

Energy Issues as an Influence Factor in the Moro Conflict In Southern Philippines

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Abstract

This study discusses the crucial role of energy security factors in the protracted conflict between the Moro Muslim groups and the Philippine government. The primary reason for conducting this research is to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the strategic dimension of natural resources, particularly energy, which is often overlooked in conflict analyses that focus on political, social, religious, and cultural aspects. This research employs energy security theory as an analytical lens to examine how issues such as land grabbing and competition for control over natural resources in Mindanao contribute to the escalation or potential resolution of the conflict. Furthermore, this study identifies specific energy-related factors that exacerbate tensions, including resource competition, the economic impact of the conflict on the energy sector, and the role of international actors. Utilizing a qualitative approach and descriptive analysis methods through case studies and secondary data from various credible sources such as the official websites of BARMM, PIDS, and PSA, this research is expected to make a significant contribution to the field of International Relations by highlighting the interconnectedness between energy security and armed conflict. The findings of this study have the potential to enrich the theoretical understanding of how energy dynamics shape the conflict landscape and inform the development of more effective strategies for achieving energy stability and peace in conflict-affected regions.

Keywords: Energy, Mindanao, Moro Conflict, Philippines Government

Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas peran krusial faktor keamanan energi dalam dinamika konflik berkepanjangan antara kelompok Muslim Moro dan pemerintah Filipina. Alasan utama penelitian ini dilakukan adalah untuk memberikan pemahaman yang lebih komprehensif mengenai dimensi strategis sumber daya alam, khususnya energi, yang seringkali terabaikan dalam analisis konflik yang berfokus pada aspek politik, sosial, agama, dan budaya. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori keamanan energi sebagai lensa analitis untuk menguji bagaimana isu-isu seperti perampasan lahan dan persaingan untuk mengendalikan sumber daya alam di Mindanao berkontribusi terhadap eskalasi atau potensi resolusi konflik. Lebih lanjut, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor spesifik terkait energi yang memperburuk ketegangan, termasuk persaingan sumber daya, dampak ekonomi konflik terhadap sektor energi, serta peran aktor internasional. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan metode analisis deskriptif melalui studi kasus dan data sekunder dari berbagai sumber kredibel seperti situs resmi BARMM, PIDS, dan PSA, penelitian ini diharapkan memberikan kontribusi signifikan terhadap studi Hubungan Internasional dengan menyoroti interkoneksi antara keamanan energi dan konflik bersenjata.

Temuan penelitian ini berpotensi memperkaya pemahaman teoritis tentang bagaimana dinamika energi membentuk lanskap konflik dan menginformasikan pengembangan strategi yang lebih efektif untuk mencapai stabilitas energi dan perdamaian di wilayah-wilayah yang terdampak konflik.

Kata Kunci: Energi, Konflik Moro, Mindanao, Pemerintah Filipina

INTRODUCTION

Tensions in internal conflict can be seen in the dispute between the Moro group and the Philippine government, where religious, ethnic and national interest factors play a role in triggering the conflict. The imbalance in regional management by the government is the main cause of rebellions, with the aim of certain community groups to gain their own authority (Prasetyowati, 2017). Mindanao, an island in the southern part of the Philippines, is known to have natural resource potential and a promising agricultural sector. However, with a population of around 24 million, the island has the highest poverty rate in the Philippines. Additionally, Mindanao's vulnerability to natural disasters often forces many of its residents to flee. As an archipelagic country with a republican form and a presidential system, the Philippines consists of around 7,107 islands which are divided into three main regions, namely Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao (Indrawan, 2016).

The Philippines, with its strategic geographical location, became an important maritime trade route connecting the Red Sea to the South China Sea, controlled by Arab Muslim traders (Wadi, 2010). The Sulu and Mindanao Islands became the first port of call for Muslim traders in the 8th century, who then began to spread Islam in the region (Majul, 1988: 8). According

to John Gershman, Islam first entered the Philippines in 1210 AD (SA, 2008: 55).

Spain arrived on Samar Island on March 16, 1521, led by Ferdinand Magellan (Nadaek & Atmadji, 1986: 166). Despite successfully occupying the Zamboanga and Caraga Peninsulas in Mindanao, Spain was unable to fully colonize the Muslim Mindanao region due to fierce local resistance. Apart from colonialism, Spain attempted to spread Catholicism through divide and rule politics and secret missions, while negatively labeling Muslims in Mindanao and Sulu by calling them "Moros" (Hasanah, 2017). This term was initially considered derogatory, but was later adopted as a symbol of identity and struggle by the Moro Muslim community (Gutierrez & Borrás, 2004).

After losing to America in the Spanish-American War in Manila Bay, Spain handed over the Philippines to America through the Treaty of Paris on December 10, 1898 (Majul, 1988: 15). On July 4, 1946, the Philippines gained independence from the United States, but the Moro Muslim community refused to join the country. Despite the Philippines' independence, discrimination against Moro Muslims continued, including stigmatization of Spanish heritage, poverty, limited access to education and employment, and military violence.

In response to this discrimination, in 1968 the Mindanao Independence Movement (MIM) was formed to fight for the independence of Muslim Mindanao from the

Philippines. This movement later developed into the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which became a symbol of the Moro people's struggle against injustice and marginalization (Latif, Mutiarin, & Nurmandi, 2018).

Another factor that has received less attention in the Southern Philippines conflict is land colonization, including the seizure of land belonging to Moro Muslims which was converted into public land by the government, as well as the exploitation of natural resources without a fair revenue sharing system (Franco, 2016). The Southern Philippines has abundant natural resources, especially water quality from inland, coastal, bay and sea waters (Agaton et al., 2022; JICA, 2016). Apart from that, this region also has great potential in the energy sector. According to the 2020 DOE report, there are more than 62 power plants in Mindanao that utilize biomass, geothermal, and hydro energy, spread across various regions such as Northern Mindanao, Zamboanga Peninsula, and Soccsksargen (Guiamel & Lee, 2020).

In 1972, the Moro Muslim community began a struggle against the Philippine government by declaring open war. This separatist movement aims to separate itself from the Philippines and form a new country (MS, Putranti, & Pertiwi, 2017). The impacts included economic losses, land confiscation, military massacres, and the government's disregard for the Moro people's complaints. This research can show a link between these conflicts and the concept of the "Resource Curse", which describes the negative impact of natural resource wealth on the economic, social or political well-being

of a country. This phenomenon often occurs in developing countries such as the Philippines, resulting in uneven economic growth, increased corruption, and prolonged internal conflict (Sholikin, 2020).

The Philippine government continues to strive to resolve this conflict in order to maintain energy security, protect national energy supplies, and prevent acts of terrorism and separatism. This step also aims to tackle excessive energy use and increase investment in energy infrastructure to create economic and political stability.

There are various factors that drive the Moro Muslims' desire to separate from the state, including ethnic, religious differences and the discrimination they have experienced for years. However, apart from these factors, energy and environmental issues are also driving the conflict in the Philippines. Although basically this conflict is better known as a result of religious and ethnic differences, energy and environmental factors also play a role. This research aims to analyze how natural resources and energy can be one of the causes of conflict between Moro Muslims in the Southern Philippines and their government (Idi, 2018).

This research is intended as a complement to the many studies related to conflict factors in the southern Philippines where previous studies discuss the main factors and triggers such as religion, ethnicity, politics, to terrorism, such as articles written by Nuril Ayni (2021) entitled "Masalah Moro: Sebuah Kajian Perkembangan Kasus Konflik Internal Moro Hingga Kancah Internasional (1946-2019)". But it has not taken into account the supporting factors, namely in the energy sector where there is an effort to grab land and resources in it by the government and

the colonial group through the doctrine of the region and the "Public Land Act" policy.

Therefore, this research will explain that although there are many previous studies about this conflict, research related to energy factors that influence conflict continues to run still a few who examine so that it is expected to provide a new understanding of the relationship of conflict with other factors, namely energy as a supporting factor.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is an explanation of how researchers organize their thinking to solve research problems, as well as explaining existing variables. In this research, the author uses conflict theory from several experts, Simon Fisher's thoughts on conflict management, and the concept of Energy Security as analytical tools to examine the effectiveness of conflict resolution efforts between Moro Muslims and the government.

In reviewing the question of how effective efforts to resolve the conflict between Moro Muslims and their Government are. Therefore, in the process of researching this issue the author used conflict theory from several experts and used Simon Fisher's thoughts to stage conflict and the Energy Security Concept as an analytical tool.

Theory Staging Conflict

In its development, conflict has many types, including racial and religious conflicts (To emphasize how conflict occurs, conflict staging theory is needed, which is a tool for analyzing ongoing conflict, where according to

Fisher, conflict can change at any time, through different stages of activity, intensity, tension and violence (Fisher, 2000). Therefore, Conflict staging theory is needed as an analytical tool that aims to understand the historical background of an incident and identify the parties involved in the conflict (Indrawan, 2022).

The first stage of conflict was coined by Simon Fisher in his book entitled Working with Conflict: Skills and Strategies for Action which contains the thoughts of Fisher and other experts. The following stages of conflict analysis include Pre-Conflict or Latent Conflict, Confrontation, Crisis, Consequence and Post-Conflict.

This theory is to emphasize how conflict works, a conflict staging theory is needed which is one of the tools for analyzing ongoing conflict where according to Fisher, conflict can change at any time, through different stages of activity, intensity, tension and violence (Fisher, 2000). Therefore, conflict staging theory is needed as a tool for conflict resolution analysis which aims to understand the historical background of an incident and identify the parties involved in the conflict. In conflict resolution, there are various theories that can be used as analytical tools in conflict resolution efforts that are usually carried out by researchers. According to John Galtung (1996), conflict is divided into three or often referred to as The Galtung's Triangle, namely conflict consisting of direct violence, cultural violence and structural violence. Direct violence is defined as violence that has immediately visible effects, including casualties, damage and other visible losses. In contrast to direct violence, cultural and structural violence has invisible effects but has a greater effect because it can influence aspects of existing culture and social structures. However, both cultural and

structural violence can play an important role in the prevention and management stages of conflict (Izzuddin, Indrakorniawan, & Stiarso, 2022).

This conflict staging will also be used as a tool to answer and analyze social phenomena and internal conflict processes that occur between Moro Muslims in the Southern Philippines and their Government. Apart from that, this theory will look at how the energy and natural resources confiscated by the Philippine government could be a factor in the ongoing conflict.

Energy Security Concept

The issue of energy security is a complex and multidimensional problem because it not only involves national and international energy policies, but is also related to national and global security policies (Sagena & Moorthy, 2012). According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), energy security is defined as efforts to ensure the availability of affordable energy for a country, both in the short and long term. Meanwhile, Jonathan Elkind emphasized that energy security cannot be resolved with a simple approach, but requires a balance between economic, national security and environmental aspects (Pascual, 2010).

The energy security concept will look at how the Philippines handles conflicts resulting from discrimination by their society and government against Moro Muslims in the Southern Philippines and how energy and the environment can influence the causes of the Moro conflict continuing to occur. In addition, this concept will see how energy security greatly influences the availability of energy in the Philippines (Sagena, 2013).

The concept of energy security has become a concrete thing, reflecting the need to build science and technology to support the development of energy and environmental components in national resilience (Allenby, 2000: 15-16; Fachrie, 2018).

RESEARCH METHODS

Research methods are a series of systematic procedures or steps to obtain scientific knowledge with specific goals and uses. In this research, qualitative research methods were used which were sourced from official records, documents and other official documents. The type of research carried out is descriptive, that is, it aims to provide a systematic, accurate and detailed description of the facts, characteristics of a population or a particular region without changing existing variables. This research focuses on how energy and the environment were factors in the internal conflict between Moro Muslims and the Philippine government, spanning the time span from the beginning of the conflict in 1968 to the achievement of a peace agreement in 2019.

The qualitative method used in this research focuses on in-depth observation by presenting narratives based on the data collected. The process involves organizing, categorizing, and interpreting data to discover patterns, themes, or meaning from the available information. Data collection is carried out through secondary data collection, namely data that has been processed by other parties. This secondary data was obtained from various sources, including official government websites, data measurement institutions, articles, journals and books. Apart from that, online library research was also carried out to obtain references from online libraries and other sources, such as the official BARMM website,

Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), Philippines Statistics Authority (PSA), and other trusted sites. The main data collection technique is online library research, which utilizes digital literature that can be accessed via the internet.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Factors and Conflict Staging in Moro Conflict

The conflict in the Southern Philippines is a prolonged conflict rooted in ethnic and religious differences, starting from the Spanish colonial period in the 15th century. During its colonial period, Spain tried to conquer the Moro Muslims, but always failed until finally the Philippines came under American rule. Over time, this conflict developed and was no longer solely caused by religious and ethnic differences.

Conflict theory then functions as a tool to explain the roots, causes, and impacts of conflict, the actors involved, the conflict process, to efforts to resolve the conflict which is often called conflict resolution or management (Wahyudi, 2021). In conflict theory, there are three types of factors that encourage conflict: main factors, supporting factors, and trigger factors (Ade R.P, Amin, A.M, Marsingga, P. 2014). As *main factors*, conflicts between Moro Muslims and the Philippine Government have historically been caused by religious and ethnic differences. These two factors are the main basis for the conflict between the two parties.

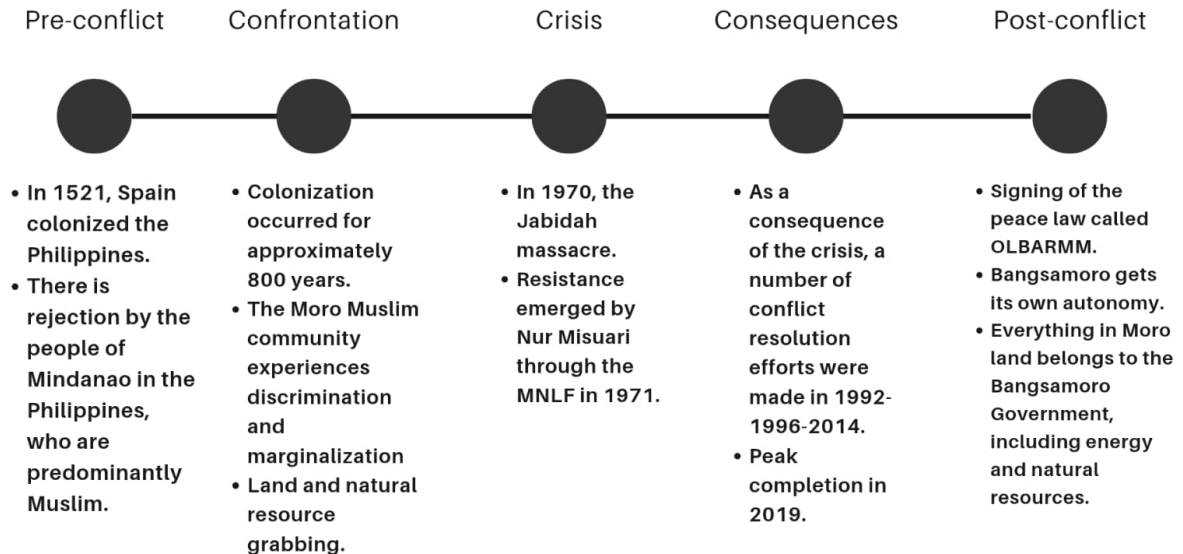
Based on the case, energy or natural resources are a *supporting factor* in the conflict between Moro Muslims and the Philippine Government, where in the Southern Philippines there is a lot of potential there. Apart from that, this is also supported by the land confiscation carried out by the government and local elites on land owned by Moro Muslims, causing access to production resources which are used as a source of livelihood to be limited or cut, causing them to lose their livelihood and increase poverty (Gutierrez & Borrás, 2004).

Trigger factors are elements that re-ignite conflict even though the situation is calm. In this case, the injustice that the Moro people continue to feel from their own country is the trigger for recurring conflicts between Moro Muslims and the Philippine Government.

"Despite being a Filipino citizen, I also adhere to the Bangsamoro identity. I belong to a traditionally underrepresented group; religious and ethnic minorities in a predominantly Christian country. Our homeland, located in parts of Mindanao and Sulu, is ninety-nine percent Muslim in a country that is ninety percent Christian. Growing up amidst the armed conflict between Bangsamoro fighters and the Philippine government, I have witnessed the economic and psychological devastation that has befallen my country and its people. Nearly ninety percent of Sulu's population lives below the poverty line, earning less than a dollar a day. Seventy percent do not have access to clean water and electricity..." (Baddiri, 2007).

According to the views of the observers above, from the grouping of existing conflict factors, energy is a supporting factor as well as the main focus in this research. Apart from issues

of religious and ethnic discrimination, the Government's confiscation of land rich in energy potential against Moro Muslims has also strengthened and prolonged the conflict.



Sources: Processed by Authors, 2025.

Figure 1. Viewing Conflict through Conflict Resolution Tools: Conflict Staging Theory

Conflict staging analysis includes five stages, one of which is **pre-conflict or latent conflict**. In the case of the Moro conflict, the root of the problem began during the Spanish colonial period. For hundreds of years, Spain attempted to expand its dominance from the Manila area and gradually spread the influence of Christian culture throughout Luzon through the Christianization process of the indigenous population (Hasanah, 2017). However, the influence of this religion did not succeed in penetrating the southern region of the Philippines because of the very strong dominance of the Muslim community. As a result, Muslim communities were increasingly

pushed back, especially after Spain imposed harsh rules forcing those who rejected Christian teachings to relocate to the southern region of the Philippines. From here the conflict between Spain and the Muslim community began to develop.

Spain also used and indoctrinated the "Indios," namely the indigenous groups they had influenced, to isolate and fight Muslims in the Philippines. Until 1898, Spain had not been able to conquer Mindanao. After the Spanish colonial period ended, the United States continued to suppress the Moro Muslims. In 1946, America granted independence to the Philippines, but proposed that the Moro Muslim region be under Philippine rule (Borlaza & Hernandez, 2025). This is contrary to the

agreement of the sultans in Mindanao which guarantees no foreign interference in their local government. America reneged on this agreement, so that the Moro Muslim territories were eventually included in the Republic of the Philippines. Thus, the Moro conflict can be considered a colonial legacy from Spain and the United States (Septia et al., 2024).

The second stage is the confrontation stage, where the conflict begins to open up. In the case of the Moro conflict, conditions in the Philippines were stable after World War II. However, this stability triggered the migration of Christians to the southern region of the Philippines, which caused Mindanao's Muslim community to become a minority in their own region. This migration exacerbates the discrimination experienced by Moro Muslims in various aspects of life. This discrimination has been ingrained since colonial times, so that Christian communities tend to view Mindanao Muslims as enemies worth fighting.

Discrimination is not only carried out by the Christian population, but also by the Philippine government. This can be seen from the lack of participation of the Moro community in the political, educational and economic fields, which makes them increasingly left behind, especially in the economic field. This condition causes poverty to get worse, because the government's attention to the Moro community is very minimal.

In addition, land grabbing and expropriation of livelihoods by the Philippine government further worsened the situation. In the context of ongoing conflict, marginalization and poverty have become unavoidable

realities for the Moro people in their homeland (Gutierrez & Borrás, 2004).

The crisis stage is the peak of the conflict, characterized by extreme violence and loss of life. One of the main events was the "Jabidah Massacre" in 1970, in which dozens of young Moro Muslims recruited for a secret Philippine government mission were massacred after refusing the assignment. These events sparked fear among Moro Muslims and strengthened separatist impulses. The same year, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) led by Nur Misuari emerged as resistance to the government. Although the government tried several times to resolve the conflict, tensions continued to recur for decades (Refworld, 2023).

The de-escalation stage is the phase where tensions and violence begin to subside, opening up opportunities for negotiations. In the Moro conflict, various peace efforts were made, but were often disrupted by the power and influence of the MNLF (Moro National Liberation Front) which rejected the peaceful approach of the Philippine government (Paredes, 2022).

On October 12, 2012, under President Benigno Aquino III, a peace agreement was reached between the government and the MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front) led by Murad Ebrahim. This agreement aims to restore Mindanao by granting special autonomous status to Moro Muslims. This process was facilitated by ICG (International Contact Group) and Malaysia as mediator. The MILF finally agreed to negotiations, while the Philippine government recognized Mindanao's full autonomy in the hope that the MILF would be loyal to the government.

In 2019, the peace agreement was strengthened through the passage of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (OLBARM), which changed ARMM to BARMM

with greater political autonomy. This law guarantees Bangsamoro political, cultural and traditional rights, while protecting human rights (Permono, 2013).

The post-conflict stage shows positive developments with the parliamentary-democratic system in Bangsamoro. However, implementation of the law has been slow, raising concerns regarding the sacrifices made by indigenous peoples in development. However, the victory of Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who supports peace, provides hope. The transition process still faces challenges, including instability in several Bangsamoro regions, which has the potential to hinder the success of peace (Crisis Group, 2023).

The Influence of Energy Factors in the Moro Conflict with the Philippine Government: Concept of Energy Security

Supporting Conflict Factors: Energy

Energy is a supporting factor in this conflict, even though the root of the problem begins with the unequal treatment of Moro Muslims based on religious and ethnic differences by the Philippine Government. Conflicts continue due to the absence of a fair revenue sharing system related to natural resources (SDA) and energy owned by Moro Muslims, as well as the existence of laws regarding land confiscation that were created during the colonial period.

During the colonial period, both Spain and America imposed laws that stripped land rights from Moro Muslims and other indigenous peoples. The colonial legal system allowed the

transfer of ancestral land through policies such as mandatory land registration by the American colonial government, which adds to evidence of land dispossession among the indigenous population of Mindanao (McDoom, 2019).

Two main points regarding this issues are, Regalian Doctrine: A Spanish colonial legal fiction implemented from 1565 to 1898. This doctrine conflicted with Moro Muslim customs that regulated land ownership under the authority of the Datu. As a result, Moro Muslims lost access to land, water, forests and other natural resources.

American Colonial Period (1898–1945): Land grabbing was carried out through a more sophisticated legal system, where only individuals and companies could legally register land. This system ignores the collective rights of communities and clans. The Moro community is disadvantaged because it does not have the ability to fulfill administrative requirements, such as cadastral surveys.

In the context of the concept of energy security, according to the Copenhagen School, energy security includes economic, political, social and environmental dimensions (Elbassoussy, 2019). The Philippines does not want to give up Mindanao because the environment is an aspect of national security. Michael T. Klare mentioned energy threats, including concerns about the adequacy of energy supplies to meet future national needs. This anxiety is what drives the Philippines to continue looking for a resolution to the conflict in Mindanao, considering that energy is a factor that prolongs the conflict.

The energy in Mindanao itself is mostly used to generate electricity which is then distributed throughout the Philippines. Power plants in the Philippines have a very large network considering that the

Philippines is an archipelagic country (Agaton et al., 2022).

Up to 27% of electricity generation in the Philippines has been produced using geothermal energy as its main ingredient since the 1970s, making the Philippines the second country with the largest use of geothermal energy after America. Like other power plants, PLTP in the Philippines is also in Mindanao along with Luzon, Negros and Leyte where this energy was first discovered in 1968 in Tiwi (Kementerian ESDM RI, 2020). To date, there are around 8 geothermal fields in the Philippines, including Tiwi itself. Apart from geothermal energy, Mindanao itself has a lot of natural resource potential, both renewable and non-renewable, which can then be used as a power plant to be distributed throughout the Philippines (PIDS, 2019). Therefore, the following is data on power plants in Mindanao for the period 29 February 2024.

Table 1. Power Plants in Mindanao based on the natural resources used

Energy Source	Number	Units
Coal	19	19
Diesel (Oil)	33	116
Biomassa	7	9
Geothermal	2	3
Solar	6	-
Hydroelectric	28	49

Sources: Departement Energy of Philippines, 2024.

The Philippines is known as a significant energy producing country, with its main energy sources spread across three large islands: Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao (Walag, Canencia, & Fiedler, 2018). This country continues to show progress in the energy sector, both geothermal energy, renewable and non-renewable energy.

Mindanao, one of the islands with the largest energy potential, is often referred to as a region with a "resource curse" (Lumawag, 2021). The resource curse phenomenon is divided into three sub-literatures, the relation between economic performance and natural resources, relationship with the political system and the relationship between natural resources and civil war (Ross, 2014).

In addition, there is a wetland or commonly called a swamp on the island of Mindanao called the Liguasan Marsh with an area of 288,000 hectares which is the location of the conflict between the MILF and the Philippine government with oil and gas potential (Gatmaytan, 2015). In addition to the promising energy potential, the location is also a place of residence for various flora and fauna that live side by side with around 100,000 families living there (Sarmiento, 2021).

Internal conflict in the Philippines, especially in Mindanao, is included in the third sub-literature. This region, although rich in natural resources, remains the region with the highest poverty rate in the Philippines, hit by a prolonged conflict that began with the Jabidah tragedy in 1968. This conflict continues to affect the region's economy and prolongs the suffering of its people (UNFPA, 2019).

Poverty in the Philippines has generally increased steadily since the beginning of the 21st century. In 2006, Mindanao recorded the highest poverty rate, reaching 38.8%. The causes include income inequality between groups, differences in development between regions, high population growth, natural disasters, and prolonged conflict, especially in Mindanao (Asian Development Bank, 2009).

Another factor that worsens the resource curse in Mindanao is the

Philippines' vulnerability to natural disasters. The Philippines is on the "Pacific Ring of Fire," a zone prone to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions (Manalang, 2024). Additionally, the country frequently faces hurricanes, floods, thunderstorms, erosion, landslides, droughts, tsunamis, and the El Niño phenomenon, making it one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world.

Resolving Conflict Related To Energy And Natural Resource

This internal conflict in the Philippines continues to experience various resolution efforts until in 2018 a law was created "Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao", namely a law which aims to form a political entity, providing the basic structure of its government in recognition of justice and legitimacy of the struggle of the Bangsamoro people. The law was legally inaugurated by a majority of votes through voting on January 21 2019 (Moner, Ali, & Manalalo, 2024).

The law contains several articles, especially the granting of an autonomous region to the Bangsamoro in Mindanao based on what the rebel group has long presented to the Philippine Government. The outline of this law is to provide rights that should have been received by Muslims in Mindanao as a result of the imbalance in their treatment so far. The law contains several articles related to regional jurisdiction, government, expansion of education and many more (Masroni, 2023).

CONCLUSION

The conflict between Moro Muslims in the Philippines and their government has its roots in the Spanish colonial period, which gave the community the negative label of "Moro". The Muslim community's rejection of colonialism, especially attempts at Christianity, caused Spain to fail to conquer the southern region until the end of its colonial period.

After the colonial era, discrimination against the Mindanao Muslim community continued, both from the majority community and the government. In response, separatist movements emerged such as the MIM (1968), which developed into the MNLF and then the MILF. Although various approaches have been taken to resolve the conflict, these efforts continue to fail. Apart from religious, ethnic and political factors, this conflict is also influenced by the struggle for natural resources and energy.

Land grabbing has become a major issue, starting in the Spanish and American colonial eras. Both colonists imposed regulations on land ownership that required Mindanaoans to fulfill certain conditions to obtain rights to their own land. This system effectively deprives local communities of their rights to their ancestral lands. Apart from that, there is no mechanism for fair sharing of profits from the confiscated land. Energy is one of the supporting factors for this conflict, considering Mindanao's abundant energy potential, including coal, biomass, oil, wind and water. These resources are used for power plants that distribute energy throughout the Philippines. According to DOE and PSA reports by 2024, there are around 95 power plants in Mindanao that utilize this natural resource.

However, this energy wealth is often considered a resource curse. This condition

not only causes poverty, but also uneven economic growth, prolonged conflict and natural disasters. Despite its abundant resources, the Bangsamoro consistently records high poverty rates, with its people remaining as far from prosperous as other regions in the Philippines.

Additionally, the Philippines is known as a disaster-prone country, and Mindanao, which is close to a trough that frequently experiences earthquakes, is often affected. Disasters such as floods, hurricanes, tsunamis, El

Niño, and volcanic eruptions are commonplace in this region. The conflict in Mindanao shows how energy and natural resources are also factors that maintain tension. As the second largest island in the Philippines with strategic natural resource wealth, Mindanao is an area that the Philippines will not just let go of. Unequal treatment based on religion and ethnicity, injustice in resource management, and land confiscation laws inherited from the colonial era are the main factors that continue to trigger conflict in this region.

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