

Biggest fake news: oversimplified federalization

We have heard it repeatedly—we federalize, our country's woes end. The collapse of the Soviet Union reveals the many pitfalls of federalization. It should have succeeded, its mission having been clearly defined: to establish an egalitarian proletarian society.

This goal was implemented by a leveling of wages among Soviet citizens, and a leveling of incomes among the republics, facilitated by a centrally planned economy. The central planners allocated resources to the republics on the basis of perceived needs without reference to economic cost.

To top it all, the Communist Party had the "leading role" (read: dictatorial powers) in society. Critics, or those who deviated from party policy, were either executed or put in a gulag. If one designed a system to facilitate federalization, one would clone the Soviet model. Nonetheless, on Dec. 26, 1991, the USSR was dissolved; its downfall was initiated by Russia, Ukraine and Byelorussia, the three most advanced republics.

In 1917, following the October Revolution, the federation brought together 15 republics that were all in the 19th century in terms of development. By the 1980s the republics in Europe had moved into the 20th century, while the southern republics—Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, etc.—remained in the 19th century. What happened in the USSR was replicated in the federal systems in Third World countries like Nigeria, India, Brazil, Mexico, etc., which failed to lessen the inequality between the imperial capital and

its less developed states.

The Duterte administration claims that it will set up an "income equalization fund" so that the wealthy states will give subsidies to the poor states. The equalization fund has worked in federations where the gap between rich and poor is miniscule. In Canada this gap is estimated at 1.6 to 1. Moreover, the gap is not permanent. Initially, the wealthiest Canadian provinces in terms of per capita GDP were Ontario and Quebec. But the discovery of oil and gas in the prairie provinces changed this equation. Alberta will soon become the richest province of Canada. From a recipient of subsidy it has become a donor to the fund.

In the Soviet Union, the subsidy from the European to the southern republics was endless. Eventually, the citizens of the wealthy republics suffered from "subsidy fatigue" to the corrupt southern republics.

The socialist doctrine of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" was not observed in the southern republics; the resource distribution was done by Muslim leaders in accordance with their own rules. The basis for advancement in the local Communist Party was old-style patronage, and not "commitment to socialism." In short, the USSR broke up because there was no modernization in its Muslim republics.

Discussions on the Philippines' Moro problem is centered on the blame game, with our Moro brothers repeatedly emphasizing the exploitation they had suffered in the hands of the Spaniards, the Americans, and now the Christian majority. Nothing is said about the failure of their own leaders.

The best example is in Maguindanao. The Ampatuans had far more powers than could be conferred legally in a federal system. They received enormous handouts from the government; they had their own system of taxation and their own system of justice, and they manipulated elections. They could have stayed on in power indefinitely had they not overreached and committed the Maguindanao massacre. That is the reality that the proponents of federalization have not discussed.

The citizens of the National Capital Region, like their counterparts in the defunct USSR, will eventually suffer from "subsidy fatigue" if they see their taxes propping up numerous Ampatuan clans in the southern areas. Eventually, the NCR will break up the federal union. By omitting the issue of modernization in Moro society, the proponents of federalization are disseminating fake news.

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* FEDERALISM