

**Philippines**

# *Ethnicity in Philippines*

## *Group selection*

In the Philippines, the decisive units for an assessment of access to/exclusion from executive power on the central state level are umbrella categories with different subgroups (corresponding to ethnic clusters). Thus, we can determine relative power access for **Christian lowlanders**, the **Fil-Chinese** (Filipinos of Chinese descent), the **Moro** (Muslim Filipinos) and the **Indigenous Cultural Communities** (ICC, the official designation for indigenous peoples in the country). There is neither a public nor a hidden key that decides entitlement to power access for the ethnic subgroups, e.g. the Ilokano, Tagalog, Visaya. The ethnic cluster groups consist each of the following major (linguistic) subgroups:

- Christian lowlanders: Tagalog; Ilokano; Pangasinan; Bikolano; Waray-Waray; Aklan; Ilongo (Hiligaynon); Cebuano.
- Fil-Chinese: mostly Hokkien Moro: Maguindanao; Maranao; Tausug; Sambil; Yakan.
- Moro: Muslim Filipinos inhabiting the southern Mindanao region.
- Indigenous Cultural Communities: Kankanaey; Bontok; Kalinga; Ifugao; Gaddang; Tinggian; Ilongot; Agta; Aeta; Mangyan; Tagbanua; Palaw'an; Manobo; Bagobo; Mangguangan; Mandaya/Mansaka; Bukidnon; B'laan; T'boli; Tiruray; Dulangan; Tagabili; Subanen.

In the Philippine case, changes in groups' relative access to power are indicated not by alterations in the distribution of central power, but by changing local or regional power constellations. Highest executive offices and senate and congress seats circulate exclusively among the Christian lowlander Filipinos, with the occasional cabinet post that goes to a member of the Moro or the Fil-Chinese minority who was propelled to power on a party ticket. The two decisive forces are the separatist movement in the Muslim south, which began around 1971, and the movement for self-determination (which implies for the Philippines cultural and economic demands rather than secession) among the country's indigenous peoples, whose start roughly coincided with the fall of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986. Both movements have not aimed for national executive offices.

## *Power relations*

### *Christian lowlanders*

Christian lowlanders share power as part of an informal ethnic coalition. Power runs in political dynasties/families that have a local base in the province; “ethnicity” (e.g. a politician’s Tagalog, Ilokano or Cebuano background) plays a subordinated role to political entrepreneurship that operates on the basis of clan-based networks. Regionally-based political families access power through a neo-patrimonial national party system (<sup>4317</sup>, Chapter 1). There are Muslim political dynasties that dominate local politics in Mindanao; occasionally, they conquer cabinet positions in Manila, but executive political power on the national level is chiefly an all-Christian lowlander affair. Christian lowlanders have been coded as having the power monopoly for the period 1946-1971, and as being dominant ever after. The 2016 General Election results suggest that this pattern is likely to continue under the presidency of Rodrigo Duterte.

<sup>4317</sup> [Abinales & Amoroso , 2015]

### *Moro*

The Moro launched an armed struggle for secession in the beginning of the 1970s, which led to a peace agreement based on the central state’s offer of regional autonomy in 1976 (Tripoli Agreement). Various and changing armed groups have since continued the struggle for secession and/or an Islamic state in Muslim Mindanao, prompting ever new state attempts at co-opting them by offers of regional autonomy (the latest one being the establishment of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) in 1989, and the expansion of the ARRM’s coverage in 2001). Moros were coded as being powerless before the onset of armed radicalism (1971), as having local power through self-exclusion between 1971 and 1989, and local power secured by the autonomy scheme put into place in 1989, thereafter with powerless coding at the national level.

The Islamist MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front) continued the struggle for secession more radically than the MNLF (Moro National Liberation Front). As part of a peace deal between the Philippine government and the MILF, the autonomous region of Bangsamoro was created, which would give more autonomy rights to the Moro. This act of legislation which was to be implemented until 2016 is still unrealized (<sup>4318</sup>). The expansion of Moro access to political power is hampered by continuing insurgent and terrorist attacks by the MILF and Abu Sayyaf which have made political compromise difficult. Moro participation in political life remained localized to the ARMM and sub-regional governments in Mindanao. One notable exception was the bid by Jamalul Kiram III, current Sultan of Sulu, to obtain a Senate position in the 2007 General Elections. On the whole, Moro access to political power persists only at the sub-state level. Several tentative peace agreements reached in the 2000s were undermined by political violence. In 1990, the population of the ARMM (Autonomous Republic of Muslim Mindanao) was 2,108,061 and by 2010

<sup>4318</sup> [Quimpo, 2016]

had risen to 3,256,140 and to 3,781,387 or approximately 3.745% of the country's population in the latest 2015 census (<sup>4319</sup>).

<sup>4319</sup> [Philippine Statistics Authority, 2017]

The idea of “Bangsamoro” (a Moro nation) remained prevalent on the Western parts of the island of Mindanao and on adjoining smaller islands of the Sulu Archipelago, but “a majority of Bangsamoro leaders accepted to stay with the Philippines in exchange for a greater degree of autonomy” (<sup>4320</sup>). A local referendum on the implementation of the “Bangsamoro organic law” (BOL) in January 2019 was supported by an overwhelming majority but did not change the situation on the ground (*ibid.*). Therefore, their powerless status on the national level (with regional autonomy) was retained.

<sup>4320</sup> [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020]

### *Indigenous Cultural Communities*

In the case of the Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICC), the struggle has been for local territorial control, and perhaps for the re-drawing of local-level political units (i.e. creation of “indigenous” municipalities), but executive office at the national level was never in the purview of indigenous political leaders. Mobilization (though not for a share of national power) coincided with the downfall of Marcos in 1986 (manifested in the mushrooming of indigenous organizations, agitation for land rights and against development aggression), winning the ICC a landmark piece of progressive legislation in 1997 (the so-called IPRA, ‘Indigenous Peoples Right Act’) that secures local land rights. Unlike the Moro, however, they have not won concessions that include devolution of power to the regional/sub-regional level. (In the Cordillera in North Luzon, the Philippine Communist party and the armed insurgency movement built around it have a strong base among the indigenous communities collectively called ‘Cordillera Peoples’).

However, they frame their struggle in class rather than in ethno-nationalist terms; if they vie for national power, they do so not as Igorot, but as part of a united revolutionary front of the “oppressed masses” of the country. The ICC were coded as being irrelevant before 1986, and progressed to powerlessness after the onset of their movement for self-determination. The ICC remain underrepresented and excluded from access to national power despite continued attempts to further their land rights through national forums such as the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP).

In 2019, there were no indigenous Senate members, but “at least three members of indigenous descent” in the House of Representatives (<sup>4321</sup>). They did not hold any executive state power. Indigenous groups, Muslims and others maintained that “electing senators from a nationwide list favored established political figures from the Manila area (*ibid.*).”

<sup>4321</sup> [US Department of State, 2019]

*Fil-Chinese*

The third ethnic category that is excluded from central executive power are the Fil-Chinese. This group contains the second or more generation immigrants from China. The Philippines and China share a long history of migration dating back nearly 1000 years, leading to a tradition of Chinese immigration to the Philippines. It was fostered by mass naturalization, and therefore legal equality, under the Marcos regime from 1975 onwards. This legislative act led to the naturalization of up to 90% of the Chinese population living in the Philippines. The former discrimination of this group is therefore coded to have ended in 1975. Many second generation immigrants nowadays have closer cultural ties to the Filipino than to the Chinese community. This process was encouraged by intermarriage between first or second generation immigrants and Christian lowlanders (<sup>4322</sup>). Currently there is no party explicitly advocating for the interests of the Chinese Mestizos or first generation immigrants. This is mainly due to popular resentment against the Fil-Chinese being a dominant group in corporate life. Political influence is exercised nevertheless via party funding. From time to time ethnic Fil-Chinese rise to high government positions but rather on party tickets than based on ethnic mobilization (<sup>4323</sup>).

<sup>4322</sup> [Dai, 2017]

As a minority, they are subjected to “active, intentional and targeted discrimination”; widespread, virulent antisinism has, for instance, manifested itself in the serial abduction of Chinese-Filipino businessmen (and their later release against ransom) in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The prevalent arrangement is for the Chinese business community to buy protection by financing the political careers of Christian lowlander politicians. Seldom do Chinese entrepreneurs openly venture into the national political arena. Consequently, the Chinese Filipinos were coded throughout as discriminated in spite of certain individuals such as Arthur Cua Yap (Secretary of Agriculture under President Arroyo, 2004-2005 and 2006-2009) having received high profile posts at the national level.

<sup>4323</sup> [Minority Rights Group International, 2017]

# *Bibliography*

- [Abinales & Amoroso , 2015] Abinales, P. N., & Amoroso, D. J. (2005). *State and Society in the Philippines*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020] Bertelsmann Stiftung. (2020). Transformation Index BTI 2020. Philippines. Retrieved on 13.10.2020 from: <https://www.bti-project.org/de/berichte/country-report-PHL.html>
- [Dai, 2017] Dai, F. (2017). Chinese Immigration to the Philippines since the Late 1970s. In *Contemporary Chinese Diasporas* (pp. 167-186). Palgrave, Singapore.
- [IBON Facts and Figures, 1991] IBON Facts and Figures. (1991). IBON Facts and Figures 30 November 1991, 14(22).
- [Minority Rights Group International, 2017] Minority Rights Group International. (2017). World directory of minorities and indigenous peoples - Philippines. Retrieved on 12.10.2017 from: <http://minorityrights.org/minorities/chinese-5/>
- [Philippine Statistics Authority, 2017] Philippine Statistics Authority, National Statistics Office. (2017). 2015 census of population and housing. Retrieved on 17.10.2017 from: <http://web0.psa.gov.ph/population-and-housing>
- [Quimpo, 2016] Quimpo, N. G. (2016). Mindanao: Nationalism, Jihadism and Frustrated Peace. *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs*, 3(1), 64-89.
- [Rodriguez & Maulana, 2017] Rodriguez, M. & Maulana, N. (2007). Ethnic groups fear not being counted properly in census. *Philippine Inquirer*. Retrieved on 11.11.2017 from: [http://globalnation.inquirer.net/news/news/view/20070824-84516/Ethnic\\_groups\\_fear\\_not\\_being\\_counted\\_properly\\_in\\_census](http://globalnation.inquirer.net/news/news/view/20070824-84516/Ethnic_groups_fear_not_being_counted_properly_in_census)
- [US Department of State, 2019] US Department of State. (2019). Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019. Philippines. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour. Retrieved on 13.10.2020 from: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/philippines/>

Political status of ethnic groups in P

From 1946 until 1970

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Christian lowlanders	0.859	MONOPOLY
Moro	0.051	POWERLESS
Fil-Chinese	0.015	DISCRIMINATED

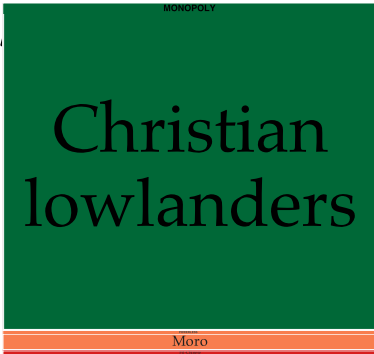


Figure 831: Political status of ethnic groups in Philippines during 1946-1970.

From 1971 until 1975

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Christian lowlanders	0.859	DOMINANT
Moro	0.051	SELF-EXCLUSION
Fil-Chinese	0.015	DISCRIMINATED

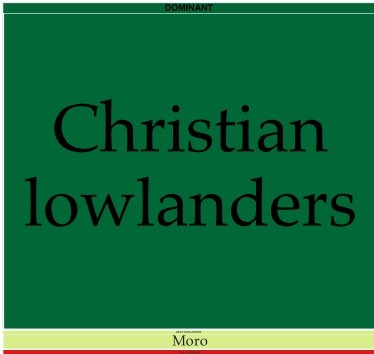


Figure 832: Political status of ethnic groups in Philippines during 1971-1975.

From 1976 until 1986

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Christian lowlanders	0.859	DOMINANT
Moro	0.051	SELF-EXCLUSION
Fil-Chinese	0.015	IRRELEVANT

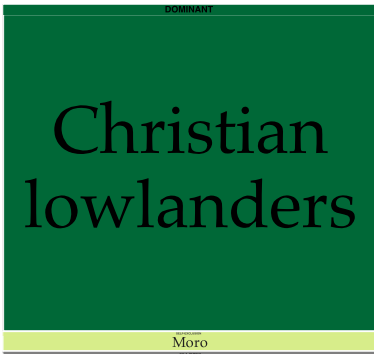


Figure 833: Political status of ethnic groups in Philippines during 1976-1986.

From 1987 until 1988

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Christian lowlanders	0.859	DOMINANT
Indigenous	0.075	POWERLESS
Moro	0.051	SELF-EXCLUSION
Fil-Chinese	0.015	IRRELEVANT

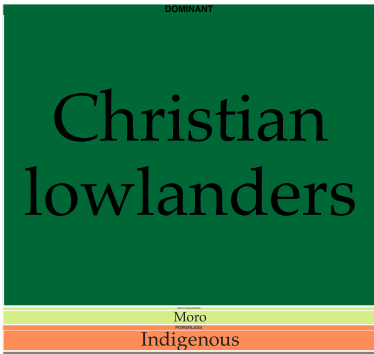


Figure 834: Political status of ethnic groups in Philippines during 1987-1988.

From 1989 until 2021

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Christian lowlanders	0.859	DOMINANT
Indigenous	0.075	POWERLESS
Moro	0.051	POWERLESS
Fil-Chinese	0.015	IRRELEVANT



# Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Philippines

From 1946 until 1946

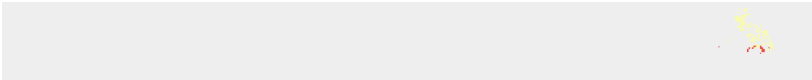


Figure 836: Map of ethnic groups in Philippines during 1946-1946.




Group name		Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
	Christian lowlanders	186 824	Regional & urban
	Moro	31 243	Regionally based
	Fil-Chinese	0	Urban

Table 307: List of ethnic groups in Philippines during 1946-1946.

From 1947 until 1948

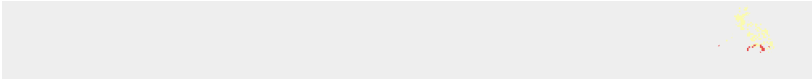


Figure 837: Map of ethnic groups in Philippines during 1947-1948.




Group name		Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
	Christian lowlanders	186 824	Regional & urban
	Moro	31 243	Regionally based
	Fil-Chinese	0	Urban

Table 308: List of ethnic groups in Philippines during 1947-1948.

From 1949 until 1975

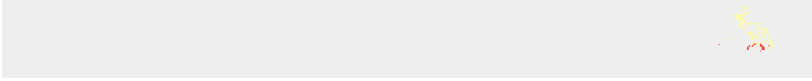


Figure 838: Map of ethnic groups in Philippines during 1949-1975.

	Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
■	Christian lowlanders	186 824	Regional & urban
■	Moro	31 243	Regionally based
■	Fil-Chinese	0	Urban

Table 309: List of ethnic groups in Philippines during 1949-1975.

*From 1976 until 1976*

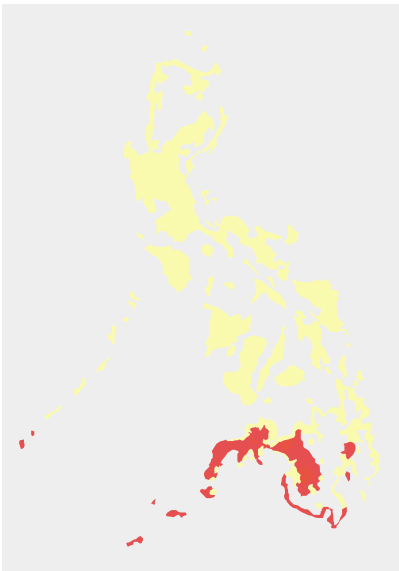


Figure 839: Map of ethnic groups in Philippines during 1976-1976.

	Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
■	Christian lowlanders	186 824	Regional & urban
■	Moro	31 243	Regionally based

Table 310: List of ethnic groups in Philippines during 1976-1976.

*From 1977 until 1986*

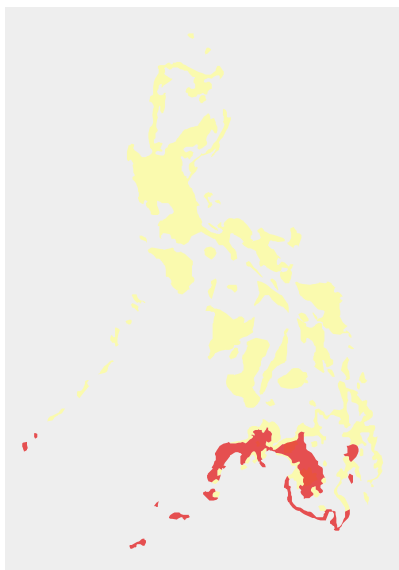


Figure 840: Map of ethnic groups in Philippines during 1977-1986.

	Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
■	Christian lowlanders	186 824	Regional & urban
■	Moro	31 243	Regionally based

Table 311: List of ethnic groups in Philippines during 1977-1986.

*From 1987 until 2021*

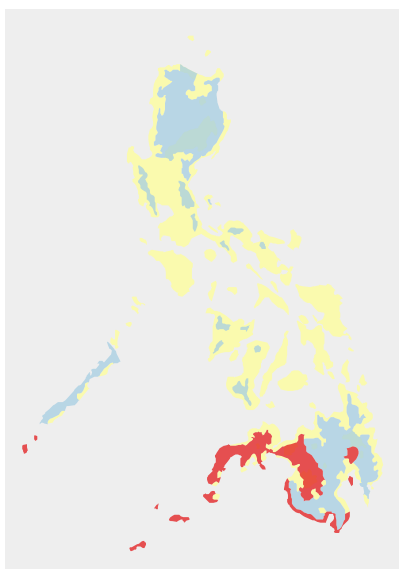


Figure 841: Map of ethnic groups in Philippines during 1987-2021.

	Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
■	Christian lowlanders	186 824	Regional & urban
■	Indigenous	96 094	Regionally based
■	Moro	31 243	Regionally based

Table 312: List of ethnic groups in Philippines during 1987-2021.

# Conflicts in Philippines

*Starting on 1946-07-30*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Philippines	Huk		1946-07-30			
Government of Philippines	CPP		1969-09-29			
Government of Philippines	Military faction (forces of Honasan, Abenina)	Zumel)		1987-01-26		

*Starting on 1970-08-19*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Philippines	MIM	Moro	1970-08-19	Explicit	Yes	Yes
Government of Philippines	MNLF	Moro	1972-10-30	Explicit	Yes	Yes
Government of Philippines	MILF	Moro	1990-01-31	Explicit	Yes	Yes
Government of Philippines	ASG	Moro	1993-05-02	Explicit	Yes	No
Government of Philippines	MNLF - NM	Moro	2001-11-18	Explicit	Yes	Yes
Government of Philippines	MNLF - HM	Moro	2007-04-12	Explicit	Yes	Yes
Government of Philippines	BIFM	Moro	2012-08-04	Explicit	Yes	Yes
Government of Philippines	al-Harakat al-Islamiyah	Moro	2016-01-18	Explicit	Yes	
Government of Philippines	Maute group	Moro	2016-02-21	Explicit	Yes	Yes
Government of Philippines	BIFM-K		2016-07-25			

*Starting on 2016-05-31*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Philippines	IS	Moro	2016-05-31	No	Yes	