

# POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF BARMM: A HISTORICAL STUDY ON THE STRUGGLES OF BANGSAMORO IN ESTABLISHING STATE CAPACITY IN THE PHILIPPINES

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**ABSTRACT:** *This historical study delved into the struggles of Bangsamoro establishing state capacity in the Philippines. To be more specific, this study aimed to provide primary and secondary data and analyze such based on determined the political development of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in the Philippines during the pre-Spanish colonial period, Spanish colonization, American rule, Japanese occupation, post-war, Marcos' Regime and Martial Law, Tripoli Agreement in Libya, peace-building and establishment of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), and the establishment of the Republic Act No. 11054 or the Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) on 2018. Furthermore, this study attempted to identify the factors of Bangsamoro's struggles in establishing state capacity in the country and indicate the region's outcomes coherent with the given findings and related literature. Using content analysis as suggested based on the approach of the historical study, the researcher generated themes and found that the political development by each juncture emerged from the prominent political changes. These specified political developments, upon evaluation, corresponded with specifications and implications that contributed to the development of the discussion.*

**Keywords:** Political Development, struggles, Bangsamoro struggle, state capacity

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Bangsamoro struggle, encapsulating the challenges faced by the Bangsamoro, emerged as a term signifying the collective aspirations of the Muslim tribes in Mindanao, officially recognized in the 2012 Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) [1]. This struggle, deeply rooted in historical injustices and contemporary developments, represents a protracted fight for self-determination, contributing to political instability in Mindanao [2]. About [3], it emphasizes the importance of understanding historical injustices in comprehending the Bangsamoro struggle.

The conflict underscores the intricate Moro identity dilemma in Mindanao, with Muslims seeking the right to self-determination [4]. Initially overlooked, the political complexities in Mindanao gained attention through initiatives like Senate Bill No. 2685, proposed by Senator Loren Legarda in 2015, advocating for the integration of "Moro History, Culture, and Identity Studies" at the tertiary level [5].

The political evolution of the Bangsamoro struggle achieved a significant milestone by establishing the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in 2019, as stipulated in Republic Act No. 11054 [6]. Despite these strides, challenges persist, as evidenced by Maguindanao Representative Mangudadatu's observations and the evolving demands of Moro rebel factions [7].

The Bangsamoro Transition Authority, tasked with overseeing the region until the 2022 national elections, faces obstacles in attaining political self-determination, as articulated by [8] and highlighted by the Asia Foundation's concerns about development and political stability [9].

The present study aims to fill the scholarly gap on the Bangsamoro struggle and the political development of BARMM, particularly examining historical periods from pre-Spanish colonialism to the establishment of Republic Act No. 11054. The research uses historical methods like content analysis to evaluate BARMM's state capacity, addressing the lack of understanding surrounding ongoing Bangsamoro efforts, ultimately benefiting the

underrepresented ethnic minority in a predominantly Christian Philippines.

### Research Objectives

The main objective of this study was to pursue a historical study on the struggles of Bangsamoro in establishing state capacity in the Philippines. Furthermore, it aimed to discover the political development of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in the Philippines during Pre-Spanish Colonial Period, Spanish Colonization, American Rule, Japanese Occupation, Post-war Mindanao, Marcos' Regime and Martial Law, Tripoli Agreement in Libya, Peace-building and establishment of Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), and the establishment of Republic Act No. 11054 or the Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) on 2018. Lastly, to discover the factors of the struggles of Bangsamoro in establishing state capacity in the Philippines.

### Theoretical Lens

About [10] in his book "Historical Theory and Methods," he highlights the multifaceted nature of historical study, advocating techniques like data gathering, evaluation, and presentation. Others [11], explore various historical study frameworks, ultimately advocating for Pluralism, which the author elsewhere [12], defines as extracting valid historical explanations from diverse and conflicting accounts. Pluralism's adaptability and inclusiveness make it a suitable guiding framework for the present study, facilitating the evaluation of historical facts and secondary data.

Political Development Theory, examined by [13], evaluates a state's ability to mobilize resources, handle policy inputs, and implement procedures. About [14], emphasizes its significance in understanding state capability, encompassing various perspectives. In the current study, Political Development Theory provides a framework to assess the political environment and state capacity of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), allowing an independent examination of factors affecting state capacity.

The concept of state capacity, integral to political development, as proposed [15], involves three key

dimensions: coercive, extractive, and administrative-bureaucratic.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative historical approach, as defined by [16], emphasizing the application of the scientific method to historical research. As described by [17], historical methodology involves identifying problems, formulating hypotheses, collecting and analyzing data, and testing hypotheses. Historical studies in politics yield crucial insights into the impact of past events on individuals, groups, cultures, institutions, or states.

### Source of Data

This study relied on a qualitative historical approach, utilizing secondary sources for data acquisition, consolidation, and investigation. Distinguishing from primary sources, such as legislation and official documents, secondary data is drawn from external accounts, references, and narratives of the event. Sources encompass books, articles, electronic media, dissertations, news reports, documentaries, and commentaries, emphasizing diverse historical information channels. Due to this limitation, the results of this

### Locale of the Study

This study delved into Bangsamoro's political development and struggles, focusing on the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Established through Republic Act No. 11054, the region operates autonomously under a Parliamentary government supervised by the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA).

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Political Development of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in the Philippines

In this study, the concept of Political Development is considered distinct from Modernization theory, aligning more with its framework. Adopting a historical approach influenced Moore [18], the research delves into the Bangsamoro struggle, emphasizing critical historical junctures and events that shaped the present. This comprehensive perspective encompasses economic liberalization, social change, institutional dynamics, cultural and political ideologies, and the state's integration into societal practices. Others [5, 19], collectively endorse this approach. The study aims to elucidate the evolution of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) and its resolution within a historical context.

### The Political Development of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in the Philippines during the Pre-Spanish Colonial Period

In the pre-Spanish colonial era of the Philippines, specifically in Mindanao, indigenous people had established their way of life before the arrival of colonizers in 1564. The primary political development during this

period was the establishment of Sultanates, notably in Mindanao, following the Islamization initiated by influential families in the 15th century [20, 21, 22]. The Sultanate system, shaped by Islamic teachings, encompassed a theocratic rule where the Sultan held political and religious authority, governing based on Sharia and representing divine authority [23].

Contrary views emerged, with [24] emphasizing the historical fragmentation among Moros, suggesting diverse power trajectories in Sultanates like Maranao. Geographical factors influenced governance, leading to either regrouping or fragmentation [25]. Additionally, [21] argued that the emergence of the Sultanate's advanced political practices replaced indigenous structures with centralized governance under the Sultan's leadership [26].

Theocracy, guided by the Qur'an, influenced Mindanao's indigenous practices, and Sultans were considered both political and religious figures [23, 27, 28]. This shift from the barangay system reflected a more robust political entity with a fusion of spiritual and political ideals, showcasing an advanced civilization in Mindanao before Spanish colonization.

### The Political Development of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in the Philippines during American Rule

After the American-Spanish conflict, the US ruled the Philippines. During the American occupation, Mindanao's most significant political development was establishing its regional government unit, following the American model [29]. Governor Leonard Wood aimed to integrate Muslims into Western political and legal models, introducing democracy and decentralization [30]. This move toward self-governance was part of the US strategy to prepare the Philippines, including Mindanao, for independence, as seen in the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 [31, 32]. The regional unit in Mindanao marked a transition from absolute monarchy to democracy, laying the foundation for Philippine self-determination.

### The Political Development of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in the Philippines during Post-war Mindanao

After the liberation of the Philippines in 1946, Mindanao's political landscape underwent significant changes. A major post-war development was the conflict between the government and Mindanao Muslims over the lack of recognition of Islamic customs and culture. The 1971 Constitutional Convention established the Code of Muslim Personal Laws (CMPL), acknowledging Muslim legal systems. Atty. Mehol K. Sadain and Saada Samad Alioden highlight this conflict and its resolution through the CMPL, constituting a significant political achievement for Mindanao's Moro people. The government's efforts to address Moro's concerns were underscored by [6], who emphasized the successful devolution of powers and wealth sharing as conflict resolution measures.

Conflicts arose from the government's failure to recognize Moro's needs, as Mamintal A. Tamano and Cesar Majul highlighted. The integration of Moros into the Philippine political body was achieved through Filipinization, which was disrupted by the Japanese invasion but resumed post-war,

as suggested by Abinales. Mussolini Lidasan supported this, stating President Marcos' attempt to address Muslim concerns aimed at mainstreaming, not assimilating, Muslims.

The Philippine government's promulgation of the CMLP aimed to ease tensions and devolve authority to allow Muslim Filipinos to be governed by their religious and ethnic rules. Despite efforts, the Moro struggle continued, culminating in Martial Law and another Moro incursion, ultimately shaping Mindanao's post-war political development.

#### **The Political Development of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in the Philippines during Marcos' Regime and Martial Law**

During Ferdinand Marcos' regime and Martial Law in the Philippines, the political development of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) was marked by the rise of Muslim separatism. Marcos declared Martial Law in 1972, leading to a disregard for the conditions of Muslim Filipinos, particularly in Mindanao. Before Martial Law, the Muslim Independence Movement in Mindanao had already raised political awareness. Under Marcos, the Moro opposition evolved into a well-organized separatist movement seeking independence to preserve the Muslim community.

Various separatist movements, including the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), emerged during this period, advocating for recognizing Moros' right to self-determination. Federico Magdalena highlighted that the events of the 1970s, marked by suppressed emotions among Moros, led to the assertion of Islamic identity and the pursuit of freedom through Muslim autonomy or complete independence.

Contrastingly, scholars like McKenna and Lara Jr. argued that Muslim separatism was not solely driven by self-determination but also by the Philippine government's failure to address socio-economic and political conditions in Mindanao. Factors such as fear of assimilation, resentment of Catholic transmigration, economic underdevelopment, and warlordism contributed to Moro separatist sentiment.

The proliferation of Muslim separatism in Mindanao during Marcos' regime was a complex interplay of Moros asserting their self-determination rights and addressing socio-economic and political grievances. The Moro struggle symbolized a solid desire to claim political rights, even through violent means, against a government perceived as neglectful and oppressive.

#### **The Political Development of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in the Philippines during the Tripoli Agreement in Libya**

The Tripoli Agreement in 1976 marked a pivotal moment in the political development of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Negotiated between the Philippine government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the accord, as highlighted by [33], legalized Bangsamoro autonomy, serving as a cornerstone for peace-building efforts in

Mindanao. In reference to [34], it emphasized its enduring importance in subsequent peace processes. However, [35] contested that the agreement aimed to weaken the MNLF, portraying the political development as a government strategy. The Tripoli Agreement was crucial in quelling conflicts and initiating peace-building in Mindanao.

#### **The Political Development of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in the Philippines during the Peace-building and Establishment of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM)**

The political development of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) during the Peace-building and the establishment of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) was multifaceted. Republic Act No. 6734 granted autonomy in 1989, building on the Tripoli Agreement. Under Ramos, the Final Peace Agreement in 1996 fully implemented Tripoli, addressing Moro aspirations. While some, like [22, 36], see autonomy as a response to armed struggle, [37] argues it's both an expression of Moro self-governance and a product of generations of armed struggle—a resolution to one of the world's most protracted conflicts. The autonomy represents the intricate interplay of historical agreements, government responses, and Bangsamoro aspirations.

#### **The Political Development of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in the Philippines during the Establishment of Republic Act No. 11054 or the Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in 2018**

Establishing the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) through Republic Act No. 11054, known as the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), marked a significant political development. The law transformed the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) into BARMM, adopting a parliamentary form of government. In reference to [38], the shift in governance structure, appointing a ceremonial leader (Wali) and a chief minister symbolized a move towards federalism. The BOL served as a model for federalism, as advocated by some during Duterte's administration. This shift represented a historic achievement in the pursuit of Moro self-determination.

#### **Factors on the Struggles of Bangsamoro in Establishing State Capacity in the Philippines**

The struggles of the Bangsamoro in establishing state capacity in the Philippines are multifaceted, encompassing political, cultural, social, and economic dimensions. This study draws upon the framework proposed by [15], focusing on three major dimensions: coercive, extractive, and administrative-bureaucratic.

In the political realm, the primary struggle identified is the aspiration for self-determination, as highlighted by [22, 4]. It aligns with the Administrative-Bureaucratic Dimension, emphasizing the importance of political circumstances, institutional support, and checks and balances—the Intergovernmental Relations Policy, discussed by Atty. Michael Henry Yusingco supports political autonomy and collaboration between the central and regional governments, contributing to the legitimacy and effectiveness of the

Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

The cultural struggle revolves around clan feuds deeply embedded in Moro tradition, hindering state capacity, as argued by [8]. It aligns with the Coercive Dimension, where communal violence and conflicts impede the region's ability to maintain peace and order.

In the social aspect, local divisions and a distorted image of the Bangsamoro further challenge state capacity, according to [8]. These issues correlate with the Coercive Dimension, emphasizing the need for policies promoting peace and order and agencies supporting internal and external authority.

Economically, the weak fiscal autonomy of the region, as indicated, aligns with the Extractive Dimension. This dimension underscores translating government principles into economic growth, relying on revenue generation, taxation, and effective resource utilization. Adequate fiscal autonomy is critical in attaining economic sufficiency and genuine autonomy [33, 39].

#### CONCLUSION

The study reveals that the Bangsamoro people's historical struggle for self-determination significantly shaped their political development across different periods. Despite achieving autonomy through the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), the region faces ongoing challenges in sustaining its political and economic autonomy. The factors influencing state capacity and autonomy for the Bangsamoro can be traced back to the shortcomings of the initial autonomous region, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The study suggests that the ARMM was an experimental endeavor that failed, leading to intrinsic dependence on the central government. The establishment of the BARMM represents an attempt to address these issues, yet full autonomy still needs to be discovered. The study concludes that realizing state capacity and autonomy for the Bangsamoro requires addressing the persistent struggles of the Moros, particularly their longstanding fight for self-determination. Without a robust assertion of their political aspirations, the achievements of the BARMM may face challenges, emphasizing the need to address the historical struggles of the Bangsamoro to achieve practical autonomy.

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