

THE CONCEPT OF ALONTO ON POLICY INTEGRATION OF THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

*This paper examines the concept of Alonto on Policy Integration of the Philippine Government; it will clarify his view on The Commission of National Integration, The Mindanao State University, Mindanao Development Authority, Civil Service Act Of 1959. The tendency of giving priority to discuss of Alonto's view on Policy Integration of the Philippine Government is to clarify and trace the hidden and explore the reality of Policy Integration of the Philippine Government. **To address this limitation**, an analytical study is conceived to foreground of his contributions to the Muslim Filipinos in the Philippine Islands through integration. **The objectives** of this study is to identify and trace the development of policy integration of the Philippine Government, to understand its reality, to summarize the view of Alonto's on policy integration, and to forward analytical framework of the reality of policy integration in the Philippine Government. **Discourse Analysis** will use in this study in order to identify Alonto's views on policy integration in the Philippine Government, contextualizing and examining, synthesizing and understanding/confirming/clarifying the reality of his view on the policy of integration. The study single out first that the Alonto's views on policy integration is no dichotomy to disconnect its view and understanding to each other and no contradictory between his Muslim Filipino followers in the Philippines. Alonto raised the level of his involvement by collaborating with international universities, institutions and centers in Islamic countries such as Egypt and Malaysia. His approach and view to spread and development of policy integration is primarily a combination of his western educational background grounded based on the Holy Qur'an and the teaching of Prophet Mohammad peace be upon him. At the end, the study focuses on Alonto's view on policy of integration of the Philippine Government and gives a critical analysis.*

Keywords: Alonto, policy integration, commission, Mindanao, Authority and Civil Service.

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Introduction

Alonto is one of the One Hundred Great Muslim Leaders in the 20th Century and he was Master Grand supporter of any Islamic movements in the Philippines. He worked at Philippine Senate as Senator representing the Muslims in Mensupala regions and he integrated the Muslim Filipinos to the policy integration of the Philippine Government with protecting their Islamic beliefs and traditional based on the Holy Qur'ān and teaching of the Prophet Mohammad PU. To solve and decrease the Muslim Filipinos' cancerous problems, Alonto arduously worked for integration cultural, education, political, and economic integration in the Philippines specifically in Mindanao Islands. (Alonto 1975). According to Alonto's integration policy is unity in diversity; every cultural group should preserve its cultural identity under a unified and diversified national culture. Alonto's idea on Muslim integration is part of national body politics because it provides the Muslim Filipinos the power and authority to decide and shape their own destiny. Towards this end, Alonto emphasized that the development a law on the integration of Muslim Filipinos, which led to create the Commission on National Integration, the Mindanao Development Authority, the Civil Service Act of 1959 and the establishment of the Mindanao State University, Marawi city (Alonto 1975).

Literature Review

One of the earliest theses discussing about Alonto is "Ahmad Domocao Alonto: An Annotated Bio-Bibliography" written by Pantonan M. Said in 1981. In his thesis, Pantonan M. Said endeavored to illustrate Alonto's life by describing his lineage, his philosophy of life, his role in the lower house as a Congressman and in the upper house as a Senator from Lanao, and his activities with some photographs. This thesis also touched on Alonto's record as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1971, his works, works composed about him, the impact of his character on diverse audiences and sectors of Philippine society, his records in the Congress of the Philippines, his social achievements and standing, and his membership and presence in various international organizations and conferences. All these achievements demonstrate Alonto's noble ambition for social, economic and educational development of the citizens Philippines.

Generally, the thesis provides factual information from Alonto's birth in 1914 to his education and professional career, stressing on his writings until 1980. In Pantonan M. Said's attempt to document Alonto's exemplary contributions, he merged his achievements in the Congress and the Senate. The only description that is worth noticing in Alonto's contribution as a Senator was his membership in the Constitutional Convention in 1971. His international official visits were also equally represented to show his collaboration with Saudi Arabia and the neighboring Gulf states as well (Said 1981). The thesis was based on a compilation of published writings from different national newspapers (i.e. *The Manila Times*, *the Manila Chronicle*, *the Philippines Herald*, *the Daily Mirror*, *the Sunday Times*, magazines (i.e. *The Filipino First Magazine*, *the Delegate Magazine* (which featured the 1971 Constitutional Convention), *the Evening News*, *the Philippines Press*, *Kislap-Graphic Magazine*, *Week Magazine* and *BagongBuhay*, and his records in the Philippines Congress and House of Representatives. From a journalistic point of view, the thesis undoubtedly speaks of Alonto as a public figure in a span of 66 years (1914-1980).

The most commendable work on Alonto was written by Tocod D. Macaraya. Entitled "Nomination Letter for the 1988 King Faisal International Award for Service of Islām and other Related Papers", this paper was a comprehensive portrayal of Ahmad Domocao Alonto as a nominee for the Service of Islām in the Philippines. Although not a typical biography, Macaraya outlined the paper in such a way that Islām as an ideology and Alonto as a leader and intellectual merged through service and commitment. Against this backdrop was the Mindanao crisis that drew international attention, especially from the Arab Muslim world. But Macaraya argued that the crisis was not religious; it was political, a product of centuries-old Spanish

colonization, which lasted for 300 years. When the Americans came as the benevolent missionaries to save the Philippines, a neo-colonialism lasted for 50 years. Then World War II came into the picture, and Philippines finally gained its political Independence in 1946, interspersed with the Japanese occupation.

In this paper, Macaraya discussed the history of Islām in the Philippines. According to him, two centuries prior to the Spanish occupation, Islām had already spread all over the Philippines, as part of its expansion to Far East. As a result of the Spanish-American War, the American invaded the Philippines at the end of the nineteenth century and introduced Protestant faith, further enhancing the identity of the Philippines as the stronghold of Christian religion in Asia. Muslims of the Mindanao and Sulu Archipelago in Southern Philippines however were able to preserve their religious identity from obliteration. It is this historical frame that some politicians simplify the Mindanao crisis as a clash of religious beliefs. Macaraya illustrated Alonto's history and educational background including his official positions in the national government and in private institutions and corporations, his contribution to socio-civic religious organization, and a brief account of his service to Islām and Muslims. Macaraya cited Alonto's works such as books, articles written in both English and Maranao language, published and unpublished, his local and international awards, participation in many seminars locally and internationally, his outstanding activities in the field of Islamic *da'wah* and people's review and comments about him.

Another Muslim intellectual who wrote a paper on Alonto was Mamitua Saber, the founding father of the Mindanao State University Research Center, later named after him, the Mamitua Saber Research Center. Mamitua Saber's biography entitled "Ahmad Domocao Alonto: Serving the cause of Faith, King Faisal International Awardee, Tribute to a Muslim Statesman", highlighted Alonto's service to Islām and Muslims in the Philippines, drew some of his preliminary statements as a government functionary, his contributions as a Filipino citizen, his intellectual works, his awards from local and international bodies, his special grants (both local and international), his outstanding activities in the field of *da'wah*, his works which were reviewed by *The Manila chronicle* and *The Daily Mirror*.

After reading Mamitua Saber's paper, I found that it is largely based on the *Nomination Letter* of Tocod Macaraya. One of the reasons might be that both Macaraya and Saber were trying to stress the contributions of Alonto as a Muslim leader and intellectual. Although Mamitua Saber's paper does not focus on AIT, it nevertheless helped me expand the list of journalistic writings on Alonto throughout his political career.

Much closer to the Alonto clan was Rowena Awliya Javier-Alonto, the wife of Bobby Alonto, one of Ahmad Domocao Alonto's grandsons. She wrote about Alonto's leadership in a paper entitled "*Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Case Study on Muslim Leadership*". Rowena included in the biography the following: Alonto's family background, and how the people of Moroland considered him a legendary character of his time, as man of vision, a great teacher, a social reformer, a statesman, a pragmatic politician and a champion of the Muslims' rights in the Philippines. Rowena concluded that Ahmad Domocao Alonto should be considered as the early father of contemporary Moro struggle for the rights of self-determination. Determined to emphasize the contributions of the old man, Rowena explained that Alonto's greatness lies in his sincerity, his self-dedication for the cause of Islām and Muslims in the Philippines, his commitment to resolve the challenges and problems facing the Muslim community, and his contributions to Islamic thought through advancing Islamic education. She also discussed the Mindanao situation before and after Alonto's birth and mentioned that his father, Alauya Alonto, was born before the outbreak of the Spanish-American war in 1898 and witnessed the military defeat of Muslims by Americans.

In tracing the Alonto's personal pursuit of excellence, she paid attention to the educational background of Ahmad Alonto through his father's footsteps, his positions in both the government and the

private sectors, and considered the year of 1950 a defining year and turning point in his life as a practicing Muslim.

With regards to the *Ansār al-Islām*, which Alonto established, Rowena argued that its establishment was to resolve the crisis between Muslims and Christians who were fighting against each other. The Muslims' struggle for their right to self-determination heightened during the Marcos regime, and a civil war broke out, pitting innocent civilians for a cause they never understood. According to Rowena, Alonto's efforts to solve the crisis could be summarized through his words: "love people because they love you back", and "the more knowledge you provide them, the more reward you receiving from God". Despite the historical events that Rowena explained in her paper, she did not elaborate on Alonto's Islamic Thought and its influence on the Muslims in the Philippines.

The Definition of Policy Integration.

Policy Integration. Alonto defines, the policy of integration means 'to foster, accelerate and accomplish by all adequate means and in a systematic, rapid and complete manner the moral, material, economic, social, and political advancement of the national cultural minorities, and to render real, complete and permanent their integration into operation' (Alonto1975). But the purpose of the Philippine Government is combining and integrating Muslim to the Christian majority and finally to Christianize Muslim Filipinos and settle their lands.

The integration policy was carried out through the following:

1.0 The Commission of National Integration

The conflicts in Lanao and Sulu were considered as major problems impeding peace and order and must be buried through education. Alonto maintained that his role in regards to integration implies that the Government should respect Muslim Filipinos' rights in their land and if possible, settlers must be stopped (Alonto 1973). The House of Representatives of the Third Congress of the Republic of the Philippines under the leadership of Jose B. Laurel, Jr., however, felt a greater concern for the plight of the Muslim Filipinos and organize a special Committee consisting of Congressman, with Lanao as a Chairperson, Ahmad Domocao Alonto, and Datu Luminog Mangelen of Cotabato and Obra Amilbangsa of Sulu as members to investigate the Moro Problem with emphasis on peace and order conditions in the Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan 'MINSUPALA' (Alonto 1975). The investigation of the Muslim Filipinos problem headed by Alonto reported that the so-called implies an issue on integration of Muslim Filipinos into the Philippine political body and the need to inculcate in their minds the fact that they are Filipinos representing integral part of the Filipino nation, and that the Philippine Government is elected for their welfare (Alonto 1975).

Second, this problem of integration cannot be solved easily as it requires a gradual process involving a complicated historical conflict of fight, religion, doctrinal, economic, settlers, social, educational and political. To resolve this problem, Alonto proposed a new solution and approach instead of military or armed confrontation. His proposal consists of formulation of a consistent government policy towards Muslim Filipinos tailored to their problems and needs in order to achieve rapid socio-economic, political, educational (Said 1981 & Javier-Alonto 2009), and specifically Islamic education (Alonto 1971). In June 22nd, 1957, the Republic Act no. 1888 was approved and the Commission on National Integration was formally organized in August 29th, 1957 under President Carlos P. Garcia (Alonto 1975). The Commission was empowered to perform the following tasks:

'to engage in and encourage the establishment of industrial and agricultural enterprises; to operate irrigation systems and power generating plants; to provide scientific assistance to farmers; to resettle landless cultural minorities; to promote their education and community life, help them secure employment; to grant and promote scholarship; to promote the development

of Municipal district government; and to perform any functions related to the promotion of the agricultural, industrial, and social development of the National Cultural Minorities. The Commission was given ten years to implement the programs' (Alonto 1975).

It is clear that the integration policy was deceptive. The Philippine Government's motive was to establish and provide industrial, agricultural, educational and scientific assistance to Muslim Filipino farmers so that they could control Muslim's ancestral lands in Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan without any resistance. Another agendum of the integration policy was to remove Islamic religion through western education. Despite the setbacks, the policy of integration has positive effects, such as many Muslim Filipinos acquired their education through the scholarship of Commission on National Integration (Alonto 1975). In ten years, many Muslim intellectuals and leaders in the Philippines specifically in Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan received grants and support to pursue their studies overseas (Said 1981).

The implementation of the policy of integration also suffered some problems. Alonto noted that except for the scholarship program, the Commission on National Integration failed to achieve its objectives due to lack of government and financial support, mismanagement by political appointees, and the rampant graft and corruption in its operations.

1.1 The Mindanao State University

In 1962, the Mindanao State University was set up in Marawi City (currently known as the Islamic city of Marawi) to answer the need for a government institution of higher learning in Mindanao Islands. The thrust of its creation was to implement and expedite the Philippine Government's western educational policy for traditional minorities such as Maranao, Maguindanao, Tausog, Kalagan, Samal and others non-Muslim minorities in Mindanao Islands, and to increase professional and technical training and teaching of literature, philosophy, sciences, and the arts through western education (Alonto 1975, Javier-Alonto 2009 & Manzoor 2005). Special attention to culture and to conduct several researches in these fields of study specifically those related to Filipino culture was also part of its mission and vision so as to facilitate better implementation of integration policy through the opinions of the Philippine Government. As predicted earlier by William E. Stevenson, the United States Ambassador to the Philippine Government, the Mindanao State University, located in the center place of Muslim Filipinos in Mindanao Islands has become a major integrating force and will help bind together the different cultures of Muslim and Christian Filipinos in Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan and all over the Philippines (Alonto 1975).

This is because students study and live in harmony despite the fact that they represent Muslims from all over Minsupala region as well as Christians from the regions like Luzon and the Visayas. It should also be noted that the Mindanao State University has uphold educational standards comparable to the best universities all over the Philippines. Mindanao State University is one of the distinguished educational institutions of the Philippine Government in Mindanao Islands providing western education to residents of these areas. This type of education may be considered as a sharp tool but it slowly removes the Islamic ethics and ideas specifically the Muslim women and this is one of the negative effects of western integration (Alonto 1975).

The integration policy also has positive impact in present time such as the conversion of many Christians to the Islamic religion. Most importantly, thousands of Muslim Filipinos graduated in various academic disciplines and became Muslim intellectuals and leaders in their respective municipality and provinces in the Philippines (Alonto 1975). Many university's graduates became leaders in their respective communities, were hired as employees and technical staff for government agencies, schools, universities, non-government organizations in the Mindanao, some in Visayas and Luzon, particularly in the Metro Manila and abroad. The Mindanao State University helped to educate many Muslim and Christian Filipinos

and they became intellectuals and leaders or ambassador in their respective municipalities in the Philippines and finally, decreased fighting between Muslim and Christian Filipinos (Said 1981).

1.2 Mindanao Development Authority

Alonto describes the Mindanao Development Authority as a corporate body in order carries out and spreading the broader policy of integration and more specifically the socio-economic development of the region of Muslim Mindanao, Palawan and the Sulu Archipelago (Alonto 1975). It was authorized to develop important strategies towards increased and balanced growth of Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan regions, 'Minsupala' provide quality leadership in the setting up of pioneering manufacturing and agricultural enterprises; organize and program the diverse efforts of the various public and private entities directly involved in the plan and projects affecting power, manufacturing, production, construction, mining, transportation and communications, conversation (Said 1981) And also provides western education to Muslim and Christian minorities, extension work, health and other activities leading and ahead to the socio-economic growth of the Mindanao Island and extending financial administration and technical support to worthwhile several manufacturing and business ventures within the Mindanao islands specifically in the area dominated by Maranao Muslim inhabitants in Lake Lanao, Marawi city (Alonto 1975).

Alonto mentioned that due to the country's economic challenges, the Mindanao Development Authority however, did not enjoy full financial support from the Philippine government. This is another solution proposed by the Government of the Philippines to easily control Muslim Filipinos' ancestral lands in Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan (Said 1981). It is very clear that one of the methods adopted by the Philippine Government in the control of the whole Mindanao Islands was to establish many industrial enterprises such as manufacturing, mining, transportation and communication, conversation, resettlement, western education and etc. (Alonto 1975). This may be justified in the fact that if the Philippine Government established infrastructures in Mindanao Islands, they can claim ownership or control and to the detriment of Muslim Filipinos (Manzoor 2005).

1.3 Civil Service Act Of 1959.

Alonto's policy on integration included a review of the Civil Service Act of 1959, which he found discriminatory to the Muslim Filipinos and cultural minorities. Concern on the providing equal opportunities to all Filipino citizens in the Philippine Islands, Alonto stated that, In line with the policy integration, members from cultural minorities with educational and other qualifications may be appointed to positions in the Civil service in their respective provinces when determined by the appointing authority with concurrence of the Commissioner of Civil service to be in the interest of the service (Alonto 1975).

This policy shows the tremendous opportunities offered for Muslim Filipinos with regards to good job with the Government of the Philippines. Some Muslim Filipinos were appointed in managerial position in their respective municipalities and provinces through Civil Serviced Act 1959. The creation of the Commission on National Integration, Mindanao State University, Mindanao Development Authority and Civil Service Act of 1959 has had very influential impact on Moro Muslim Filipinos in Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan (Alonto 1975). This is evident in education of Muslim Filipinos and also professionals in Mindanao Islands. This is considered to be one of Alonto's great achievements during his parliamentary struggle in the Senate of the Philippine Government (Said 1981). Alonto explained that many '*Ulamā*, professionals and graduates from Mindanao State University and *Jāmī'atu al-Fīlībīn al-Islāmia* were employed as lecturers, employees and staff in several government and private institutions, and even abroad. Alonto also accentuated that one of his approaches in regards to the integration is that people living in society should

understand one another and live side by side away from all feelings of cultural superiority. For Alonto, integration can only be achieved through unity in diversity (Alonto 1974).

Alonto's view on the policy integration of the Philippine Government was spread in the Philippine Islands; because it is very easy to convey Islamic message to the Christian Filipinos and since the integration policy of the Philippine Government practiced between Muslim and Christian Filipino students, workers and employees at Mindanao State University a lot of Christian converted to Islamic Religion until our current time (Alonto 1973). According to this, Alonto's view and concept on integration, every Muslim should protect his/her religion and Islamic tradition. He argued strongly that the only way for the Christians to understand Islamic religion was to give them models to emulate (Alonto 1975). This fourth component of Alonto's integration helped Muslim Filipinos join government institutions and gave them economic stability and permanent tenure until our current time.

Analysis and Findings

Based on my analyzing, finding and evaluation showed that Alonto tried to integrate the Muslim and Christian Filipinos in the Philippine Government through the establishment of the Commission on National Integration and the purpose of this integration is to engage in and encourage the establishment of industrial and agricultural enterprise in the Muslims areas, to operate irrigation systems and power generating plants, to provide scientific assistance to farmers, to resettle landless cultural minorities, to promote their education and community life, to grant and promote scholarship, to promote the development of Municipal district, government, industrial, and social development of the National Cultural Minorities. According to Alonto, instead of fighting everyday between Muslim and Christian Filipinos they should help each other; educate each other and living side by side without fighting. Alonto leads the Commission on National Integration in order to decrease and solve the cancerous problem between Christian and Muslim in Mesupala Region. Alontosays, this is our opportunity to educate our Muslim brother through the scholarship of the Commission on National Integration. Alonto is the one who started the establishment of Mindanao State University in order to integrate Muslim Filipinos to the Christian Government and convey Islamic message to them. Alonto intended that this is the best way to convey Islamic Da'wahto Christian Filipinos through education. The Mindanao Development Authority is one of the Philippine Government tools to control Muslim lands in Mindanao. The last component of integration is the Civil Service Act of 1959. This policy shows the tremendous opportunities offered for Muslim Filipinos with regards to good job with the Government of the Philippine. Some Muslim Filipinos were appointed in managerial position in their respective municipalities and provinces through Civil Serviced Act 1959. The creation of the Commission on National Integration, Mindanao State University, Mindanao Development Authority and Civil Service Act of 1959 has had very influential impact on Muslim Filipinos in Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan even though the Philippine Government intended to grab Muslim's lands and Christianize Muslim Filipinos but Alonto challenged them and convey the Islamic message to Christian Filipinos and educated both Muslim and Christian Filipinos through the component of the policy integration of the Philippine Government. All the Muslim intellectuals and his Christians colleague agreed about his concept on policy integration. It is confirmed that Alonto's concept on policy integration based on western education and should be Islamized. Alonto is no doubt successful in sharing all that he knows about the policy of integration and his ideas on developing and spreading the component of integrationis via education with conveying the Islamic message to Christian Filipinos and this is the best way to stop fighting between Muslim and Christian Filipinos.

Conclusion

The Alonto's concept on Policy integration of the Philippine Government have benefited the Muslim and Christian Filipinos in Mindanao in many ways since his time until now. As a member of the Philippine Senate, Alonto authored bills and acts on education, electoral representation, and national integration, the Commission on National Integration, the Mindanao Development Authority and the Civil Service of Act 1959. To address and solve the Mindanao problem which was partly orchestrated or arranged through establishment Mindanao State University. Alonto raised the level of his involvement by collaborating with the employees of the Philippine Government, local and intellectuals in order to minimize the cancerous problem between Muslim and Christian Filipinos and educate both of them. Finally, the components of the policy integration has good impact on both Muslim and Christian Filipinos in the Philippine Islands such as decreasing fighting and increasing education and conveying Islamic message to Christian Filipinos in the Philippines.

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