

Philippines: Storm surging for Peace in Mindanao - Part 4 - Symbiotic Relationship between the CAB and the Mamasapano Bloody Event

Saturday 4 April 2015, by [DE SILVA Raymund](#) (Date first published: 22 March 2015).

Contents

- [The Peace Agreement with \(...\)](#)
- [IMPORTANT Historical LESSONS](#)
- [Conclusion](#)

In a few days (3 days to be exact) Mamasapano failed Police Operations will be three(3) months old. Five (5) days from now, it will be exactly one year ago when the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) will have its first year anniversary. Both of these very important events are on the same situation -that is - they have started in good intension and mission but somewhere along the way, something happened and somehow both of them have been affected in one way or another. In fact, the two important events have intertwined

The signing of the CAB last year was hailed not only by the Bangsamoro and the nation but the International Community as well. It was the culmination of the 17 years of negotiation between the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The sole purpose of that negotiation in late 1996 was to solve the Bangsamoro problem. It should be recalled that on September of the same year (1996) the government of the Philippines had just signed a final peace agreement with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) with the Ramos government, claiming to have ended 40 years of the Moro Struggle for the Right to Self-Determination (RSD).

Obviously, when the MILF's leadership had started negotiating with the Ramos government or even the subsequent governments it has never referred to a history of war and peace struggles and efforts - it (MILF) simply wants to solve the Bangsamoro problem. It should be recalled that the MILF is a split group from the MNLF in the late seventies and later formalized it in 1982. It had fought with MNLF for the Right to Self Determination (RSD) of the Moro people stressing earlier the nationalist aspect of the struggle but shifted to more religious (Islamized) to differentiate itself from the MNLF. In the 90's the MILF had shifted from guerilla nature of their struggle to more conventional. They had built fixed camps and regular military trainings. This was the period when its founding Chair Salamat Hashim began regular basing in the areas in the Maguindanao province. The senior members of the present leadership of the MILF were in one way or another had experienced in the peace negotiation with the MNLF and the Marcos government in the seventies including in the 1976 Tripoli Agreement. It should be assumed that they (MILF Leadership) could have learned from this concrete experience.

Now, it has already signed the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) on October 12, 2012 which basically outlined the Political settlement between the GPH and the MILF and the process of

transition from ARMM to a new Bangsamoro autonomous political entity.

Four annexes and the Addendum on the Bangsamoro waters and Zones of Joint Cooperation were also signed between the years 2012 to 2014.

All these signed documents are integral part of the CAB and currently the processes are on the detailed implementation of the Annex on Transitional Modalities and the Arrangement (signed on February 27, 2012). This particular annex details the creation of a Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) which drafted the Bangsamoro Basic Law and has submitted to both houses of Congress and the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) which will replace the ARMM after the BBL has been approved.

Excluding the MNLF now and repealing the Republic Act 9054 which expanded the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) in 2001 it got all the necessary provisions (political and economic) including the territories which will be the scope of the new Bangsamoro Juridical Entity but were clearly the product of the long historical struggles for the right to self-determination (RSD) led earlier by the MNLF and currently by the MILF..

By virtue of the peace agreement signed and about to be implemented between the GPH executive department and the MILF leadership they are going to replace ARMM by a BTA which will be composed of peoples from the MILF/BIAF and Moro traditional politicians (Motrapos) whose track records are nowhere to be found or recycled at best.

The BBL and its approval (of whatever version) will not definitely be an all out solution to all problems in the Bangsamoro. But it should be at least starting from concrete history of building economic and political infrastructures. At least, basic of these criteria should be positively acting or helping to solve the 2009 Ampatuan Maguindanao Massacre (at its 64th month) in which everybody knows by now that a significant number of suspects led by the grandson of the principal suspect former Maguindanao Governor Datu Andal Ampatuan, have been hiding in Mamasapano and even joined in the bloody carnage against the SAF/PNP in January 25, 2015. The mayor of Mamasapano - Benzar Ampatuan - is the brother of the suspect hiding in the municipality.

Few days ago, one of the principal suspects from the Ampatuan had already posted a bail bond with more than eleven million pesos (P11.5M) which surprisingly did escape the eyes of Aquino administration BIR Commissioner Kim Henares (talking of double standard).

The Peace Agreement with MILF, the Presidential Legacy that never was...

Anyway, the signing of the CAB and working for the details of the foundation building for the MILF political entity will be the event that people will celebrate its first anniversary on March 27, 2015.

Obviously, one thing is clear that the process has been fast tracked and fitted to the term of Aquino administration and anybody who stands its way is practically ran over or referred to as anti-peace. Only a big event like the January 25, 2015 Mamasapano can stop and give more time to rethink and study it. One cannot really understand the reasons why the Executive and the Presidential Adviser on Peace Process (OPAPP) have been really in a hurry to have the peace process with the MILF consummated irregardless of the substance and the form of such process and peace they want to achieve.

The Mamasapano bloody incident was a covert police operation aimed to arrest or neutralize the international terrorists like Marwan, Amin Baco alias Jihad and their Filipino assistant Basit Usman.

The US direct involvement in the botched police operation had made it non 100% PNP operation but part of the US international campaign against terrorism.

The failed police operation was done in the middle of the area claimed by the MILF and its partners the BIFF and the private armed group (Ampatuan). The last two groups were there in the area with MILF because they were secured by virtue of the existing ceasefire agreement between the GPH and the MILF. The same reason was used by the international terrorists who stayed in the area with the MILF to take advantage of the existing ceasefire.

The SAF/PNP, 44 of them lost their lives, following the mission from the President and top levels of SAF/PNP, were able to successfully neutralize Marwan. The Mamasapano bloodlust was able to expose about the relationships of MILF and with the international terrorists and those who were running away from the hands of the law (BIFF to escape the 2008 MOA-AD carnage and the group of Ampatuan to escape from the Maguindanao Massacre in 2009).

The manner of which the BIAF operatives finished off those SAF/PNP lying helplessly on the ground (34 of them have wounds inflicted at close range) draws the picture to the nation and the international community the kind of armed non-state actors (about to be part of the State by virtue of documents signed already) like the BIAF in terms of observing the Standard of the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and Human Rights. This is the reason why nobody could not understand where was the Chair of the Commission of Human Rights coming from. Thirty four (34) SAF/PNP Commandos lying helpless on the ground were finished off - is simply a massacre. The MILF had claimed that it was the BIFF, who did the inhuman acts, it should assume responsibility because it (MILF) is the peace partner of the government. Its operatives should have ordered the BIFF to respect the deal and treat humanely the wounded.

Witnesses had been saying already that the SAF/PNP were "cleaned up" with their bulletproof and armored vests before killing them one by one. The stealing of their personal belongings and cellphones which were even used to contact the wives and families of the dead SAF/PNP were also blatant violations of their Human Rights. The action of the Chair of CHR has already compromised whatever the coming result of their own investigations. Unless of course, its (CHR) investigation is only focus on giving critique on the results of other investigations like that of the Senate.

In three days time from today, the Mamasapano carnage will be three months old. Many substantial changes have happened in the country. The seemingly unstoppable peace process between GPH and MILF would have been started in the coming months. With the approval of the BBL as submitted by the BTC and fully supported by both panels of GPH and MILF, the BTA would be about to be launched. Nobody can check anymore the fact that even a significant member of the GPH members of the BTC had their own reservations or cannot really agree with the version of BBL as submitted to both houses of Congress. Nobody can check anymore which are unconstitutional parts of the BTC version of the BBL as seen removed by the Executive department as what pointed out by Chair Al Haj Murad and Peace Panel Chair Mohagher Iqbal when they were with the President in Japan.

But January 25, 2015 police fiasco had happened and with that the time clock for the peace process and the approval of the BBL seemed to have stopped. People including the Senators and Members of the House of Representatives who before the Mamasapano were supportive of the BBL and the peace process, have suddenly become cautious and began to rethink the peace partnership with the MILF. The people who have questioned the process with the MILF included the allies of the Aquino administration and have gone far to even question the representations of the GPH Peace Panel and the interests and loyalty of the Office of the Presidential Adviser of the Peace Process (OPAPP).

The January 25, 2015 event has even brought the Aquino administration to its most serious political

crisis. It has brought the President down to his lowest approval and trust ratings since he was elected in 2010. It practically wiped out whatsoever was left of the President's political capital which could practically paralyze its endorsement capacity to the next President of the country by the year 2016.

If this downtrend continues then the peace process including the BBL which will set up the legal foundations for the new Bangsamoro political entity will be dragged down together with its sponsors.

The President and his administration have continued to mishandle the Mamasapano botched SAF/PNP operations. The manner and ways they have tried to put the blame to everybody except the President made the people angrier and desperate everyday. They have already expressed in the latest survey that 8 out of 10 of them do not believe anymore the President's explanation.

At this stage, the level of appraising the situation has gone down to the level of personalities. The citizenships of the MILF's leadership have been put into question. The personal lovelife of the President has been projected out of proportion by the showbiz sister Kris no less. Rumors have been going around on the health situation of the President. The Makati controversies of having two Mayors can possibly create constitutional crisis in the country's premier business center. Obviously these are definitely done to divert peoples' attention from the deepening political crisis the Aquino administration has been dragged into.

The impasse and the lull period brought about these two events have encouraged other stakeholders in Mindanao to express and articulate their demands. The MNLF of the Council of 15 led by Muslimen Sema has expressed their sentiments that they rather enhance the existing ARMM rather than create a new Bangsamoro political entity. The group of Nur Misuari is definitely not in favor of the Bangsamoro. Another MNLF, the Jihad Council will most likely support the line of Sema group. It should be recalled that the organization of Islamic Countries in the main, still supports the MNLF, especially the Nur Misuari group which for them is the only legitimate representative of the Moro people. It (OIC) has worked out for the putting up of the coordinating body for all the Moro revolutionary groups including the MILF. But has not gone farther enough.

IMPORTANT Historical LESSONS CAN HELP US Reach an Almost Future Perfect

During this period, it will be an excellent occasion for the MILF to rethink the Status of its peace process with the government. The ongoing military operations can have pressure effects on its combatants (even if directed to the BIFF and other terrorists). The impasse can last longer period and it will possible that restless BIAF commanders could not hold any longer and can create a new split within the MILF/BIAF. Without the BBL, the MILF cannot build the United Bangsamoro for Justice Party (UBJP) and cannot start the BTA.

There is a need of deep internal consolidation and organizational strengthening of the rank and file of the MILF/BIAF. The continuous intensification of the all-out war against the BIFF and the remaining terrorists will greatly debase the present base commands of the MILF. There are already signs that the AFP are getting more reinforcements so as to have holding and consolidating forces to the areas left and abandoned by the MILF and the BIFF. An excellent starting point is to continue the political movement to unite and strengthen the Bangsamoro consciousness and transcend from ethno-tribal dynamics so that serious nation building can start.

The joyous celebrations of the nation and the international community during the March 27, 2014

signing of the CAB between the GPH and MILF was almost exactly the same situation when final peace agreement was signed between the government and the MNLF almost 18 years ago.

At present there are moves from the International community to pressure the government and the MILF and the country as a whole to proceed with the peace process and the BBL's approval. Lessons should have been learned.

Conclusion

The GPH and the MILF peace panels have gone a long way. Substantial documents have been signed to prepare the Bangsamoro political entity come into existence. Definitely, as one event has proven it, the foundation has been very weak. Obviously the trust and confidence that the two bodies (government executive body and the MILF Leadership) have been at most on the superficial level and at the very least, it has only reached on the personal level between the different personalities involved in the process.

A very hard lesson learned is that - a peace process - should not be anchored on a specific personality or limited on a specific time element. It should stress on the qualitative impact on the different stakeholders aside from their principals. Real ownership of the process should be timely checked and rechecked. Commitments of all the stakeholders and the principals should be renewed regularly so that identified gaps can timely be filled in.

The abovementioned considerations are some of the surest things to avoid a "fall out" even in the most difficult and trying moments of the peace process. Events like the Mamasapano and its serious results can collectively strengthen each other and can easily make stakeholders move forward instead of paralyzing them

STORM SURGERS for Peace in Mindanao have to learn from them so as to make them navigate their present peace journey and move forward with confidence and invigorated hope in the continuous building of a just and inclusive peace in Mindanao and the country.

Raymund de Silva, March 22, 2015

P.S.

* Raymund de Silva is a Mindanao-based political analyst and has been active in different social movements and progressive organizations since the 1970s. Follow him:

www.rdsnsights.blogspot.com