

Southern Philippines: Toward a Memorandum on Self-Determination

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In early August, the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) stood on the verge of signing a breakthrough agreement that could have moved both sides closer to the closure of a three-decade-long war. The Moros, minority Muslims living in the southern Philippines, have been fighting the central government for greater self-rule since the 1970s. But the agreement, facing wide opposition, soon unraveled.

Force has kept the Moro people within the Philippines: Against their will, the Moros, who were already living in their own states in the south, were incorporated beginning in the early twentieth century into what became the Philippine nation-state by American colonizers and their Filipino partners from the north. [1] Without their consent, the Moros' and the indigenous peoples' (IP) lands were declared Philippine property. Tens of thousands of hectares were sold or leased to foreign and Filipino-owned corporations. Dominated by Filipino landlords seeking to douse mounting demands for land redistribution in the north, the Philippine government set off massive resettlement programs that encouraged and pushed millions of landless, impoverished peasants to the region where the Moros and the IPs lived. Laws discriminated against the Moros and the IPs: In the 1920s, for example, corporations were allowed to own up to 1,024 hectares of land each, Christian settlers could claim up to 16 hectares each, but non-Christians were allotted only four. [2]

But it was not the settlers who benefited most. By the late 1980s, more than half of the lands in the region were in the hands of a few plantation owners, multinational corporations, and logging concessionaires that extracted the area's resources but plowed the wealth out of the region. [3] At one point, it was estimated that the region provided half of the products being exported by the Philippines. The Moros, meanwhile, have become among the poorest in a poor country: Up to 80% of them are now landless and they have among the shortest life expectancy, the lowest literacy rates, and the least access to education, health, and other services in the country. If, before, they made up the majority of the region's population, now they account for less than a fifth. [4]

Terrorized by militias supported by landowning politicians and government security forces, cornered into a narrowing portion of the region, but increasingly conscious of their collective plight, the Moros fought back. Beginning in the 1970s, they rose to wage armed struggle against the Philippine government. With nearly universal public support among the Moros, the struggle took on the character of a popular uprising for national liberation. Though poorly armed and poorly trained, the Moros managed to bring the US-supported Philippine military to a stalemate. Peace talks ensued.

The Moros momentarily laid down their arms and their bid for an independent state in exchange for the promise of greater autonomy - a promise that the Philippine government has repeatedly broken by conceding only limited power to Moros in autonomy arrangements that it put in place on its terms. [5]

The Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD), the result of the latest round of negotiations between the Moros and the government, could have broken that history of broken promises. Having sparked widespread and strident opposition, however, the agreement has since been unilaterally abandoned by the Philippine government. The prospect for peace has never appeared bleaker since the 1970s: Despite the government's reversal, however, the Moros want the peace negotiations to continue; the government, for its part, now says that the talks will resume only if the Moros disarm. In other words, surrender. For the government, it is force, yet again, that will keep Moros within the Philippines. The door to negotiations slammed on their faces, Moros are faced with no other option but to resist.

For those committed to peace with justice, our duty does not end in merely preventing the outbreak of full-blown fighting or calling for a ceasefire, if such a ceasefire ends up perpetuating a status quo in which Moros continue to be held at gunpoint within the Philippines. It merely begins with advocating a long-term solution that addresses and ends the historical oppression suffered by Moros. No solution will lead to peace if it is not just; and it won't be just if it does not advance the Moros' right to self-determination. While advancing this right is not all that is required, no solution will be complete without it.

Viewed from the precipice of a full-blown conflagration, the vision offered by the MOA-AD becomes sharper and clearer. Though it has since been killed, its proposals and principles - whether it retains the name or not - can still resuscitate the moribund peace process.

A STATE WITHIN A STATE

The MOA-AD envisions the establishment of - without as of yet establishing - a so-called Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE), described as a "state within a state" or a "sub-state" in an "associative relationship" with the Philippines. [6]

This governing entity is to exercise "shared responsibility and authority" with the Philippine government over a particular territory: the area covered by the current Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM); a number of municipalities which voted to be with ARMM in a plebiscite in 2001 but did not become part of the ARMM; plus another 735 villages whose residents will be asked whether they wish to be part of the territory in a plebiscite to be held within 12 months upon the signing of the MOA. Another category, encompassing around 1,500 villages, is proposed to receive targeted socio-economic assistance from the government. After 25 years, their residents will also be asked whether they wish to join the BJE. [7]

The BJE is to have its own "basic law," its own security forces, its own system of taxation and finance, and its own political and administrative structures, including civil service, electoral, judicial, educational, and other institutions. It may send trade missions to and enter into economic agreements with other countries. It will be allowed to exercise greater authority over its territory's resources such as minerals, oil, natural gas, etc. and it will have the power to grant or enter into resource-extraction concessions and agreement. Royalties from these resources are to be split 75% and 25% between the BJE and the Philippine government, respectively.

A COMPROMISE

Though the MOA-AD falls far short of the Moros' original goal of establishing an independent state, it goes farther - and is more specific - than any of the previous agreements in providing for greater Moro self-rule. Politically, the BJE will have more power than the current ARMM, itself a governing entity created as part of previous peace agreements but mandated with very limited powers. Rather than paving the way for Moro self-determination, the ARMM ended up being further eroded by the government, and later on dominated by powerful clans and warlords favored by the Philippine government.

Signifying the Moros' acceptance of the demographic changes that resulted from the government-sponsored resettlement policies, however, the BJE's territory will be smaller than the area originally claimed as the "homeland" of the Moros - and even less than the area that was supposed to have been under Moro autonomy, as promised in the earlier 1976 Tripoli Agreement between the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the government. Though the territory is proposed to cover more villages beyond ARMM, their inclusion is far from assured: the government, with all the advantages it enjoys, can be expected to do all it can to win the scheduled plebiscite. Within what will remain of BJE-governed territory, no one is to be evicted: the MOA-AD states that existing property rights will be respected, meaning land previously awarded by the government to settlers and corporations - as well as lands claimed by IP communities - will not be expropriated. [8]

In other words, the MOA-AD is a compromise document. Contrary to the widely held view that the agreement is "too good to be true" - that the government is being too generous - the MOA-AD arguably requires more on the part of the Moros' than on the Philippine government. The latter won't lose anything more than a still undefined fraction of political and economic control over a small part of Philippine territory - the government will still wield "shared authority and responsibility" in ways that will only be spelled out in a final agreement - and no individual's or corporation's property will be taken away. The Moros, on the other hand, will not only be abandoning their claim for more land or their share of resources already extracted; they will be setting aside their dream of a country to call their own.

WITH THE MOROS' BACKING

Despite requiring more concessions from them, Moros have expressed their readiness to accept the compromise proposed in the MOA-AD. In fact, the agreement is being pushed by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the largest, most powerful Moro liberation organization today — and supported by other Moro organizations, including those that are ideologically unaligned with the MILF, along with non-Moro groups with Christian migrants and IP communities in their membership. [9]

Though the MILF's leadership is reputed to be conservative - with many coming from the landowning class - one does not have to be fond of the MILF to acknowledge that the Moro people - just like any other people - have an inherent right to self-determination. Regardless of what one thinks of the MILF's politics, it cannot be regarded as unrepresentative of Moro aspirations. As an indicator of its support among Moros, who are estimated to number around 4-5 million people, the MILF has demonstrated its capacity to mobilize at least a million people - possibly more - for its assemblies. No other single political group in Mindanao - or even in the rest of the Philippines - can match this. And as the government has come to realize, no negotiated settlement with Moros will be possible and sustainable without the MILF's participation. According to MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu, "The MOA-AD is the best of all agreements so far because it directly addresses the root of the problem: the homeland of the Bangsamoro people." [10]

Such enthusiasm is, of course, not necessarily shared by all Moros. Others within the MILF, particularly among the ulama, reportedly felt dissatisfied with some of the MOA's provisions, saying

it doesn't go far enough. Some Moro leaders are reportedly not prepared to completely abandon the bid for independence. Though it is not clear how wide this view's support is within the MILF - given that such views have not been made public, it is expected to gather more adherents if the peace talks fail yet again. What is clear at this point is that the MILF leadership and organization are committed to a negotiated settlement and only they - and not the government or any other Moro organization today - enjoy the legitimacy to be in the position to rally the majority of Moros behind any solution.

The other large - though increasingly marginalized and factionalized - Moro organization, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), is seemingly divided on the question: Some of its key leaders have signified their support for the agreement; others, like MNLF founder Nur Misuari has gone on record to question it. The concern, however, appears not to be that the MOA-AD fails to advance Moro self-determination. Rather, the objection seems to spring from apprehensions about the future of the MNLF's earlier agreement with the government which - with the clipped autonomy it brought - is now widely seen as a failure.

Though the MILF will obviously be placed at an advantage in case the BJE comes to life, its officials have repeatedly stressed that the leaders of future governing entities will be decided by all Moros - and not just by the MILF alone. And though the MILF leaders have said that they want to establish an "Islamic state" in their homeland, the MILF's vision on how this state would look like remains vague; in fact, its position on this question has been inconsistent. The MILF's founder has signified that the question will only be decided on later. [[11](#)]

Supposing the Moros do succeed in getting greater self-rule, how the Moros will govern themselves is to be a continuing contest among Moros: it could well be that the rich and landed Moros, many of them already with the MILF, will only be replacing - or conniving with - current Filipino rulers in oppressing the Moro people. But just as Filipinos - to quote former Philippine President Manuel Quezon - should be able to choose "a government run like a hell by Filipinos than a government run like heaven by the Americans," so should the Moros.

This time though, given the way Filipinos have been running the country, it may well be a choice between a government run like hell by Moros than a government already run like hell by Filipinos. In any case, Moros are not doomed to perdition: they may actually be better at running their own government if only they were given the chance. At this stage, those who seek to extend solidarity to Moros struggling for emancipation within Moro society can contribute most by supporting the Moro struggle for emancipation from Filipino domination.

SELF-INTERESTED PRAGMATISM

A solution can be just not because it satisfies what the aggressor wants but because it addresses what the victims deserve. It is the Philippine government that annexed the Moro states without their peoples' consent; it is therefore not up to it to dictate the terms of the solution to the aggrieved party. Balance is not to be achieved by exacting equal concessions from two uneven sides; it is to be attained by seeking the required solution to bring about a desired balance that does not currently exist.

Having said that, the MOA is groundbreaking in demonstrating that the Philippine government can actually offer much more on the negotiating table than it has previously claimed it could. In an unprecedented break from its erstwhile unyielding stance, it turns out that creating a "state within a state" for Moros, for example, is within the realm of the possible - at least in the minds of some in government. It is not the ridiculously outlandish demand that it has been made out to be in the past.

Such perceived “generosity” has prompted some to claim that the agreement was a trap: if it was “too good to be true,” it could only be because it was “designed to fail.” [12]. The government, the reasoning goes, deliberately agreed to promise things it had no intention of giving supposedly to cast itself as the magnanimous party that is willing but unable, as a result of constitutional hurdles and the predicted opposition that will follow, to give ground. This will then supposedly provide a backdoor to charter change and/or provoke large-scale fighting, boosting public support for a war against Moros — even a pretext for declaring martial law — thereby allowing her to extend her term.

Without allowing that the government is actually being generous, this ‘war’ scenario is problematic because it takes for granted the following questionable assumptions: that the Philippines is in a position to continue waging war against the Moros, that such a war will be to its benefit, and that such a war will not prove destabilizing to the President’s own rule.

As it is, the war has already cost billions of pesos that a cash-strapped government could hardly afford; underpaid and demoralized soldiers are bogged down fighting a protracted war with other resurgent armed groups. Should a war escalate, the government will lose more billions that it could otherwise have spent on other expenditures. It will lose soldiers that it could otherwise send to fight other ‘enemies’ - all for a war that it is not assured of winning.

Moreover, government negotiators could not have been aware that giving ground on the issue of governance and territory could be an extremely risky gambit: in recognizing, and thereby according legitimacy, to the Moros’ key demands, the government has paved the way for those demands being advanced as the Moros’ minimum set of demands in future negotiations. If the government’s game plan at the outset was really more fighting, then agreeing to the MOA-AD - just to lure the Moros - actually undermined its own - and not the Moros’ - position. Intentionally or not, the government has pushed out the boundaries of what’s acceptable.

An alternative explanation for the much-vaunted “generosity” could be this: more pragmatic, though no less self-interested, Filipino leaders - as well as their supporters in the US - have realized that they can’t afford to continue the war without risking greater probability of defeat at the hands of ‘enemies’ they are fighting simultaneously; that they have assessed that the over-all benefits from a negotiated solution will ultimately outweigh the costs; and that they have accepted that a more stable Philippines, less distracted by war on one front and with its coffers bleeding less, could stabilize the rule of the President more.

In other words, it could well be that sections of the Philippine government have realized that it is in their larger interest to reach a compromise with the Moros — not because they support Moro self-determination but because they seek to protect their own interests. That the government subsequently abandoned the agreement does not necessarily prove that doing so was the intention all along; only that other narrow interests - the rule of local politicians and landlords, the support of business groups worried about their investments, the loyalty of hawkish and right-wing generals, the need to prevent traditional opposition politicians from courting the support of jingoistic sections in the media, the church, and the public - prevailed.

With these interests stoking anti-Moro prejudice and Filipino chauvinism, it is no surprise that many Filipinos appear to have rejected the MOA-AD offhand. Conditioned by the media, the educational system, and the larger society to view Moros with suspicion, most Filipinos have been kept deliberately ignorant of the Moros’ marginalization. And yet, informed of the stakes, aware of history, and empowered to have a say in the government’s negotiating stance, the Filipino majority can potentially be the strongest advocates for a just resolution to the war. Unlike a number of hawkish military officials, they have no careers to build or military contracts to profit from; only better relations with their Moro sisters and brothers to gain. Unlike the Piñols and the Lobregats,

they have no lands to protect; only a future of peace to win. [\[13\]](#)

DIVIDED SOLIDARITY

While many Moros - presumably the majority who support the MILF - see in the MOA a step forward in their struggle for self-determination, those who already profess support for their struggle - in the left and in the peace movement - have had a harder time uniting behind it. A number of peace coalitions, leftist parties and left-leaning social movements, have dared to come out to counter the popular wave rejecting the agreement. Others have been more equivocal: they have neither categorically expressed their opposition nor support for the MOA but their pronouncements have had the effect of further discrediting the agreement. Whether this has been intended or not, it has contributed to the hostile public opinion against something that the Moro movements themselves want signed.

For the most part, the point of contention has not been whether the agreement sufficiently advances the interests of those that they claim to support; the concern, rather, has been that the agreement could also benefit those that they oppose, with anticipated consequences and implications. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, some fear, foisted the MOA-AD as a “Trojan horse” to extend her stay in power. The United States, for its part, pushed for the agreement to secure its geopolitical objectives in the region.

Even if one grants both premises, the conclusion - that the MOA, even if good, should therefore be rejected or, at least, not actively supported - is problematic. It burdens the Moros with impossible conditions for attaining their aspirations: First, that the parties they negotiate with should have only altruistic motives in their negotiations. Second, that the result of their negotiation should not only be good for them but be bad for the other side. Should the Moros wait until they find someone they can deal with who has only the purest of intentions? Is it their fault that the country they see as a colonial power happens to have a scheming President whom the opposition, which counts the left among it, has so far failed to remove? Must a final solution wait until the revolution is won?

Implicit in the conclusion is the evaluation that the Moros’ self-determination is secondary to the goal of unseating the President or undermining US strategic objectives. Such a trade-off is unwarranted because it should, in fact, be the task of the left and the peace movements to both prevent GMA and the US from achieving their goals and to support the Moros’ aims at the same time.

Not only is this stance more principled, it is also more strategic: Replacing the GMA administration with one that can mediate among different interests— and rally support around decisions that will advance the larger public interest rather than valuing only its survival by pandering to the hawks and the Lobregats - could be the first step in putting in place a negotiating side that would commit to and defend a just and peaceful settlement with the Moros. As the Moros strive to gain or have more power over their government, our task is to change ours without depriving the Moros of the chance to have theirs. Moro self-determination should not be made conditional on our success or held hostage by our failure.

Challenging the US’ geopolitical thrust in the region entails supporting the many Moros who have been at the forefront of opposing US military presence in Mindanao. It is by supporting their demands for self-empowerment that we strengthen their capacity to oppose the Philippine-supported US agenda in the region. In doing so, we also help them isolate those Moros among them who have been sidling up to the US to promote their own interests or in the misguided belief that the US will champion their legitimate cause without a Faustian bargain.

The alternative - explicitly or implicitly rejecting or undermining the Moros legitimate aspirations - could end up assisting GMA and the US in securing their goals by leaving Moros with no choice but to succumb to their self-interested advances.

NOT THE MOROS' STRUGGLE ALONE

While the Moros form a large marginalized minority, they have not been the only ones who have been dispossessed and who have been resisting. The other indigenous peoples in the region have likewise been displaced from their lands, many evicted by logging companies, miners, plantations, and other corporate interests with the backing of the Philippine state. Driven to migrate to Mindanao because lands in the north remained in the grip of a few, many Christian settlers remain poor and landless - their misery and resentment fanned and unleashed against the Moros by the landlords and politicians who have grabbed the most lands and resources. No solution will be just if it does not address the injustice that has also been perpetrated against the IPs and Christians migrants.

As it is, the MILF through the MOA-AD has effectively given up their claims over areas they consider part of their homeland but which are now demographically dominated by migrants. It is the obligation of the Philippine government to ensure that lands - within and beyond Mindanao - are more equitably distributed to more Filipinos in order to dilute the concentration of lands in the hands of a few powerful families or corporations.

Within the BJE, no one is to be expelled. As mentioned earlier, all existing property rights will be respected and can only be revoked with due cause. The MOA-AD explicitly states that IPs will be given "free choice" as to whether to be part of the BJE. The agreement also lists the Indigenous People's Rights Act, a Philippine law meant to protect IPs' rights to their ancestral domains, among its references. Though some have expressed their opposition to the BJE, it is telling that a number of other IP groups - particularly the ones living inside the territory to be covered by the BJE - have thrown their weight behind it. Given the way they have been treated by the Philippine government, some have even said that they are more confident of enjoying more harmonious relations with the Moros within the BJE.

The IPs' right to self-determination should not be subsumed under the Moros'. At the same time, self-interested parties should not be allowed to cynically appeal to one oppressed people's rights in order to deprive another oppressed people of theirs. Both oppressed peoples will lose. A solution must be found to ensure that all rights are simultaneously advanced. Though its provisions are reassuring, the MOA-AD - or subsequent agreements - could go farther. For example, it could explicitly state the following: that the IP's ancestral domains will not only be recognized but protected from encroachment through more specified measures; that the IPs and non-Moros will not be treated as second-class citizens within the BJE by stipulating that they will enjoy equal rights and will be entitled to the same privileges and services as the Moros; that the IPs will likewise enjoy self-determination through the establishment of political institutions that ensure their autonomy; and that the IPs, should they decide to be part of the BJE, can still subsequently withdraw from the BJE if they so desire.

BEYOND NATIONALISMS

A world divided by ethnicity - with each group of people that claims its own identity fighting for its own piece of land - will be a world of endless wars. Instead of sub-dividing the world into more and

more states based on constructed notions of ethnicity, race, or nationhood, we should move towards creating a world drawn together by our common humanity: The earth's lands and resources should belong to everyone - and not to whoever happens to have been accidentally born within the artificially and often arbitrarily drawn boundaries that enclose them. Everyone should have equal rights regardless of their state or nationality.

Moving towards this post-nationalist, post-imperialist world should not, however, entail depriving the Moro people what other peoples now currently have: greater autonomy or their own independent state. In recognizing their right to have their own state within the Philippines, the MOA-AD is a step forward from the Moros' current subordination and marginalization within a country they did not choose to be a part of.

But while the MOA-AD does not go far enough, it also does not close the door towards more substantive sovereignty for Moros in the future. By providing an interval of time for the Moros to be empowered by having greater power over their society and their resources, the Moros - wearied by fighting and disadvantaged by dispossession - can have the opportunity to build their collective capacity as a people. Achieving this affords them a better position to exercise their democratic choice later: They can opt to remain within the Philippines as part of the BJE. Alternatively, they can choose to have their own state in a federal system which they would be able to jointly construct on more equal terms with the rest of the Philippines - instead of being forced into a federal system that they will have little role in designing, as current proposals go. What should also not be ruled out, however, is that Moros may actually opt to be part of a unitary Philippines if they freely and without any imposition reach the conclusion that they can do so on their own terms. The absence of coercion could be the basis of a stronger, more lasting - because less unequal - union.

Otherwise, the Moros can and should be able to choose to have their own independent state if they so wish. Recognizing this right would not only correct a historical injustice, doing so moves us one step closer towards a world with more equality and less domination, and hence, one step closer towards a post-imperialist post-nationalist world.

P.S.

* From Focus on Trade #143, September 2008.

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Footnotes

[1] For a historical background, see W. K. Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand* (Quezon City, Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1990); Cesar Adib Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1999); Kristina Gaerlan, and Mara Stankovitch (eds.), *Rebels, Warlords, and Ulama: A Reader on Muslim Separatism and the War in Southern Philippines* (Quezon City: Institute for Popular Democracy, 2000); Thomas McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels: Everyday Politics and Armed Separatism in the Southern Philippines* (Pasig City: Anvil Publishing Inc., 2000); Marites Danguilan Vitug and Glenda M. Gloria, *Under the Crescent Moon: Rebellion in Mindanao* (Manila: Institute for Popular Democracy and Ateneo Center for Social Policy and Public Affairs, 2000); Patricio N. Abinales, *Making Mindanao: Cotabato and Davao in the Formation of the Philippine Nation-State* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000).

[2] R.J. May, "The Wild West in the South: A Recent Political History of Mindanao," in Mark

Turner, R.J. May, Lulu Respass Turner (eds.), *Mindanao: Land of Unfulfilled Promise* (Quezon City, New Day Publishers, 1992); Samuel K. Tan, "The Socioeconomic Dimension of Moro Secessionism," *Mindanao Studies Report* 1995/ No. 1; Aijaz Ahmad, "Class and Colony in Mindanao," in Kristina Gaerlan and Mara Stankovitch (eds.), *Rebels, Warlords, and Ulama: A Reader on Muslim Separatism and the War in Southern Philippines* (Quezon City, Institute for Popular Democracy, 2000); Eric Gutierrez and Saturnino Borras Jr., "The Moro Conflict: Landlessness and Misdirected State Policies," *East-West Center Policy Studies*, Number 8, 2000.

[3] Cited in Kit Collier, "The Theoretical Problems of Insurgency in Mindanao: Why Theory? Why Mindanao?", in Mark Turner, R.J. May, Lulu Respass Turner (eds.), *Mindanao: Land of Unfulfilled Promise* (Quezon City, New Day Publishers, 1992).

[4] Eduardo C. Tadem, "The Political Economy of Mindanao: An Overview," in Mark Turner, R.J. May, Lulu Respass Turner (eds.), *Mindanao: Land of Unfulfilled Promise* (Quezon City, New Day Publishers, 1992); Samuel K. Tan, "The Socioeconomic Dimension of Moro Secessionism," *Mindanao Studies Report* 1995/ No. 1; Aijaz Ahmad, "Class and Colony in Mindanao," in Kristina Gaerlan and Mara Stankovitch (eds.), *Rebels, Warlords, and Ulama: A Reader on Muslim Separatism and the War in Southern Philippines* (Quezon City, Institute for Popular Democracy, 2000); Eric Gutierrez and Saturnino Borras Jr., "The Moro Conflict: Landlessness and Misdirected State Policies," *East-West Center Policy Studies*, Number 8, 2000.

[5] See Kristina Gaerlan, and Mara Stankovitch (eds.), *Rebels, Warlords, and Ulama: A Reader on Muslim Separatism and the War in Southern Philippines* (Quezon City: Institute for Popular Democracy, 2000).

[6] Soliman M. Santos Jr. "BJE and the question of independent statehood," August 12, 2008.

[7] "Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain Aspect of the GRP-MILF Tripoli Agreement on Peace of 2001".

[8] "Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain Aspect of the GRP-MILF Tripoli Agreement on Peace of 2001".

[9] For example, the agreement is supported by the Anak Mindanao party-list, a secular left-leaning political party of Moros, as well as the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy, a group that includes moderates and conservatives, plus peace groups such as the Mindanao Peoples Caucus, a broad grouping that includes Christians and indigenous peoples in its membership, to name a few.

[10] Public forum, August 11, 2008.

[11] Patricio N. Abinales and Donna J. Amoroso, *State and Society in the Philippines* (Pasig City: Anvil Publishing Inc, 2005); Joseph Chinyong Liow, "Muslim Resistance in Southern Thailand and Southern Philippines: Religion Ideology and Politics," *East-West Center Policy Studies* Number 24, 2006.

[12] See for example the editorial "Designed to Fail," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, August 9, 2008, which articulates a popular theory.

[13] The Pinols and the Lobregats are some of the most powerful families that have acquired huge tracts of lands in Mindanao. They have been at the forefront of opposing the MOA-AD.