

Substantive Autonomy for Indigenous Papuans: Lessons from the Bangsamoro Peace Agreement in the Southern Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Special autonomy has been in place in Papua for more than two decades as a state accommodation instrument for the political demands of Indigenous Papuans (OAP), yet implementation remains marked by recurring armed violence, political distrust, and limited OAP participation in policymaking. This contrasts with the Southern Philippines, where the peace process between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) produced the Bangsamoro Organic Law (2018), establishing autonomy with broader legislative authority and political representation. This article analyzes the factors explaining these divergent outcomes and formulates institutional lessons for strengthening substantive autonomy in Papua. Using a qualitative library-research design with comparative document analysis of regulations, peace agreement texts, institutional reports, and academic literature, the study finds that the divergence rests on four dimensions: the formation process (imposed versus negotiated), the scope of substantive authority devolution, the strength of indigenous political representation mechanisms, and the availability of post-agreement sustainability mechanisms. Papua's autonomy remains largely

administrative-fiscal in character, without meaningful reformulation of political power structures for OAP, whereas Bangsamoro's autonomy emerged from lengthy negotiations involving binding political representation and phased normalization. The findings underscore the importance of strengthening the Papuan People's Assembly (MRP), opening inclusive dialogue, and establishing an independent post-autonomy evaluation mechanism to transform Papua's autonomy from procedural to substantive.

INTRODUCTION

Armed conflict in the Land of Papua shows no sign of abating, even though special autonomy status has been in force since 2001 and was reinforced through Law No. 2 of 2021 on the Second Amendment to Law No. 21 of 2001 (Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021). Throughout 2024, 65 cases of armed violence were recorded between the West Papua National Liberation Army–Free Papua Movement (TPNPB-OPM) and security forces, resulting in 114 casualties, 71 of whom died (Kompas.id, 2024). This figure rose in 2025, with at least 21 armed incidents and 40 casualties recorded in the first quarter of that year alone (Tempo.co, 2025). Human rights monitoring organizations have even recorded more than 100,000 civilians displaced by military operations in several highland regencies of Papua as of August 2025 (Project Multatuli, 2025). Recent monitoring data show this escalation continuing into 2026: 35-armed violence incidents were recorded in the first quarter of 2026, while second-quarter 2026 data recorded the highest number of civilian deaths from security-force operations documented by that organization in the past decade (Human Rights Monitor, 2026a, 2026b). This phenomenon reveals a fundamental paradox: special autonomy, normatively designed as a conflict-resolution instrument, has instead proceeded alongside escalating rather than diminishing violence.

The significance of examining this phenomenon lies in the scale of fiscal and political resources the state has devoted to Papua's Special Autonomy without adequately resolving the

underlying political grievances of OAP. Independent academic evaluations of two decades of Special Autonomy implementation show that the development gap with the national average remains high, and that special autonomy fund governance still faces distribution and central-regional coordination problems (Teraspapua.com, 2026; Prabowo, Supriyono, Noor, & Muluk, 2021). The gap between the scale of the budget and the lack of progress on the political dimension underscores that Papua's problem is not solely about economic welfare, but also about unresolved recognition and political representation for OAP (Jentera Indonesia, 2021). In this context, comparative lessons from other autonomy cases that have relatively succeeded in de-escalating separatist conflict become academically and politically relevant.

The Southern Philippines offers an instructive contrast. After more than four decades of armed conflict between the Philippine government and Moro groups, the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) in 2014 and the passage of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) in 2018 gave rise to the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), with a far broader scope of authority than its predecessor, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (PeaceRep, 2019). Under the agreement, of 81 areas of authority mapped between the central government and Bangsamoro, 58 were fully devolved to Bangsamoro and 14 others shared (Peace Accords Matrix, 2025). Although Bangsamoro's political transition has also faced challenges, including repeated postponements of its first parliamentary election from an original 2022 target to 2026 (Rappler, 2026), its institutional trajectory shows a genuine shift from procedural to substantive autonomy, marked by legislative authority and binding political representation.

Several studies have compared Papua's special autonomy with Aceh's to explain why Aceh is considered relatively more successful in de-escalating separatism than Papua. Barter and Wangge (2022) show that the substantive content of Aceh's and Papua's autonomy arrangements is relatively similar, but their negotiation processes differed sharply; Aceh's autonomy was negotiated with former Free Aceh Movement combatants after the tsunami and the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding, whereas Papua's autonomy was imposed from above without adequate involvement of OAP political representation. Lele (2021) reinforces this argument, showing that the success of asymmetric decentralization in de-escalating separatist conflict is determined by the degree of accommodation, both in process and in policy outcomes. In cross-national comparison, Kwak (2025) uses Galtung's Conflict Triangle model to compare Papua and Bangsamoro, finding that securitization and victimization dominate the pattern of conflict in Papua, while Bangsamoro moves toward incrementalism and inclusivity through peace negotiations. Söderberg Kovacs, Höglund, and Jiménez (2021) note that Bangsamoro's autonomy risks producing a fragile peace if the benefits of autonomy are not distributed evenly, while Eaton and Shair-Rosenfield (2024) highlight differing patterns of territorial accommodation between Indonesia and the Philippines in de-escalating separatist conflict.

Although the literature above has mapped differences in process and outcome across the two cases, studies that specifically link this comparison to the institutional architecture of indigenous political representation, the Papuan People's Assembly (Majelis Rakyat Papua/MRP) on one hand and the Bangsamoro Parliament with its sectoral seats for indigenous peoples on the other, remain limited. Indonesian-language studies on Papua's Special Autonomy generally stop at domestic comparison with Aceh (Suharyo, 2018) or focus solely on administrative-legal aspects (Pasalli, 2023), without situating the Papua case within a broader autonomy-based conflict-resolution theoretical framework or systematically comparing it with the contextually relevant Bangsamoro experience.

The novelty of this article lies in linking the “process versus substance” framework developed by Barter and Wangge (2022) with a comparative institutional analysis of OAP and Bangsamoro political representation, in order to formulate four dimensions distinguishing substantive from procedural autonomy: the formation process, the scope of authority devolution, the strength of indigenous political representation, and post-agreement sustainability mechanisms.

Based on the foregoing, this research aims to: (1) analyze the factors explaining the divergent outcomes between Papua's special autonomy and Bangsamoro's autonomy; and (2) formulate institutional lessons from Bangsamoro's peace process and autonomy design relevant to strengthening substantive autonomy in Papua.

Theoretically, this research contributes to extending the process-substance framework of asymmetric autonomy into cross-national comparison in Southeast Asia, while testing the relevance of Kymlicka's (1995) theory of minority self-government rights in a postcolonial autonomy context marked by protracted armed conflict. Practically, this research is expected to inform policymakers evaluating the direction of Papua's Special Autonomy reform, particularly regarding strengthening MRP's authority, opening inclusive dialogue space, and establishing an independent post-autonomy evaluation mechanism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Main Theory: Asymmetric Autonomy as a Conflict-Resolution Instrument

Asymmetric territorial autonomy theory positions autonomy as one power-sharing instrument for de-escalating self-determination disputes between territorial minority groups and the state (Wolff, 2010; Weller & Wolff, 2005; Hannum, 1990). Rather than granting full independence, autonomy offers limited self-government authority within a unitary or federal state framework, with non-uniform variation in authority across regions depending on historical context and the political demands of the group concerned. Ghai and Woodman (2013) argue that the success of autonomy as a conflict-resolution mechanism is determined not merely by constitutional design on paper, but also by the accompanying political process. This argument is sharpened by Barter and Wangge (2022), who show through a comparison of Aceh and Papua that similar autonomy content can produce very different outcomes depending on the formation process; autonomy negotiated with the political representation of the aggrieved group tends to be more legitimate and sustainable than autonomy imposed unilaterally by the central government. Recent work by Juon and Bochsler (2023) reinforces this argument by showing that the effectiveness of territorial autonomy in de-escalating separatist conflict also depends on the timing of its grant within a country's political-transition cycle, not merely on the formal content of the authority granted.

Supporting Theory: Minority Self-Government Rights and the Conflict Triangle

The normative framework explaining why indigenous groups are entitled to autonomy is provided by Kymlicka's (1995) liberal multiculturalism theory, which distinguishes three types of group-differentiated rights: self-government rights for national/indigenous minorities, polyethnic rights for immigrant groups, and special representation rights to correct historical exclusion. Within this framework, both OAP and the Moro people can be categorized as national minorities in Kymlicka's sense, since both possess historical territorial attachment and self-government claims, rather than merely claims to cultural integration. To explain the dynamics of conflict transformation toward peace, this research also draws on Galtung's Conflict Triangle model as applied by Kwak (2025) in comparing Papua and Bangsamoro, which outlines three

interlinked dimensions: the attitude of conflicting actors, institutional and practical behavior, and the contradiction in each side's desired resolution approach.

Previous Research and Synthesis

A body of prior research shows a relatively consistent pattern of findings. Barter and Wangge (2022) and Lele (2021) both conclude that an inclusive negotiation process is the main explanatory variable for Aceh's relative success over Papua, even though the substantive authority content of the two autonomy arrangements is relatively equivalent on paper. In the Philippine case, Söderberg Kovacs et al. (2021) emphasize that Bangsamoro's autonomy opens the possibility of sustainable peace, but that sustainability depends on equitable economic benefit-sharing and post-agreement institutional consolidation which is a finding relevant given the repeated postponement of Bangsamoro Parliament elections (East Asia Forum, 2025; New Mandala, 2025). Kwak (2025) reinforces the cross-case comparison by showing that the attitude-behavior-contradiction pattern in the Papua conflict is rigid and protracted, unlike Bangsamoro's pattern, which moves toward incrementalism and gradual reconciliation. Eaton and Shair-Rosenfield (2024) add a territorial dimension, showing that the demarcation of autonomous territory also affects the degree of political accommodation perceived by the group concerned.

At the domestic institutional level, studies on MRP affirm that this institution formally functions as OAP's cultural representation, with consideration and approval authority over draft special regional regulations, but that this authority is frequently marginalized in practice because it is consultative rather than binding (Majelis Rakyat Papua, 2020; Pasalli, 2023; Firman, 2025). Recent research reinforces this pattern: Situmorang (2025) shows that Papua's top-down autonomy approach leaves limited room for meaningful conflict transformation, while Tryatmoko (2025) documents the deterioration of local democratic quality in Papua following the expansion of Special Autonomy, consistent with the argument that progressive authority content on paper does not automatically produce better political legitimacy.

Critical Analysis of the Literature

The process-substance literature (Barter & Wangge, 2022; Lele, 2021) has strength in its parsimonious causal explanation of the negotiation-process variable, but tends to pay less attention to the detailed institutional design of indigenous representation. Conversely, institutional studies of MRP (Pasalli, 2023; Majelis Rakyat Papua, 2020) are rich in domestic institutional detail but thin on comparative cross-national theoretical framing. Galtung's Conflict Triangle model as used by Kwak (2025) excels at explaining attitude-behavior-contradiction dynamics but is less specific in detailing the elements of autonomy institutional design itself. Kymlicka's (1995) theory, while providing a strong normative foundation regarding self-government rights, was developed in a Western liberal-democratic context, so its application to a postcolonial context marked by an authoritarian legacy and protracted armed conflict, such as Indonesia and the Philippines, requires contextual adaptation. This research positions itself to bridge the respective strengths of these approaches.

METHODS

Approach and Research Type

This research uses a qualitative approach with a comparative-analytical descriptive research type. The design employed is library research through comparative document analysis, rather than field research based on primary interviews. This design choice rests on two considerations. First, substantively, the research question is comparative-institutional in nature, requiring examination of regulatory texts, peace agreement texts, and institutional documentation from two different jurisdictions, making document analysis the most appropriate

strategy. Second, ethically and methodologically, the ongoing armed conflict context in Papua demands caution regarding the safety of potential informants; document-based research enables credible analysis without posing security risks to vulnerable subjects.

Location and Unit of Analysis

This research focuses on two units of analysis: (1) special autonomy governance in Papua Province and its resulting split-off provinces (Lembaga Administrasi Negara, 2023), with an analysis period of 2001–2026; and (2) Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao governance in the Southern Philippines, with an analysis period of 2014–2026. Both cases were selected using a most-similar-systems-design logic — shared context as postcolonial, multiethnic archipelagic states with a history of protracted armed separatist conflict and the adoption of asymmetric autonomy policy as a policy response — but differing on the key variable of autonomy formation process.

Data Sources and Collection Techniques

Research data consist of secondary data grouped into three categories: (1) legal documents and official agreements, comprising Law No. 21 of 2001 (Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 2001), Law No. 2 of 2021 (Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021), the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (2014) (Government of the Republic of the Philippines & Moro Islamic Liberation Front, 2014), and the Bangsamoro Organic Law/Republic Act No. 11054 (2018) (Republic of the Philippines, 2018); (2) institutional and civil-society organization reports, comprising reports from the Papuan People's Assembly, the Bangsamoro Transition Authority, Human Rights Monitor, and Papua humanitarian monitoring organizations; and (3) indexed academic literature obtained through systematic searches of the Scopus and Google Scholar databases, as well as SINTA/Garuda-accredited national journal portals, using the keywords “Papua special autonomy,” “Bangsamoro autonomy,” “asymmetric decentralization Indonesia Philippines,” and their variations. Data collection was conducted through documentation and staged literature searches, beginning with primary sources, followed by secondary academic sources, and cross-verified with credible journalistic sources for current contextual data.

Data Validity

Data validity was maintained through source triangulation — comparing information contained in legal documents, institutional reports, and academic literature to ensure consistency of findings — as well as theoretical triangulation, using more than one theoretical framework (asymmetric autonomy theory and Galtung's Conflict Triangle model) to interpret the same data. For journalistic sources used to support current contextual data, this research only referenced media outlets and institutions with credible track records and cross-verified information across sources.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted using qualitative content analysis through the stages of data reduction (document coding based on the four dimensions of the conceptual framework), data display (paired comparison matrices between Papua and Bangsamoro), and conclusion drawing/verification, conducted iteratively until thematic saturation was reached.

Research Ethics

Because this research is entirely based on public documents and does not directly involve human subjects, human-subjects ethical approval was not required. Nevertheless, the researcher applied academic caution by avoiding overgeneralization of minority/indigenous group narratives, citing sources transparently and traceably, and striving for balanced perspective between state and OAP/Bangsamoro viewpoints in presenting the findings.

RESULTS

Historical Context of the Conflict

The Papua conflict and the Mindanao conflict share roots in controversial postcolonial territorial-integration processes and structural inequality toward indigenous populations. Papua was integrated into Indonesia through a process culminating in the 1969 Act of Free Choice (Penentuan Pendapat Rakyat), while the Moro region in Mindanao experienced structural marginalization from the colonial era through post-independence Philippine internal-migration policies that altered Mindanao's demographic composition (Barter & Wangge, 2022). Armed liberation fronts emerged in both regions: the Free Papua Movement (OPM) and its successor TPNPB in Papua, and the Moro National Liberation Front and its offshoot the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in Mindanao.

Autonomy Formation Process: Imposed versus Negotiated

Papua's special autonomy was born through Law No. 21 of 2001, formulated by the central government in the post-Reform (pos-Reformasi) period as a preemptive response to referendum demands, without adequately involving OAP political representation in its formulation process (Barter & Wangge, 2022). The second revision through Law No. 2 of 2021 was even more problematic in process terms, as the central government did not meaningfully involve the Papuan People's Assembly, a move met with the arrest of participants at a Special Autonomy evaluation forum in Merauke and the forced dispersal of student protests against the revision (Jentera Indonesia, 2021).

By contrast, the Bangsamoro Organic Law was the outcome of a seventeen-year negotiation process between the Philippine government and the MILF, facilitated by international mediation, beginning with the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (2012) and culminating in the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro on 27 March 2014 (Philippine News Agency, 2026; PeaceRep, 2019). Although this process was also marked by serious violent incidents, such as the Mamasapano incident in January 2015, which killed dozens of police personnel and others (PeaceRep, 2019), negotiations continued through the passage of the BOL in 2018 and its ratification via plebiscite in 2019.

Scope of Substantive Authority Devolution

Comparing the scope of authority reveals significant differences, as summarized in Table 1. Under the CAB, of 81 areas of authority mapped, 58 were fully devolved to Bangsamoro, 14 shared with the central government, and only 9 remained the central government's exclusive authority, including defense and foreign relations (Peace Accords Matrix, 2025). Devolved authority includes the establishment of the Bangsamoro Parliament under a parliamentary system distinct from the national presidential system, fiscal authority in the form of revenue-sharing and block grants, and authority over Bangsamoro waters via a special annex (Peace Accords Matrix, 2025).

By contrast, Papua's Special Autonomy grants authority to manage affairs based on its own initiative within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), but this authority is predominantly in the form of fiscal transfers, the Special Autonomy Fund, and administrative affirmative-action policy, without separate legislative authority or a restructuring of the system of government that fundamentally distinguishes Papua from other provinces beyond fiscal aspects and representation quotas (Suharyo, 2018).

Table 1. Comparison of Autonomy Dimensions between Papua and Bangsamoro

Dimension	Papua Special Autonomy	Bangsamoro Autonomy (BARMM)
Legal basis	Law 21/2001 jo. Law 2/2021	CAB 2014; Republic Act No. 11054/2018
Formation process	Formulated by central government, minimal OAP representation involvement	17-year government–MILF negotiation, facilitated by international mediation
System of government	Continues to follow the national presidential system	Parliamentary, distinct from the national system
Legislative authority	Limited; special regional regulations require central approval	Bangsamoro Parliament holds autonomous legislative authority
Fiscal authority	Special Autonomy Fund (conditional transfer)	Revenue-sharing and block grants
Indigenous group representation	MRP: consideration/approval authority, consultative in nature	Bangsamoro Parliament: party, district, and sectoral seats (including IP), binding in nature
Normalization mechanism	No formal dialogue/decommissioning pathway with TPNPB-OPM	Normalization pathway: MILF weapons decommissioning, monitored by the Third-Party Monitoring Team

Indigenous Political Representation

The Papuan People's Assembly functions as OAP's cultural representation with four principal authorities: providing consideration and approval regarding governor/deputy governor candidates, consideration regarding candidates for Papua's MPR RI delegation, consideration and approval of draft special regional regulations, and consideration of regional government cooperation agreements with third parties (Majelis Rakyat Papua, 2020). Despite having an approval function that appears significant on paper, in practice MRP's authority is frequently marginalized because its position is not legally equal to the Papua Regional House of Representatives (DPR Papua) or the central government, meaning its recommendations and considerations can be disregarded (Majelis Rakyat Papua, 2020; Pasalli, 2023). By comparison, Bangsamoro's representational architecture includes an 80-seat Bangsamoro Parliament comprising party-representation seats, parliamentary district seats, and sectoral seats, including seats reserved for non-Moro indigenous peoples in the Bangsamoro region (Rappler, 2026; International IDEA, 2019; Paredes, 2015). The Bangsamoro Parliament's legislative authority is binding, functioning as an autonomous legislative body rather than merely an advisory body, although its implementation also faces institutional-consolidation challenges (International IDEA, 2019; East Asia Forum, 2025).

Post-Agreement Sustainability Mechanisms

The Bangsamoro agreement is equipped with two parallel implementation tracks: a political track toward establishing BARMM and the Bangsamoro Parliament, and a normalization track covering the decommissioning of MILF combatant weapons, the transformation of former

conflict areas, and the socio-economic reintegration of former combatants, monitored by an independent Third-Party Monitoring Team (Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, 2024). By contrast, Papua's Special Autonomy has no equivalent mechanism in the form of a normalization pathway involving dialogue with TPNPB-OPM, nor a permanent independent monitoring mechanism; Special Autonomy evaluation is largely internal to government, conducted through the Steering Body for the Acceleration of Papua Special Autonomy Development established under Article 68A of Law No. 2 of 2021, without directly involving the disputing parties within a formal dialogue framework (Jurnal Civile UTU, 2023).

Recent developments confirm that Bangsamoro's own political process remains far from fully stable, meaning its advantage over Papua's Special Autonomy is relative rather than absolute. In September 2024, the Philippine Supreme Court ruled that Sulu Province was not lawfully part of BARMM, as a majority of its voters had rejected ratification of the BOL in the 2019 plebiscite. This ruling eliminated seven of the Bangsamoro Parliament's 80 seats and contributed to repeated postponements of its first parliamentary election, from an original May 2025 target to October 2025, then postponed again to no later than 31 March 2026, and postponed once more in early 2026 by the electoral authority due to technical redistricting constraints (International Crisis Group, 2026). The normalisation track also remains incomplete: as of mid-2025, around 14,000 of the total scheduled MILF combatants were still awaiting the final phase of weapons decommissioning, while the central government unilaterally replaced BARMM's interim Chief Minister in March 2025, triggering internal MILF tensions that have not fully subsided (International Crisis Group, 2026; Timberman & Moner, 2025). These findings confirm that Bangsamoro's autonomy, while structurally more substantive than Papua's Special Autonomy across the four dimensions analysed, remains an unfinished institutional project vulnerable to political intervention from the central government.

DISCUSSION

The findings above confirm the core argument of Barter and Wangge (2022) and Lele (2021) that the autonomy formation process matters more for success than authority content alone. Within Wolff's (2010) and Weller and Wolff's (2005) asymmetric autonomy theory framework, the legitimacy of an autonomy regime depends heavily on the extent to which the targeted group feels ownership over its institutional design. Bangsamoro's autonomy, while also imperfect, emerged from a lengthy bargaining process that gave the MILF, as the Moro community's primary political representative during negotiations, an equal position in formulating the autonomy design, so the resulting authority reflects a shared compromise and is therefore more readily accepted as legitimate by Bangsamoro's constituent base. By contrast, Papua's autonomy was formulated by the central government with limited OAP political representation involvement, so that although its content is fairly progressive on paper for a unitary state, its acceptance among OAP remains low.

At least three causal factors can explain this divergence in outcomes. First, the degree of conflict internationalisation differs significantly: Bangsamoro's peace process was facilitated by Malaysian mediation and monitored by international observer groups, while Indonesia has consistently treated the Papua issue as a domestic matter closed to international third-party facilitation. Second, the structure of the disputing parties' political representation differs: the MILF is a relatively consolidated single actor able to represent the Bangsamoro constituency in formal negotiations, whereas OAP political representation is fragmented among MRP as a formal state institution, armed TPNPB-OPM factions, and civil-society and diaspora groups with diverse

political positions, leaving the government without a single negotiating partner regarded as representative by all parties. Third, state policy approaches toward each conflict differ: the Philippine government shifted from a security approach toward political dialogue after repeated failures of the military option, while a security approach remains the dominant policy toward Papua to this day, as reflected in escalating military operations and a continually rising number of internally displaced persons (Project Multatuli, 2025).

Academically, these findings both confirm and extend Barter and Wangge's (2022) process-substance framework by showing that the dimensions of indigenous political representation and post-agreement sustainability mechanisms are additional variables that must be explicitly accounted for, not merely the initial negotiation process. Autonomy that is negotiated but lacks credible sustainability mechanisms risks legitimacy erosion, as reflected in the repeated uncertainty surrounding the Bangsamoro Parliament election schedule (New Mandala, 2025; International Crisis Group, 2026); this finding aligns with Schulte and Carolan's (2023) argument that the durability of post-conflict autonomy agreements is determined more by the degree of legalization of their sustainability mechanisms than by the content of the initial agreement alone. Conversely, autonomy that is imposed but subsequently strengthened with binding political representation may gain additional legitimacy despite a problematic initial process.

At the policy level, these findings indicate that reforming Papua's Special Autonomy toward substantive autonomy requires at least three steps. First, transforming MRP's authority from consultative to legally binding, particularly in the approval process for special regional regulations and the appointment of OAP-related public officials, mirroring the Bangsamoro Parliament's binding legislative authority. Second, opening formal, inclusive dialogue space involving broader OAP political representation, including civil-society groups, churches, and customary leaders, not limited to a security approach. Third, establishing an independent post-autonomy evaluation mechanism involving trusted monitoring parties, given that evaluation that is entirely internal to government tends to be less trusted by OAP as the directly affected party.

Nevertheless, adopting the Bangsamoro model in the Papua context must account for significant contextual differences. The Indonesian government consistently regards the Papua issue as part of NKRI's sovereignty and territorial integrity, which cannot simply be equated with the Philippine political process that recognized Mindanao as a new autonomous entity resulting from negotiation with an armed group; differing views on Papua's final status remain an unresolved point of political contestation between the central government and segments of OAP, and this study does not intend to take sides on that political position, but rather to analyze autonomy institutional design comparatively and institutionally.

In addition, internal fragmentation within TPNPB-OPM makes forming a single negotiating partner akin to the MILF a distinct challenge that cannot be resolved merely by replicating Bangsamoro's institutional design. Therefore, lessons from Bangsamoro are most usefully understood not as a blueprint for direct application, but as a reference on the principled importance of participatory process, binding representation, and post-policy sustainability in redesigning Papua's autonomy architecture.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that the divergence in outcomes between Papua's special autonomy and Bangsamoro's autonomy rests on four interrelated dimensions: the autonomy formation process, the scope of substantive authority devolution, the strength of indigenous political representation mechanisms, and the availability of post-agreement sustainability

mechanisms. Papua's autonomy, while progressive in some administrative and fiscal aspects, remains at the level of procedural autonomy due to the limited involvement of binding OAP political representation in both process and implementation; by contrast, Bangsamoro's autonomy, while not yet fully mature, has moved further toward substantive autonomy through a combination of inclusive negotiation, legislative authority devolution, and normalization mechanisms monitored by independent parties.

The main contribution of this research is a four-dimensional conceptual framework of substantive autonomy that extends the existing process-substance framework in the Aceh-Papua comparative literature, while presenting cross-national comparative evidence that remains limited in the Indonesian-language literature on Papua's Special Autonomy policy.

This research has several limitations. First, it relies entirely on secondary data and public documents without primary data from direct interviews with OAP, MILF/BARMM, or relevant government officials, so interpretation of the direct perceptions and experiences of affected groups remains limited to what has been documented by others. Second, the Papua-Bangsamoro comparison faces comparability limitations given differences in religious context, demographic composition, and armed-actor structure that are not fully equivalent. Third, the dynamics of both cases continue to evolve, including the repeated postponement of the Bangsamoro Parliament election, which as of the writing of this manuscript had still not taken place (International Crisis Group, 2026), and Papua's continually shifting security dynamics (Human Rights Monitor, 2026b), meaning these findings will need to be updated as policy developments continue.

Future research is recommended to complement these findings with field research based on interviews with OAP, MRP members, and/or Bangsamoro actors to deepen understanding of local perceptions of autonomy design; to extend the comparison to include the Bougainville autonomy case in Papua New Guinea as a regionally relevant third case; and to conduct quantitative process-tracing of the allocation and absorption of Papua's Special Autonomy Fund to test the relationship between fiscal authority and OAP welfare indicators more rigorously.

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