

## Analysis Synergy to Achieve Positive Peace in the Southern Philippines under President Duterte

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**ABSTRACT:** Under President Duterte, the Philippine government has made a lot of efforts in order to improve the welfare of the people in Mindanao, Southern Philippines as a concrete form of supporting positive peace. This commitment is carried out through various inclusive and participatory approaches as well as assistance programs provided to conflict-affected communities and former combatants. In addition, there is a synergy in legal basis and a peace agreement as a consensus between conflicting actors so that a long-term commitment is established to create positive peace. This research uses a qualitative approach with peace theory and a literature review design related a collaboration to efforts the achievement of peace in the perspective of synergy during President Duterte. Collecting data by compiling sources from various kinds of literature such as reading books, websites, and discussing with experts and competent groups in various efforts to achieve peace. The results showed that mediation and reconciliation efforts were carried out on an ongoing basis to resolve conflicts completely. Meanwhile, welfare programs are also carried out by the government at the macro, mezzo, and micro levels to increase the community trust so as to break the roots of conflict caused by differences in culture, religion, and perceptions of the Bangsamoro. In conclusion, achieving positive peace in the Southern Philippines is still in progress. President Duterte's first step towards peace with the presence of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) until the existence of BTA became the starting point for the realization of equity and social justice for all Filipinos.

**KEYWORDS** – Synergy, Positive Peace, Mindanao, Bangsamoro, Duterte

### I. INTRODUCTION

The Mindanao conflict is a very long-standing conflict, involving the inhabitants of Mindanao with residents outside Mindanao. The dynamics of the Mindanao conflict originated from the resistance of the mindanao population to colonialization efforts by the Spanish who had successfully controlled the Luzon Islands and wanted to expand their sphere of influence to the southern part of Luzon in the 15th century AD.

After Philippine independence, July 4, 1946, the Mindanao conflict occurred between the Philippine government and the people of Mindanao. The policy of the Philippine government of Manuel Quezon, which wanted to abolish the cultural, legal and political structure and replace it with a legal structure, as well as a positive law-based culture and politics in the Philippines, was met with strong resistance from the Datu in Mindanao because it was understood that it would threaten the legitimacy of the Datu and threaten the Islamic identity that had been rooted in Mindanao since the 15th century.

The change of government between one regime and its successor regime has its ups and downs in resolving the conflict with the people of Mindanao. In an effort to defend the territory, the regime in the Philippines has two major strategies, namely by confrontation strategy against rebel groups or carrying out a

political strategy in the form of a peace agreement or referendum to determine the political choices of the people of Mindanao.

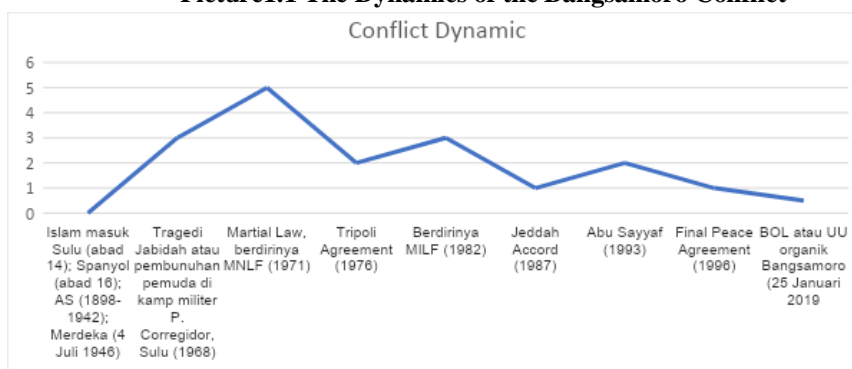
In a conflict, it is very possible to have human rights violations committed by both the government and rebels. Conflict and human rights are 2 inseparable things, as is the case in the conflict in Mindanao.

The establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in March 2019 has been a major step towards conflict resolution between the Philippine government and several autonomy-seeking groups, in particular the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). BARMM is the poorest region in the country. Armed conflict and violence are still common in the poorest provinces of Barmm Lanao Del Sur, Maguindanao, and Sulu, where clashes between the military and armed groups such as the Islamic Freedom Fighters Of Bangsamoro and the Abu Sayyaf group linked to the Islamic State are frequent.

Significant human rights issues include reports of: unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings, by and on behalf of government and non-state actors; reports of enforced disappearances by and on behalf of governments and non-state actors; torture by and on behalf of government and non-state actors; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary detention by and on behalf of government and non-state actors; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; arbitrary interference and; serious violations in the conflict, including unlawful recruitment or use of child soldiers by terrorists and groups in insurrection against the government; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and the media, including violence, threats of violence, and the unjustified arrest or prosecution of journalists, censorship, and the use of criminal defamation laws to punish Journalists; high-level and widespread government corruption; serious government restrictions or harassment of domestic human rights organizations; and threats and violence against labor activists.

The discussion of this research will be focused on the term of President Duterte, because the BOL Act was the initiation of Rodrigo Duterte himself, where this law was designed to give Muslims overall autonomy, as well as judicial and economic advancement. Under the law, courts of Islamic Law will be opened in the region, and the Philippine Central Government will hand over its administrative authority in Mindanao to the Bangsamoro Government. The waters in the Bangsamoro Territory will be jointly managed by the National Government and the Bangsamoro Government. The Autonomous Government will be responsible for managing energy resources. In addition, former fighters from the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) will be able to join official forces (the Bangsamoro Law Passed After the Philippine Popular Consultation, 2019). Further, consider the following picture:

**Picture1.1 The Dynamics of the Bangsamoro Conflict**



Source: Processed by the author, from (Abubakar, 2019; AUN-HRE et al., 2021; Surwandono, 2013)

Based on the picture above, it can be said that the current conflict in the Philippines, especially in Mindanao, tends to be dynamic and has potential. Where the flow of conflict is not fixed and continues to move or change. There are various potentials for this conflict to be resolved soon after the implementation of the Bangsamoro organic law. Based on the explanation above, it can be formulated research question is “How is the analysis synergy in the Bangsamoro conflict resolution in the Southern Philippines under President Duterte in order to achieve peace?”.

## II. THEORY FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Peace Theory

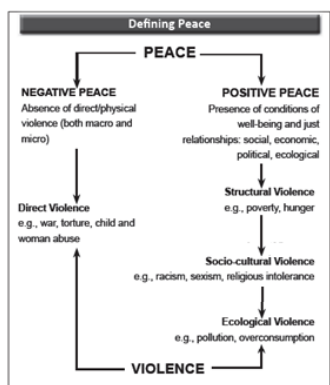
Peace is defined as a condition in which people can live side by side, even though these communities have cultural, social, and other differences. This difference is not an obstacle because of the ability to communicate well, so that there is good understanding and tolerance between these different communities (Perwita et al., 2015). Terminologically, peace means the absence of war or violent conflict. While the meaning of war is direct violent conflict, so war occurs when a conflict resolution cannot be achieved through non-violent methods so that it forces the parties involved in the dispute to take violent action as the only way, from this it can be noted that the conflict itself is divided into two, namely nonviolent conflict and violent conflict (Graham Evans and Jeffrey Newnham, 1998).

Johan Galtung conceptualized the meaning of peace as an internal condition of humans who have peaceful thoughts towards themselves when faced with certain situations. Galtung in (Supriyanto & Wahyudi, 2017) suggests that there are three stages of conflict resolution which will be used by the UN at every opportunity to become a conflict mediator, as well as the deployment of peacekeeping operations (UN PKO). According to Boutros Boutros-Ghali in (Aji & Indrawan, 2019) the three stages are:

1. Peacemaking is a process whose purpose is to reconcile or reconcile the political attitudes and strategies of the warring parties through mediation, negotiation, arbitration, especially at the elite or leadership level.
2. Peacekeeping is the process of stopping or reducing acts of violence through military intervention that carries out the role of a neutral peacekeeper.
3. Peacebuilding is the process of implementing social, political, and economic changes or reconstruction for the sake of creating lasting peace.

In addition, for Galtung, the ideal peace is the complete disappearance of violence, not only physical violence, but also structural violence in the bureaucracy and cultural violence in the human mindset. Therefore, Galtung divides the typology of peace into two forms, namely positive peace and negative peace. Galtung defines negative peace as a condition without direct violence but still structural and cultural violence. While positive peace is interpreted as a situation of creating integration in society (Castro & Galace, 2008, pp. 17–19)

**Picture 2.1 Peace Education: a Pathway to a Culture of Peace**



Source: Loreta Navarro Castro and Jasmin Nario Galace, 2008.

Negative peace or simply translated as non-violence and war is generally found in the realm of diplomacy. We can see this diplomacy, for example, in conflict areas. People who live in conflict areas long for peace which is marked by the end of a war or conflict that occurs in their area. So that diplomatic efforts are

made to stop war or other forms of direct violence that occur in the area. On the other hand, positive peace is found in peacebuilding. In peacebuilding there is a conflict transformation process that directs the condition of the community to be free from structural violence and cultural violence. In other words, the achievement of negative peace is more conservative because it only maintains conditions as they should while positive peace actually grows new things that have not previously grown. Therefore, the form of positive peace will feel more complex and difficult so that it also demands an effort that is not easy to achieve.

Peace is also an associative process that integrates (reconciles) the community which can be seen in the form of (a) Cooperation/Cooperation, namely the realization of people's interest and concern to work together in an understanding; (b) Accommodation which is a process of reaching a temporary agreement that is accepted by both parties to the dispute; (c) Assimilation is the process of merging culture into a single culture and (d) Amalgamation is the process of merging two cultural groups that can produce something new (Santoso, 2019). From some of these understandings, peace can be interpreted as a condition where there is no conflict due to differences from various social aspects. Where the differences in these aspects reach an agreement and undergo a process of unification.

### III. DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 SAT Analysis in Achieving Positive Peace in the Southern Philippines

The conflict in the Southern Philippines that has been going on for a long time can be analyzed with the SAT concept, namely structural root causes of conflict, Accelerator and Trigger. The structural root causes of conflict include several factors, namely systematic political exclusion, inherent economic inequality, the absence of adequate and responsive institutions, shifts in demographic balance, economic decline, and ecological damage to the region (ITP, 2012). Factors are the most entrenched indicators of conflict and the most difficult to achieve because they are usually latent. In the Philippines itself, from its history, it also includes a colony from Spain where cultural values are much oriented to the cultural heritage of colonialism, including religion.

The majority of the Philippines' population is Catholic, which is also the only Christian country in Asia. Over 86% are Roman Catholic, 6% belong to various nationalized Christian cults, and another 2% belong to more than 100 Protestant denominations. In addition to the Christian majority, there is a strong 4% percent Muslim minority, concentrated in the southern islands of Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan (Miller, nd). Residents in the Southern Philippines, especially in Mindanao, are called Bangsamoro. The Bangsamoro struggle can be seen through the struggle against the western conquests of Southeast Asia. When the Spanish landed on the Philippine islands in the early 1520s and met with datos and sultans who already had their own concept of "nation". When America came and defeated Spain, the Bangsamoro people still refused to be part of the new Philippine Government (Abubakar, 2019).

**Picture 3.1 SAT Triangle Bangsamoro**



Sources: Edited by Researcher

In this context, it can be seen that differences in culture, religion and the Bangsamoro who consider themselves as a minority are the roots of the conflict in the Southern Philippines. The Philippines continued the American colonial policy by using the slogans of Filipinoization and Christianization so as to create tension in the Muslim community in the Southern Philippines (Herbert, 2019). In addition, the history of the Bangsamoro which has long had its own sultanate also became the basis for them not to join the Philippine government. Accelerators. are events that increase the level of the situation to be up or down, for example, such as events that accelerate the process of escalation or de-escalation of conflict when the independence of the Philippines was recognized by America, then a new Philippine government was formed which was formed in the Republic of the Philippines.

However, during the process of the formation of this Philippine state, the Bangsamoro people consistently fought for independence through various means, either through diplomacy or through armed movements. Guerra (2010) explained that the long-standing conflict was accelerated by the policies of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, one of which was designing the policy of moving the population of Luzon and Visayas to Mindanao which added to the problems in Mindanao such as the Bangsamoro feeling marginalized and the existence of land disputes, shifts of power, economic migration and stereotypes from immigrants to the Bangsamoro. In line with Wiharyanto (2011) that the meaning of the word Moro itself is an illiterate, evil, godless person and who is the result of the stigmatization of the colonizers because they did not succeed in Christianization in Mindanao (Tandio et al., 2016).

These discriminatory actions then led to various rebellions by the Bangsamoro, one of which was the formation of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) as a representative of the Bangsamoro and wanted an independent state in the Southern Philippines. During the administration of President Corazon Aquino, the ARMM (Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao) government was formed, which is an autonomous region formed to fulfill the aspirations of the Bangsamoro people.

However, the ARMM failed in the midst of the dynamics of the Philippine government and the change of President which caused the inconsistency of the operation of the ARMM. The failure of the peace agreement between the Philippine Government and the Bangsamoro also prolongs this conflict. Triggers can be said to be events that lead to the peak of the outbreak of conflict. The struggle of the Bangsamoro in the Southern Philippines was so strong that it continued to resist the influence of the invaders. When the Republic of the Philippines became independent, the Bangsamoro still continued to fight for their independence, various efforts were made even though the Philippine Government also continued to try to facilitate the Bangsamor people in the Southern Philippines with various agreements.

According to Chaidar, the Mindanao Muslims protested the injustice done by the Philippine government to the Bangsamoro. Until the peak of the trigger was the Jabidah Tragedy, which cost the lives of 180 Moro Muslims in Corregidor, where in 1968 the younger generation of Muslims were trained, after being trained they were savagely killed on the island of Corregidor (Firmanzah, 2017). This tragedy triggered the establishment of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) Organization in 1971 by the Filipino Islamic Political figure, Nur Misuari. In Surwandono (2013), this tragedy occurred during the government of President Marcos when Moro Muslims felt so pressured in 1965-1986. The Marcos regime in power tends to apply repressive policies to every form of Mindanao people's resistance to the government, whether carried out by Muslim Mindanao groups or communist groups.

Radical actions were carried out by the MNLF in the hope of achieving independence or at least getting regional autonomy. The MNLF is an Islamic group that is militarily well organized and strong (Firmanzah, 2017). Moreover, after the Jabidah Tragedy and the establishment of the MNLF, President Marcos issued a Martial Law which in the end led to the outbreak of war between the Armed Forces of the Philippine Government and the MNLF group.

### **3.1 Barriers and Challenges to Achieving Positive Peace in Mindanao**

The Bangsamoro peace process in the Muslim-majority region of Mindanao has been going on for nearly a decade since the government reached a permanent ceasefire agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front after nearly 40 years of conflict. Where there has been a referendum held three years ago, on January 30, 2019, the contents of which agreed on the establishment of a wider Muslim autonomous region in the Southern Philippines. Since then, the conflict in Mindanao has experienced a continuous de-escalation of conflict.

However, there are still some obstacles and challenges that need to be mentioned regarding the positive peace process in Mindanao. One of them is the process of signing the Moro Nation Organic Law in January 2019 which is a product of an initiative carried out by President Duterte himself. So it is uncertain whether the new President, President Marcos Junior, will continue to support the peace process if the government changes hands. Because there have been many examples in the past where countries have shown that the process can be stopped if the new government and president come to power and then suspend the relevant policies (Çolakoğlu, 2014).

Research by Fukunaga, (2013) explains that there is a crisis of trust experienced by the Bangsamoro towards every effort made by the Philippine government to achieve peace (Istiqomah, 2014). The Bangsamoro's distrust of the Philippine government was caused by several previous Philippine Presidents' actions which tended to harm them. These actions include the All-out-war Policy issued by President Joseph Estrada which caused thousands of civilians to become victims. The actions of President Gloria-Macapagal Arroyo who once carried out an attack on the Buliox Complex related to the terrorist issue, even though at that time the Philippine government and the MILF were carrying out a peace process. Distrust increased when the MOA-AD signing was unilaterally canceled by the Philippine government.

Refuge is also one of the challenges for the Philippines in terms of socioeconomic welfare, where refugees from outside, who are predominantly Muslim, such as those from Rohingya and Afghanistan, stay for a long time before returning to their country of origin or continuing to their final destination, namely Australia. The majority of these refugees can be categorized as underprivileged or near poverty in many aspects such as economic aspects, language, education and various adjustments to the new environment. Therefore, refugees can have potential conflicts with local residents, especially regarding social and economic welfare.

In the context of welfare, economy and social, poverty is no longer understood as merely an economic misunderstanding, but also the failure to fulfill basic rights and different treatment for a person or group of people in living a life with dignity. Basic rights that are generally recognized include the fulfillment of the needs of food, health, housing or a sense of security and the right to participate in socio-political life for the population. Refugees from outside this country often experience social disharmony due to their inability to adapt in a new country, resulting in disrupted social functions (Arifin, 2020).

As previously explained, the majority of foreign refugees who come to the Southern Philippines are Rohingya and Afghans. It has also been explained that the majority of these refugees have a fairly low social welfare. Therefore, it is possible that these refugees were recruited or abused by terrorist groups such as the Abu Sayyaf and others. Considering the circulation of weapons in the Philippines is quite easy and free. In response to this, Colonel Emmanuel A Canilla PA (GSC), as the Defense Attache of the Philippine Embassy in the Overseas Work Lecture of the Defense University, Faculty of National Security, Peace and Conflict Resolution

Study Program on Thursday, June 16, 2022. Added information related to the government's challenges in facing refugees in the Southern Philippines. A Canilla said that the Government is happy to accept refugees from outside, including refugees from Afghanistan and Rohingya (Myanmar).

“Actually our President, especially President Duterte really welcoming some refugees from Afghanistan and Rohingya, during that time so we are open and accepting them in our country. And we have Departement of Social Welfare Development as the main agency that provide their (refugees) basic needs. These departement also doing a collaboration with others agency in national and international such us police or intelegent agency and UNHCR in order to anticipate the refugees being recruited by terorism”.

This is one line with the statement made by President Rodrigo Duterte himself at the 76th UN General Assembly. According to Duterte, the Philippines has opened its doors to Afghans who fled after the Taliban came to power.

“As one global community, we must do our utmost to help the Afghan people and all those who continue to suffer” - President Duterte.

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The Dynamics of conflict in Mindanao has a long history for the Philippines itself. During the reign of President Duterte for the 2016-2022 period, we can see that there was a significant effort to enact the Bangsamoro Law/ Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), which had previously failed to materialize. Many way has been implemented by Philippines Government in order to achieve peace in Mindanao. And from mediation until reconciliation has their own obstacles as astruggles. But Philippines Government under President Duterte didn't give up try to solve the problems. In reconciliation itself, there are two main way that government did. That is NonViolence Approach (Soft Way) and Violence Approach (The hard way), and it will be better to combine those two way. This all needsynergy of all parties involved in maintaining peace in Mindanao. So the conclusion is all efforts to achieve peace in Mindanao is carried out during the Duterte era cannot be separated from synergy perspective. With a peace, especially positive peace in Mindanao, government wish that increase the social welfare in this location. The steps that taken by Duterte are already right, hopefully President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. can continue all this good steps and maintain the stability that has been built in the Southern Philippines region.

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