

Clearing the Pathways to Peace: Law, Policy, and the Mindanao Conflict

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In 2008, the Supreme Court struck down the Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Picking up from the lessons of the MOA-AD, the Government of the Philippines (GPH) under President Benigno S. Aquino III resumed peace negotiations that will bring final and enduring peace in Mindanao. On 27 March 2014, the GPH and the MILF signed the historic Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB), with the hopes of bringing an end to the conflict that has ravaged war-torn Mindanao for nearly five decades. Concluding the 17 years of negotiation, the CAB lays down the groundwork for the creation of an autonomous Bangsamoro political entity, attaching importance to the unique history of the Bangsamoro people and their aspirations as a distinct community. The CAB is considered as “the final political settlement” of the armed conflict in Mindanao.

The Article traces the roots of the Bangsamoro struggle back to pre-colonial times. In particular, it examines the interruption of the spread of Muslim influence throughout the Philippines due to the arrival of the Spaniards, as well as the continuous external and internal events that have since intruded into the wealth, lands, and lives of the Bangsamoro.

The Author points out the importance of understanding the origins and the evolution of the centuries-old Bangsamoro conflict. Moreover, the Author probes into the different government responses to the clamor for self-governance of the historically marginalized Bangsamoro. Lastly, the Author explores the novelties introduced by the CAB, the promise that it brings, and the possibility of paving the way for a more comprehensive, final, and lasting peace in Mindanao.