




# **BANGSAMORO:**

## **Framing Philippine Nation Building, Reform, and Self Determination**

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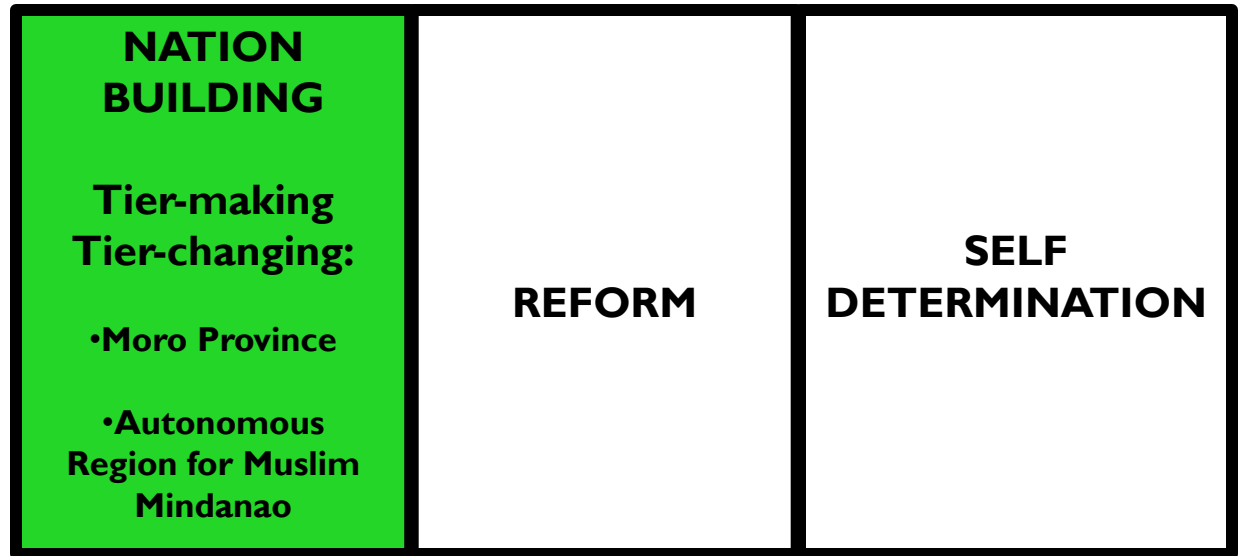
# Nation-building/State building

The seemingly parallel but fundamentally antithetical assumptions of GPH's and Moro struggle's framing of the "Bangsamoro" on at least three variables (nation-building, reform, and self-determination) explains the age-old problem in the Muslim South that continues to be constructed and re-constructed until today.

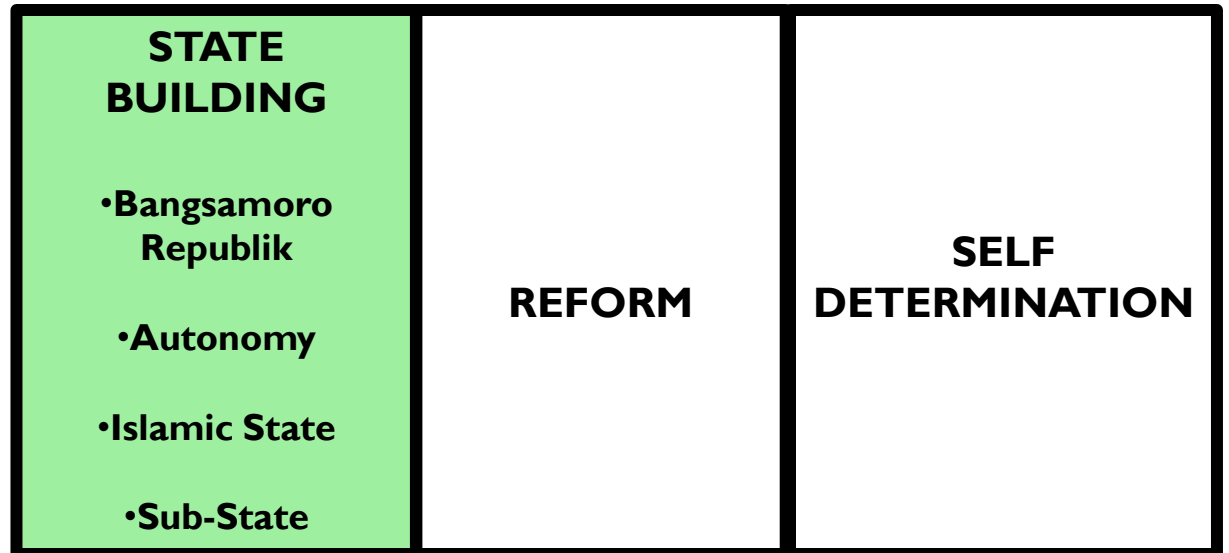



Traditionally, nation-building is a process of constructing national identity through manifold use of power and control by employing resources and manpower to perpetuate and advance the State and its interest. It may also be viewed as “indigenous and domestic creation and reinforcement of the complex social and cultural identities that relate to and define citizenship within the territory of the state. State-building, on the contrary, is the establishment of the paraphernalia of the State or strengthening of institutions and apparatus of the State particularly “through building capacity and providing the essential infrastructure for the state to function.” While the former is a continuing internal process of rallying people towards a common goal, the latter is generally an enabling process of State’s institutional capacity and development.

# GPH




# MORO MOVEMENTS






On GPH: while pertinent policies, autonomy, peace process, and State-initiated reform had been successively done these past decades, they are generally extension of State's version of nation-building, reform, and self-determination.

On Moro fronts: while they professed to abandon armed struggle and entered into peace process and tried to work within the frame of autonomy, they continue to pursue their right to self-determination with certain adjustment in the process, while taking, at times, autonomy as strategic “peace route” in pursuing higher political goals including availing the nuances and dynamics of state-building processes (e.g., sub-state).



The clash thus of two frames — GPH’s nation-building vis-à-vis Moro fronts’ state-building — makes the Moro struggle protracted leaving the government, at the most obvious level, continuously engaged in tier-making and tier-changing in Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago, a typical yet glaringly constant approach that harked back to US method of pacification and integration in Moroland since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The varying nature of the two frames is based on the fact the GPH is mandated to promote nation-building and nationhood with the end to preserve Philippine sovereignty and territorial integrity. (*From State-to-nation-building tract*); on the contrary, the Moro struggle is based on the premise that the Bangsamoro has inalienable right to self-determination on the basis of their historical and political claim for sovereignty. (*From State-to-Filipinization-to-State-building tract*).



In the past, the recourse to administrative and political tier-making methods has been traditionally done either through unilateral action of the State or through a peace process by restructuring the division of power relation along a strictly vertical flow (e.g., strong executive) from national to regional government. At present, the plan is to divide power along a relatively adjusted State-sub-state relation (e.g., strong legislature) from national to parliamentary government (i.e., Bangsamoro).

While the approach of changing the locus of power relation (from executive to legislature) will be relatively new, tier-making and tier-changing technique has been an old, cyclical recourse per experience of Muslim Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago.

# American Colonial Period and Philippine Commonwealth (1899 to 1937)

Tier/Unit/Office	Nature	Function	Year
1. Military District of Mindanao and Jolo	Military	To oversee US benevolent policy in Mindanao and Sulu	1899
2. Military Department of Mindanao and Jolo	Military	To rule via four districts: first and second, comprising Mindanao; third, Sulu; fourth, Palawan and other adjacent areas	1900
3. District of Mindanao	Military	To rule via two districts over Christian areas: one in the north through a headquarter in Cagayan; the other in the south and central Mindanao with headquarter in Zamboanga	1900
4. Seventh Separate Brigade	Military	To continue the thrust of MDMJ after the latter's geographical department was temporarily closed for ten months	1901
5. Bureau of Non-Christian Tribe	Administrative	To investigate non-Christian peoples; ascertain tribal distinction, territorial limits, social organization, language, belief, manner and custom	1901
6. Department of Mindanao	Military	To carry on the missions of DM in 1900 and SSB in 1901	1902
7. Moro Province	Military	To organize and to initiate American government policy of direct rule and interference on Moro internal affairs	1903
8. Department of Mindanao and Sulu	Administrative	Effect the Filipinization of Mindanao and Sulu in preparation for Philippine independence; to unify the structure and powers of provincial and municipal governments in Moroland with the rest of the country; to institute "rapid amalgamation of with the inhabitants of other islands"	1914
9. Office of Commissioner for Mindanao and Sulu	Administrative	To develop Mindanao for the immediate benefit of the Philippine Commonwealth	1937

Source: Julkipli Wadi "Tier-Making and Tier-Changing in Mindanao and Sulu." *Diliman Review* Vol. 48, No. 2, 2000.



## Philippine Administration (1957 to 2016)

Tier/Unit/Office	Nature	Function	Year
1. Commission on National Integration	Administrative	To foster the moral, material and political advancement of non-Christian Filipinos	1957
2. Mindanao Development Authority	Administrative	To accelerate the development of the region	1961
3. Rehabilitation and Development Program	Administrative	To rehabilitate, reconstruct and develop areas ravaged by war in the late 60s and early 70s; to restore normalcy in the region; to assist evacuees; to repair damaged infrastructure; to expand agricultural production; improve education and health services	1973
4. Presidential Task Force for the Reconstruction and Development of Mindanao	Administrative	To implement the RPD; to assess damage on private property; to mobilize funds; to prepare an integrated program of full reconstruction; to restore peace and order	1973
5. Southern Philippines Development Administration	Administrative	To promote economic development and social stability through cooperation and non-corporation ventures	1975
6. Autonomous Governments in Region IX and XII	Political	To implement regional autonomy in accordance with the Tripoli Agreement (according to the Philippine government)	1977
7. Ministry of Muslim Affairs	Administrative	To insure the integration of Muslim Filipinos into the mainstream Filipino society with due regard to their beliefs, customs, traditions, and institutions	1981

**Table 2** Source: Julkipli Wadi "Tier-Making and Tier-Changing in Mindanao and Sulu," *Diliman Review* Vol. 48, No. 2, 2000.

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<b>Tier/Unit/Office</b>	<b>Nature</b>	<b>Function</b>	<b>Year</b>
8. Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao	Political	To implement regional autonomy in accordance with Art X Sec. 15 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution	1989
9. Mindanao Economic Development Council	Administrative	To promote and coordinate the active participation of all sectors to effect the socio-economic development of Mindanao through a wholistic and integrated approach	1992
10. Southern Philippine Council for Peace and Development	Administrative	To oversee and coordinate peace and development in the Special Zone of Peace and Development whose area of jurisdiction covers the thirteen provinces under the Tripoli Agreement	1996
11. Bangsamoro People's Regional Autonomous Government	MNLF's Proposed political and regional unit in the phase 2 of the GRP-MNLF Peace Agreement	To implement regional expanded autonomy in accordance with the phase 2 provision of the GRP-MNLF Peace Agreement after the amendment of the Organic Act of the ARMM	—
12. Maglanco-Socsargen Council	Pres. Estrada's proposed administrative council to the MILF (before the all-out war in 2000)	To implement peace and development in areas under the sphere of influence of MILF, i.e., Maguindanao, Lanao, North Cotabato, South Cotabato, Sarangani, and General Santos	1999
13. Expanded ARMM	Political	To implement RA 9054 mandating the expansion of territorial coverage of the ARMM	2001
14. Bangsamoro Juridical Entity	MILF's proposal to broaden political power and territorial jurisdiction of the ARMM	To effect the establishment of State-sub state arrangement between the Philippines and the BJE	2009
15. Bangsamoro Sub-state	MILF's proposal in the first phase of peace process with the Pnoy Administration	To serve as alternative political arrangement in the ARMM	2011
16. Bangsamoro Government	New political entity	To serve as new political entity in the Moroland	2016

**Table 3** Source: Julkipli Wadi "Tier-Making and Tier-Changing in Mindanao and Sulu," *Diliman Review* Vol. 48, No. 2, 2000.

”...the colonial-political mixture is what creates a disjuncture between the “horizontal” and “vertical” relation of power because, from the point of view of governance, a unitary set-up requires a relatively homogenous society while an effective application of separation of power presupposes a stable system of democracy...Instead of over-hauling the government unitary structure, state control was employed to maintain national unity amid wanton disregard of culture of indigenous peoples and other sub-national communities. As a consequence, it emboldened inter-governmental problem, rendered futile the national government effort of tier-making and tier-changing and further worsened the “power vacuum” in southern Philippines.”

# Reform

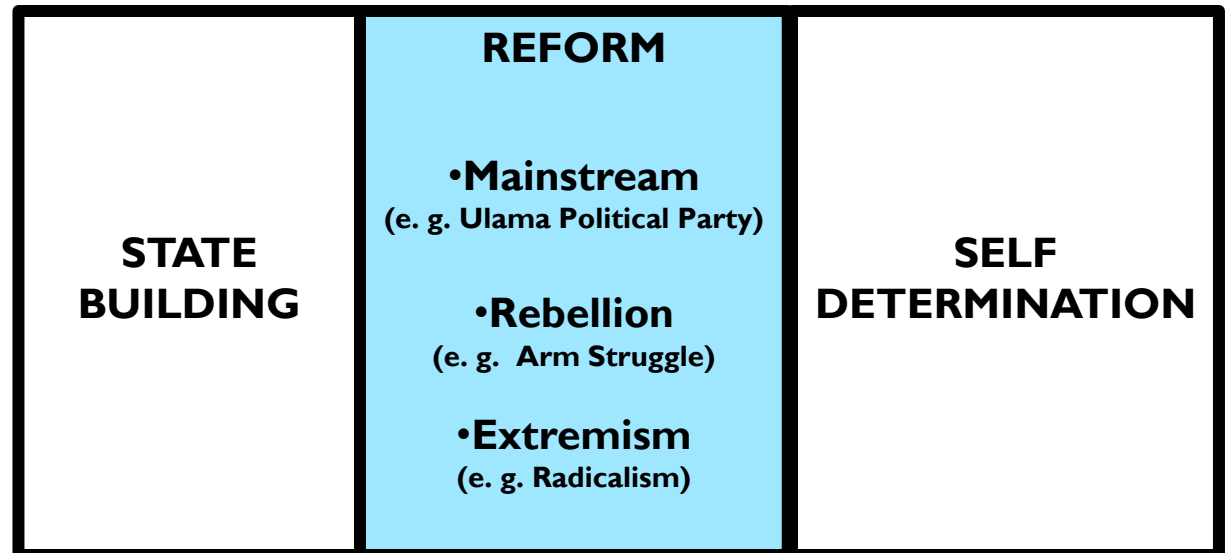
Reform is a product of “imagined communities” with GPH engaged in “higher image of communion” (e.g., nation-building) while Moro movement “patrimonial” community but historically endowed entity is envisioned to have “a deep, horizontal comradeship” (e.g., state-building or as an “imagined transition” any of its lower variant like regional autonomy, federal system or sub-state) to politically secure Moro identity, homeland, culture, posterity, and so on.

Reform is a relative instrumentality with which both entities try to operate their respective visions or political imaginations. Due to difficulty of finding or stabilizing the ideal “imagined” relation, reform is thus never stable and permanent. It is partly defined by politics of imagined formation and partly by asymmetry of relation.

# GRP

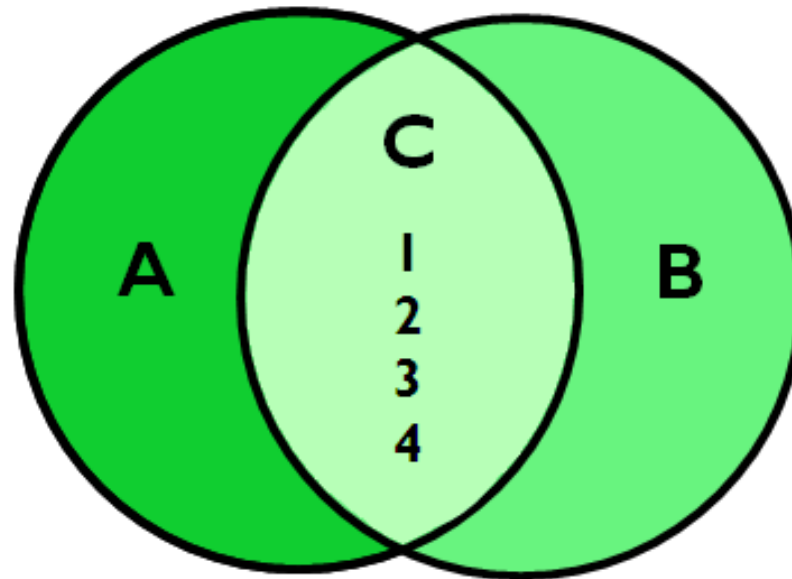


# MORO MOVEMENTS



Reform correctly applies thus to the Philippines as a State together with its institutions and processes since she has all the “higher image” of political structure and functionalities that need to be “reformed” so as to weed out corrosion and check deformities or treat undesirable elements in the political system including the harmonization of State-community relation. Whereas the Moro community being a notch lower relative to “horizontal” relation of power vis-a-vis the Philippine State is still about “to form” a viable political structure which has to be continuously negotiated; or in extreme case, to be politically excised altogether, if it wishes to reach a higher political meaning and to gain substantive power and control of its own affairs; hence, the word “reform” does not fittingly apply to said community, albeit it may also have some significance in small precipitations of Moro society or organization *per se* as a corrective instrument for social or organizational change, but has no direct bearing in terms of state-community relation.

In fact, while reform initiatives by Moro themselves had been launched in different areas since the early and mid 20<sup>th</sup> century as advanced, for instance, by *Parhimpunan sin Islam*, *Sarikat Islam*, Association of Muslims in the Philippines, and *Ansaru l-Islam* and many others before the '60s and '70s; to say the least, those initiatives were either too fickle with very limited vision and strategy notwithstanding the ambivalent politics of their purveyors as those had been naively used as propaganda tools by Moro traditional politicians to gain points from national politicians and Arab and other Asian leaders while other initiatives have been subsequently siphoned off years later into the bigger thrust of Moro struggle of decolonization and self-determination.



**Legend:**

A = Philippine Nation Building

B = Moro Quest for State Building

C = Reform (1, 2, 3, 4)



C1 – regular program of the government that is usually coursed through the main channels of government to carry out State’s project, social program, and political plan including military agenda and strategy in Muslim community.

C2 – combined vision and strategy that accommodate some of the demands of Moros for self-determination that are usually agreed upon during negotiations and supposedly implemented after signing peace agreements with rebel groups.

Given the politics between the Philippine government and Moro movements during and after the implementation of the peace agreement, C2 is usually and gradually overshadowed and eventually absorbed into, and overtaken by, C1 leaving the rebel group/s wallowing in complaints thereafter. It is not only that the peace process is rendered fragile and inutile, the previously negotiated project of reforms with rebel groups is unilaterally reduced and eventually owned and solely implemented by the government with no clear formula what to do with rebels left in limbo. Even where rebels are constrained to re-invigorate themselves, with their uncertainty mounting, the prospect of government doing reform unilaterally in contested areas remains uncertain too. Where government tries to do reform on its own or plans to hold or resurrect a peace process with rebel group/s it has to be ready to envision a new paradigm and meaningful political arrangement; lest, it bears the brunt of simply recycling traditional tract of reforms.

Represented as C3, holding or resurrecting a peace process with rebel group/s as requirement to level up reform that ought to be incremental and comprehensive, has to be something mutually envisioned by both government and rebel peace groups particularly their peace panels. While C3 is necessary to boost a new beginning of peace making that aims toward broader, comprehensive, no non-sense reform, a large part of it is determined by parties' willingness, creativity, and skill as conditions to upgrade their political vision and translate it into practical, implementable, sustainable projects of reform on both short and long terms.

For lack of better symbol, there is C4; it is the range of foreign countries' supports on reform and other socio-economic program and development assistance by host of international, regional and transnational players whose web of interests in the Moroland has radically piled up these past years. On surface, C4 or foreign support on reform and others is advantageous to the government and the Moros in short-term as it practically provides source of funds to implement such reform and development agenda. However, it raises a question whether such dimension of reform has effectively served the Moro people in long term given the nature of such support as obviously an extension of interests by foreign countries' and international institutions and given the endless, cyclical character of government-initiated reforms in Moro community these past decades. If such dimension of reform is reliable and effective given its longevity in Mindanao and Sulu, why had it not create that lasting impact and why should it be done again and again?

# Self-determination

The recourse to harmonizing State's notion of self-determination with that of minority groups like the Moros and their struggle for self-determination requires *quid pro quo* for both the State and said minority. It is usually expressed with the State allowing some sharing of "internal" dimension of sovereignty through restructuring power and control with minorities. The latter, in turn, "blocks off" temporarily its claim for "external" sovereignty to deter recognition of status of belligerency from foreign countries. Yet, minorities are able to work for certain space or nuances by availing the notion of "earned sovereignty" and "sub-state" as alternative to traditional way of restructuring intergovernmental relation.



**GRP**

**NATION  
BUILDING**

**REFORM**

**SELF  
DETERMINATION**

- State
- Minority

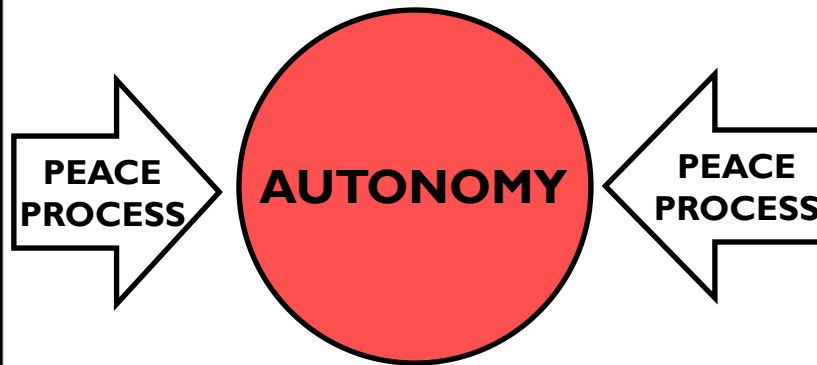
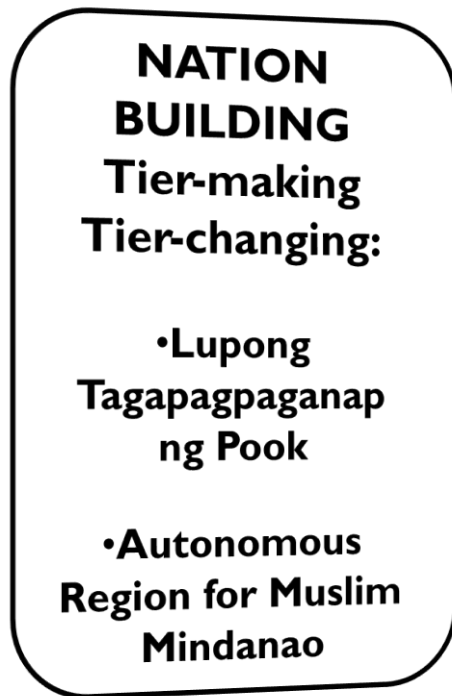
**MORO  
MOVEMENTS**

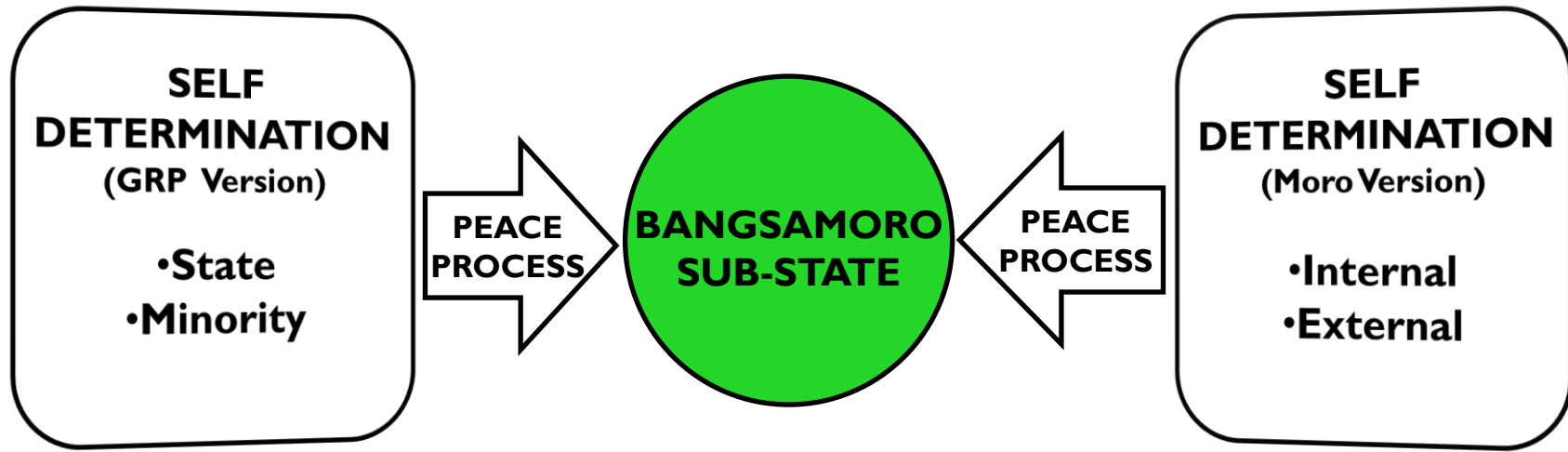
**STATE  
BUILDING**

**REFORM**

**SELF  
DETERMINATION**

- Internal
- External







# The Bangsamoro

- Continuing political experiment reflective of tier-making and tier-changing experience in Mindanao and Sulu;
- While the project is partly creative, the political context and environment of its creation remains partly traditional and limited, as there are many forces and critical factors that need to be treated as solution than problems.
- While the project is currently in the making until 2016, it is the politics of Bangsamoro in post-2016 that would be more exciting.