

Moro problem remains unsolved

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Moro problem remains unsolved, and perceived to be worsening, under the administration of president Gloria Macapagal Aroyo. The Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Bangsamoro must understand and give serious attention to the problem in order not to waste time and efforts.

The GRP have made a series of negotiations with the Moro rebels in order to cease the Moro problem in Mindanao. The Moro rebels aim to establish an Islamic government and the latter is enthusiastic to strengthen the sense of Filipino nationalism within the constitutional framework.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front, in particular, is known as secessionist group and the GRP therefore sticks to preserve its territorial integrity as enshrined in its constitution.

At the start of the negotiation, It is obvious that the MILF has led the latter toward its vision. The fact, their 2001 Tripoli accord provides that 'negotiation and peaceful resolution of the conflict must involve consultations with the Bangsamoro free of any imposition in order to provide chances of success and open new formula that permanently respond to the aspiration of the people for freedom.' The negotiated political process which should be the establishment of Bangsamoro Juridical Entity may be tough to the government to implement because the prospective result might contravene the territorial integrity of the State.

Moro struggle is a continuing cycle. Its different forms, modes and strategies indirectly pressure the Philippine government to make "laws and policies" governing "projects and programs" implemented, and the rest have been executed, for the Bangsamoro. But, government projects and programs failed to address the "Moro problem."

Question has been raised why this Moro problem continue to persists? This question invites diverse opinion among observers. It may be known to those who are really conscious and have sufficient knowledge on Moro history. This I think distinct from Muslim problem. It is unique. It refers to the inclusion of the Bangsamoro into the Philippine Republic, hence, without this there can be no Moro struggle against the government for genuine self-determination, a separate Bangsamoro state. Muslim problem, on the other hand, is broader enough. It refers to socio-economic, political and educational problems of the Muslims.

The quest for a separate Bangsamoro state can be achieved through armed struggle or political settlement- that means the legal constraints have to be set aside and the will of the people, the Bangsamoro in particular is a paramount consideration.

The Philippine Constitution provides the present Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao which was conceptualized and legislated in order to address the Moro problem. This autonomy, however, failed to realize the "people's expectation."

The first Government enhanced autonomy offer was proposed by Estrada in 2000 which the MILF utterly rejected; the second in February 2003, which the MILF did not care to look at; and the third suddenly rejected without looking at the so-called package. This government offer is an act of abandoning the consensus points on ancestral domain aspect of the Tripoli Agreement of 2001.

Obviously, the government is shifting to constitutional process in order to offer Bangsamoro Federal set-up. Jesus Dureza, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, told members of the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines that the objective of the move is to allow the creation of a Federal Bangsamoro Governance after a peace pact between the government and the MILF is signed.

Constitutional experts, some of whom helped frame the 1987 Constitution is working on “fast mode” to allow for a “federal framework” that would “clear the way” for the government to “really respond to the Bangsamoro aspirations,” Dureza said. This is not among the consensus points reached by the government and MILF peace panels. The details of the Federal framework will be left to the Congress to legislate.”

Secretary Norberto Gonzales, National Security Adviser, who was also present, told reporters separately that the proposed federal state, which he acknowledged was not part of the consensus points reached by the government and the MILF, is “actually at the informal level, being mentioned (by the MILF) because when you look at the package of the MILF, they’re really looking at something like...statehood and that is not possible.. in the terms of our Constitution today. But the idea of federalism, the Bangsamoro states will be possible but of course that will call for a Constitutional amendment...” This is necessary since government cannot execute any agreement against its constitution.

If government continue its initiative to amend its constitution in order to implement what was agreed between the MILF and GRP and the MNLF and GRP peace panels, I think political settlement can move forward. to accommodate the “desired ends” of the Bangsamoro..