

Perspectives on the Bangsamoro

Arceli B. Naraga

Abstract— The Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) panels announced the agreement of the establishment of a new political entity to replace the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). Of vital importance is the reflection and perspectives on how the soon to be established Bangsamoro government in the region would fare in the area of governance and development. The responses of 15 respondents from the various sectors of a mixed community of Muslims, Christians, and Lumads in the province of Maguindanao and Cotabato City were documented using descriptive qualitative approach through the in-depth interview method to bring to light their perspectives and conceptualizations on the Bangsamoro in quest for genuine development.

Keywords—ARMM, Bangsamoro, Conceptualizations, Development

I. INTRODUCTION

As a descriptive qualitative study, this paper explores and looks deeper into the Cotabatenos' perspectives and conceptualizations on the Bangsamoro with the proposed Bangsamoro government establishment in Mindanao, Philippines. To examine how some personalities in Cotabato City and the province of Maguindanao view this recent evolving political development in the region, Cotabato being not included in the ARMM (Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao) is of prime importance. The necessity to know whether a positive perspective is at hand with regards the Bangsamoro can be beneficial to various sectors involved in the quest for the solution to the age old problem conflict that impeded the achievement of genuine development in the area. Notably, "good governance is a prerequisite to successful national development" and in this case the soon to be established Bangsamoro government. Wherefore, this study gives an actual account on the perspectives and conceptualizations on how the region and its leaders would be faring in governance from various perspectives. Such understanding of the unique constructs of some Cotabatenos and Maguindanaons can effectively lead to better understanding of the people's perspectives in effecting genuine development in the proposed Bangsamoro government.

While there are several literatures elucidating on the nature of the proposed Bangsamoro, it is equally relevant that a descriptive qualitative paper on the perspectives and conceptualizations on the Bangsamoro from the point of views of some of those who are directly affected in the process of governance in Cotabato City which is a potential place that will be included in the proposed Bangsamoro government be

studied. Specifically, this study sought to determine answers to the following queries:

1. What are the various constructs and understanding on the concept on Bangsamoro?
2. What are the various issues that would confront governance in the proposed Bangsamoro government?
3. Is there the real hope for the Bangsamoro struggle for genuine development?

II. METHODOLOGY

Purposive sampling method is employed. It involved the selection of respondents based on an important characteristic under study. A total of fifteen (15) respondents were purposely selected based on the variety of tribe, gender, age, type of work, level of income, educational attainment and religious affiliation representations.

Data gathering methods included respondent in-depth interviews. The researcher used an interview guide (a general outline of the topics to be discussed). The researcher also explored relevant topics as the respondent brought them up during the interview.

Each of the respondents of the fifteen (15) key informants is from Cotabato City and Maguindanao. As to tribe, the respondents include Maguindanaons, Tausug/Chavacano, Cebuano, Ilonggo, Maguindanaon/Iranun, Tirurays and Ilocano. With regards gender, majority of the respondents are female, that is, they comprised 66% of the respondents while one-third or 33% of them are males. Talking about the ages of the respondents, the oldest is 69 years old and the youngest is 18 years old. Most of the respondents are in their forties. Moreover, the respondents of the study also come from various types of employment although a few of them do not have work for one is a plain housewife and the other one is a student. The respondents include a house helper, nurse, tutor, farmer, engineering consultant, teacher, professor at the same one of the peace negotiators in the recent MILF and GPH Peace talks. Some of the respondents are manicurist, *trisikad* driver, and security guard. Also, with regards level of income of the respondents, some do not have their own income yet or have no income at all. But the highest monthly income earned reached as much as more than fifty (50) thousand pesos while the lowest income is three (3) thousand pesos a month. As to educational attainment, the respondents include those who gained elementary level only. Some are elementary graduates. A few of them are high school graduates. A considerable number are degree holders and college level. One respondent is an MA graduate while the other two are Ph.D. and LIB graduates respectively. Majority of the respondents are Muslims. Some are Roman Catholics while the others are Iglesia ni Cristo, Born Again Christian and Pentecost.

III. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Conceptualizations on the Bangsamoro. The various constructs and understandings on the concept of the Bangsamoro based on the perspectives of the respondents are summarized. It can be noted that the respondents have some prior knowledge about the Bangsamoro. However, the level of their understanding varies. Some have taken the issue for granted, indeed, they are not interested. On the other hand, others are reluctant and have many apprehensions with regards to the proposed establishment of the Bangsamoro government. Others are hopeful with the Bangsamoro.

Generally, the respondents have no profound idea with regards to the content of the Framework Agreement of the Bangsamoro (FAB), the Comprehensive Agreement of the Bangsamoro (CAB) and the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL).

As revealed by the respondents, they got the information they have about the Bangsamoro from the mass media such as the radio, television and newspapers. Others also point to the information they gained from conversations with friends and acquaintances in the market place and or in school. It has also become a topic for discussion in the family. Some have even direct involvement in discussions about the Bangsamoro because they believe that they should participate as Bangsamoro. One even went to the extent of becoming one of the peace negotiators.

It is worthy to note, that some of the respondents have identified it as a solution to the peace and order problem in Southern Mindanao. They are hopeful that with the Bangsamoro, the ways of Islam will be fully implemented in the area.

On the question of agreement or disagreement on the proposed Bangsamoro government, the respondents are divided. It can be gleaned that some of the respondents do not favor the establishment of the Bangsamoro. They express hopelessness as they view it as only good in paper but not in actual practice. Another factor given on the disagreement is that the Bangsamoro cannot solve the peace and order problem in Mindanao. It is viewed to only cater to the desires of the MILF and not to the general welfare in Mindanao. They view the Bangsamoro as only a given for the MILF to put an end to the conflict between the MILF and the government.

On the contrary, there are also respondents who express their positive outlook with regards to the Bangsamoro. They are hopeful that some benefits can be gained from the proposed Bangsamoro government. It can be a solution to the problem of peace, poverty, governance and development in the Southern Philippines.

Also, there is that positivity on the approval of the proposed Bangsamoro government as replacement to the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) by the Philippine law making bodies.

Issues Confronting Good Governance, Alleviation of the life of the Bangsamoro and Peace. Various issues have been presented by the respondents and these can be grouped into the issue of good governance, alleviation of the life of the Bangsamoro and Peace.

Good Governance. On the issue of good governance, the respondents revealed problems such as rampant graft and corruption faced by the ARMM today. The great challenge then is on how the Bangsamoro can counter it. Also, the culture of corruption has been blatantly exposed by the respondents. Less is done to improve the political infrastructures in the present government in the ARMM that might be passed on the Bangsamoro. Hence, there is the need for cleansing, the need for the careful selection of leaders who can administer the proposed Bangsamoro government towards good governance.

Alleviation of the Life of the Bangsamoro. Another pressing issue confronting the ARMM today that needs to be addressed by the proposed Bangsamoro government is the unimproved quality of life of the Bangsamoro. Poverty incidence is still very high. From this revelation, it can be deduced that there is still a struggle towards the achievement of genuine development. There is a need to fast tract the delivery of basic services to the poor people in the area.

Despite the many development efforts, there is still that state of underdevelopment and poverty in the area which are stumbling blocks to genuine development and peace.

The challenge then can be laid on the shoulders of the proposed Bangsamoro government, that is, on how to make way for a better Southern Philippines in the near future.

Peace. It is indeed elusive. But there is still hope for its achievement. The Bangsamoro government can be a means towards its achievement. Only, there is a necessity of leaders who can steer the boat towards it.

Prayers for Genuine Development. The respondents express their hopes and wishes for the success of the Bangsamoro. The present administration's sincerity under President Rodrigo Roa Duterte and the concerted effort of the Bangsamoro can be tools towards development. High hopes are expressed in the development of the area's educational system and agriculture economy which are considered catalysts for development. Let the letter be implemented at its fullest for genuine development in the Southern Philippines.

Obstacles may be encountered but as long as there are dependable leaders who prioritize the welfare of the people, then real development is possible.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

With deep gratitude, the author is expressing her deepest gratitude to MSU-Maguindanao in Dalican, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao. Specific recognition is afforded to the Chancellor Dr. Bai Soraya Q. Sinsuat, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Dr. Tomanda D. Antok, Vice Chancellor for Research, Extension and Development, Dr. Danilo S. Josue, Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance, Engr. Suharto Pentaliday, and all the faculty and staff of the University who afforded overwhelming support to the researcher and author.

REFERENCES

- [1] Bacani, B. R. (2004). *Beyond Paper Autonomy: The Challenge in Southern Philippines*. Center for Autonomy and Governance. Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Manila, Philippines.
- [2] *Bangsamoro Basic Law (Proposed Primer)*. www.opapp.gov.ph.

- [3] Bangsamoro Documents. Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB). Volume 1, Ateneo de Davao University Publication Office and the Mindanao News and Information Center Service Cooperative. 2014
- [4] Boransing, M. and Lacar, L. Referendum for Independence or Autonomy: A Framework for a Peaceful and Permanent Solution to the Moro Problem. Notre Dame Journal, Vol. XXX, No. 1.
- [5] Campado, P. (1999). The MNLF-GRP Peace Process: From Tripoli To SPCPD Cotabato Thru Time. www.cotabato.net, August 2014
- [6] Diaz, P. (1999). Trade Offs in Mindanao Peace Process. Notre Dame Journal. en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cotabato_City, August 2014
- [7] Fianza, M. (1994). Colonization of the Moro land Questions in Mindanao, Philippines and Some Continuing Issues, ND Journal
- [8] Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro. www.opapp.gov.ph, August 2014 irranunation.blogspot.com, September 2014
- [9] Jubair, S. (1999). Bangsamoro a Nation Under Endless Tyranny. KL, Malaysia
- [10] McKenna, T. (1998). Muslim Rulers and Rebels: Everyday Politics and Armed Separatism in Southern Philippines. Berkeley, University of California Press
- [11] Mercado, E. (1998). Muslim Mindanao and Philippine Circa 1898. ND Journal
- [12] Mercado, E. (1999). Southern Philippines Questions (a Challenge to Peace and Development). Notre Dame University Press, Cotabato City.
- [13] Muslim, M. (1994). The Moro Armed Struggle in the Philippines: Non-Violent Alternatives. University Press and Information Office, MSU Marawi City
- [14] Rasul, D. (1993). Peace Initiatives an Introduction, Manila.
- [15] Tanggol, S. (1993). Muslim Autonomy in the Philippines: Rhetoric and Reality. Office of the Press and Information Office. MSU Marawi City
- [16] Naraga, Arceli B. The Political History of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. 2004. Master's Thesis. Notre Dame University Cotabato City
- [17] Regalado, Edith. 7 ARMM Towns cited for good governance. www.philstar.com /nation/2014/02/14/ www.nscb.gov.ph, September 2014



Arceli B. Naraga, Author.

Arceli B. Naraga was born on October 24, 1967 in Cotabato City, Mindanao, Philippines. She graduated her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with the academic distinction of Cum Laude from MSU-IIT, Iligan City. She earned two Masters degree. She has an MAEd in General Education and MAEd in History where she received her Outstanding Thesis Award. Recently, she has defended her dissertation leading to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Development Studies at Ateneo de Davao University.

She is the current Campus Secretary of MSU-Maguindanao in Dalican, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao. She is also a lecturer in the Social Sciences of the Carl Balita Review Center (CBRC) for the Civil Service examinations and the Licensure Examinations (LET) for teachers.

Prof. Naraga has attended various international conferences and was able to present her researchers on topics such women's role in environmental protection, information and communication technology and the Bangsamoro people in Mindanao, Philippines.