Configuring the Mindanao
Peace Process: Implications
for Development and Globalization

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Abstract

This paper has two aims: (1) explore the ongoing Mindanao peace process involving, as major actors, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Philippine government to resolve the sovereignty-based conflict in the south, and (2) discuss some implications for development and constructing a Bangsamoro homeland, in the sense of a nation (or state) emerging, with its own diversity that encompasses various ethnic groups and identities. The paper contends that the peace process is also a cultural issue, besides its obvious political connotation. Hence, this process needs to be framed along the lines of culturalism - moving toward the direction of a multicultural mix sensitive to all ethnicities and respectful of cultural differences - foreground by globalization. Peace and stability are necessary conditions for development, especially so for new nations that confront, and are in turn influenced by the larger global processes. In particular, it proposes that the peace process cover certain grounds for dialogue and offers some policy suggestions toward ending the conflict that has deeply divided Muslim and Christians, and marginalized other indigenous people (Lumads) in the Philippines. It is necessary to develop a "culture of peace" in this formulated homeland tuned in to globalization, both as space shared by diverse ethnic groups who enjoy equity and as locus where they can affirm their status and identity.

The Mindanao peace process is a means to resolve the sovereignty-based conflict, install Muslim autonomy and promote development in this troubled region of the Philippines. This conflict, as the "problem" in Mindanao is also generally known, is viewed in many different lenses. One source aptly puts it as a "struggle among the Moro (term for Philippine Muslims) people for 'self-determination' against attempts to assimilate them into the wider body politic of Philippine society" (IAG, http://www.iag.org.ph). This struggle is manifest in the secessionist movement pursued by the Moros, and is associated with a long-running conflict that pits a minority with the majority group, in one hand, and the government, on the other. It has been around for several decades (since the 1970s), or even hundred years, depending on one's timeline and analysis. A quick review is nonetheless in order.

At the heart of this conflict in Mindanao is a Philippine history that casts the Moros at the margin of nation-building. But for the most part, they are in but not of the Philippines. Spanish colonization of more than 300 years (1565-1898) has virtually left them autonomous and masters of their own land. Moreover, the succeeding American occupation (1898-1946) created a divergent history unkind to the Moros. Mindanao was incorporated to a single Filipino nation. When the country became independent, not much has changed, only a replay of colonial programs under the hands of Christian Filipinos. The early relations between Moros and Christians were characterized by animosity and conflict, though the American colonial regime and later the Philippine Commonwealth (1935-1946) tried to bridge the gap as the two communities are integrated together. The wounds of conflict were reopened by government policies under the hands of Filipino rulers, notably the massive land resettlement policies that tended to displace the Moros from their own lands. Add to this certain practices that the Moros as discriminatory, such as non-recognition of their identity and history as part of mainstream Philippine society. History books generally make passing mention of Muslim society and culture, and tend to view them in bad light as pirates and bandits. Philippine press is obviously biased against Muslims. Some government programs are suspected of diluting Moro values by assimilation and cultural imposition (see Muslim (Tan,

1977; Muslim and Guiam, 1999; Vitug and Gloria, 2000). Muslim discontent exploded at the onset of Martial Law in the early 1970s due to the Jabidah massacre. Thus, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) under Nur Misuari was born, and the struggle was elevated to a new height. Attempts to placate the Moros came by way of peace agreements in 1976 forged in Tripoli, and 20 years later in Indonesia during the presidency of Fidel Ramos. Further, the promised autonomy that began earlier in 1989 did not resolve the Moro problem (Tanggol, 1993), and the government found itself negotiation again with the Moros. This time around, it deals with the rival Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in intermittent peace talks punctuated by deadly wars.

The gravity of recent Moro struggle can be seen from its costs. Campo and Judd (2005) report that between 1970-2001 the conflict has yielded an estimated 120,000 casualties (excluding untold numbers of wounded and disabled), more than two million people displaced, a cost of 2-3 billion US dollars in terms of losses and damage to property, and thousands of Muslim refugees to nearby Sabah, Malaysia. In the aftermath of another "war" in 2008 due to an aborted peace agreement between the MILF and government, the costs are even more staggering. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC, 2009) says that the total number of displaced persons range from 330,000 to 400,000 as of the end of August 2009.

At the other side of the issue are the immense dividends of peace and stability in the southern Philippines, if a comprehensive and just accord is sealed. This paper contends that the volatile peace process must hold, it must be carried out to its logical conclusion. Completed, it is likely to lead toward economic and political stability, nation building, and development. These are necessary ingredients for making the nation stand on its feet, founded on ethnic diversity and multiculturalism as a source of strength. In turn, this is a step toward the nation's participation in regional and world affairs in this age of globalization, contributing and likewise receiving a fair share in return.

This is what makes the Mindanao peace process imperative. What does it take to fly?

The Peace Process: Historical Development

I would not go through the litany of explaining the conflict since a plethora of studies about it exists.[i] Suffice it to say that it is associated with the Bangsamoro struggle noted previously. While the history of the conflict is long and complex, this paper focuses on efforts to resolve it during the past 40 years. The present analysis builds upon and takes off from previous works on the peace process (see Magdalena, 1997; Mercado, n.d.; Lingga, 2005; Rodil, 2009; Montessa, 2009; Kamlian, 2010).

The Bangsamoro struggle is one of the three major political conflicts in Mindanao today, says Rudy Rodil (2009), former vice-chair of the government panel or GRP engaged in peace talks with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), and later with its rival faction, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. The other two are "the Lumad assertion of their own distinct identity and fight (unarmed) for self-determination, and the struggle for national liberation from the three fundamental social evils of US imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratcapitalism." The last one refers to the conflict with the "communist-inspired" insurgent group or the Communist Party of the Philippines and its military arm the New People's Army (CPP/NPA). Former President Fidel Ramos (2006) identifies the unfinished peace talks with the MILF and the armed struggle waged by the CPP/NPA as two of the most important security threats in the country today.

Since 1972, the search for comprehensive peace in Mindanao has begun. It now spans six presidencies in the Philippines since Marcos came to power, and from many indications the light at the end of the tunnel is not yet shining. Many agreements have been forged, but most of them did not hold. Hence, the unending cycle of conflict and search for peace has driven many people impatient, even violent. It has also left a region devastated by war, its economy ravaged, and the Muslim communities there more marginalized and impoverished than ever.

The elusive peace is the result of many factors, among them the strange relationship between Manila and the decentralized Moro government, lack of goodwill on both sides, incoherent policy by the central government, dependency on government's limited resources, proliferation of illegal firearms and armed bands (e.g., kidnap for ransom gangs) that could not be reigned in, near complete reliance on ceasefire

agreements, or on the negotiated peace agreements - as if these are end in itself or equipped with autopilot mechanism . Some examples suffice. The 1976 Tripoli Agreement, sealed between the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Marcos government, lays the cornerstone for Moro autonomous government as an answer to secession. This document, however, is an incomplete framework that cannot stand by itself. Several attempts to make it work continued in the next regime under Corazon Aquino failed, making the MNLF under Nur Misuari intransigent as ever. During this time, a new constitution was promulgated in 1987, setting up a place or abode for Muslims called "Muslim Mindanao." The new constitution also recognized for the first time in history the existence of two regions where political autonomy may be established, the Cordillera Region, and "Muslim Mindanao." Despite the creation of the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao or ARMM (by virtue of RA 6734) in 1989, its implementation did not augur well for Misuari who broke away from the negotiation table.

It took 20 years and another administration, under Fidel Ramos, to make a significant achievement in the peace process. Thus came into place the 1996 Final Peace Agreement (FPA) between the MNLF and the government. FPA envisioned a new hope, a new beginning, for a meaningful and workable Moro autonomy that would lead to an expanded, self-governing ARMM as originally spelled out by the 1976 agreement. However, it only suspended the conflict as the arrangements for peace and development were not accomplished. Misuari was elected governor of the ARMM, and the MNLF took the reigns of government until 2001. Dissatisfied with the central government, he and his men staged a rebellion in Zamboanga and fled to Malaysia, only to be arrested and deported back where he stayed behind bars for many years. Finally, Misuari was acquitted by the court in 2009, and became a free man again. Then, he ran for election this year as governor in Sulu but lost to Sakur Tan. In addition, there are numerous complaints regarding personnel and fiscal management of the ARMM under his administration (Bacani, 2005; Boncodin et al., 2007).

This short-lived experiment has shown that Moro autonomy is dysfunctional, if not a total failure. Or so it is regarded, even by Muslims themselves. It is a huge disappointment. Both the MNLF and the government take turns blaming each other for not making Moro autonomy work. Fact is, this agreement is not "self-executing" (Bacani,

2005) and that the Moro autonomous government appears to have become a willing tool of the Manila central authority to serve its vested interest. The ARMM seems to have been "eaten up" by the system, behaving no differently from the previous two administrations of the ARMM under Zacaria Candao and Lininding Pangandaman. It takes "two to tango," so the saying goes. The responsibility to see a contract come to action and reality resides on both parties, not just the party that holds the bag or those people on the ground with shovels.

Even before the eclipse of the MNLF in 2001, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), a major rival faction within the movement, has continued the fight for self-determination and engaged the government in another round of peace talks. In between fighting and fragile ceasefires, the MILF resumed an equal if not more radical stand for self-determination, or secession in the front's terminology. As a testimony, the "war" of 2000 under Joseph Estrada's government saw widespread violence and destruction of communities, mostly Muslims. This was repeated in 2008 under Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's administration, inflicting more damages and civilian deaths to those communities still reeling from grave devastation, and sending an ocean of internally displaced residents to refugee camps.

Moreover, the Arroyo government came pretty close to closing a deal with the MILF, except for major technical glitches, and the popular perception that "she is using the peace talks as a leverage to perpetuate herself in power" (Rodil, 2009). A ranking government official (Montessa, 2009) involved in the peace process also admits that "lack of trust in government" is one among those responsible for the peace talks to ground to a halt. In any case, this part of the story is a tall order that may be covered in greater details by another paper.

In August 2008, the finished draft of another peace document (i.e., the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain or MOA-AD) met strong opposition days before its scheduled signing by both parties in Kuala Lumpur. The Supreme Court issued a Temporary Restraining Order, and then finally declared it as unconstitutional upon hearing the arguments, even if the Arroyo government had previously disbanded the GRP panel and announced that it would not sign the draft in "its present form or any other form" – perhaps to save face and make its judicial review as "moot" or academic.[ii]

In the aftermath of this legal debacle, many have lost hope, others desperate. Two MILF rogue commanders (Bravo and Kato) and their men attacked towns in Lanao del Norte and in Maguindanao provinces a few days after the SC declaration, causing at least 41 deaths and destruction to innocent civilians (GMA News, 2008). These attacks led to the "war" that until now rages in central Mindanao and has brought massive displacement to Moro communities, says the Norwegian IDMC (2009). In sum, eleven years of peace talks under the past administrations (nine under Arroyo and two under Estrada) collapsed, yielding no gains but more pain and suffering for the Moro people.

Does the present government under Benigno Aquino III (son of former president Corazon Aquino) have a better deal with the MILF, as he promised during his inaugural speech this year? Not quite, if the reading of events during his first 100 days is the barometer. On Oct. 15, 2010, an open indignation letter addressed to him has circulated in cyberspace through blogs, chats and emails. The letter contends, among other things, that instead of "moving forward the quest for peace and justice, your (Aquino's) government has begun to move backwards at a faster acceleration than what it promised to fulfill at the beginning. Further, it observes this government has "created conditions which lead to the nullification of the gains of the peace process" (Marawi City Confederation of Supreme Student Councils et al., 2010).[iii]

Other segments of civil society and stake holders in the peace process are nonetheless keenly interested in the resumption of the peace talks. The MILF indicated it is openness to the talks, a reversal of its hardline stand that the MOA-AD was a "done deal."

Framing the Peace Process: Globalization-Culturalism Nexus

All peace process is a political issue, which is culturally sensitive and emotionally charged. It is not simply about forging a peace agreement, only to be violated and abandoned. Neither is it a mere political settlement about authority, power sharing, distribution, and governance. It is also about communities, cultures, identities, values, aspirations, and shared spaces, which are all normatively ordered according to people's beliefs and social conventions.

The peace process thus needs a cultural approach grounded on the current realities of globalization. More specifically, the culturalism analysis used here means cultural diversity or multiculturalism, defined as "the acceptance or promotion of multiple ethnic cultures, applied to the demographic make-up of a specific place, usually at the organizational level, e.g., schools, businesses, neighborhoods, cities or nations" (Wikipedia). Recognition of ethnic identities, including decision to declare one's identity rather follow an imposed one, is one major aspect of multiculturalism. At the extreme end of multiculturalism lies a kind of advocacy for enhancement and protection of rights of individuals and ethnic groups, sought from or provided by the state as legal guarantees that become part of this doctrine (Makedon, 1996).

On the other hand, globalization "refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" (Robertson, 1992: 8). In this globalized period the world is reshaped into a "single arena" where communities are connected to one another not only in economic but more so in cultural terms. Globalization is relevant to the construction of any sociopolitical space – be it a region, nation or community caught in the process of change. "What it means to live in it, and how it must be ordered, become universal questions. These questions receive different answers from individuals and societies that define their position in relation to both a system of societies and the shared properties of humankind from very different perspectives." The confrontation of their world views means that globalization involves 'comparative interaction of different forms of life' (Robertson, 1992: 27).

Globalization is a relevant concept because of certain processes that reinforce or give space to localism, or its hybridized form (glocalism). In particular, "Muslim Mindanao" or "Moro" is an entity integral to and connected with both global Islam and Islam in the periphery (local).

This kind of tandem operation of local/global dynamics, global localization or glocalization, is at work in the case of minorities who appeal to transnational human rights standards beyond state authorities, or indigenous people who find support for local demands from transnational networks. The upsurge of ethnic identity politics and religious revival movements can also be viewed in the light of globalization" (Nederveen Pieterse, 1995:49)

We shall invoke the twin concepts of culture and globalization, and their intersections, as we go along. An overview of some interrelated principles that impinge on the peace process is now necessary.

The modern world today has literally become a global village (Robertson, 1992). Moreover, this huge and "borderless" global arena is also a space where the local co-exists or invents itself, resulting in a hyrbid form (Nederveen Pieterse, 1992:49). It is a site of "difference" in which people or groups constitute and represent their cultural identities (Appadurai, 1990). It is also a forum through which they can now articulate their legitimate demands for a fair share of what society can provide in terms of some valued goods (e.g., power, status, and wealth) that have been denied them in the past. This space is a locus where the global and the local meet, sometimes in harmony, at other times in conflict, but one which offers a lever for economic empowerment. Who would have thought that "think globally, act locally" as a vision pursued by Akio Morita would put Japan's Sony Corporation in the global radar, and make this company brand ahead of Coca Cola and General Electric in America? iv

Quest for Moro independence or autonomy is, in fact, a direct consequence of our globalizing planet. It is a social and political reaction of the Moros against centuries of cultural assimilation and homogenization owing to a global process that introduces and rejects colonial/imperial schemes. In the Philippine case, it, started during the Spanish colonization (1565-1898) and was reinforced by the American occupation (1900-1946). When the Philippines got its independence, the assimilation project has continued to this day. The dominant philosophy of nation building in the Philippines is cast in the same mold. Its homogenous, one-nation-one-thought (*Isang Bansa, Isang Diwa*) policy seems to have lost its luster, even contested, in this era of globalization. The Moros detest being engulfed by both western and Philippine "neo-colonial" designs under the guise of state-sponsored programs of "integration" in many aspects of public life — education, judiciary, and even in popular culture like music and the arts, consumption behavior, and the like. Thus, the Moro struggle may be viewed as both an assertion and a celebration of heterogeneity and hybridity, an alternate social arrangement to govern social life because of raised awareness of the "other" seeking recognition in the global arena (Robertson, 1992).

Globalization means not only getting connected with the world, but also taking stock of what it offers to improve people. It can doom societies to perdition as it weakens or undermines authority and sovereignty of states, erodes cultural identities of people, and exaggerates capitalism dependency. But it is also a source of vast opportunities that empower individuals, groups, and nations never imagined before. It increases modes of organizational options for production and renewal (Nederveen Pieterse, 1995:50). This is particularly relevant for regions in the periphery endowed not only with "authentic" cultures but also with rich but untapped resources, such as the Bangsamoro areas. Ironically, within this homeland is a poor region (the ARMM) that sits on top of gold. Van Helvoirt (2009:75) reports that in 2005 ARMM had the smallest Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) per capita at 3,433 pesos, and contributed less than 1 percent (0.9) to the national GDP. Recent data (see Figure 1) gives the same mirror image in terms of ARMM's contribution to the total GDP, although there is a slight increase in the per capita GRDP to 3,572 pesos, according to the National Statistical Coordination Board (Aug. 2009). Also, four of the five provinces of ARMM belong to the ten poorest provinces in the Philippines. This pathetic image of the region's economy is due to its short-sighted integration in the national and global economies, not to mention the existing sociopolitical problems there.

The impoverished status of ARMM stands in stark contrast with the booming economy of Northern Mindanao, Davao and the two Visayan regions, which are all entrenched nationally and linked to the global market. For example, Bohol has become a global tourist destination while Cebu is a highly urbanized global trading hub for export-oriented manufacturers and service providers (Van Helvoirt, 2009:164).

More importantly, this alarming poverty of the ARMM seems like a historical anomaly. This area is at the heart of another one in the past · the "Sulu Zone" · described by Warren (2002:22) as "an area of great economic vitality. It was based on global-local links to the China trade." The relative prosperity of "Sulu Zone" lasted for almost 100 years (1768-1898), catapulting the Sulu sultanate to a powerful maritime "state" that utilized slave labor – itself a commodity pursued for economic value – to collect and distribute goods (sea and jungle products like pearls, tripang, birds' nest, wax) highly desired on the Canton market and in various trading centers in Southeast Asia.[v]

Distribution of Gross Regional Domestic Product, 2008-2009
Per Capita Index with Reference to the National Average
At Constant (1985) Prices in Pesos

REGION / YEAR		2008	2009
PHILIPPINES		15,666	15,528
NCR	Metro Manila	41,541	40,838
CAR	Cordillera	19,021	19,007
I	Ilocos	8,277	8,030
II	Cagayan Valley	8,504	8,514
III	Central Luzon	12,039	11,636
IVA	CALABARZON	14,750	14,209
IVB	MIMAROPA	13,536	13,295
V	Bicol	7,210	7,650
VI	Western Visayas	14,149	14,699
VII	Central Visayas	14,997	14,810
VIII	Eastern Visayas	7,007	6,993
IX	Zamboanga Peninsula	10,671	11,173
X	Northern Mindanao	17,042	17,183
XI	Davao Region	15,139	15,696
XII	SOCCSKSARGEN	12,782	12,665
ARMM	Muslim Mindanao	3,563	3,572
XIII	CARAGA	7,525	7,579

Source: National Statistical Coordination Board (2009)

Figure 1: *Gross Regional Domestic Product (at constant 1985 prices), Philippines*

Now back to the present global era. As globalization carries with it irresistible forces for social change, it behooves individuals, ethnic groups, and nations to have a plan and get ready for it. Chinese *taipan* John Gokongwei of Cebu and owner of an airline company can agree no more: "We have no choice but to prepare ourselves for that; we should not take globalization sitting down" (Gokongwei, 2002). Indeed, globalization will just pass us by if we ignore it. As a testimony, Mindanao is weakly linked to the growing regional trade known as the BIMP-EAGA triangle,[vi]

although part of the diaspora and labor migration to Asia (notably Japan, Taiwan and Singapore), the Middle East and other parts of the world. Its rich natural resources are a promise to a dynamic economy that ought to benefit the local community more than the multinational corporations operating there (see Tadem, 1992). Harnessing its potentials to take advantage of global conditions is a great challenge for the region in dire need of development.

The Bangsamoro homeland as envisioned in the rebel fronts is, in reality, an "invisible" space created by globalization, an "imagined community" (or "imagined worlds") in the works.[vii] Fact is, this territory in terms of a physical existence (ARMM) and other areas they want to incorporate into a new Bangsamoro domain have become a shared space, a multiethnic homeland. [viii]   It is vastly different from the territory inhabited by the indigenous peoples (Moros and Lumads) before colonial periods. One may think of a parallel example in Malaysia, where Malays, Indians, and Chinese all live together in the same space that also followed the grooves of imperial designs and globalizing conditions. While this comparison is not culturally valid because the Malaysian *ethnies* are racialized, the divide between Moros and Christians is as deep because of animosities emanating from piratical raiding and slavery in the past (see Warren, 2002). The mutual hatred they have of each other arose from this bitter historical experience, and has been ingrained in their collective memories. Many Christians regard the Moros as "untrustworthy" and "pirates," while the latter consider the Christians as "opportunists" and "landgrabbers." Even the word "Bisaya" which refers to the Cebuano speaking people now dominant in Mindanao has a derogatory connotation among Muslims as "slaves." But the Moros suffer even more, ranging from prejudices and discriminatory practices (in jobs, housing) to oppressive policies of the government, says Abhoud Syed Lingga (2010:31-32). Lingga currently sits as a new member of the MILF panel.

The politics of "becoming" vs. "being" is also a matter of great concern. The Bangsamoro as an *ethnie* or community at home with the world, or tuned in to its processes, requires playing a new game, the politics of "becoming," rather than remain trapped in the state of "being." This community has to engage the capitalist world with a viable development agenda apart from living solely in the world of Islam. In his critique to the MNLF, Stauffer (1984:18) argues:

This community... is forced to live in a world-system dominated by others and organized, economically, around values that directly assault the centrality that Islam claims for itself in the organization of society. Because it must continue to adjust to the more powerful capitalist world-economy, the Islamic community cannot remain contented with being, with putting into practice the Islamic way of life, but must increasingly articulate alternatives in the very sectors of life – those having to do with economic development – over which the capitalist nations .. hold hegemonic control.

Recalling the cultural significance of the local in the global, there is need to affirm diversity and multiculturalism. The concept of culture is imbedded in any social exchange that involves values, norms and behaviors. Ethnicity, being the carrier of culture, is widely recognized as the builder of communities and nations around the world. Ethnic groups form the background of modern nations as *ethnies*- which Anthony Smith defines as "named units of population with common ancestry myths and historical memories, elements of shared culture, some link with a historic territory and some measure of solidarity, at least among their elites" (Wikipedia). Mindanao is now peopled by three major groups: Moros, Christian Filipinos, and Lumads.   (Many Moros don't consider themselves as Filipinos, though they agree they hold Philippine citizenship.)   Statistics show that in 1990, the southern Philippines (Mindanao, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Basilan and Palawan) have a total population of 14.7 million inhabitants, of which the Christianized Filipinos comprise the majority at 77.2% of the population, the Moros 17.5%, and the Lumads 5.3% (Magdalena, 1997). Not much has changed in the 2000 census, the distribution of the tri-people" being 72.5%, 18.5% and 8.9% respectively (Rodil, 2010:9). This means that, in Mindanao with a population of 25.4 million, the Muslims constitute about 3.4 million, according   to   the   Office   of   Muslim   Affairs   (cited   in http://www.muslimmindanao.ph/Islam_phil2.html).

On a larger canvass, the cultural-globalization framework is a plea for a "culture of peace" being encoded into the hearts and minds of people. Peaceful and stable societies are quick to develop. These conditions are prerequisites to growth and compatible with a globalizing world. In the regional context, the culture of peace means establishing more "peace

zones,"[ix] an "export-processing zone" strategically located in a growth center (Cotabato or Zamboanga?), re-telling and reproducing the "Datu Paglas story" several fold,[x] and perhaps a reformulated "Bangsamoro zone" (from Sulu zone) aggressively responding to contemporary requirements of globalization. In micro-level terms, it means removing the barriers and establishing bridges for inter-ethnic cooperation, instilling core values (love, compassion, mutual understanding, cultural sensitivity) into the hearts of people, erasing the unsavory ethnic labels attached to Moros, Christians and Lumads due to ethnic prejudice and past experience. People must move on and learn to accept each other, rather than romanticize history and relive its nostalgic memories. "Philippine Muslims should no longer live in the past and must go beyond the 'victim mentality... We need to move on to the self-help, winning, forward-looking' mindset," advocates Datu Paglas. Narrow or parochial ethnic nationalism (i.e., misguided love of one's ethnic group) is an antidote to diversity and its multicultural doctrine that does not sit well with the global process. It only invites antagonism and violence, which begets more violence. War makes everybody a loser. On the part of the state, there is no justification for indiscriminate use of coercive force. A nation cannot go on when some regions are left behind, wallowing in poverty and stagnation, and whose people are driven to revolt.

Contours of the Peace Process

Without preempting the agenda of the peace talks, which both the government and MILF panels agree to resume this year, certain issues deserve consideration. From a scientific perspective, it is hypothesized that a smooth and comprehensive peace process is likely to achieve success if it is participatory and rests on broad consensus. The contours of such process are shaped by the following policy suggestions for a meaningful and participatory action, essentialized by the culturalism discourse foreground by globalization:

First, widen and broaden the base of public support and consultation. Both parties have to enlist not only support from among their immediate constituents or followers but should also appeal to and consult as many diverse sectors as possible, especially among the

Christian majority, the media, and multiethnic coalitions representing Moros, Christians and Lumads. This is a must step recognized by many observers (Bacani, 2005; Guiam, 2008; Mercado, 2008; Montessa, 2009). Public consultation should be conducted, and information widely disseminated to various stakeholders, peace advocates, NGOs, and other groups. It is a lesson to avoid a fatal mistake committed in the MOA-AD, according to Fr. Mercado (2008:11): "The paramount flaw (of MOA-AD) is the absence or utter lack of consultation of stakeholders, including Christian leaders, indigenous people in Mindanao, and peace advocates themselves." Conduct of a plebiscite is not consultation, talking to people to make an informed decision is.

Second, make the peace talks transparent. Lack of transparency in the recent peace talks has been assailed by many sectors (see Mercado, 2008)[xi]. The public right to know is basic in any critical decision that affects the future of all affected individuals. Apart from being consulted, they must also be informed what decisions are being made, how these are formulated, what are the risks or consequences to their own lives. In this digital age, such matters are only a mouse click away. The peace process and all negotiated settlements arising from the talks must be packaged and posted in blogs and social networking sites on the Internet (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, etc.) for chatters, bloggers, texters, and other enthusiasts of web-based communication. For those without access to computers, cyberspace or cellphones, flyers may be distributed, and meetings or dialogues conducted. These mechanisms will effectively educate civil society, instead of the finished agreement rammed down its throat - caught unaware and clueless what decision to make when the time comes.

Third, think of a new, creative formula "outside of the box." A just and comprehensive peace agreement is badly needed, but it must be flexible and free from the "boxed" alternatives that constrained the 1996 and the 2008 peace initiatives. A functioning peace accord is long overdue to rectify past errors and onerous government programs that marginalized the Moros and kept their doors closed for development. Whether this means reviving the botched MOA-AD or retouching its provisions to conform to the constitution - or amending the latter to make way for an acceptable agreement - is a great challenge.

Fourth, delineate mutually acceptable areas of autonomy. This difficult process must be accomplished through consultation with all

stakeholders representing the affected tri-people population, considering their unique histories, cultural differences, and aspirations. Avoid the pitfalls of the past peace talks by directly talking to more people to enlarge consensus beyond the negotiation table. Muslim Mindanao, or Bangsamoro homeland, suggests what looks like a "restoration project" that collides with varied and deep-seated claims, most especially those of other indigenous people (Lumads) whose ancestral lands are silently incorporated. This is, in fact, the bone of contention in the MOA-AD draft. Its expansive attempt to include many contestable areas under the Bangsamoro ancestral domain, with all its honest intentions, seems like reviving the old suzerainty of the sultanates which once ruled in Mindanao. The latter is significant, as the "MILF is not just after a piece of land, they plainly want to recover a political territory" (Rodil, 2010:25). The 1890 map shown in Figure 2 provides us a glimpse into the past.
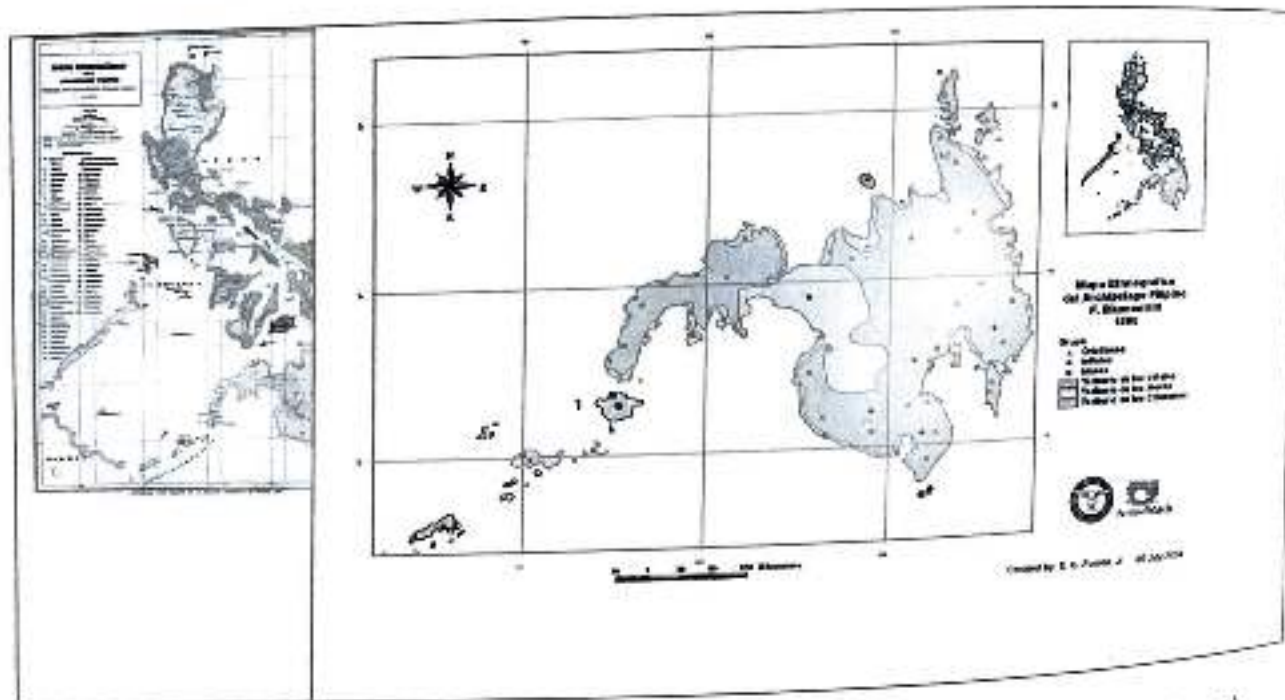

Figure 2. Ethnographic Map of the Philippines by Ferdinand Blumentritt, 1890 (inset). The enlarged map of Mindanao shows the relative distribution of three major groups of people (Moros, Cristianos, and Infieles) and the areas they inhabit during this period, based on the correspondence between Jose Rizal and Ferdinand Blumentritt. Note the larger territory occupied by "Infieles" (Lumads) and "Moros" compared to the smaller regions along the coasts inhabited by Christian Filipinos. The old map was redrawn by S. G. Padilla in 2004. Reproduced from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:1890_Mindanao.jpg.

It is also instructive to compare this map with relatively more recent ones (Figure 3), such as those depicting the Moro Province (1903-1913) under the American regime (sans the province of Palawan), and the territorial scope sought under the 1976 agreement (all of Palawan, and part of Davao only -Davao del Sur). The maps, however, do not convey the actual sphere of politico-cultural influence of the Moros.

Fifth, consider amending the constitution. Charter change - it's now or never! Re-configuring Muslim Mindanao in operational terms and other pertinent aspects of the constitution relating to the grant of Moro autonomy should be considered. The time may be now that the new administration seems open to that possibility, not obsessed to stay in power unlike the previous Arroyo regime. A decision must be made by the government leadership on this matter, given the lessons of MOA-AD, if it is serious about the peace process coming to its conclusion. Another six years of waiting may be long enough. By then, more segments of the Muslim community in Mindanao may have become more militant or radical.

Map 1· *Moro Province (1903-1913)*   Map 2· *Tripoli Agreement (1976)*
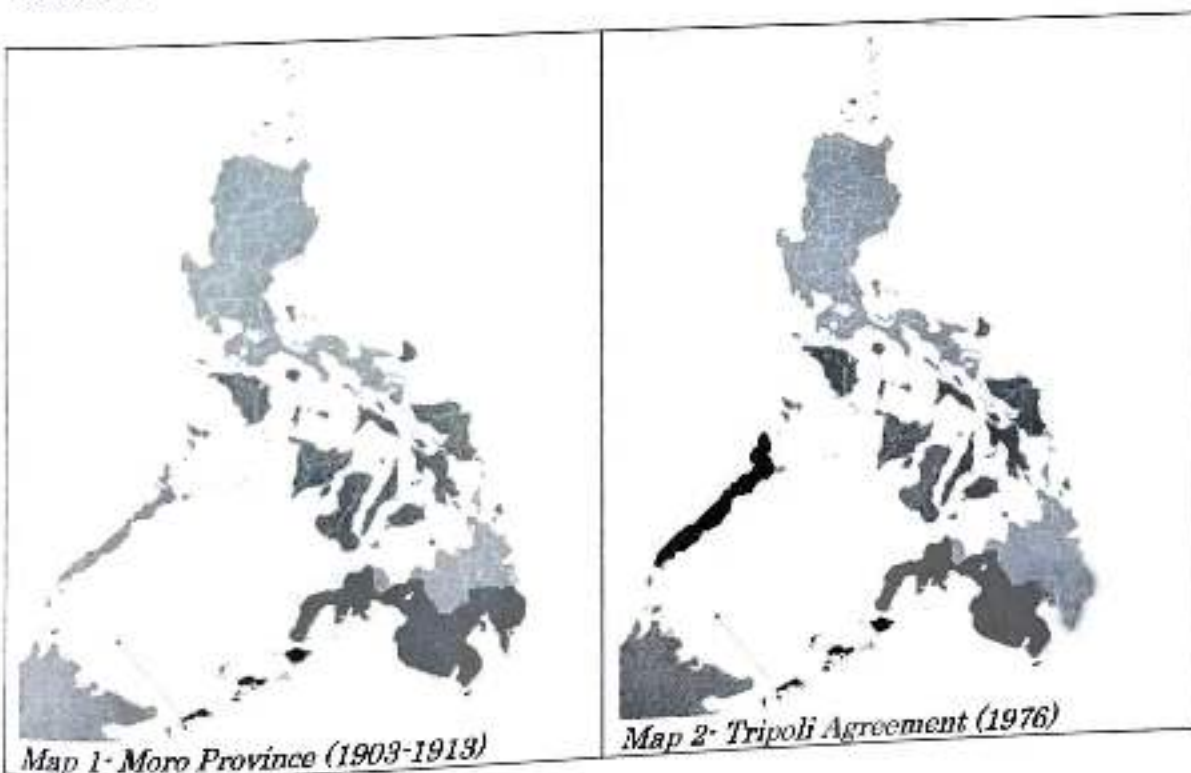
Map 3- Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM, 1989)
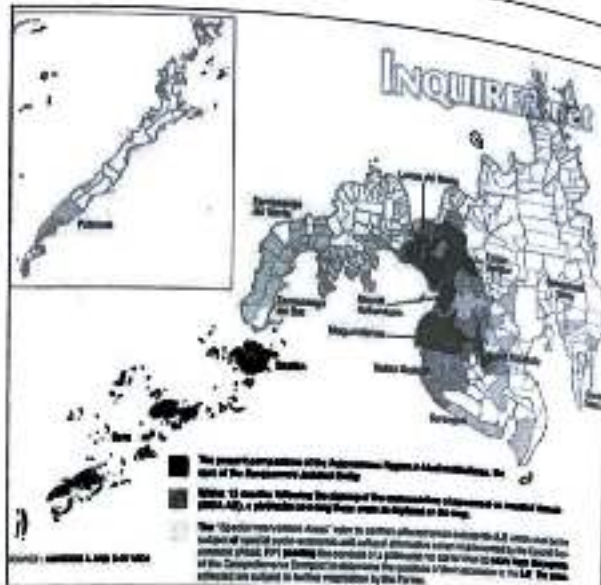
Map 4 - Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD, 2008)

Figure 3. Maps of the changing terrain of Bangsamoro "homeland" (or Muslim Mindanao). Red, green and yellow colors suggest current and future areas for inclusion in the said homeland.

Sixth, create a viable, "inwardly looking" yet functional Moro autonomy grounded on multiculturalism. How many - one or two (federal) units linked to a central Bangsamoro region? This is a serious question raised before, as it is now.[xii] The cultural logic is, that even the Bangsamoro is not homogenous, though all of its members subscribe to the Islamic faith. There are 13 ethnic groups comprising the Bangsamoro *ethnie*, each has an identity different from the others. In addition, there is another category of indigenous people (Lumads) broken down to 35 "tribes" being subsumed under, or integrated to, the Bangsamoro (Rodil, 2010). The rival factions in the Moro front (MNLF and MILF) are, in fact, contoured along two dominant ethnic groups, Tausug and Maguindanao, not to mention the "defunct" MNLF-Reformists controlled by the Maranao. This apparent Moro (and Lumad) ethnic plurality makes consultation also imperative among their respective constituencies, following Lingga's (2005:32) admonition that the collective will of the Bangsamoro "should be the basis of authority of their representative body

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and the last word in the settlement of the problem." But there is also a parallel struggle for self-determination - though somewhat silent for now - being waged by the Lumads (Rodil, 2010). Should the peace process address only that of the Moro struggle? These somewhat competing struggles and claims to the same domain demand resolution once and for all.

Seventh, the Bangsamoro may envision their community whatever way they want toward the path of "becoming." In addition to the religious commitment to "being" – such as defending and promoting Islam among its adherents in the Philippines looking toward Mecca - the Bangsamoro have to come to grips with its own diversity and the political economy of the region, with an eye to the national and global. Progressive nations or communities eventually move out from their old moorings (including recreated origins or invented locality) into a more outwardly looking position to confront the radically changed world of today's global era. Montessa's (2009) proposal "to aim at compelling images of the future" (e.g., a new Muslim-Christian relationship) alludes to this long-range visioning or positioning. The process of "becoming" must fertilize potentials to develop – given certain limits –matched by opportunities or resources that allow development to proceed in the context of globality. Such orientation must also provide space and equity to the "other" – Lumads and Christian living in the Bangsamoro homeland - without depriving or curtailing their rights. Its articulation in the peace process will enhance its appeal, especially to international bodies and institutions in the capitalist world-system, to help create a "mini-Marshall" plan to jumpstart take off without heavy reliance on the resources of the state.

Eight, include the Lumads as direct participants in the peace talks. The common mistake is the presumption that they are already included, since they do belong to the indigenous category, or that they can opt out later if they don't want to become part of the new political landscape.[xiii] But their identity and ancestral land are integral to the claims for the Bangsamoro domain. The tri-people concept is already known in many circles and is actually being used by tribal peoples whose identities were "different" (Rodil, 2009; Rodil, 2010; Bandara n.d.). However, this multiethnic construction is negated by some due to the issue of "identity crisis," for many of the Lumad members have been Islamized or Christianized (Abbas, 2007). There have been alert calls in the past that they are not being accorded the same recognition as the

Moros with whom they share ancestral land in Muslim Mindanao. A basic principle in nation building is the *politics of inclusion*, not exclusion. As Montessa (2009) puts it: "Include everyone, talk to the Christians and Lumads directly."

Ninth, clarify the complex meaning of ethnicity or "indigeneity," and resolve the disjuncture between identity and ancestral land, as well as the ethnic basis of competing claims to this land. This is the dilemma inherent in cultural diversity itself, and the tension between a homogenizing world and hybridizing globalization (Appadurai, 1990:295). "How far must ancestry go back to be legitimate, to be recognized," asks renown poet and writer F. Sionil Jose (2009) . The Bangsamoro redefines (or re-invents) itself along primordial lines as "indigenous people," "original" or "natives," subsuming other ethnics (Lumads), while downplaying other groups ("settlers") now on their way to becoming minorities in this contested locality. Yet they all share the same space and may have similar rights by virtue of heritage and legitimate modes of acquisition (purchase, prior and continuing occupation). Many more of these non-Moros may have been there, or have come to Mindanao after 1565 during colonial periods. What really constitutes these ethnicities, or tri-people, as categories of being? What about those members of tribal groups who have "lost their innocence," or those without a memory of their ethnic ("native") origin? These identity conflicts that hound all peoples in the Philippines also echo as strongly in the periphery. In Mindanao, they are now posted in a "decentered" or "liberated" space, where one group asserts a hegemonic and central position. These are problems in nation-building that arise due to the rejected process of incorporative politics in the past. It is the same problem brought forth by a new process of indigenization of cultures and "re-territorialism" of the homeland.

Tenth, address environmental, health and gender issues. These issues are basic to any economic formation consistent with a globalizing world. The destruction of the forests of Mindanao and depletion of other resources have ecological repercussions to the indigenous people, particularly the Lumads during the past few decades. This is a direct result of misguided development to incorporate Mindanao to the emerging national and global settings. Unchecked, the degradation will compromise food security and expose the already vulnerable indigenous peoples to greater health dangers (higher mortality rates of mothers and infants,

illiteracy, and disease). It is also a form of indirect structural violence (poverty, human rights violation, ecological degradation, health problems, etc.) that contributes to a worsening conflict, or opening up another deadly war on the horizon.

All things considered, these policy suggestions are in step toward resolving the elusive peace process and reaping the dividends it brings forth.

Conclusion

There's no quick fix to the continuing peace process. It must go on but somewhere it must stop. Everybody must have a voice to articulate a position in the dialogue. Like building a house, every resident must have a say on how it should look like, everyone having an idea, a tool or material to contribute. More importantly, it must hew in as far as possible to the requirements of a building code. If such code does not exist, or is unclear, it must be developed. While fidelity with the constitution is required, the impasse brought about by MOA-AD should serve as lessons to resolve the Mindanao conflict through charter change now.

Diversity (tri-people) is a cultural capital that can be marshaled to cushion the adverse, homogenizing effects of globalization to arrest erosion of cultural identity, especially for the Bangsamoro and the Lumads. As a "decentered" region or *ethnie* from Philippine society, Muslim Mindanao (or Bangsamoro region) is still part of the Philippine state that may gather more strength and better leverage as both participate in the global process. But the roadmap to lasting peace must chart a clear destiny for the Bangsamoro as a nation "becoming" that also guarantees equity and space for the other ethnic groups.

We can only speculate on future events. Mindanao as a land of promise may be fulfilled, or squandered, by the new realities of globalization. On the side of optimism, a successfully concluded peace accord will reap tremendous benefits in the south and the country as well. Trade and investment will likely grow, as it did for a brief period during the Ramos administration, opening the portals for globalization due to political stability. The rich natural resources of this reconstituted region (as "truly" autonomous), and the entire Mindanao will be tapped with more investors and capital flows, the business climate creates more job opportunities, tourism will thrive, and government gets good credit rating

in international institutions as its economy improves due to rational integration in the global market.

All of these possibilities, however, call for stronger commitment and more spade work in the present context of the Mindanao peace process and beyond.

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Endnotes

[ii] The Supreme Court voted 8-7 on MOA-AD, striking it down as "unconstitutional." Chief Justice Reynato Puno's "Separate Concurring Opinion" is perhaps most telling. In his opening statement, he says: "It is the duty of the government to seek a just, comprehensive and enduring peace with any rebel group but the search for peace must always be in accord with the Constitution. Any search for peace that undercuts the Constitution must be struck down. Peace in breach of the Constitution is worse than worthless…If the MOA-AD is constitutionally infirm, it is because the conduct of the process itself is flawed " (see http://sc.judiciary.gov.ph/jurisprudence/2008/october2008/183591-puno.htm). The full text of MOA-AD is available at *Autonomy & Peace Review*, Vol. 4 (July-Sept 2008), pp. 43-93 (also see http://www.iag.org.ph/cgi-bin/publications/files/Volume%204%20Issue%20No.%203.pdf). A historically grounded, culturally informed legal analysis is made by Michael O. Mastura on the magistrates' almost split-decision. Mastura is a member of the MILF panel. In his words: "It does seem fair to comment that the *ponencia's* discourse is highly technical and mechanical without hint of the humanitarian suffering and oblivious to all the human realities that inform the MOA-AD." He winds up with these stinging, if provocative, statements: "The conduct of the entire peace

process requires a deeper understanding of the armed conflict and political complexities for crisis is an important trigger mechanism for fundamentalism" (Mastura, n.d.).

iii Full text of the indignation letter is available online at http://www.maranao.com and http://www.luwaran.net/index/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1599:open-letter&catid=letter.

iv Kenichi Ohmae describes such vision as an inspiration in writing his book *The Borderless World* (see "Akio Morita: Guru of Gadgets," 1998, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,989790-3,00.html).

v The slaves who worked in the farms of, or were sold by, Tausug sultans and datus consisted mostly of Christian Filipinos relentlessly hunted and captured from the coastal areas of the Visayas and Luzon, and some tribal members from Palawan and Mindanao itself. Other slaves came from within the Tausug society as a penalty for unpaid debts. Within the Sulu zone, a distinct ethnicity rose – the half-bred Sama Balangingi (fathered by Tausugs) - who turned out to be more aggressive raiders and hunters of slaves (Warren, 2002). However, slavery was not unique to the Sulu zone. It is a pre-Islamic practice narrated in the Maranao and Maguindanao epic "Darangen."

vi This acronym stands for Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines-East Asia Growth Area. It came into being during the administration of President Fidel V. Ramos as a strategy for regional development, apparently inspired by the global process (Ramos, 2006). His trade liberation policy earned for the Philippines the tag as "Asia's Next Economic Tiger," until the 1997 financial crisis in Southeast Asia took its toll on the economy.

vii Arjun Appadurai (1990) coined this word as an extension of Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities" in keeping with the global tension arising from cultural homogenization and cultural homogeneity.

viii The constitutional proviso for "Muslim Mindanao" and later the notion of "Bangsamoro ancestral domain" bannered by the MILF are vague, complicated, ambitious and open to conflicting interpretations. Configuring this space for mutual co-existence and a liveable area for the tri-people must be the defining feature of the peace talks. At present, the areas of autonomy in actual operation as provided for under RA 6734 (act creating ARMM) consist of only five provinces and two cities out of the original 13 (now 14) provinces and 9 cities specified under the 1976 agreement.

ix There are now five peace zones in Mindanao. See Francine Blume, "Peace Zones: Exemplars and Potential," Spring-Summer 1993, in http://acorn.sbu.edu/xSpring-Summer%201993/Spr93-Peace%20Zones-pg5pg13.pdf.

The Datu Paglas story is a lived story of an economic experiment in Maguindanao, whereby Moros and Christians learn to co-exist in harmony as they earn a living on a farm operated by La Frutera, raising bananas for export (this story is narrated by Datu Toto Paglas III himself in http://asiasource.org/asip/preventive.cfm).

xi Also see articles and discussions of the MOA-AD in the *Autonomy & Peace Review*, Vo. 4, July-Sept. 2008, or http://www.iag.org.ph/cgi-bin/publications/files/Volume%204%20Issue%20No.%203.pdf.

xii Under Marcos, there were two Moro autonomous regions based in Zamboanga City and Cotabato City. Some personalities within the MNLF circle and sympathizers (e.g., Ibrahim Iribani, MNLF Spokeperson, and Manaros Boransing, Undersecretary of Education) have suggested such administrative structure to avoid intra-ethnic conflict. Further, Congresswomen Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (former Philippine president) has filed a bill recognizing the need for two regional units of the Moro autonomy.

xiii In the recent peace talks, the Lumads had one member in the GRP panel, three in the GRP Technical Working Group, and another one in the MILF panel's Technical Working Group. "But they were not content with this for the MILF took the position that the Lumad are part of the Bangsamoro, so is their territory." says Rodil (2010:25). The present composition of the GRP panel also has one Lumad (Teduray) member.