THE RODRIGO DUTERTE POLICY TO BANGSAMORO IN THE SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES

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Abstract:
The restive Bangsamoro minority's struggle for rights is part of the enduring Muslim South - Christian North political conflict in the Philippines. The Philippine government's efforts to negotiate a peace agreement with the Muslim minority have hit deadlocks and mismatches between the goals of the two parties. Specifically, this study used content analysis to examine the Philippine government's strategy during the Rodrigo Duterte era in realising peace for this protracted conflict with the Bangsamoro minority group. The results showed that Rodrigo Duterte as achieved peace in the Bangsamoro through mediation and negotiation, tools used by the previous government. In addition, Rodrigo Duterte's commitment became more significant by granting regional autonomy rights to Bangsamoro. The critical element enabler of Duterte's strategy was the dual-track negotiations.

Keywords: Rodrigo Duterte, Bangsamoro, Muslim minority, conflict.

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1. Introduction

Muslim minorities in various Southeast Asian countries receive unfair treatment from their governments. Examples are the Rohingya ethnic conflict in Myanmar\(^4\) and the Patani conflict in Thailand\(^5\). Muslim minorities are often treated differently by the government with people whose beliefs differ from theirs\(^6\). Therefore, minority communities must fight for their rights and determine their destiny.

Mindanao is an area in the Philippines and the base of poor Muslims. Moreover, the Southern Philippines is characterized by danger, violence, conflict, poverty, and neglect. These conditions are caused by economic and political injustice and the Philippine Government's mistreatment of the Muslim Bangsamoro in Mindanao\(^7\). As a result, minority Muslims live under pressure and struggle to determine their destiny. They are often excluded or marginalized in their own homes and considered the weakest people in the national socio-economic progress. The Philippine government takes a militaristic approach in dealing with the separatist movements to liberate the Bangsamoro. However, the militarization policy only increased deaths and chaos, with no benefits. The Philippine rulers assume that aggressive measures are the most effective in dealing with separatist movements in their country\(^8\).

Theoretically, conflict could be projected as a triangle with Contradiction (C), Attitude (A), and Behavior (B) in three corners. Attitude or behavior in conflict means a rejection of the other party’s superiority. Although the assumptions could be positive and negative, violent conflicts are synonymous with negative assumptions towards the enemy due to anger and perceived insecurity\(^9\). In the Bangsamoro case, the state factor with a massive development policy for Christians in the Mindanao region caused a direct violent conflict. As a result, the rights of Muslims to economic and socio-cultural welfare were exploited by Filipino Christians.

In the above scenario, basically rooted in 1919, the government issued an ultimatum that all land in the Philippines belonged to the state. Furthermore, the government opened agricultural land and issued unilateral regulations. In 1944, large-scale non-Muslim settlements and migration programs were built in the Mindanao region. This government policy limits the movement space and encourages unfair treatment of the Mindanao Muslims. Filipino Muslims feel they have fundamental rights to their religion, traditions, and economic resources. Although

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the Muslim community has a place in the Philippines, they lack the attention, security, welfare, and happiness to occupy their homes.10

Likewise, the state's policy of relocating the northern Christian population to the southern Philippines triggered the growth of the Bangsamoro separatist movement. Therefore, the separatist movement was formed due to threats and insecurity from the government's policies. The movement aims to fight against the government that makes policies arbitrarily.11

Behavior is mental, verbal, or physical expression arising in conflict. Forms of behavior include violence, humiliation, crimes, and human rights violations.12 The discriminatory actions by the Philippine government could be seen from the differences in the treatment of Mindanao people. Specifically, the Christian community has excellent access to economics, politics, education, and health. Conversely, the Muslim community of Mindanao receives no proper access from the government.

Additionally, the emergence of a separatist movement from Bangsamoro triggered repressive government actions. A militarization policy was imposed during Marcos's reign, resulting in heavy casualties. Also, the Martial Law policy gave rise to various tortures, murders, or deploying civilian troops to massacre the Mindanao people.13

Conflict contradiction consists in the incompatibility of goals that exist or are perceived by the conflicting parties, caused by a mismatch between social values and structure. This leads to violence and conflict between the parties.14 The Philippine government aims to assimilate Bangsamoro Muslims into the national body by eliminating their culture from the Mindanao region. Furthermore, it perceives the Moro Muslims as backward people and an obstacle in the country’s development. Consequently, due to these discriminatory actions, the Bangsamoro separatist movement aims to free its people from the repressive pressures of the Philippine government. Instead of security, they are threatened by the government's erosion of Muslim culture. That is why the Bangsamoro people want to secede from the Philippines.15

In this context, the authors consider that the years 1993-1996 were critical in the development of peace between the Philippine government and the Bangsamoro. Fidel Ramos, the Philippine President at the time, was significant in his efforts to bring peace to the southern Philippines. Therefore, to be more systematic, this study is divided into two periods: pre-Duterte administrations, which covers the dynamics from the Fidel Ramos era to Benigno Aquino, and the Duterte administration.

14 Ramsbotham et al, op. cit.
Historically, the Bangsamoro struggle was marked by the birth of the Moro Liberation Front (MLF) movement, which became the mother of the struggle but eventually split due to different ideologies and desires. First, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), led by Nurulhaj Misuari (Nur Misuari), upholds a secular nationalist ideology. Second, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is led by Salamat Hashim, a warrior cleric with a pure Islamic ideology aspiring to establish an Islamic state in the Southern Philippines. However, the MNLF led by Nur Misuari later split into the Reformist MNLF and Abu Sayyaf groups led by Dimas Pundato (1981) and Abdurrazak Janjalani (1993), respectively. Consequently, this division weakened the Moro people’s struggle and strengthened the Philippine government in dealing with the Bangsamoro.16

Various peace treaty negotiations have been conducted between the Philippine Government and the Mindanao liberation movement. The Tripoli agreement has been agreed upon since the government of Ferdinand Marcos. However, the government is not too committed to implementing the agreement. Corazon Aquino's government then crafted a deal that included the largest Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) ever realized. Aquino's policy was seen as a commitment to achieving a peaceful situation, which was largely launched by her predecessor Ferdinand Marcos following the escalation of hostilities between the government and the Southern insurgents. Furthermore, there were peace talks mediated by ASEAN on 30 August 1996 at the Merdeka Palace in Jakarta between the Chairman of the MNLF Nur Misuari and President Fidel Ramos. However, the agreement shows the uncertain fate of the Bangsamoro because of the prevailing tension between the two parties. The government of Fidel Ramos conducted repressive militarization of the Muslim base area.17

The peace agreement was again initiated during the reign of Benigno Aquino III. On 17 March 2014, the head of the MILF liberation movement signed the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB), allowing for implementing the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL). The agreement was expected to end 17 years of negotiations and decades of armed conflict in the southern Philippines. However, the agreement was thwarted by the Mamasapano incident in January 2015, when more than 40 elite police forces were killed in an attack18. Subsequently, the peace agreement slipping could impact the security of the Philippines in the South. Moreover, it could reinforce the long-held perception that the Christian majority is not interested in a peace treaty but in marginalizing the Muslim minority.

The Mindanao region has become an attractive destination for transnational jihadist movements due to the poverty, unemployment, and marginalization of Muslims on the island. Furthermore, it has porous maritime borders with Muslim-majority countries in Malaysia and Indonesia, with large ISIS sympathizers19. Extremist terror has also plagued the island of Mindanao. The HDI index in areas of Mindanao that are the epicenter of violence is much below the national average in the Philippines (the Philippines’ HDI index is 6.5), while

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provinces that do not experience conflict, such as Cebu, have HDI ratings of 7.2. The conflict's impact that may be explicitly stated is the loss of life and public infrastructure. In terms of public facilities, both formal and informal, a paradigm that will solve the problem through duty to rebuild is required. The branch of one movement born from the two Moro movements has turned into a notorious terror group belonging to the ISIS networks.

Ethnic-religious issues and political goals characterize Mindanao's galaxy of Muslim militant groups. There are four main Muslim militant groups, including the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), an early round of the MILF, the Abu Sayaf Group (ASG), the Bangsamoro Justice Movement (BJM), and the Philippines branch of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). The groups have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State and support creating a genuinely independent caliphate in Southeast Asia i.e. Jama’at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (JTJ), Ansarul Khilafah Philippines (AKP), Darul Islam Sabah, Ansar al-Shariah Sarangani, Ma’rakah al-Ansar, Khalifa Islamiyyah Mindanao (KIM), and al-Harakatul al-Islamiyyah. Loosely organized cells of the Abu Sayaf Group (ASG) stretching from Zamboanga, through Basilan, Sulu and Tawi Tawi. This represents a significant shift in political and ideological goals than Mindanao's autonomous or self-sufficient Bangsamoro region. However, the MNLF has taken a softer approach to the government and supported the peace process under Duterte.

Several peace agreements on the Mindanao conflict have been made, but their implementation is a problem, resulting in an ineffective peace process on both sides. This is due to the differences in providing advice, input, and policies between the two parties.

The Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) signed by President Rodrigo Duterte on 26 July 2018 was perceived as a new hope for the Bangsamoro struggling for self-determination for more than four decades.

The Philippines is a country with a democratic system of government that does not accept separation within its territory. In this regard President Rodrigo Duterte has tried to implement the following:

- The Philippine government under Rodrigo Duterte is democratic in achieving peace on the Bangsamoro minority conflict through the mediation and negotiation methods used by the previous government.
- The Philippine government grants the Bangsamoro the right of regional autonomy.

Based on this description of the background, this study examines the Philippine government's efforts during the Duterte administration in resolving the Bangsamoro Muslim minority conflict.

2. Method

This qualitative research uses content analysis to examine the Philippines' efforts to resolve the Bangsamoro Muslim minority conflict during the Duterte administration. The question is answered using secondary data sourced from books, journal articles, and government documents. Furthermore, the data are displayed directly throughout the discussion because a qualitative study allows researchers to flexibly manage the article.
Qualitative research is challenging in the COVID-19 pandemic context because the ability to perform first-hand observation is severely limited. However, digital research based on online text analysis is beneficial during this challenging situation. Content analysis allows researchers to analyze and interpret text later. Content analysis effectively examines social science research, such as films and government policies. Therefore, it was used in this article to analyze and comprehend the text from secondary data sources concerning President Duterte's policy on the Bangsamoro in the Southern Philippines, especially between 2016-present day.

3. Finding and Discussion


The end of the Cold War had a significant impact on the development of the Moro conflict. Post-Cold War presents a major transformation in the trend of global conflict which is increasingly leading to the intensity of domestic conflict compared to between countries. This encourages countries to work hard to reduce internal conflicts that often involve the government and national politics. Political stability is the main thing that the state must achieve through a series of peace-building efforts. It must be admitted that various peace efforts carried out by the Philippine government have often failed such as the 1976 Tripoli Agreement and the 1987 Jeddah Accord. Various political factors are seen as contributing to this failure. However, the clash of identity between the "Southern Philippines" and the "North Philippines" is considered the most serious trigger in the failure of these various negotiations and peace building. Thus, in subsequent paragraphs, the authors will outline various peaceful processes to resolve the Bangsamoro issue, as well as the factors for the agreement's failure prior to the Duterte administration.

3.1.1. Fidel Ramos and the 1996 Jakarta Agreement

The challenging situation in the post-Cold War has prompted Fidel Ramos as a newly inaugurated president to pursue peace in the Southern Philippines immediately. We consider the 1996 Jakarta Agreement that was initiated by President Fidel Ramos to be the cornerstone of the Bangsamoro peace process which has significant impact on the further peace building in the Southern Philippines. It must be conceded that the realization of the 1996 Final Peace Agreement to end the conflict in the Southern Philippines has been a challenging and complex process. In this case, the role of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is very critical in the initial process to bridge negotiations between the two parties. Through a committee called the Ministerial Committee of the Six which is chaired by Indonesia and consists of Bangladesh,

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Libya, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, and Somalia. Mediated by Indonesia, the Philippine government and the MNLF continued to carry out so-called 'exploratory talks' before finally reaching an agreement to hold 'formal peace talks' which was held in Cipanas, West Java, Indonesia. Finally, both parties agreed to adopt agendas taken from the 1976 Tripoli Agreement to be proposed in the 1996 Final Peace Agreement namely national defense, regional security force, education, economic and financial system, etc. As consequences, under this agreement all former MNLF fighters would be employed as the country’s security staff whether for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) or the Philippines National Police (PNP). Indeed, the 1996 Final Agreement between the two parties, signed in Jakarta, raised optimism for a peaceful resolution to the prolonged dispute. This historic accord, nevertheless, did not persist long due to failure during implementation. The reasons are varied, ranging from technical difficulties in the field, corruption issues, sensitive identity issues, and a loss of mutual trust between the two parties.  

3.1.2. Joseph Estrada and the offensive policy against Bangsamoro

Instead of advancing on President Fidel Ramos' legacy, particularly through the landmark 1996 Final Peace Agreement, the Philippines' new leader, President Joseph Estrada, has damaged his predecessor's peace efforts. In fact, Estrada's actions in dealing with the problems in the Southern Philippines were far from peaceful and were more autocratic and unilateral. Estrada advocated a hardline stance, waging an "all-out battle" against the MNLF, which resulted in the group's serious damage following the collapse of MNLF headquarters as well as the surrender of the fighters to the Manila government. At the same time, Estrada claims that what he is doing is a form of quest for peace. Conversely, Estrada accused the MNLF of harming the peace process since it was deemed uncommitted to the pact and frequently contradicted its words with its deeds. It is undeniable that Joseph Estrada was unable to resolve the Bangsamoro issue. Instead, his programs were viewed as a kind of political maneuvering to hide the myriad problems he was embroiled in, like corruption, cronyism, and poor governance. His actions did succeed in dismantling the MNLF, but they also sparked retaliation following a series of explosions in Manila's government center. Furthermore, Estrada appeared to be in a pickle when his actions in response to the Moro conflict elicited strong reactions from different international communities, including the European Union, OIC, and neighboring countries notably Malaysia. The intense reaction was sparked by the large number of foreign nationals who were kidnapped in the Southern Philippines. Although Estrada has often sought communication with the MNLF, his stance, which tends to alienate the MNLF, makes reaching an accord difficult for both parties.

3.1.3. Macapagal Arroyo, war on terror, and the offensive policy against Bangsamoro

Given the fact that Joseph Estrada has jeopardized the peace development mainly initiated by his predecessor Fidel Ramos, the dynamics of Southern Philippines extremely came under misery situation. The offensive policy of Estrada on the Moro conflict has triggered the rebels’ retaliation. Indeed, the MNLF has fragile and diffused into various groups following the collapse of headquarters as well as the surrender of the fighters to the government of the Philippines. However, once Macapagal Arroyo came to office which also takes offensive policy, the groups also have become more radicals by kidnapping foreign citizen and use the hostage for financial ransom. One of the main groups which remain exist today is Abu Sayyaf. Amid of war on terror as a global agenda, the Arroyo’s policy on the Southern Philippine under “all-out war” likely gained a momentum since the Abu Sayyaf group also labeled as terrorist group by government of the Philippines and other countries including the US, Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, UK, etc. At the same time, number of criminal and terrorism attack conducted by Abu Sayyaf group has sparked by kidnapping foreign citizens to gain ransom for funding the organization. Due to the global concern on Abu Sayyaf group, US government for instance, has installed a join military task force with the Philippines armed forces to launch counter terrorist operation in the Southern Philippine. During Aroyo’s administration, MNLF group remain exist, yet Abu Sayyaf became notorious groups which invited global concern. Since the involvement of the US in particular on the war on terror under the mission called as Operation Enduring Freedom – Philippines (OEF-P), the entire period of Macapagal Arroyo administration totally focused on the military operation in the Southern Philippines. In fact, Arroyo has attempted to build a dialogue, particularly anti-Nur Misuari faction inside MNLF, yet launched an offensive policy against diffused groups including Jemaah Islamiyah and Abu Sayyaf. Arroyo obviously used the momentum of the global war on terror to boost her position in domestic politics as well as to gain financial and political support from the international community amid terrorism as the global agenda. Despite Arroyo's agreement to adopt a new referendum program that included holding local elections for the Southern Philippines, separatists, particularly Nur Misuari, rejected all of it. This means that throughout Arroyo's presidency, there was practically no agreement with the Bangsamoro. Only an offensive policy is responsible for the worsening of terrorism by MNLF splinter organizations, particularly the Abu Sayyaf, which is harmful to all parties involved, both in the Philippines and internationally.

3.1.4. Benigno Aquino and the challenge of peace initiations

The leadership transformation from Macapagal Arroyo to the new president namely Benigno Aquino has gradually changed the situation in the Southern Philippines. Although the violence and terror remain high, the government of the Philippines under the Aquino administration has precisely attempted to establish communication and peace talks with the Bangsamoro rebels. On the one hand, the Bangsamoro resistance appears to be weakening and fragmenting. On the other hand, it contributes to the creation of a scenario that leads to a more open peace. The Abu Sayyaf, for example, which has become a security nightmare in the Southern Philippines and its environs, has been defeated by its parent group, the MNLF. The reason for this is that the MNLF believes the Abu Sayyaf’s struggle has strayed from Islamic beliefs. One of the MNLF's negative viewpoints on the Abu Sayyaf is that they believe the terror group is responsible for a number of


terrorist acts, particularly kidnappings for ransom, which is extremely unsettling. Even Abu Sayyaf was listed among the top 10 groups responsible for 1.7% of all kidnappings worldwide.\textsuperscript{41} Although the process of talks between the Manila government and separatist groups in the Southern Philippines encountered many obstacles, Aquino managed to sign an important peace agreement, namely the Comprehensive Agreement on Bangsamoro (CAB) on 27 March 2014 in Manila.\textsuperscript{42} The CAB agreement was realized after President Aquino's envoy, Miriam Coronel-Ferrer, succeeded in convincing the Bangsamoro envoy, Murad Ibrahim (MILF), through an agreement in Kuala Lumpur. Previously, President Aquino also attempted to negotiate with Murad Ebrahim concerning peace by discussing the preparation of the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB). This was followed by negotiations on the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) annexes, leading to both parties' Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) in 2012. The effort aimed to balance commitments for regional formation autonomy in the Mindanao region. However, the government failed to commit to the MILF, undermining the flexibility of the peace agreement. In fact, all of Aquino's attempts were ruined by the 2015 Mamasapano clash, which was extremely damaging to all parties involved, particularly the extremely arduous negotiation process. Additionally, the opposition's role is considered as crucial in the rejection of peace efforts following the 2015 Mamasapano incident, which resulted in the deaths of dozens of Philippine security policemen. Therefore, the next government required renegotiation on peace.\textsuperscript{43}

\subsection*{3.2. Philippines Policy on Bangsamoro during Duterte administration (2016-2018)}

The division of separatist movements in the southern Philippines into many factions, on the other hand, was a blessing to the Duterte administration. The more anarchic the Abu Sayyaf group, which later became affiliated with the global ISIS network, has triggered the most important factions in the Southern Philippines, particularly the MILF and MNLF, to band together to form a coalition to destroy the Abu Sayyaf, which was thought to have strayed from Islamic teachings. Moreover, the two factions later united and backed the Philippine government in military operations against combined terror groups in Marawi under Duterte's leadership. Therefore, in the subsequence paragraph, President Duterte's efforts to bring peace to the Bangsamoro would be explained further.

\subsubsection*{3.2.1. Democracy and Dialogue with Bangsamoro}

In general, the Philippine government made efforts to peace talks with the MILF by focusing on the consequences for the public situation and conditions.\textsuperscript{45} In the Philippines, Article X section 3 of the 1987 Constitution demands the local government code be given by Congress in the following years as a solid basis for decentralization. The constitution describes decentralization laws with effective mechanisms, initiatives, and referendums. It allocates different local government powers, responsibilities, and resources and provides qualifications, elections, appointments and dismissals, terms, salaries, and powers, functions, and duties of

\footnotesize{45} MS, ibid.}
local officials. This implementation required a decentralization process that began with the Local Government Code of 1991, negotiated details in the Philippine Congress. Therefore, the Philippine government references implementing a decentralized system in its territory. This regulation enables the government to identify the most feasible approach to solving their problem.  

The fact that the Bangsamoro separatist organization has dispersed does not mean that political stability is improving. The horrific occurrences of the Aquino administration, on the other hand, pushed Duterte to attempt new, more dignified, and democratic approaches to end the prolonged war. The path toward the end of the conflicts democratically is increasingly open due to sociologically, Duterte is originally from Mindanao. He is the first president from Mindanao. Hence, he was psychologically pushed to find the greatest way for achieving peace in his hometown. Locals are also comfortable conversing with Duterte, which has led to the willingness of Bangsamoro insurgents to accept negotiations with the Philippine government. Frankly, both the MILF and the MNLF under Nur Misuari are in the same boat, and returning to the war appears to be out of the question.

Duterte has really used a personal and cultural approach to build communication with the Bangsamoro. To begin, he asserts during the that:

“Because I really want to end the evil people, since we are ready to listen. We want to reconfigure Mindanao, we will do it (if) we just talk. You can start now while I am still here to listen to you […] I am pleading to you, I do not want to kill Muslims, I do not want to kill Christians, I want people to live peacefully in this word, you know we only live once.”

The quote above demonstrates Duterte's skill at presenting ideas in a personal manner, making the offer difficult to refuse. Autonomy is a rational and democratic choice that must be adopted if the conflict is to be resolved. In addition, Duterte also tries to persuade him of the value of peace and the futility of war. Because life once only, Duterte believes that living a tranquil and peaceful life is essential. Duterte also urged all parties to contribute to the peace endeavor by putting an end to all forms of violence and requesting a strong response from the government. Peace will be established if provocations and acts of violence stop, and the Bangsamoro's autonomy can be implemented properly.

3.2.2. Granting of autonomy to Bangsamoro

Duterte's effective approach model, as mentioned above, has had a considerable impact on the Bangsamoro peace process. In fact, the main reason Duterte pushed for peace so quickly was that he saw how ineffective the previous autonomy system, ARMM, was. Rebels in the Philippines' southern provinces remain disillusioned by the region's gradual progress toward wealth and peace. As a result, new breakthroughs are required in order for autonomy to really achieve the benefit and happiness of all parties in Mindanao, particularly the Bangsamoro. Duterte urged that the BBL be passed by parliament at the 17th Congress. The Bangsamoro

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47 Heydarian, “Duterte the Peacemaker?”
Organic Law (BOL) was then successfully passed by parliament through Republic Act No. 11054, followed by the establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) to replace the ineffective ARMM. Officially, the bill was signed by President Duterte on 26 July 2018. Bangsamoro accepts BBL since it deals with issues as follows:

1. Recognition of the justness and legitimacy of the cause of the Bangsamoro people
2. Constitutional entrenchment of regional autonomy
3. Territorial jurisdiction
4. Autonomous powers of the Bangsamoro government
5. Structure of the Bangsamoro government
6. The Shariah court
7. Management of intergovernmental relations
8. Inclusive and participatory regional governance
9. Protection of ethnic minorities or Non-Muslim (Christian and Lumads)
10. Cultural identity issues
11. Strengthen electoral and party system
12. Establishing the traditional justice mechanism
13. Support for Muslim communities outside the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region
14. Bangsamoro Autonomous Region’s participation in national government
15. Bangsamoro government-Local government relations
16. Rehabilitation and development programs for Bangsamoro combatants
17. Fiscal autonomy
18. Accountability and good government mechanism
19. Transition mechanism
20. Protection of national unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity

To complete the autonomy process within the framework of implementing the BOL, a plebiscite was held to determine whether the people in the Southern Philippines agreed with the BOL. The referendum took place in the "core" Bangsamoro areas. The referendum went off without a hitch and was administered by the Commission on Elections, the central independent electoral agency (COMELEC). The COMELEC-designed questions simply ask one question with two possible answers: "Yes" or "No" to agree to ratify the BOL. The question was crafted in two languages: Arabic and Filipino, all of which are spoken in the Bangsamoro region. The questions are grouped into categories depending on preset areas, such as extant ARMM (excluding Basilan), Basilan, Isabela City, Cotabato City, and others. The referendum resulted in an overwhelming majority (85%) of voters agreeing to join and form the BARMM. A sample of the ballots provided by COMELEC is shown below.

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With this post-plebiscite victory, the Bangsamoro under BARMM finally received the full autonomy they had yearned for. The Bangsamoro has the right to a separate governance system as a result of their autonomy, even though they are still part of the Philippines. Furthermore, the Bangsamoro has the right to share income with the central government, such as a 75% tax, 75% income from metallic minerals, 100% for non-metallic minerals (sand, gravel, quarry resources), and an "equal share" of proceeds from energy resources like petroleum, natural gas, and uranium. However, some challenges remain to exist and have the potential to become problems if not addressed seriously. For example, minimal bureaucratic experience,

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intergovernmental relations, intra-Moro political competition and spoilers, and the issue of security restoration.\textsuperscript{55}

In comparison to the previous era, the Bangsamoro peace efforts under the Duterte government have achieved excellent outcomes. With a distinctive communication style and sociological closeness between Duterte and the Bangsamoro, he was able to become a great catalyst for the peace process and subsequently granted the coveted right of autonomy to the Bangsamoro. Even Duterte's policies have the power to bring Mindanao's feuding factions together and repair the Bangsamoro's relationship with the Philippine government. Of course, it is critical to ensure that this peace is long-lasting and that the Bangsamoro enjoys prosperity, which has been sorely lacking owing to the extended conflict.

The recent situation in Southern Philippines is complex and dynamic, as the BARMM faces various challenges and opportunities in its transition period. For instance, the implementation of the CAB has been delayed by several factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the resistance of some local politicians, the presence of violent extremist groups, and the unresolved issues with other Moro factions.\textsuperscript{56} Additionally, Duterte approved the extension of the transition period of the BARMM from 2022 to 2025, giving more time for the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) and the national government to fulfill their commitments under the CAB.\textsuperscript{57} Duterte has also expressed his willingness to engage in dialogue with other rebel groups, such as MNLF and the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), to achieve a comprehensive peace in Mindanao.\textsuperscript{58}

Nevertheless, Duterte’s approach to the Bangsamoro has also been criticized by some sectors, especially human rights advocates, and civil society organizations. They argue that Duterte's war on drugs, martial law declaration, anti-terrorism law, and red-tagging campaign have undermined the human rights and democratic space of the Bangsamoro people.\textsuperscript{59} They also point out that Duterte's federalism agenda, which he initially proposed as a solution to address the historical grievances of the Moro and other marginalized groups, has been sidelined and overshadowed by his other political priorities.\textsuperscript{60}

Indeed, the success of the Bangsamoro peace process depends not only on Duterte, but also on the strong partnership between the BTA and the national government, as well as the active participation and support of various stakeholders, such as civil society, local government units, security forces, religious leaders, indigenous peoples, women, youth, and other sectors.


The Bangsamoro peace process is a historic opportunity to achieve lasting peace and sustainable development in Mindanao, but it also requires constant vigilance and collective action from all concerned parties. The acknowledgment of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. as the next leader has bolstered optimism for the achievement of Bangsamoro peace. In his speech to the 77th United Nations General Assembly, he claimed that the Bangsamoro peace formula could serve as a model for conflict resolution elsewhere in the globe.61

4. Conclusion

The main purpose of this article is to find out President Rodrigo Duterte's policies regarding the Bangsamoro during his administration, especially since being sworn in as the 16th president of the Philippines. Previous Philippine presidents have made efforts to stop the war and promote peace, especially since Nur Misuari began the Bangsamoro armed resistance against the Philippine government through the founding of the MNLF. All previous government-led peace initiatives were deemed a failure since they were always accompanied by the Manila government's repressive and militaristic actions toward the Bangsamoro. Despite the fact that peace attempts such as the 1976 Tripoli Agreement and the 1987 Jeddah Accord were achieved, the 1996 Final Peace Agreement in Manila after a series of peace talks in Jakarta, was viewed as the most significant achievement of the two parties' peace efforts. Indeed, the Philippine government was considerably more aggressive during the presidency of President Macapagal Arroyo which benefited from a global war on terror campaign.

Once Duterte took office in the Philippines in 2016, there appeared to be a great determination on the part of the Philippine government to put an end to the fighting and bring peace to the Bangsamoro. Duterte's origins from Mindanao are a crucial aspect of his sociological proximity to the Bangsamoro, allowing for amicable communication. This has an impact on the psychology of the Bangsamoro rebel organization, which feels at ease conversing with Duterte. With these advantages, Duterte employs two strategies in his peacemaking efforts: first, prioritizing discussion as a means of fostering democracy, and second, accommodating a long-held goal, namely autonomy. The 17th Congress' approval of Duterte's proposal for the BOL marks a watershed moment for the Bangsamoro. The peace and transition process, which was preceded by a plebiscite to ratify the BARMM, is a clear example of how democracy is genuinely practiced in the case of Bangsamoro in order to achieve peace.

Recent developments have indeed had a significant impact on President Duterte's approach to the Bangsamoro issue. Since his initial efforts to establish peace and autonomy, we have witnessed the passing of time and the unfolding of events that have shaped his administration's approach. Duterte's tenure has seen the successful establishment of the BARMM through the BOL. However, as with any complex issue, there have been both positive and negative outcomes. On one hand, Duterte's proximity to Mindanao and his willingness to engage in dialogue have facilitated communication and cooperation with the Bangsamoro rebel organizations, a crucial factor in the progress made. On the other hand, there have been challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and local political dynamics. Nevertheless, the successor of Duterte, President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. acknowledged of Bangsamoro peace process during the 77th UN General Assembly, have raised optimism for the future peace sustainability in the Southern Philippines.

Indeed, considering the inauguration of Ferdinand Marcos Jr. as President of the Philippines in 2022, there also arises a significant question regarding the continuity or alternation of policies initiated during the Duterte administration, particularly concerning the

Bangsamoro peace process. In terms of the continuity of peace agreements implementation, President Marcos Jr. has expressed commitment to fulfilling and enforcing peace agreements in the Bangsamoro region, echoing sentiments expressed during the Duterte administration. This continuity suggests a continued focus on achieving lasting peace and stability in the region. Additionally, in terms of regional autonomy, both Duterte and Marcos Jr. have emphasized the importance of regional autonomy rights for the Bangsamoro, with President Marcos Jr. affirming the significance of the political and normalization tracks of the peace agreement. This shared emphasis implies a continuation of efforts to grant meaningful self-governance to the Bangsamoro people.

Meanwhile, there also potential changes at least in two aspects. First, in terms of leadership style, President Duterte pursued peace through negotiation and mediation, while President Marcos Jr. may bring a different leadership style to the table. His approach to governance and conflict resolution could potentially lead to adjustments in the strategies employed within the Bangsamoro peace process. In addition, in terms of political alliances, the political landscape may shift with the new administration, potentially impacting alliances and collaborations within the Bangsamoro region. President Marcos Jr.’s engagements with various political factions and stakeholders could result in changes in the dynamics of peace negotiations and implementation.

All in all, the transition from the Duterte administration to the presidency of Ferdinand Marcos Jr. introduces both opportunities and challenges for the Bangsamoro peace process. While there are indications of continuity in terms of commitment to peace agreements and regional autonomy, shifts in leadership style and political alliances may bring about changes in the approach to peacebuilding. Ultimately, the success of the peace process will depend on the adaptability and resilience of policies in response to evolving circumstances under the new administration.

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