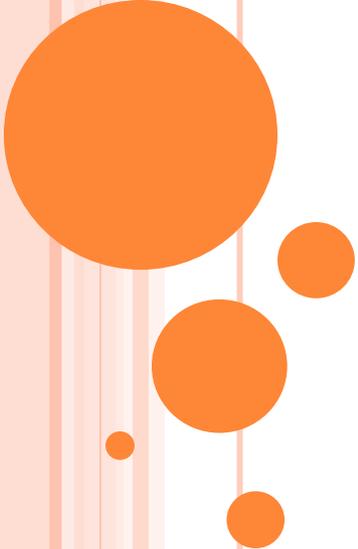


THE STATUS AND PROSPECT OF THE “BANGSAMORO SEPARATIST MOVEMENT” IN THE SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES



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Statement of the Problems:

1. What is the struggle of the Bangsamoro people in the Philippines;
2. What are the major factors that brought about such struggle;
3. What is the status of this struggle;
4. How the struggle affects present developments in Southeast Asia region; and
5. How Muslim separatism in the Philippines can be addressed using domestic, regional or international frameworks.



INTRODUCTION

In the context of the establishment of peace and development in Mindanao, Philippines, the issue on how to address the long-decades of Moro-politics was centered on the government's political agenda. On October 2012, the Philippine government signed a Peace Framework Agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which can be interpreted as both sides seriously committed to end the Mindanao armed conflict.

Any peace agreement is a response to people's expectations to end differences and find commonalities based on mutual search for understanding and harmony.



Southeast Asia Scenario:

Islamic movement to promote Islamic awareness and system is an emerging phenomenon...

The Philippines is no exception to this.

Well-known cases of separatist movement are: the Bangsamoro in the Philippines, the Patani Malays in southern Thailand, the Shan and Karen and Rohingya in Burma, and the Acehnese in Indonesia.



Influenced of Islam

Islam was the principal cause of Muslim separatism in Southeast Asia and shapes the objectives of any separatist movement in this region... (Clive J. Christie).

Muslim communities in this region have been trapped on the wrong side with the formation of nation-state and subjected to either European colonialism or pre-colonial patterns of political power.



The Bangsamoro people

The 13 Moro ethno-linguistic tribes in the Philippines were united by Islam religion... They were active and assertive in developing their autonomous communal institutions and religious practices through Islamic consciousness and propagation.

In the past, Islam in the Philippines has surfaced as a strong political force for mobilization and political protest against secular political order. It is a form of power struggle fought under the banners of nationalism, religion, and human rights.



Policy towards the Moro people

State's policy was premised on national interest that gives full meaning and respect to their ethnic and religious identities as part of the broader national polity...

- Current developments in Southeast Asia have shaped the struggle of the Bangsamoro people for self-determination, and served as a strong political force.
- Both national interest and the separate interest of the Bangsamoro people are congruent with the broader interest of SEA region.



THE MORO-POLITICS: SELF-DETERMINATION AND ARMED SEPARATISM

- The Bangsamoro people are advancing their aspirations and continue their struggle to establish their own separate nation-state through self-determination aims to acquire political power and preserved economic and social resources.
- The government will find this as a problem of political integration in the Philippines; hindrance to the effort to consolidate and assimilate various ethnic groups under one political structure or through the regional autonomous government; and an obstacle towards nation-building.



The Source and Foundation of Moro Separatism:

The interplay of the historical and legal frameworks served as the source and foundation of the Moro separatist struggle in the Philippines.

The legal Framework

- The struggle for self-determination with legitimate aims and purposes is recognized by international law and protected by international conventions on human rights.
- *Internal self-determination* concerns with the right of the people to govern itself. It is a right of the people to control significant aspect of internal matters.
- *The Moro people regarded the concept of national self-determination as their fundamental rights... (W. T Che Man)*



Historical Framework: Moro's Sultanates

“Of various linguistic groups that inhabited the Philippines at the time of Spanish conquest, the Muslims of the south had the most developed social organization. This was due mainly to the Islamization of Mindanao and Sulu...(R. Constantino)

These sultanates exhibited a level of independence and developments prior to colonization of the Philippines.



Viewing Separatism in Southeast Asia: the case of the Moro people

- Situated along ethnic identities where minority groups became as such in their states after the struggle for independence.
- The various separatist movements that emerged in SEA in the Post-WW I until WW II had common historical experience like the development of nationalist resistance to the European colonial powers, the definition of the respective national identities of the region, the upheaval of the period of Japanese intervention, and the establishment of independent states (C. Christie).
- From 1945 to 1990 an era of discerning the legitimacy of separatist movement. A problem not from the side of the separatist movement, but from the state as a problem to be resolved by appropriate policies. This will continue to apply to the Mindanao problem as on top of government's political agenda.



But the old paradigm of viewing Moro-politics was confined to and influenced by these factors:

- (1) Unfair treatment experienced by Muslims;*
- (2) cultural and religious differences;*
- (3) integration into the national polity resulted in oppression, exploitation, neglect, and discrimination;*
- (4) lost of ancestral lands;*
- (5) minoritization of Muslims due to migration of settlers in Mindanao;*
- (6) assertion of historical events;*
- (7) anti-colonialism; and*
- (8) shifting of political power from traditional Moro leaders to Christian settlers.*



Islamic movement on the promotion of Islamic awareness and system has been described by Asian scholar Dr. Hussin Mutalib based on these manifestations:

- (1) Demand for greater enactment of Shar'iah or Islamic law as part of state laws;*
- (2) A noticeable change in Muslim dress (donning of headscarf) and eating habits (concern for halal foods);*
- (3) A similar increase in the birth of Islamist political parties, both in number and influence;*
- (4) Local governments, both with Muslims as the majority or minority community, have begun to result to Islam as legitimating tools in their political agendas; and*
- (5) The demand for Islamic education in Madrasah and Mosques, and the flourishing of Islamic institutions and other research institutes, has never been discernible.*



THE BANGSAMORO SEPARATIST MOVEMENT

What guarantee success for any separatist movement like the case of the Moro people of Mindanao are conditions by the following:

- (a) stimulated by a sense of marginality which is physical and not merely conceptual, that is, to convert their fears into political goals;*
- (b) a sense of territorial legitimacy, that is, an absolute right to occupy a given territory of their own which can be linked to their history of a pre-colonial identity;*
- (c) a grass root support and a mass organization;*
- (d) a sense of unity and oneness despite of their ethnic diversity, they can still unite with a common objective and goal; and*
- (e) the level of international support.*



Viewing Bangsamoro Separatist Movement:

- *Acquired religious dimension;*
- *Growing awareness of marginality and sense of alienation;*
- *Period of decolonization resulted in political protest that gave birth to the formation of the Moro separatist movement (e. g. MNLF and MILF)*



THE POLICY OF POLITICAL AUTONOMY: A ROAD TOWARDS NATIONAL INTEGRATION

- State policy towards Moro-politics is anchored on national integration. This policy of national integration is weak in so far as the Moro people are concerned. Thus, threatened by Moro separatism.
- *National integration* is intended to distribute equal political resources of the state, and to foster national identity.
- This will allow a particular group (like the Moro people) to participate in decision-making so as not to deprive them of their rights and privileges.
- In so doing, the government will fully achieved legitimacy, survival and growth.



How to address Moro-politics and Moro separatism?

- But the issue to confront is how responsive and effective political autonomy to address Moro-politics and armed separatism ...
- This will provide a dichotomized distinction between ethnic nationalism and national identity.
- To promote ethnic nationalism is the core issue, which any separatist movement in Mindanao is trying to advance that ultimately leads to the establishment of a system of governance suitable and responsive to the needs of the Bangsamoro people.



THE MINDANAO PEACE PROCESS: A PATH TO SUCCESS OR FAILURE?

Peace agreement is a state mechanism aims to arrive at political compromises...

- The government of the Philippines utilized it to counter any armed resistance.
- Moreover, it was used by the government to achieve *national security*, which may be defined as a condition in which people's way of life and their institutions, their territorial integrity and sovereignty, including their well-being, are protected and enhanced.
- Thus, this is a pre-requisite for economic growth and development.



Peace Accord...

- Through a peace accord, the government engaged and encouraged the Moro armed separatist movement (e. g. *MNLF AND MILF*) to participate in the resolution of the Mindanao problem.
- From the 1976 Tripoli Agreement to the Peace Framework Agreement signed on October 2012.
- Philippine government introduced different peace formulas to address Moro separatism.



The 1976 Tripoli Agreement

The 1976 Tripoli Agreement was the jumping point for the government to bring back the Bangsamoro people to the mainstream society by offering political autonomy.

- Political autonomy within the framework of the Tripoli Agreement was accepted due to limited international support for secession.
- The MNLF leadership distrusted the Marcos government for non-compliance with the letter and spirit of the accord when the same was submitted for referendum and thereafter issued Presidential Order creating two autonomous regions (IX and XII) in Mindanao.



Creation of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM)

- In 1986, the Cory Aquino administration signed a ceasefire agreement with the MNLF; and committed to give autonomy to the Moro people within the framework of the Philippine Constitution.
- Pursuant to the mandate of the 1987 Philippine Constitution on Autonomy, the Philippine Congress enacted the Organic Act (Republic Act No. 6734) creating the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).



The 1996 GRP-MNLF Peace Agreement

- In 1996 the Ramos administration signed a peace agreement with the MNLF (*1996 GRP-MNLF Peace Agreement*).
- The MNLF considered the agreement as the final peace agreement between the government of the Philippines and the Bangsamoro people.
- The agreement created the so-called Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD), a three-year transition mechanism that will oversee development efforts in the areas originally mentioned in the Tripoli Agreement.
- After three years, a plebiscite will be conducted to determine if these areas are willing to join the ARMM.



Estrada's administration "All Out War" policy

Changes in the policies of the government prompted the Arroyo's administration to deal with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) on a different peace formula as a response to Estrada's administration "*All Out War*" policy against the MILF.



Gloria Arroyo's Administration MOA-AD

- On 5 August 2008 the government and the MILF about to sign the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) which envisioned the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE), but halted by the Philippine Supreme Court on the ground of unconstitutionality.
- The MOA-AD received strong public reactions and oppositions for being secretive and lack of political consultations with the people in the areas affected by the so-called Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE) vested with powers of a sovereign state.
- The issue on Ancestral Domain was central to the MOA. It was one of the three major talking points in the original negotiation between the Arroyo government and the MILF. The other two are on Security aspect and Rehabilitation and Development aspect.



Benigno Aquino's Peace Framework Agreement

- The controversy created by the MOA-AD pushes the government of President Benigno S. Aquino III to revise government's policy towards Moro armed separatist movement in Mindanao, and reconstituted a peace panel that will negotiate with the MILF.
- On 15 October 2012, the government peace panel signed a peace commitment as major points of reference preparatory to a final peace agreement with the MILF. This is known as the "*Joint GPH-MILF Draft Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro*".
- Both parties agreed to establish the "*Bangsamoro*" as a new autonomous political entity (NPE) to replace the (present) Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).
- The ministerial form and cabinet system Bangsamoro shall be governed by a Basic Law.



Highlights of the Basic Law

- The Basic Law shall be drafted by the Transition Commission composed of fifteen (15) members. Seven (7) members will be selected by the GPH and eight (8) members, including the Chairman, will be selected by the MILF.
- When the Basic Law is ratified by the people in the core areas of territory of the Bangsamoro, the ARMM will be abolished and replaced by the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) and all authorities vested in the ARMM will be devolved to the BTA during the interim period and continue to perform functions in the area of autonomy pursuant to its mandates under the basic Law.
- The BTA will be immediately replaced in 2016 upon the election and assumption of the members of the Bangsamoro legislative assembly and the formation of the Bangsamoro government.
- But the national government will retain the powers on: *Defense and external security, Foreign policy, common market and global trade, Coinage and monetary policy, Citizenship and naturalization, Postal Service, and other powers that may be agreed upon by the parties.*



THE ROLE OF THIRD PARTIES IN THE MINDANAO PEACE PROCESS: WHAT ARE THEIR INTERESTS?

- The Mindanao problem is closely monitored by the international community. Given its rich natural resources and economic potential, Mindanao will gain better opportunities in trade and foreign investment and tourism activities that will help boost Philippine economy and the economies of neighboring countries in SEA region, as well as European countries.
- Generally, countries that participated in the peace effort in Mindanao have foreign investments in the Philippines and the attainment of peace in Mindanao is very imperative to protect their economic interests in the Philippines.
- In the ongoing peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the MILF with the government of Malaysia as third party mediator, highly sophisticated support mechanisms (e.g. *facilitation and monitoring*) are in place.
- The Mindanao scenario has been subsumed by new forms of “*global governance*”- collective action, which is emerging as prominent pieces of international relations. *Global governance* encompasses activities at all levels of human interaction that have international repercussions. It implies examination of various governance activities, from formal to informal, from law to rules to understanding, at a variety of locales.



THE MINDANAO PROBLEM EMBEDDED IN THE SEA “REGIONALIZATION”: TOWARDS REGIONAL GOVERNANCE AND ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

- The issue on how global peace, stability, and security can be achieved in this Post-Cold War era is a matter that needs global response and prioritization among states in the World. The end of this ideological conflict not only resulted in the changed of global structure, from bipolar to unipolar, but also in the mindsets of people to live in a very peaceful, politically stable, and economically progressive environment.
- Armed conflict or ethnic strife posed threat not only to the state and region, but also to international security. It challenged state's sovereignty and efforts towards national integration and regional stability (R. Buendia)
- Any approaches and processes on peace and security to address conflicts cannot be achieved only through national and global initiatives . There is a need to adopt a new mechanism that would complement national and global efforts as a viable solution to any peace and security problem. This mechanism is called “Regionalization” (A. Malindog).



Regionalization

“Regionalization” as an alternative peace and security strategy that seeks to create the condition necessary to reduce reliance on the use of (military) force.

- *Regionalization* as a process which could be done in different sectors (social, cultural, economic and political sectors) which facilitates the emergence of a pluralistic security community, regional transnational economy; the emergence of supra-national institutions and the creation of common policies.



Relevance of Mindanao Peace Process in SEA Region

- The Mindanao peace process is very significant to the security, stability, and economic framework of Southeast Asia region.
- Part and parcel of the overall preparation in the formation of the Asian Economic Community (AEC) by 2015.
- Based on the AEC blueprint, the goal of a single market and production base is by achieving free flow of goods, services, investment, and skilled labor, and freer flows of capital, while continuing to reach out to the rest of the world- “open regionalism”. Such a single market and production base would help minimize transaction costs and maximize trade gains.



Mindanao a Gateway to BIMP-EAGA

- The potentials of Mindanao as an area for economic investment will be dependent on the outcome of a final peace agreement.
- Mindanao possess the quality of being a primary growth driver for the entire Philippine economy due to its relation to BIMP-EAGA (C. F. Habito).



HINDRANCE TO MORO SEPARATIST STRUGGLE: AN ASSESSMENT

Factors that hinder the Moro struggle for separatism are:

- *Muslim Migration caused by armed-conflict in Mindanao*
- *Government Policy to promote Islamic culture and practices*
- *Moro leaders occupying government positions*
- *Muslims acquired new set of values and Professionalism*
- *Dominance of Muslim Traditional Elites and Political Families*
- *Inter-marriages between Muslims and Non-Muslims*
- *Ethnic barriers within the Moro social group*
- *Problem with majority-minority relations in the Philippines has been overcome*
- *Compromising Moro aspiration with Peace Agreement*



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

- There were various initiatives taken to accommodate Bangsamoro demands for self-rule, but such sophisticated measures were not enough to allocate and share state's political resources due to lack of political will on the part of the government, or because of failure to observe constitutional requirements which is difficult to compromise, or because of non-involvement of legitimate stakeholders in the process. To comply with all of these would be essential ingredients for the attainment of political settlement of the Mindanao problem.
- The voluntary or involuntary participations of other countries in Southeast Asia (SEA) are sought to assist in the resolution of the Mindanao problem, and international intervention is essentially needed without violating international protocol of non-intervention as push factor for the parties and all stakeholders in Mindanao to agree on one common stand to resolve their political problems once and for all.



Cont...

- Whether the existing 1996 GRP-MNLF Peace agreement resolved Muslim separatism, or until a final peace agreement is concluded with the MILF, or whether peace agreements have the tendency to revive old struggle of the Bangsamoro people for secession when it fails remain to be seen.
- The Framework Agreement signed on October 2012 was a good signal to find ways and means to address the peace problem in Mindanao and clearly indicates the seriousness and determination of the Philippine government and the MILF to sign a final peace agreement and the expectations on the part of the multiple stakeholders of Mindanao to support such initiative. However, any peace negotiation must be transparent and open for suggestions and recommendations from the various stakeholders in Mindanao.



*Magsukol, Daghang Salamat or
Thank you very much...*



