

An Interfaith Diplomacy And Multi-Track Conflict Prevention Strategy In Bangsamoro (2025–2026): Governing Peace From Below

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ABSTRACT

In contemporary armed conflicts, internal state violence is becoming more common. It is marked by dispersed participants, mobilization driven by identification, and localized instability. Within the New Wars framework, these dynamics manifest as horizontal conflicts—intermittent communal violence integrated into daily social interactions and largely disregarded by state-centric security paradigms. This study contextualizes the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) within international discourse on New Wars and horizontal conflict by analyzing peace management during a pivotal post-war electoral transition (2025–2026). This article examines interfaith diplomacy as a grassroots peace governance mechanism, serving as a multi-track (Track I,II, and VII) conflict prevention strategy, with a focus on the Tri-People Peace and Development Agenda. This theory posits that interfaith actors serve as significant non-state diplomatic agents who influence community norms, alleviate horizontal tensions, and enhance electoral stability, alongside their informal function as peacebuilders. The study improves our understanding of peace governance by connecting religious participation to the reform of sub-national government, surpassing formal institutions.

Keywords : *Interfaith Diplomacy, New Wars, Multi-Track Diplomacy, Bangsamoro, Conflict Prevention*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Located in Southeast Asia, The Philippines comprises over 7,000 large and small islands and a coastline of 36,289 square kilometers. The Philippines is divided into two regions: the northern and southern regions. The northern region comprises the Luzon archipelago. The southern region comprises the Sulu and Mindanao archipelagos, both inhabited by Muslim populations known as the Bangsamoro. Civilization in this southern region was already advanced before the arrival of Spanish and American colonial rule. This region was formerly a sultanate, known as the Sultanate of Sulu and the Sultanate of Maguindanao, whose inhabitants were Muslim. These sultanates were founded in the 16th century, and the arrival of Islam in the southern region occurred around the 13th century. This teaching was brought by Muslim scholars and traders from Arabia, at a time when Islam was very present in the southern region (Chaidar et al., 2019).

In the colonial era, as Spain and the United States came to Philippines and created divisions, especially in the south also they spread Catholicism. The Moro territories were treated as frontier zones to be subdued through administrative and military integration, without any recognition of the local Islamic political system that had existed long before the formation of the modern Philippine state. This posed a threat to the national identity of the Southern Philippines, leading to prolonged conflict. The colonialists also carried out transmigration, moving Catholics from the north to inhabit the south. This resulted in Muslims becoming a minority and marginalized in their own region. Islam in Mindanao became a minority religion, dominated by the Catholic population due to injustice in

land ownership and the consequences of mass transmigration, which angered the marginalized Mindanao Muslims and gave rise to a separatist movement like MNLF (Moro National Liberation Front) and MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front) (Rüland et al., 2019).

The protracted conflict in the Southern Philippines is not simply a territorial dispute or a struggle for economic resources, but stems from a profound identity crisis, posing a real threat to the integration of the Philippine national identity. This threat stems from Manila's failure to craft an inclusive national narrative, which effectively excludes the Moro Muslim community. Historically, Moro identity has been shaped through centuries of resistance to external powers, both Spanish and American. When the Philippines gained independence in 1946, this separate Moro identity, instead of being accommodated, was further marginalized by the Catholic-dominated central government. This process created a divide between the Filipino identity envisioned by Manila, which tended to be homogenous, Christian, and Tagalog-speaking, and the distinct Bangsamoro identity, rooted in Islam, customary law, and the political history of an independent Sultanate (Anderson, 2020).

This lack of governance is most noticeable in autonomous areas that have just come out of a war and are now making the switch to democracy. In these areas, official institutions work alongside complex webs of religious and community (BONOMI et al., 2021). One of the example of this is The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). The Bangsamoro Organic Law created BARMM after decades of fighting between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. It is a bold experiment in post-conflict autonomy, institutional reform, and peace consolidation. As the region gets ready for its first parliamentary elections, which will happen March,31 2026, the stakes of governance expand beyond procedural democracy to include the bigger problem of stopping horizontal conflict from starting up again in a place where identity politics are still strong. Despite the significance of formal governance structures and security frameworks, they are insufficient to address the issues that are already prevalent in many communities In response, interfaith and civic actors working in Moro, Indigenous, and Christian communities have taken on more and more roles in preventing conflict, mediating moral issues, and bringing people together. These changes make Bangsamoro a good place to study how peace is governed from the ground up, through interfaith diplomacy that operates within multi-track frameworks that support and shape formal governing procedures throughout times of political change.

In this context, the Tri-People Peace and Development Agenda changes how sub-national Bangsamoro residents communicate about conflict prevention and peacekeeping. The plan was made at the October 2025 Tri-People Conference for Social Cohesion. Before the region's first parliamentary elections, it brings together religious and community leaders from the Moro (Muslim), Indigenous Peoples, and Christian groups to work together to lower the risks of voting, protect human rights, and make society stronger. The Tri-People Agenda is more than just a loose or symbolic group of people from different faiths working together. It's a structured way for non-state actors to work together to avoid conflicts, settle moral problems, and coordinate between communities. The agenda sets common rules for peaceful political competition and community duty, which is a form of peace governance from below. It steps in where official security institutions can't see, which is in social settings where horizontal conflicts are most likely to happen. As (Driessen, 2025) says, this shows how religious participation can be a multi-track diplomatic tool that links Track II and Track III processes to support formal government institutions during times of political change.

Even while there is more academic interest in post-conflict governance, elections, and autonomous arrangements, the existing literature still doesn't do a good job of covering interfaith players and non-state diplomacy. Research on post-conflict autonomy and peace agreements predominantly emphasizes institutional architecture, constitutional engineering, and elite-level power-sharing, frequently regarding social cohesiveness as a secondary result rather than an independent governing process. On the other hand, studies on interfaith communication and creating peace between religions usually look at things from a moral or cultural point of view, focusing on things like reconciliation, tolerance, or moral ideals while not really looking at issues of governance and political change. In the meanwhile, state-centric and Track I views still dominate the fields of

diplomacy and conflict prevention, and religious players are not often seen as strategic agents in multi-track frameworks. Consequently, a substantial theoretical deficiency persists regarding the role of interfaith actors transcending identification boundaries as non-state diplomatic agents in the reform of peace governance at the sub-national level, especially in autonomous territories undergoing precarious election transitions. This divide is particularly evident in the examination of horizontal conflict avoidance, where the informal, relational, and moral aspects of governance are frequently neglected by formal institutional assessments (Kii, 2026).

While the role of faith-based organizations is recognized in peacebuilding studies, the explicit linkages between interfaith dialogue, non-state diplomacy, and sub-national governance reform remain under-explored (Driessen, 2025; Kii, 2026). In response to this gap, this essay looks at how interfaith diplomacy works as a way to keep the peace from below during times of political change. This paper examines the Tri-People Peace and Development Agenda in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, posing the question: How does interfaith diplomacy operate as a form of grassroots peace governance within multi-track conflict prevention frameworks to manage horizontal conflict during political transition in Bangsamoro? The article provides a comprehensive case study of interfaith coordination among Moro, Indigenous, and Christian leaders in a post-conflict autonomous territory experiencing electoral transition. Theoretically, it enhances the literature by reconceptualizing interfaith engagement as a non-state diplomatic activity integrated within multi-track conflict prevention and sub-national governance. From a policy standpoint, the findings enhance discussions on peacebuilding and autonomy by illustrating how informal yet organized interfaith structures can augment official institutions in addressing election risks and maintaining peace in fragmented societies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study aims to examine how interfaith diplomacy functions as a mechanism of peace governance in post-conflict autonomous regions undergoing political transition. This article uses the ideas from New Wars, horizontal conflict, and multi-track diplomacy to show that the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao is an important example for researchers to learn more about how non-state actors, especially religious leaders who work across identity lines, can help prevent conflict outside of formal state institutions. By synthesising various theoretical frameworks, the research enhances discussions on peace governance and provides empirically substantiated insights into the function of interfaith actors in mitigating electoral risks and horizontal conflicts within fragmented societies.

A. New Wars and the Transformation of Intra-State Conflict

Since the Cold War ended, academic discussions about armed conflict have focused more and more on the change from wars between countries to long-lasting warfare within countries that involve non-state actors, identity-based mobilization, and broken authority systems. The international system is undergoing a profound transformation. This transformation has been shaped by the aftermath of the Cold War. The spread of globalization and the emergence of new patterns of cooperation and conflict between state and non-state actors have triggered the development of a new generation of warfare. This new method of warfare is characterized by violence between various combinations of state and non-state networks fighting in the name of identity politics as opposed to ideology. This is what has been called the new war of the 21st century (Poetri, 2021).

The New Wars framework has put forth the most well-known ideas about this change. It says that modern wars have less clear lines between soldiers and civilians, less centralized state control, and more politicized ethnic and religious identities (Kaldor, 2013). Empirical evidence corroborates this transition, indicating that civil wars have increased in frequency, duration, and lethality for civilian populations compared to conventional interstate warfare. Globalization plays a crucial role in this shift in the meaning of war. Researchers (Pettersson et al., 2021) observe that the boundaries between

domestic and international conflict are blurring, but the roots of conflict remain within states. The emergence of armed non-state actors is central to intra-state conflict, where these groups challenge state authority, control territory, and become the primary driver of conflict escalation. Other actors can also emerge from outside the state, such as groups affiliated with armed non-state groups within a country. This is what makes intra-state conflict no longer a temporary conflict but a long-term structural phenomenon. It involves not only violence and weapons but also is maintained by weak state institutions, political inequality, and ideological fragmentation.

Modern armed conflicts have increasingly shifted from the rationale of international warfare to enduring intra-state violence marked by fragmented participants, identity-driven mobilization, and indistinct distinctions between civilians and fighters. Within the framed of New Wars paradigm, the conflicts in Bangsamoro occur in contexts of fragile or evolving governance, characterized by challenged power, legitimacy, and social authority at various levels (Newman, 2004). The Moro conflict in Mindanao has diverse dimensions, encompassing both external and internal aspects, fueled by a number of factors such as social and political differences, and historical background.

The escalation of the rejection of minority status and structural injustice gave rise to resistance movement in Moro. The presence of Western colonial powers not only changed the political power structure but also accentuated the process of Islamization that had previously developed naturally. Since the Christianization process that occurred around 1940, following Philippine Independence from the United States, Muslim communities in the region have continued to experience marginalization and structural inequalities in their lives. They felt they were not being treated fairly and experienced systemic discrimination from the central government. This situation gave rise to various resistance movements since 1970s. From an organized muslim movement Muslim Independent Movement (MIM); then the Moro Liberation Front (MLF) emerged in 1971; the MLF movement changed its name to the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). The resistance movement also including the emergence of militant groups like Abu Sayyaf, which emerged as a form of protest against structural injustice. This explains the interconnected factors underlying the Moro conflict. This complexity can be seen as the transformation of the conflict, which was initially intrastate, to extend beyond national borders (Abd Ghofur, 2016).

The emergence of a new paradigm of intra-state conflict is understood as a long-lasting, recurring, and fragmented conflict process. This is not caused by civil war between ethnic groups, but by the involvement of various non-state actors, as well as by clashing political, social, economic, and identity dynamics. Therefore, critics have said that the New Wars literature makes too much of new ideas and ignores historical continuities, but it is nevertheless important for analysis since it shows how violence is a part of weak or changing government situations. In these situations, conflict is not just a breach of order; it is also a sign of contested authority, legitimacy, and social control.

B. Horizontal Conflict, Identity Politics, and Electoral Transitions

The complexity of the conflict in Moro State can be explained by analyzing its various sources. According to (Suharto & Lestari, 2020) conflict is a condition in which arguments, fights, or disagreements arise over opinions or desires, or differing or conflicting views. Every conflict involves various parties in power whose desires or opinions clash, whether economic, political, or cultural. Conflict can take the form of military repression, domination, collective violence, or racism, and can be resolved through negotiation or armed conflict. Furthermore, conflict is divided into two types: vertical and horizontal.

Vertical conflict arises between the government and the community. The results of vertical conflict include resistance, disagreement, and public distrust of government institutions. The main actors in vertical conflict involve both the community and the government, leading to research that suggests conflict arises as a result of government policymaking processes that lack participation, which then leads to differences of opinion, disputes, violence, and even separatism. Research (Karim, 2023) explains that state involvement can address conflict through a country's foreign policy approach. In conclusion, the author states that Indonesia's vertical role in conflict resolution still

requires further revision. This is because Indonesia's role is limited to regional security, leaving Indonesia's role in global conflicts largely unaffected.

Geopolitical competition today is not only a vertical conflict but also a horizontal one. Unlike vertical conflict, horizontal conflict arises because the complexity of international relations has recently transcended the state versus citizen divide. This shift is driven by the emergence of power structures involving non-governmental groups with similar power to competing states. According to (Selway, 2017) the imbalance in research on horizontal conflict indicates unresolved issues involving numerous powerful non-state actors.

In the Bangsamoro case, a deep-rooted history of colonialism has resulted in discriminatory actions experienced by Moro Muslims. Therefore, the dynamics of the conflict in the Bangsamoro are more horizontal than vertical. In addition to the conflict between the state and armed Moro groups, violence also occurs between local communities, fueled by territorial disputes, identity crises, and a lack of political protection. Research of (Lara & Franco, 2022) confirms that the violence in the southern Philippines is based on weak legal institutions governing the rights of indigenous peoples Lumads (IPs). The weak implementation of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) is considered unfair, thus continuing the armed conflict. The granting of ancestral rights stipulated in the IPRA is not a universal instrument capable of ending violent conflict, especially conflicts related to communal identity.

In this context, an increasing amount of research emphasizes the prevalence of horizontal conflicts—localized and socially embedded confrontations among communities, clans, or identity groups that occur below the threshold of formal warfare (Gudrun Østby, 2007). These fights happen from time to time but last a long time. They tend to get worse during political changes and election times, when rivalries between elites meet unresolved racial and religious differences. But the main ways to build peace and stop wars are still mostly state-centered, focused on things like how institutions are set up, how security is handled, and how things are done at the elite level. Small-scale conflicts that come from regular social interactions, moral authority, and community trust are hard for these ways to find or deal with. This shows that there is a big hole in the government when it comes to keeping the peace in places that have just finished fighting.

According to (Anderson, 2020), the Moro conflict in the Southern Philippines explains how Philippine national identity is vulnerable to the shadow of multi-ethnicity and colonialism. The case of the Moro conflict shows the vulnerability of national identity to ethnic polarization, a collective imagination replaced by a highly exclusive conflict narrative. Philippine national identity is formed using symbols such as Tagalog as the national language and the colonial historical narrative as a Muslim majority, which becomes an obstacle to the unification of the Moro Muslim group who still maintains a strong cultural and religious identity. Historical marginalization, such as land takeovers by Christian migrants from the north, has created a sense of injustice that strengthens the imagination of the Moro as a separate community.

The timeline of the separatist struggle then shows fragmentation that reflects ideological divergence in addressing this identity crisis. The Moro conflict has transformed cultural and historical claims into political demands expressed through armed actors, from the MNLF to the MILF. Despite the multi-ethnic and multi-identity composition, the majority of Filipinos see themselves as Moro rather than Filipino, and this has fueled the idea of establishing a Bangsamoro (Moro Nation). Although several peace agreements have been reached between the Philippine government and rebel groups, their implementation has often been hampered by Philippine politics and political opposition within Congress. This has led to debates regarding the process of achieving democracy through the first Bangsamoro elections, scheduled for late March 2026 (Bangsamoro Information Office, 2025).

Research from (Newman, 2004), new wars are not only external factors to a country like World War I and World War II, but also arise from within the country itself. He also stated that New Wars understanding is especially pertinent for post-conflict areas experiencing political transitions, when

official institutions exist alongside informal power structures based on community, religion, and identity. In the study of (Brancati & Snyder, 2011) election times are especially dangerous times for horizontal conflict to get worse. Research on post-conflict elections by indicates that political competition often triggers identity narratives, allowing elites to leverage communal affiliations and grievances for electoral advantage. In these situations, violence usually doesn't happen as planned rebellions. Instead, it happens as fights, threats, and dissatisfaction in specific areas. These processes are particularly evident in cultures with histories of armed conflict and persistent identity divisions, where confidence in formal institutions is tenuous.

Other studies related to the election process show that religious leaders often operate as informal government officials when political competition is high. Instead of just making identity polarization worse, religious elites might use their moral authority to ease tensions during elections, keep political competition within moral limits, and stop violence in communities, especially when identity politics gets stronger during elections. Research from Indonesia indicates that religious leaders actively influence voter behavior, mediate conflicts, and foster societal harmony, hence affecting electoral dynamics outside formal institutional frameworks. These findings contest state-centric and securitized frameworks about election-related violence by demonstrating how non-state religious entities facilitate conflict avoidance through moral persuasion, social integration, and relational authority. Consequently, the literature emphasizes the necessity of seeing religious leadership not merely as a cultural or moral influence, but as a kind of sub-national governance that influences political order and stability during election changes (Ahnaf & Lussier, 2019).

Even while this is true, a lot of the writing on preventing conflict still focuses on formal methods like electoral administration bodies, security sector reform, and legal frameworks. These tools are necessary, but they often don't work well for dealing with the relational and moral aspects of conflict that happen at the community level, where the state isn't always present and legitimacy is questioned.

C. Multi-Track Diplomacy and Non-State Conflict Prevention

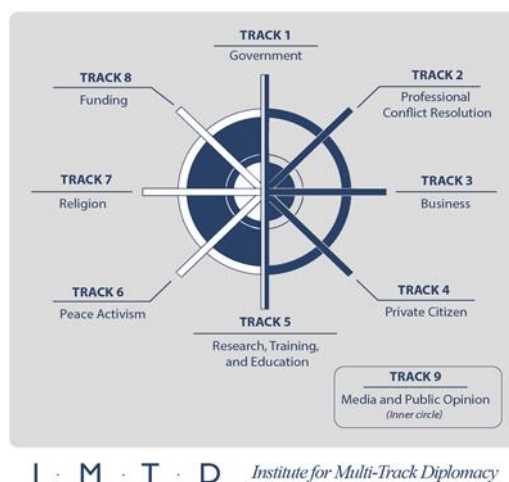
The dynamics of 21st-century international relations have undergone a new shift, particularly in the world of diplomacy. New diplomatic strategies are essential to keep pace with current developments, particularly in addressing dynamic international conflicts. The concept of multi-track diplomacy, proposed by (Diamond & McDonald, 1996) is divided into nine diplomatic tracks, each with its own distinct roles and characteristics. Multi-track diplomacy refers to a conceptual framework that understands peacemaking and conflict prevention as the result of the interaction of various actors, not only states and official diplomats, but also non-state actors operating at the informal elite and grassroots levels.

In the Multi-Track Diplomacy study, it is emphasized that actors in international relations are not only presidents, countries, ambassadors, foreign ministers, and other representatives of countries as Track I. The existence of non-state actors in this case Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and community leaders (Track II) also have an important role in realizing world peace (Mujiono & Alexandra, 2019). In Track II, diplomacy engaging some non-state actors such as informal diplomacy involving elites, experts, and civil society leaders and Track III including grassroots and community-based initiatives. Subsequent research has shown that non-state actors can be very important in early warning, mediation, and developing trust, especially when formal institutions don't have enough reach or credibility (Samingan, 2024).

Track three diplomacy relates to businesses that seek peace through international trade and economic cooperation. Fourth, track four diplomacy involves individuals in peace and development activities, for example through youth exchange programs, volunteer organizations, or special interest groups. Fifth, track five diplomacy creates peace through learning, encompassing research, training, and education. Track six diplomacy, the sixth pathway, is carried out by activists who seek peace through advocacy on issues such as ceasefires, human rights, socio-economic justice, and others. Seventh, track seven diplomacy is religion-oriented, seeking peace through spiritual and religious

communities and morality-based movements. Next, track eight diplomacy involves funding groups, such as foundations and philanthropic individuals, who provide financial support. Finally, track nine diplomacy, a significant pathway today, involves communication and mass media, which can shape public opinion. The nine tracks in multi-track diplomacy create continuity between diverse actors, allowing them to cooperate with one another in facilitating efforts to resolve international issues, both global and domestic.

Figure 1 Multi Track Diplomacy



Source: (Diamond & McDonald, 1996; Intitute for Multi-Track Diplomacy, 2002)

According to (Nujuliyani et al., 2023) via a qualitative juridical examination of the post-reform conflict between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), illustrate that modern non-international armed conflicts are intricately linked to fragmented authority structures, resulting in significant humanitarian repercussions for civilian populations. Their research highlights that solely formal legal and military measures are inadequate to mitigate violence, needing conflict resolution frameworks that transcend official state procedures. The authors utilise a multi-track diplomacy framework, particularly Track II diplomacy with non-state and international mediators, to demonstrate how informal and semi-formal entities, such as international organisations and external facilitators, fulfil essential mediation roles when direct negotiations among armed parties are politically restricted. This literature enhances broader discussions on peace governance by demonstrating that conflict management increasingly depends on non-state diplomatic practices that function alongside formal institutions. This supports the assertion that sustainable peace in post-conflict settings requires multi-actor governance frameworks rather than solely hierarchical state control.

In the journal of (Rethanovagi & Rusdiyantana, 2018) explains the resolution of the problem of illegal Indonesian Migrant Workers (TKI) in Malaysia by analyzing the Multi-Track Diplomacy approach. The problem of illegal TKI cannot only be handled through diplomacy between countries (Track I) but requires the involvement of non-state actors, such as international organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The main problem in the journal explains that mass deportation measures are considered very repressive and therefore do not address the root of the problem. The Indonesian government combines Track I through bilateral cooperation with Track II with the assistance of IOM. Thus, for some cross-border issues can be resolved with state assistance and involving non-state actors.

The rapid development of technology and the global political order have transformed international relations, which were previously characterized by state-to-state interactions, into a new stage for interactions between non-state actors. Globalization has created a new world that encourages countries to democratize (Margono, 2015). Democracy promotes the spirit of freedom, openness, and justice, triggering the acceleration of the resolution of the Moro conflict. The Mindanao region itself

is very rich in ethnicity, with the majority dominated by three ethnic groups: Muslims, Christians, and Lumads (Indigenous Peoples). After conducting various discussions involving leaders from various ethnic groups, it was concluded that a resolution to the conflict can be achieved if these three ethnic groups work together. This is written in the journal (Mendoza, 2015) as the ideology of Tri-People, which explains that three clashing ideologies are combined to achieve a resolution to the conflict. The Moro conflict is not only about identity but also about long-standing corruption involving all ethnic groups. As is fitting for politics, there are group interests in power.

In line with what happened in Moro, the idea of forming BARMM is clear evidence that the presence of community leaders can help resolve conflicts. When the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) was established in 2019, it marked a major political milestone in the long struggle of the Bangsamoro people for self-determination. Although it was designed to unite politically, its impact on ethnic and sub-ethnic identities in the region remains unclear. The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) also has become an important reference point in the history of prolonged conflict and political uncertainty in the Philippines, especially in Mindanao. The fact that conflict prevention can be achieved through religious figures of each ethnic group with their influence in gathering communities and beliefs from each ethnic group/religion, is considered effective in the Moro Case.

D. Interfaith Diplomacy and The Governance Gap

Alongside advancements in multi-track diplomacy, the discourse on interfaith communication has notably developed, especially concerning peacebuilding and reconciliation. A significant portion of this work focuses on normative goals, including tolerance, mutual understanding, and reconciliation within religious divisions. Although useful, these methods frequently lack intellectual engagement with issues of political power, institutional reform, and governance in transitional contexts (Driessen, 2025). The study that conducted by (Appleby, 2000), religious leaders are increasingly recognized as significant intermediates owing to their moral authority, social integration, and extensive networks. Another empirical studies indicate that faith-based entities frequently exhibit distinctive abilities to mediate conflicts, reduce tensions, and promote social cohesiveness in fragmented communities (Haynes, 2009). Nonetheless, these contributions are often regarded as ancillary or informal, rather than as essential elements of governance and conflict prevention frameworks.

Track VII in Multi-Track Diplomacy depicts religion as a manifestation of peace through the praxis of belief. Here, we examine how peace-oriented beliefs and activities are practiced by spiritual and religious communities, as well as several moral-based movements such as pacifism, the belief that conflict resolution can be achieved through peaceful means; the existence of sanctuaries or places considered sacred in a religious context, where places of worship are considered capable of protecting a person, and religion as a manifestation of non-violence. Based on this depiction, the existence of religious groups can help bridge interfaith conflicts (Diamond & McDonald, 1996).

Deriving from the vocabulary of interfaith discourse, the phrase "Interfaith Dialogue" was established to describe worldwide dialogue between religions. Later, the name "Interfaith Dialogue" was established to incorporate talks involving atheists, agnostics, humanists, and other organizations without a religion or belief. The only goal of this is to bring about world peace and tolerance. The purpose of interfaith discourse is to promote a consensus, whereby all participants achieve a mutually beneficial outcome. Activities that involve groups in discourse are frequently facilitated by individuals with considerable societal influence (Mujiono & Alexandra, 2019).

The study of interfaith diplomacy has been developing for a long time since mediation was introduced by Christian denominations in South Africa. Research (Nicosia, 2016) explains that Christianity inherited teachings on nonviolence and peacebuilding. Furthermore, Christian teachings and values provide the foundation for Christian peacebuilding. This foundation shows that Christianity provides a range of nonviolent responses to conflicts worldwide, both within and between societies. Christians play a crucial role, even pioneering nonviolence and rejecting violence.

In areas where religious conflicts run the risk of turning violent, religious leaders and faith-based groups have made a substantial contribution to fostering interfaith communication, reconciliation, and tolerance. They can act as peacebuilders and refute extremist narratives because of their moral authority and strong relationships to local communities. Similarly, traditional rulers and customary institutions have exploited their influence to arbitrate local disputes and maintain social cohesion through time-tested customary processes. Religious tensions between Muslims and Christians have fostered violence in many parts of Nigeria, particularly in the center region, known as the Middle Belt, and in northern states hit by Boko Haram's activities. In many locations, interfaith conversation mediated by religious leaders has been vital in de-escalating tensions and building mutual understanding amongst contending groups. For instance, the Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC), which unites Muslim and Christian leaders, has attempted to promote religious tolerance and settle disputes in unstable areas. Following acts of violence driven by religion, NIREC has promoted peaceful coexistence and community-level reconciliation by urging religious leaders to speak out against violence (Adeolu, 2025).

Interfaith dialogue arises from a shared interest in achieving peace and tranquility; in other words, a shared goal. Both Islam and Christianity were revealed to humanity of all nations for the sake of peace, making it possible to compare the two religions. This dialogue aims to strive for a more just, freer, and more humane society. At this stage, people of all faiths and religions work together to transform society to become more just, freer, and humane, thereby preserving the integrity of creation and the environment. The intended form of dialogue is a dialogue of religious experience, to place the role of religion in the context of global issues such as environmental issues, war, morality, human rights, and justice facing humanity in the 21st century (Irawan et al., 2024).

Consequently, a significant deficiency endures at the convergence of interfaith studies, diplomacy, and government. Current research seldom regards interfaith players as non-state diplomatic agents whose actions significantly influence governance outcomes, especially at the sub-national tier. This gap is particularly pronounced in autonomous or post-conflict regions, when peace is maintained not solely via official institutions but also through informal systems of social regulation, moral persuasion, and communal cooperation. As a result, the function of interfaith diplomacy in averting horizontal conflict during election transitions is still little conceptualized.

This paper expands upon existing literature by analyzing interfaith diplomacy as a modality of grassroots peace governance integrated within multi-track conflict prevention frameworks. The study emphasizes the Tri-People Peace and Development Agenda in Bangsamoro, positioning interfaith actors not on the periphery of peacebuilding, but as non-state diplomatic agents exercising governance functions by regulating social behavior. It adds to bigger discussions about New Wars, horizontal conflict, and multi-level governance by showing how peace is actively managed through non-state diplomatic techniques that work under and next to formal institutions.

3. METHODS

This research adopts a qualitative case study methodology to investigate interfaith diplomacy as a mechanism of grassroots peace governance amid a political transition. Instead of seeing peace as an end result, the study sees it as a way of governing that comes about via interactions between state and non-state actors in both formal and informal settings. A qualitative, governance-oriented design is particularly adept at elucidating the relational, normative, and processual components of conflict prevention that are frequently neglected by event-based or quantitative methodologies. In this qualitative paradigm, policy and institutional documents are regarded as primary qualitative data, studied not as neutral records but as socially embedded texts that express norms, governance claims, and methods of ecumenical participation. The research contextualizes interfaith diplomacy within multi-track conflict prevention frameworks, highlighting the governance roles executed by non-state actors in scenarios of constrained institutional consolidation.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Bangsamoro Governance Context & Horizontal Conflict Risks

The Mindanao conflict is a protracted conflict rooted in colonial history, structural marginalization, and identity politics. Prior to Spanish colonialism, the Mindanao region and the Sulu Archipelago were under the Sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao, which had established Islamic political, economic, and religious systems. The arrival of the Spanish in the 16th century with a mission of Christianization and conquest transformed this power relationship into a religio-political conflict, in which Moro Muslims were positioned as "the other" and continued to experience oppression until the post-independence period of the Philippines.

Chronologically, the history of the Moro people's struggle can be divided into three periods. First, the Moro fought against Spanish colonial rule from 1521 to 1898, lasting 377 years. Second, the Moro fought against American colonial rule for 47 years, from 1898 to 1946. Third, the Moro fought against the Philippine government from 1970 until the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) in 2019. Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) Republic Act No. 11054, or in Tagalog as *Batayang Batas sa Rehiyong Awtonomo ng Bangsamoro*, is a law intended to establish a political entity, a basic government structure, grant broad autonomy, and recognize the unique identity of the Bangsamoro as an integral part of the Republic of the Philippines. This law replaces the previous law, Republic Act No. 9054 (Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao) (AQUATERA, 2023).

Discrimination against the Bangsamoro has led them to seek independence from the Philippines. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), originally the MNLF, has become a major obstacle to achieving Islamic autonomy in the Southern Philippines. The MILF aims to secede and establish an Islamic state for the Bangsamoro. Thanks to the MILF's large following, the conflict between the Philippine government and the Southern Philippines escalated and expanded its influence, prolonging the conflict. The government and MNLF's lack of commitment to implementing the ARMM has further exacerbated the MILF's brutality. Numerous scholarly journals and books have repeatedly emphasized the discriminatory attitudes and marginalization felt by the Moro community, which continue to prolong this conflict (Rüland et al., 2019).

Since 2012, President Aquino has intended to establish a political entity for the Bangsamoro to replace the ARMM, which was considered a failed attempt to unify the Philippines. Through the Framework Agreement on Bangsamoro (FAB), the Moro people can become independent without separating from the central government. Bangsamoro replaces the Autonomous Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) through legislation that will regulate Bangsamoro autonomy. The initiative to establish this entity was further pursued during President Rodrigo Duterte's administration, with the creation of a bill called the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), which was later ratified as the Bangsamoro Organic Law in 2018. The BOL itself differs slightly from the ARMM in substance. This is because the BOL regulates several more fundamental aspects, such as greater fiscal autonomy, the formation of a parliamentary government, the BOL's convergence with the 1996 Framework Peace Agreement and the 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, inclusive governance at all levels, and the Bangsamoro's ability to regulate its territory and waters based on local policies (Arifal, 2022).

The substance contained in the BOL essentially regulates the following matters:

Table 1 Substansi BOL

Article I	Name and Purpose
Article II	Bangsamoro Identity
Article III	Territorial Jurisdiction
Article IV	General Principle and Policies

Article V	Powers Of Government
Article VI	Intergovernmental Relations
Article VII	Bangsamoro Government
Article VIII	Wali
Article IX	Basic Rights
Article X	Bangsamoro Justice System
Article XI	National Defense and Security, Public Order and Safety, and Coast Guard Services
Article XII	Fiscal Autonomy
Article XIII	Regional Economy and Patrimony
Article XV	Plebiscite
Article XVI	Bangsamoro Transition Authority
Article XVII	Amedments, Revision, Repeal
Article XVIII	Final Provisions

Sources: (*Republic Act No. 11054*, n.d.)

The Bangsamoro government is formally known as the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). The BARMM is a region with special autonomy and inclusive governance located in the southern Philippines. The BARMM's administrative region comprises the geographic regions previously defined in the ARMM. The region encompasses five provinces in the Mindanao archipelago: Basilan, Manguindanao, Lanao Del Sur, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi. It comprises 116 municipalities and two cities, totaling 2,590 barangays. On December 20, 2020, the number of cities within the BARMM increased to three after Cotabato City joined the Bangsamoro jurisdiction (Republic Act No. 11054, 2018).

The establishment of the BARMM was the culmination of a peace agreement between the MILF and the Philippine government. Bangsamoro separatist groups fundamentally rejected the legitimacy of the ARMM because the law governing the autonomous region did not fully grant the Bangsamoro the right to control the territory. Therefore, the framework known as the Comprehensive Agreement of 2014, signed during the Aquino and MILF administrations, served as the initial foundation for the establishment of the BARMM autonomous region after the enactment of the BOL on July 26, 2018, through the signing by President Rodrigo Duterte (Office, 2025).

The BARMM was initially suspected of being unconstitutional because the region adheres to a parliamentary system, while the Philippines itself follows a presidential system. The Philippine judiciary has never issued a single ruling declaring the region unconstitutional. Therefore, the Comelec (Commission on Elections) held a two-part plebiscite: First, a plebiscite by residents of the ARMM Region to determine whether to dissolve the ARMM and replace it with the BARMM. Second, a plebiscite held in municipalities and barangays in Lanao del Norte Province and Cotabato City to determine whether these areas would be willing to join the BARMM jurisdiction. Through this second plebiscite, 63 barangays and Cotabato City were then transferred to the Bangsamoro government as part of the BARMM (Bangsamoro Information Office, 2022).

The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region is the only Muslim-majority region in the Philippines. The dark history of the Moro conflict was resolved by three ethnic groups: Muslims, Christians, and

Lumads, working together. Therefore, it can be concluded that Bangsamoro is an autonomous region with a foundation of moral and religious authority. In the journal (Yusof & Bagolong, 2023), the protracted Moro conflict is characterized by weak state institutions and public trust in the state, discrimination, and the legacy of colonialism. The Bangsamoro government uses an Islamic moral framework as the basis for its government legitimacy and social regulations. This presents a unique challenge for the Bangsamoro government because the formation of the BARMM is the result of three distinct ethnic groups.

Historically, the term "Moro" during the Spanish colonial period was intended to distinguish Filipino Christians from Muslims in terms of political rights and citizenship. However, the term "Moro" has since become widely recognized internationally as the political identity of Muslims in the Philippines, particularly in the southern region. The BOL essentially does not explicitly define whether Moro people must be Muslim. However, based on historical concepts, the term "Moro" is intended solely for Muslims. Therefore, non-Muslim communities in the region cannot be classified as Bangsamoro. It is important to note that there are three major groups of people living in the south of the Philippines: the Bangsamoro, the Lumad, and the Christian Filipinos.

The Lumad are an indigenous group that is not categorized as Muslim or Christian. Therefore, it is probable that jealousy and animosity could grow because the Bangsamoro are placed in a special position above other ethnic groups in the Philippines by extending inclusive autonomy powers to the Bangsamoro. The BOL is indeed designed to address the war in the Philippines, especially the Bangsamoro insurgency movement. However, constructing a just government that can accommodate all communities in the BARMM region is a very large issue. Furthermore, the Bangsamoro government is presently during a transitional phase, and the establishment of an ideal government necessitates much planning and effort. Due to disagreements with the BARMM government, which may be unjust to local communities and give preference to others, such as the MILF group, the Lumad ethnic group may subsequently launch an armed rebellion (Rüland et al., 2019).

This is essentially one of the major challenges and issues the BARMM government will face in realizing justice for all groups. Because, as with previous insurgency movements in the region, they are often based on injustice experienced by certain groups by others with greater political power. Currently, the Bangsamoro certainly has greater political and economic power than the Lumad ethnic group due to the BOL. This considerable power is certainly a significant advantage for the Bangsamoro. However, this can backfire if the government is not managed properly and ideally, prioritizing justice for all groups. Moreover, the BARMM will eventually hold its first elections, which are prone to the risk of escalating inter-community tensions based on religious and ethnic identities.

B. Interfaith Actors as Peace Governance Mechanism

Religious conflicts are frequently misinterpreted. Conflicts related to religion, belief, culture, and worldview may also be instigated by political or economic tensions. When factions pursue power or scarce resources, prevailing disparities may serve as a justification for intensifying rivalry or conflict. Various initiatives can be undertaken to identify possible conflicts and their underlying causes. Consequently, it is imperative in religious social life to foster critical comprehension, facilitate open discourse, and uphold respect for difference.

Interfaith dialogue can play a role in strengthening mutual understanding and respect, reducing religious-based conflict, and promoting tolerance and harmony in society. Furthermore, the role of religious leaders is crucial in maintaining interfaith harmony. A study published in the journal (Fauziah & Ashifa, 2024) shows that religious leaders play a significant role in maintaining interfaith harmony. This study reveals that religious leaders can act as mediators and unifiers in building interfaith harmony. Religious figures and spiritual leaders play a key role in facilitating dialogue and creating understanding between parties involved in a conflict. Moral and ethical values taught by

religion often serve as guidelines for conflict resolution. They can help build shared understanding and promote justice in the resolution process.

Religion is one of the oldest, most universal, and most influential social institutions in human life. It is not only a metaphysical belief system but also a foundation of morals and values that shape social order. In traditional societies, religion is seen as a source of sacred power that regulates not only human relationships with God but also with other human beings. However, in modern and postmodern societies, despite growing secularization, the influence of religion remains strong, often present in more complex and multifunctional forms, both as a personal belief system and as a socio-political force. Current global developments demonstrate that religion is at the center of rapid and complex social change. The era of digitalization, the globalization of values, the mediatization of religion, and the trend toward individual spirituality are creating significant transformations in the way individuals and communities practice religion. The mediatization of religion is not only changing how religion is conveyed but also how it is understood and practiced by its adherents in virtual social spaces.

In detail, the goal of interfaith dialogue is to help all parties reach a consensus, ensuring a win-win solution for all involved. Furthermore, a prerequisite for dialogue is the presence of diverse parties from various religious groups. It's important to understand that interfaith dialogue can be called interfaith dialogue when different religious groups engage in dialogue together. Interfaith dialogue has expanded beyond national issues to encompass international issues. Therefore, in practice, the term interfaith dialogue is often used to discuss international issues of tolerance and diversity (Mujiono & Alexandra, 2019).

According to (Farhani et al., 2025) concludes that religion in contemporary society has entered a phase of complex social struggle, reflected in three main forms: deviation, conflict, and belief transformation. First, religious deviation emerges through the rise of viral religious teachers (ustadz), instant spirituality, and syncretistic practices that combine elements of religion and popular culture without theological depth. This indicates a crisis of authority and a lack of critical religious literacy in a digital society. Second, religious-based social conflicts often occur because religion is used as a tool for exclusive identity and sectarian politics. Social tensions such as hate speech, rejection of places of worship, and even interfaith violence reflect that religion is no longer merely a social glue but is also vulnerable to being used as a means of polarization. Third, belief transformation occurs due to the increasing tendency of society, especially the younger generation, to seek forms of religiosity that are more personal, reflective, and not tied to formal institutions. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for religious institutions to reform their approaches and methods of conveying teachings. Overall, this article emphasizes that religion is not merely a system of belief, but also a dynamic social phenomenon undergoing continuous reshaping. Therefore, a moderate religious approach, strengthening religious digital literacy, and reforming religious education are needed to maintain the function of religion as a bringer of peace and a unifier of society amidst diversity.

The role of interfaith actors developed long before Spanish colonization in the Philippines. In the 16th century, the Sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao played a significant role in the southern Philippines. The existence of the spice route connecting the Sulu Sea and the Celebes Sea created a relationship not only for the spice trade but also for cooperation in confronting greater threats, particularly from Europeans. When defending the southern Philippines, the Sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao sought military assistance from the Sultanate of Ternate-Tidore. This close relationship resulted from a mutually beneficial economic relationship in the spice trade along the Sulu-Sulawesi route. This intensive trade network also facilitated the spread of Islam to various regions of the archipelago, including Maluku, Sulu, and Maguindanao (Rüland et al., 2019).

The spirit of resolving the Moro conflict has never waned. Various non-state actors have consistently participated in mediating and mitigating the Moro conflict. Mahid M Muntilan, also known as Guro Mahid, is very popular among interfaith forums in the Philippines. In 1996, this figure, also known by the title Guro Mahid, initiated a dialogue forum between bishops and clerics

(Bishop-Ulama Conference). Mahid M Muntilan's popularity for peaceful preaching and his expertise in dialogue with people of different faiths has earned him a reputation alongside Roman Catholic Bishop Fernando Capalla and Bishop Hilario Gomez of the National Council of Protestant Churches of the Philippines. This respected figure is inseparable from his role as a peacemaker or advocate for peace and interfaith dialogue in Mindanao. During the era of President Joseph Estrada, Guro Mahid M Muntilan later known as Nur Misuari was entrusted with serving as a member of the Mindanao-wide government panel to negotiate a peace agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). His political prominence continued to grow when he served as Governor of Lanao Del Sur Province in 1992. Then, in 2001, he was elected Vice Governor of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARRM) along with the Muslim National Liberation Front (MNLF). However, the struggle to pacify the Moro Muslims ended when Guro Mahid died on December 6, 2007 (Amrullah, 2015).

The Philippine government attempted to resolve the Moro conflict by signing the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) with the MILF, which enshrined the Bangsamoro's special autonomy. This agreement also stipulated the Moro people's rights to self-determination through a transitional process. Most importantly, the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Force (BIAF) was deactivated and separatism was ended. The conflict and violence did end, but it's important to remember that the ethnic and religious prejudices that resulted from the conflict gradually diminished, not necessarily disappearing through this peace agreement. Even after the CAB agreement, doubts arose among Filipino Christians regarding Bangsamoro autonomy, as it lacked treason and extremist actions. The MILF is a separatist group that rejects the peace process and prefers violence. This was further clarified by the presence of the Abu Sayyaf group in the 1990s. Therefore, more than just the government's involvement, it requires the involvement of multiple ethnic groups (Trajano, 2020).

Interfaith dialogue is one way to foster harmonious relationships and maintain interfaith harmony. Interfaith dialogue can counteract diverse perceptions and suspicions in building interfaith relationships within society. It also broadens the religious perspectives of adherents; an inclusive understanding of religion will be embedded in their mindsets and behavior, preventing the spread of radical ideologies that tend to be exclusive within religion, which can lead to acts of terror in society due to the inability to accept truths outside their own groups (Priyanda & Hidayati, 2025).

In some cases, local conflicts, such as inter-clan disputes (*rido*), are difficult to resolve using the state legal system. The government is considered untrustworthy because its resolutions are often unclear. The presence of clerics and pastors in the Maguindanao and Lanao regions serves as a crucial authority, perceived as possessing legal and moral authority, as well as an emotional connection with the community. As mediators of local conflicts, interfaith actors are viewed by local residents as protectors of human rights and providers of social assistance in remote areas. This is reflected in the establishment of the Bishop-Ulama Conferencen (BUC), which has become a crucial pillar of humanitarian aid and helped facilitate dialogue when diplomacy with the state fails. A study (Koyama, 2025) shows that people in Maguindanao tend to place their trust in conflict management based on religious and customary values rather than through state bureaucracy. This suggests that the weakness of state bureaucracy can give rise to a new force, namely interfaith actors, in peace governance mechanism.

The referendum obtained by the Bangsamoro, which ultimately granted them greater autonomy, became the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BARMM), which is outlined in the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL). Within the BARMM structure, the involvement of transnational actors is not merely a formality but a strategic instrument for achieving equality and upholding justice for all groups. The BOL guarantees sectoral seats in parliament for representatives of Indigenous communities and religious scholars. Furthermore, the establishment of the Office for Settler Communities aims to ensure the protection of Christians in the Bangsamoro region by ensuring easy access to public services and equal legal protection (Corpuz, 2025).

C. From Below Peace Governance during Electoral Transitions

Nearly three million Moro Muslim minority people in the Mindanao region of the southern Philippines are currently voting on a referendum that will grant them greater autonomy over the region. The BARMM's authority extends far beyond the ARMM. In the legal realm, sharia courts will be opened in the region. Fiscal power of US\$950 million (Rp13.5 trillion) in development funds will also flow over the next 10 years, not including tax revenues generated in the Mindanao region. This referendum marks a turning point in the Bangsamoro community's quest for prosperity, recognition, and freedom. It is hoped that this will crystallize a lasting peace in the archipelago. This also BARMM are prepared for transition (Hendroy, 2019).

Tensions arose when the Abu Sayyaf-led church bombings in Palau Jolo hampered the transition process. This is where interfaith dialogue plays a crucial role. The BUC subsequently transformed into the Mindanao Religious Leaders Conference (MiRLec) (Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Reconciliation and Unity, 2025). The organization was formed to unite interethnic leaders, such as Catholic bishops, Protestant pastors, religious scholars, and indigenous leaders, to create a dynamic and progressive peace movement. This has become one of the triggers for the emergence of religious dialogue and interfaith cooperation in education to facilitate the transition process. The Bangsamoro government will conduct first electoral process in 31, March 2026 (Bacongco, 2024).

The Philippine government has a dark history of corruption. Bangsamoro people view the practices of central officials as inconsistent with the demands of justice according to religious values. As with any new government, the transitional election period is crucial. The success of the general election process at the end of March will be crucial for the future of the BARMM government. Religious leaders play an active role in providing education to counter all forms of black campaigns. Some steps taken include incorporating Islamic-based political and democratic education into Friday sermons and Sunday services. This activity focuses on educating the younger generation, especially those unfamiliar with the parliamentary system, as BARMM is the only autonomous region in the Philippines to adopt a parliamentary system. Furthermore, religious leaders use a religious value and moral approach to emphasize the importance of electing honest and competent leaders to avoid money politics (Digal, 2025).

The role of religious actors during the transition process is also evident in their involvement in discussing the electoral system. It is worth remembering that the Bangsamoro consists of multiple ethnicities, necessitating interfaith dialogue. The Bangsamoro Darul Ifta' (BDI) assisted in the sectoral accreditation process for Ulama (Islamic scholars) so that the election of representatives is based on Ash-Shuara (consultation), not simply through the ballot box. Furthermore, to maintain election integrity and regional security during the campaign period, ethnic leaders signed a joint commitment through the Faith and Peace in Action dialogue (Adviser, Office of the Presidential on the Peace, 2025).

A delegation from the Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education (MBHTE) of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), Philippines, conducted an observation in Indonesia in order to study educational practices for fostering peace in Maluku through a cross-cultural religious literacy approach. MBHTE visited Indonesia because it is developing an inclusive education curriculum and believes that to be truly inclusive, schools, teachers, and students must teach them how to be more accepting and tolerant of differences, especially in religious matters. Furthermore, the curriculum at BARMM emphasizes inclusive education that integrates Islamic education with other religions, making knowledge exchange with Indonesia highly relevant. In the curriculum development process, diversity is truly an integral part of education. BARMM is currently at the peak of its educational curriculum reform. Therefore, the government needs to learn from other countries with similar diversity dynamics (News, 2026).

The exchange of information by the BARMM delegation embodies the transfer of full autonomy to the BARMM regarding lower-level political issues. Bangsamoro distrust of the Philippine government is also one reason why lower-level actors can manage their own affairs without having to wait for a response from the central government. Issues related to the social, cultural, and economic

development of the community are fully regulated by the BARMM. The remaining high-politics discussions will be left to the Philippine central government.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Bangsamoro case highlights the impact of colonial trauma as a factor in ethnic divisions within the Moro community. The Muslim Moro population has been marginalized since the Spanish Christianization. Furthermore, several conflicts within traditional territories, particularly inter-clan (*rido*) conflicts, have made the contestation of the Moro conflict extremely complex. Several theories are needed to gradually explain why the prolonged conflict in the Moro community has not yet achieved a successful resolution.

The author observes that studies on interfaith diplomacy, particularly in relation to Bangsamoro, have not yet addressed the role of religious actors in ensuring the success of the election process. Therefore, the case study explanations involve multiple religious figures, including Muslims, Christians, and Indigenous Peoples. Further research can be conducted after observing the democratic transition process at the end of March. From this situation, we can see the results of the hard work expended by interfaith leaders in preparing for the democratic transition.

Interfaith diplomacy has played a crucial role in conflict resolution. The ethnic diversity of the Bangsamoro, the colonial legacy, and the weak role of the state have made the Moro conflict not merely a vertical conflict but also a horizontal one. The involvement of the state, non-state actors, and the role of ethnic leaders aligns with the practice of Multi-Track Diplomacy. In this paper, the author highlights the more effective role of religious actors in uniting differences in identity, reducing prejudice between religions, and building trust to resolve local conflicts. The practice of Interfaith Diplomacy is carried out by applying religious values that teach love, peace, and justice to achieve reconciliation in inter-ethnic conflicts. This is also supported by the Bangsamoro government's seriousness in responding to the transition process. Various social activities, such as religious dialogue, improving the quality of education, and cooperation in legal accreditation of the BARMM, are carried out jointly by representatives of each Bangsamoro ethnic group.

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