unknown, it is thought to have begun as early as the 13th century.

The spread of Islam in the southern Philippines was greatly aided by the Sultanate of Sulu, founded in the fifteenth century (Majul, 1973; Tan, 2008). Known as "Wali," Muslim academics, traders, and missionaries spread Islam throughout the archipelago by founding settlements and preaching. Numerous indigenous peoples were converted to Islam due to these efforts, especially in the southern regions of Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan.

Numerous academics have studied Islam in the Philippines in-depth, examining its sociopolitical dynamics, cultural influence, and historical evolution. Majul (1978) provides a thorough history of the Muslim communities in the country, detailing their beginnings, growth, and contacts with Spanish colonial authorities. Saleeby (1908) offers a thorough examination of the Sultanate of Sulu, highlighting its contribution to the propagation of Islam and its sway over regional politics and the economy. Kiefer (1972) examines the social and legal framework of the Tausug people, emphasizing how Islamic values are incorporated into their way of life and government. Furthermore, Tan (2008) examines how Islam shaped the history and identities of the Muslim inhabitants in the southern Philippines. When taken as a whole, these works add to a more complex understanding of Islam's many roles in Philippine history and society.

The coming of Islam in the Philippines may be divided into three stages. The first stage was during the thirteenth century when Arab merchants landed on Sulu Island as their trade route. This claim, however, is supported by the discovery of a tombstone on the slope of Bud Datu of Jolo indicating the name of Tuhan Maqbalu and the year of his death, 1310 AC, in the Gregorian calendar (Jubair, 1999). According to Cesar Adib Majul, a Muslim historian at the University of the Philippines, Tuhan Maqbalu was a chieftain of Muslims at that time (Majul, 1973). The second stage of Islamization was during the arrival of some other learned Arab du'at who came via Sumatra Island headed by Raja Baguinda Ali of Menangkabaw during the end of the 14th century. The third stage was the coming of Muslim leaders from Malacca, Java, Moluccas, and Borneo during the 15th and 16th centuries (Gowing, 1968). The last stage of the process of Islamization in the Moroland from the early 19th century onward was credited to the influences of some Muslim du'at coming from the centers of Islamic studies such as

Arab countries, like the al-Azhar University of Egypt, the University of Madinah, and Libya. Apart from this, the emergence of Islamic schools and the increasing number of Moro students who had been given the chance to learn Islam in many Arab countries and also several Moro people who managed to perform Hajj and are fortunately given the chance to learn more about Islam (Majul, 2015).

After several hundred years have passed by, Muslims in the Philippines are still lagging in all aspects, whether they live in Luzon, Visayas, or Mindanao. Of the total 108,667,043 household population in 2020, nearly four-fifths or 85,645,362 persons (78.8%) reported Roman Catholicism as their religious affiliation. Islam followed it with 6,981,710 persons (6.4%), and Iglesia ni Cristo with 2,806,524 persons (2.6%). In 2015, these were also the top three religious affiliations in the country. Completing the top ten religious affiliations in 2020 are Seventh Day Adventist and Aglipay (0.8% each); Iglesia et al. (0.6%); Bible Baptist Church (0.5%); and United Church of Christ in the Philippines Jehovah's Witness and Church of Christ (0.4% each). Table 5 shows Islam was the most predominant religion in BARMM, accounting for 4.49 million persons or 90.9 percent of the 4.94 million household population in the region. It was followed by Region IX - Zamboanga Peninsula with 18.2 percent, SOCCSKSARGEN with 15.8 percent, Region X - Northern Mindanao with 8.5 percent, and Region XI - Davao Region and MIMAROPA Region with 3.5 percent each. On the other hand, Region XIII - Caraga, which is also in Mindanao, registered a proportion of Islam of only 0.5 percent. The rest of the regions posted proportions ranging from 0.1 percent each in Bicol and Region VI - Western Visayas to 1.3 percent in the NCR.

Table 1. Number and proportion of the household Population Who Reported Islam as Their Religious Affiliation by Region: Philippines 2020

Region	Household Population	Islam	
		Number	Percent
Philippines	108,667,043	6,981,710	6,4
National Capital Region (NCR)	13,403,551	173,346	1,3
Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR)	1,791,121	5,817	0,3
I –Ilocos Region	5,292,297	12,475	0,2
II. –Cagayan Valley	3,679,748	7,249	0,2
III. –Central Luzon	12,387,811	46,588	0,4
IV.A. –CALABARZON	16,139,770	80,057	0,5
MIMAROPA Region	3,212,287	113,288	3,5
V. –Bicol Region	6,067,290	9,090	0,1
VI. –Western Visayas	7,935,531	9,784	0,1
VII. –Central Visayas	8,046,285	16,412	0,2
VIII. Eastern Visayas	4,531,512	5,568	0,1
IX. –Zamboanga Peninsula	3,862,588	703,823	18,2
X. Northern Mindanao	5,007,798	423,317	8,5
XI. –Davao Region	5,223,802	185,248	3,5
XII. –SOCCSKSARGEN	4 351,773	685,702	15,8
XIII. –Caraga	2,795,340	12,777	0,5
Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)	4,938,539	4,491,169	90,9

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority, 2020 Census of Population and Housing

The Muslim population of approximately 6,981,710 individuals in the Philippines, comprising around 6.4% of the total population, indeed presents an opportunity for the development of Islam in the country, mainly if this population actively engages in preaching duties. With a sizable Muslim population, there is a more significant potential for the dissemination of Islamic teachings, values, cultures, and principles within the non-Islamic country. Muslims can engage in da'wah activities to educate others about Islam, promote understanding, and dispel misconceptions about the religion. It is clearly stated in The Holy Al-Quran, Chapter Ali Imran (3): 110.

Muslim society can be crucial in building and strengthening Muslim communities across the Philippines. Through mosques, Islamic centers, and community organizations, they can provide spiritual guidance, support, and services to fellow Muslims, fostering a sense of belonging and unity. They can initiate and participate in social and humanitarian initiatives that align with Islamic values of compassion, justice, and charity. This includes providing assistance to people in need, supporting orphanages and schools, engaging in disaster relief efforts, contributing to the overall welfare of society, and engaging in dialogue with members of other faith communities. It is also essential for promoting mutual respect, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence. Muslims can participate in interfaith initiatives to foster understanding, promote dialogue, and build bridges of cooperation with people of different religious backgrounds. The significant Muslim population in the Philippines presents an opportunity for the development and promotion of Islam, provided that individuals within this population actively engage in preaching duties, community-building efforts, and initiatives that promote the values of Islam and contribute to the well-being of society as a whole.

### **Research Method**

A multi-methodological approach was employed to investigate the future of Islamization in the Philippines, integrating qualitative and quantitative research methods. Firstly, a comprehensive literature review was conducted to establish a theoretical framework and contextualize the study within existing scholarship on Islamization, Southeast Asian Islam, and Philippine society. This involved reviewing scholarly articles, books, government reports, and other relevant sources to gain insights into historical trends, contemporary dynamics, and potential future scenarios. Additionally, archival research was undertaken to analyze historical documents, manuscripts, and official records about the spread and development of Islam in the Philippines over time.

Secondly, qualitative data collection methods were employed, including semi-structured interviews with key informants such as religious leaders, academics, policymakers, and community representatives. These interviews provided invaluable perspectives on the factors influencing Islamization processes, the challenges faced by Muslim communities, and the potential trajectories of Islam in the Philippines. Moreover, fieldwork was conducted in various regions across the Philippines to observe

firsthand Muslim communities' practices, beliefs, and sociocultural dynamics. This study involved participant observation, focus group discussions, and informal conversations with community members in the Cordillera Administrative Region, located in the northern part of the Philippines, during the 2023 Eid al-Adha program. These methods facilitated a deeper understanding of local contexts and experiences related to Islamization.

This study aimed to generate comprehensive insights into the future of Islamization in the Philippines by triangulating these qualitative data sources with quantitative demographic data and statistical analysis.

### **Results and Discussion**

The future of Islamization in the Philippines through Islamic da'wah is a complex topic influenced by various social, political, and cultural factors. Since Islam has a long history in the Philippines, predating Spanish colonization. The southern regions, particularly Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago have significant Muslim populations. Islamic da'wah has been ongoing in these areas for centuries. The Moro people, who are predominantly Muslim, have been seeking autonomy and self-determination for decades. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), and other groups have been involved in armed conflict with the Philippine government. The resolution of these issues could impact the future of Islamization and the spread of Islamic teachings in the region. The global Islamic community, including organizations and movements, can impact Islamic da'wah efforts in the Philippines. The success of Islamic da'wah in the Philippines will also depend on how well it resonates with the local population's cultural and social norms. The effectiveness of outreach efforts will be influenced by factors such as education levels, economic conditions, and existing religious practices (Sulayman, 1989). The stance of the Philippine government towards Islam and Islamic organizations will play a significant role. Policies related to religious freed.

Education and governance in Muslim-majority areas will affect the ability of Islamic groups to engage in da'wah activities. Interfaith relations and dialogue with Christian communities will also influence the future of Islamization in the Philippines. Positive interactions and cooperation between Muslims and non-Muslims can shape perceptions and attitudes towards Islam. The future of Islamization in the secular state of the Philippines through Islamic da'wah will be shaped by a complex interplay of historical, social, political, and cultural factors. It will likely continue evolving in response to changing circumstances both within the Philippines and globally.

### **The Emergence of Muslim Scholars Outside The Arab Countries**

Muslim scholars from non-Arab countries bring diverse cultural, linguistic, and scholarly backgrounds to Islamic discourse. Their perspectives often reflect Muslims' unique experiences and challenges in their respective regions, enriching the global

conversation on Islam. These scholars graduating from abroad are often more attuned to their communities' specific needs and contexts, offering religious guidance and interpretations that resonate with local cultures and traditions. This localized approach can enhance the relevance and applicability of Islamic teachings in non-Arab contexts. Filipino Muslim scholars can serve as bridges between different cultures and religious traditions. Their ability to navigate multiple cultural and linguistic contexts facilitates dialogue and collaboration with scholars, activists, and religious leaders from diverse backgrounds. The emergence of Muslim scholars outside of Arab countries reflects Islam's dynamic and diverse nature as a global religion. Their contributions are crucial in shaping the future of Islamic thought, practice, and identity in an increasingly interconnected world.

Usually, foreign countries are active funders of organizations, both through governmental channels and private institutions or individuals. This involvement in funding can take various forms and impact the operations, activities, and priorities of recipient organizations. Undoubtedly, many countries provide foreign aid to support development projects, humanitarian assistance, and capacity-building efforts in other countries. This aid may be provided bilaterally, directly from one government to another, or through multilateral channels such as international organizations and funds. Foreign governments often fund development organizations and initiatives to address poverty, improve healthcare, promote Islamic education, and foster economic growth in Muslim minority countries. Effective partnerships and responsible stewardship of funds are essential for maximizing the impact of foreign funding on positive social change and sustainable development.

### **Muslim Community's Awareness of The Da'wah Movement**

The awareness of the da'wah movement within the Muslim community varies depending on whether they are actively involved in religious activities, such as attending mosques, Islamic lectures, seminars, and community events, and are more likely to be familiar with the da'wah movement. Da'wah efforts are often promoted and discussed within these contexts. Muslim Filipinos with a strong background in Islamic education and concerned about their religion are likely to be more aware of the da'wah movement. This includes individuals who have studied at Islamic schools, seminaries, or universities where da'wah principles and methods are taught. Nowadays, one of the essential things is using social media and online platforms because they have facilitated the dissemination of da'wah messages and materials. Muslims who are active on social media and follow influential Islamic scholars or da'wah organizations are more likely to be aware of the movement. In and outside the country, da'wah activities are deeply ingrained in the local community's religious practices and culture.

Combining individual experiences, community dynamics, and broader societal factors shapes the awareness of the da'wah movement within the Muslim community. Effective communication strategies, community engagement, and collaboration among

Islamic organizations can increase awareness and understanding of da'wah objectives and methods.

The emergence of preaching bodies throughout the country plays a significant role in conveying Islam to the Christian community, promoting interfaith dialogue, and understanding the culture. These preaching bodies, which include Islamic organizations, mosques, educational institutions, and community groups, engage in various activities to share Islamic teachings, values, and practices with individuals from diverse religious backgrounds. Emergence preaching bodies organize outreach programs, seminars, and educational activities to inform the Christian community about Islam. These initiatives aim to dispel misconceptions, promote understanding, and facilitate dialogue between Muslims and Christians. These Islamic organizations also engage in community service projects and social welfare activities that benefit Muslim and Christian communities. They foster unity, solidarity, and collaboration among diverse religious groups by addressing common societal challenges and working together on shared goals. Some Islamic organizations and educational institutions contribute to scholarly research, academic conferences, and publications exploring the intersection of Islam and Christianity. They promote more profound understanding and respect between the two religious traditions by fostering intellectual engagement and dialogue. The emergence of preaching bodies throughout the Philippines strengthens efforts to convey Islam to the Christian community by promoting dialogue, understanding, and cooperation between Muslims and Christians. Through outreach, education, community engagement, and advocacy, these bodies contribute to building bridges of peace and solidarity across religious divides.

### **The Establishment of Various Islamic Ngo's in the Country**

The establishment of various Islamic non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in a country reflects the growing importance of civil society in addressing social, educational, and humanitarian needs within the Muslim community. Islamic NGOs often focus on community development initiatives aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of Muslims, particularly in marginalized areas. These initiatives may include poverty alleviation programs, vocational training, microfinance, and small-scale infrastructure projects. Most of the Islamic NGOs in the Philippines, such as Discovery Islam Baguio (DIB), Discovery Islam Pangasinan, ISCAG Cavite, and so on, are involved in educational initiatives, including the establishment of schools, madrasas (Islamic schools), and educational scholarship programs. These efforts aim to provide quality education to Muslim children and youth, empower women and girls through literacy and skills development, and promote Islamic values and teachings. These Islamic NGOs play a crucial role in providing humanitarian assistance and relief efforts during times of crisis, such as natural disasters or conflicts. They often collaborate with international humanitarian organizations to deliver aid to affected communities, including food, shelter, healthcare, and psychosocial support. Most of these NGOs often

collaborate with government agencies, international organizations, and other civil society groups to enhance their capacity and effectiveness in addressing community needs. They may participate in networking events, workshops, and training programs to share best practices and learn from each other's experiences. The establishment of various Islamic NGOs in the Philippines reflects the diverse and dynamic nature of the Muslim community and its efforts to address social, educational, and humanitarian challenges through grassroots initiatives and civil society engagement. These organizations play a vital role in complementing government efforts and promoting inclusive development and social cohesion in the country.

The existence of Republic Act 9997, also known as "An Act Creating the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos, Defining its Powers, Functions, and Responsibilities, and Appropriating Funds Therefor, and for Other Purposes," was enacted on February 5, 2010. This law aimed to establish the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF) to address the concerns and promote the welfare of Muslim Filipinos in the Philippines. The NCMF is tasked with various responsibilities. This Act represents the interests of Muslim Filipinos at the national level, formulating policies and implementing programs to promote the economic, social, and cultural development of Muslim Filipinos and administering the Shariah justice system.

In the Philippines, several Islamic movements and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) work to promote Islamic values, assist Muslim communities, and advocate for their rights. First, Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has transitioned into a political organization advocating for the rights and autonomy of Muslims in the southern Philippines, particularly in the Bangsamoro region. They are vital in the peace process and implementing the Bangsamoro Organic Law. Second, Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), similar to MILF, MNLF is a political organization advocating for the rights and self-determination of Muslims in Mindanao. It was one of the first rebel groups to engage in peace talks with the Philippine government and signed a peace agreement in 1996. Next, Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), a splinter group from MILF continues to engage in armed conflict with the Philippine government. They advocate for a separate Islamic state in Mindanao and oppose the peace process. They were followed by the United Bangsamoro Justice Party (UBJP), a political party in the Philippines that represents the interests of Muslims in the Bangsamoro region. It participates in elections and works to advance Muslims' political and socio-economic rights. Muslim Legal Assistance Foundation (MUSLAF) is an NGO that provides legal assistance and advocacy services to Muslims in the Philippines, particularly in cases related to human rights violations, land disputes, and discrimination. Next is Al-Mujadillah Development Foundation, Inc. (AMDFI), an NGO focusing on community development, education, and livelihood programs for Muslims in Mindanao. They work to empower marginalized communities and promote peace and development in the region. Also, Islamic Relief Philippines is an international humanitarian organization that operates in the Philippines, providing emergency relief,

development assistance, and long-term support to vulnerable communities, including Muslims affected by conflict and natural disasters. These are a few examples of Islamic movements and NGOs in the Philippines. Many more local and international organizations work to address the needs and promote the rights of Muslim communities in the country.

### **The Hostility of Muslim Countries towards the Muslim Minority in the Philippines**

The relationship between Muslim-majority countries and the Muslim society in the Philippines can vary depending on a range of factors, including political dynamics, historical context, and religious affiliations. While it is essential to acknowledge that there might be tension or disagreement, it is also crucial to recognize that the relationship is multifaceted. Not all Muslim-majority countries hold the same views or exhibit the same behaviors towards the Muslim minority in the Philippines. The political relationship between Muslim-majority countries and the Philippines can influence their stance towards the Muslim minority. Diplomatic relations, trade agreements, and geopolitical interests may impact how Muslim-majority countries engage with the Philippines on issues related to its Muslim population. Muslim-majority countries, like many other nations, may express concerns about extremism and terrorism emanating from specific segments of the country. Combating radicalization and terrorism may involve cooperation between countries and intelligence-sharing mechanisms. Also, individual or international Islamic organizations may provide humanitarian assistance and development aid to Muslim society in the Philippines, particularly in conflict-affected areas or areas impacted by natural disasters.

Muslim countries recognize the importance of collaboration among NGOs, Muslim societies, and the private sector to complement the work of development da'wah and Muslim organizations. By leveraging multiple stakeholders' expertise, resources, and networks, the program aims to achieve more significant impact and sustainability in addressing development challenges. The focuses include capacity-building and training for da'wah NGOs to enhance their effectiveness, sustainability, and impact, as well as promote partnerships and collaboration among stakeholders to leverage complementary strengths and resources. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are also used to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of development interventions under the program.

Arab donor countries and their national agencies have provided various forms of assistance to the Philippines, including financial aid, grants, technical support, and development projects. Likely, Arab donor countries have provided humanitarian assistance to the Philippines in response to natural disasters and crises. This assistance includes emergency relief supplies, food aid, medical assistance, and disaster response and recovery support for education and training initiatives in the Philippines, including scholarships, vocational training programs, and capacity-building initiatives for students, teachers, and professionals. These efforts aim to enhance human capital

development and promote knowledge exchange and cooperation between Arab countries and the Philippines.

Some Arab countries, particularly those with renowned educational institutions such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates, attract many international students, including Muslims from the Philippines, for higher education. These students often pursue various academic disciplines, including Islamic studies, engineering, medicine, business, and humanities. To provide a rough estimate, according to UNESCO data, in 2019, over 1.5 million international students were studying in Arab countries. While this figure includes students from diverse backgrounds and religions, it is reasonable to assume that a significant portion of these students are Muslim, given the religious demographics of many of the countries sending students to Arab nations.

### **The Embrace of Islam among Christian Communities Abroad**

For some individuals within Christian communities, the decision to embrace Islam is a profoundly personal and spiritual journey. They may be drawn to Islam's monotheistic theology, emphasis on social justice, or the spiritual practices of prayer and fasting. Interfaith relationships and dialogue can significantly facilitate the conversion of individuals from Christian backgrounds to Islam. Positive interactions with Muslims, exposure to Islamic teachings, and discussions about faith and religion can spark interest and curiosity about Islam. Christian communities may be attracted to Islam's intellectual and philosophical aspects, including its rich theological tradition, ethical teachings, preachers, and historical contributions to science and philosophy. A desire for community and belonging may also drive reversion to Islam. Individuals who feel marginalized or disconnected from their Christian communities may find a sense of belonging and identity within Muslim communities. The embrace of Islam among Christian communities abroad is a complex and deeply personal phenomenon shaped by a combination of spiritual, social, cultural, intellectual, and global factors. It reflects the diversity and dynamism of religious identity and expression in contemporary societies.

### **Freedom of Religion Practiced in the Country**

Freedom of religion is a constitutionally protected right in the Philippines, guaranteed by the 1987 Constitution. Article III, Section 5 of the Constitution explicitly states: "No law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall forever be allowed."

The Philippine Constitution safeguards the right of individuals to practice their religion freely, without interference from the state. This includes the freedom to profess, observe, and celebrate religious beliefs and the freedom to change one's religion or belief system. The Constitution mandates the separation of church and state, prohibiting the government from favoring or endorsing any religion. This principle ensures that religious institutions do not wield political power and that state policies and laws remain

neutral concerning religion. The Philippines is diverse, with a rich tapestry of religious beliefs and practices. Freedom of religion extends to all faith communities, including Catholics, Muslims, Protestant Christians, Indigenous practices, and others. The government recognizes and respects this diversity, promoting tolerance and mutual respect among religious groups. While the government supports secular education in public schools, it also respects the rights of individuals to receive religious instruction. Private schools, including those affiliated with religious organizations, can provide religious education according to their beliefs. Remember that the Constitution prohibits discrimination based on religion, ensuring that individuals are not disadvantaged or marginalized because of their religious beliefs or affiliation. This protection extends to various aspects of public life, including employment, education, housing, and access to services. It is stated in constitutional provisions that Philippine laws, such as the Anti-Discrimination Act of 2019, provide further protection against discrimination based on religion. These laws promote equality and inclusivity, fostering a society where individuals can freely express and practice their religious convictions. Freedom of religion is a fundamental right enshrined in the Philippine Constitution and upheld by the legal system. While challenges and issues may arise, the government and society are committed to protecting and promoting religious freedom for all individuals and communities in the country.

### **Elected Senator Among Muslims**

The election of a Senator from the Muslim community can enhance the representation of Muslims in the country's legislative body. It provides an opportunity for the voices, concerns, and interests of Muslims to be heard and addressed at the national level. The victory of Senator Robin "Abdul Aziz" Padilla can inspire and empower Muslims across the country, demonstrating that they can actively participate in the political process and hold positions of influence and leadership. The Senator can serve as a bridge between the Muslim community and the broader society, fostering dialogue, understanding, and cooperation among different religious and cultural groups and advocating for policies and initiatives that benefit the Muslim community, such as promoting peace and development in Muslim-majority areas, addressing socio-economic disparities, and protecting the rights of religious minorities. As a Muslim representative in the country, he can contribute to promoting inclusive governance, social cohesion, and democratic participation. It underscores the importance of diversity and representation in shaping public policies and decisions that affect all segments of society.

Muslims in the Philippines are lagging in all aspects. Some Muslim areas, particularly in the Muslim minority in Luzon and Visayas, face socio-economic challenges and development disparities compared to other regions in the country; it's important to avoid generalizations and recognize the diversity of experiences among Muslims in the Philippines. As a Muslim representative in the Senate, he should be

more focused and active on infrastructure development, including access to transportation, healthcare, education, and essential utilities, which varies across different regions in the Philippines. While some Muslim-majority areas may face infrastructure gaps, there have been efforts by the government and development organizations to address these disparities. Education and employment opportunities are critical determinants of socio-economic advancement. In some Muslim-majority areas, there may be lower literacy rates, higher unemployment, and limited access to quality education and vocational training. Efforts to improve education and skills development are crucial for empowering Muslim communities in the country.

### **The Future of Islamic Laws in the Philippines**

For many years, Muslim minorities have been excluded and divided due to the government's failure to grant them equal rights in the political, social, and economic spheres. These rights put the politicians in the Philippines under pressure to think again. Numerous initiatives have been put out for a long time to close the gap, especially in education and legal reform. In order to accomplish them, the Muslim minority's rights to codify Islamic personal rules, such as the establishment of Shari'ah courts and the position of mufti, were justified because the right to culture is a fundamental human right. The Constitution, Article XIV, Section 17 stipulates that:

"The State shall recognize, respect, and protect the rights of indigenous cultural communities to preserve and develop their cultures, traditions, and institutions. It shall consider these rights in formulating national plans and policies."

Religion has long played a significant role in the sociocultural acceptance and economic advancement of Muslim communities in the Philippines. Because so few people worldwide understand Islam to be a comprehensive way of life, non-Muslim lawmakers in the Philippines have disregarded and overlooked the crucial role that Islam plays in Muslim society. Because there are so few primary literary sources explaining the historical roots of Muslim religious practices in the Philippines, Islam has been misunderstood. Finding Islamic literature and manuscripts in public or private educational establishments is difficult. The publications authored by Christian historians from the Philippines misrepresented and improperly showed the history of Islam and the Muslims.

On the other hand, some public institutions forbid students from practicing Islam and from dressing in Islamic garb. Some private educational institutions forbid students from publicly expressing their beliefs for fear that doing so might violate the law. The truth is that Islamic social institutions like zakat, waqf, and sadaqa are not accepted by the government. This demonstrates how Muslims are disadvantaged in leadership and decision-making roles, as well as in the educational and economic domains.

Mariam Tagoranao and Alizaman Gamon (2019) mentioned that Muslims in the Philippines had a sophisticated legal system before the country declared independence. Because the Luwaran Code of Maguindanao and the Diwan Tausog of Sulu served as its

foundation, these laws became known as the "Moro jurisprudence ."In 1886, the Luwaran Code of Maguindanao was composed. In other words, the Code follows the teachings of the Shafi'i School of Law, widely accepted throughout the Malay world. Under the Sultan of Sulu's suzerainty, the Diwan Tausog was established as the main Sulu personal law codex. In 1878, it received official recognition as a code. The Diwan Tausog contains laws against theft, kidnapping, pretenses, and murder, in addition to sexual offenses. The Muslim communities in Mindanao and Sulu Island had already built their Islamic system of governance, and following colonization, Muslim laws, customs, beliefs, and culture persisted unaltered by the policies and directives of the colonizers.

The Tydings-McDuffie Law, also called the Philippine Independence Act, was passed by the U.S. Congress before the Philippines gained complete independence. It gave the Philippine Legislature the authority to convene a constitutional assembly to draft a new constitution. Only one delegate, the former Senator Sultan Alauwiya Alonto, represented the Muslim communities during the Constitutional Convention that drafted and framed the 1935 Constitution. It demonstrates how U.S. legal principles shaped the Constitution's provisions to win the U.S. President's agreement, which was a crucial fort. The envisaged transition of the Philippine independence is crucial (Leon, 2005).

However, the question of independence in the Philippines was merely the brilliant national notion of the Christian Filipinos. The majority of Muslims rejected being ruled by non-Muslim Filipinos because they saw independence as unimportant. Their preference was to be under U.S. government protection and supervision. The lack of complete respect for Muslim rights under the 1935 Constitution served as the foundation for the unfavorable reactions. Secular laws took their place, disregarding their social and legal traditions. "The Commonwealth constitution, which gave the Philippines its first state of freedom, made various provisions for the welfare of the Christian majority, but paid no attention to the requirements of Muslims," notes George Arthur Malcom, the author of *The Commonwealth of the Philippines*. Muslims opposed the inclusion of Mindanao and Sulu in the newly formed Republic of the Philippines. Muslim leaders appealed to the U.S. Congress, stressing that if the Philippines became an independent nation, Muslims would not be permitted to engage in governance or to profit from economic growth and that a Filipino government might not even recognize and appreciate Islam (Majul, 2015).

Muslims' customs and religious rights were not considered throughout the drafting and framing of the 1935 Constitution. This stems from the legislators' ignorance of the fact that Islam is a religion that includes all facets of human existence. No law that grants a title of nobility will be enacted, as stated plainly in Article III, Section 1(9). This clause stifles any future recourse to sultanate sovereignty and independence and restricts the expansion of Islamic government as it was known to the Muslims in Mindanao and Sulu. The 1973 Constitution, which states that "the separation of church

and state shall be inviolable," established the legal framework for separating church and state as it exists in the United States. The idea behind this Western ideology is "building a wall of separation between church and state." According to this political and legal theory, religion and state should keep their issues apart and not meddle in one another's business. The constitutional ban that states that "no law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion" suggests this idea.

Article 2, Code of Muslim Personal Laws in the Philippines, clearly states that 1) recognizes the legal system of Muslims in the Philippines as part of the law of the land and seeks to make Islamic institutions more practical; 2) codifies Muslim personal laws; and 3) provides for an effective administration and enforcement of Muslim Personal Law among Muslims. However, the laws restrict family issues, including guardianship, succession, property relations, marriage, divorce, and custody. Except for certain associated criminal violations like *ta'zir* and the imposition of penalties at the judge's discretion, the applicability is solely based on civil law. Establishing Shariah courts for family case adjudication and settlement is another provision of the Code.

Muslim communities made use of the political clout and liberty bestowed upon their leaders to create a social climate that was more favorable to the growth of Islam and its institutions. It is possible to see the terrible experiences Muslim communities have had as a result of secularism's infiltration into the social structure. Since it impeded the legal way for the expansion of Islamic knowledge and culture in the Philippines, it is intellectually challenging and traumatizing.

The Muslims of the Philippines are not an exception to the many tensions that arise when the government attempts to regulate Muslim identity and culture. The government has closely monitored any reforms in Islamic institutions because of the socio-political ramifications of secularism's dominant impact on the social structure. In considering Muslim aspirations for genuine peace and justice for the entire Muslim community in the Philippines, ruling elites and policy makers drew ideas and concepts from the West. Each of the policies has advantages and disadvantages. We have emphasized that Muslim evolutionary organizations have requested a certain level of autonomy from the government as a result of biases and prejudices against Muslim minorities. The establishment of Shariah courts as a component of the national judicial system and the acceptance of Muslim personal laws nationally were two aspects of the peace package.

## **Conclusion**

Various factors, including demographic trends, socio-political dynamics, cultural shifts, and religious developments, will likely influence the future of Islamization in the Philippines. The Muslim population in the Philippines, particularly in the southern regions such as Mindanao, is expected to continue growing due to their awareness of *da'wah* activities. This demographic trend could contribute to the increasing visibility and influence of Islam in the country. The *Madrasahs* and Islamic educational

institutions should be crucial in promoting Islamic teachings and values among Muslim communities. Efforts to strengthen and expand these institutions and integrate them with the national education system could further advance Islamization in the Philippines. Also, resolving longstanding conflicts and grievances in Muslim-majority areas, such as the Bangsamoro region, is essential for fostering peace, stability, and development. Addressing these issues through dialogue, reconciliation, and inclusive governance could create an environment conducive to Islamization and religious coexistence.

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