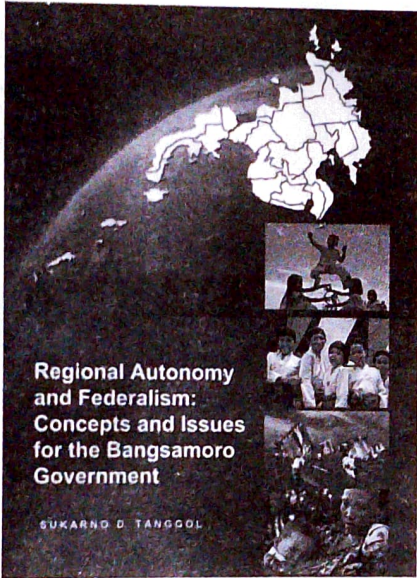


## Book Review



SUKARNO D. TANGGOL

Regional Autonomy and Federalism Concepts and Issues for the Bangsamoro Government. Iligan City: MSU-Iligan Institute of Technology, 2012. 155 pages

The publication of this book comes at a time when hostilities between the Philippine armed forces and the MILF in Mindanao are relatively scaled down as more civil and non-belligerent ways are considered in the attempt to bring to an end a conflict that has caused instability and disorder in many parts of the islands in the past 5 decades or so. Dr. Tanggol covers five major topics in this book. These are Regional Autonomy in the Philippines; Theory and Practice of Federalism; Federalism, Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict; Federalism in Switzerland; and Federalism in the Philippines: Status and Prospects.

The book has many merits thus it may serve an important resource for political science, governance and even contemporary Philippine History. The discussions of the evolution and ideology of Federalism are brief but concise and substantial. One does get lost in the

language of political science while reading his work thus making the book understandable even for those who are simply interested in federalism and the conflict in Mindanao.

Dr. Tanggol starts his book with short background of the conflict in Mindanao. The points he raised in this chapter are really nothing new since these issues have been raised and echoed elsewhere by Rodil, Tan, Kamlian and Maruhomsalic, among others. What is novel about Tanggol's work is he attempts to craft his account of history in such a way that the narrative paves the way for federalism as an option for governance. A significant part of the historical background is the inclusion of the MOA-AD issue, a major setback in the GRP-MILF peace process. I agree with Tanggol when he wrote about the failure of the MOA-AD had something to do with the wounds "borne of past animosities and conflicts." Tanggol had every right to lambast some politicians who "ride on the emotions of the public to score points even without the benefit of objectivity and rationality." (15).

In the next chapter, Tanggol initiates his discourse on Federalism beginning with definitional concerns and ends with how federalism is practiced abroad. Undoubtedly, Tanggol is able to present a scholarly review of federalism in theory and in practice by citing both its successes and failures. For Tanggol, if there are successfully federated states such those in the Americas and Europe, there are failures as well like the former Soviet Union, United Arab Emirates and Indonesia. It is also in this chapter where he shows his partiality towards Watt's theories on federalism. Watt's theories serve as the backbone for Tanggol's proposed model of federalism for Mindanao.

Prior to the articulation of this model, Tanggol considers other ethnicity and nationalism as condition that impact federalism. In this chapter he interprets that issues that have plagued Mindanao from the context of nationalism and ethnicity. In doing so, he ushers in marginalization as a major source of conflict and how federalism can serve as a tool for resolution.

Although Tanggol's bias for federalism is blatant and obvious, he is not quick to propose it as the ultimate solution to the Bangsamoro issue. In the chapter on Federalism in Switzerland, he shows how federalism worked for Switzerland, a country of diverse ethnicities and religion like the Philippines. For Tanggol, Swiss federalism is very good and a unique model of the said means of governance. However, he underscores



that even though the Philippines and Switzerland are “both faced with diversity... they have very diverse diversities” in so many aspects. Despite this, the Swiss model may be emulated and adapted for governing the Philippines.

In his penultimate chapter, Tanggol lays down clearly articulated his proposal for federalism in the Philippines using Watt’s theories. What is a worth noting about this chapter is that in as much as federalism is potential means for bringing closure to the problems in Mindanao, Tanggol is quick to point at gaps that can cause its failure. For instance, he brings in mutual distrust between the GRP and the Moro and the Christians as obstacle that need to be hurdled through reconciliation; the existence of small groups that “always succeeds in stalling peace efforts for the vested interest” (95), poverty, violence, graft and corruption and accountability on the part on Muslim leaders in Mindanao.

On the whole, the book is a good read and deserves space in the shelves of those who are interested in the Bangsamoro issue specifically, and Philippine politics in general.

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