

# Breaking from imperial manila: an analysis of the proposed federal- parliamentary ...

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It has been two years since Federalism was proposed on the system of government of the Philippines through House Concurrent Resolution No. 15 May 7, 2008. Federalism is one of the most debatable topics today regarding the system of our government.

This discussion examines the article of Jose B. Abueva, University of the Philippines Professor Emeritus of Political Science, on the proposed federal-parliamentary system of government for the Philippines. A federal-parliamentary system must be implemented in the Philippines for it will solve the recurring societal problems and conflicts brought by our centralized government. It will also stimulate and hasten the country's political, economic and cultural development. In the unitary-presidential system of our government, the legislative power has a fixed electoral mandate that its own source of legitimacy (Abueva, 12). This means that in our system the executive power is not supported by the majority of the legislature therefore there is no cooperation.

Also, we continue the counter-productive unitary-presidential system with its powers, authority and resources centralized in the national government at the expense of local government leaders, citizens and entrepreneurs and country-wide development (1). Another flaw of the system is the Manila Centrism of our economy that causes the congestion of Manila because of the mentality of the people that they will find greener pastures there. In addition, in our system of government the national government frequently meddles in the small problems of the local governments whereas the latter can solve its own small troubles since they know more about them than the national government. Abueva explains the advantages of federalism and <https://assignbuster.com/breaking-from-imperial-manila-an-analysis-of-the-proposed-federal-parliamentary-government/>

parliamentary government in the Philippines and the characteristics of it that he formed with the Citizen's Movement for a Federal Philippines (CMFP).

There are two main features in the proposed federal-parliamentary system.

First is the self-rule by the people in the proposed 11 states and their local government. Another is the shared rule between the federal government and the states. There are eleven proposed states namely Bangsamoro (5 provinces), Davao Region and Central Mindanao (8 provinces), Western and Northern Mindanao (12 provinces), Eastern and Central Visayas (10 provinces), Western Visayas and Palawan (7 provinces), Bicol (7 provinces), Southern Luzon (8 provinces), Central Luzon (7 provinces), Cordillera (6 provinces) and Northern Luzon (9 provinces). The 11th state will be Metro Manila, which will be the center of the federal government. Abueva also compares a pure presidential regime to a pure parliamentary regime in a democracy.

In a parliamentary system, the chief executive power must be supported by a majority in the legislature and can fall if it receives a vote of no confidence. The executive power (normally in conjunction with the head of the state) has the capacity to dissolve the legislature and call for elections (11). While in a parliamentary system, the executive and legislative powers have their own fixed electoral mandates that are their sources of their legitimacy (12). In his comparison, one can easily see the advantages of a federal-parliamentary system over the unitary-presidential system, and that is the cooperation and harmony between the executive and the legislative department while still having check and balance to each other. On the proposed federal-

parliamentary system, we shall gradually and painstakingly transform our formal “electoral democracy” to a functional “substantive democracy” (15). Abueva implies that the proposed system enables the people to participate well in nation building not just in suffrage but through participation in civil, social, economical, cultural and political development.

Despite these good features of the proposed federal-parliamentary system, the problem on having self-determination and self-governance that the Bangsamoros want can arise. Even before the Spanish times, the Moros believe that they are not part of the Philippines because they are not completely conquered by the Spaniards. Unlike Luzon and Visayas, which was under the colony of the Spaniards for 333 years, the Moros were just colonized for just 50 years consecutively (Agoncillo). Federalism can give the Moros the self-governance that they want without detaching themselves from the Philippines unlike the flawed autonomy where only the power of elite Datus prevails and political wars happen like the Maguindanao massacre. However, the government should show that the proposed federal-parliamentary system is applied for the benefit of the Moros and the minorities and not just for the term extension of greedy politicians. We can address some disadvantages of federalism and adjust to it easily if we apply our own Filipino concepts and values.

Our bayanihan is applicable when the other states need help in terms of finance, natural resources or security; in this case, there is a mutual relationship. The model of federal-parliamentary system that suites our country is not really where the states are independent for each other but a

system that enables the states to help each other and prevents unnecessary political rivalries. If we consider the conditions of the Philippines in implementing federalism, we should let the masses know that there will still be a central government though the power will be more decentralized. This will make them understand easily the main difference of the system, which is the interdependence of the national and local governments. In addition, they can adjust well if this concept will be taught and revised in order to implement it successfully. In conclusion, there are two main hindrances in the development of our country can be banished by the proposed federal-parliamentary system, these are the flawed political structure and The federal-parliamentary system will solve the problem on the flawed political structure of our government.

It will allow the executive power and the legislature to harmonize. In this way political conflicts will be lessen and the laws that are essential for the Filipino people can be passed easily. The federal-parliamentary system will give the States their own freedom to solve their problem, which is good because they know among themselves on how their problems will be solved. This will give the people the chance of what the constitution called the participation in nation building. The implementation of this federal-parliamentary system we should remember that this is not just a bare structural change in the government but rather an internal change in the harmony of the leaders, the people and the proposed states.

Also, we should take note that a federal-parliamentary democracy is not proposed as a “ panacea or cure all for our myriad ill as a nation”. There is

no such thing as a cure at all. (15) But this can be a good start in alleviating the illness.