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THEME: THE ROLE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN BUILDING A HARMONIOUS SOCIETY

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Peace Administration in Philippine Public
Administration and Governance

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Introduction

The major political upheavals the country is going through which critically threaten modest economic gains and weaken already fragile institutions highlight the central role of public administration (PA) and governance in the country’s continued quest to approximate political stability and sustainable economic development. While such role of PA and governance had long been defined in areas such as policymaking and implementation, fiscal management and local governance, areas and/or fields of public sector management such as peace administration continue to draw increasing importance. This is mainly characteristic of the current “beyond-the-state” character of PA called governance, which afforded PA an encompassing reach and daunting expectations.

Peace administration as a critical area in Philippine public administration and governance draws its urgency from the continued struggle of the government to forge peace in southern Philippines specifically the peace settlement with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). The slow progress in the peace development process continues to be hampered by the very concerns of PA and governance: poor capacities amongst local government units involved; overlapping/duplicating of functions of government bodies; and, lack of transparency and accountability in the management of public funds.

This paper will attempt to highlight Philippine PA and governance’s central role in the administration/governance of peace in the country. A cursory quick review of the evolution of PA in the country and its consistent focus on the concerns/problems (presumably including the peace problem) that ail the society rather than its disciplinary tradition, will be done. A quick review of the peace programs and/or efforts will then be discussed along the lines of Philippine PA and governance’s socially conscious albeit highly politicized, stance.

From this, the paper will outline the challenges that the peace programs have to grapple with highlighting the critical areas of intervention where PA and governance can be most helpful. Specifically, the nuances and vagaries of the peace problem will be looked into in the context of governance’s principles of popular participation (citizen participation, local governance, etc.), transparency and accountability and predictability.

Finally, the paper will also take a quick look at how peace administration can be more appropriately captured in the framework of Philippine PA/Governance instruction and research.

II. Philippine PA: From Administration to Governance

Public Administration in the Philippines formally began with the establishment of the then Institute of Public Administration at the University of the Philippines under a technical assistance from the United States and the United Nations in 1952. However, the roots of Philippine PA’s administrative character can be traced back to as early as the pre-colonial era, the colonial period and the later, independence period which have all enriched it. And so, when PA was formally instituted in 1952, the country already had a sense of the nature and scope of its administrative character which was possibly an uneasy mixture of indigenous Filipino concepts of social/community management, raw ideas/symbols of military rule courtesy of the Japanese colonizers, vague concepts of a central government-church rule courtesy of the Spaniards and, huge American ideals of democracy and election systems.
Such an “uneasy mixture” of influences however did not render Philippine PA nagging to be defined or approximated by clear philosophical characterization when PA was formally introduced in the country with a strong American flavor of “conflict controversy” with political science. Philippine PA steered away from American PA’s preoccupation with its definitional and philosophical issues as a distinct discipline. Rather, it evolved independently as an academic discipline and continued to grow as a fusion of external theorizations, constructs, principles and internal concerns.

A. Inward-looking PA

These internal problems of the public organizations and administrative system as well as the overriding goal of instilling traditional PA values of efficiency, effectiveness and equity, made Philippine PA more conscious of what Danilo Reyes, in 1995, termed as the “anomalies of its environment” rather than American PA’s propositions of politics-administration dichotomy, which Reyes also aptly called “anomalies of the field”. PA literature during this time was “inward looking” or preoccupied with the problems engulfing the public sector as well as the internal problems of the bureaucracy.

This inward looking theme continued to persist as PA expanded towards wide-ranging concerns from institution building to the strengthening of its network and collaborative activities with the public sector. This period (1957-1972) which Reyes categorized as a period of institution building and the search for new frontiers was marked by the involvement of more Filipino scholars in the study and practice of PA. This period ended with the dark years of martial law in the early 70’s.

B. Socially Conscious and Politicized PA

The next phase in the evolution of Philippine PA was a turbulent one as the country was then plunged into the uncertainties of transition. While the martial law administration effected sweeping changes in government under an authoritarian regime, it also sought to foster the philosophy of development, largely drawn from influences then ranging from the international community. This period was characterized by the restructuring of the bureaucracy under the Integrated Reorganization Plan, the rise of technocrats, the fixation with development goals of the Marcos’ model of constitutional authoritarianism. It was a difficult period for scholars of PA. In their quest for efficiency in the administrative system, they were faced with the choice of either collaborating with an authoritarian regime which hopefully would correct fundamental anomalies in the bureaucracy or resisting it in favor of slow but democratic means of reform. This period also marked the emphasis on development administration during the Marcos years. This period saw the flowering of concern for a client-focused orientation or the outward-looking theme, as the discipline become engrossed with such problems as equity, redistribution of wealth, better service delivery, and also as a result of the influence of the outlook towards new PA. (Reyes: 1995)

From 1982 to 1992, Philippine PA was associated with the increasing activism of the discipline as regards inequities in society. It was in this era where the embers of political activism began to be fanned as PA, as well as the rest of Philippine society, saw the Marcos regime as a corrupt and illegitimate dispensation that cannot deliver the desired reforms both in government and in society as a whole. Much of the studies in this period represented the then prevailing mood for change, for reforms and for attention to the populace, which has
been habitually neglected by government. PA in the Philippines continued to evolve a socially conscious, social reform-oriented but highly politicized character. (Reyes: 1995)

C. Research in Philippine PA

In 2002, Ledevina Cariño chronicled the nature, scope and character of research in Philippine PA from the traditional public administration to the current governance phase/period, which she aptly called “varieties” of Philippine PA. Cariño’s work highlighted local conceptualization or theorization of what, how and for whom the study and practice of public administration should be in the Philippines.

Her study proved that while influenced by foreign, mostly American PA theories, principles, constructs and elements, the researches in various areas notably showed democracy, Philippine style, as both content and context. The areas also highlighted the dominant concerns of PA research, which Cariño concluded to be specific to the Philippines, although “universal” to the PA discipline. These areas were:

- Personnel Administration/Human Resources Administration;
- Organization and Management;
- Fiscal Administration;
- Studies of Political Institutions;
- Democracy as a proper subject for PA;
- Bureaucracy-Democracy;
- Popular Participation/Citizenship;
- Decentralization/Devolution; and,
- State-Market Relations.

D. Governance

The 1999 World Conference on Governance held in the Philippines has been regarded as a coming of age for Philippine PA as it formally redefined Philippine PA’s scope and extent. Broadly defined, governance now refers to the sound exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage a country’s resources for development. It embraces not only the affairs of the government but also the proactive role of the private sector and civil society in national development. Its basic elements are accountability, participation, predictability and transparency. (Carino: 2000)

Consistent with the governance’s encompassing “beyond-the-state” character, Philippine PA thus widened its horizons and expanded to diminish the confines of the state and look beyond it to include in its purview, all other (democratic) state institutions (legislative, judicial, civil society, etc.) that are involved/engaged in the activities of the public sphere.

In dissecting the governance concept that now characterizes Philippine PA, Cariño highlighted what she termed as processes pushing for governance:

- the quest for growth and development;
- the environmental movement;
- globalization; and,
- peace consolidation.
III. Peace Consolidation

In the 1999 World Conference on Governance, the need to consolidate peace in countries experiencing war, secession movements and internal conflicts was highlighted as a critical process for governance. This could not be truer for the Philippines as the continuing peace problem remains to be a nagging governance agenda. In governing all protagonists for peace, governance demands capacity building not only for the state agencies in dealing with former rebels, but also leadership and political skills training so that they can take up social responsibilities side by side with their military and civilian counterparts. The actors of governance, private sector and civil society must embrace them. The private sector must look at them with new eyes, as potential producers/consumers and as part of the market while civil society must acknowledge them as members. The tasks of nation building must be seen by all as their collective responsibilities and the resulting peace and development their common ownership. (Geingob in Carino 2000:75)

A. The Mindanao Conflict

The conflict in Mindanao has largely been concentrated in the Muslim-majority areas of central and southwestern Mindanao, which consists of three of today’s administrative regions (Region IX—Western Mindanao; Region XII—Central Mindanao; and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, or ARMM) and of four provinces in Region XI—Southern Mindanao (Davao del Sur; Sarangani; South Cotabato; and Sultan Kudarat).

Resistance to central control and resentment at the increasing number of Christian settlers, as well as the logging and mining activities, which had become important sources of export earnings, was at first organized under the aegis of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) formed in the late 1960s, and until the 1990s largely accepted as representing the interests of Mindanao’s Muslim population. Despite the formation of Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) in 1989, and the formal acceptance of the 1996 peace accord between the Government and the MNLF, the armed conflict continued. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) emerged as the Government’s main opponent.

MILF, as the name suggests, is more religion-oriented than the nationalistic-oriented MNLF, but is in no way comparable in attitudes or practices to Islamic fundamentalist organizations elsewhere in East Asia. The Moros have benefited from the support of the Organization of Islamic Conferences, and have maintained close relations with Muslims in Indonesia and Malaysia.

However, MILF relations with the small terrorist (and largely criminal) group Abu Sayyaf and the Indonesia-based Jemaah Islamiyah have been sporadic and loose, and in the context of the on-going peace discussions the MILF has distanced itself completely from those organizations. Overall, although religious differences have partly shaped the conflict, the roots of the conflict have been the clash of interests in land and other natural resources, and the identity issues emerging from the de facto second class status of much of the Moro population.

1 This portion has, as major reference, Salvatore Schiavo-Campo and Mary Judd's paper, The Mindanao Conflict in the Philippines: Roots, Costs and Potential, written for Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit, World Bank (Social Development Papers). Paper No. 24, February 2005)
B. Philippine Peace Programs

Successive Philippine political administrations starting from then President Ferdinand Marcos have attempted to forge a negotiated peace settlement of the conflict with the Moro rebels realizing that a purely military solution to the problem was not feasible. At the height of the MNLF rebellion in the 1970s, the Marcos regime sought the intercession of Libya in the signing of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement with the MNLF. The accord provided for an immediate cessation of armed hostilities between the two parties and established the framework for an autonomous region for the Muslims in Mindanao. However, Marcos did not implement the provision on autonomy because it meant carving out 13 provinces from Mindanao to constitute the autonomous region. (Campo and Judd: 2005)

It was not until President Corazon Aquino came into power in 1986 that this provision was fulfilled, but with the crucial condition that it should follow the Constitutional process of holding a plebiscite to determine which among the provinces specified in the Tripoli Agreement would opt to become part of the autonomous region. Expectedly, only 4 of the 13 provinces, where the Muslims are a majority, decided to join the autonomous region. The MNLF accused the government of violating the Tripoli Agreement and continued its armed struggle, although on a much smaller scale due to its, by then, waning influence. (Campo and Judd: 2005)

President Fidel Ramos continued the policy of his predecessor and met success with his peace initiative when the MNLF leadership, under Chairman Nur Misuari, signed a peace accord with the government in September 1996. The Agreement provided for the establishment of an interim institution called the Southern Philippine Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD), to be headed by Chairman Misuari, which would be responsible for supervising and coordinating development projects in an area designated as the Special Zone for Peace and Development (SZOPAD). SZOPAD covered all the provinces specified in the Tripoli Agreement.

Aside from the advances made in the peace negotiations, the Ramos administration undertook innovative action to institute mechanisms to address the roots of armed conflict and insurgency. The Social Reform Agenda (SRA) was launched, as the central mechanism for putting needed socioeconomic reforms in place, particularly for identified basic sectors of poor and marginalized Filipinos. Drawn from a wide range of consultative processes, including the nationwide consultations conducted by the National Unification Commission (NUC), the SRA underscored the partnership between government and non-governmental basic sectors in defining and influencing the country’s development thrusts. (Deles: 2004)

The Ramos administration made its exit with a defined government peace process, completed political settlement with the MNLF and military rebel groups, ongoing peace negotiations with the MILF, adoption of a government anti-poverty strategy, and institutionalized support for other parts to peace, including renewed community initiatives towards a comprehensive and lasting peace.

By the time of President Joseph Estrada’s election in 1998, the threat was no longer emanating from the MNLF as most of its leading officials had joined government or were elected local government officials with tacit support from the central administration. The new challenge was emanating from the MILF, a breakaway group from the MNLF, headed by Hashim Salamat and operating largely in Central Mindanao. With little understanding of the peace initiatives of his predecessors, and in response to alleged atrocities committed by the
MILF, President Estrada declared an “all-out war policy” in April 2000 and mobilized a large military contingent to capture several MILF camps, including its main headquarters in Camp Abubakar. Although the assault was successful on the surface, it failed to crush the MILF, which chose to avoid direct confrontation by splintering into smaller groups and hiding in the remote areas of the region. (Campo and Judd: 2005)

In contrast, the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo initially declared an “all-out-peace” policy toward the MILF but was forced to temporarily abandon it when the military launched another assault of MILF controlled territories in February 2003 in pursuit of “criminal elements” operating there. By the middle of that year, peace was again restored when the new and more pragmatic leadership of the MILF under Chairman Murad Ebrahim, who succeeded the late Hashim Salamat, forged a ceasefire agreement with the government. Exploratory talks between representatives of the government and the MILF were immediately held under the auspices of the Malaysian government. The Government-MILF Joint Ceasefire Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (JCCCH) was tasked to monitor any violation of the ceasefire agreement. It was also agreed during the exploratory talks to welcome an International Monitoring Team, led by Malaysia, to complement the work of the JCCCH and strengthen the peace process at the ground level. The formal peace talks are expected to resume soon. At their center, as in the past, will be the strong desire of the Moros for a geographical area where they can promote their culture, religion and way of life. (Campo and Judd: 2005)

Building on the initiatives of previous administrations, the peace process under the current administration zeroed in on further strengthening institutions and policies for peace and on putting back on track key aspects of the peace process. In addition, emerging local, regional and global threats and challenges to the peace process continue to face the Arroyo administration. These necessitate a strategic approach to making and building peace. Addressing terrorism, human security, religious and cultural assertions, transitional justice and the like have the challenged peacemakers and added yet new dimensions to the country’s pursuit of peace.

President Arroyo’s Presidential Adviser on Peace Process, Secretary Teresita Quintos-Deles, in a paper delivered at the 3rd UP Public Lecture on the Philippine Presidency and Administration, outlined what she described as the “six paths” to peace of the government’s comprehensive peace process:

1. Pursuit of social, economic and political reforms that will address the roots of the armed conflict;
2. Consensus-building and empowerment for peace;
3. Peaceful, negotiated settlement with the different rebel groups;
4. Programs for reconciliation, reintegration into mainstream society and rehabilitation;
5. Addressing the concerns arising from continuing armed hostilities; and

The six paths to peace enunciate government’s commitment to an integrated approach to peace. They are not mutually exclusive of each other and each path reinforces the other and the weakness or absence of one would impede and protract the entire peace process.

Executive Order No. 125 established the administrative structure for carrying out the peace process. It created the post of the Presidential Adviser on Peace Process (PAPP) with
Cabinet rank, charged with the management of the comprehensive peace process, and assisted by a full secretariat to provide technical and administrative support. To date, EO 125 remains the central and seminal policy issuance, which defines the parameters of the peace process.

Clearly, peace administration has evolved to embrace a more holistic approach following a comprehensive look at all “dimensions” that caused, reinforced and allows the peace problem to thrive. This approach is very much the good governance approach and the dimensions are the very factors or variables that Philippine PA and governance have consciously been preoccupied with. From day one, the peace problem and the dimensions surrounding it have in fact been part of the “anomalies of its environment” that PA and governance have taken in both as content and context in its study and practice in the country.

IV. Peace Administration in Philippine PA

While already properly situated in the “social-reform context” and pursuing the “consultative-participative approach” of governance, a lot remains to be done if we are to anchor peace administration more concisely in the study and practice of PA and Governance in the country.

A. Instruction and Research

In the launching conference of the NAPSI PAG in 2004, Joel Mangahas of the National College of Public Administration and Governance (NCPAG) of the University of the Philippines, proposed to enhance the role of PA Education to support the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals2, and its targets for reducing poverty, improving health and education, promoting economic growth, empowering women, and creating an enabling environment for sustainable development. In his paper, Mangahas raised learning competencies (on the MDGs) in the study and practice of PA that need to be emphasized as programs of study and research (curricula) in public administration and governance are revisited and strengthened.

Unlike the MDGs that still need to be integrated into academic curricula, peace administration is already present in existing PA and Governance programs of study in the country. What is needed is its highlighting as a critical field/area of study and research in PA courses on social and economic development. As noted in Eleazar Ricote’s paper on poverty alleviation and the role of public administration in the same launching conference of NAPSI PAG in 2004, the study and practice of PA and Governance in the country is already reflective of and responsive to the continuing challenge of development and its numerous concerns, including sustainable and lasting peace. Throughout the years, this character of PA has increasingly afforded it a very significant role in realizing the country’s development and governance reforms.

Of course, peace administration in Philippine PA and Governance Philippine PA instruction and research need not be highlighted as a “major” area or field such as fiscal administration,

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local governance, public policy and organizational studies. That would end up confining it to be a “stand alone” field, complete with boundaries and delineations against the said fields when in fact, it actually transcends all of them.

Studying the origins, causes and nuances of the peace problem and the peace programs in the country will inevitably require the PA student/scholar to view it all from the perspectives of public policy (review of peace policies and their implementation frameworks), local governance (peace and order at the local level, citizen participation, role of non-government organizations and people’s organizations), fiscal management (national and local fiscal agenda, support to affected communities/sectors, “revolutionary tax”, etc.) and organizational studies (institutional framework, coordination/relationships between and among public and private organizations).

The challenge for Philippine PA instruction and research was best articulated in the Evaluation of Graduate Education in the Philippines (EGEP) commissioned by the CHED and implemented by the Fund for Assistance to Private Education (FAPE). It stressed the challenge for PA-degree-offering institutions to better “recognize” PA’ as a field in terms of what constitutes it, its distinct differences from other “generic” management degrees, its teaching and research requirements as well as the necessary books and materials.

Peace administration, in the context of the four major fields highlighted above, is a distinct area that constitute what Philippine PA is and for, and it definitely cannot be understood using a “generic” management approach. It is along these lines that peace administration draws its critical relevance in the study and practice of PA and governance in the country.

B. Peace Governance

In the same paper of Mangahas, he stressed good governance as the enabling environment for attaining the MDGs. He went further to outline the role of the state vis-à-vis key milestones in governance in the context of its basic elements: accountability, participation, predictability and transparency.

The same can be said about peace administration. Its challenges and prospects render the role of the state and the demands of good governance most critical and of utmost urgency. In the context of these elements of good governance, the following are the general challenges that best peace administration in the country, with PA at the forefront.

- Reform in the politics of exclusion, repression and corruption.
- Socio-economic development characterized by unequal access to resources with special attention to environmental and social risks
- Participative and consultative policy formulation and implementation.
- Reform in the institutional framework (agencies, bodies, councils) mandated to implement, oversee and monitor peace building initiatives.
- Non-discrimination of minorities confronted by questions of identity and ideology.
- Strengthening of Muslim civil society to rectify Muslim/Christian imbalances.
- Involvement of local governments in the socio-economic programs and conflict management under the decentralized framework of development and governance.
• Use of empirical work on the impact of various approaches (interreligious, dialogue, peace zones, effects on citizen attitudes) to help guide conflict management efforts.
• Strengthening of civil society networks involved in peace movement to transform them into organizations capable of bringing Muslims and Christians together in a sustained fashion.
• Continuity and consistency of peace agreements and peace building initiatives from one national and local political leadership to the next.

**Concluding Statement**

The peace problem in the country is certainly here to stay and the challenges are getting more and more insurmountable. But the gains have so far been reasonable enough to continue with the journey hopefully towards a lasting peace, in the near horizon.

In its current governance orientation, PA study and practice in the country will definitely play a central role in the said journey. Over the long term however, PA as a distinct discipline in Philippine social sciences, has to approximate a theory of equity so as to enhance the fiber of justice and democracy, and consequently, of modernization. (Reyes:1995). Efficiency and equity in the distribution of resources and wealth, and of growing modernization, must be accompanied by efficiency equity in the administration of justice and of democracy.
REFERENCES


