

PATTERNS OF POLITICAL CHANGES AND THEIR SOCIAL IMPACT IN MINDANAO AND SULU AFTER THE FEBRUARY 1986 ELECTIONS: A PERSPECTIVE

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I. Preliminary Remarks

Government administration and the dynamics of politics of Mindanao and Sulu archipelago since the ascendancy of the Aquino government two years ago appear to be going towards a certain discernible direction, affecting various ethnocultural and ethnolinguistic communities in the area, as well as political movements and political groups such as the Moro National Liberation Front, the National Democratic Front, and the Mindanao Independence Movement.

More concretely, there has been a perceptible partial circulation of political and economic elites among the Christian, hilltribe, and Muslim communities. Exceptions are those represented by some new emerging leaders who do not come from established political dynasties and powerful economic blocs.

The *lumadnons*, or highland tribes, have awakened to the socio-economic and political realities of the eighties. Their days of isolation seem to be at an end, threatened by the majority population's multi-level intrusion. Their self-sufficient economy is being transformed into a monetized one. Their cultural heritage and natural resources are undergoing commercialization.

The two best-known insurgent organizations — the Moro National Liberation Front (including the MILF and the MNLF-Reformist factions) and the National Democratic Front — have experienced intermittent and alternating truce or reconciliation, and the rise of tense relations or armed hostilities with the National Government.

The accumulated adverse impacts of these various developments and changes since early 1986 have caused a steady socio-economic stagnation, if not down-turn, in Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago. The quality of life among the Mindanaoans, Basilanons, Tausug and Samal has deteriorated, creating a fertile breeding ground of fissiparous political tendencies and social fragmentation.

Consequently, Mindanao today speaks with different and weakened voices. Its people are disunited. Its leadership is still largely ineffectual due

largely to its fragmented population. Everybody feels the need for new and effective leadership of Mindanao, as multifarious problems exist and drag down efforts to rebuild the south socially, economically and politically.

II. Partial Circulation of Political-Economic Elites

Political leadership in the south has changed over the past two or three years. Erstwhile leaders under Marcos are now playing the role of oppositionists, unless they practise turncoatism.

The newly-elected or -installed leaders come basically from the same class as the present oppositionists. In an area where capitalism has made inroads long ago but minus the industrial components, the leaders who have the money, even if they were suppressed for around two decades, were the only ones who could challenge the status quo.

As illustrative examples, the developments in Sulu, Zamboanga del Sur, Agusan Provinces, and Lanao Provinces are worthy of mention.

Governor Tupay Loong of Sulu and his clan used to be identified with the past administration. So was the late Governor Mus Iquiedo. The Loongs, during the January 18, 1988 elections, became the standard bearers of PDP-Laban who battled Officer-in-Charge Indanan Ani of the United Nationalist Organization (UNIDO). Tupay Loong won as Governor, after a series of legal skirmishes that included the issue of fraudulent voters' list. Nonetheless, earlier (in May 1987) during the Congressional elections, the brother of Indanan Ani won a seat in Congress, along with the other winner, Abduzakur Tan, of the politically powerful Tan family of Jolo.

Thus, the Loongs have staged a spectacular political comeback. However, the Anis and Tans have also managed to hold on to congressional representation of the province.

Zamboanga del Sur and Pagadian City politics constitutes another excellent example of partial circulation of political and economic elites in Mindanao. For around fifteen years, the Concerned Citizens Aggrupation (CCA) leaders of this big province suffered immeasurable setbacks in the hands of the dictatorship. Harassments, election anomalies, and other forms appeared to be the chief weapons used against them. When Cory Aquino rose to power, these CCA stalwarts became the new government leaders (Officers-in-Charge) who later were elected into office during the January, 1988 elections.

In terms of socio-economic class, these newly-elected leaders come from moneyed groups (e.g., agribusiness leaders and landlord families). This is basically the same class to which the ousted leaders of Marcos belong.

There have surely been differences in principles between the two groups, as exemplified by their conflicts on the use of political authoritarianism in the country. Nonetheless both belong to the same moneyed groups.

Substantially and generally, the same pattern of political change was witnessed in Agusan. The last local elections saw the defeat of the Plaza clan, headed by Congressman Democrito Plaza. Valentina, his wife and the lady ex-Governor of Agusan del Sur, was defeated by the incumbent Governor Paredes, who is not exactly from the elite, but is an acknowledged technocrat and development management expert. Figurado, a long-time City Mayor of Butuan, along with the wife of Congressman Edelmiro Amante of Agusan del Norte (a close ally of D. O. Plaza), were defeated by the incumbent Governor Rama, one of the sons-in-law of Cagayan de Oro politician and multi-millionaire Pedro "Oloy" Roa. These Agusan political changes are incredible, considering that the Plazas were politically and financially well-entrenched for over ten years.

In Lanao province, the Dimaporos were denied the provincial base of political power. Congressman Ali Dimaporo's daughter-in-law (who is a daughter of the late, popular Governor Quibranza) lost to candidate Abalos for Governor of Lanao del Norte. The same thing happened to Ali's younger brother in Lanao del Sur. The big winners were administration candidates Abalos and Atty. Saidamen Pangarungan. Congressman Abdullah Dimaporo and Ali Dimaporo still represent these provinces in Congress. However, the local administration is no longer under their control.

The recent winners in these provinces were, by stereotype social reckoning, not popularly considered as having reached the same level of political and economic power as the Dimaporos, Alontos, Dianalans, and Lucmans. This is not to say that they are without money. Nonetheless, their being administration candidates enabled them to secure enough popularity and perhaps logistical support, which proved to be crucial factors that determined the outcome of the contests.

These examples abound throughout Mindanao, with only slight variations: those who were associated with the past regime are now playing the role of critic, fiscalizer, or plain oppositionist. Those who now hold political power and wield tremendous business and economic influence were in the ranks of the opposition against the Marcos regime.

A more intensive and geographically-focused study of the political leadership of Tandag, Surigao del Sur, was conducted by Wulfranie A. Arrubio recently. Her findings show that, over the years, the same socio-economic class has dominated the politics of this capital town.¹ Her findings appear to coincide with this researcher's general political observations of the south.

Whether these findings validate Pareto's original concept of circulation of elites needs further additional substantiation and more intensive studies.

¹ Wulfranie A. Arrubio, "An Overview of the Nature and Pattern of Political Leadership in Tandag, Surigao del Sur", a paper read before the 8th National Conference on Local History (General Santos City: Mindanao State University, 18-20 September, 1987).

This is because the findings show some 'deviants': new leaders not connected with old rulers have been voted into power. Their individual and collective political influences, though, do not yet match those of the political and economic elites.

That these new leaders, obviously with different orientations, have surfaced at all is a welcome phenomenon. That they will develop into what some call the "modernizing elites" remains to be seen in the coming years.

III. New Recruits into the System: Exceptions to the Circulation of Elite Theory

The newly emerging leaders, springing from non-privileged classes, have managed to get elected as senators, governors and city and town mayors in Mindanao. Mostly professionals, a number of them dedicated to certain socio-political causes, these new leaders are generally with little financial resources and un beholden to vested economic interests and political dynasties. Thus, until the opposite happens, they represent opportunities to develop more dedicated leadership and render unselfish service in the name of development. That mostly are professionals who may also be cause-oriented would mean they have potentials in leading the area towards new directions. Moreover, their recruitment into the political system could serve as an inspiration to talented and ambitious but poor young people who have dreams of becoming political leaders. Their hold on the structures of governance presents an alternative to the *rigodon* of political and economic elites.

In terms of ideology, however, these new leaders differ much; hence, they are not united.

Senator Pimentel's *Partido Demokratiko ng Pilipinas* (PDP), a left-of-center party is far different from Reuben Canoy's *Mindanao Independence Movement* (MIM). The first tends to be socialistic and nationalistic; the other, although not a formal party in the conventional sense, seeks rather discretely to gain support among both Christians and Muslims so that the independence of Mindanao could be realized. Both groups in turn differ from Homobono Adaza's *Minandao Alliance*, the strength of which is largely based in Misamis and portions of Davao.

The *Concerned Citizens Aggrupation* of Climaco, Ariosa, and Arao² has fought for several reforms. One outstanding feature of its program is to foster harmonious Muslim-Christian relations, a party plank which had served the province in good stead in the face of the uneasy and tense relations between the MNLF and the national government over the past two years.

² Climaco was City Mayor of Zamboanga City until his assassination. Ariosa is the incumbent City Mayor of Pagadian City, capital city of Zamboanga del Sur.

Nonetheless, this platform differs from either Canoy's *MIM* or any of the other Mindanao political groups.

Outside of these political groups, some of the newly emerging leaders are either members and leaders of PDP-Laban, Lakas Ng Bansa, etc., or are with the cause-oriented groups such as ATOM, BANDILA, and others.

Despite the weaknesses these new leaders may be experiencing, such as lack of proper networking and influence over economic-business organizations, lack of political clout in the traditional sense (e.g., patron-client relations, etc.), they represent the fresh hope for reforms in various areas of regional life. These areas include organizing and managing an effective and efficient bureaucracy and identifying and pushing for programs of socio-economic reconstruction of Mindanao, Basilan, and the Sulu archipelago in a manner that will upgrade the area materially (using the wealth of human and natural resources found there), and improve the life of Mindanaoans qualitatively. In the coming years, these two sets of reforms will be needed most, as more development programs financed from both domestic and external sources may be poured in the area.

IV. The Role of the Cultural Communities

The tribal communities, such as the Subanon of Zamboanga peninsula, the Manobo of Agusan and nearby areas, the Higaonon of Misamis, Camiguin and Bukidnon, the T'boli and Tiruray of Cotabato, the Mansaka, Bagobo and Bilaan of Davao, have been adversely affected by recent political developments. Occupying mostly the highlands of Mindanao, these tribal communities have been, in recent years, subjected to a lot of pressures.

Heavy migration of Christians from the Visayas and Luzon provinces have caused the natives to sell their lands to the new settlers, not knowing the full implications. For instance, the concept of ownership under the Torrens title system has not been internalized by them, while the settlers know it by heart. Forest resources, previously the natives' exclusive preserve, have been easily appropriated and exploited by more technologically- and financially-equipped business organizations owned and run by the elite among the majority population. Culturally, they have been slowly but steadily commercialized and debased — as a consequence of unplanned social interaction and development. The majority have brought with them materialistic, if not hedonistic, values. In this regard, the most pernicious are influences principally coming from leaders who possess what is called "the fast buck mentality".

In short, the cultural minorities of Mindanao, following changes in communication, transportation, and social mobility could no longer enjoy the luxury provided by the halcyon days of communal life. Worse, their rights,

privileges and wealth (communal or individual) have been trampled upon in a world that has shrunk considerably.³

The cultural communities have organized themselves, as a form of response to changes that originate outside their own communities.

For example, the Mindanao Highlanders Association, the TRICAP and Philippine Association of Cultural Communities (PACCI) — all being multi-ethnic bodies — have been actively promoting the interests of the cultural communities. In the spheres of government and politics, they have been no less active.

Some of them have risen to high positions in the government since the dawn of the Aquino era. Such agencies as the Ministry of Agriculture, the now defunct Office for Muslim Affairs and Cultural Communities (OMACC), and others have been venues of such participation.

Recent developments concerning the defunct OMACC and the newly-structured OSCC (Office for Southern Culture Communities) have unfortunately dampened the spirits of these leaders. Charges of favoritism and violation of Civil Service rules have been hurled by those who were yanked out of the payroll, following the reorganization last year. Until now, the government has not acted decisively on these issues.⁴ The probable danger of such inaction is that some disgruntled leaders may decide to revolt and exacerbate Mindanao conflicts. Such an eventuality must be avoided since the Mindanao highlands constitute the strategic place where political initiatives and the viability of any regime in the south will be truly tested. Besides, their ancestral lands hold the true comparative advantage of the Philippines: forest, mineral, and other precious resources, which are less abundant in central and north Philippines.

The minorities have already been actively involved in the underground movement in recent years. Leaders who were tapped to develop the peace and reconciliation program of the Government since two years back have estimated that approximately thirty to forty percent of those who went to the hills and fought the government in Mindanao are minorities. Lack of socio-economic opportunities relative to the majority and having seen the

³ Fr. Sean McDonagh, SSC, listed the following problems faced by cultural communities of Mindanao: land resources; timber and forest resources; terror; conflicts over land titles; differing cultural ideas about land ownership, tenure and use; mines; and others in his paper. "The Future of Tribal Filipinos", 8th National Conference on Local History (General Santos City: MSU, September, 1987).

⁴ In a letter to the Editors of several dailies in Manila, cultural community leaders of Mindanao's various regions, represented by Datu Mahanong Perez, Atty. Joseph Banghulot, Atty. Emmanuel de Guzman, and others, dated October 12, 1987, these leaders complained against the use of "skeletal forces" in the OMACC's running of cultural community affairs, instead of renewing the expired appointment or respecting incumbent Regional Directors and other officials. The legal basis was Executive Order No. 177-A, which extended for another 120 days from May 8, 1987, the last day for reorganization of the new office provided for in Executive Order No. 177 and Executive Order No. 122-C which created the Office for Southern Cultural Communities.

brutalities of war right on their homelands, these peace-loving souls have fled and joined socio-political and even religious movements in the hope of protecting their lands and homes. In the process, they lay their own families open to retaliatory strikes by other forces. And thus, the animosities right away begin. These developments and changes ought to be managed on a top priority basis, for the sake of peace.

Beyond the above considerations, the hilltribes exhibit similar political malaise as the two other communities. An example of this is the body charged with developing the cultural communities, the (OSCC). The organization experiences a miniature circulation of elites, which change has taken place at the expense of tried and tested Mindanao leaders. That the positions being contested are largely appointive, not elective, does not diminish the personal anguish and dangers to peace. Additionally, a question may be posed, thus: "Why must the cultural communities, just newly initiated into the world of Philippine politics with all its defects and aberrations, have to follow the footsteps of their Christian and Muslim brothers in the unending and barren cycle of circulating elites and threats of national dismemberment?" The cultural integrity and unity of the hilltribes should not be made victims in the name of modernity and forced national conformity.

V. Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)-National Government Conflict: Differing Concepts of Regional Autonomy

Just as the circulation of political elites, and the rise of new leaders, hitherto never linked with business empires or political dynasties, has not so far produced social and economic upliftment of Mindanao, the revival of the National Liberation Front talks/negotiations for the establishment of regional autonomy has not yet resulted in peace. The reason for this failure: differing concepts of regional autonomy and a rather bull-headed attitude on both sides of avoiding compromises.

The National Government fielded four peace negotiators in succession over the past two years: Senator Agapito Aquino, Senator Aquilino Pimentel, Ambassador Emmanuel Pelaez, and finally Secretary of Health Alfredo Bengzon, as negotiation panel heads. Essentially, the National Government through the negotiation panel has sought to implement the Tripoli Agreement provisions. In this regard, it has followed the footsteps of the past regime, as exemplified by its avowed desire to go through "constitutional processes" in determining which provinces and cities ought to be included in the autonomous area, which was interpreted as a plebiscite or referendum to determine the majority opinion. It is noteworthy that, in 1977, when the Agreement was first implemented by then President Ferdinand E. Marcos, the provinces of Davao del Sur and Palawan were excluded presumably because of the referendum results. These places rejected the idea of establishing an area of autonomy. By following the 'traditional' approach to the problem, the Aquino Government, in effect, favors the minimalist approach (in terms

of geographic extent of area of autonomy in the south and power-and-authority sharing between it and the MNLF).

In addition, it can also be interpreted that with the Regional Consultative Council (RCC) serving as the transitory decision-making structure for the autonomous region, the permanent machinery for decision-making in the regional will be evolved. It will therefore be a new, transitory structure different from the operating regional autonomous governments in region 9 and 12.

On the other hand, the Moro National Liberation Front has differed, over the past two years, from the National Government's concept of Autonomous Region on at least three counts, namely: a) extent of territory (MNLF proposed the whole of Mindanao, Sulu, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, and Palawan); b) the extent of powers, functions, and prerogatives to be given the Regional Autonomous Government; and c) the manner by which the autonomous region will be established. The Government wants to determine the scope through a plebiscite, while the MNLF has hinted or even quite explicitly wanted that it be declared by Congress and by the Executive as such. Further, the MNLF wants the 60,000 MNLF troops to act as the regional security force, while the Government wants the power to decide which elements of the Armed Forces of the Philippines will be assigned within the Region. Furthermore, in foreign affairs, MNLF wants the Autonomous Region to have concurrent powers, while the National Government wants exclusive authority in that aspect of national life. The same pattern of difference between the Government and the MNLF in power- and authority-sharing can be seen in many other areas of regional life.⁵

The MNLF actually swings in a pendulum-like movement between secessionism and acceptance of regional autonomy. During hostile periods, such as the time that immediately followed after the declaration of martial law in September, 1972, MNLF espouses outright secessionism from the Philippine Republic. And during times of truce, as when Cory Aquino rose to power in February, 1986, it has a tendency to accept genuine autonomy as the solution to the so-called Moro problem.

In principle, there is no big disagreement between the two parties on the need for regional autonomy, except that they could not agree on certain points. There is also much disagreement or a wide gap of views on which factor should command greater weight: historical antecedents, such as when Muslims were predominant in the south (e.g., pre-World War II) or the present realities, such as the fact that Christians have more population and that they occupy wider territory.⁶

⁵ See the proposal of the Moro National Liberation Front to the Philippine Government Negotiations Panel, headed by Ambassador Emmanuel N. Pelaez, in 1987. See *Peace Betrayed* (MNLF-RP Negotiations, January 1-July 25, 1987), p. 12-15.

⁶ B. R. Rodil, "Bangsa Filipino in Cotabato: A Game of Numbers? Or a Matter of Fundamental Right?", 8th National Conference on Local History (Gen. Santos; MSU, 1987).

The region was on the verge of another shooting war last March, 1988. War could have started had the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) approved full membership for the MNLF. Leaders like General Fidel Ramos and Secretary Raul Manglapus expressed similar ideas on the issue. These ideas had one common denominator: that if OIC accepted the MNLF as full member, it was tantamount to an open armed conflict between MNLF and the National Government.

Additionally, the Regional Consultative Council (RCC) is being organized, presumably to start the process of establishing regional autonomy.

The aforementioned two developments, one on the MNLF side and the other, on the part of the Government, illustrate very eloquently two pathways toward "federalism". MNLF's application for membership in the Organization of Islamic Countries may be a tactical device to secure the maximum extent of territory, authority, and powers, as a form of federal set-up for Mindanao and Sulu archipelago.

In order to strengthen the foundation of peace and economic progress, it is therefore very crucial that lasting bridges of understanding be built among Christians, Muslims, and *Lumadnons*. Not very far from that foundation is a determined effort to reach compromises on three or more areas of difference between the Government and the MNLF.

Although the Muslim problem is a different issue altogether vis-a-vis the political changes among the Christian population, the socio-economic impact of both factors are similar — that is, these have served as stumbling blocks to peace, socio-economic recovery and cultural upliftment of Mindanao.

President Aquino can still reverse the situation, given that peace is established and that enough resources are poured into the region. Her recent visit to Tawi-Tawi and Zamboanga where she offered ₱1B for development fund, is a step toward that direction. The involvement of new leaders, emerging or yet to emerge, and the three major communities constitute another step. To effectuate the second step, massive organizational and coordinative programs for change and productivity have to be pursued.

VI. Changes in the NDF-National Government Confrontation

The relations between the National Government and the National Democratic Front, led by the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA), just like relations between the government and the MNLF, started on a hopeful note in 1986 but ended up in hostilities in 1987 and 1988.

During the last few years of Marcos' rule, hostilities between the central government and the NDF were at their height. The success of the CPP-

NPA's Davao experiment in urban guerrilla warfare threatened the Government in the south. If Davao City is considered the urban center, the highlands and agricultural areas of Bukidnon-Agusan-Cotabato and Davao del Norte borders and mid-portion of Zamboanga Peninsula are considered the rural areas of Mindanao. Following Maoist doctrine, Davao can be surrounded and cut off from the masses who live in rural areas and producers of staple crops and commodities.

In time, opposing forces slowed down CPP-NPA successes. The military, in tandem with rightist groups such as *Tadtad* and *Nakasaka* slowly cut off portions of territories and communities which were under CPP-NPA control. In the second and third year of the Aquino administration, especially after the electoral exercises were completed, the military establishment launched a rather strong offensive following the capture of Col. Gregorio Honasan, whose attempt at a coup d'etat was largely based on an accusation that the Government was ineffective vis-a-vis the insurgencies and that liberal democracy cannot survive under the new regime. To prove that the accusations were unfounded, the military had to hit at the revolutionaries very hard.

Today, the battlegrounds between the NDF of Mindanao and the Government have been more or less concentrated around the Mt. Malindang (Zamboanga peninsula) area, borders of Bukidnon and Misamis Oriental, highlands of Agusan and Surigao as well as the mountainous portions of Davao, Lanao and Cotabato provinces.

The restricted or more sharply-defined area of present armed hostilities are no less disturbing and costly. But it affords more breathing space for civilian populations of the unaffected places to engage in agricultural, fishing, manufacturing, commercial and other pursuits. If continued a little longer, it should increase productivity among the Christians in due time.

In effect, present changes shifted the theatre of armed conflict to the homeland of the cultural communities with all the negative ramifications.

VII. Stunted Socio-Economic Growth

The contemporary socio-economic picture of the south may be considered a product of accumulated negative impact of political changes in the past four years, including the first two years of the Aquino regime. The exceptions to this generalization are the rise of new, dedicated leaders who come from the professional groups and the recent attempt of President Aquino to give more financial support to Region 9.⁷ Thus for the National Government to succeed in bringing progress to the South, it has to be pre-

⁷ Referring to the P1B financial resources for the development of Region IX. In addition, there have been projects being implemented to develop Mindanao. See Office of Muslim Affairs, *Muslim Development: Two Years Under the Aquino Administration*, N. D.

licated on the Aquino leadership working in tandem with new leaders, aside from educational or moral and bureaucratic reforms.

Right now, it is difficult to arrest the downward trend, socially and economically speaking.

Firstly, the peace and order situation is not encouraging to investors and entrepreneur. The crime rates, for example, of regions X and XI were the worst in the country in February, 1988, averaging monthly crime rate of 65.50 and 5.38 respectively. Regions XII and IX, the two other regions of Mindanao, averaged 21.88 AMCR and 14.24 AMCR, respectively, putting them on the seventh and ninth spots.⁸ Last year, from January to June, 1987 Regions XI and X also occupied first and second places in terms of AMCR, having respectively posted the records of 38.48 and 28.54.⁹ The slightly increasing crime rates in the four regions of Mindanao, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi followed the national trend. But the records of Regions X and XI have been the worst cases all over the country.

Secondly, the magnitude of poverty per one thousand families in the four regions in 1985 — Region IX, 311.7; Region X, 375.8; Region XI, 428.8; and Region XII, 280.0 — occupy roughly the middle spots (Region XII, sixth; Region X, ninth; Region IX, eleventh and Region XII, twelfth), if all 13 regions are ranked in terms of number of poor families. This is not exactly bad. But viewed in relation to total poverty threshold, which is the amount in pesos of monthly income needed to fully satisfy basic family living requirements, the four regions occupy *fourth* (Region XI), *fifth* (Region X), *eighth* (Region XII), and *tenth* (Region IX), respectively.¹⁰ This means a lot of things, such as high prices of prime commodities, due to low income of the population, or lack of production and supply, or both.

Illustrating further the difficult socio-economic picture, Regions X and XI, for instance, require ₱2,388 and ₱2,262, respectively, per month per family of six members to live decent lives or fulfill basic living requirements. In the provinces of Mindanao, families with both husband and wife being public school teachers or that both are employes of public or private agencies/firms will have difficult time reaching that level of gross monthly income. And, really, how many of the Mindanaoans are employees or have incomes comparable to them?

The price indices for all four regions (collapsing price indices of food, beverages and tobacco, clothing, housing and repairs, fuel, light and water, services, and miscellaneous category), in fact, progressively increased from the last years of Marcos regime (the years 1983, 1984, and 1985) to 1986.¹¹

⁸ Quoted from An Occasional Paper dated February 17, 1988, a study made by the staff of one national office.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ National Economic and Development Authority, *Philippine Statistical Yearbook*, 1987, pp. 129-132. See also *Philippine Statistical Yearbook*, 1986.

These socio-economic problems are what the earlier-mentioned structural reforms and productivity must squarely face.

VIII. Recapitulation and Some Recommendations

The patterns of political changes as we see it do not apply to all cultural and social groups all at the same time. Each community has its own patterns of political change, since in Mindanao each community largely functions on its own.

In terms of changes of political leadership, the three communities exhibit similar patterns: some circulation of elite has taken place.

The socio-economic impact of political changes has, so far, been characterized by stagnating, if not outright, worsening, regional economic and social life. High prices of prime commodities, constructing supplies, high incidence of poverty and crime rates in practically all four regions of Mindanao are the components of the worsening social life.

In view of these developments, there is, in general, a need to further broaden the base of social participation in political and economic life of Mindanao. The election of new leaders other than those who belong to the established political and economic elite is, in this regard, a good sign.

The present trend whereby the hilltribes' home areas have largely become the theatre of war in Mindanao is unfortunate. For this will only result in further deterioration of Mindanao's cultural communities. These cultural communities constitute the balancing factor in the region. They are the third member of a triadic relationship among Christians, Musiims and *Lumadnons*.

Moreover, in a materialist analysis, the hilltribes' homeland hold the most important resources for the entire country: mines, rivers for hydro-electric power, forest resources of all types; and that their lands are the last space for agricultural expansion, along with the seabeds, when the Philippine population grows tremendously at the next turn of the century.

As regards the Moro problem, there is a necessity to negotiate once more. The crucial points where the two parties differ — extent of territorial coverage of autonomy, power and authority sharing, and whether to start an autonomous region you need to undertake a plebiscite or you simply pass a comprehensive legislative act, — have to be studied more carefully with the end in view of arriving at acceptable solutions.

And for long-term purposes, it should be a policy of the national government to crisscross Mindanao with all types of roads, communication and maritime infrastructures in order to integrate Mindanao and Sulu further into the national body politic. But the system of governance will need a decentralization (e.g., federal set-up) policy in word and in practice.