Post-Conflict Institution in Support of Reintegration and the Peace Process:

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Introduction

Bringing human security issues to the central public discourse and making them a national policy concern will significantly reduce conflict and open windows of opportunity for building peace in conflict-prone regions. This is especially true in the case of Mindanao where not only the conflict but also the peace process are simultaneously protracted (Oquist, 2001: 2-4; ICG, 2008:1-4; and 2011:2-3). Although peace agreements have been achieved several times, conflicts continue. In such a situation, it is not only conflict that should be highlighted, but also peace deterioration and its negative impacts on human security. This is especially relevant when the ongoing peace talks reach a deadlock and have not resulted in a substantial peace agreement.

This paper discusses the vulnerabilities of the people in Mindanao who live between war and peace situations. The people are easily trapped in civil war and dislocated from their home regions. Based on observations and interviews done during three months of field research in Mindanao, this paper highlights human security issues affected by peace deterioration, a critical issue that has to be tackled in order to build peace in conflict-prone regions. As a case study, the paper draws lessons from the conflict and peace dynamics in Mindanao from August to November, 2011. On 4 August 2011 President Benigno "P-Noy" Aquino, the new elected President, had reopened dialogue with MILF leaders. While continuing the peace talks, he declared 'all-out justice' instead of 'all-out war' and issued the promise to strengthen the peace process in Mindanao.

As will be elaborated below, unlike the previous governments, the government of President Aquino brought with it a new promise to build peace in Mindanao. The paper argues that, despite the conflict causes that need to be addressed properly, the weaknesses of peacemaking process to produce peace agreement (Oquist, 2001: 6-10; Brillantes, 2005: 6-9) is one of the obstacles to build peace in Mindanao. After raising awareness on human security issues and calling out to peace advocates to support the building of a democratic peace process, it is expected that a sustainable peace would be prospectively achieved in Mindanao. Moreover, as the main source of human security problems in Mindanao is not only the conflict causes but also the peace obstacles, the paper argues that strengthening the peace process and foreseeing the future of post-conflict peacebuilding institutions, as "structures and institutions supporting the peace process to avoid a relapse into conflict and promote sustainable peace"(Boutros Boutros-Gali, 1996:4), would be highly significant to transform conflict and build peace in Mindanao.

The following report elaborates on this issue, first of all, by assessing the current conflict dynamic and peace development in Mindanao. Then, discussions on peace deterioration and its impacts on human security problems in Mindanao will ensue. After discussing this issue, the paper elaborates on humanitarian (human) intervention in responding to human security problems and presents lessons from them to promote reintegration and build the democratic peace process. Based on this analytical examination, the paper finally presents recommendations to tackle those issues by raising awareness on human security issues and proposing a visionary democratic peace process to promote peacebuilding in Mindanao.

Protracted conflict, but also protracted peace

Before the report presents an analysis and proposes recommendations, it is worthwhile here, first of all, to assess the current situation of conflict and peace dynamics in Mindanao in order to find out an appropriate approach to promote reintegration and peacebuilding. Taking into account what has been discussed in literature and during public

discourses on Mindanao so far, immediately it is found that there has been much more attention been given to conflict issues than to peace dynamics. In fact, besides its being is a conflict region, Mindanao is also a very dynamic region in terms of peacebuilding and development.

On the surface, we can see that the region is a very rich one with abundant natural resources. It is also surrounded by the beautiful sea areas, a rich regionwide plantation, beautiful mountains, green paddy fields, rich traditions and cultural diversities. But, behind all the beauty are sedimented tensions and conflict in its social and political landscape; not only horizontal ethno-religious and vertical self-determination conflicts, but a combination of both ethno-religious nationalism and self-determination conflicts (Ferrer, 2005: 7-15). Moreover, the region faces vertical ethno-religious nationalism or a self-determination conflict between the state and the people over political identity and state formation as part of the nation-state building of the modern Philippine society, historically it is also marked by a horizontal conflict of traditional feud among the "big man". Now it is sustained in the form of *rido* or clan conflict (Abinales, 2004: 47-48 and 163-170). However, many peacebuilding efforts haves been made to settle the conflicts, either by government, civil society organizations or development agencies by means of political negotiations, humanitarian intervention and many other civilian peace initiatives (Lee, 2005: 121-123; Lingga, 2005).

The conflict and peace dynamics in Mindanao can be properly understood from the inter-relations or actions and counter responses of the armed struggle with the Moro fronts, on one side, and the Government of the Philippines (GRP), on the other side. There are two main fronts in the Moro rebellion, the MNLF *(Mindanao National Liberation Front)* and the MILF *(Mindanao Islamic Liberation Front)* (Santos, 2005: 4-8). While both the MNLF and the MILF were previously united in a single front against the GRP under the umbrella of MNLF that demanded Mindanao's independence, the latter then split to launch its own struggle with the objective of establishing an Islamic state in Mindanao. This was mainly driven by the dissatisfaction of the MILF due to its exclusion from the power

sharing arrangement in the regional autonomy for Mindanao reached between the MNLF and the Philippine government as provided for in the First Tripoli Agreement.

Meanwhile, from the government's counter insurgency position, there are three dominant positions that can be identified, namely; military victory, pacification and demobilization and politico-institutional positions (Oquist, 2002; Brillantes, 2005). The military victory position refers to a political position of government who sees the winning of the war or crushing the rebellion of the enemy using military measures. This, according to them, is the only viable solution to end the conflict in Mindanao. On the contrary, while both the pacification and political institution positions oppose the military victory approach, the two are slightly different. The pacification and demobilization approach tend to believe more in achieving peace through economic development and social welfare distribution, the institutional approach believes that the political solution would be the only viable solution to end the conflict and build sustainable peace. Seemingly, it is in the interplay of the multiple positions of the armed struggle in the Moro fronts, on one side, and the different positions in the counter insurgency responses and policies, on the other, that the conflict and peace dynamics in Mindanao could be properly comprehended. The following brief trajectory of conflict and peace dynamics in Mindanao gives an illustration.

The modern armed conflict in Mindanao began in 1972 when the MNLF declared Mindanao to be independent and free from the Philippines. The rebellion was immediately responded to by the Philippine government under President Ferdinand Marcos who issued a mixed counter insurgency strategy; military mobilization on the one side and political solution through negotiation on the other. Peace talk between the GRP and the MNLF was held for the first time in 1976. The Tripoli Peace Talk resulted in a political arrangement granting regional autonomy to Mindanao. This arrangement was fully implemented after the second peace talks held in 1996 under President Fidel Ramos. However, some core members of the MNLF from the Islamic faction were not satisfied with the agreement as they

perceived its implementation to be fully controlled by the central government. Eventually, they withdrew from the peace agreement and set up a new front, the MILF movement.

After President Ferdinand Marcos was ousted from office, President Cory Aquino reactivated negotiations by revitalizing the regional autonomy of ARRM. The peace situation continued to improve under the next president, Fidel Ramos who promoted more power devolution, political decentralization and regional autonomy for Mindanao. To back up this process, the *Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development* (SPCDC) was established with the specific objective to promote 'post-conflict' rehabilitation and reconstruction. However, the MILF still did not accept the policy as they perceived it to tend to favor the MNLF and traditional local community leaders who had a close personal relationship with the political elite at the central government while excluding them from taking part in the new power sharing arrangement.

The situation became worse under President Joseph Estrada, who favored adopting the military victory position to pacification and the political institution solution. This was clearly shown in his decision to declare "all-out-war" in response to the rebel movement. Under such option, the military clashes between the government's military arm and the MILF was unavoidable. In the case of the battle attacking Camp Abubakar, for instance, the MILF lost its stronghold (Ferrer, 2005: 6). President Joseph Estrada himself directly celebrated the victory in the ruined Camp to delight the propagandists (Oquist, 2002: 13). The war deescalated after President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the MILF resumed peace talks in the Second Tripoli peace Agreement in 2001. Three main points resulted from the agreement, namely, a cease fire, reconstruction and rehabilitation and ancestral domain. To support their implementation, four bodies of post-conflict institutions were formed; the Coordination Committee on Cessation of Hostility (CCCH), the International Monitoring Team (IMT), and the Bangsamoro Development Agencies (BDA) and Bangsamoro Leadership and Management Institute (BLMI) were established to implement the Second Tripoli Peace Agreement.

While the first and second points of agreement were quite successfully implemented and resulted in significantly decreasing violence, the third point faced many obstacles. There were political debates and contestations over the ancestral domain issue or the MOA-AD agreement at the national policy level so that finally, it was rejected by the Senate and Congress in 2008 which perceived it to be unconstitutional. Since the MOA-AD was rejected by the government, conflict resumed in Mindanao with regular armed clashes between the GRP and rebels taking place. The critical situation ended after the newly elected President "P-Noy" Aquino held a secret meeting with the MILF leaders in Japan on August 4, 2011, to resume political dialogue that was expected by many to come up with a more democratic political solution. As will be elaborated on more in the next section, after this meeting, a series of political negotiations were held in Kuala Lumpur starting September 2011, with much tension breaking out between the MILF and the government in the drive to find a political solution.

Peace deterioration and human security impacts

One crucial issue that can be learned from the previous conflict and peace dynamics in Mindanao is the tendency when the peace process is deteriorating for rising tension, polarization, and conflict between the warring parties to follow immediately, with devastating impacts on human security. The rising tension and military clashes during the Joseph Estrada presidency, for instance, happened after the peace process deteriorated. At the time, in 2002, all-out war was declared that resulted in serious destructive impacts on human security. It was estimated that about almost one million people were dislocated or displaced as a result of the all-out war decision (PHSR, UNDP, 2005: 4).

A similar case also happened in 2003 when President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo issued a 'buliok offensive' that resulted in almost a half million IDPs evacuated from their home region. The military clashes occurred again after the MOA-AD was rejected by the government that led to the displacement of some 700.000 persons and the

death of approximately 500 people. Serious destructive impacts were also inflicted on productive assets, livelihood, houses and schools in the conflict areas (PHSR, UNDP, 2005: 4).

This tendency can also be captured in the bigger picture of conflict and peace dynamics in Mindanao. Seen from the conflict incidents, for instance, is how the cases of violence drastically decreased when the peace process regained its political momentum (PHSR, UNDP, 2005). President Corazon Aquino's decision to update regional autonomy for Mindanao, for instance, produced a significantly decreasing number of conflict incidents from 288 to almost zero in her last term in power. The zero incident level was then maintained under President Fidel Ramos by promoting more political decentralization and greater political autonomy for Mindanao. But then, during the military victory period under President Joseph Estrada the number of incidents rose to 114 after he declared all-out war in 2000. And the number continued to increase and peaked at 316 in 2008 after President Arroyo issued an all-out war declaration after the MOA-AD was rejected by the Senate and Congress (PHSR, UNDP, 2005: 3-5). Different direction toward a conflict decrease taken place when the peace process sustained and regained its political momentum. The extended peace process did allow a larger number of people to return to their homes, either through humanitarian intervention or peacebuilding efforts. The restoration of the cease-fire with the MILF in mid-2003, for instance, and relative peace in 2004, allowed thousands of people to return home to pick up their lives (PHSR, UNDP, 2005: 5-6).

However, the restoration of the cease-fire did not mean that the people in Mindanao were freed from vulnerabilities and violence. As the peace process proceeded, and military victory approach take a rest, another armed conflict in the form of *rido* conflict wake up at community level. Though it had no direct relation between state and rebellion conflict and *rido* conflict, the *rido* conflict tend likely to emerge when there is no extent degree of social stability quarented by state presence. The impacts of the *rido* conflict are not indifferent in compare to military clashes between rebellion and

government as it also similarly created serious devastating impacts on human security. The recent land dispute among community leaders in Datu Piang, Maguindanao in August, 2011, particularly between the group of the Abunawas commander (Kato's followers) and Azmi commander (MILF's followers) in Datu Piang regency, for instance, resulted in the death of 14 combatants and displaced more than 3,500 villagers (*Mindanao Cross*, 20 August, 2011).

Peace deterioration, and the rising tensions and conflicts that follow are the main or key issues behind the human security impacts. The protracted conflict and contestation over peace policy has resulted in specific political and conflict dynamics in Mindanao. The three different positions in the government's counter insurgency policy produce their own impacts on local dynamics. While the military victory position tends to create polarization and armed clashes, the pacification and demobilization position tends to create a social fabric without a single political reference to hold and unite the social fabric in a stable political order (Oquist, 2002; Abinales, 2004). Therefore, in order to tackle peace deterioration and human security impacts, consolidation of peace peace policy has to be strengthened at the national level. Bringing to the fore human security issues to be a national policy concern would definitively strengthen peace process. The recent opening dialogue and ongoing peace talks between President "P-Noy" Aquino and the MILF leaders might be expected to create a more promising process for bringing about a democratic solution and sustainable peace in Mindanao.

Humanitarian intervention and human security responses

Building human security requires collaborative action among strategic actors and agencies. In this respect, the existing local mechanism and regional institutions, such as the regional autonomous government of Mindanao (ARRM), civil society organizations, community based organizations and development agencies, are potential strategic partners to promote democratic peacebuilding governance in Mindanao. As mediating institutions, they can be a bridge for building peace between

the government and rebels and for finding a democratic solution.

The central government normally runs its policy through local government by building a close connection and political ties with the local elite and civil society institutions. Moreover, both the government and rebels also try to build closer relations with civil society organizations and people at the community and grass-roots levels in order to gain political legitimacy in public policy and the political struggle. In addition, in order to reach people in the ground, development agencies also deliver development assistance and humanitarian relief via or with the approval of both the government and rebels. Because of their potentials to be a mediating institution, collaboration among these various actors and agencies could strengthen peacebuilding. However, there are also many obstacles to build human security and peace through the measures. The research finding below shows the potential and weaknesses of using this approach to promote democratic peacebuilding.

Many development agencies and civil society organizations in Mindanao undertaking humanitarian intervention, unfortunately, is still a partial intervention. They were not very much aware of the importance of integrating humanitarian intervention and the peacebuilding approach. Many of them only working around the conflict, and only some of them work *in* the conflict, and the few who do intervention on the conflict integrate humanitarian, development and peacebuilding approaches (Gaigals and Leonhartd, 2001). With the exception of one or two civil society organizations and networks, for instance the Katuntaya Foundation and *Consortium of the Bangsamoro Civil Society* (CBCS) who work by simultaneously combining both the humanitarian/community development and peacebuilding/conflict prevention, most civil society organizations in Mindanao do not apply conflict sensitivity and peace driven development approaches, as suggested for instance by the former secretary of the UN, Boutros-Boutros Gali, in his triple agendas for peace, development, and democratization (Boutros-Boutros Gali, 1996).

The regional autonomous government of Mindanao (ARRM), for instance, through its Social Welfare and Development Bureau has been extending a lot of development assistance and undertaking humanitarian relief efforts, especially during times of crisis. The *Pamana* Program, for example, is one of the biggest humanitarian intervention programs of the central government launched in coordination with the local government of Mindanao in order to assist and resettle the displaced people affected by conflict (*Mindanao Cross*, 20 August, 2011; 24 September, 2011; *Manila Bulletin*, 29 October, 2011). However, in many cases, it is very difficult for them to enter communities and areas controlled by the rebels as provided for the cease-fire agreement which classifies them as "restricted". The MILF and government may not enter territories under the other group's control.

Moreover, resistance and oftentimes, disputes between groups in the community and the local government over issues pertaining to the IDPs's resettlement program have been noted. One of the contentious issues has to do with whether the IDPs should be 'reintegrated' back to their original areas that are now controlled by the rebels, or be "relocated" to other places outside the territories but under the state control. There are also different perceptions and interpretations with regard to reintegration issues between both the government and the rebel groups. While for the government reintegration means reintegrating people into areas controlled by the government for them to be part of the body of citizens of the Philippine state, for the rebels it means they should be returned to their original home territories now under the control of the rebels.

The other potential institutions for building partnerships for peacebuilding are the post-conflict institutions, that resulted from and were established by a peace agreement. Besides the ARRM that was initially established by a peace agreement in 1996, the BDA and BMLI (the latter was recently reactivated by P-Noy Aquino's government, see Manila Bulletin, 29 October, 2011) are post-conflict institutions resulting from the Second Tripoli

Agreement of 2001. They can be viewed as potential strategic partners for peacebuilding. As institutions established by a peace agreement, they get support from both the government and the MILF leaders to perform the tasks of rehabilitation and reconstruction and, therefore, have a wider reach of people and peace constituencies at the community levels controlled by both the rebel groups and the government (Interview with the head of BDA, 25 August, 2011).

Moreover, a broader activity included people and IDPs across borders was the humanitarian intervention done by development agencies in collaboration with civil society organizations and community-based organizations. The *Community Services and Family Initiative* (CSFI), for instance, gets funding support from international development agencies such as World Bank and UNDP. It has been doing a lot of humanitarian interventions, among them a food security program for IDPs and the IDPs's resettlement (Interview with CSFI staff, 18 August, 2011). But, its main program so far mainly focuses on helping out in humanitarian relief efforts and development assistance, without much integration with a broader conflict-sensitive and peace driven development framework. As the sources of the people's vulnerability in Mindanao are mostly peace deterioration and conflict impacts, by giving development assistance and humanitarian relief only, though these are very helpful, will not mean much help to effectively prevent and resolve problems. Many cases show that after the IDPs returned to and resettled in their home regions, they were easily affected again and again by reemerging tensions and conflicts and vulnerably became "permanent" IDPs in their home regions.

However, some other civil society organizations have built a more integrated approach by combining both development assistance and peacebuilding compared to the two development agencies above. The Katuntaya Foundation (KFI) has employed double intervention approaches; on the one hand, it promotes humanitarian and community development and, on the other, it also utilizes conflict sensitive planning and a peace driven development approach. Established by NGO activists from different backgrounds, especially from community development and peace activism, it simultaneously organizes community development and peacebuilding initiatives by integrating development intervention into a peace and development framework. For its broader framework, its activities are not only supported by people and community leaders from various ethnic and social backgrounds, but also by international development agencies, such as UNDP, JICA, and many other international agencies especially those that promote humanitarian dialogue initiatives and programmes (Interview with the head of the Katuntaya Foundation, 19 October, 2011). Moreover, for its broader objective to achieve peace rather than merely doing community development in a narrow sense, it also easily mediated various interests and demands of the people and groups to formulate a common agendas of peacebuilding and, therefore its programmes are able to easily enter communities across borders, controlled either by the rebel groups or the government (Interview with Katuntaya Foundation Staff, Norman Abas, 23 August, 2011).

In addition, as a member of the *Consortium for Bangsamoro Civil Society* (CBCS), the KFI also has a specific program to promote conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the areas affected by conflict in Mindanao. The CBCS is a network of civil society organizations established by NGO activists in the fields of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. It could be seen as a "strategic think-thank" of civil society in Mindanao that is not only concerned with development issues, but also with finding a political solution for Mindanao. There are regular discussions held in the CSBS office to discuss the current political situation and peace negotiations between the government and the MILF. Several programmes on conflict prevention and peacebuilding are also organized by the network involving the local government, MILF, MNLF leaders, national and local politicians, community leaders, religious leaders, academicians, civil society organizations and community based organizations (Interview with Guamel Alim, head of CSBS and Katuntaya Foundation, 19 October, 2011).

For its inclusivity in running the programs, it is not strange therefore that the network gets support from multiple sides actors and agencies; such as ARRM, MNLF, MILF, community leaders, religious leaders, civil society and community based organizations, and could be a potential mediating institution that supports the building peace process. But, the challenges for making peace in Mindanao are so great, that in order to be a powerful institution supporting the peace process, it is highly suggested that the agency strengthen its capacity to be a mediating institution, especially through the application of a comprehensive framework and approach to peacemaking and peacebuilding.

Those five categories of mediating institutions above illustrate how the local institution can be a potential strategic partner promoting peacemaking and the building of a democratic practice process. Collaboration among them would help support the peace process and build democratic peacebuilding in Mindanao. However, as will be elaborated below, a new visionary peace process is highly required to mediate the differences and build equivalent changes among them to consolidate the peace process in Mindanao.

Post-conflict institution and peacebuilding

Since the MOA-AD was rejected by the government, the peace process was terminated and there were no significant sign of improvement in peace building in Mindanao. However, the peace process has gained new political momentum as recently President "P-Noy" Aquino resumed peace talks with the MILF leaders on 4 August, 2011. The peace process now is taking place under the specific political context of a more open negotiation process between MILF leaders and the more open and democratic government of the Philippines which has closer relationship with civil society organizations and the pro-democratic movements. Because of the more democratic and its openness to pursuing political dialogue, the commencement of the political dialogue and negotiations can be expected to bring about better prospects or the future of building peace in Mindanao.

However, there are also obstacles to promoting political negotiation, especially when the contestation over peace policies between military victory and the political and institutional solution position at the national level is escalating. There are political leaders who are still in favor of a military victory approach rather than a political solution to resolve the Mindanao problem, especially when political contestations between the government and political opposition is getting intense. How to transform the increasingly military approach to the peace process to a more democratic political solution is the most challenging task for political negotiations for Mindanao today.

Moreover, the other critical issues that need to concern are the obstacles to achieve a deliberate peace negotiation. As recently shown during peace talks in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, there is a highly charged debate between the MILF and the GRP over the issue of how to govern the Mindanao region in the future. The MILF proposed a "sub-state", which proposal was rejected by the GRP that in turn offered the alternative of a comprehensive autonomy package for Mindanao. The MILF rejected this autonomy package proposal, after which a 'reject of the rejection' process and positions between the two parties proceeded. The peace process deteriorated thereafter and went on in a 'mutual hurting process' that tended to push the peace process to a deadlock. Fortunately, there is still a basic ethico-political principle agreement among the parties to continue the peace process that would solve the Mindanao problem through a peaceful political solution instead of a military one (Arguillas, 2011; Coronel-Ferrer, 2011).

As happened in the past, whenever the peace process deteriorated, and political contestation over the peace policy at national level was in tense, tensions and conflict on the ground were expected. Immediately after the recent peace process in Kuala Lumpur deteriorated, military clashes between the armed rebels and government forces took place in Al-Barka, Payao, Zambuanga, Sibugay in the province of Basilan that claimed about 19 lives from the special force troops were, thousands of

people were displaced (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 26 October, 2011; *Philippine Star*, 29 October, 2011). The incidents instigated the moving up of a military victory approach either from the side of the Moro fronts or government, that finally forced the highest level of authority President "P-Noy" Aquino to declare "all-out justice".

The "all-out justice" declaration was very decisive and different from the pronouncements of the previous administrations that tended to declare "all-out war" when faced with a similar crisis and equally difficult situation. The difference between "all-out war" and "all-out justice" is that; while the first is totally outside the rules of the game of peace and falls under the category of war, the second still has in it a certain place for and degree of the rule of law and justice as being inseparable from peace and the rules of the game in a democratic peace process. As expressed in the statement delivered by the peace adviser of President "P-Noy" Aquino, Ging Deles, who defended the President's all-out justice decision, "In this case, the President was very clear. The best possible outcome was to go after the lawless elements but at the same time preserve the peace process. That was really something that was important for everybody" (Philippine Daily, *Inquirer* 30 October, 2011).

Mindanao in this time needs a new visionary peace process to strengthen the ongoing peace talks and find out a viable political solution. Insofar as the protracted conflict and peace and human security affected by the conflict are the main concerns, strengthening the peace process by putting human security as the first concern should be the main objective of the new visionary peace process. But, as in the Mindanao context human security could only be realized if there were consensus on the peace policy among policy makers, and it should be supported by the demilitarization of politics and the demobilization of rebellion, the new visionary peace process should be able to provide a viable democratic political solution.

In this respect, democratic imagination would help in visioning the future of the peace process in Mindanao. Through democratic imagination, the future of war-to-democracy scenario and transformation, especially how to transform rebellion to a new democratic post-conflict institution under the rules of the game of democratic society can be foreseen. The democratic imaginary could assist everybody in foreseeing what kind of post-conflict institution can be expected to come up in Mindanao after a peace deal to transform rebellion is achieved. While in this respect the existing post-conflict institutions should be enhanced, how to build a new democratic peace process to transform the rebel groups to democratic groups or post-conflict institution after a peace deal is the main concern of democracy-to-peace transformation (Kovacs, 2008).This scenario is very promising to building sustainable peace in Mindanao. But, the main problem would be the persisting conservative politicians who still believe in having a military victory in order to win peace rather than winning the hearts and minds of the people through deliberative political negotiation and a democratic peace process. To make the democratic solution come true, a democratic agonistic politic has to be built to transform the antagonistic conflict or enemy type of power relationship among the parties to agonistic or adversary type of power relationship so that the conflicting parties could articulate their voice freely through democratic process.

Conclusion

This paper raises critical points on how to tackle peace deterioration and conflict tension to prevent negative impacts on human security and promote a democratic peace process in Mindanao. Based on observations and interviews done during three months of field research in Mindanao, this paper comes to the conclusion that a visionary peace process should be promoted to strengthen the peace process and find a viable democratic solution and foresee the future of post-conflict institution to transform rebel groups to be a new democratic post-conflict institution.

Mindanao is a very dynamic region in terms of conflict dynamics. However, there are also peacebuilding initiatives and efforts that have been promoted by many to settle the conflicts, either by state, civil society, or development agencies. From the overall picture of the conflict and peace dynamics in Mindanao, there can be found a tendency that when the peace process deteriorates, it is then immediately followed by tensions between the warring parties that ultimately result in negative impacts on human security. As shown by the trend of the conflict and violent incidents in the region, the violence decreases as the peace process improves, but then it will increase when the peace process deteriorate. Behind this overall tendency, there are contestation over the peace policy, especially between military victory and political-institution solution position on the government side, on the one hand, and tensions and divisions among the rebel groups, on the other hand, that make peace consolidation difficult to achieve.

Rising awareness on human security impacts affected by peace deterioration and conflicts, in this respect, would help promote reintegration and build a democratic peace process in Mindanao. Strengthening collaboration among strategic actors and agencies, both at the national and local levels, especially between post-conflict institutions and civil society organizations and development agencies that function as a mediating institution, would help promote reintegration and a democratic peace process. However, a new visionary peace process is required in this respect to resolve their differences by building equivalent changes among them to consolidate the peace process, especially to build common agendas and platforms, and strategic actions to promote reintegration and strengthen the democratic peace process.

Mindanao now urgently requires a new visionary peace process to build and strengthen the ongoing peace talks to find a viable democratic political solution for human security problems and the conflict. In the Mindanao context, human security could only be realized if there were consolidation over peace policies, supported by demilitarization of politics and the demobilization of the rebellion process. Then and only then should, the alternative new visionary peace process be able to provide a viable democratic space to transform political contestation and conflict between state and rebels from antagonistic conflict or enemy type of power relationship to agonistic conflict or adversary type of power relationship within a democratic system and framework without violence.

In this respect, democratic imagination would help in visioning the future of the peace process in Mindanao. It will assist in foreseeing what democratic political system and post-conflict institution will come up after a peace deal to transform rebel groups to be a democratic post-conflict institution. While the existing post-conflict institutions have to be enhanced, how to build a democratic system and post-conflict institution to transform rebel groups to new democratic groups and institutions after a peace deal should be the main concern of the war-to-democracy scenario and conflict transformation in Mindanao.

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