

**THE TRIPOLI AGREEMENT: A NEW COVENANT OF
PHILIPPINE NATIONHOOD AND A FRAMEWORK FOR
TOTAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE BANGSA MORO***

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Introduction

On December 23, 1976, or about nine years ago, representatives of the Philippine Government and of the Moro National Liberation Front signed the Tripoli Agreement. It was done with the participation of the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission of the Islamic Conference and had the personal guidance of both President Khaddafy and President Marcos.

This agreement was hailed as a milestone in the history of Mindanao, as it was intended to be the critical first step in regaining peace besides providing for regional autonomy as a new framework for the total development of the Moro and his territory.

Today, however, the MNLF leadership and supporters in the Islamic world community believe that this agreement, after almost a decade, remains to be implemented, and serious doubts have been raised as to whether the agreement is worth more than the paper on which it was written. It is unfortunate that the dialogue which produced this historic document broke down, thereby aborting the round of talks between the government panel and the MNLF without discussion of the implementing details of the agreement. It is futile, it seems to me, to dwell now on the circumstances leading to, or on whom to pin the blame for the breakdown of the dialogue. In the same vein, I shall leave to the historians the task of judging the propriety or correctness of the government's subsequent actions and decisions pertaining to the implementation of the Tripoli Agreement. I shall leave to the historians, too, judgment on the wisdom of the position of the MNLF, specifically of its Chairman Nur Misuari, which is that of disassociation with these phases and processes of implementing the agreement.

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What needs to be stressed instead is that the so-called "Moro problem" which gave rise to the MNLF separatist rebellion remains unresolved, and that the protagonists in the controversy continue to cite the Tripoli Agreement as the reference point for a final resolution of the problem. Recent media reports quoted MNLF spokesman as saying that the separatist movement will be revived before the year-end because of the non-implementation of the Tripoli Agreement. As articulated by President Marcos after the breakdown of the dialogue, the government position is to continue the policy of accommodation and reconciliation towards the MNLF, to continue the reconstruction and development of Mindanao in accordance with the spirit of the Tripoli Agreement even without MNLF participation, and instead "to involve the greater number of our people in building the peace."

The underlying premise of this conference, to which I fully subscribe, is the continuing validity and relevance of the Tripoli Agreement, notwithstanding the state of non-reconciliation to this day between the government and the MNLF leadership. In this paper, I shall first advance my own perception of the historical significance of the Tripoli Agreement, and that is: the Tripoli Agreement is the first true covenant for a political union entered into by and between the Christian Filipino and the Bangsa Moro; hence, the conceptual framework for comprehensive planning and total development of Moroland has already been defined. Then, I shall dwell on the thesis that what is needed now is a more effective mobilization of the national political will to translate this covenant into a reality. Since the process and the outcome of development planning is an effective mechanism to mobilize the national political will, the concluding part of this paper shall be an attempt to formulate the fundamental principles for such a comprehensive development plan for the areas of regional autonomy as envisioned in the Tripoli Agreement.

The Tripoli Agreement as a Covenant of Nationhood

In the search for the historical significance of the Tripoli Agreement, my re-reading of Philippine history has led me to draw two major conclusions. The first is that there is a parallel between the MNLF rebellion and the Filipino struggle for national liberation in the second half of the 19th century. Just as the *illustrados* launched the Propaganda Movement that crystallized the concept of Filipino nationhood and laid the ideological basis for the Revolution of 1896, the MNLF leadership has articulated the sense of Bangsa Moro nationhood that rose above tribal identities. As expressed in the first issue of the MNLF newsletter, *Maharlika*:

The MIM is misnamed: Mindanao is not our nation, because Sulu and Palawan are also included. Also, Muslim Independence Movement is not right because it is not our nationality — there are Muslims in other countries and not all the people are Muslims. The correct name is Moro, because that is our nationality . . . This is not a religious war. Christians can also be Moros . . . I can't give you an accurate answer about the kind of governmental system the

MNLF plans to establish. We've got to get the consensus of the majority of the people on that.

From this very moment there shall be no stressing the fact that one is a Tausog, a Samal, a Yakan, a Subanon, a Kalagan, a Maguindanao, a Maranao, or a Badjao. He is only a Moro. Indeed even those of other faith who have long established residence in the Bangsa Moro homeland and whose goodwill and sympathy are with the Bangsa Moro Revolution shall for purposes of national identification, be considered Moros. In other words, the term Moro is a national concept that must be understood as all-embracing for all Bangsa Moro people within the length and breadth of our national boundaries.

The MNLF rebellion in the recent past, as with the Filipino nationalists of the previous century, was confronted with only two options — full citizenship under a union with the “mother country” or separate nationhood.

The conventional wisdom propagated today by nationalist Filipino historians is that the reform movement of the Great Propagandists, of which the leading light was Jose Rizal, was an expression of a still “unripened” nationalism which reached “a higher stage of development” much later upon the organization of the Katipunan and the launching of the armed struggle for national liberation under the leadership of the Great Plebeian, Andres Bonifacio. The “nationalist theme” in the Philippine history as it is interpreted centers on two views: 1) that the eventual failure of the Philippine revolution was due to its betrayal by the *ilustrado* class (or the *burgis*) which recaptured the leadership of the revolution from the masses: and 2) that the revolutionist Bonifacio was the real nationalist and was superior to the reformist and pacifist Rizal. The leading proponent of this view is the University of the Philippines where Misuari studied and later taught as a Professor of Political Science.

If I have indulged at some length on this aspect of recorded Philippine history, it is only to stress the heavy burden placed on the MNLF leadership, specifically its Chairman Nur Misuari, in making the choice between complete separation on the one hand, and union under a framework of autonomy, with the Philippine Republic, on the other. In the context of the foregoing Filipino nationalist historiography, a scaling down of the MNLF goal of separation to autonomy may be construed as “a betrayal of the nationalist aspiration of the Bangsa Moro.” That the MNLF Chairman did in fact later opt for autonomy under the Tripoli Agreement is a testament not only to the moderating influence of the Islamic Conference but also to Misuari’s personal courage in his willingness to risk being so misinterpreted. That the MNLF leadership of Nur Misuari, soon after signing the Tripoli Agreement, had reverted to the position of separate statehood for the Bangsa Moro, or an autonomy indistinguishable from separate statehood, may not necessarily be due to perfidy or deviousness, which is the view espoused in the government “white paper” on the controversy. It may instead be a reflection of the enormity of the risk of condemnation as a traitor to the cause of the Bangsa Moro. Misuari may understandably have perceived this risk to have increased as a consequence of the govern-

ment conduct of the plebiscite on the geographical scope and the administrative arrangements of the autonomy, including the organization of the provisional government as envisioned in the Tripoli Agreement.

This, I assert, is not an *apologia* for Misuari, but an attempt to lay some basis for new efforts on the part of the government to resume the dialogue with the MNLF, without which further discussions or actions on the Tripoli Agreement and its implementation would not be fully productive. I hold this view considering the second major conclusion I have derived of Philippine history that is, that the Tripoli Agreement is the first true covenant entered into by and between the Muslim Filipinos and the Christian Filipinos for the preservation of an undivided Philippine statehood.

My re-reading of Philippine history has informed me that — partly because of the failure of the Philippine Muslims to develop a sense of community until recently, and mainly as aspects or consequences of the history of Spanish, and later American colonialism — the Christianized Filipinos and the Moro people have lived virtually in separate worlds. Spain's conquest and successful colonization of the central and northern regions of the Philippine archipelago and the failure of her military campaigns to subjugate the Moros of Mindanao and Sulu established the demarcation lines. The Philippine revolution of 1896, to my mind, was a golden opportunity for the Christian Filipino and the Moro to establish a unified struggle for national liberation. Much to my disappointment, I have not found any historical document to show that the people of these islands joined forces in the common struggle to terminate Spanish colonialism and to establish a new nation embracing the inhabitants of the entire archipelago. What seems clear is that the 1896 revolution was a movement independent of the Moro resistance against Spanish colonial subjugation. It has intrigued me no end that even Jose Rizal, who, during his Dapitan exile, was virtually cheek-by-jowl with the Moro people, nonetheless failed to make any mention of the Moros or to ponder on their role in the emergent national society.

Extending this theme further, we note that the Moro freedom fighters were not included in the battle plans of the Katipunan under Bonifacio and later under Aguinaldo. We may also note that the Moro leaders did not have an opportunity to participate in framing the constitution of the Malolos Republic when Aguinaldo and Mabini called for a nationwide revolutionary congress. Not surprisingly, the Filipino military strategists during the Filipino-American war also failed to establish common cause with the Moro warriors who resisted the Americans just as ferociously as they resisted the Spaniards.

In retrospect, I believe we may regard the proposal for a ninth ray in the Philippine flag to commemorate the Moro wars of resistance against the Spaniards as a mere afterthought and a poignant reminder of the failure of the brains of the Filipino revolution to forge ties of nationhood with the Moro people during that

critical period in Philippine history.

The American regime recognized and perpetuated the differentness and apartness of the Moro peoples from the rest of Philippine society. The Moro Province was created in 1903 as separate and distinct from the larger Philippine bureaucracy. Moroland was subsequently administered under a Department of Mindanao and Sulu (1914-1920), under the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes of the Department of Interior (1920-1936), and during the Commonwealth period, under the Commissioner for Mindanao and Sulu.

These special administrative arrangements for the Moro territories understandably did not mitigate the alienation of the Moro from the Christian Filipino, an alienation nurtured by the heritage of hatred and mistrust during Spain's Moro wars. Not surprisingly, during the discussions of Philippine independence in the U.S. Congress, the general sentiment of the Moro people was for non-inclusion in a Christian Filipino republic. This sentiment was conveyed to the American authorities in Washington and Manila on several occasions — the June 9, 1921 petition of Mindanao and Sulu Moro leaders, the Declaration of Rights and Purposes sent to the U.S. Congress by a group of Moro leaders in 1924, and the letter of 121 Lanao datus to President Roosevelt in March 1935. It is noteworthy that this sentiment was strong enough to elicit the support of U.S. Congressman Bacon, who filed a bill for the separation of Mindanao and Sulu from the emergent Philippine republic.

The plight of the Moro people was temporarily relegated to the background by the growing threat of war with Japan. As a consequence, a noted scholar has observed, "when independence was declared in 1946, the Muslim peoples, with social institutions and culture different from the majority of the Filipinos, found themselves bound with the latter in a new political entity with a direction which they had practically no hand in formulating (Majul, 1976:91)." It may be recalled, too, that there was Moro representation in the constitutional convention of 1934-35 which included Sultan sa Ramain Alauya Alonto of Lanao, Datu Piang of Cotabato and Hadji Butu of Sulu, but it must be noted that delegate Tomas Cabili of Lanao refused to sign the constitution of 1935 on the grounds that it failed to articulate and protect the interests and welfare of the Moro people which he regarded as his main constituency, being himself of Moro descent. In this context, I submit the view that the representation of Sultan sa Ramain Alauya Alonto, Datu Piang and Hadji Butu did not necessarily constitute a Moro covenant of political union with the Christian Filipino. They were laboring under the serious limitations of having Spanish as the language of discourse in the convention and of their unfamiliarity with the lexicon of western political tradition.

The constitution of 1973 was the next major opportunity for a categorical declaration of Moro union with Christian Filipinos under the Philippine Republic. Although the Moro representatives to the constitutional convention of 1971 were this time decidedly of adequate training and experience, still the question is moot

because the ratification of the 1973 constitution was overtaken by the declaration of martial law and the eruption of the MNLF rebellion. Under these circumstances, we cannot posit that the 1973 constitution, in contrast to the constitution of 1935, is a covenant of political unity between the Moro and the Christian Filipino.

Hence, a review of the historical record will indeed support the proposition that the Tripoli Agreement is a milestone in the history of Filipino nation-building as it marks the very first true covenant for brotherhood and national unity between the Christian Filipino and the Bangsa Moro. All the previous fundamental political acts of the Moro community in its relation to the larger Philippine society and body politic were characterized by tribe-based identities and were merely reactions to the initiatives of colonial powers. The Tripoli Agreement in contrast is premised on a Bangsa Moro identity that has transcended the tribal identities and is thus a direct covenant of the Moro community with the Christian Filipino majority.

Because the national leadership has a keen sense of history, I am confident in the belief that the government will continue to give importance to the Tripoli Agreement as the cornerstone that it is for rebuilding the peace and accelerating the development of Mindanao. You will recall that soon after the breakdown of the government-MNLF dialogue, President Marcos declared in his report to the Batasang Bayan that: "Nothing less than peace, nothing less than unity and brotherhood is our aim." And counseling against anger and retaliation in the wake of the resumption of hostilities after the breakdown of the dialogue, President Marcos further said (1977);

... Our objective will not be to make war on those who wish to deny to us the peace, but to make every other man, woman or child an active participant in the effort to construct the peace . . . by systematic and deliberate ways to enlarge the domains of peace, by investing more of our available resources, so that we may quicken the pace of progress, and make more equitable the sharing of its fruits, among a greater number of beneficiaries.

Accordingly, I hereby announce that it shall be the policy of this government not only to maintain the present reconstruction and development program in Mindanao, but to strengthen it, to the limit that can be supported by our available resources. As I invite you therefore to join your government in the search for a new approach to the discussions that have been adjourned, I also ask you to lend to this policy your fullest support.

Preliminary Considerations Towards a Development Plan of the Bangsa Moro

Let me now proceed on a discourse on development planning in the context of the Tripoli Agreement. This is the topic assigned to me, I suppose because of

some contributions to the literature on the Moro problem that I have made, specifically the policy and program proposals that we at the MSU-Iligan Institute of Technology have advanced concerning the educational, socio-economic and political development of Muslim Mindanao. In the course of the present discussion, I believe it will become clear that the historical perspective of the Tripoli Agreement as I have just brought up is necessary to a lucid presentation on the development plan of the Bangsa Moro in the area of autonomy as envisioned in the agreement.

I submit that an appreciation of the essence and historical significance of the Tripoli Agreement as a true covenant of political union of the Bangsa Moro and the Christian Filipino under a single statehood is necessary for the resumption of dialogues. I believe that the breakdown of the talks and the procedural impasses over the subsequent phases of implementation of the agreement are an offshoot of our having lost sight of its essence and historical significance, and of our having become too pre-occupied with attaining immediate concrete results regarding its implementing details. The emphasis on the legal, rather than on the moral nature of the agreement, also contributed to the misunderstanding because the parties proceeded from contrasting notions or premises. The MNLF and the Islamic Conference perceive the agreement as a treaty or an international agreement, violations of which are subject to sanctions in accordance with international law, whereas the Philippine government regards it as a "memorial or record of understanding between the Philippine government and an organization of its own nationals."

My view is that these disputes on the legal aspects of the Tripoli Agreement are counterproductive and should be set aside. They do not, in any case, detract from or alter the moral nature of the Tripoli Agreement as an expression of the nation's political will, a covenant of political union of the Bangsa Moro and the Christian Filipino. Whether called a treaty or a memorial, to my mind it is still an agreement that is morally binding on the parties. It is, therefore, heartening to note that the rhetorics and polemics issuing after the breakdown of negotiations have focused not on the fundamentals of a political union but on the details of such a union. On this basis, I believe that we may affirm the unimpaired validity of the Tripoli Agreement. Since it encompasses and defines the areas of development concerns, including the broad outlines of the organic structure of the regional autonomous government, the Tripoli Agreement may thus also be regarded as the conceptual framework of an areawide integrated development plan of such autonomous region.

Nonetheless, we are now faced with the fact that negotiations have broken down, and the problem is how to carry on the task of translating the covenant into reality with the active participation of all concerned parties. This problem has been compounded by the fragmentation in the MNLF leadership. My position is that by all means let us continue the efforts toward reconciliation and exhaust all avenues for a resumption of the dialogue with the MNLF, including all factions that have split from Misuari's camp. But while working and hoping for reconciliation,

let us now begin to set into motion the terms of reference of the Tripoli Agreement. Rather than wasting our past efforts towards its implementation, let us reaffirm the covenant of political solidarity embodied in the agreement. On this solid foundation of a consensus, let us draft and formulate the organizational and development plan of the Moro autonomous region in Mindanao.

This brings us to the question of mechanics and the machinery that shall be vested with such a responsibility. Heeding the call of President Marcos to search for "new approaches," I propose that a Tripoli Agreement Study Commission (TASC) be formed. Acting as a neutral "brain trust" composed of national and international scholars representing relevant fields of expertise, the Commission shall spell out the details of the organic structure and limits of authority of the autonomous government and its relationships with the central government, including the specific areas of concern which the Tripoli Agreement had left for later discussion. These are: a) integration of the Bangsa Moro army with the Armed Forces of the Philippines; b) setting up of a system of *shariah* courts and autonomous administrative, financial and economic systems; c) establishing the regional educational system and its relationships with the national educational system; d) providing for Bangsa Moro representation in the Supreme Court and in other agencies of the central government; and e) determining the autonomous region's share in revenues from mines and mineral resources of the region. The Commission shall form task forces in each area of concern with the representation and participation of the MNLF, the government and other sectors of the regional and national community. The participating sectors of each task force shall discuss and adopt detailed policy proposals in their respective area of concern, on which basis the Commission shall formulate and recommend concrete policy guidelines bearing on the details of implementation of the Tripoli Agreement. The final round of talks stipulated in the Tripoli Agreement, if this is resumed, shall thus have a more concrete basis for discussions and negotiations.

The organization of a study group as herein proposed was necessary even if the dialogue did not collapse. It is even more imperative now because of the complexity of the areas of concern embodied in the agreement. On a larger plane, the TASC would serve as a broker between the MNLF and the government to expedite the negotiation process. Contending opinions would be subjected to a rigorous appraisal based on the standards of reason and expertise, thereby minimizing recriminations inherent in any adversary dialogue. It has the advantage of making a deeper study, given more time and effort, to develop a mutually satisfactory program faithful to the provisions of the agreement.

Suggested Basic Principles of the Bangsa Moro Development Plan

I have high hopes that the proposal for a Tripoli Agreement Study Commission will find support in the highest councils of state and among the leadership of the MNLF. Anticipating the creation of the Commission, I shall now delve in this concluding part of my paper on what I perceive to be the fundamental premises and principles of comprehensive development planning of the Moro autonomous region. These are: 1) the reality of the socio-cultural distinctness of the Mindanao Muslims from the rest of Philippine society and the validity of the emergent national consciousness of the Mindanao Muslims as Bangsa Moro; 2) the value of Islam as a socio-cultural force for development and integration of the Bangsa Moro with the Christian Filipino community; and 3) the need for a strategy of "reverse discrimination" and total development to bridge the socio-economic gap between the Bangsa Moro and the Christian Filipino

The first principle I have already discussed at length. Let me just reiterate the fact that the MNLF movement has accelerated the emergence of a Bangsa Moro national consciousness, as a recent study has shown (Abbahil, 1984). This survey conducted last year bearing on the ethnic and national self-identity of the Mindanao Muslim youth reveals that 89.4 percent reject the use of the name "Filipino" whereas 43.2 percent agree with the term "Moro" as their nationality.

The principle of recognition and acceptance of the reality of the Bangsa Moro emergent national consciousness is a fundamental premise in defining the details of the region of autonomy of the Bangsa Moro. The most immediate implication that I can readily perceive is the need for a political framework that affords maximum autonomy for the Bangsa Moro community within the context of a single state as already conceded by the MNLF in the Tripoli Agreement. This, I believe, is not really problematic because distinction of nationalities does not necessarily imply individual sovereignty for each. Several historical and contemporary states could be cited as examples of viable political systems embracing varying nationalities.

Under these premises we may debunk the time-worn concepts of integration which the Bangsa Moro perceives as, in reality, assimilation. Instead, with the framework of autonomy, the Bangsa Moro shall be not just tolerated but encouraged to realize a flowering of his historical and ethno-cultural heritage.

This brings us to the role of Islam in the development of the Bangsa Moro. The second principle that I submit for consideration is the recognition of the Islamic character of the MNLF liberation movement which is its distinguishing feature (De los Santos, 1978) and of the real value of Islam as a cultural force in the life of the Bangsa Moro community. Islam is a total system which integrates religion with government, the economy and the social and cultural life of its believers. I refer you to Dr. Amir Hasaan Siddiqi (1975) for a comprehensive discussion of Islamic institu-

tions. The western political tradition of separation of Church and State has no meaning in Islam. Hence, it is not just history and the emergent sense of Bangsa Moro nationality that are arguments for maximum political autonomy, but also the Islamic way of life that has been embraced by the Bangsa Moro. This necessitates a political framework wherein the Islamic doctrines, especially those on the political structure and process, could be given the fullest expression.

It should be stressed at this point that the value of Islam as the integrative force in the strengthening of the Bangsa Moro nationality does not necessarily imply a complete break from the larger Philippine society in the long run. As one scholar has pointed out (De los Santos, 1978), Islamic doctrine does not preclude a political solidarity of Muslims and non-Muslims. It emphasizes, among others, the distinction between a greater and lesser jihad — the greater jihad (*al akhbar*), which is the higher principle, espouses the primary of a Muslim's obligation to "wage war" against evil as a purification process. In other words, Islam places a higher value on moral revolution that is internal in every individual Muslim, compared with the external, armed battle against the *kaffir* or non-Muslim. Hence, a truly devout Muslim is necessarily a good citizen, especially in the context of a pluralistic society and political system.

Elsewhere I have outlined a policy concept of "reverse discrimination" and total development as an alternative approach to the Bangsa Moro Problem in the Southern Philippines (see Boransing, 1979). Reverse discrimination seeks to alter an unequal situation bred by majority-minority relations in pluralistic societies. It is a comprehensive program of development which envisions the design and implementation of a package of social, economic, political and educational policies for a disadvantaged group — the Bangsa Moro — to enable them to catch up with the rest of the population. With it, the Bangsa Moro shall be guaranteed participation in nation building without losing their cherished cultural heritage. Additionally, it shall give them access to various opportunities, and insure for them the enjoyment of benefits of development under a highly competitive marketplace.

The concept is in accord with the views of Muslim scholars (e.g., Majul, 1976) and has been tried with a measure of success in Malaysia which spearheaded the *bumiputra* policy, a long-range program of development that brings the indigenous Malays (including non-Muslim tribes) to the level of the prosperous Chinese in all aspects of national life.*

*Under the premise that most of Malaysia's racial and social problems are essentially economic in origin, the government developed a national program of development which carries a radical re-allocation of economic resources and opportunities for the Malays, Chinese and Indians. It adopted a target whereby "within two decades, at least 30 percent of the total commercial and industrial activities of all categories and scales of operation should have participation by Malays and other indigenous people in terms of ownership and management" (Nagata, 1972).

How does the proposed policy compare with other concepts of development? First, it is not pursued in the current practice of adopting the Western style of development in which change is secured along the lines of secularism and capitalism. Where ordinarily development is conceived as compartmentalized efforts to change things for the better, which is assimilative in meaning to the Muslims, the policy of total development suggests a harmonious process of seeking simultaneous change in all aspects of life — social, political, economic and even moral — while at the same time respecting religious differences. Where development is ushered in the by the forces of capitalistic economy and cut-throat competition, the policy implies that the marketplace should not be monopolistic but should instead allow effective participation by a disadvantaged group which by reason of inequality loses out by natural default.

Anchored upon the virtues of Islam, total development stands neither for a complete socialization nor for absolute *laissez faire* of production and distribution. As in any Islamic system, where development stands midway between capitalism and communism, it does not oppose or prevent individuals from acquiring private property. At the same time, however it rejects concentration of wealth in a few hands, which is itself an evil perpetrated by naked capitalism (Siddiqi, 1975).

Second, it follows that the concept is not justified mainly by pure economic rationalism and secondarily by humanitarian concern. Rather, it proceeds on the assumption that both should be integral to the whole sequence of development but subordinate to the divine will. Development is more meaningful to Muslims if it is polished not by the trappings of modern economic theories but tempered with a noble human purpose, that of making individuals fulfill service to humanity according to the grand design of God where everyone is equal or free.

And third, it is a wholistic yet balanced view of human nature and the universe. The policy believes that things are lasting or stable if coherence is achieved in the relationship between man and his environment, or between men and other men, by shelving the popular belief of primacy of man over nature, by establishing mutual respect among men, and by according the less privileged the dignity of being heard and respected for what they believe in.

These, then, are some of the ideological principles of the suggested policy concept, if development is to elicit active participation and allow enjoyment of its fruits among the Moros in the Philippines. They are overriding concerns of a development program whose intention should be communicated clearly so that a group does not become an unsuspecting victim of, but a willing participant, in the process of development.

These premises and definitions fully understood, let me now sketch a framework of what I believe comprises a realistic program for total development in the Bangsa Moro areas.

Politically, proportional allocation of seats in both local and regional levels should be determined in the Moro areas of the south. This also implies equal representation of the Christians in the areas where they are a minority, so that all voices will be heard in the shaping of decisions. In like manner, Bangsa Moro participation in the important national government agencies should be guaranteed to give them the opportunity to prove their worth and to demonstrate their loyalty. These agencies include, among other things, the judiciary, the military, the educational system and agencies concerned with planning and development.

Socially, targets should be fixed for a period, say, of 30 years, during which the Bangsa Moro is guaranteed participation and access to opportunities in education, manpower training, health, and related affairs. More specifically, the proposal entails strengthening of both the public school and the Muslim *madrasah* school, institution of a massive program of scholarship for qualified Bangsa Moro youth for tertiary and university education, and manpower program for skills training for the out-of-school youth and adults alike, among others.

There should also be a package of economic policies to enhance the agricultural, industrial and commercial development of the Bangsa Moro communities. Tax rebates and tax holidays should be granted to those establishments which commit their resources to developing the Moro areas, by employing a significant proportion of Muslims or accepting equity ownership from them, funding manpower training of Moros, and much more. Setting aside a certain percentage of the electric power generated from the Agus River and the Pulangi River for use of businesses in the Bangsa Moro regions will also be desirable. Strengthening of the Philippine Amanah Bank as the major financial institution in the Bangsa Moro areas according to Islamic laws shall draw inspiration among small Moro entrepreneurs. Sums of loanable funds for these areas must be earmarked to encourage and hasten the development of agri-based industries. These and many more such commercial policies shall guarantee for all time an active and meaningful participation among the Bangsa Moro.

In a nutshell, the concept of total development is nothing but a plea to grant the Bangsa Moro their basic human rights for protection so they may live without fear and feelings of alienation within their own homeland. Its essence is to provide them guarantees to recover the precious opportunity lost from historical accidents. Operationally, it means narrowing down the wide gap in the different arenas of life so that the Bangsa Moro will be brought to parity with the rest, giving them pride in their uniqueness and valuing their efforts to participate in nation building under the new covenant.

The provisions of the Tripoli Agreement, as I have pointed out, spell what may prove as a comprehensive development program for the Mindanao Muslims. The proposed concept of total development conforms to the broad contours of the agreement by way of operationalizing developmental activities in social, educational,

economic and political spheres. It has attempted to lay down some specific targets of policy and offered basic principles for rationale. In addition, the concept of total development is quite explicit in its search for protectionist measures not to be interpreted as special concessions but to be viewed as aspects of human rights for citizens who are left out and whose survival is threatened.

Concluding Notes

In this paper I have shown a case for re-assessment of the Tripoli Agreement in the context of its substantive and historic meanings for the Bangsa Moro and the larger Philippine society. More than what it entails on paper, the agreement symbolizes for the first time a new covenant for unity and brotherhood between two national communities destined to live by circumstances under a single political system. Recognition of such a symbolism demands acceptance of the necessity of continuing the talks to activate the complex provisions of the accord. It also calls for ways of laying out in specific terms the broad confines of a total development program.

I have attempted to suggest some basic principles and mechanisms of what appear to me as procedural steps toward a fruitful implementation of the agreement. If accepted, these suggestions call for the mobilization of the national political will, and all other resources, to bring into reality the purposes of the new covenant. Commitment must be indicated by all sectors to carry out a new task that has just begun but failed, if peace and development are to prevail in a land of "broken" promises. The new covenant, as I call the Tripoli Agreement, is designed to fulfill the promise of unity and prosperity. While the Tripoli Agreement has been considered in some quarters as "a mere scrap of paper" (Canoy, 1979:299), no longer the instrument for unity it was purported to be, its implications for peace and development in Mindanao are still burning issues crying for response. Translating the new covenant into reality hinges on the willingness of men to listen and sit down again with others who want to sue for lasting peace. I would like to believe that today in this conference we are making a new beginning.

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