



Review and Analysis of Philippine Federalism

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ABSTRACT

The current study was performed to give a general overview of the federalist government in terms of the structure, quality, operations, and readiness analyzed based on the view of several columnists and editorials. This is purely a descriptive design intended to discuss a particular topic or issue being studied. Qualitative content analysis was employed to investigate the various opinions held by columnists and editorials on Federalism aggregated from thirty (30) news articles from three nationally circulated newspapers and research papers. The online-retrieved data were printed, read, and analyzed in order to understand the depth of the concepts. The research determined that the contributing writers in national newspapers focus on the following themes of federalism: structural integrity and unity of federalism in governance; challenges and principles in the application of federalism in a previously highly centralized system; roles of political systems and popular sovereignty in federalism; federalism as means to enhance democratic governance and efficiency. The program is designed to discuss and inform the national and international audience about federalism's adoption as a new system of governance in the Philippines. Thus, from the nationally circulated newspaper in the Philippines, it can be established that writers discuss critical aspects of federalism, including decentralization to attain more autonomy, a focus on the quality and efficiency of services, clear functional allocation for efficiency in governance, and readiness of the provinces to adapt to federalism, which would mean smooth transition to this new form of government. It also takes into consideration recommendations on how federalism has successfully been undertaken in the Philippines, involving key strategies such as education campaigns, stakeholder engagement, and capacity building of local institutions in preparation for an informed transition.

RESUMO

O estudo atual foi realizado para dar uma visão geral do governo federalista em termos de estrutura, qualidade, operações e prontidão analisadas com base na visão de vários colunistas e editoriais. Este é um design puramente descritivo destinado a discutir um tópico ou questão específica que está sendo estudada. A análise de conteúdo qualitativa foi empregada para investigar as várias opiniões mantidas por colunistas e editoriais sobre o federalismo, agregadas de trinta (30) artigos de notícias de três jornais e artigos de pesquisa de circulação nacional. Os dados recuperados on-line foram impressos, lidos e analisados para entender a profundidade dos conceitos. A pesquisa determinou que os escritores contribuintes em jornais nacionais se concentram nos seguintes temas do federalismo: integridade estrutural e unidade do federalismo na governança; desafios e princípios na aplicação do federalismo em um sistema anteriormente altamente centralizado; papéis dos sistemas políticos e soberania popular no federalismo; federalismo como meio de aprimorar a governança democrática e a eficiência. O programa é projetado para discutir e informar o público nacional e internacional sobre a adoção do federalismo como um novo sistema de governança nas Filipinas. Assim, a partir do jornal de circulação nacional nas Filipinas, pode-se estabelecer que os escritores discutem aspectos críticos do federalismo, incluindo a descentralização para obter mais autonomia, um foco na qualidade e eficiência dos serviços, alocação funcional clara para eficiência na governança e prontidão das províncias para se adaptarem ao federalismo, o que significaria uma transição suave para essa nova forma de governo. Ele também leva em consideração recomendações sobre como o federalismo foi realizado com sucesso nas Filipinas, envolvendo estratégias-chave como campanhas educacionais, engajamento de partes interessadas e capacitação de instituições locais em preparação para uma transição informada.

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Introduction

Federalism in the Philippines has been one of the most talked-about topics, where the supposed shift from a unitary to a federal form of government captures the limelight (Luyun et al., 2021). Whereas, on the other hand, proponents believe that federalism would actually reduce regional disparities, enhance local self-governance, and promote economic growth as regions are given more control over their lot and policy concerns.

In essence, this is all about empowering the local government or giving it greater autonomy to exercise wide latitude in the handling of its peculiar needs and concerns. (Rodiyah et al., 2020). It decentralizes power, its advocates would argue, and limits the control of the national government, with the supposed effect of paving the way for greater responsiveness at the local levels and accountability (Rodiyah et al., 2020). It is also seen as one way to spur regional economic growth since regions are allowed to design policies according to the different economic contexts they are in, hence attracting more investment and jobs. (Armanios et al., 2020).

Besides, federalism allows this recognition and preservation of diversified cultural identities in the country, giving powers to the regions for promotion and protection regarding their vernacular languages, traditions, and customs (Birhan, 2024). However, critics note practical difficulties that come with transition into a federal system: increase in bureaucracy, rise in administration cost, and intricacy of restructuring government functions. It also has some risks of increasing regional inequalities: the richer regions may make full use of autonomy while the poorer region cannot manage properly due to lack of enough resources and support from the central government (Savage, & O'Connor, 2019).

On the other hand, skeptics insist that federalism will further consolidate the political dynasties and local elites at the expense of democratic processes, which can result in sustained corruption and patronage (Dahlström & Lapuente, 2022). The call for federalism gained momentum during the administration of President Rodrigo Duterte when a consultative committee was created to draft a new constitution (Yusingco et al., 2023). This is a proposition that has had the most intense resistance and thus far failed to garner the necessary political and public endorsement to ensure successful transition (Covo, 2021). Proponents' persistence for reform to rectify perceived deficiencies in the current system meets the critics' warnings about the pitfalls of proposed innovations. In the Philippines, debate on federalism has been a very complicated and contentious issue that reflects varying opinion and interests within the country (Montiel et al., 2022).

Proponents of federalism say that it would attract more evenly distributed development across regions, since the various local governments are allowed to make policies related to their specific needs. There are also prospects of heightened political participation, accountability, and efficiency in governance. Decentralization of powers can address historical issues of

inequality and marginalization in most regions (Gagnon, 2021). On the other hand, many skeptical researchers indicate such risks of transition to federalism as an increase in administrative costs, the complications of constitutional revisions, entrenchment of local political dynasties, and corruption (Huberfeld et al., 2020). Issues like regional imbalance and the capacity of local self-governments to shoulder added responsibilities also arise.

Empirical studies often stress a sequential, well-planned process of federalism, advising experimentation through pilot projects and gradual decentralization so that the federal arrangements could be tested and improved before going fully operational (Huberfeld et al., 2020). Researchers thereby advocate for the strong institution framework that infuses accountability and good governance in the federal system. By interest of scholars in federalism in the Philippines, there is unanimity among these scholars that prudent carefulness, thorough planning and wide-ranging research are needed pre-conditions to ensure the success of transition to (Hutchcroft & Gera, 2022). This represents a discussion that is in balance, where optimism concerning the benefits possible is offset by caution regarding the tough challenges that face it (Overeem, 2022).

Columnists and editorials are all over the place on Philippine federalism: to most people, it is a welcome step toward decentralization that can give more powers to local governments to be even more effective in meeting regional concerns, thereby improving governance, accountability, and service delivery (Canare, 2021). However, there are divided opinions if federalism will weaken or strengthen the stranglehold of political dynasties. Some argue that it can dismantle entrenched political families and give way to more genuinely democratic modes of governance. Others, though, warn that it may consolidate the local oligarchy and continue asymmetrical power relations (Gienapp, 2021).

Editorials also talk about how federalism can bring about the country's inequality in the regions through the granting of more powers to the local government and improve economic activity, particularly in underdeveloped areas such as Mindanao (Xu, & Warner, 2022). While columnists recognize these developments as a plus, they say what is needed are clear constitutional revisions that delineate precisely functions to avoid confusion and inefficiencies (Gienapp, 2021). Others, however, express their disagreement and refer to major cultural and political barriers, including "dole mentality" and paternalistic governance, to true federalism. These views represent the optimism of what might be achieved through federalism and, at the same time, are concerns that would need to be met regarding practical and political issues that would arise from it (Yusingco et al., 2023).

The federal government is a system of government in which powers of government are divided between two sets of organs: one for national affairs and the other for local affairs, each being supreme within its own sphere (Inman & Rubinfeld, 2020). This form of government has been the talk in local television and online communications these past months in the Philippines. Federalism is one of the hottest political issues at this time, as it could take the

place of the unitary government the Filipinos have today (Tusalem, 2020). One of the major recurring underlying principles of political importance informing and encompassing all three themes in federalism is an idea which defines political justice, shapes political behavior, and guides individuals toward a proper civic synthesis of the two. With its covenantal roots, federalism is a concept whose significance is on a par with natural law for defining justice and on a par with natural right for sketching the origins and proper constitution of political society.

In the recently held 2016 Philippine national elections, there have been candidates who spoke highly of federalism. This is one of the reasons why presidential candidate Rodrigo Duterte and his running mate for Vice President, Alan Peter Cayetano, had always espoused federalism (Montiel & Uyheng, 2020). But this is not the Philippines's first foray to embrace federalism. In 2005, the State of the Nation address to Congress by then President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo accelerated the process of federalization (Ancho et al., 2020). Discussions on Federalism are not exclusively the preoccupation of the Philippines but also echo in some other countries in Asia. In the light of devolution, some have argued that Federalism is the next logical step. In the Philippines, advocates of Federalism look upon the structure of the federal system as a means of overcoming geographical obstacles and cultural diversity in governance by allowing fragmentation while simultaneously allowing for national interests.

It is also said that the federal system will fast-track the development of the country and address internal conflicts spawned by separatist movements in Mindanao. Besides, federalism is one of the most important tools of collective representation with powers to be given to the constituent regional political units. On the same note, the 2016 Philippines President-elect Rodrigo Roa Duterte is equally an advocate for Federalism as one far better system of government to serve the Filipinos. The areas outside Metro Manila are given meager budgets by the Internal Revenue Allotment, he argues. It would be worth the electorate's, or the common people's, time to understand what Federalism is. That way, they will better think deeply about Federalism before making their final decision to adapt it as the new form of government for Filipinos.

Framework of the Study

The paper primarily aims to provide a comprehensive review of the structure, quality, operations, and readiness of the federalist government from various columnists and editorials. This may include an analysis of the perspectives put forward in selected articles to understand the discourse on the possible shift to federalism in the Philippines (Teehankee, & Calimbahin, 2020).

Discussion on federalism in the Philippines has been very varied among columnists and editorial writers. Whereas proponents like Senator Robin Padilla urge that it would deconcentrate powers and bridge gaps between regions, other critics raise very serious doubts

as to the viability and appropriateness of the timing of such a change (McMurry, 2022). Federalism exponents tout it as a way to allow local governments to attend to the peculiar needs of their regions more effectively, rather than having all the resources and decision-making powers concentrated in "imperial Manila." This would supposedly usher in balanced economic growth and better governance for a very diverse country (Tano, 2024). Critics counter this with a list of obstacles and risks. Various opinion editorials say the country is unprepared for such an overarching change, noting for instance that many Filipinos don't know how federalism actually works. (Yusingco et al., 2023).

There is further apprehension that federalism will reinforce the already marked disparities between richer and poorer regions since these areas are able to develop more with their greater resources and will leave others behind in the processes of development (Iammarino et al., 2019). Besides, the transition cost and complication to the federal system are considered a big barrier, in particular, with different economic and social challenges the country is faced with (Yusingco et al., 2023).

With these in mind, some columnists suggest that strengthening the current Local Government Code and further improving governance with the current unitary system may be better advanced rather than pushing for federalism at this time. The latter would achieve, they believe, some of the benefits of decentralization without the risks and dislocation of a full shift to federalism (Gienapp, 2021). While the issue is still out for debate, it has been a prevalent comment that the call for federalism be set aside and attention be given to more immediate concerns and the fine-tuning of the current governance structures (Skowronek & Orren, 2020).

The study is based on central elements that define the discussion of federalism, mainly structure, quality, operations, and readiness (Lamchek & Radics, 2021). It does this through every element of media analysis, while focusing on opinions and arguments presented by columnists and editorials (Davies & Wincott, 2021). The aspect of structure examines the proposed form of the institutional framework of the federalist government, including separation of powers between national and regional governments, establishment of regional governments, and division of responsibilities. This analysis goes to the heart of understanding how a federalist's proposed structure intends to redeploy authority and what mechanisms it will provide for controlling the relationships between levels of government (Lamchek & Radics, 2021).

Columnists and editorials have presented their opinions on whether this redistribution will result in a more balanced and effective system of governance or if it will bring in new coordination and control problems (Mittler, 2020; Sari & Pranoto, 2021). The quality component probes the perceived efficacy and effectiveness, the overall quality of governance under a federalist system discussed by columnists and editorials (Valle-Cruz et al., 2020). This encapsulates discussion on transparency, accountability, and governance standards. Federalism is considered a way of incentivizing more responsive and accountable forms of local

governance and, hence, as improving the quality of governance (Amerikaner, 2021). On the other hand, critics highlight potential additional corruption and inefficiencies at the regional level and question the actual capacity of the federal system in yielding better governance results (Valle-Cruz et al., 2020).

The operations component looks at the practical operations of how a federalist government would work, in terms of administrative processes, fiscal management, and law enforcement and service delivery at both the national and regional level (Rosenbloom et al., 2022). This analysis is inclined to identify what operational challenges and opportunities the federalist system would pose.

Discussions within the media often allude to the fact that the regions would be in a better position to adapt their administrative processes and fiscal policies to suit the conditions in their respective localities, which might perhaps translate into more efficient service delivery and economic management (Duff & Wohlstetter, 2019).

However, there are also considerable concerns concerning regional governments to efficiently manage these responsibilities (Granberg et al., 2019). Finally, the readiness dimension examines the preparedness of the Philippines to shift toward federalism along various bases: political will and popular support, institution readiness, and various challenges most likely to affect implementation (Shair-Rosenfield, 2024) Media discourse presents a variegated picture, with some columnists pointing to the strong political advocacy of federalism by key powerful political figures and some regional leaders (Montiel et al., 2022).

Nonetheless, there is a strong opposition and skepticism not only in the other political strata but also among the masses. This readiness analysis will further take into consideration the institutional capacity of the Philippines to handle such transition by assessing the established administrative structures, legal frameworks, and the overall socio-political environment (Yusingco et al., 2023).

Media analysis serves as a means to analyze and explore the complex, multifaceted discourse of federalism in the Philippines. It will undertake a comprehensive appreciation of the arguments and concerns of the proponents and critics alike on the proposed shift to a federalist government through the structure, quality, operations, and readiness components (Atienza, 2019). This, in effect, underlines that what is needed to address the challenges and leverage on the opportunities which federalism may bring to the Philippines is careful consideration and comprehensive planning (Uyheng & Montiel, 2020).

Methods

Research Design. This research on the topic of federalism in the Philippines based on a descriptive research design. Precisely, the qualitative content analysis approach applied in analyzing the various opinions expressed by columnists and editorials in regards to federalism.

Such a design pursued in order to comprehend diverse perspectives in detail and provide an in-depth analysis of the discussion related to federalism (Atienza, 2019). Through this approach, the study attempts to deconstruct debates on federalism in the Philippines and their crosscutting variances that make the subject matter multilayered. Qualitative content analysis was used in this study to analyze prevailing themes, arguments, and concerns on federalism. This will be an incisive look at drawing from the different perspectives and, hence, giving way to an understanding of the implications and considerations tagged to the possible shift to a federalist system in the Philippines.

Locale of the Study. The setting of this study is the Philippines, wherein nationally circulated newspapers are selected to ensure a wide range of media discourse. Three selected newspapers, namely Philippine Daily Inquirer, Philippine Star, and Manila Bulletin, being in wider reach and having more potential influence in shaping the public discourse, are considered due to their wide circulation. Through these sources, the present research aims at analyzing how federalism is framed and discussed in large media outlets that reflect the diverse perspectives and framing of the national conversation on this topic.

Data Sources. This research shall include articles and opinions written by columnists and editorial writers in the selected newspapers. While these columnists and editorial writers themselves are not being engaged, their articles in writing shall be considered as the data to be analyzed. To have a wide purview of perspectives on federalism, this paper covers the works of thirty columnists and editorial writers.

Instruments. Qualitative content analysis is the major tool employed in the research to carry out a systematic analysis of textual data. It involves coding, organization of coded data into themes, and highlighting patterns and relationships within the text. The analysis will involve careful selection and examination of citations from the writers' opinions to ensure completeness in understanding the issue.

Data Collection. This involved the retrieval of thirty news articles on federalism from the online archives of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, the Philippine Star, and the Manila Bulletin, which were then printed out for thorough analysis. This selection process was therefore designed with the widest scale of opinions and thoughts about federalism in mind, to make certain that discourse on this matter is adequately represented. Selection was primarily based on the relevance of content. The papers were to discuss various essential aspects of federalism: decentralization, political dynasties, economic implications, and constitutional challenges. A diverse range of sources was attained by distributing the selected articles equally within the three newspapers to avoid biased review and differences in editorial standpoints.

Data Analysis. This qualitative content analysis had looked into the varied opinions of columnists and editorials on Federalism, which were culled from thirty news articles from three nationally circulated newspapers and research papers. Data analysis started with

preliminary readings of printed articles to obtain the general sense of the content and context. Further readings then allowed the researcher to identify and code key concepts and ideas. In the process of coding, data were organized into themes and sub-themes so as to give a sequential presentation of the opinions advanced. Themes were perceived as those that reflected recurring patterns and relevance to federalism based on the importance of the topics as defined by their discussion in the articles. Quotes from authors have been carefully selected based on their representativeness with clarity of the respective themes and concreteness of opinions and arguments. It was painstakingly tiring to instill deep understanding of the issue of federalism and to analyze the manifold viewpoints in a scholarly and objective manner

Results and Discussion

Structural Integrity and Unity of Federalism in Governance

As such, columnists look critically at the inherent structures of federalism and debate them. Most of the writers define Federalism as a diffusion of sovereign powers or the division of powers between the central and sub-national levels of government. They expound further that Federalism is about devolving some of the decision-making powers from the center to the sub-national level.

This is one abiding truth in the process of federalization: it does not deprive the nation-state of its integrity. "The Path to Federation" Yusingco (2015)

The following three essentials of federalism will come into play: 1) clear division of powers between the Centre and the states; 2) a structure for state government which shows a collective spirit in running the administration; and 3) mechanisms at the state level which institutionalize consultation, cooperation, and collaboration among the states with respect to national interests.

This serves as a wide avenue for the readers, especially Filipinos, to understand or get information about Federalism that will be helpful in the exercise of their rights and performance of their duties as citizens of the Philippines, particularly in view of plans to shift from the present unitary system of government. Acquiring this knowledge is considered a strong political tool of every Filipino because it enables them to decide intelligently and cooperate with the proposition of the present government to turn the form of government into a federal system.

Federalizing was basically all about drawing in all the constituent political entities together into a single and united nation-state. Page 99, par. 3, (Yusingco, 2015). "The Path to Federation"

The same goes for Anderson, "If there is an essence of federalism, it is that there are two constitutionally established orders of government with some genuine autonomy from each other, and the government at each level are primarily accountable to their respective electorates – whether national or regional" (page 164, par. 15). (Rodrigo, 2014). "A Forum on Pursuing Federalism"

Most of the authors defined Federalism as the decentralization of sovereign powers or a distribution of powers between the central and sub-centre level (Mueller, 2019). For instance, retired Chief Justice Artemio V. Panganiban, now a columnist of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, referred to federalism as the "decentralization of sovereign powers to make the government truly of the people, by the people, and for the people." On the contrary, Elfren S. Cruz of the Philippine Star defines federalism as a form of government in which there exists division of powers between the national government and the regional governments. Federalism is also characterized by a transfer of responsibility for certain decisions from the centre to the sub-national level. However, not all decisions and responsibilities are transferred to lower levels of authority. Those responsibilities which are the concern of the nation, or which touch every part of the federal state, remain under the central authority.". This therefore, implies that in this system, independently and autonomously exists the state or local level of government without its control by the central or national government as it would have occurred in a unitary form of government.

According to Arban, (2019), federalism is one kind of government system suited for an overpopulated, diverse ethnic group of people. His idea coincides or matches with what Inman & Rubinfeld said; that federalism is said to be particularly suited to democracies especially those with very large populations or large geographical territories. With the Philippines already an overpopulated and ethnically diverse country, federalism has a very big chance for acceptance by the majority of its citizens. It is in a federation, as articulated by the authors, that individuals are more attached to regional issues that are discussed in contrast to a state that has a unitary government.

There are no remote or neglected provinces. This is because the access of the citizens to public authorities is quicker, that is, citizens access politicians and public authorities with more ease compared to a unitary state that would have a central authority which is far. It is the aim of the Federal Republic that the citizens, through autonomous local and regional governments, will be active participants that could raise standards of living together with their political consciousness in a way to improve their chances of effective contribution in local and regional

elections and government. In the same vein, Baraggia & Bonelli, 2022 opined that the only genuinely federal system is that whose constitution, in writing, is made with the rule of law. This is because its constitution must stipulate with a written rule of law in the division of powers between the national and regional governments. It becomes important to establish the modality needed for an effective distribution of economic and political power from the center to the region. Federalism would become the more effective kind of government for a state of our size with over 100 million Filipinos. As stated by Senator Koko Pimentel, federalism establishes each state's independence from the central government.

The discussed analysis of the basic structures of federalism is really a big contribution to the existing literature on federalism, especially in the Philippines. In fact, the discussions focusing on the decentralization of sovereign powers and the distribution of responsibilities between the central and local government provide a nuanced understanding of how federalism might be operationalized in the Philippines (Canare, 2021). This focus on devolution of decision-making powers to lower tiers of government enhances the discussion on federalism through the possible way around governance in terms of altering dynamics, challenges in implementation, and the possible implications for empowerment and autonomy at the local level. This inquiry into basic structures is very much part of the general discourse on federalism, whose insights are particularly apropos to the continuing consideration by the Philippines of its possible movement from a unitary to a federal system (Tano, 2024).

This paper is limited to what these few writers have contributed to the discussion on federalism. In addition, this analysis has been restricted to printed articles only and may not touch upon what other forms of media-including digital platforms, academic journals, or public opinion surveys-may also be saying about the issue. Other studies might extend the scope of this study by considering a wider range of sources and by further examining how federalism actually functions in practice in different countries or contexts. Future research should, therefore, study empirical evidence either about how federalism affects patterns of governance, local self-government, and the performance of public policy.

Challenges and Principles of Implementing Federalism in a Historically Centralized System

Beyond doubt, President Rodrigo R. Duterte is the most leading proponent of Federalism today. To his credit are notable seasoned political luminaries who have joined his crusade: Former Senator Aquilino Pimentel, Senator Koko Pimentel, Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez, former President Fidel V. Ramos, former Chief Justice Reynato Puno, to name a few (Ladia, 2022). However, not all writers of the news articles from the three national newspapers analyzed in this study share the same pro-Federalism stance. Some provide competing ideologies that puzzle readers; nonetheless, such competing ideologies allow the readers to continue to study and explore Federalism. Each writer has his or her unique reason why he or she is pro- or anti-President Duterte's topmost political agenda.

Abebe et al. (2022) assert that Federalism does not promote political dynasties, but Guritno et al. (2019) refute that with the argument that Federalism, if practiced earnestly, will promote political dynasties. Schapiro (2020) argues even further that Federalism alone is not enough to eradicate poverty and inequality. It changes the periphery but never touches the core issues of it all. On the contrary, Da Silva (2022) perceives Federalism as an instrument, which provides the mechanism of carrying solutions within the new constitutional framework. According to Tana (2023), economists believe that such systemic change may bring Federalism to ignite genuine growth and prosperity in poverty-and-unemployment-ridden peripheral areas, such as Mindanao, where local governments, now empowered to carry solutions suited to their economic problems, alleviate such concerns. To this end, Montiel & Uyheng (2020) support their paper with claims by the President that shifting to a federal system would catalyze economic progress within the country, more so in Mindanao.

The writers of these news articles underscore the positive or desirable aspects of Federalism that Filipinos may experience if the shift from a unitary to a federal form of government proves successful. These salutary features are: political dynasties are terminated or prevented, feudal enclaves are avoided considering the existing local fiefdoms, armed rebellion in Mindanao and developmental disparities in the regional areas may be squarely addressed, basic service delivery is ensured to be more efficiently delivered, a system of checks and balances is instituted, used as an instrument for economic and social development, counter secession, and enables healthy competition and cooperation, enabled the states to enact their laws, more civic participation is encouraged, the penchant for centralization is arrested, and Research is invited.

Not only does it involve devolution of political and fiscal powers at the local level, but it is also a shared responsibility in the determination of the future of the entire country. Yusingco, 2016 "Federation: A Deeper Look"

As opined by Yusingco of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, *"Political dynasties are a huge obstacle to federalization because they undermine local governance."* Further, he said that *"political dynasties have made local governance a family enterprise. Father is governor, mother is congresswoman, brother is mayor, son is councilor, niece is SK (Sangguniang Kabataan), cousin is barangay captain, kinakapatid is vice mayor, and so forth"*. This correctly has been referred to as *"clan-inclusive government"* by esteemed Mindanao civil society activist Guiamel Alim.

On the other hand, the newsmen/writers also clearly point out the cons or downside of Federalism that Filipinos are likely to face in case the shift from a unitary form to a federal form of government succeeds. These disadvantages include the possibility of Federalism causing

frustration and paralysis, creating problems with respect to national policy making, resulting in confusion brought about by conflictive jurisdictions and laws, and fostering general apathy or indifference on the part of the public to national concerns.

To be effective and meaningful, federalists want the Constitution to separate the powers of the federal from the local governments, (Panganiban, 2016). "Federalism 101".

Instituting the federal system in our country will not be easy because our government, since the Spanish and American colonial periods, has always been centralized and unitary (Panganiban, 2016). "Federalism 101".

According to Khatoun, 2023, the defects of federal-parliamentary government are that the federal state may fail to work with the ideal interests of society, the smaller political states are most likely to be dominated by a single political party or dynasty, the prospect of national powers growing at the expense of the regions or provinces, powerful local states and interests hold back progress and block the implementation of national plans; and in federalism, there is no unity of state laws or regional laws. This creates an obstacle to any business transaction being carried out.

Thus, discussions of desirable and undesirable qualities of federalism carry much significance in existing literature about the subject in general and more specifically within the Philippine context. Polarized views regarding President Rodrigo R. Duterte's advocacy for federalism bring one to associated complexities and possible outcomes from this shift in governance (Luyun et al., 2021). This discussion nails the expected benefits-economic growth, improved local governance, and prevention of political dynasties-along with the risks, including entrenchment of local elites, an inability to address core issues such as poverty and inequality. To put it in other words, the fact that this equitable balance provides a more refined insight into how federalism might reshape the political, social, and economic contours of the Philippines.

This paper therefore adopts a multi-perspective approach with the hope of encouraging a more enlightened and critical study of federalism in general, and further elaborates on how both its possible benefits and risks might be seen in the Philippine setting. (Tano, 2024).

The limitation of this study is that it will only be able to represent the opinions of certain individuals and sources alone, perhaps not fully representing various opinions on federalism. The analysis reflects predominantly the concerns and views relating to political dynasties and challenges that federalism may pose but may not capture other critical dimensions such as economic impacts, social equity, or experiences from countries with successful federal systems.

Further studies can, therefore, explore these aspects by considering a wider scale of opinion from scholars, policy thinkers, and the general public.

Empirical investigations in countries that have political and social contexts relatively comparable to those of the Philippines concerning the actual impact of federalism may be conducted in future studies. Case studies of other federal systems may be useful in identifying how such challenges, as identified, for instance, in the presence of political dynasties and overlapping jurisdictions, could be mitigated or managed.

Role of Political Systems and Popular Sovereignty in Federalism

One aspect is concerned with the amendment in the current constitution to give a legal framework to the new form of government. As shared by the column writers of the three national newspapers, the federal constitution should stipulate the distinctly divided functions in the center and at the locality. This would eliminate the confusion because of the overlapping jurisdiction. They also deliberated on the formation and makeup of federal states, restructuring of local government, remodeling of the state executive, fiscal decentralization, among others. These considerations are fundamental in transitioning from a unitary to a federal system of government.

As we and others have argued, such a federal-parliamentary shift would be so much better for a robust party system to have first emerged to support it. Braid, Bill (2016). "Federalism 101".

Advocates of federalism relate it to the principle of "popular sovereignty," and the "release from the costly, stifling, and demoralizing effects of excessive central government." (Braid, 2016). "Federalism 101".

A unitary system of government, when replaced by the current unitary system of government, will exhibit some big-time operational changes in governance. These are the revision of the current constitution to create a legal framework for the new government in general operations.

What is being performed in each of the central and local levels, among others, shall be spelled out by the federal constitution within the new constitution to ensure that misunderstandings or overlaps of jurisdictions do not arise (Afesha, 2022). Besides, the establishment and composition, reforming the local governance, restructuring the executive organ of state, and fiscal decentralization amongst others have to be mentioned in the new constitution. These elements represent the panoply of significant operational changes which would occur in transitioning from unitary to a federal system of government.

It, therefore, adds to the existing literature on federalism in general and that of the Philippines. Presently, the paper focuses on the revision of the constitution in place to give the country a clear legal framework that outlines the function of the central government and those of the local governments. This will ensure smooth transition with no cases of conflict of jurisdiction or inefficiency (Simon, 2019).

Examining the crucial aspects of the composition of federal states, the reform of local governance, restructuring the executive branch, and fiscal decentralization provides an all-inclusive overview of the practical challenges to be overcome so as to make a smooth shift from unitary to a federal system.

This widens the understanding of the complicated legal, administrative, and financial considerations in federalism and makes reasonable planning and implementation dire necessity in the case of Philippines (Yimenu, 2024). The latter lies in the fact that this research focuses on the theoretical and structural aspects of constitutional revision, without in-depth consideration of the practical challenges and political dynamics that surround the implementation of these changes. Reliance upon the views of newspaper writers may reduce the breadth, because fully accounting for the complexity of constitutional reform, the subtlety of public opinion, and the legal difficulties of transition that accompany federalization may not be captured.

Other possible research areas for the future are the in-depth case study of successful constitutional reforms toward federalism in other countries and empirical studies on the potential impacts of fiscal decentralization and restructuring of governance in the Philippine setting. Furthermore, follow-up research can be conducted to consult on how public involvement in constitutional reform could be further enhanced, and also the potential legal and institutional obstacles that might arise from shifting from a unitary system to a federal system.

Federalism as a Means of Enhancing Democratic Governance and Efficiency

The Philippines is more ready for Federalism than ordinarily thought of. There is a strong belief that people in the provinces are now perfectly capable of establishing their institutions. The belief holds that almost all regions in the Philippines are economically viable, adding that only one or two regions might need subsidies from the national government. A proposed composition of states in the Philippines is a group of regions rather than individual provinces, which are viable economically in federalization.

Quisumbing King (2022) surmised that Federalism is not alien to Filipinos because one could demonstrate from historical records and artifacts that the ancient Filipinos organized their social life in small communities and clans. This historical backdrop underlines knowledge and experiences of Filipinos in the area of politics concerning Federalism. On the other hand, Canare & Francisco (2019) pointed out that federalism does not directly resolve poverty and

inequality. It is a challenge to all Filipino citizens given the prospect of a federal shift in government that begs the question of whether such a plan is necessary. Moreover, writers give emphasis on other important issues regarding the historical-cultural and political conditions of the Philippines, prevailing "dole mentality" among local government officials, a paternalistic style of governance, existing political dynasties, and so forth. From such challenges, deep understanding would warrant informed decisions to be made by the people in the acceptance or rejection of Federalism.

Another catching thing related to Federalism is that it is one of the current trends in the world, where more than 25 countries of the world are under a federal governance system, which accounts for more than 40% of the nations of the world. While on the other side, Boroush (2020) claims that all the democratic countries with more than 100 million population are federal countries, except countries like Japan, Indonesia, and Philippines. Popelier (2024) categorically states:

Federalism is like freedom-hard to define, but handled properly, it is the way to organize good governance for huge populations with different ethnic groups. Pedrosa, CN (2016 January 23). "Federalism and Duterte".

To be democratic in the Athenian sense of the word, we must reduce the size of government into manageable units. To me, that is what makes federalism so attractive to many countries today. The federalist principle empowers smaller units of community so governance is more efficient. It is also more 'democratic' because more citizens are able to participate in governance. Pedrosa, CN (2016 January 23). "Federalism and Duterte".

Former Philippine Supreme Court Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban started a different approach instead of continuing the move to amend the current charter in federalizing the country. Having had huge experience as a high ranking official in the judiciary branch, Panganiban is a good provider of information for those who want to learn and be able to give sufficient information. He said that there are other ways to attain the same objective of devolving power without having to change the charter. These are through the enactment of legislations to give more autonomy, devolving more powers, and providing more funds to the local government units. From this perspective, one sees a positive view on the adaptation of Federalism for the Philippine government (Montiel & Uyheng, 2020).

The discussion of whether the Philippines is ready for federalism helps improve, in a subtle manner, the literature on federalism in general and particularly in the Philippines. Again, it prods the analysis to reconsider the more common assumptions of the country's preparedness for such a significant political change by showing an awareness that most of the regions in the Philippines are economically viable for federalization, and Filipinos are

historically familiar with decentralized governance structures (Luyun et al., 2021). It adds depth to the debate, and considering the economic viability at the regional level, the historical context of federalism in the Philippines, it may be more feasible than previously thought. (Canare, 2021). However, the analysis adds to the literature by providing counterarguments of how federalism can pose a problem in terms of attaining positive change in poverty and inequality, and how historical-cultural obstacles could affect its success. The discussion of the opportunities and challenges of federalism outlines that any transformative change in governance must be underpinned by thorough understanding and due care for the socio-political context of the Philippines.

First, this study relies on historical and global comparisons, which may not be in a position to take into consideration the peculiar social, economic, and political realities in the Philippines. Through the drawing of parallels with other countries without an adequate review of specific conditions, the analysis perhaps will make simplistic the complexity of transition toward a federal system. (Tusalem, 2020).

This may also predispose the research toward criticisms that federalism might face at the federal level and take away from any supposed benefits of the system, or other models of governance that could remedy the same issues. This could be complemented by more locally contextualized research on how federalism would respond to the prevailing political culture of the Philippines, the economic inequalities, and the social arrangements.

More empirical studies are needed on how federalism can meaningfully have an impact on levels of poverty, inequality, and efficiency in governance in the Philippines. Further research may investigate the citizen's view of federalism and investigate in what ways federalism might help reduce regional disparities or enhance political participation. For this, comparative studies can be undertaken where other countries have already successfully made their transition into federalism, especially those countries that have greater historical and cultural affinity with the Philippines, in order to show practical lessons and ways of implementation for the country.

Conclusion

Therefore, the possible movement towards federalism in the Philippines has huge implications for governance: first, in terms of dispersion of powers and enhancement of local government institutions to be more responsive to regional concerns. But this begs questions of capacity at the local institutional level and their preparedness for such added responsibility regarding its impact on governance, accountability, and service delivery.

Of equal importance is the debate between those who feel federalism would only serve to entrench local elite rule, and those who think that, if carefully crafted with enough safeguards, federalism would lead to more democratic politics. While federalism does offer the

hope of correcting regional disparities and spurring economic development-especially in regions such as Mindanao-it will succeed only if local governance is well implemented.

Operational challenges, especially constitutional revisions and functions to be clearly outlined to avoid confusion and conflict, would have to be handled with care. Whereas most of the regions are economically viable and the historical context may suggest readiness for federalism, significant barriers lie in the way of cultural conditions and prevailing styles of governance.

Thus, it is important that the road to federalism be first prepared by providing that local institutions are strengthened through capacity-building programs, improved governance frameworks, and increased transparency and accountability. Anti-political dynasty safeguards should be introduced in the federal constitution together with more restrictive laws on campaign finance in order to encourage multi-party political competition.

Full impact assessments regarding the impact of federalism on poverty, inequality, and regional development will be necessary to be done to aid in designing the federal system. Public education campaigns and consultations need to be made to ascertain that the decision to have federalism, particularly for the most affected region, is well informed. A suitable strategy could be adoptive implementation in phases after piloting to realize operational problems to be improved before scaling up. Valuable insights and best practices could also be afforded by conducting research on federal systems in countries with similar contexts that could be adapted to suit the needs of federalism in the Philippines.

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