

# A Comparative Perspective of the Rise of Basque and Moro Nationalism

## From Incipience to the Period of the Dictatorship

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*The article compares and contrasts the factors which brought about the emergence of Basque and Moro nationalism since their incipience, to the Franco and Marcos dictatorships in Spain and the Philippines, respectively. Basque nationalism was generally brought about by cultural and political marginality which was exacerbated by immigrants into the Basque region. The same reasons can be attributed to the rise of Moro nationalism, but unlike the Basques, this was aggravated by the Moro's economic marginalization. As for the Basques, the assertion of their political institutions, culture, and identity was shared by the other regions in Spain such as Catalonia. This was not the case of Muslim Mindanao which was alone in its plight. National political events also heightened Basque and Moro nationalism. In the case of the former, this was brought about by the Carlist Wars which sought to get rid of its local institutions, the fueros. For the Moros, the colonization of the Philippines by Spain and later on by the U.S. forced an alien political and economic system on them which was perpetuated by the Filipino elites in a postcolonial state. The period of the dictatorships in Spain and in the Philippines witnessed the heightening of Basque and Moro nationalism which further strengthened their respective separatist movements, i.e., the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (Euskadi and Freedom, or ETA) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). The weakening of the MNLF during the martial law period, however, was brought forth with the intervention of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) to the plight of the Muslims in the Philippines, leading to the establishment of the Tripoli Agreement which was brokered by Libya between the Philippine government and the MNLF. As for the ETA, it remained strong even under the Franco dictatorship and was aided by France, which provided a safe haven to Basque refugees.*

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In the Philippines, there is a view that if development and economic growth occur in the Muslim areas of Mindanao and if the Muslim regions are given autonomy or through another form such as federalism, the Muslims, mainly through the Moro National Liberal Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), will cease to pursue separatist aspirations, i.e., independence. This view, however, seems to be debunked by the experience of the Basque separatist movement. The Basque region of Spain is currently one of the country's wealthiest and most industrialized regions, with its per capita gross domestic product 22 percent higher than Spain's national. Moreover, Euskadi, as what the Basque region is referred to is perceived to have the greatest amount of self-rule in Europe. "The Basque institutions have their own fiscal and educational system, have authority over public works and a host of other areas of competence that make it more of a State, properly speaking, than an autonomous region." (Basta Ya! Citizens' Initiative 2005, 1). The question which comes to mind, therefore, is why the Basques were able to develop a political autonomy which continue to be elusive for the Moros<sup>2</sup> in the Philippines and secondly, why despite this political autonomy, there continues to exist a Basque separatist movement. The latter concern is of importance to the Philippines to understand because of a popular belief that among the major reasons for the continuing existence of the MNLF and the MILF are underdevelopment and the need for more political autonomy.

This paper, therefore, seeks to compare and contrast the experience of the Basque and Moro separatist movements in order to understand better the factors which not only brought their emergence but, more importantly, their continuity. In answering these questions, this paper focuses on the factors which brought about the rise of Basque and Moro nationalism because much of what the Basques and Moros are today were greatly shaped by their historical roots, which could be traced from their incipience and to the periods of the Franco (1939-1977) and Marcos (1972-1986) dictatorships in Spain and in the

Philippines, respectively. By doing this, the study seeks to determine the factors which have hindered the democratization and development process which affects these two separatist movements. It also hopes to shed light to the commonalities and differences of experiences of separatist movements found in developed (i.e., Spain) and developing (i.e., the Philippines) societies. In the process, the study hopes to contribute to the growing but still sparse literature of comparing separatist movements in developed and developing societies.

The first part of the paper will therefore look into the factors which brought about the rise of Basque and Moro nationalism, and the second part will examine the consequent emergence of the Basque separatist movement, the *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (Euskadi and Freedom, or ETA), and the Moro separatist movement, i.e., the MNLF. It will compare these two movements in terms of the political, economic, and socio-cultural factors which brought these about. It will also examine the solutions offered by their respective governments in resolving the ethnic conflict as well as the extent to which these have been successful.

## **THE EMERGENCE OF BASQUE AND MORO NATIONALISM**

The Basque region of Spain contains 2 million inhabitants, many of whom are not Basque (see Figure 1). It contains four of the claimed Basque provinces: Navarra (a separate region, not part of Spain's autonomous Basque region), Álava, Biscay, and Guipúzcoa. The main towns of the claimed region are San Sebastián, Pamplona, and Bilbao. In France, the three provinces, which do not literally exist as a geographic entity, are Labourd, Lower Navarre, and Soule. This is roughly the territory covered by the French department of Pyrenees-Atlantiques.<sup>3</sup>

As for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), this currently consists of the following: Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Sulu, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, and the cities of Marawi and Isabela (see

Figure 1. The Basque region in Spain  
(source: [http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/images/P1-AJ510\\_BASQUE\\_20071105184528.gif](http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/images/P1-AJ510_BASQUE_20071105184528.gif)).



Figure 2. The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao  
(source: <http://www.hawaii.edu/cps/armm.png>).



Figure 2). In 1981, the other provinces included in Muslim Mindanao were Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte, Lanao del Norte, Sultan Kudarat, and North Cotabato (Lomongo 1981).

## **THE POLITICAL ROOTS OF THE PROBLEM FOR THE BASQUES AND THE MOROS**

The Basques' conflict with Spain focuses on their "drive for nationhood" which is shared by several other regions against a state that historically has been centralist and anti-regionalist (Encarnacion 2004, 66). It is therefore not one of a "struggle for co-existence by a collection of disparate ethnic groups and regions" (Encarnacion 2004, 66). For the Basques, a major reason for this drive is their assertion of their identity which is firmly rooted in the ancient, "non-European" origins of the Basque people (Sullivan 1988, 3). The single most important fact, and symbol, of this ancient Basque identity is the Basque language, Euskara (Sullivan 1988, 11-13).<sup>4</sup>

For the Basques, the single most important symbol of their political identity was the *fueros* (local laws and privileges) which affirm an ancient political system, not a modern one. "This means the right and capacity to organize from within the community. Most important, as an ancient communal system of *local* self-rule, the *fueros* preceded any concept of "nation" (Edles 1999, 332). The *fueros* gave the Basques political rights, "together with a number of valuable economic and social privileges such as immunity from Spanish customs duties and exemption from military service outside their native province." (Hooper 1995, 391). This is one of the major reasons why Spain is considered as "the most decentralized large country in Europe after Germany and Belgium, but demands for greater autonomy especially by Catalonia and the Basque Country continue to be a source of political tension" (Economist Intelligence Unit 2007).

For the Basques, the root of the problem emerged with the attempt of the Spanish government to integrate the region with the rest of society.

This was initially seen in the Carlist Wars<sup>5</sup> which sought to get rid of the *fueros*, exacerbating further class divisions and in the process, heightening the sense of nationalism. "Inside the Basque Country, the Carlist wars were civil wars that pitted urban, anti-*fuero* liberals against nobles of the countryside, peasantry, and clergy – the latter of whom were united under the slogan 'God and the *fueros*'" (Heiberg 1982, 364). Carlism, thus, in general had many supporters in the region and could count on the unconditional support of most of the very influential clergy. This may also be referred to as the confrontation between the traditionalist camp and liberal cities (Basta Ya! Citizens' Initiative 2005). The defeat of Carlism was linked to the defeat of the charter law system associated with the Spanish government taking advantage of "the situation to wipe away the remnants of the charter law system after the so-called 1839 'Charter Law arrangement' (*Arreglo de los Fueros*)" (Basta Ya! Citizens' Initiative 2005, 53; Loyer 1998). What the incident also revealed was the shortcomings of Spanish liberalism, with the central government blaming the impossibility of the coexistence of the *Fueros* and the Constitution, fueling the Carlist rebellion leading to hundreds of thousands of casualties from the war (Basta Ya! Citizens' Initiative 2005).

The Carlist wars also highlighted the class divide which was further reinforced with the Basque urban middle class discovering the advantages of conserving a certain degree of self-rule, e.g., to maintain fiscal autonomy and the ability of provincial governments to make public investments. "In effect, these powers came to be crucial in launching the first wave of industrialization during the interim of 1839-1871 period between both Carlist Wars." (Basta Ya! 2005, 54). The defence of the integrity of the charter law system, therefore, "seemed to lie with the rural population and the clergy." The Carlismists were late to discover the tremendous mobilizing role that the defence of the *Fueros* could play in the rural areas but they ended up making it a part of their cause as evidenced by their popular slogan "God, Country,

King, and *Fueros*" (Basta Ya! Citizens' Initiative 2005, 54). The religious fundamentalists also defended the charter law system as a stronghold of faith that stood against atheism and liberal ideas by affirming that its main function was to isolate the Basques from the rest of the world (Basta Ya! Citizens' Initiative 2005). What was ironic with this was the abolition of the *fueros* resulted into the punishment of all the Basques even those who supported Carlism. Moreover, the urban lower middle class, who tended to support the central government were most affected economically. This class, however, would spearhead the Basque region's rapid industrialization (Hooper 1995).

*The colonial experience in Muslim Mindanao.* Like the Basques, the Moros also problematized their integration into the rest of the Philippines. This is because before the Spanish came, they were ruled by their respective sultanates, which were connected with the rest of the sultanates in the Islamic world extending from Northwest Africa to Southeast Asia. This made it a part of the *dar ul-Islam* (Majul 1999, 5). Moreover, their political institutions were greatly influenced by the political institutions of older Islamic countries and were considered as the relatively most centralized (Majul 1999, 377). The strength of the sultanates are found in their relations with neighboring Muslim principalities where they are linked because of marriage. This creates alliances of convenience in times of war with outsiders (Majul 1999, 406). The emergence of Muslim Mindanao was therefore brought about externally, unlike in the rise of the Basques which was an internal development. The coming and expansion of Islam to Mindanao, i.e., Maguindanao, the Zamboanga and Maranao areas, is attributed to Sharif Muhammad Kabunsuwan who perpetuated this through a system of political alliances and plural marriages when he established himself as a ruler on a principality (Majul 1999, 70). "The Sulus and the Maguindanao, as well as Maranao, always took it for granted that their Islamization was a connected series of events that was in some manner intimately related to the Islamization of neighboring Malaysian

principalities" (Majul 1999, 79). Before the establishment of the sultanates, however, there were in existence *datos* or local chiefs in Sulu, but the Sultan took over the obligation of taking care of the people who were unable to take care of themselves and who were in the land which was placed under his name. This was all done in accordance to the Islamic tradition (Majul 1999, 382).

A major difference with regard to the experience of the Basques and the Moros is the latter's colonial experience. When the Spanish came, the Sulu and Maguindanao sultanates fought Spanish colonialism. Some of the minor sultanates in Maranao, however, were eliminated by the Spanish. In July 22, 1878, however, "Sulu Sultan Jama ul-Azam and the Spanish government, represented by Col. Carlos Martinez, signed a peace treaty which was ratified a month later by the Manila Government... This transformed Sulu to a protectorate of Spain while retaining a great deal of autonomy for the Sulus in both matters of internal administration and commercial activities" (Rodil 2000, 138). Further, "the Sulu Sultan bound his subjects in the Sulu archipelago and dependencies to obey the Spanish King" (Majul 1973, 299). All these, however did not change the fact that during the last years of Spanish rule in the Philippines, the sultanates continued to observe the fundamental tenets of Islam (Majul 1999, 115). This has guided their struggle against Spain, i.e., the Islamic consciousness of the Muslims in the Philippines, particularly in the manner in which they saw how Spain had converted the other inhabitants of the country into Christianity (Majul 1999, 406). Thus, unlike the Basque experience, there was a struggle of two religions in the case of the Moros viewing Christianity as the enemy of Islam. The status quo in the Moro region further changed, under American colonial rule. The American colonizers decided that the Muslims were considered as Filipinos sharing the same territories (Rodil 2000). During this period of 25 years, "state-Muslim interaction in Mindanao was premised on keeping Muslims distinct but at the same time formally integrated into

Philippine territory" (Abinales 2000, 4). For the Americans, this meant the presence of the US Army, which ruled the Moro Province from 1900-1913 under American governorship.

*Integrating the Muslim elites.* Another difference between the Basque and Moro experiences was the political hierarchical structure which the Moros had under a sultanate which the Basques did not have. The Basque socio-economic structure was represented by class divisions, for example, the division between the urban middle class and the rural class, while Muslim society was characterized by a feudal structure, i.e., the sultanate. Thus, the focus of the American colonizers was to deal with the Muslim elites/royalty, i.e., the *datus* who the Americans treated as tribal ward leaders to collect taxes and police their domains rather than integrating them into the colonial state machinery (Abinales 2000). The Americans also made use of public education to "civilize the Moros" and to "conciliate the *datus*" and the "ordinary Moros". The Moros were also pacified by the colonizers through the building of infrastructures, e.g., roads, telegraphy lines, military outposts which facilitated "brutal military campaigns against the resistant Moros" (Abinales 2000, 19-21). Such was not the experience of the Basques, as the central government did not only have to contend with them but also with the other regions asserting their autonomy/independence. In 1914, changes were brought about by the civilian government with the Moro Province being renamed Department of Mindanao and Sulu. "Filipinization of administrative posts began, with Christian Filipinos appointed governor in four of seven provinces. By 1920, Filipinos occupied all governorships. Some Moros were appointed but only at the provincial board level. Legislative power over the region was also transferred to the Philippine legislature" (Ferrer 2006, 464).

In general, therefore, Muslim Mindanao came "under direct Filipino control and the Muslim elites who accepted Filipino hegemony were subjected to the art of patronage politics" (Abinales 2000, 18). The *datus* no longer aspired for a role in the greater Southeast Asian

region but for positions within the colonial state. Filipino politicians based in Manila also saw Muslim voting blocs as potentials for their political parties. What was clear though was that that the communities of southern Mindanao had been introduced to a colonial politics that was clearly dominated by Filipinos (Abinales 2000, 36). There was, for example, no national representation of the Muslims, because only a few were nationally elected and there were only four Moros who sat at the drafting of the 1935 Philippine Constitutional Convention (Ferrer 2006). The reality, thus, for the *datus* was that their future lay in defining their prospects as “mere provincial politicians in an arena defined by Filipino rule” (Abinales 2000, 54). This was certainly different from the experience of the Basque, whose politics was not dominated by outsiders, i.e, the powers in central government. Moreover, although the Basque upper class associated closely with the Spanish oligarchy, the rest of society asserted its independence from this. This was unlike the Moros, where the *datus* chose to cooperate/collaborate with the colonizer and, later on, the ruling Filipino elite. The other Moros could not also assert themselves as they lacked not only the political but also the economic resources to do so, unlike their Basque middle class counterparts.

### **THE ECONOMIC ROOTS OF DISCONTENT**

Basque and Moro nationalism were also sparked by economic discontent but for differing reasons. Unlike the Moros, the Basques were not the victims of economic marginalization, but rather of cultural and political marginality (Encarnacion 2004). The Basque country, together with Catalonia, is the historic seat of Spanish industrial and financial capital. “Both regions enjoy the highest standards of living in Europe” (Encarnacion 2004, 66). This, however, has not always been the case. It was originally a poor country “but the Basques are purported to be the only European peoples not to have suffered under the feudal system” (Caestresana Waid 1987, 15). The Basques owned their land or worked for a wage or share (not as serfs). When Basques

fought, they did so freely, for a share of the spoils, rather than as mercenary soldiers. Basques paid only those taxes which they imposed on themselves (Edles 1999).

The imperial expansion started by Spain in 1492, however, “opened up great possibilities to those Basques who were left out of the family inheritance to make their fortune by serving the crown whether it was in European wars or in conquest of the Americas” (Basta Ya! Citizens’ Initiative 2005, 32). This changed in mid-1800s, whereby the Basque Country, together with Catalonia, became Spain’s most industrialized areas (Edles 1999). It became an important producer of steel, the bulk of Spain’s coal coming from the mines of the Asturias. This made it an exception in the country which was largely agricultural with only a limited industrial revolution (Johnston 1967). An effect of this was the surge of Spanish immigration<sup>6</sup> (Edles 1999). The recruitment of immigrants from other regions was one factor which contributed to the integration of the Basques to Castilian society (Hooper 1995).

This, however, did not prevent the rise of Basque nationalism, which is viewed as an expression of “the frustration of pre-industrial Basque elites with changes brought about by industrialization and centralization... In both Basque country and Catalonia, ethnic nationalist movements emerged in the late nineteenth centuries, in conjunction with both industrialization and immigration” (Edles 1999, 315). Furthermore, a factor which hindered the high level of development in the Basque country as a facilitator for its integration into Castilian society was the unevenness with the way the benefits of development were felt by the classes in Basque society. This was seen between 1887 and 1902, with the emergence of Basque upper-middle-class owners of the factories and of banking and insurance concerns who aligned themselves with the oligarchy (Edles 1999). On the other side, one had the lower-middle-class bosses of workshops who came to regard industrialization as a gain in terms that they became rich,

but also as a loss because of “the influx of hundreds of thousands of workers from other parts of Spain.” Referred to as *maketos*, they were viewed by the latter as a threat to the survival of the Basque society in its traditional form. Such unevenness in the integration, therefore, did not facilitate a holistic absorption of the Basques in Castilian society (Hooper 1995).

*Immigration and ethnic conflict.* Like the Basques, the Moros also looked at immigrants adversely as they were overwhelmed by their increasing numbers. In 1903, for example, Muslims made up 76 percent of the Mindanao population. By 1960, however, they constituted only 23 percent. Currently, “Muslims remain the majority in only five of twenty-three provinces of present-day Mindanao, namely, Sulu, Basilan, Tawi-tawi, Maguindanao, and Lanao del Sur, and in only one city, Marawi” (Ferrer 2006, 463). Unlike the Basques, however, who economically benefited from the entry of the immigrants, this was not the same for the Muslims. This could be traced to the colonial policy which witnessed the minoritization of the Muslims in their homeland. The 1902 Land Registration Act, for example, required the acquisition of a Torrens Title as proof of ownership of land, which the Muslims did not have. This was followed by the 1905 Public Land Act, which declared all unregistered land effectively public land. The Muslims, therefore, could not assert their prior occupancy as sufficient basis to claim ownership. “Although some *datus* were able to title lands under their name, many indigenous Muslims who traditionally enjoyed usufruct rights failed to acquire land titles due to disagreement or lack of appreciation for an understanding of new laws” (Ferrer 2006, 464). Such an experience was not in the case of the Basques, who were not evicted from their lands and even region, as in the case of the Moros.

Another difference between the Basque and Moro experience was that the former spearheaded its own economic development, which was led by the middle class, unlike in the case of the Moro Province, which was subjected by the economic policy of the colonial ruler and

later on, by the central government. A problem, however, was that the Philippine state was weak and could not promote a coordinated economic development through the Mindanao Development Authority. Moreover, projects could only be undertaken with the support of local politicians (Abinales 2000). This was, therefore, unlike the Basque experience where the region developed on its own with a minimum of intervention from the central government. Moreover, in the development in Mindanao, the beneficiaries were mainly the Muslim elites and the non-Muslims, unlike in the Basque region where the urban middle class were at the forefront of the region's development.

### **PROBLEMATIZING IDENTITY AND NATIONALISM**

A consequence of this political and economic discontent among the Moros was the rise of Islamic nationalism, particularly with the attempt of the United States to put the Moros under its tutelage. For the Muslims in Southern Philippines, they were confronting "the challenge of modernity and nation-states" (Wadi 2006, 90), something similar to what the Basques were facing after the Carlist wars. With the dissolution of Moro sovereignty and the transfer of political control to the government during the American colonial period, what emerged was a Moro "political consciousness and reformulation of their historic identity." The Moro strategy was to launch a "protracted war of secession and self-determination" (Wadi 2006, 90). The Moros, however, were not monolithic in this aspect as some of the *datus*, who opted to participate in the politics of Filipinization, "sought to declare themselves the moderate alternative to the more rebellious types and volunteered to mediate between suspicious Moros and Filipinos" (Abinales 2000, 56). One, therefore, also witnessed the transformation of some Muslim *datus* into provincial politicians who refused to regard themselves as Filipinos. Even the younger *datus* embraced the political rules of the game, including the new requirements for being representatives of the "Moro people." One way of appreciating these changes among the younger *datus* is to look at their educational and

political “pilgrimages” (Abinales 2000, 60). A perception was that Muslims were willing to participate in the Filipinization process for as long as they could retain their identity of “Muslim” along side that of “Filipino”. Islam was also perceived to be a tool “to get more concessions through participation in the center’s politics” (Abinales 2000, 62).

A problem, however, was with their limited formal education, the Muslim participation was restricted to only a few Moro elites (Abinales 2000). Thus, the Moro elites could “not use their positions as stepping stones for advancement through the state hierarchy”. Their inability to do so also signified that their political import was negligible (Abinales 2000, 67). Because of the division among the *datus* on whether to accept or resist the new order, as well as being weakened by army occupation, “most of the leaders made peace with the new order and chose to integrate”. Thus the term “Muslim-Filipino” appeared, articulated consciously by those *datus* who had come to accept as their political arena the agencies, institutions, and offices opened to them by the Filipino authorities. In the 1960s, state centralization further affected the manner in which regional and provincial strong men went about their politics (Abinales 2000).

Such a situation, however, did not preclude the emergence of a secessionist faction in the Muslim community as this was aggravated by the nature of the Mindanao postwar state, which was “riddled with bureaucratic corruption and inefficiency, dependent on the United States, dominated by oligarchic forces that exploited state resources for patrimonial ends, and faced by repeated outbursts of resistance from below” (Abinales 2000, 115). As early as the 1960s, Philippine Muslim nationalists, “appropriated the term Moro and transformed it into a positive identity for a set of people who resisted colonial subjugation and maintained their Islamic religion but have been forcibly annexed into the colonial territory and oppressed and marginalized under the Philippine state” (Ferrer 2006, 460). The major

resistance groups which emerged also used these terms, i.e., the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and its army (the Bangsa Moro Army), as well as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). "Moro spokespersons have also used the term Bangsamoro to encompass all those within the claimed homeland, regardless of religion and ethnicity" (Ferrer 2006, 460). Debates have also ensued with regard to the compatibility of nationalism with Islam, with some claiming that it is not, because Islam is universal while nationalism is parochial. There are also those who believe that "the Muslim world does not emanate from Islam but from other social, ideological, and ethnic constructs" (Wadi 2006, 93).

For MNLF leader Nur Misuari, the Moro nationalist history explains the Moro struggle and their quest for a separate national identity and political independence as advanced by Moro movements (Wadi 2006). Such rhetoric could be associated with liberation movements "which use concepts like self-determination, decolonization, usurped sovereignty, and annexed or occupied territory". Islam is used here in an attempt to project it as playing a "significant role by providing them a sense of belonging and ideology" (Wadi 2006, 94). Thus, the role of religion, i.e., Islam, for Muslim liberation movements plays a crucial part in the Moro separatist movement, unlike in the Basque separatist movement.<sup>7</sup> Although Basque nationalism was also spearheaded by the religious sector of society in its attempt to shield the fading away of Basque traditions with the entry of the immigrants, the Basques did not have to contend with other identities, aside from the Castilian identity, being contested in their region. This was unlike the Moros, who had to contest a dominant national identity (Filipino) and other evolving identities among non-Muslims and other settlers in Mindanao (Wadi 2006). One identity formation is Mindanaoan, which "refers to Christians, Muslims, and the indigenous peoples, which is conceived as a label which attempts to go beyond religious terms like Muslims and

Christians which are considered divisive and inappropriate for political and national identification among the people of Mindanao" (Wadi 2006, 10).

In the case of the Basques, their identity and nationalism were couched within the context of the ideas of Sabino Arana Goiri (1865-1906), a son of a Carlist supporter. His ideas provided the fuel for the emergence of Basque nationalism in the late 1890s. He saw the division between the liberal cities and the traditionalist Basque countryside, and advocated for the return to the Basque country "to a state of pre-industrial innocence in which society would be guided by the dictates of religion and the choice between socialism and capitalism would be irrelevant. At the core of his doctrine was an undisguised hatred for the immigrants..." (Hooper 1995, 396). He coined a new term "Euskadi" to denote a Basque nation comprising territories in which history had taken rather different courses (Loyer 1998). Arana's reactionary ideology may have also caught on with the Basques, as Spanish socialism did not really capture them because mining and manufacturing flourished in their region and what persisted were Catholic and separatist sentiments. As for Spanish socialism, this was built upon "the shifting sands of a backward, almost pre-capitalistic economic modernism" (Puzzo 1962, 20-21).

Basque nationalism could not be curtailed with the Spanish government's attempt at federalism. This was because during its First Republic 1873-74, the attempt to federalize Spain never materialized, "since it met with strong resistance from a variety of societal forces and eventually fell victim to a military rebellion" (Encarnacion 2004, 63-64). A second attempt was made in the Second Republic 1931-1939, and the Republican leaders granted home rule to the so-called historic regions of Catalonia and the Basque country. This second effort at federalization, however, was even more catastrophic than the first as it "ushered in a civil war that claimed the lives of approximately 1 million people. The resultant outcome of this conflict was the Franco

dictatorship, installed in 1939 and kept virtually intact until 1977.” (Encarnacion 2004, 64)

The solution in the Philippines was the opposite. That is, during the post-colonial period, the government’s policy was to forcibly integrate the Moros into the Philippine nation-state. The deteriorating Muslim-Christian relations took on a critical turn in 1968 “when the media exposed a massacre of Muslim military trainees in a secret training camp just outside Manila” (Abinales 2000, 166). This was referred to as the Jabidah Massacre, where Tausug trainees who were recruited by the army were summarily killed. This heightened Muslim resentment against the central government, leading to violent land disputes and other social tensions. What emerged was the formation of vigilante groups in the 1970s serving as private armies of powerful or rich Christian/Muslim landowners (Ferrer 2006). This also resulted in sentiments among younger Muslims in favor of separating Mindanao from the Philippines to preserve Muslim identity and put to a stop to the “oppression of Muslims”. Muslim politicians deplored the massacre but characteristically restrained popular hostility against the government (Abinales 2000). The Jabidah massacre also gave impetus to young Muslim radicals who were initially confined to the universities to search for ways to reach the Muslim masses to give substance to their revolution. What resulted was the spread of Muslim sentiment against the government. This was further fueled with the opportunism of Muslim politicians which pushed the radicals to provide an alternative leadership. “Radical idealism, however, was tempered by the reality that to reach the masses, they still had to go through the local politicians they despised” (Abinales 2000, 167).

Nevertheless, this did not prevent the “emergence of a new form of Moro nationalism whose objective is not only a demand for separate *bangsa* but an assertion for a separate and independent government and homeland animated by political ideals of Islam and *shar’iah* (Islamic law)” (Wadi 2006, 90). If the Basques had Sabino Arana Goiri to

provide the rationale for the Basque separatist movement, the Moros had Nur Misuari who spearheaded the MNLF. Misuari was formerly part of the Muslim Independence Movement (MIM) which was formed on May 1, 1968. In 1971, he took over the leadership, with the Movement assuming a more revolutionary stance soliciting foreign support to carry out its secessionist objective (Lomongo 1981). Unlike the Basque Arana who advocated a reactionary and conservative ideology, Misuari prior to his taking over the leadership of the MNLF was a student of Marxist-Leninist thought. He was a member the *Kabataan Makabayan* (Nationalist Students) which was perceived as the student organization of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). Misuari was an admirer of Nguyen Giap (Lomongo 1981).

### **Dictatorships and Separatism**

Under Franco, the resentment towards the central state was not helped much when the Franco dictatorship stripped the Basque together with Catalonia and other regions of their autonomy. This was part of what is referred to as his “comprehensive and oppressive policy of cultural homogeneity”. Its aim was “to erase the distinct linguistic heritage of many regions. Franco’s attempt to homogenize Spain included a ban on the use of Catalan and Euskera in schools, government offices, and other public places.” It even made use of intrusive forms such as “prohibiting parents the freedom to give their children Catalan and Basques names” (Encarnacion 2004, 64). Franco’s rationale for this is that “Spain’s multiple nationalities were the root of the nation’s proclivity toward anarchy and separatist violence”. For him, this made the nation not suited for democracy but for authoritarian rule (Encarnacion 2004, 64-65).

The repression of the Basques brought about the rise of the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (or ETA) which is the radical movement of Basque separatists. The ETA, whose language acronym is Basque Homeland and Freedom, “was organized in 1959 and it chose July 13, the Saint’s

Day of Ignatius Loyola, perhaps the most well-known Basque and the founder of the Jesuit order, as its founding date" (Shepard 2002, 57). This was the time it broke away from the much larger Basque Nationalist Party (Partido Nacionalista Vasco - PNV) where it constituted the faction known as the ETA-Military (ETA-M) (OnWar.com 2000). It first took up arms in 1968 to fight for the independence of northern Spain's three-province Basque region. This included the neighbouring province of Navarra and bits of south western France in their proposed state (Jones 1999). This also signified the split between the radical and conservative members of the PNV which was looked upon as "a hybrid and fusion of Arana's nationalist fervor and *fuero* liberalism (Heiberg 1982, 370). "Despite its external image as a 'terrorist' organization, ETA enjoyed significant popular support in the Basque provinces. ETA is viewed in terms of 'patriotic action' (*ekintza*) rather than of (irrational) terrorism" (Edles 1999, 334).

"Although ETA was founded by university students and professional people, the active end of the organization rapidly came to be dominated by Basques from the *caserios* which existed side-by-side with small factories or workshop. This reunited the struggle of the peasant farmers who fought for Carlism" (Hooper 1995, 398-399). "For all its revolutionary rhetoric, ETA... has always had a strong streak of conventional Roman Catholic morality. From time to time it has mounted campaigns against what it regards as decadent activities... for example, planting bombs in bars and discos or in cinemas showing sex films" (Hooper 1995, 399).

Before the death of Franco in 1975, "the Basque pressure for an independent nation became more serious under the ETA's prodding". The target of ETA were mainly those "who had been identified with the Franco regime and the repression of the Basque (Shepard 2002, 57). ETA's most serious act committed was the killing of Franco's apparent successor Luis Carrero Blanco in March 1973. ETA's killing of Blanco could be best understood as "part of ETA's action-repression

spiral theory whereby attacks on the Francoist state would lead to a blatant, universal repression. An objective to bring about greater popular anger “which would spiral into mass rebellion and eventually civil war and Basque secession” (Clark 1990, 8-9). This, however, did not seem to be the case as the Basque nationalists (including some of ETA’s own leaders) began to doubt the potential for mass revolution (Edles 1999).

Unlike the ETA, the MNLF under Misuari emerged even before Marcos’ imposition of martial law, but like ETA was further strengthened because of the repression of the Moros during the period of dictatorship. The MNLF consisted of three factions, following three major tribal lines – the Maranaos under Abdul Khayer Alonto, the Maguindanaos under Hashim Salamat and the Tausogs/Samal/Yakan group under Nur Misuari (Lomongo 1981). All of them were united against the attempt of the Marcos authoritarian regime to eliminate them. Unlike Franco, however, Marcos cultivated ties with Moro leaders, leading to the emergence of new Moro political dynasties like the Dimaporos, Lucmans, and Alontos. This was his way of making sure that he had allies in Muslim Mindanao who he could rely on. This was unlike Franco who did not cultivate any Basque elites. The probable reason for this is that Moro society was hierarchical, i.e., there are sultanates who had their respective followers and who the national leadership could divide and rule, unlike in the Basques. Thus, what existed in Muslim Mindanao were feudal relations, which did not exist in the Basque region as it was a highly industrialized capitalist region. Moreover, as indicated by the three factions in MNLF, tribal lines also separated the Moros from each other with their respective sultanates. These differences were exploited by the dictatorship to sow differences among them. This was, therefore, unlike the Basques who were not separated from one another by a specific cultural identity.

Another difference in their experience under a dictatorship was that the Basques could identify with the struggles of the other Spanish

citizens in two ways. One was the struggle to overthrow the dictatorship, and the other to assert its independence against a centralist state which was shared by other regions in Spain like Catalonia. In the case of the MNLF, the struggle against the Marcos dictatorship was something millions of Filipinos could identify because of the repression and economic hardship. This was particularly shared by the MNLF with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP); its military arm, the New People's Army; and its united front, the National Democratic Front (NDF), or the CPP-NPA-NDF. The CPP sympathized with the cause of the Moro insurgency, but it could not agree with the MNLF for the creation of a separate independent Moro nation, as they argued that there are also Filipinos/Christians within that Bangsamoro which the MNLF was fighting for. Although they did not articulate this openly, the CPP Central Committee was of this view.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the Moros were basically alone in fighting for an independent nation, something which was not shared by the rest of the Filipinos.

A third difference is that the plight of the Basques was dealt with internally. That is, there was no external force to help them with the exception of France, which provided for refuge for Basque exiles. But this was not in terms of military assistance. Thus, the Basque problem was resolved internally and was very much in the agenda after the civil war when the Franco dictatorship was overthrown. This was not the case of the Moro insurgency where external actors played an important role in attempting to resolve the Moro problem. This came about in the early 1970s when communal violence in Mindanao resulted into more than 100,000 refugees and the deaths of hundreds of Muslims and Christians, particularly in Lanao and Cotabato. This drew the international attention of Muslim states, particularly members of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) leading to the provision of military training and logistical support to the Moro rebels from Muslim countries, particularly Libya (Ferrer 2006). It also helped that Misuari was actively soliciting military and financial support from them, which

he received. The support given to the Moro separatist movement by the OIC was reinforced with the imposition of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) of an oil embargo in October 17, 1973 on the countries that were supporting Israel – with one them being the Philippines (Rodil 2000).

Thus, unlike the Basque experience which remained generally an internal affair between the Basques and the Spanish government, this was not the case with the Moro insurgency, as Marcos was forced to forge diplomatic relations with members of the OIC, particularly the Arab countries, not only to lift the oil embargo but also to stop their military and financial assistance to the MNLF. Diplomatic relations, therefore, were established with key Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia in 1975 and Libya in 1976. Saudi Arabia sponsored the Jeddah Peace Talks, the first peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the MNLF in January 1975, while Libya would play a key role in forging the Tripoli Agreement which laid down the structures of autonomy for Muslim Mindanao (Lomongo 1981). This political solution to the ethnic conflict was complemented with other political remedies such as amnesty to rebel returnees as well as economic packages in the Muslim region, e.g., “the declaration of ancestral lands occupied and cultivated by the National Cultural Communities as alienable and disposable under Presidential Decree 264” (de Guzman 1980, 55). Cultural solutions to the conflict were also resorted to, such as the “authorization of the use of Arabic as medium of instruction in schools and/or areas in Southern Philippines” (de Guzman 1980, 55).

Despite all these attempts, however, the Tripoli Agreement during the martial law period was rendered a failure because of the “reversion of the original demand of the MNLF for the creation of an independent Muslim state in Southwestern Philippines” (de Guzman 1980, 58). Despite this, however, President Marcos on July 25, 1979 issued Presidential Decree 1618 creating the autonomous regions (*Sangguniang Pampook and Lupong Tagapagpaganap ng Pook*) of Region IX (Western

Mindanao, consisting of the provinces of Zamboanga del Norte and Zamboanga del Sur and the cities of Dipolog, Dapitan, Pagadian, and Zamboanga) and Region XII (Central Mindanao, consisting of the provinces of North Cotabato, South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, and Saranggani). The OIC was not happy with the Philippine government's implementation of the Tripoli Agreement, prompting it to temporarily cut off its oil supply to the Philippines (Campado 1996, 147).

There are pros and cons, therefore, to the presence of an external player in resolving the Moro insurgency. On the one hand, without them, the Marcos dictatorship would have completely obliterated the Moro insurgency. But on the other hand, the MNLF would have been forced to ally with the CPP-NPA-NDF to fight the Marcos dictatorship. In the 1970s, both the CPP-NPA-NDF and the MNLF became very strong forces to contend with in Mindanao and if combined, some believe that they could have ousted the Marcos dictatorship. What happened, however, was that although the CPP-NPA-NDF and the MNLF both agreed to the need to overthrow the dictatorship, they disagreed with regard to the establishment of a Bangsamoro homeland. Because of this, they both carried out their military warfare against the Philippine government in separate territories in Mindanao. That is, the MNLF in the Moro areas, while the CPP-NPA-NDF in the non-Moro areas. With the establishment of diplomatic ties with the Arab countries, however, Jose Ma. Sison,<sup>9</sup> the founder of the CPP, cautioned Misuari that this would strengthen the Marcos dictatorship as this will lessen the armed insurgency against the military particularly in the Moro areas. Furthermore, the military arms which were used against the MNLF would also now be used against the CPP (Sison 1992). And indeed, the establishment of peace talks weakened the military arm of the MNLF, as military assistance was either minimized or stopped as the solution was now political rather than military. In a sense, they became "hostage" to the talks between the Philippine government and the OIC governments. This was not the case with the

Basques who themselves were the ones directly dealing with the Franco government through the armed struggle. Thus, they could claim their own personal victory with the overthrow of the Franco dictatorship and make their demands accordingly, which was not the case with the MNLF.

## CONCLUSION

The experiences of both the Basque and Moro nationalist movements bring to light similarities and differences within the context of their respective societies. For the Basques, what brought about the rise of their nationalism was not economic marginalization like in the case of the Moros, but cultural and political marginality. The Basque country is Spain's most industrialized area, and their nationalism grew out of the immigration which flocked to the Basque region. The fear of the Basques was that they were going to lose their traditional forms. It also did not help that the nature of the Spanish state was that it was historically centralist and anti-regionalist. As for the Muslims in Mindanao, they were subjected to American colonial policy which although sought to separate them from the influence of Filipino elites, also saw the need to "civilize" them in the manner the Americans saw proper. Previously, the Moros had their sultanates as their political unit which was recognized by the Spanish colonial government. The Moros, therefore were not able to keep their political structure when the Americans came. This was unlike the Basques, who were able to keep the symbol of their political identity, i.e., the *fueros*. As for the Moros, aside from marginalizing the sultanates, the Americans and later on the Filipino ruling elites imposed the Philippine national political system on them where they were minimally represented. The Moros were basically left alone in their plight as compared to the Basques, who benefited from the assertion of identities by the other Spanish regions. This pushed Spain to become the most decentralized large country in Europe, although there continues to be a demand for

more autonomy. As for the Moros, aside from the imposition of a national political system on them, there were also no other institutions by which they could express their identities such as through schools, i.e., *madrasahs*. This was also aggravated by a situation whereby the Moros lost their source of livelihood as they were driven off their lands by new laws and the influx of immigrants.

National political events also aggravated both the situation of the Basques and the Moros. For the Basques, this was the Carlist Wars which sought to get rid of the *fueros*. Although this exacerbated class divisions in the Basque society, a result was the heightening of the sense of nationalism among the lower middle-class, who were the strong supporters of the *fueros*. This was the same class which spearheaded Basque industrialization and in the process translated their economic power to political power and fought to maintain their local political system. They advocated the ideas of Sabino Arana Goiri to bring the Basque country to its pre-industrial innocence and highlighted the hatred for immigrants. For the Moros, it was American colonialism which heightened their consciousness as they were deprived of their land, their political system, and their identity. The issue they raised was both nationalism, i.e., anti-imperialism, and Islam, as religion was their unifying factor. As the Americans left, they were replaced by a post-colonial government which imposed the Filipino identity on the Moros. Unlike the Basques where the middle class played an important role in the region's economic development and political assertion of the *fueros*, there were Muslim elites who collaborated as well as cooperated with American and Filipino rulers in their attempt to be part of national politics or to sustain their political hold in their respective provinces. This, however, did not prevent the emergence of a separatist movement i.e., the MNLF, as was also the experience of the ETA, which also made use of armed struggle. The MNLF was led by Misuari who was a student of Marxist-Leninism, an ideology different from that carried by the Basque ideologue, Sabino Arana

Goiri, who was a conservative and even reactionary. Both, however, were concerned with the perpetuation of their identities, although the Moros were in a much more complex situation as their identity had to contest with other identities in Mindanao, i.e., the Mindanaoan identity, which included Filipinos, Christians, and *lumads* or indigenous peoples who were there even before the Muslims. This was not the case of the Basques, whose identity dominates the Basque region. Another difference with the Basque and Moro experiences is that in Spain, because there were other regions asserting their autonomy, the Spanish government was forced to look into the possibilities of federalism. The first two attempts towards this failed, however, as the first one was met with strong resistance, i.e., rebellion, while the second one ended in a civil war resulting in the Franco dictatorship. This was unlike the Moro experience, which was not replicated in other parts of the Philippines.

The periods of dictatorship in Spain and in the Philippines witnessed the heightening of Basque and Moro nationalism, which further strengthened their separatist movements, i.e., the ETA and the MNLF. Both the ETA and the MNLF also had external support, from France and the OIC respectively. In the case of the ETA, however, this was in the form of France providing a refuge from persecution by the Franco regime, while for the MNLF, Islamic countries were known to provide military assistance and training to the Moro rebels. The OIC also threatened to cut oil to the Philippine government because of the suppression of their Muslim brothers. The ETA, however, remained strong even until the end of the Franco dictatorship as it was not able to suppress this. This was unlike the MNLF which was greatly weakened with the establishment of Philippine diplomatic relations with Islamic countries believed to be supporting the MNLF. The solutions which the Philippine government and the Libyan government also came out with through the Tripoli Agreement also came out as ineffective.

The Basque and Moro experiences, therefore, reveal that the Basques were able to maintain a great deal of political autonomy as they were able to develop economically with minimal support from the central government. They found alliances with other regions in Spain that also had the same experience. They were able to translate economic power to political power, leading to the establishment of a formidable separatist movement, i.e., the ETA. In the case of the Moro experience, the sultanate was too weak to ward off the American colonial power, and its leaders, i.e., the *datus* chose to ally with the colonizers and later on with the Filipino ruling elite which continued to marginalize its power as the *datus* were not able to make headway with national politics. This could also be a consequence of the inability of the *datus* to push for economic development in the Moro province which could have given them economic leverage vis-à-vis the Filipino ruling elite. The irony was that they were even deprived of their own landholdings. For the Basques, although their upper class closely associated itself with the Spanish oligarchy, the urban middle class chose not to and this was crucial, as this was the class which was the engine of the Basque region's industrialization which they translated into political power in their demand to keep the *fueros*. This would provide the foundation for their demand for further political autonomy or in the case of the ETA, independence.

## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> "The term 'Moro', derived from the word *Moors*, was first used by Portuguese adventurers to refer to Muslim populations in Asia. The term was adopted and used pejoratively by the Spaniards to refer to the Muslim population who, regardless of ethno-linguistic grouping, resisted colonization and conversion to Christianity" (Ferrer 2006, 460).

<sup>3</sup>Main towns in the French Basque area include Biarritz, Bayonne and St. Jean de Luzon on the coast. . . and a large section of the interior, stretching to St. Jean Pied de Port near the border. All told, the ETA claims that there are one million Basques on the Spanish side and two hundred thousand in France (Shepard 2002).

<sup>4</sup>Linguists, anthropologists, and historian concur that Euskara is non-Indo-European language, which suggests that the Basques were established in the Pyrenean homelands at least a millennium before the arrival of the Magyars in Eastern Europe (Shepard 2002).

<sup>5</sup>“The Carlist Wars arose from a dynastic dispute after the death of Fernando VII. The wars pitted liberal supporters of Ferdinand VII’s infant niece Isabel, who controlled the government in Madrid, against peasant supporters of Ferdinand’s brother Carlos (hence they became known as ‘Carlists’)” (Payne 1875, 41).

<sup>6</sup>Significantly, the term *immigration* rather than *migration* is used in Spain to refer to the movement of Spaniards (mostly from Andalusia, in southern Spain and Castile) to the Basque Country and Catalonia (Edles 1999, 343)

<sup>7</sup>The ethnicity framework countervails the nationalist perspective, including the Islamist discourse on Moro history and struggle. It views Moro nationalism through the prism of culture and ethnicity. Ethnicity viewed from the perspective of the state is thus the major position of the Philippine government and most Filipino scholars and analysts. On the contrary, ethnicity viewed from below is also referred to as ethno-nationalist history (Wadi 2006, 94-95).

<sup>8</sup>Interview with Ricardo Reyes, former member of the CPP Central Committee, 2005.

<sup>9</sup>Jose Ma. Sison and Nur Misuari knew each other quite well as they were both students at the University of the Philippines in the 1960s to 1970s. Misuari also used to be a member of the *Kabataan Makabayan*, the student arm of the CPP-NPA-NDF.

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