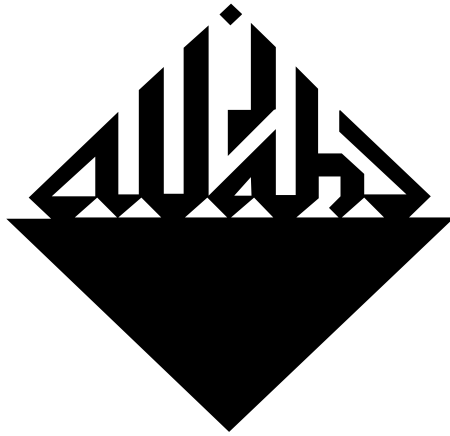


# STUDIA ISLAMIKA

INDONESIAN JOURNAL FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES

Volume 28, Number 1, 2021



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TRUSTING IN GOD:  
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“AKSI BELA ISLAM” MARCH IN JAKARTA (2016)

Rahmat Hidayatullah

# **STUDIA ISLAMIKA**



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Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies

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## The Predicaments of Muslims in the Philippines: An Exposition of Said Nursi's Hypothesis vis-à-vis Hizmet Movement Approach

**Abstract:** *The complexities of interdependent predicaments experienced by Muslims propel their pessimism on the prospect of reform in the Philippines. This pessimism has made the apathy of Muslims towards the corrupt system in the country. Consequently, this condition drives the weakening of altruism and increases apathetic social identifiers. These predicaments continue until the current day due to the lack of inclusive and effective remedies for improving the rudiments of people's living in contemporary society. By using analysis of documents and in-depth interviews, the writers examine the root causes of Muslim-Filipinos' interdependent predicaments according to Said Nursi's hypothesis vis-à-vis Hizmet Movement approach. The study finds that Said Nursi's "triumvirate quandaries hypothesis" resembles, to a greater extent, the interdependent predicaments of Muslims in the Philippines. Thus, inclusive remedies concurrent to the approaches of the Hizmet Movement that are known to have effectively addressed the triumvirate quandaries need to be contextualized in the Muslim-Filipino society within the context of the Philippines secular state.*

**Keywords:** Muslim-Filipinos, Interdependent Predicaments, Hizmet, Politics, Bangsamoro.



**Abstrak:** Kompleksitas kesulitan yang saling bergantung yang dialami oleh umat Islam di Filipina mendorong pesimisme mereka terhadap prospek reformasi. Pesimisme ini telah membuat umat Islam menjadi apatis terhadap sistem korup di negara tersebut. Kondisi ini mendorong memudarnya jiwa altruisme dan meningkatkan identifikasi sosial sebagai masyarakat apatis. Kesulitan ini berlanjut hingga sekarang karena kurangnya solusi yang inklusif dan efektif untuk memperbaiki dasar-dasar kehidupan masyarakat kontemporer di sana. Dengan menggunakan analisis dokumen dan wawancara mendalam, penulis mengkaji akar penyebab kesulitan-kesulitan Muslim-Filipina tersebut menurut hipotesis Said Nursi vis-à-vis dengan pendekatan Gerakan Hizmet. Studi ini menemukan bahwa Said Nursi hipotesis di dalam “triumvirate quandaries” sebagian besar selaras dengan kompleksitas kesulitan-kesulitan yang dihadapi Muslim di Filipina. Dengan demikian, solusi-solusi inklusif yang sejalan dengan pendekatan Gerakan Hizmet yang diketahui telah secara efektif mengatasi masalah “triumvirate quandaries” perlu dikontekstualisasikan dalam masyarakat Muslim-Filipina dalam konteks negara sekuler Filipina.

**Kata kunci:** Muslim Filipina, Kesulitan yang Saling Bergantung, Hizmet, Politik, Bangsamoro.

**ملخص:** لقد دفعت تعقيدات المصاعب المترابطة التي يعانيها المسلمون في الفلبين إلى الشعور بالتشاؤم حول آفاق الإصلاح، ماجعلهم لايبالون بالنظام الفاسد في البلاد، وبالتالي تؤدي إلى إضعاف الروح الغيرية وزيادة المعارف الاجتماعية اللامبالية. وتستمر هذه الصعوبات حتى اليوم بسبب عدم وجود حلول شاملة وفعالة لتحسين أسس المجتمع المعاصر هناك. وقد قام الكاتب، باستخدام تحليل الوثائق والمقابلات المتعمقة، بفحص الأسباب الجذرية لهذه الصعوبات بين المسلمين والفلبينيين وفقاً لفرضية سعيد نورسي في مقابل نهج حركة حزمت. وتوصلت الدراسة إلى أن فرضية المآزق الثلاثية لسعيد النورسي تتماشى، إلى حد كبير، مع الصعوبات المعقدة التي تواجه المسلمين في الفلبين. وبالتالي، فإن الحلول الشاملة المتماشية مع نهج حركة حزمت، والتي أثبتت فعاليتها في التغلب على مشكلة «المآزق الثلاثية»، ينبغي وضعها في سياق المجتمع المسلم الفلبيني في سياق دولة الفلبين العلمانية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** المسلم الفلبيني، المصاعب المترابطة، حزمت، السياسة، بانغسامورو.

The unprecedented interdependent predicaments of Muslims in the Philippines began as early as the 16th century when the Europeans first stepped on Philippine soil (Majul 1999). This continues up to this day due to an unequal system of relations, first between the colonizers and now with the central government (Marohomsalic 1995). As a result of the chain of colonization processes, people who were regarded as 'aboriginal' were forced to assert their rights and preserve their identity throughout history (Cayamodin 2013). The Muslims, as a result of continuous intrusions by external and internal powers on their communities, were forced to defend themselves and their socioeconomic and political institutions from waves of opponents by forming revolutionary movements to maintain the social order corresponding to their religio-cultural and political identities (Mastura 2012; Lingga 2004). As advanced by Majul (1974), this assertive attitude of Muslims was shaped by various forms of subjugation coming from both outsiders and foreign allies from within. Up to the post-colonial period, it brought various predicaments—particularly an ineffective education system, underdeveloped economy, and internal schism—from foreign invaders, all without a distinct inclusive approach and without sustainable remedies coming from internal and external stakeholders.

In recent years, the cyclical predicaments of the Muslims are seen to be deepening as evidenced by (1) higher illiteracy rate, polarized madrasah institutions, and imbalanced two-far extreme types of education which did not produce holistic and progressive human resources in the Muslim communities (Cayamodin 2019a); (2) the deepening economic underdevelopment due to flawed laws and mismanagement of Islamic economic institutions (Gamon and Tagoranao 2018), which increased desperation among Muslims, especially the youth; and (3) the worsening internal schism in various levels that appeared to have heightened due to the emergence of ISIS-inspired groups that have infiltrated Muslim communities. Recently, these groups targeted the youths who have been exasperated with the current system, resulting in unimaginable disruption of the social order, as evidenced during the Marawi siege in 2017 (Maute 2018). As a result, Muslims began to become confused of their religio-cultural and social identities. This was brought about by the influx of different schools of thought and the rise of liberalization. Such a scenario led youths to question their elderlies when their cyclical predicaments will end and how that cycle will be reversed towards a hopeful future.

These questions seem rampant until today because of negligence and lack of courage between and among Muslim leaders. Cyclical predicaments have deepened further due to the pessimism of the educated and the egotism of powerful groups and individuals.

In order to understand the cyclical predicaments of Muslim Filipinos, the researchers try to analyze Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's triumvirate quandaries hypothesis. The theory of Said Nursi on the nature of social predicaments in the society is centered on the interdependent roles played by balanced education as an antidote for ignorance, the establishment of sustainable various business ventures, and promotion of philanthropic activities and welfare organizations as a remedy for poverty, and the promotion of dialogue as a solution for schism (Michel 2013). In modern society, these concepts are symbolized by institutions that are working interdependently for the operation of the society in order to maintain social order. This can also be anchored to the "systems theory" advanced by social scientists beginning in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, a theory that explains the cohesive conglomeration of interrelated and interdependent parts of an entity or institutions in the society (Laszlo and Krippner 1998). Such theory is used as the framework of this study to understand better the nucleus of the predicaments of Muslim Filipinos in a secular country—the Philippines.

In the contextualization, the study further explores the approaches of a select transnational knowledge-based reform movement—the Hizmet—that is highly regarded to have effectively addressed the dynamics and the challenges brought about by ignorance, poverty, and schism found in various Muslim communities around the world (Yavuz 2003a). It must be noted that the followers of the Hizmet movement drew inspiration not only from the philosophy of the founder of the movement, but they are primarily inspired by the teachings of Said Nursi. Presumably, the Hizmet movement actualized the theory of Said Nursi in the present era of globalization, thus, making them successfully operate in more than 170 countries around the world. Moreover, the Hizmet showed successful operations in many Southeast Asian countries, including Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, where the interdependent predicaments in the Malay-Indonesian world are addressed in a sustainable manner. The movement, having been inspired by the genuine and peaceful teachings of Islam, is able to promote tolerance, compassion, civility, dialogue, and humanitarianism despite the challenges of contemporary society, including the rise of violent extremism.

Thus, it is the main thrust of this paper, at this juncture, to analyze the relevance of Said Nursi's Triumvirate Quandaries Hypothesis as well as the approaches of a transnational reform movement—the Hizmet—together with the philosophy and methodologies it promotes and its contextualization to Muslim-Filipinos in this present era of globalization. In gathering data, the researchers used analysis of documents, especially laws, policies, and other existing works that have discussed or are related to the dynamics of the interdependent predicaments in the Muslim-Filipino communities. The researchers also conducted in-depth interviews with key informants, especially individuals who are heads of organizations and institutions and members of the Hizmet Movement to strengthen our propositions and enrich the discourse in this study.

### Said Nursi's "Triumvirate Quandaries" Hypothesis

In the aftermath of World War I in 1941, a Turkish noble man and religious scholar, Beduizzaman Said Nursi (b. 1873, d. 1960), who was the founder of the most powerful text-based faith movement active in Turkey (Yavuz 2003b), appeared to hypothesize the root causes of various predicaments faced by the Turkish people. He tried not to single out the effect of the long and large-scale war that his people inevitably participated in. Said Nursi posited that the real problem, which he termed 'enemies of Muslims,' was not any one antagonist country or the inevitable effect of war. According to Nursi, there were three major problems that have insurmountable effects on society and on humankind which are: (1) ignorance, (2) poverty, and (3) disunity (Michel 2013, 4). This study referred to these three significant predicaments as "triumvirate quandaries," which are interrelated and cyclical, as reflected in Figure 1 below.

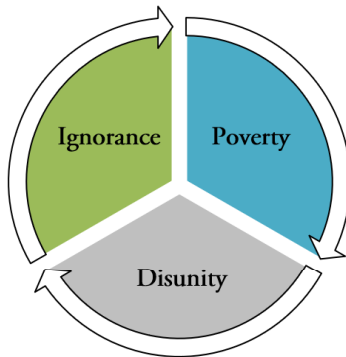


Figure 1: Badiuzzaman Said Nursi's "Triumvirate Quandaries" Hypothesis

The main argument of Said Nursi was these three predicaments have vested sanctions over other institutions in society, which must be given emphasis. These are the very root causes of various societal problems. Concurrent to the works of Said Nursi, education may refer to a high illiteracy rate, but this also refers to the non-actualization of the philosophy of education by the learned people due to the deterioration of morals and ethics. People, despite their education, may remain indifferent to the predicaments faced by society caused by the lack of morals and ethics taught in culture and religion. Poverty is not only confined with the people's low standard of living, but it is also referring to ungenerousness that resulted to the non-practicing of the Islamic fundamental teaching on *zakāh* (charity) and *waqf* (endowment), that led to the uneven distribution of resources and made the wealth in the society confined only to few hands. Disunity is referring to both ethnic and ideological conflicts that create disunities among the people.

This hypothesis was proven to be apparent not only in Turkey but also in different countries. However, most countries approached these triumvirate quandaries with more fragmented solutions than the holistic interrelated remedies advanced by the Hizmet in Turkey and other countries. It must be emphasized here that a more fragmented solution lacks inclusivity due to the absence of unity among people and institutions dealing with the predicaments. On the other hand, a holistic interrelated approach, though it requires a high level of altruism and quality human resources, including what Fethullah Gulen referred to as “perfect human being” (*insān kāmil*) or what Confucius termed as “superior man” whose reign produces harmony in human social and political life (Carroll 2007, 59–78), offers sustainable impacts due to its synchronized and balanced nature.

The view of Said Nursi on the imperative to deal with these triumvirate quandaries was, in our view, seemingly inspired by Qur'anic injunctions and Prophetic traditions given his Islamic orientation as a known Muslim scholar. In fact, these three major problems and their solutions are often mentioned in the Holy Qur'an (e.g., education: 58:11, 96:1–5, 39:9; poverty: 2:43, 2:276, 2:282, 3:92, 3:180, 4:29, 62:10; and schism: 5:3, 49: 13) (Unal 2006). As discussed by Gulen (2005), they are also perceived to have been constantly embedded in the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad. Thus, people and organizations who tried to deal with Said Nursi's triumvirate quandaries hypothesis could

hardly avoid divine stimulus because of the obvious concurrence of his view with the primary sources of Islamic thoughts. This study focuses on examining the nature of this triumvirate quandaries hypothesis, analyzing its remedies as practiced by the Hizmet, and contextualizing it in the case of Muslims in the Philippines. The researchers tried to use the approach of the Hizmet Movement inspired by Fethullah Gulen and how it addresses these triumvirate quandaries in over a hundred countries in the world. The researchers believe that this movement has effective, holistic, and sustainable remedies on the aforesaid quandaries, whose vitality and successes in a relatively short period have attracted the appreciation of scholars, academe, institutions, and governments from around the world.

### **The Hizmet: A Transnational Knowledge-Based Movement**

Analogous to the emergence of a reformist socio-religious movement in Indonesia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century—the Muhammadiyah—that works, among others, on reform through education, empowerment, and community development (Elhady 2017), the Hizmet, a Turkish word which means “rendering service” (Bilici 2006, 4), the movement was established in 1968 in Turkey as a transnational knowledge-based movement (Tekalan 2009). The action, organized organically through grassroots initiatives, is inspired by the philosophy of a highly regarded religious scholar, preacher, and imam named Muhammet Fethullah Gulen, widely regarded by his followers as Hocaefendi, which means “Master,” “Highly Respected Educator,” or “Higher Religious Authority” (Yavuz 2003a, 20). Analogous to Said Nursi, Fethullah Gulen’s discourse and practice is deeply rooted in Islam, the foundation of his endeavor to renew Muslim societies (Celik 2008). Accordingly, Fethullah Gulen is the most influential Muslim scholar in the world who has been placed as one of the world’s “Top 100 Public Intellectuals” (Foreign Policy 2008, cited in Yucel 2010; Celik 2017). The Hizmet has enormous voluntary participants from different backgrounds, ideologies, nations, ethnicities, and faith globally. Volunteer participants are motivated by Islamic values and ideals and encouraged to be civically engaged and generous, philanthropically driven, and peaceful (Shroff 2009).

Turkish people and organizations, both government and nongovernment, tried to find remedies on the triumvirate quandaries since the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of the Kemalists.

However, they seemed to have failed in various attempts due to lack of inclusivity and sustainability caused by the friction created between the secular ideology promoted by Kemal Ataturk and the Islamic values and legacy left by the Ottoman empire that are embedded in the hearts of the Turkish population (Yavuz 2003b; Gozaydin and Ozturk 2014; Bilici 2006). Thus, the search for a more sustainable and inclusive remedy has become earnestly imperative to address the challenges of a fast-evolving society. This concern led to the emergence of the Hizmet's interrelated programs addressing the triumvirate quandaries. The Hizmet uses more powerful motivations such as volunteerism and altruism to serve the people without expecting a worldly return. Advanced by a transnational knowledge-based movement, this approach is significant and harmonious to the history of Islam in the Malay-Indonesian world or the ASEAN, which was the method of the earlier Arab Muslim traders and missionaries who had significant contributions to the Malay-Indonesian civilizations.

Concurrent to Said Nursi's observation, Fethullah Gulen viewed that society has three greatest enemies: ignorance, poverty, and internal schism, and inspired people to adopt sustainable remedies (Genc 2012). In the case of Hizmet and its approaches to the so-called greatest enemies of the society across nations, Cihangir Arslan (Phone Interview, April 2018), the former president of Pacific Dialogue Foundation (PDF) owned by Hizmet, viewed that:

“The Hizmet Movement, to address the predicaments and see the ailing society reformed, centered its activities on three interrelated initiatives, such as (1) establishment of educational institutions; (2) business and welfare organizations; and (3) dialogue foundations within and outside Turkey.”

First, the educational institutions of the Hizmet Movement are successfully operating in more than 170 countries across the globe, covering basic primary schools to universities. The primary goal of these educational institutions is to “enable suitable environments for people where they can realize their potential beyond their religious or ethnic extremism” (Celik 2017, 30). Second, activities, programs, and projects of the Hizmet worldwide are successful mainly because of the enormous numbers of business people, volunteers, and professionals from different walks of life who spend most of their resources and efforts to advance the visions of the movement (Berg 2012). Third, Fethullah

Gulen asserts that dialogue “is the social extension of tolerance; it is an interactive, outwardly social activity. He defines dialogue as two or more people coming together to talk and meet on certain subjects and, through this, to draw closer to one another” (Yildirim and Burnett 2011, 18–19). Hence, dialogue can be used as a tool for people to promote tolerance, amicable relationships and prevent rift and stereotypes with each other to achieve peaceful coexistence. In sum, the Hizmet Movement believes that these three interrelated remedies can sustainably cure the triumvirate quandaries in particular and other social ills of the society in general.

## **The Hizmet Movement in the Philippines (1994–2020)**

### *The Advent of the Movement*

In 1994, a group of dedicated educators arrived in the Philippines from Turkey to do humanitarian work, introducing Hizmet’s knowledge-based reform model espoused by the philosophy of Fethullah Gulen. The arrival of this group was marked as the advent of the Hizmet Movement in the Philippines. In its infancy, the group tried to collaborate with Muslim scholars, academics, and intellectuals to scout for a suitable location in Metro Manila to establish the school. Unfortunately, due to lack of patronage in the beginning caused by the insignificant Muslim population in the north, the financial constraints, and the very high cost of living in the country’s capital, they moved to Zamboanga City in the southern Philippines, where they found an abandoned building, formerly known as Al-Makdum College in the outskirts of the city, and converted the building into a progressive school (Durakoglu 2011). Two years later and upon settling down, they expanded their operation to the north and organized an umbrella foundation designed to carry out the Hizmet’s activities in the country. This foundation is known today as Integrative Center for Alternative Development (ICAD) Foundation Incorporated, founded on April 17, 1996, and registered in the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

Malik Dimakuta (Personal Interview, October 2018), the current Director of ICAD Foundation, explains that:

“From the inception of the foundation, it became the coordinating body for various activities related to education and humanitarian endeavors by the Hizmet patrons. The focus of the Hizmet in the Philippines is



on education, business, humanitarian activities, and religious dialogue and cultural understanding. The members of Hizmet, both local and international, make sure that these activities are done peacefully and progressively under Philippine laws.”

These significant activities by Hizmet in the Philippines are also found in more than 170 countries all over the world where the Hizmet Movement established communities. The nature and approaches of handling such activities are almost the same depending on the socio-cultural environments and legal requirements in the host country.

### *Education Programs*

Similar to the case of other countries where the movement established schools, the Hizmet Movement’s activities in the Philippines are centered on providing quality education as “a true symbol of human cohesion and oppose to all types of extremism” (Celik 2017, 31). In 1997, the first school—the Filipino-Turkish Tolerance School—was established by the Hizmet in Zamboanga City. The Hizmet later established Fountain International School (FIS) in 2006 with two branches in San Juan City, operating from elementary to secondary levels with the recent inclusion of the K-12 by RA No. 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013.

Onur Kilicaslan (Personal Interview, November 2018), the Director of Fountain International School in San Juan City, Metro Manila, stated that:

“The Hizmet Movement’s schools in the Philippines performed very well in various regional, national, and international academic competitions, particularly in the fields of Math and Science. Because they are registered with the Department of Education (DepEd), these schools were patronized by esteemed families, mostly government officials and professionals. These schools are attended by pupils and students from diverse ethnic and religious affiliations due to the schools’ integrity and commendable achievements in various academic and extracurricular competitions locally and abroad. The parents greatly appreciate the modern school facilities, the extension services, and humanitarian endeavors of the school to communities.”

Similar to the operation of the movement in other countries and in complement to the schools that Hizmet established in the Philippines, the Hizmet also established Academia Language and Review Center located in San Juan City in 2013, focusing on language training for both local and foreign nationals, an initiative that ushers young people to further their education or advance their career.

“The center caters to the needs of students for University entrance exams and those planning to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) for other academic as well as work purposes.” (*Y. Selim Sirinoglu, personal interview, April 2018*)

Other commendable educational activities under the Hizmet include providing scholarships and additional financial assistance for deserving Muslim and non-Muslim students from various regions in the Philippines, including a group of youths coming from Tacloban. Their families were victims of Typhoon Yolanda in 2013.

“The Hizmet takes care of these fully-sponsored students by providing for them safe accommodation and instilling in them the culture of scholarship through regular reading, writing, and public speaking activities. These young promising scholars and intellectuals are also immersed in universally accepted moral values and ethical interpersonal behaviors as a method of preparing them for returning to their respective communities.” (*S. Turkmenow, personal interview, August 2018*)

Concurrent to the above discussion, Hizmet’s philosophy and approach to education are seen to have supplemented and further advanced the mainstream Philippine system of education. It must be noted here that the Hizmet’s schools in the Philippines, similar to Hizmet’s schools in other countries, adopt international curricula such as the International General Certificate for Secondary Education (IGCSE) accredited by Cambridge University, which such type of curricula are rarely found in Philippine schools.

In the Muslim communities, it has been a long practice of Muslim-Filipinos since the 70s, beginning during the height of the Martial Law under President Ferdinand Marcos up to this date, that many Muslim-Filipino students were sent abroad to further their studies, especially when they reached the higher degree levels. Muslim-Filipinos, given their preference to send their children to Muslim-dominated countries that have similar socio-cultural and religious orientations with the Muslim-Filipinos such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and some countries in the Middle-East and North Africa (MENA), will find the Hizmet approach convenient and better alternative as it is seemingly aligned with their educational aspiration for young generation especially after the recent establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). By and large, the schools of Hizmet seem to have perfectly fitted with the preference of Muslim-Filipino

parents for their children to study abroad. This approach will eventually neutralize the presumed ethnic and religious extremism embedded in the Muslim-Filipino communities, mold the minds of the young Muslim generation, and prepare their society to meet the demands of the contemporary time.

### *Business and Humanitarian Activities*

Quality education is a universal antidote to lift the status of marginalized people. However, in the case of the Hizmet, this will not effectively materialize without the movement's financial component. This led to the parallel operations of educational and business institutions of the Hizmet. Berg (2012), in her study of Hizmet Movement, explains that the success of the Hizmet-inspired activities and projects is to a large extent due to a large number of businessmen, volunteers, and professionals coming from different Turkish cities and rural areas who spend most of their time and efforts to establish a project or activity they believed in. Hizmet sympathizers established local and national business associations from which strong networks of businesspersons were created. These business associations aim to provide a suitable atmosphere for gathering the Turkish private business sector together and stress the importance of cooperation and ethics, arrange business trips all over the world to seek new opportunities for Turkish entrepreneurs that led to greater success. This had become the fuel or the core financial source funding the numerous activities and institutions of the movement.

Consequently, this has been translated in the Philippines up to this date in cities where Hizmet set foothold. The Hizmet have increased the participation of Muslim Filipinos in the country's business activities, especially at the corporate level countrywide.

“At the pinnacle of the Aquino administration, the Hizmet managed to facilitate the establishment of the Philippines' Turkish Chamber of Commerce (TUSKON), which was designed to strengthen the business partnerships between Turkey and the Philippines. This ushered in the inflows of Turkish investments in the Philippines, including solar energy, engineering, information technology companies, and various forms of trade between Turkey and the Philippines. By and large, this endeavor has promoted business networks nationally and internationally that has opened business opportunities not only for Muslim-Filipinos but for the rest of the country at large.” (*I. Karabulut, Personal Interview, July 2018*)

For the welfare and humanitarian activities, Hizmet transcends boundaries set forth by religion and culture. In their understanding of mercy to all humankind, Hizmet followers do not set the preference to whom they shall offer services and conduct humanitarian activities despite the religious and ethnic diversities in the country. During the aftermath of Typhoon Ondoy in September 2009, Hizmet-affiliated Kimse Yok Mu (translated as “Is Anybody There?”), in partnership with local government units (LGUs), delivered a significant amount of rice and other goods for the typhoon victims. More vividly, it must be remembered that in the aftermath of Super Typhoon Yolanda in November 2013, the first international non-government organization (NGO) to have reached Tacloban a few days following the dissipation of the typhoon was the Kimse Yok Mu. This group of ten Turkish medical practitioners selflessly conducted medical missions to attend to the immediate medical needs and other health concerns of the victims of Typhoon Yolanda when other groups, both government and nongovernment, had yet to initiate their counterparts. Such instances show the profound humanitarian activities cherished by the Hizmet’s followers for humanity.

One of the highlights of the Hizmet in their chain of welfare activities is the Ramadhan dinner (iftar) during the holy month of Ramadhan. This activity is conducted annually, inviting people from different religious and cultural affiliations regardless of their status in the social stratifications of society. The iftar is generally attended by Muslim and non-Muslim students, professors, clergies, high-ranking government officials, military personnel, and diplomats. This demonstrates the Islamic tradition of compassion and generosity through Iftar as instituted by Gulen and practiced by the Hizmet followers (Unal and Williams 2000). Another appealing Hizmet welfare activity is the Annual Beef Sharing Program regularly conducted by ICAD Foundation with the city governments of San Juan City, Zamboanga City, and Marawi City.

“The activity has been benefitting thousands of low-income families, mostly non-Muslims from different cities within and outside Metro Manila. Since it began in 2001, it has been regularly conducted after the Eid al-Adha (Feast of Sacrifice) and at the same time, has become the most awaited welfare activity for the thousands of poor people.” (*M. Dimakuta, Personal Interview, October 2018*)

The activity shows that people from different walks of life may celebrate together through sharing. It encourages other affluent

individuals and families to contribute and share to the poor part of the Almighty's bounties. Hence, the authors argue that Hizmet's concept of business and humanitarianism is worth emulating to the Muslim communities in the Philippines to address their decades-long fundamental predicament of an underdeveloped economy.

### *Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue*

One pillar of Hizmet activities is to promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue to uphold understanding between and among people who belong to different faiths and cultural orientations (Yildirim and Burnett 2011). To realize this, the Dialogue Among Civilizations was founded by the Hizmet as a meeting place for people from political, scientific, business, and art circles, as well as for representatives of various religions (Unal and Williams 2000). This endeavor has been emulated in the Philippines that led to the creation of Pacific Dialogue Foundation, Inc. (PDF), a non-stock and non-profit educational and cultural foundation established by a group of Filipino and Turkish volunteers in 2011. It seeks to build and foster relationships between and among people of diverse backgrounds. The Foundation upholds the primacy of universal values such as tolerance, understanding, compassion, mutual respect, and fairness (Pacific Dialogue Foundation Inc. n.d.a.).

Cihangir Arslan (Phone Interview, April 2018) opines that:

“The PDF has reached a quite significant number of faith-based institutions and groups including universities and colleges such as the University of the Philippines; University of Santo Tomas; De La Salle University; Ateneo University campuses in Manila, Zamboanga, and Davao; San Carlos University; and Cotabato City Polytechnic State College; among others. Its endeavors were largely anchored on promoting peaceful coexistence and a common understanding of people with different religions and cultures. In a recent development, the PDF conducted a University Lecture Series on various topics, including preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE). The foundation played a critical role in bridging the gap between Muslims and non-Muslims, particularly faith-based organizations and academic institutions.”

The study believes that the core principles of Hizmet on the promotion of the abovementioned universal values through dialogue may lead to the revival of Filipino culture and heritage towards national unity. As advocated by Hizmet, these universal values are one of the effective strategies in narrowing down the socio-cultural gaps between Christian dominant and Muslim minority in the Philippines. Another

significant Hizmet activity that promotes civilizational renewal is the International Festival of Language and Culture (IFLC), which had begun in Turkey from 2003 to 2013 and was participated by at least 140 countries.

“In the Philippines, IFLC began in the year 2013, which was participated in by at least twenty countries and attended by a significant audience from different walks of life. This annual celebration showcases the diversity of linguistic and other cultural talents from across the world.” (Y. S. Sirinoglu, personal interview, April 2018)

In sum, the above discussion on the Hizmet’s activities at the local and international levels indicates the broad, holistic, and inclusive profound knowledge-based approach of the movement in resolving the three significant predicaments of contemporary society. The researchers deemed it worth emulating the case of Muslims in the Philippines in concession to the requirements of the current social environment.

### The Interdependent Predicaments of Muslim-Filipinos

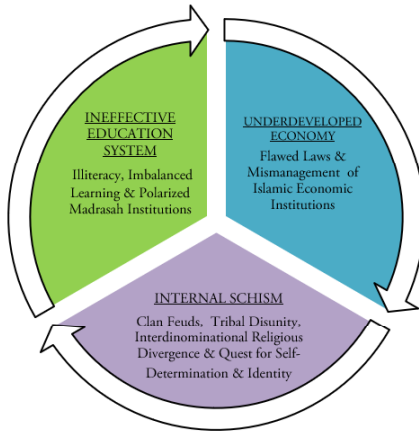


Figure 2: The Interdependent Predicaments of Muslim-Filipinos

Figure 2 shows the Muslim-Filipino interdependent predicaments reflective of Said Nursi’s triumvirate quandaries hypothesis and the views of Fethullah Gulen. This section presents the dynamics of these interdependent predicaments, including their ramifications as seen in the contemporary Muslim-Filipino society. This study presumed that these interdependent predicaments enormously fuel other societal problems that have become systemic and cyclical for several decades.

## Ineffective Education System

The centuries-old history of the dichotomous – traditional and modern – educational systems that shaped educational institutions found in the Muslim-Filipino communities brought ominous impact to their society. Muslim Filipinos face problems in their one-dimensional educational system that is perceived to be ineffective caused by the government's laxity on the integration of Muslim-Filipino traditional education with the national mainstream modern education system. This has been aggravated by the failure of the defunct Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and the LGUs in the Muslim provinces for not providing Muslim Filipinos with an integrated and holistic educational system suitable to their religio-cultural orientations (Cayamodin 2019c). For an in-depth conception, an ineffective education system does not mean Muslims are uneducated, but rather that their level of education in general and the nature of their educational institutions are not congruent with their socio-cultural orientation and have failed to address the problems that their society faces for decades. For worse, most educated people did not actualize their education philosophy and succumbed to the enticements of corrupt systems.

This is following the view of Said Nursi on ignorance as part of the triumvirate quandaries hypothesis, which was further expounded by Gulen (2005) when he opines that ignorant people are not those without knowledge, but those who do not know or actualize the philosophy of learning and purpose of education. Many of the so-called educated members of the Muslim-Filipino society are perceived to have imbalanced or one-dimensional education. They are either profound in theological knowledge but weak in conventional fields of education, primarily on both natural and applied sciences, or the other way around. This scenario ushered in various social predicaments of Muslims in the Philippines when they are religiously upright but lack the appreciation on the modern sciences or liberally educated but alienated from moral and ethical teachings of Islam. Gulen (2010, 49) further states that “science without religion is blind; religion without science is lame.” This appears that the integration of these two worldviews is imperative to produce balanced human resource and realize a balanced society of Muslims grounded on the concept of *wasatiyyah* (Islamic moderation) as advanced by Professor Muhammad Kamal Hassan (Dorloh and Yusuf 2015). The following discussions deal with the factors that comprise

ineffective education system among Muslim-Filipinos such as illiteracy and imbalanced education, and the polarized madrasah institutions in the Muslim communities.

### *Illiteracy and Imbalanced Education*

Concerning the above, both primary and functional literacy rates of Muslim Filipinos, particularly in the recently established Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), appeared not to be par with the rest of the country's regions. The 2013 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey showed that among the areas in the country, the former ARMM (now the BARMM) has the lowest statistics in both primary and functional literacy rates at 81.55% and 71.60%, respectively when compared to other regions (Philippine Statistics Authority 2015). This suggests that the problem on education, as discussed earlier, is confined to the lack of understanding and application of the philosophy of education. Still, it is also manifested in the actual indicators of education in the Muslim areas based on empirical data. Thus, from the philosophical and empirical perspectives, ignorance is presumably rampant in the Muslim-dominated region in particular and in various Muslim communities in the whole country at large.

Another problem on education confronting Muslim Filipinos is the perceived imbalance caused by the polarization of madrasah institutions and the lack of a holistic approach in educating Muslim children. As polarization continues without effective integration of all types of madrasah, Muslim students continuously become deprived of the education they need to materialize the balanced society (*ummatah wasatan*) envisioned in Islam (Cayamodin 2019c). Imbalanced education of Muslims characterized by the divergence of Islamic and conventional education has led to constricted legalist minds and extreme liberals that have failed to comprehend the dynamics of society, which is immersed with conservatism inherited from the teachings of culture and religion.

### *Polarized Madrasah Institutions*

The problem of illiteracy and imbalanced education is further heightened by the polarized madrasah institutions existing in the country that primarily cater to the needs of Muslim Filipinos for schooling. This



polarization is mainly caused by the absence of an inclusive legal and regulatory framework governing madrasah institutions. Currently, there are four types of madrasah in the Philippines that are simultaneously operating interdependently with diverse curricula, learning materials used, and methods of teaching (Ibid). Consequently, these polarized madrasah institutions among Muslims led to the imbalanced education embedded in their minds for several centuries. In the long run, this dilemma has brought long-term effects to Muslim lives, including their slim chances to be employed in the Philippine bureaucracy and other non-government agencies due to their education which is unrecognized in the Philippine education system. To some extent, these very polarized learning institutions lead to imbalanced education, which inevitably contributes to deepening poverty in the Muslim provinces and internal schism.

In sum, the essential and functional higher illiteracy rates, the very polarized madrasah institutions, and the imbalanced education found among Muslim Filipinos played a major role in the cyclical predicaments with generational effects. Thus, a sustainable and holistic educational system, similar to Hizmet's universal approach to education, suitable for Muslim Filipinos' socio-cultural and religious orientations in the Philippines is deemed necessary.

### **Underdeveloped Economy**

Marohomsalic (1995) explains that more than 300 years of the Spanish-Moro War stalled the development of Moro societies. Marohomsalic noted that although sultanates have remained, all the efforts of the traditional leaders were directed at fighting and repelling intrusions by world powers. This was carried up to the post-independence era with Moro leaders' subsequent quest for freedom. This condition led to the meager participation of Muslims in various economic activities, especially in tertiary and quaternary sectors. In the 1990s, the ARMM (now the BARMM) registered the highest poverty head count or highest indices of social stress in the country (Mastura 2012; Milligan 2005). In 2015, there was at least 59% of the population in the BARMM living below the poverty threshold, while Lanao del Sur, being one of the five Muslim-dominated provinces comprising BARMM, was dubbed the poorest province in the country has 74.3% of its population living below poverty line (Philippine Statistics Authority 2015).

In more recent years, the deepening poverty in Muslim communities is further worsened by the flawed laws (Muslim 2019) and the mismanagement of Islamic economic institutions (Gamon and Tagoranao 2018) lack of financial inclusion in Muslim communities. In the long run, this scenario has resulted in various social ills such as massive corruption in the bureaucracy and proliferation of vote-buying and bribery that resulted in weak political institutions (Cayamodin 2013; Muslim 2019; Panda 1993; Ampa 2017). The study argues that although some laws, despite the flaws, were passed to develop the economy in the Muslim areas, the implementations of these laws did not meet the expectations of both the government and the Muslim population. There was a seemingly lack of translation of these laws into action without compromising the socio-cultural and religious orientations of Muslim Filipinos. There was a failure to widen the advancement and institutionalization of Islamic economic institutions in the administrative aspects precipitated by the executive branch of the government and, most importantly, the academic institutions all over the country. The lack of academic institutions for Islamic economics in the Philippines jeopardizes the development of socioeconomic aspects of Muslim Filipinos in the country. This scenario led to the inefficient administration and discouraging performances of economic institutions created for Muslims, including, among others, Amanah Islamic Bank, National Commission of Muslim Filipinos, and the defunct Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

### *Flawed Laws and Mismanagement of Islamic Economic Institutions*

Analysts and scholars frequently attribute the problem of an underdeveloped economy in Muslim areas to the mismanagement of Islamic Financial Institutions (Gamon and Tagoranao 2018). This is further aggravated by the delay or non-passage of various Bills for Islamic Economic Development filed before the Philippine Congress both in the upper and lower houses. These include Senate Bill No. 668 and House Bill No. 8281 filed before the Philippine Congress in 2016 and 2018. This issue is further precipitated by the flaws found in the existing national legislations and policies for the economic development of Muslim areas.

Government institutions that are created by-laws with the mandates to uplift the economic status of Muslim Filipinos appeared to have low performance due to mismanagement. These include (1) Amanah

Islamic Bank (formerly Al Amanah Islamic Investment Bank of the Philippines) created by Republic Act (RA) No. 6848; (2) National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF) (formerly Office on Muslim Affairs) created under RA No. 9997; and (3) Philippine Halal Export Development and Promotion Program created by RA No. 10817. These are all designed to promote and widen financial inclusion among Muslims and address poverty in the Muslim communities. These laws are seemingly not encouraging Muslim Filipinos to participate in various economic activities, mainly due to multiple loopholes found in the statutes above that are incompatible with the Muslim-Filipino religio-cultural identities.

This study argues that, first, RA No. 6848 or otherwise known as the Charter of the Amanah Islamic Bank (AIB), since its inception is restrictive as it specifies AIB to be the sole authorized Islamic bank in the country. Simultaneously, its operation has been dominated by the conventional system (Ibrahim, Omar, and Hamdan 2018). This law hindered other Islamic banking and financial institutions' institution for nearly three decades when the law was signed in 1990 due to its restrictive nature. Consequently, the restrictive nature of RA No. 6848 has jeopardized the best economic interests of Muslim Filipinos. Likewise, this did not develop Islamic financial institutions, which hindered the full engagement of Muslim Filipinos in various Shari'ah-compliant investment ventures and other business activities. This has also discouraged the establishment of foreign full-pledged Islamic banks in the Philippines.

Second, RA No. 9997, also known as the law which created the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF), is commendable when it was first passed in 2010. It appears, however, that some significant economic institutions such as *zakat* (charity), *waqf* (endowment), and halal industries, especially Islamic banking and finance, are not priority programs of the NCMF. On the other hand, given its stature, the Commission can develop such financial institutions tremendously. The Commission is mainly confined to a handful of programs that are routinely conducted annually, such as the Qur'an Reading Competition, Shari'ah training, and pilgrimage (hajj). In contrast, various potential socioeconomic programs under the Bureau of Muslim Economic Affairs (BMEA) and the Bureau of Pilgrimage and Endowment (BPE) remain untapped.

And third, RA No. 10817 appeared to have flaws from the very beginning when it took local halal industries for granted and focused instead on the exportation aspects of halal products. It is also unfortunate that the law provides that the Philippine Halal Export Development and Promotion Board is composed of high-ranking government officials regardless of their religious affiliation, without considering the sensitivities of halal issues, which are deeply rooted in Islamic teachings. In a nutshell, the law has affected the integrity of the Philippine halal industry from the lenses of foreign halal entities, especially in Southeast Asian and Arab countries. Further, this scenario has also inevitably upset the opportunities of the Philippines to compete and increase its share from the \$6.4 trillion estimated value of the world halal market, which neighboring countries, such as Malaysia and Thailand, enjoy (Chehade 2018). This is due to the reasonable implementation and institutionalization of stricter halal standards, laws, and policies duly recognized by the governments of those countries for the past decades.

### *Lack of Financial Inclusion*

The absence of Islamic financial instruments and products in the Muslim communities caused by flawed laws and non-passing of bills for Islamic economic institutions has resulted in the lack of Muslims' financial inclusion. This is one of the fears of Muslims, for them not to share with economic benefits and progress of the country (Tamano 1981). Muslims are becoming increasingly desperate to grow their local economy due to the absence of Islamic financial institutions. Consequently, beginning in the 1970s, Muslims started to emigrate to neighboring regions and cities, especially in the National Capital Region (NCR), to find material and spiritual meanings (Gunting 2015). However, these waves of Muslim emigrants from Mindanao are considered an inconsequential portion of the financially excluded Muslim population in the BARMM. At least 89% of Muslims in the BARMM are unbanked, suggesting comprehensive financial isolation in the Muslim communities (ABS-CBN News 2018). This means that many Muslims are untapped, at least in the financial sectors, because of the absence of economic platforms concurrent with their religious-cultural identities.

## Internal Schism

Internal schism, comprised of feud-related clan classes (*rido*), interethnic conflicts, religious unity within diversity, and rebellion by Muslims against the government, is one of the major problems in the Muslim communities that derail various development programs because of fear of being caught in both minor and major conflicts (Mastura 2012). The micro to macro layers of the schism that have existed for many years in the Muslim communities postulates the complexity of the interdependent predicaments in their society. This can be seen in a hierarchy starting from *rido*, interdenominational religious divergence, inter-ethnic conflict, and the people's unceasing insurgency and quest for self-determination and identity. The study argues that since the educational system in the Muslim areas did not harmoniously work with the socio-cultural and religious orientations of the people precipitated by the deepening poverty, the teachings of Islam are believed to have overrun by their cultural extremism so that customary informal norms, especially *maratabat* (pride or honor) rule the dynamics of relationships between and among Muslim-Filipinos

### *Clan Feuds (Rido)*

Rixhon (2014), citing a 2004 Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey on the participation of women in peace, conflict resolution, governance, and development, found that the BARMM has a much higher percentage of incidents of clan feuds or *rido* at 28 percent, as compared to the country's 16 percent. The proliferation of *rido* in the Philippines, particularly among Muslims in Mindanao, is mainly caused by, among others, political rivalry, petty crime, land disputes, retaliation, accident, illegal drugs, and elopement, which are precipitated by customary practices such as *maratabat* (pride) and the lack of state control and authority (Matuan 2014; Abbas 2008; Durante, Gomez, and Sevilla 2014). This proliferation of thousands of clan feuds hindered development in Mindanao (Kamlan 2014), which has affected millions of Muslim Filipinos and led to social isolation and a significant number of casualties (who are mainly male heads of patriarchal Muslim-Filipino families in the south). By and large, clan feuds brought long-term effects to Muslim families involved as most casualties are male family members such as fathers, sons, and brothers. This becomes a heavy burden in a more patriarchal society like that

of Muslim Filipinos when many families lose their male working members who are tasked to sustain the families. The prevalence of feuds aggravated other social problems in Muslim society that have both proximal and distal impacts.

### *Religious Unity within Diversity*

Article 6, Title II of Book 1 of the Code of Muslim Personal Laws of the Philippines specifies the authorized Islamic schools of law, namely the Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliki, and Shafi'i, with the Shafi'i given preference under Article 134, Title IV of Book 3 in cases of ambiguity in determining what governs specific legal concerns by Muslims (Presidential Decree (PD) No. 1083). Conversely, since the return of Muslim-Filipino students who studied in Islamic universities in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), they created various religious institutions, organized Ulama groups, and build networks. These endeavors should have been a force to unite Muslim Filipinos to reform spiritual practices and maintain orthodox Islam. However, these exertions of the Ulama are seemingly counterproductive in Muslim communities as disagreements of religious views on various matters became prevalent, often leading to misperceptions of religion. This schism among religious leaders (Ulama) negatively affected the unity of Muslims, at least in their practice of orthodox Islam. These interdenominational conflicts were taken advantage of by both internal and external powers to exploit Muslim communities economically (as seen in 2012 during the tragic aftermath of Coco Rasuman investment scam (Pimping 2015)) and politically (as witnessed during the catastrophic Marawi Siege (Maute 2018)).

According to Shiekh Abdulmajeed D. Djamla, the Grand Imam of the Islamic Center in Marawi City, he posited that:

“The established orthodoxy of Islamic denominations in the Philippines, that has been in place for centuries since the beginning of Islamization process in the Philippine archipelago in as early as 14<sup>th</sup> century was recently challenged by the emergence of the Shi'a denomination, the mounting rift between the adherents of Salafism (Salafiya) and Ash'arism (Ash'ariyya), the recent internal schism between factions of the Tablighi Jama'at, the rise of Sufism, and the prevalence of radical ideologies leading to the formation of violent extremist groups claiming to have affiliations with the ISIS. This religious diversity resulting in conflict and confusion needs to be addressed using a sustainable approach before it gets worst as in the case of other Muslim countries.”

In sum, religious diversity has created significant turbulence in the Muslim communities. More often, this made Muslim Filipinos confused about their religio-cultural identity due to a lack of unity among the ulama on various issues caused by the absence of interdenominational religious convergence.

### *Inter-Ethnic Conflict*

Muslims in the Philippines are a heterogeneous population (Saber and Tamano 1986) comprised of thirteen (13) ethnolinguistic groups or tribes (Cayamodin 2013; Matuan 2014). Each of these tribes has distinct customary practices, uses their languages, and is located mainly in the southern islands of Mindanao. Given the nature of the composition of Muslim Filipinos, the conflict between tribes is almost inevitable, as they aim to advance their respective socioeconomic and political interests. This is further intensified in the relationship between Muslim ethnic groups and non-Muslims, especially in the 1970s when the Ilonggo Land Grabbers Association (ILAGA) was organized to grab lands by intimidating Muslim ethnic groups in the provinces of Cotabato and Maguindanao and the Lanao areas (Alim, Bulao, and Kulat 2014).

In Muslim ethnic groups, this dynamic of ethnic relations ushered the problem of political and bureaucratic patronage or nepotism for decades. This has affected the performance of various national socioeconomic and political institutions created by the government for Muslims, such as the NCMF, the Mindanao State University System (MSUS), and the now-defunct ARMM. The mandates of these institutions—as spelled out in RA No. 9997, RA No. 1893, and RA No. 9054 (as amended by RA No. 11054)—were not fully realized the intensity of nepotism and feelings of cynicism between and among Muslim tribes. In sum, tribalism undermines the potentials of various socioeconomic and political institutions to progress and develop Muslim communities in Mindanao.

### *Quest for Self-Determination and Identity*

Historically, Muslims in the southern Philippines preserved their Malay-Muslim identity for centuries which is akin to the identities of Muslims in the neighboring countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei, despite the waves of alien colonizers who created pandemonium

in the Muslim-Filipino society. This congruence of identities between Muslims in the Philippines and ASEAN has been manifested in their numerous traditions and customary practices, including, but not limited to, language, politics, education, social gatherings, and rituals. This identity has evolved to the so-called “Bangsamoro” – a Malay-oriented identity used during the height of the quest for self-determination, especially during the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in the 1970s. Consequently, the pursuit of self-determination and identity of Muslim Filipinos led to ongoing rebellion against the government. This is because previous administrations have failed to erase from the minds of the Muslims four latent psychological fears and misgivings experienced by Muslim Filipinos. These include concerns (1) of being alienated from their religion, (2) of being displaced from their ancestral homelands, (3) of having no future in the Philippines because they cannot participate in the government nor have a share in the economic benefits from the exploitation of the natural resources, and (4) of losing their cherished values, customs, and traditions (Tamano 1981). The more perceptive a Muslim becomes, the deeper he feels these fears.

Muslim (2019) viewed that this quest of the Muslims has lasted for more than four decades and was successively negotiated under seven Philippine presidents. Fortunately, this has waned with the birth of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), which is considered one of the highlights of the current administration of President Rodrigo Duterte. Accordingly, the Bangsamoro struggle became the most prolonged secessionist insurgency after South Sudan was granted independence in 2011. The passage of RA No. 11054 creating the BARMM and its subsequent ratification in 2019 signaled the culmination of the armed struggle of Muslims in the South. This is also believed by many as the recession of revolutionary independence movements.

However, this paper argues, since fears of Muslim Filipinos are yet to be entirely erased. The BARMM remains in its transition stage. The quest for self-determination or independence is still very much ingrained in the minds of a few groups, especially extremist groups that have begun to infiltrate many Muslim communities in the country, which led to the tragic Marawi siege. This study argues that the BARMM should meet the expectations of the Muslims and erase their fears to avoid the cycle of failures that was experienced in the recent



past. The phenomenal emergence of violent extremism in the Muslim communities needs immediate sustainable and inclusive remedies before it becomes endemic.

### **Remedies to the Interdependent Predicaments**

Since the predicaments of Muslims in the Philippines—which is caused partly by ineffective local government units (LGUs) in many Muslim areas—have become very intricate and have led to an apathetic attitude, the effects of the predicaments had become endemic. Thus any attempt to resolve the predicaments should be multifaceted, has a holistic grasp, and warrants sustainability to avoid repeating tedious solutions attempted in the past. Also, researchers believe that the newly-instituted BARMM government will usher in the proposed remedies. Drawing from the previous discussions, there are complementary solutions that can be considered the contextual application of Hizmet’s approach to resolving the interdependent predicaments of Muslims in various parts of the globe. The proposed solutions are further supplemented with primary sources of Islamic thought to dignify the rather conservative socio-cultural and historical orientations of Muslim Filipinos. Figure 3 illustrates the interrelated remedies along with the political and social institutions that are mandated to realize these remedies. This study believes that these corresponding remedies will significantly exterminate the interdependent predicaments.

### **Integrated and Holistic Education System (IHES)**

The “Islamicization” of human knowledge and the “relevantization” of revealed knowledge intended to develop Islamic education in the country is seen to have been understood nominally, as evidenced by the lack of educational materials produced by Muslim-Filipino scholars on the subject matter. This led to the dualistic approach of Muslim Filipinos on education precipitated by the separation of Church and State as enshrined in the Philippine Constitution. Thus, Muslim Filipinos are confined to naming their socio-political and cultural institutions with Islamic or Arabic-oriented names without real manifestation of Islamic in a true sense. This includes the naming of Dansalan to Marawi City to Islamic City of Marawi in 1956 by RA No. 1552 and Parliamentary Bill No. 261 during President Marcos regime (Benito, 1985), which move was not intended for Islamization or relevantization of Islamic

revealed knowledge in the city but accordingly to attract funds from the Middle East. This case happens to other institutions and places that have been named after Islamic or Arabic names. In a broad sense, this practice also is seen in schools, universities, and other knowledge-based institutions of Muslims in the Philippines.

On the other note, the study argues that what Muslim Filipinos need, at this time in the case of education, is “integrated and holistic education,” which combines revelation and reason embedded in the teachings of morality and ethics (*adab*) in Islam. An approach that shapes people’s perspectives and lives and can be a permanent solution for various social ills and problems in society (Al-Faruqi 1982; AbuSulayman 1994; Hussain 2009; Buyukcanga 2011; Qutb 1979; Cayamodin 2019a; Othman 2009). This is similar to the approach of the Hizmet movement:

“The education program implemented by the Hizmet in the Philippines is largely focused on sciences and mathematics taught with universal values and ethics as practically and equally important in the existence and survival of human beings in this world.” (A. Yetik, personal interview, July 2018).

Similarly, the adoption of what AbuSulayman (1987) called a ‘comprehensive systematic approach’ in Muslim education to address contemporary Muslim problems is imperative. As opined by Qutb (1979), the formal and traditional lessons on religion will not be sufficient to meet the desired human requirements in contemporary life. Thus, the integrated system of quality education as enshrined in the Bangsamoro Organic Law should be implemented in the broader scope, including in Muslim areas outside the BARMM. This will ensure that knowledge produced in the Muslim communities becomes holistic and aimed at developing the diverse potentials of Muslim children. Gulen (2005, 189) states that “an education system is judged by its universality, comprehensiveness, quality, and ability to change students.” By this, the education of Muslims should be designed to conform to the Islamic worldview and for it to emit change in various capacities. This approach is termed by Muhammad Kamal Hassan, a renowned contemporary Muslim scholar, as the “Islamicization of human knowledge and worldview” (Ali 2017, 66–67). This can also be likened to the “vaccination approach,” grounding children in the knowledge of the faith and aiming to build up their immunity long before they are exposed to moral diseases (Hathout 1995, 116). These approaches are imperative to realize the ideal society envisioned in Islam.

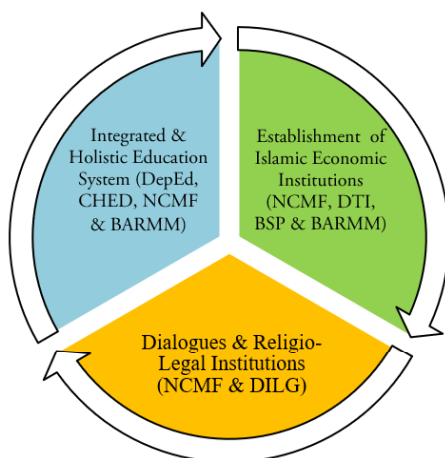


Figure 3: Interrelated Solutions to the 'Interdependent Predicaments' of Muslim-Filipinos

Thus, there is a need to establish institutions promoting an integrated and holistic education system (Cayamodin 2019a, 4; 2019c) that will produce abundant “vaccinated” human resources. This education system, having the strong potential to help transform Muslim communities in the Philippines (Curo 2015), prepares individuals to become what Gulen termed as “perfect human beings” (*insān kāmīl*) (Yavuz 2003a, 26), or in Al Attas’ (1979, 33) words, “good men” (*insān adabī*) whose altruism is firm as the strong current of cyclical predicaments that need to be neutralized and ultimately reversed in the long run. These generations of “superior men,” as termed by Confucius (Carroll 2007, 60), are morally and ethically upright to fulfill their societal responsibilities. Further fueled by their proper education and intense dedication, these “good men” will stand firmly not to be part of the corrupt system and to slow down the current of the predicaments strategically. This paper argues that “superior men” can only be produced on a large scale by implementing an IHES that employs the “vaccination approach” and the Islamicization of human knowledge at both the basic and higher levels of education. Rest assured that the establishment of the IHES will be following Philippine laws and policies on education and in coordination with the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). The National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF) will further reinforce this on Muslim Filipinos and the promising role of the BARMM.

### *Basic Education*

Islamic education at the basic level is guided by national laws (such as R.A. No. 10908) and DepEd policies on madrasah education, particularly DepEd Order No. 51, s. 2004 (as amended by DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2011). The basic education program being implemented in Muslim areas needs to be reconfigured in a suppletory manner. Similarly, to produce balanced and holistic human resources for basic Islamic education, there is—as stated in House Bill No. 6644—a need to standardize and regulate and empower the four types of *madāris* and combine Islamic education with conventional education. This will address the imbalanced education ingrained in the minds of Muslim Filipinos and promote an Integrated and Holistic Madrasah Education System (IHMES) (Cayamodin 2019a). This system will produce the “perfect human being” (*insān kāmil*) and address gaps in the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) program of DepEd that has been ineffectively implemented for more than a decade. Muslim children should be educated under the IHMES from early childhood to teach profound universal moral values and ethics grounded in Islam at the early stage of their development. The IHMES is believed to have sustainable “immunizing” effects, as proposed by Hathout (1995), on the personality of the younger generation of Muslims, who are expected to bring meaningful change and reform in Muslim society.

### *Higher Education*

The implementation of the IHES should also cover higher education institutions (HEIs), including those in Muslim communities such as the Mindanao State University (MSU) and its auxiliary branches and other Mindanao-based universities and colleges, as well as the University of the Philippines, especially its Institute of Islamic Studies (UP IIS). The integrated and holistic education system for Muslim Filipinos is more crucial in higher learning institutions (as mandated by RA No. 10908). Students develop their critical thinking and are trained to produce knowledge. Moreover, there is a need to adopt Islamization of knowledge (IOK) or Islamicization of human knowledge (IOHK), as advanced by several Muslim scholars, including Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, Isma’il Raji Al-Faruqi, Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman, and Muhammad Kamal Hassan (Ali 2017), in higher education to produce a balanced Muslim society (*ummattan wasāṭan*). The focus

of Islamicization should be on the philosophy of knowledge, the congruence between divine and reason, and how it is envisioned to be actualized in the lives of Muslims. Following RA No. 10908 and RA No. 11054, the IHES approach must be reflected in the curricula of various universities and colleges where a significant number of Muslim students can be found.

For IHES to be materialized, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) needs to accommodate the system in the higher education system. For instance, it can elevate its current Technical Committee (TC) for Islamic Studies to become a Technical Panel (TP) for Islamic Studies, comprising technical committees for various Islamic Studies disciplines in the country. This endeavor widens the group's scope and will allow CHED to have direct access to the diverse curricula of both public and private HEIs for Islamic Studies in the country, including the *Ma'āhid* (Islamic colleges) and *Jāmi'ah* (Islamic universities). This will also open possibilities for instituting various Islamic Studies programs and courses which will help the government tackle and address Muslim societal predicaments such as poverty, imbalanced education, and the emergence of violent extremism. The institution of a self-contained and sound educational system, to which the entire human race should be brought up (Qutb 1979), features relatively recent prevailing topics such as Islamic banking and finance, halal studies, international relations (*siyār*), and peace education, is imperative. This will mold the minds of Muslims from becoming unduly legalists to becoming more productive and rational individuals who will ensure the transformation of Muslim communities.

### **Establishment of Islamic Economic Institutions**

The underdeveloped economy in provinces predominated by Muslims can be assumed to have been precipitated by the lack of genuine initiatives to advance Islamic economic institutions within Muslim communities. A survey of current researches and empirical studies shows that there is a need for genuine initiatives from both the government and private sectors to develop the economy of a relatively natural resources-rich Muslim region in the southern Philippines. Concurrent to the earlier discussions, there is a need to boldly address the loopholes found in various legislations that the government has passed. Besides, the passive attitudes of some government officials and

international entities in advancing Islamic economic institutions in the Muslim areas must be transformed into an active partnership that will warrant opportunities for all the people concerned.

Congruent to the Hizmet's approach, Islamic economic institutions intended to alleviate poverty for Muslim-Filipinos, such as *zakāh* (charity), *waqf* (endowment) (Gamon and Tagoranao 2017; 2018), Shari'ah-compliant banking and financial systems (Belleng 2017; Solaiman 2018), and the halal industry (Domona 2009), should be advanced despite the secularism of governing institutions in the country. As enshrined in the Philippine Constitution, secularism or the principle of the separation of Church and State must be liberally construed in the context of a multicultural society like the Philippines. As opined by Cheng (2017), secularism must be understood concerning how closely religion intertwines with other institutions regulating everyday life such as law and economics.

Thus, good practices concerning economic institutions in other countries—especially those in Southeast Asia, including Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, and Thailand, all have proximal sociocultural relationships with the Philippines—must be considered. This will make the Philippines well-prepared on the prospects of economic integration put forward by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Consequently, these practices will promote broader financial inclusion and increase the participation of Muslims in various economic activities. These will also eventually address the issues on the lack of financial inclusion and patronage from previously unsuccessful Islamic economic institutions and from loopholes found in existing legislations designed to govern Islamic economic institutions in the Philippines. Muslim-Filipino communities must promote the academe's role in conducting research to advance Islamic economics. Academic institutions such as the Mindanao State University–King Faisal Center for Islamic, Arabic, and Asian Studies (MSU–KFCIAAS) and the UP IIS may be tasked to conduct empirical research on various Islamic economics components and their applications to the Philippines.

### *Development of a Halal Ecosystem*

This study, concurrent with Domona's (2009) views and Muslim (2019), proposes wider financial inclusion in Muslim areas by developing a halal ecosystem backed by legislation. One of the highest

government officials tasked to develop the country's Halal industry, the Undersecretary of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Abdulgani M. Macatoman (Online Interview, June 2020), opined that:

“The development of Halal Ecosystem in the Philippines is critical to Muslim-Filipinos. It will solve most of the difficulties that they experienced in the country as Halal foods for consumption, pharmaceuticals, fashion, and Shari’ah-compliant investments and financing will now be available. The Halal Ecosystem will bring more opportunities and uplift the economy of the country. It will attract more Muslim tourists, which will greatly develop the Philippine tourism industry. It will also cater to the needs of those health-conscious Filipinos, and create a peaceful and developed society because Halal speaks of fairness and development.”

Further, economic development programs to be implemented in Muslim areas must be Shari’ah-compliant to attract the patronage of Muslims. Similarly, loopholes in existing laws governing halal industries and institutions must be addressed in order for the various economic institutions in Muslim communities to function efficiently. The mandate of the Bureau on Muslim Economic Affairs of the NCMF (as defined in Section 11(a) of RA No. 9997) must be widened to promote greater economic welfare for Muslims. The restrictive nature of RA No. 6848, which governs the Al-Amanah Islamic Investment Bank (the only bank authorized to offer Islamic banking), and the defective aspects of RA No. 10817, which regulates the Philippine Halal Export Development and Promotion Program, must be amended or replaced with better laws, as in the case of the recent passage of RA No. 11439 providing for the regulation and organization of Islamic banks, to build a productive halal ecosystem and advance Shari’ah-compliant services and products not only for Muslim-Filipinos but also for the rest of the Filipino nation. This will genuinely promote the Philippine halal industry and attract the inflows of halal investments from other Muslim countries, especially those belonging to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Also, one potential exertion from the end of the government agencies mandated to set national standards is to give due attention to the halal industry. Government agencies tasked to draft Philippine National Standards (PNS), including the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS) under the Department of Agriculture (DA), the Food and Drug Administration under the Department of Health (DOH), and the Bureau of Philippine Standards (BPS) under the Department

of Trade and Industry (DTI), will play a critical role in boosting the economy in the Muslim areas. The PNS can be used instead of legal and regulatory frameworks on halal and help improve existing policies and create future legislation for the practical and effective establishment of Islamic economic institutions. This will eventually attract inflows of foreign investments, particularly from OIC member countries. Nonetheless, the development of Islamic financial institutions should not be confined only to agencies contributing to the PNS. Thus it should involve other sectors such as tourism (through the Department of Tourism), finance (through the Department of Finance), etc.

By and large, this endeavor will uplift the economic status of Muslim Filipinos in particular and boost the Philippine economy in general. It will allow the country to compete in the \$6.4-trillion world halal market (Bin Ismail 2019), where our neighboring countries like Malaysia and Thailand have enjoyed big chunks of the pie for the past decades. The successful establishment of halal industries will promote wider financial inclusion in Muslim communities. These will allow them to participate in various economic activities without compromising their religio-cultural identity. Ultimately, the uplift of the economy in Muslim areas has sustainable positive impacts, which will help address the country's problem on the emergence of violent extremism.

### *Institutions of Poverty Alleviation and Welfare Programs*

Congruent to Hizmet's approach, there is a need to institutionalize sustainable poverty alleviation programs, including Islamic Microfinance (Solaiman 2018), and proper management of economic and welfare institutions, including *zakāh* (charity) and *waqf* (endowment) (Gamon and Tagoranao 2017, 2018). It must be noted here that the institution of these sustainable poverty alleviation programs is, to some extent, already mandated by law. *Zakat* is a significant component of House Bill No. 5772. At the same time, *waqf* (endowment) and the development of Muslim Economic Affairs have also embodied RA No. 9997 and RA No. 11439, which are all necessary to address poverty effectively. One of the major contributors to sustain the Hizmet's humanitarian activities is the presence of welfare organizations owned by private individuals and philanthropists with immense altruism (Celik 2017). Unfortunately, these are rarely found in Muslim communities in the Philippines because most organizations engaged in humanitarian



activities are mainly dependent on foreign donors, which leads to a lack of sustainability. Thus, attempts to establish sustainable poverty alleviation programs and welfare institutions by different sectors could deepen poverty in Muslim communities. As viewed by Gamon and Tagoranao (2017), these programs can be self-sustained by utilizing *zakāh* and *waqf* coming from within local Muslim communities, without necessarily restricting funds coming from international entities for welfare purposes. Further, these institutions must be handled by a group of highly trained individuals with reliable experience to ensure their success and sustainability across Muslim communities.

Other programs to promote economic development in Muslim areas, concurrent to the work of Arthur (2012), are the introduction of financial literacy education and the creation of active business organizations of Muslim businesspersons both at the micro and macro levels. These remain a big challenge in bringing economic growth to Muslim communities. The poor financial literacy education and non-existence of Muslim business consortia curtail the potential of halal industries and Shari'ah-compliant services. This is sometimes caused by the individualistic attitudes of some Muslim businesspersons, particularly those based in Metro Manila. Up to this time, only a handful of Muslims was able to join the corporate world. Muslim Filipinos are confined to small and medium-sized enterprises, which could be considered subsistence endeavors. Thus, there is a need to teach financial literacy education and create a business consortium of Muslim Filipinos. Consequently, this will open the door for business opportunities and eventually promote wider financial inclusion and poverty alleviation.

### **Establishment of Dialogues and Religio-Legal Institutions**

The promotion of dialogue is essentially an activity to educate (Yildirim 2011). Therefore, the sustainable discussion is necessary if people want to know each other better and reach an agreement (Unal and Williams 2000). The Hizmet Movement summons Muslims to be aware that Islam teaches the need for dialogue and peace and that Muslims are called to be agents and witnesses to God's mercy (Celik 2008). Allah says: "O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another" (Al-Qur'an, 49:13). This verse indicates the significance

of dialogue and the imperative to create religio-legal institutions that will constructively pursue dialogue and resolve conflicts between and among clans, tribes, groups, and religions existing in Muslim communities. The conduct of dialogue at different levels must be governed by the principles of fairness and mutual respect and intend to achieve peaceful coexistence and constructive cooperation under the concept of brotherhood in faith and humanity. This will eventually erase the fears of Muslims and make them active participants in nation-building. The following sections discuss priority programs to promote dialogue and understanding at different levels and create the National Council of Ulama, the Shari'ah Advisory Board, and the Darul Ifta.

### *Institution of Conflict Resolution and Wasatiyyah Programs*

Many clan feuds are one of the major problems in Muslim communities that have enormous negative impacts on societal progress. One effective way to resolve feuds (*rido*), as advanced by Atar (2014), is the institution of traditional and community-based peaceful conflict resolution programs grounded on customary laws and will counter the proliferation of *rido* in various Muslim provinces and cities. This can be done by empowering traditional methods of conflict resolution with the full support of LGUs (Matuan 2014; Abbas 2008; Kamlian 2014). As suggested by Constantino (2014), this will be effectively done in collaboration with community-based NGOs and civil society groups advocating for conflict resolution. The case of Reconciliatory Initiatives for Development Opportunities (abbreviated as RIDO), founded by Sultan Hamidullah Atar of the Royal House of Marawi, is a commendable example (RIDO Inc. n.d.).

Other effective conflict resolution methods rooted in traditions of the Philippines' ethnolinguistic groups and sustainable models practiced in other countries must be explored to suit the needs of Muslim Filipinos given their diverse tribal and customary practices. Also, the role of the Agama Arbitration Council (as recognized under Philippine law by virtue of Articles 160 to 163, Title II, Book 4 of Presidential Decree No. 1083, and in Sections 17, 18, and 20, Article X of RA No. 11054) and other legal venues in resolving disputes in Muslim areas must also be intensified to minimize the proliferation of *rido*. Another possible initiative to address internal schism is the establishment of the Center for Wasatiyyah for Muslim-Filipinos, following the success of

the Thai Wasatiyyah Institute for Peace and Development in Thailand (Dorloh and Bin Yusuf 2015). This center will have a significant role in maintaining peaceful coexistence between and among families, tribes, and religious sects in Muslim areas.

### *Promotion of Tribal Dialogue*

The increasing frictions between and within Muslim tribes are worrisome, as they violate fundamental Islamic teachings on brotherhood. These rationalize the need for tribal dialogues, wherein tribes are convened to promote commonalities and address differences. The Bureau of Peace and Conflict Resolution (BPCR) and the Bureau of Muslim Cultural Affairs (BMCA) of the NCMF, as mandated by RA No. 9997, should expand their duties in promoting regular tribal dialogues. Consequently, these dialogues will lead to creating a Tribal Council of Elders, which will have proportional representation from different Muslim tribes. The institution of tribal dialogue and a council of elders will make Muslims get rid of political and bureaucratic patronages that have stalled the progress of socio-political institutions created for Muslims (Cayamodin 2019b). This will also promote congruence and agreement among Muslims, regardless of tribal affiliation. Furthermore, it will make state-mandated institutions for Muslim Filipinos, including the NCMF, MSU and its auxiliary branches, and the newly-established BARM, more effective in addressing the needs of Muslims.

### *Institution of Intra-faith and Interfaith Dialogue*

Religious diversity is as old as human history, and religion has been the fountainhead of civilization (Ayoub 2014). Hence, dialogue within and between religions is necessary. The relevance of dialogue can be ascribed from the recent development and emergence of religious groups and sects. Discussions on religious doctrines both in public and private places constantly clash to warrant intra-faith dialogue. The study argues that the dynamics of religious sects in the Philippines necessitates systematic intra-faith and interfaith dialogues.

On the one hand, intra-faith dialogue is indispensable. It shall focus on the interdenominational interpretations of Islamic teachings and practices following any of the recognized denominations (*madhāhib*) in the Philippines, including Hanafi, Maliki, Shafie, and Hambali (as identified in Presidential Decree No. 1083). The recent emergence of

Shi'a Muslim groups compels dialogue with Sunni groups to avoid further escalating doctrinal differences. On the other hand—and concurrent to the method adopted by the Hizmet's Pacific Dialogue Foundation—interfaith dialogue will deal on the relationship between Islam and other religions. Religions should focus on the promotion of their commonalities and address their differences through tolerance and respect. This will eventually eliminate religious discrimination and bigotry and foster peaceful coexistence between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Dialogue, as remedy for schism and a mechanism for bridging the gap between Christian dominant and Muslim minority communities, as conceptualized by Said Nursi and advanced by Hizmet movement, is believed to have originated as early as human history and civilization (Kurucan and Erol 2011). This paper presumed that Said Nursi, a Muslim scholar, might have drawn his view on adopting dialogue from a scriptural text and a prophetic tradition. The Holy Qur'an speaks of dialogue between people of different faiths in multiple passages (e.g., 3:64, 49:13, 5:48; 29:46, 60:8). Likewise, scholars believe that dialogue was an illustrious tradition of the Prophet Muhammad in dealing with the People of the Book – Jews, and Christians. Accordingly, the Madina Charter was a project for peaceful coexistence and a basis for dialogue between people of different faiths (Ibid). Therefore, this paper argues that intra-faith and interfaith dialogues must be regularly conducted across local, regional, and national levels to maximize their impact on the promotion of peaceful coexistence. Government agencies such as the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF), the National Security Council (NSC), and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) should work together to facilitate the institution of intra-faith and interfaith dialogues to stimulate a more expansive understanding between people from different faiths and cultural orientations. This will also empower religious groups and make them more effective in collectively addressing various social problems. Faith-based groups play a critical role in preventing and countering violent extremism.

*Creation of the National Council of Ulama,  
Shari'ah Advisory Councils, and a National Darul Ifta*

Concurrent to the established Islamic organizations mainly participated by Ulama in other countries, especially in Southeast Asia such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah of Indonesia; the Majlis

Ugama Islam Singapura (MUIS) or known as the Islamic Religious Council in Singapore; and the Central Islamic Council of Thailand (CICOT). The creation of the National Council of Ulama, the Shari'ah Advisory Council, and the Darul Ifta (Fatwa Council), duly authorized by the government under existing laws, is vital in promoting understanding and peaceful coexistence between and among Muslims and non-Muslims in the country. First, Article 1, Section 5 of RA No. 9997 authorizes the appointment of a Commissioner representing the ulama sector. However, since the passage of the law in 2010, the Office of the Commissioner for Ulama has yet to initiate commendable development programs that highlight the vital role of the ulama in resolving various legal and social issues in Muslim society. Currently, there are plenty of registered ulama organizations in the country, including the Ulama League of the Philippines (ULP), the National Ulama Conference of the Philippines (NUCP), and the Philippine Ulama Congress Organization Incorporated (PUCOI), among others. These organizations, however, are operating independently from each other and without a unified vision and recognized authority. Sheik Luqman Bin Usman Imam (Online Interview, June 2020), Professor of the University of the Philippines – Institute of Islamic Studies and the president of a duly registered religious and non-profit organization – the Philippine Ulama Congress Organization Inc. (PUCOI), explains that:

“PUCOI recognizes that it will be tremendously challenging to achieve its goal and objectives by itself alone. Hence, one of the core values of PUCOI is a partnership. Under this premise, we see that establishing a National Ulama Council is essential and a must, provided that it will be a cause of unity among Muslim Filipinos, for we are the minority in this country. All Muslim Filipinos will be well represented in the council. Provided further, that qualified and widely accepted and recognized National or Grand Mufti will head the council like those in other Muslim-minority countries such as the CICOT in Thailand and the MUIS in Singapore.

Thus, the commissioner's office must act as a catalyst for creating the National Council of Ulama, which will be an umbrella organization for the empowerment of ulama that the Commissioner for Ulama directly supervises.

Second, the establishment of Shari'ah Advisory Councils, as contained on RA No. 11439, is equally essential to appease Muslim Filipinos' legal concerns in various matters related to their day-to-day

living. Dr. Anwar M. Radiamoda (Personal Interview, June 2020), a Shari'ah Counselor and the Director of the Shari'ah Center at Mindanao State University viewed that:

“The establishment of Shari'ah Advisory Councils in different government and non-government institutions across levels in the country has enormous significance to address the legal concerns of Muslim-Filipinos. These Councils will help not only to purely legal affairs of Muslim Filipinos but also to shape their education anchored to peace in various capacities. It will help guide socioeconomic institutions that may desire to engage the Muslim population in the country. In other words, the Councils will have multifaceted functions as in the case of our Shari'ah Center at least in the University, City, Provincial, or Regional level.”

The study presumes that the creation of these councils will help the government vastly in the implementation of development programs mandated by laws, such as the development of halal industries (Domona 2009) under RA No. 10817 and RA No. 9997, management of Muslim economic affairs, and the expansion of Islamic banking and finance by RA No. 6848 and/or RA No. 11439. These endeavors need the aid of Shari'ah Advisory Councils, as in the case of other countries. The establishment of these councils will also strengthen the promulgation and implementation of the Shari'ah programs in the country as mandated by PD No. 1083, RA No. 9997, and RA No. 11054, which might appease the long aspiration of the Bangsamoro and the whole Muslim-Filipino community in the Philippines.

Lastly, although there was an established regional Darul Ifta in the now-defunct ARMM and a few cities and provinces outside BARMM, the institution of a National Darul Ifta has tremendous significance as it was authorized by law. Articles 164 to 168 under Title 3 of Book 4 of the Code of Muslim Personal Laws of the Philippines (PD No. 1083) authorized a jurisconsult (*mufti*) for Islamic law. However, since the departure of the last jurisconsult, Atty. Saaduddin A. Alauya, who was first appointed as jurisconsult in 1996 during the time of former President Fidel V. Ramos and retired in 2003 due to old age, the Aquino and Duterte administrations failed to realize the enormous significance of the appointment of a jurisconsult to address various legal concerns of Muslims in the country. It undermines the pursuit of Muslims for unified religio-cultural practices and their quest for defense against radical ideologies due to the absence of the highest legal authority. It can be argued that the appointment of a jurisconsult should not be taken

for granted by the Supreme Court and the Executive Branch of the government because of its vital role in the issuance of legal resolutions (*fatāwá*) about issues affecting Muslim communities within and outside the country. The Office of the Jurisconsult will play a major role in deciding cases forwarded from lower Shari'ah courts to the Supreme Court to avoid erroneous decisions rendered by the highest court in the country (Rappler 2018). By the law, the jurisconsult should be the default chair of the envisioned National Darul Ifta to cater to the inevitable need of Muslim-Filipinos for *fatāwá* efficiently. In summary, the creation of the National Council of Ulama, Shari'ah Advisory Councils, and a National Darul Ifta will pave the way in addressing various religious, social, and legal issues in Muslim communities.

## **Conclusion**

The complex interdependent predicaments of Muslims in the Philippines, as discussed above, need to be addressed using sustainable remedies, concurrent to the Hizmet approach, that is feasible with the current social environment and considerate of existing religio-cultural identities of Muslim-Filipinos. The 'triumvirate quandaries' hypothesis of Said Nursi may not necessarily be the only way to illustrate the predicaments that have weakened the progress of Muslim-Filipino communities, but this demonstrates the major interrelated factors, congruent to systems theory, that affect other elements of Muslim society that need to be given more attention. Similarly, the remedies shown by the Hizmet movement in different countries, including the Philippines, may not be the only solution to the concerns of Muslim Filipinos. Their proven impacts and compatibility in contemporary situations suggest their imperativeness and imply the need to contextualize these to suit the religio-cultural sensitivities embedded in Muslim-Filipino society. The harmonious, progressive operation of the Hizmet approach across world countries in this era of globalization amidst the prevalence of violent extremism in the Muslim communities suggests its relevance to addressing the seeming stalemate and loss of hope for meaningful change has ingrained in the minds of Muslim-Filipinos.

The present dualistic education system in Muslim communities, a product of successive colonization processes, and legalistic religious and one-dimensional paradigm congenital from unprogressive foreign

education models lack significant components that are compatible with the religio-cultural orientations of Muslim-Filipino society. This dualistic education system fails to produce “vaccinated” human resources or full humans and undermines the realization of a balanced Muslim society (*ummatan wasatan*) in the Philippines. Hence, to remedy these nuances, educational institutions in the Muslim communities, particularly in the BARMM, should employ the IHES across the different levels of education under DepEd and CHED. The successful implementation of IHES needs the full support of local, regional, and national governments in various capacities.

Poverty is not supposed to be a predicament in regions like Mindanao, which is blessed with vast natural resources. The potential to develop the economy of Muslim areas has become enormously hopeful under the recent passage of laws and standards that aim to advance the socioeconomic conditions of Muslim communities, including the current establishment of the BARMM. However, part of Philippine laws, which remains uncultivated, is the religious-oriented economic sectors such as zakat, waqf, Islamic bank, and finance. The development of these institutions should not be hindered by a mere principle of law when the dignity and the future of Muslim Filipinos as citizens of the Philippines are at stake. At the same time, the Philippine Constitution also considers the customs, traditions, beliefs, and interests of National Cultural Communities in the formulation and implementation of policies. As agreed by many scholars, the deepening poverty in the south is one of the major factors that led to various micro and macro levels of schism. This paper argues that solving this predicament is equally imperative to change the revolutionary mindset of Muslim Filipinos and meaningfully cooperate to nation-building.

Thus, this study’s advancement of integrated and holistic education system and the development of Islamic economic institutions in the Muslim communities are strongly viewed to lessen the frictions between and among ethnicities, clans, and religious sects. The peaceful coexistence of these groups in Muslim communities, with the help of the dialogue anchored to the sublime concept of respect, tolerance and a balanced way of life (*wasatīyah*), as advanced by Hizmet movement, will fortify the impacts of an integrated and holistic education system and sustain the future gains of Islamic economic institutions. This will



eventually reverse the cycle of the interdependent predicaments from a pessimistic and negative direction, which lasted since the beginning of the colonization of Mindanao, into an optimistic and positive route, which will ensure the future progress of Muslim communities in particular and the country at large.

## Endnotes

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The journal invites scholars and experts working in all disciplines in the humanities and social sciences pertaining to Islam or Muslim societies. Articles should be original, research-based, unpublished and not under review for possible publication in other journals. All submitted papers are subject to review of the editors, editorial board, and blind reviewers. Submissions that violate our guidelines on formatting or length will be rejected without review.

Articles should be written in American English between approximately 10,000-15,000 words including text, all tables and figures, notes, references, and appendices intended for publication. All submission must include 150 words abstract and 5 keywords. Quotations, passages, and words in local or foreign languages should

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All notes must appear in the text as citations. A citation usually requires only the last name of the author(s), year of publication, and (sometimes) page numbers. For example: (Hefner 2009a, 45; Geertz 1966, 114). Explanatory footnotes may be included but should not be used for simple citations. All works cited must appear in the reference list at the end of the article. In matter of bibliographical style, *Studia Islamika* follows the American Political Science Association (APSA) manual style, such as below:

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3. Feener, Michael R., and Mark E. Cammack, eds. 2007. *Islamic Law in Contemporary Indonesia: Ideas and Institutions*. Cambridge: Islamic Legal Studies Program.
4. Wahid, Din. 2014. *Nurturing Salafi Manhaj: A Study of Salafi Pesantrens in Contemporary Indonesia*. PhD dissertation. Utrecht University.
5. Utriza, Ayang. 2008. "Mencari Model Kerukunan Antaragama." *Kompas*. March 19: 59.
6. Ms. *Undhang-Undhang Banten*, L.Or.5598, Leiden University.
7. Interview with K.H. Sahal Mahfudz, Kajen, Pati, June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

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أحمدي عثمان

تصميم الغلاف:

س. برنكا



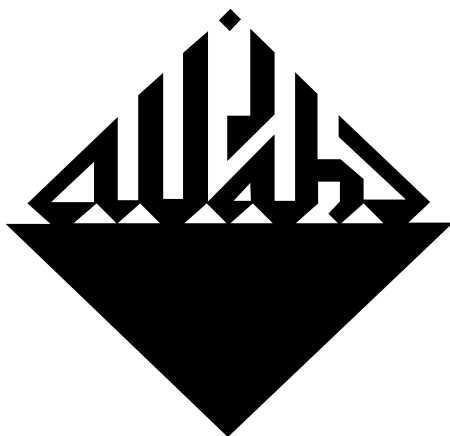
# ستوديا اسلاميا



# سثوديا اسراميا

مجة إنءونيسية للءراساء الإسلامية

السنة الثامنة والعشرون، العءء ١، ٢٠٢١



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THE PREDICAMENTS OF MUSLIMS IN THE PHILIPPINES:  
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السبائر وشبكة العلماء المصريين  
في نوسانتارا: ءراساء في مخطوط  
«بابء في بيان حكم شرب الكفان»  
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