

NGOs and Peace Building in the Philippines: Muhammadiyah's Reconstruction Plan for the Bangsamoro Post Peace Agreement

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Abstract

This paper aims to explain how Muhammadiyah, as the second largest Islamic movement in Indonesia, has significantly played peace-building role for the Bangsamoro, which is the minority Islam-based ethnicity living mostly in the southern Philippines. Series of peace talks and negotiations lead to peace agreement between the Bangsamoro and the government of the Philippines. However, reconstruction agenda remains major problem in the area. Therefore, the Bangsamoro invites overseas Islamic movement to immediately rebuild.

Concerning studies on non-state actors in peace building, more people argue that the actors including NGOs have hidden political, economic and ideological agenda behind humanitarian aid, while the rest believe that they are neutral. Although Muhammadiyah is an Islamic-based movement, it has not exclusively promoted to spreading the Islamic mission, but inclusively and comprehensively worked with another stakeholders and its international counterparts to build social integrity and infrastructures.

This article focuses on implementing inclusive and comprehensive prescription in peace building process taking place in the Bangsamoro, which is located in the southern Philippines. Muhammadiyah recognizes that the religious identity is the underlying factor for long period of conflict. To maintain the peace, Muhammadiyah, then, cooperates with the Catholic NGO of Italy to manage peaceful behaviors among the members of government.

Keywords: Non-Governmental Organization, Peace Building, the Bangsamoro, Conflict Resolution, Muhammadiyah and the Philippines.

Introduction

For forty years, the armed conflict between the separatist of the Bangsamoro and central government of the Philippines has been a nightmare for Muslim citizens, who are many people killed, injured and driven out from their homes. The displaced ones, then, moved to live in the refugee camps with limited public facilities and clean water. Adult women in particular were threatened by sexual abuses because of less privacy space in the camps. At the same time, children lost their opportunities to have good education, nutrition and safe environment. Additionally, both social structures and infrastructures have no longer sustained in the conflict.

What ASEAN neighboring and the Islamic countries have shown to respond the conflict are different. First, several Islamic countries had sent military assistance to the separatist because of religious bond. In this regard, the military separatists had developed into three groups: the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Abu Sayaf, which is the most radical Islamic group. Second, neighbor countries, like Indonesia and Malaysia, prefer dialogue process and negotiation to resolve the conflict. They facilitate several meetings involving two conflicting parties to formulate the peace agreement.

Furthermore, the problem that more frequently emerges post conflict is the reconstruction of social integrity, public facilities, not to mention governmental institutions. International actors of both state and non-state are necessary to take part in rebuilding the areas where the conflict has been settled. The reason why those actors should involve in restoration is that the conflicting parties' budget constraint is minimum. Therefore, they need foreign direct investment to establish public facilities. This loan uses to require transparency and accountability, which are characteristics of clean governance. Having promoted democratization, clean governance and law enforcement becomes one package the international state actors offer.

Social integrity is the most difficult problem to deal with because of several reasons. First is psychological factor. The conflicting parties who fight each other have felt trauma that in turn construct their own perceptions to others. Second is ideological tension. The conflict of identity or the ideological conflict as clearly

seen in the southern part of the Philippines is distributive type of resolution. It means that the solution could be a zero-sum game, which one party has to be a winner over the other. Third is cultural aspect in which peoples share common values. Cultural difference between majority entity of Filipinos and minority group of Malay-ethnic people living in Moro has possibly triggered the manifest conflict. Indeed, managing social integrity should not only involve state actors but also more importantly invite international NGOs.

Concerning social integrity in the southern part of Philippines post peace agreement, the Bangsamoro believes in Muhammadiyah, the second largest Islamic movement of Indonesia, to lead mission of community development and empowerment, as well as reconstructing the identity. It introduces particular endeavors for the Bangsamoro and the central government in order to achieve peaceful coexistence. Then, in cooperation with its international counterparts, Muhammadiyah distributes the specific rebuilding agenda to develop the Bangsamoro. This paper discusses several following problems, which are 1) historical background of Mindanao Conflict and its peace agreement, and 2) Muhammadiyah's reconstruction plan to overcome the problems post the Peace Agreement in Mindanao.

I. Conflict of Mindanao and Peace Agreement

Mindanao is archipelago region consisting of large and small islands. Since Islam spread in 12th century, it had two Islamic kingdoms namely Maguindanao and Sulu. In 13th century, both kingdoms fought each other to influence other thirteen ethnicities inhabiting around Mindanao. Therefore, the first conflict of Mindanao is ethnic conflict among Muslims (Ahmadi, 2011).

Migrating wave of Visayas ethnic or Filipino to Mindanao had varied ethnic conflict. The Philippines army supported the Christian Ilaga ethnic killing a number of Muslims in early 1970s. Unfortunately, Marcos administration did not halt immediately to this genocide. Muslims of Mindanao believed that the conflict was Crusade-like religious conflict. This was a reason to which Nur Musuari invited the Middle East countries to intervene. The conflict, in turn, develops into separatism issue between the Bangsamoro and the central government of the Philippines.

Furthermore, this conflict has become more increasingly complicated because of actors diversity in Mindanao. First is the Islamic actors that are divided into three groups: 1) Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), 2) Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and 3) the Abu Sayaf group. Second is an indigenous Mindanao ethnic namely Lumads. Third is the communist armed group namely National People Army (NPA), not to mention the central government of the Philippines (Ahmadi, 2011).

Concerning the Islamic separatist movements, those groups have specific characteristics. MNLF, led previously by Nur Misuari, who graduated from the University of the Philippines, is aimed at opposing both Ilaga ethnic and the central government that humiliate to Muslims. It is official Mindanao representative that negotiate to the government in 1976 and 1996. Its ideology is secular nationalism rather than Islamic ideology because Nur Misuari was an activist of the Islamic socialism movement during his study in college. Interestingly, more political elite and members of MNLF are from Tausug ethnic including Nur Misuari, who comes from royal family of the Sulu Kingdom.

On the other hand, MILF, founded by Salamat Hashim, who completed his study in the university of Al-Azhar, Egypt and was Nur Misuari's deputy in MNLF, is conservatively based on the Islamic ideological platform. Compared to MNLF, it maintains that having independency of Mindanao state is better than the special autonomous. Therefore, MILF prefers more confrontation to the government than accommodation as chosen by MNLF. Although MILF claims that its followers and combatants are higher population than MNLF, the government has never invited it as Mindanao representative in peace negotiation process. This movement is dominated by Maguindanao ethnic which has historical conflict with the Sulu. Meanwhile, the Abu Sayaf group is the most radical Islamic armed group that benefits the conflict for economic reason by terror.

Mindanao conflict has resulted three dynamic issues during the crisis: primordial, instrumental issues not to mention constructivist. As mentioned by Cesar Adib Majul and Che Man, primordialism is a primary factor of conflict in Mindanao (Majul, 1973; Majul, 1985; Man, 1985). Agustino (2001) argues that primordial conflict is natural due to clash of different ethnicity, religious believers and tribes. Instrumentalist maintains that conflict is mechanism to

maximize economic interest of who are involved. However, constructivist criticizes the previous perspective by defining ethnic diversity as an asset to interact and understand among communities.

From 1960 to 1980, Mindanao conflict had been classified in the primordial issues because of several reasons. First is coercive policy of the Philippines government towards Muslim of Mindanao. Most Mindanao peoples recognize that the policy reflects Catholic political representative against the Islamic believers. Otherwise, for the government's view, Muslim Mindanao is ignorance, uncivilized people and primitive. They are also similar to the nation of Moors living in Africa, who had conflict with Catholic people of Spain. Genocide to Muslim in Mindanao took place in 1970 and conducted by Ilaga ethnic and the government, was considered as primordial conflict.

After Tripoli Agreement in 1976, this conflict shifted to the instrumental type, which all elites use the conflict to boost both domestic and international support. MNLF has successfully attracted sympathy and recognition of international communities particularly the Islamic World. Indeed, Nur Misuari is more powerful than traditional power of the Mindanao kingdom. He also becomes part of elite along with MILF, which its withdrawal from MNFL is a way to reach strategic position. Nevertheless, the Islamic terror group of Abu Sayaf kidnaped people for some money. This conflict also increases the USA support for the government to counter terrorism, whom MILF and Abu Sayaf are proclaimed as the terrorist group, and elevates empathy of local people living in Luzon island.

The conflict moves to the constructive type after the Final Agreement 1996. It means that international communities or particular construction drive preferences of whether conflicting parties should negotiate or fight continuously. Peace construction of Islamic international community is quite dominant to encourage MNLF in accepting peace negotiation. By peace preference, The Organization of Islamic Conference shows that Islam is a peaceful religion. At the same time, economic construction is a pivotal reason why the government decides ceasefire and negotiate peacefully. During the conflict, the government has costly economic and social casualties (Ahmadi, 2011).

Peace resolution between the Bangsamoro represented by MNLF and central government of the Philippines resulted three agreements: Tripoli Agreement 1976, Jeddah Accord and Final Peace Agreement 1996. Tripoli Agreement 1976 is mainly sponsored by the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). This organization appointed four countries: Libya, Saudi Arabia, Senegal and Somalia to become member of special commission to investigating violation in Mindanao. Its membership was extended by Indonesia and Bangladesh, which were interested to join in. Hence, they were known as the Ministerial Committee of Six. Preparing peace negotiation is core duty of the committee.

Tripoli Agreement 1976 constitutes three fundamental articles. First is status of Mindanao autonomous. Mindanao peoples can autonomously govern themselves within political system of the Philippines. Second is dealing with independent territories. This agreement recognizes that Mindanao has thirteen independent traditional areas: Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte, North Cotabato, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, Davao del Sur, South Cotabato and Palawan. Third, the particular regulations of governance, managing natural resources as well as integrating ex-MNLF in the state military and police should consider the constitution of the Philippines.

In terms of implementing Tripoli Agreement 1976, the major problem is that the government of the Philippines has constitutional authority to determine whether articles of the agreement is in line with the state constitution or not. This contributes negative impacts for MNLF. First, the government has more opportunity to exclusively impose its model in conducting the articles. Second, it is advantage for the government to reconfirm peoples who have no intention to separate such as Palawan, Cotabato and Davao del Sur, which have huge oil deposit.

Due to shortcomings outcome, Nur Misuari leading MNLF asks the OIC for actively monitoring and taking serious actions against the government domination over MNLF. Marcos, for instance, seems to apply "the carrot and stick policy", which is less people attempt to rebel, more economic share they receive. Then, three Islamic oil producer countries: Iran, Arab Saudi and Libya condemn the government's commitment in the agreement and deliver the policy of oil

embargo to the government. Also, those countries prohibit Nur Misuari to use armed forces in responding the government.

In response to unsuccessful Tripoli Agreement 1976, the government initiates to persuade Nur Misuari in renegotiating a new agreement. Sponsored by the OIC, both parties have approved to sign the Jeddah Accord in 1987, which definitely includes autonomous regions and their borders. This positive trend leads both parties to the Final Peace Agreement in 1996, which is facilitated by Indonesia and the OIC. The important point of the agreement is the government's acceptance to integrate ex-MNLF combatants to the national armed forces. The agreement creates a peace order and a regime those conflicting parties refer to.

However, after signing the agreement, Mindanao remains insecure due to intensity of conflict and the Muslims' welfare, who particularly live in five Islamic autonomous regions: Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Basilan. Another actors such as MILF, Lumads and NPA appear to kill the Philippines' military personals, demolish public facilities and kidnap civilians (Reuters, 1996; Times, 1997; Ahmadi, 2011). Therefore, Mindanao peoples have serious problems of social integrity (Kenneth, 1999), economic recovery, traumatic healing and rebuilding infrastructure (Surwandono, 2011). Involvement of international communities to solve those problems is necessary.

II. Muhammadiyah's Reconstruction Plan in Mindanao post Peace Agreement

In the Dutch colonial period, Ahmad Dahlan, who was the Islamic clergy and modernist, founded the first Islamic movement namely Muhammadiyah in Yogyakarta, 1912. It has focused on the idea of Islamic purification and humanity, which are health and education services. In addition, Alfian (1989) believes that Muhammadiyah has not only been Islamic reformist and the agent of social change, but also been the political force resisting global injustice.

As a political force, Muhammadiyah argues that Islam cannot be separated by political, economic and social problems (Alfian, 1989). Any colonialism and political abuse that threat to humanity should be eliminated. Therefore, Muhammadiyah also provoked its members to fight the Dutch colonialist and communism. It also was a prominent actor to overthrow the Soeharto presidency

through the people power. Inspired by Amien Rais, who chaired Muhammadiyah from 1999 to 2004 and criticized Soeharto's corruption, students rallied on streets to end the regime. This reform flourished along with the economic crisis in 1998.

In order to overcome Mindanao conflict that considerably influences Muslim civilians' welfare and security, international NGOs are welcomed to distribute their reliefs. Neisbitt (2003) maintains that providing basic needs, medical treatment, trauma healing not to mention facilitating peace dialogue are important roles the non-governmental organizations can play in conflict areas. Looking at level of actors in conflict resolution as perceived by Jhon Lederach, NGOs' leaders are the second level along with ethnic and religious leader who can arrange problem solving workshop, training in conflict resolution as well as peace commission. Meanwhile, the first level is military, political and elite religious leaders who engage negotiation, mediation and ceasefire. The lowest level is local leaders, indigenous NGOs and community developer (Neisbitt, 2003).

According to Kalypso Nicolaïdis, NGOs have ability to prevent the conflict in three stages: 1) latent conflict, 2) hostile explosion and 3) post conflict through four possibilities of combining method and scope. Method consists of 1) hands-on: capacity building and evaluating roots of conflict, and 2) hands-off: signaling actions for instance threats. Scope also is divided into two types: 1) ad hoc: short-term period and 2) systemic: proposed long-term period action. Combination of both method and scope could be four preventions: 1) coercive diplomacy (hands-off, ad hoc), 2) institutional inducement (hands-off, systemic), 3) cooperative management (hands-on, ad hoc) and 4) systemic transformation (hands-on, systemic) (Neisbitt, 2003).

In the 46th Muhammadiyah National Congress held in Malang, East Java, it issued the Muhammadiyah vision 2025, which it has to contribute proportionally for humanity and Islamic solidarity from national to international level (Agus Ulinuha, 2013). In this regard, Muhammadiyah has been the only Islamic member in the International Contact Group (ICG), which involves both international NGOs and states to mediate peaceful meeting between the Bangsamoro and the government. Syamsuddin, who chairs Muhammadiyah between 2010 and 2015, argues that the following Muhammadiyah's

responsibilities are 1) creating social integrity of two factions in the Bangsamoro namely MNLF and MILF and 2) promoting humanitarian works enhancing the Bangsamoro livelihoods, in the field of education, health and socio-economics (Syamsuddin,2013).

Based on Muhammadiyah's experience engaging series of peace talks for the Bangsamoro, in cooperation with the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Muhammadiyah has conducted informal talks between top leaders of the MILF and MNLF. The Informal Talks was part of agenda in the 4th World Peace Forum organized by Muhammadiyah, Center for Dialogue and Cooperation among Civilizations (CDCC) and Ceng Ho Multicultural and Trust in Bogor, West Java, Indonesia has been able to reduce the gap both groups. Syamsuddin believes that

“[t]he Bogor meeting come up with an Agreement to develop a MILF-MNLF Joint Road Map for the pursuant of the two Agreement which had been respectively signed separately by MNLF and MILF with the Government of the Philippines. To enable the promotion of humanitarian works on the ground, Muhammadiyah has made a scoping mission to Mindanao on 12–21 June 2011, and a Muhammadiyah Road Map 2020 for Bangsamoro has been developed”.

The Road Map 2020 of Muhammadiyah for the Bangsamoro has stated four theme: 1) Preparatory and Infrastructures Development, 2) Human Resources Development, 3) Institutional Development not to mention 4) Consolidation and Dissemination. It covers a number of fields: a) education focuses on lower, middle, higher education and research works, b) social development consists of socio-economic potentialities, role of women and youth development, c) health emphasizes on health services and community health, d) civil society elevates interfaith network and civil society development and e) organizational arrangements prepares establishment and empowerment of local Muhammadiyah in Mindanao. Each the fields attempt to improve institutions and peoples who work in.

What Muhammadiyah demonstrates in its road map employs the notion of systemic transformation and cooperative management. It also illustrates completely comprehensive and inclusive by imposing interfaith networks. According to Amin Saikal, three Abrahamic religions: Islam, Christian and Judaism share common moral values and beliefs. They are monotheistic religion

that respects God and His attributes (Saikal, 2003). However, in primordial perspective, those are root of conflict among believers as shown in Mindanao. Muhammadiyah, then, invites its international counterpart of Christian NGO in Italy to promote peace to the government. The peace in Mindanao cannot be successfully achieved without any mutual understanding between separatist groups, the government and stakeholders of international community.

III. Conclusion

Mindanao crisis is a 40-year conflict that mainly involves the Muslim ethnic and the central government of the Philippines. The separatist has two factions: national-based ideology group of MNLF and the Islamic-based ideology of MILF. After the Final Agreement 1996 signed by MNLF and the government, the violence increases because of MILF and the others (Lumads and NPA). Another impacts are economic, social and ideological problem.

Resolving those problems require the role of international community, which is accepted by both conflicting parties. Muhammadiyah is solely an Islamic and social movement of Indonesia having more opportunity to offer post-conflict programs because none conflicting parties are reluctant. Rebuilding programs of Muhammadiyah is comprehensively aimed at empowering society and building human capacity. It inclusively promotes interfaith dialogue to prevent the primordial conflict. All designed plans refer to the notion of cooperative management such as improving health services, public services and women empowerment. Another concept that Muhammadiyah refers to is systemic transformation, which the Bangsamoro should be more economically independent by developing their resources.

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