

The Lessons of the Philippine Peace Process

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The quest for peace and the search for solutions to local and global problems in human security and governance must be conducted within a comprehensive development framework. As the Toda Institute framework states;

Global perspectives must be constructed bottom-up, from the synthesis of the local views on the human problems facing communities ... The concept of human security is premised on the need to assess security concerns on the basis of well-being of people rather than the physical security of states. The traditional paradigm of political and state-controlled decision-making in peace and security matters is no longer viable in today's society where non-state actors are assuming an ascending role.

Past approaches to conflict resolution have often followed a competitive or win-lose strategy, which has ultimately led to further escalation of conflict. Lately, however, there has been a growing acceptance of peaceful strategies such formal dialogues and negotiations as preferred modes in settling conflict. This analysis will focus on culture and communication and the active participation of civil society in the peace process in the Philippines.

The Philippine Situation: A Case Study On Peace Making

The country's struggle for freedom and democracy has been marked by violence and conflict, resulting in considerable loss of lives and property. On the positive side, it has given the people strength and clarity of vision to continue to preserve their democratic gains.

The peace movement started as a struggle against exploitation, inequalities in the distribution of resources, and violations of human rights. Over the years, the advocacy of people's organizations provided the impetus in awakening general consciousness. To a large extent, they have helped shape the direction of government initiatives in future peace processes.

The celebration of the centennial of revolution against Spain has brought into focus historical accounts of armed conflict and a growing recognition of the need to emphasize peaceful struggles. For example, in the centennial's information and advocacy programs, there is a conscious effort to demonstrate that Muslims, women, and indigenous peoples actively participated in the struggle for freedom. This is to rectify historical accounts, which primarily centered on activities in Northern and Central Luzon. Documentation of local history likewise encourages

the presentation of women, minorities, writers, artists, and development workers as “peaceful” players in the revolution. Global movements focusing on human rights, gender and children’s rights, sustainable development, and social development issues have underscored peaceful social transformation strategies and continue to emphasize values of trust, mutuality, cooperation, sharing, compassion, and respect for other cultures.

The peaceful people’s revolution at EDSA in 1986, which brought down the Marcos dictatorship, was followed by eight years of peaceful transition to democracy. As Abueva (1992) noted, “the government’s success in suppressing coup attempts, reversing the communist insurgency and in containing the Moro secessionist threats in Mindanao was a clear demonstration to the people that peaceful change is possible.”

The consensus in several peace conferences was that all armed combatants must be brought to the negotiating table. Continuing social mobilization of people at all levels was undertaken to build a peace constituency. Among the peace advocates and activists who constitute the nation’s emerging peace constituency are leaders and members of churches and associations of religious leaders of both Christian and Muslim faith, peace advocacy networks, human rights advocates, environmental advocacy networks, human rights advocates, environmental advocacy groups, labor and agrarian reformers, people’s councils, and organizations of the urban poor. The outcome of major peace initiatives of the National Peace Conference and the Multi-Sectoral Peace Advocates was a declaration, “Towards a National Vision for Peace,” drafted after President Aquino declared the Decade of Peace in January 1990. more than 100 non-government and people’s organizations representing 17 sectors worked for more than a year to craft the vision of peace which “perhaps best captures the spirit and movements of people’s participation in the peace process today... This vision statement reflects the belief that peace is both a process and a pledge; the conviction that involves resolving conflicts as well as building possible futures.” (Garcia 1988).

The peace process in Mindanao did not happen overnight. It is the consequence of vigilance expressed in overt and active social action over the years by concerned citizens’ groups. The National Peace Conference was headed by former Supreme Court Justice Cecilia Munoz Palma, and the National Unification Commission was chaired by human rights lawyer Haydee Yorac. While the principal negotiators came from government, their authority was derived from continuing consultations with the peace constituency coming from various sectors.

The Mindanao Process: Lessons In Communication

On 2 September 1996, the historic peace agreement between the government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro National Liberation Front

(MNLF) was signed with the participation of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) Ministerial Committee and its secretary-general. The quest for peace seemed like a "Mission Impossible," according to Pres. Fidel V. Ramos, who considered the comprehensive peace process framework as one of the most important hallmarks of his administration. The key actors were Chairman Nur Misuari of the MNLF and Amb. Manuel T. Yan, chairman of the GRP panel. It had taken about 19 years from 1972 to 1991 for the administration of former Presidents Ferdinand E. Marcos and Corazon C. Aquino to seek a solution of the conflict in the Southern Philippines that would be acceptable by all sides.

The strategy in the peace negotiations, which lasted all of four years, highlighted the communication approach and the use of information. Communication in its broadest definition includes such dynamics as the amount and quality of dialogue between the protagonists; media coverage; institutional or administrative communication; and use of information and informal networks.

Of the 16 lessons learned, as noted by President Ramos in his analysis of the Mindanao peace process (Ramos 1996), at least 11 were specifically communication strategies while the other five depended on effective use of communication. They are: use of constructive rather than adversarial encounters; emphasis in messages on commonalities rather than disagreements; exploration of the multifaceted angles of a simple idea; good administrative communication through aide-memoire and continuing public information campaigns; use of broad consultations with various groups; use of "third party facilitation," or mediators, a culturally appropriate mechanism; use of informal communication in informal venues; appropriate choice of principal negotiators; sensitivity to difficult coordination through communication during crisis situations; and finally, use of candor and straightforwardness instead of innuendoes to generate trust.

The general perception was that the public media contributed to delays in achieving consensus. The media had their own prejudices, which were quite evident, especially in the reporting of outcomes of the accord, the basis of the peace agreement. Informal surveys and content analysis of print and broadcast media reporting indicated that the media tended to deal with contentious issues – stories that pitted protagonists against each other rather than on areas of mutual agreement. This demonstrated the media's orientation to sensationalism, conflict, personalities, and one-sided presentations. Content analysis of news during the peace process showed that military briefings in the region or in Manila remained a significant source of news about terrorist attacks or bombings in Mindanao. But these briefings, according to the study done by the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility in 1994 (De Jesus 1996), did not include a civilian perspective, carrying little news about the rest of the area, about schools or business, with little mention of efforts to bring relief to victims of attacks or to those displaced by war. De Jesus (1996) further observes: "It is typical of media's blind spot that citizen and NGO peace efforts receive so little attention as

news... Perhaps greater exposure (of journalists, a greater interest in news about communities healing themselves of past wounds, who rise above the hostilities which have set them apart.”

Field research to map positions of various sectors in Mindanao on the creation of the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD) showed a dearth of information on the SPCPD. The usual source of information cited was the mass media, but reports, particularly those of the views of dissenters and provisions in the agreement, were found to be distorted.

It may be recalled that the breakdown of the North-South dialogue during the historic Cancun summit in the early 1970s was attributed to the rigid stance of the protagonists, who brought inflexible agendas to the negotiating table. The countries in the West, or the North, had their own interests to protect, and the South, or the developing societies, had their own demands. A lesson learned during that summit is the importance of openness and willingness to listen to the other's point of view. Communicators describe this as the art of human dialogue – the presence of trust, authenticity, transparency, love and an orientation toward “win-win” strategies.

Peace advocates suggest examples of successful indigenous peace process – the *bodong* in the Cordillera, where consensus is arrived at within the context of dialogue and trust accompanied of course by the usual rituals. In the Mindanao peace process, the principals noted the use of what they describe as the ASEAN approach of *Musjawarah* (consultation) and *Mufakat* (consensus). The establishment of mechanisms for regular dialogues between Christians and Muslims are some of the examples of nongovernmental groups' initiatives.

Historical Antecedents Of The Mindanao Conflict

The conflict in the South is not merely a Muslim problem but is in fact a Christian problem – a legacy of the Spanish era, according to Fortunato Abat (1997), a retired general and now the chairman of the government's peace panel for Mindanao. The MNLF rebellion, which broke out in 1972, was the result of benign neglect by Christian leaders who failed to recognize the worth of Muslim Filipinos. Even Jose Rizal, the national hero, regarded the Muslims as part of the Filipino nation, and in the statutes of La Liga Filipina, drafted in 1892, he proposed to unite the archipelago into one “compact, vigorous and homogenous body.” Emilio Aguinaldo, the first president of the short-lived republic, sought the establishment of a special political system for non-Christian communities in conformity with traditional customs. However, the Christian delegates to the Malolos Congress, who were influenced by the Spaniards, were unable to appreciate Aguinaldo's call for unity. Spain's crusading spirit inculcated fear and hatred of Muslims.

In 1973, MNLF military might was demonstrated in the first Muslim rebellion. The response of government was military action – the organization of the Central Mindanao Command (CEMCOM), based in Cotabato under the leadership of Abat. The population ratio of Muslims to Christians at that time was 1:6. At present, the MNLF constitutes a minority and is perceived to be fanatic in its goal of establishing an “Islamic state.” Its strength lies in its political and military structures in the controlled areas.

Ambassador Yan, chair of the government panel in the peace negotiations, attributes success to such factors as mutual respect, transparency, and sincerity, which helped in building confidence.

Yan, a soft-spoken senior diplomat and former army general, played a role that no one in Mindanao could have filled, as he was able to strike rapport with the scholar-activist Misuari, who perhaps saw in him a father figure worthy of emulation. The four-year negotiation process may be characterized as a series of collective-bargaining dialogues. It was a gradual granting of concessions to Nur Misuari after confidence-building measures were installed. But the panel’s initial timetable of one and a half years was not realistic. Delays were caused by the absence of Misuari, who was abroad, and because the latter wanted to have talks held outside the Philippines. During the first 18 months, the negotiations were held in Jakarta. Most of the time, both panels stayed in the same hotel, which enabled them to hold a number of informal talks in coffee shops. Rapport was established, and Misuari, convinced of the sincerity and political will of the government, was eventually persuaded to come home. Talks were held every year, and during the third round, the government panel proposed Misuari’s being elected governor of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and that a council known as the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development be set up with Misuari as head. The council would be tasked with peace building through the implementation of social and economic reforms. In March 1996, 123 issues were resolved. But negotiations ended in a stalemate over three contentious issues, namely, the setting up of an autonomous provisional government; integration of the MNLF into the armed forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP); and differences in perceptions of the implications of autonomy. The Philippines constitution requires a plebiscite, but Misuari was not agreeable as 75 percent of the people in the region are Christian. The peace agreement finally provided for integration into the AFP and the PNP of 7,500 MNLF members.

Further consultations were made by the GRP panel with sectors such as the Senate, the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, and the Philippine Constitutional Association. The consultations revealed what was already known – that the ARMM had already implemented the Tripoli Agreement. Misuari and his group did not find it adequate, as it was set up by the Philippine government without the participation of the OIC, led by Khadafi of Libya and President Suharto of Indonesia. The decision was to set up the SPCPD as an interim body. Special

Islamic ministerial meetings in Jakarta clarified the role of SPCPD, and at the mixed committee meeting in June 1996, the two negotiating panels arrived at what is known as the Davao Accord. This agreement defined the objectives and structure of SPCPD: it would be established without a plebiscite; the chairman would come from the MNLF; and a 70-member consultative assembly, with 41 members from the MNLF; would be created.

The common objection to the SPCPD was that it gave the MNLF considerable power as the majority came from the Muslim group. But Yan felt that the Muslims gave up more, as their original intent was secession – to set up the Bangsa Moro Republic. Misuari wanted the SPCPD to last 10 years but in the end compromised with the GRP panel's recommendation of three years. Shortly after Davao Accord, the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) implemented a Communication Plan party to counteract the media's negative reporting and to inform various sectors of the progress in the negotiations. The cabinet and the Senate divided into teams, held press conferences and media interviews, and conducted hearings. A majority of the Muslims were on the government side; a majority of the objectors represented the Christian faith. A positive outcome of the communication campaign was public awareness that the *lumads*, or indigenous people, consisting of several millions, and not the Muslims, actually dominated Mindanao. The *lumads* acquired a status that they did not have before the public information campaigns.

Abat (1997) notes the views of observers who are concerned with need to establish mechanisms to sustain the gains already made. The latter have raised questions such as: Will the grant of autonomy to the Muslims dissipate the secessionist movement? Now that autonomy is granted, what will prevent them from demanding independence later? What can be done to motivate them to stay within the Republic of the Philippines? How can we reduce the influence of the Islamic countries in what is purely an internal problem? Will economic development reverse the move toward secession or accelerate it? As scholars of contemporary Muslim affairs know, the MNLF, being the most militant, has received the highest and continued attention and the support of the OIC and the Muslim world.

To answer these questions, one must view them within a comprehensive framework of development. Such a framework considers the need to give equal importance to social, cultural, political, environmental, and economic concerns. The cultural issue is important in peace-building efforts as there are vast differences in the cultures of the Muslims and the Christians which need to be reconciled. The Muslims belong to the Islamic religion, have a high illiteracy rate, are traditionally water-bound, and live in dire poverty due to a high percentage of landlessness. To aggravate the problem, there is considerable political conflict among the Muslims themselves – the Tausugs, the Maguindanaoans, the Maranaws. One of the positive developments has been the ongoing peace talks between the MNLF and the more militant Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). It

is expected that a peace agreement will soon be forged between these two groups.

A study by Nunez (1997) showed that the lack of understanding of Islam which encompasses ideology, religion, and culture by both government and the Christians was a principal source of conflict. Using Gurr's theory of relative deprivation, Nunez, who was mayor of General Santos City in Mindanao, explains that conflict can result from a group's perceived discrepancy between what it seeks or what it values and what is actually attains. In her survey of a sample group from both the Muslim and Christian population, she found that although Muslims had high status expectations, they felt that their level of achievement was low because of lack of support from the external environment. The Muslims felt that Christians and the national government did not understand or give due recognition to Islam. Christians, on the other hand, felt that the conflict was primarily due to Muslim's desire to control Mindanao even if they were in the minority. In terms of attitudes toward the other, Muslims rated the Christians positively except for two negative attributes. The Christians, however, positively except for two negative attributes. The Christians, however, rated the Muslims negatively on nine out of fourteen attributes. The author therefore concludes that Christians had stronger biases and prejudices against Muslims than Muslims had against Christians. The ethnic factor is an important dimension in understanding Mindanao conflict. And thus the agreement signed in 1996 may just be a respite, according to critics, who also noted that efforts to solve the problem of ethnic separatism either through socioeconomic programs or military action are doomed to failure.

Towards A Comprehensive Development Framework

A comprehensive development framework encompasses the interaction of development processes, local and national institutions and infrastructures, movements, and regional and global alliances and blocs. The peace process is supported by processes such as decentralization, devolution, democratization, grassroots mobilization, and advocacy, all of which require dynamic information and communication support.

The institutional and infrastructure component consists of media, information technology, social and cultural institutions (specifically, education and human resource institutions), and social reform institutions. Popular movements include women's and children's rights (gender), green (environment), cooperatives, religious and spiritual, human rights, and literacy and educational movements. Regional and global alliances and blocs include the Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines – East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA), APEC, ASEAN, and the OIC.

The principal root of conflict is poverty, an outcome of social and economic inequities. The search for consensus in a free and open society requires an

understanding of shared values with communication as a main resource to further cement the ties that bind people culturally. There is also the task of reconciling priorities of central with local governments, and subsequently with that of capital (business) and of civil society. A stable society is one where government, capital, and the civil society are in continuing dialogue. Peace goals must be shown within a framework that emphasizes not merely quantities or numbers of structures but also the quality of information, strategy in timing, relationships, approaches and methodologies as well as socio-culturally appropriate perspectives and strategies.

Decentralization, Autonomy, and The Role Of Popular Movements

The peace accord was signed within a favorable policy environment in support of decentralization and local autonomy. The 1987 Philippine constitution provided the impetus for such a shift when it declared that the period of centralized governance was over and mandated the Philippine Congress to enact separate organic act for autonomous regions in Muslim Mindanao and the Cordilleras. Both the Aquino and Ramos governments adhered to the principles of decentralization, devolution, and local autonomy. The Local Government Code law transferred authority and responsibility to local government units. The Ramos administration adopted “people empowerment” as one of its pillars in governance to emphasize popular participation in nation-building.

During the four-year peace negotiations, the discussions centered on the factors perceived to be the root causes of armed conflict and discontent. The National Unification Commission (NUC) convened regional public consultations nationwide, perhaps the first opportunity for a truly multisectoral discussion. It helped in the realization that there can be honest differences of opinion as to the appropriate resolution of a single perceived problem. Bishop Francisco Claver, a regional convenor, noted that the voices heard were not those of the traditional opinion makers – experts, political analysts, politicians, commentators – but ordinary men and women from all walks of life speaking from the guts of society. With or without government and rebel groups’ initiatives, popular movements and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) would have pursued peace through community-based activities like cooperatives, livelihood projects, and literacy classes where Muslims, Christians, and *lumads* could work together and learn to appreciate their religious and cultural differences.

A number of peace advocates served as “pressured groups.” Their tasks included monitoring the progress of peace negotiations, convening fora for dialogue, developing peace agenda for various groups, and conducting peace education. They set up peace zones, particularly in areas of armed conflict between government soldiers and rebel forces. Peace zones are geographical areas where armed conflict could no longer be waged and where the entry and safekeeping of firearms, whether by residents or outsiders, is prohibited. The peace zones are creative alternatives to the armed conflict that traumatized the

communities. The long and festering experience of violence from continued hostilities became a catalytic agent that moved the people to declare their communities as zones of peace.

Basic Christian Communities (BCCs), a Latin American pastoral innovation transplanted into the Philippines at the height of the Marcos regime in the mid 1970s, are voluntary organizations rooted in basic Christian values of social justice and equity. They are mostly found in the rural areas, and many of those involved in peacekeeping are found in Mindanao. They are engaged not only in religious activities but also in projects that address endemic poverty. Like the BCCs, Women in Enterprise Development was set up to provide literacy, entrepreneurship training, and credit assistance for poor Muslim women. Through structured learning experiences, the project has been able to promote peace and understanding among marginalized women belonging to both Christian and Muslim faiths. The Islamo-Christian Silsilah Dialogue movement provides an appropriate venue for communication by establishing a center that conducts courses on Islamic and Christian religions and culture. These are voluntary grassroots initiatives that continue to monitor the peace situation in Mindanao.

The peace process is a communication process. It starts with intrapersonal communication as the individual reflects on his values and attitudes toward peace, such as developing respect, acceptance, and appreciation of the views, beliefs, culture, and traditions of others. This is fostered by openness, active listening, and education. The communication media have played a critical role in facilitating free and open discussion, disseminating information on agreements on vital issues, creating an ambiance of cooperation, promoting hope and congeniality rather than despair. On the other hand, they have also created dissension and have contributed to further misunderstanding through use of negative stereotypes of ethnic groups, women, and foreigners.

An analysis of the gains made over the past decade since the country became free after 14 years of martial law shows a checkered balanced sheet in the area of peace and order. The signing of the peace agreement in the South was merely a beginning. Peace-building efforts are now being threatened by local and global development. Unemployment, underemployment, continuing exploitation of the environment, children, and women, violation of human rights as well as crime and violence in the streets and in the media are among the threats that must be confronted with appropriate government policies and social-action programs by non-government organizations. Delivery of social services was delayed, and opposition groups within the government and the private sector continue to criticize the creation of the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development. These critics believe that the peace accord will not kill the desire of the Bangsa Moro people to pursue autonomy. Opportunities come in the form of a more socially and politically active citizenry. Cooperatives and NGOs working in the areas of social credit, literacy, and small economic

enterprises have demonstrated that economic productivity can be achieved while at the same time building networks of solidarity, cooperation, and collective action.

The government's Social Reform Agenda (SRA), adopted as its antipoverty flagship program, may be considered an enabling intervention. It addresses three areas of inequity: access to quality basic services; and effective participation in economic and political governance. The SRA's main goal is the achievement of a just and lasting peace through literacy education, establishment of micro enterprises, and livelihood opportunities in 20 priority provinces. Five of the 20 – Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Surigao del Sur, Agusan del Sur, and Basilan – are in Mindanao. This program is however hampered by poor legislative support and slow implementation.

In terms of infrastructure support, the advents of new information and communication technology has expanded communication channels, thus facilitating the communication process, broadening the peace constituency, and creating a sense of national community. Peace negotiators are no longer limited to “across the table” dialogue but are now able to sustain discussions even after formal meetings through modern technologies. Consultations with the principals are facilitated by “hotlines.” The CPP-NDF maintains an Internet website, which provides the group's positions on certain issues. Broadcast stations compete for live or taped interviews via satellite with CPP-NDF leaders based in Europe for comments on late-breaking issues and events. Chairman Nur Musuari is regularly interviewed by Manila broadcast stations for recent developments in Mindanao.

Until recently, the lack of access to services by the people of Mindanao and other rural communities could be attributed to the lack of information technology and media infrastructures. Up to the early 1980s, some provinces in Mindanao, such as Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, were isolated. The only accessible radio programs were those aired from Malaysia and Indonesia. This reinforced the affinity of Filipino Muslims with the Muslim community outside the country.

Global and Regional Influences

Interdependence in the global community necessitates the integration of geopolitical and economic concerns in today's national peace agenda. Hardline positions on economic sovereignty must now be seen in the light of regional economic blocs such as the setting up of the World Trade Organization. Cultural integrity is allegedly “threatened” by transborder data flow facilitated by information technology and satellite communication. In short, global and regional trends are creating new areas of conflict and adding new topics to the list of “talking points.”

A recent development in the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) agenda is the desire on the part of the Philippines and other member countries to consider, along with the economic agenda of trade and investment liberalization, environment and political security issues (e.g., “strategic relationship between Asia and North America in a new era”). The environmental issue has become a priority concern as political analysts and futurists predict that conflict among nations in the next century will be abetted by competition for scarce natural resources. Food security is threatened by anticipated depletion of energy and water supplies.

At the recent forum, *Alternative Security Systems in Asia Pacific*, held in Bangkok, Richard Falk (1997) stated that the region shows all the features of potential degradation of security in an area where there is only a poorly developed regional cooperation system while there is a growing external geopolitical threat largely led by the United States. Other participants see the pursuit of high-speed industrialization with limited natural resources as a source of conflict. Disputes over territory (Spratly Islands) and conflicts over water resources, as well as potential rivalries over mineral exploitation, will surely affect the security of the region.

In the case of the Philippine government-MNLF relations, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), particularly Indonesia, has played a critical role in facilitating the peace agreement. ASEAN emphasized respect for Philippine sovereignty and independence as a framework for settling the issue. On the other hand, the Organization of Islamic Countries may have served both as a political pressure group to both sides and as an “economic” pressure group as it represents oil-producing countries (on which the Philippines is dependent for oil and financial support for the MNLF). The challenge is one of maintaining a healthy balance so that the autonomous region of Mindanao does not become overdependent on the OIC.

Agenda for the Future

A response to the ongoing tensions and hostilities is a government – private sector partnership that seeks to mobilize a Mindanao-wide advocacy for unity and nonviolence. Building on shared concerns of citizens, a Mindanao Agenda for Peace and Development (MAPD) was drafted. It embodies a vision of the people of Mindanao – the need for sustainable and equitable development; transparent and accountable governance; a relevant, equitable, and culturally sensitive system of education, justice, and law enforcement; community-based mechanisms for dialogues and conflict resolution; and respect for the cultural integrity of indigenous people. The continuing consensus-building process includes information dissemination and advocacy for the MAPD, mobilization of peace-advocacy groups and communities, establishing a network of Peace Centers, and mediation initiatives in areas identified as “flash points” for violent conflicts (Mercado 1995).

It appears that the factors behind the Mindanao conflict support Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis. Peace advocates are, however, optimistic that a sincere commitment to the search for commonalities among diverse cultures and developing creative responses such as innovative mechanisms for continuing dialogue may still avert the "clash" scenario. The Second International Conference on the Culture of Peace sponsored by UNESCO and the Philippine government in 1995 further stressed the central role of education and research in developing governance and empowerment for a culture of peace. Access to literacy and schooling and peace and human rights education in schools and in continuing education for civil servants, defense and security forces, and political leaders are recommended. Alternative participatory and anthropological research methods will enable documentation of local and grassroots stories of empowerment and strengthening of civil society.

If the government's intent to provide 30 percent of the total infrastructure budget for 1998 becomes a reality, the prospect of Mindanao's becoming a stable economy in 15 years is realizable. Mindanao's regional economy would further benefit from its interaction with the neighboring areas in the Brunei Darussalam – Indonesia – Malaysia – Philippines East Association of Southeast Asian Nations (BIMP-EAGA).

Future strategies in peacekeeping must likewise consider Philippine National Unification Commission recommendations, which emphasize six institutional paths. They are: the pursuit of social, economic, and political reforms which deal with the root causes of insurgency and social unrest; consensus building and empowerment for peace; peace talks with the different rebel groups aimed at final negotiated settlements; reconciliation, reintegration into society, and rehabilitation of rebels; protection of civilians and the de-escalation of conflicts, which includes protection of human rights; and building a positive climate for peace, which includes confidence-building a positive climate for peace, which includes confidence-building measures, peace advocacy, and education.

Futuristics and development scholars (Kennedy 1993; Brzezinski 1993; Talisayon 1996; Boulding 1993; Korten 1990; Club of Rome 1991) stress the importance of the moral, ethical, and spiritual dimension in our quest for peace as well as a new humanism. Boulding (1993) believes that a viable peace culture has to happen at the grassroots. Negotiation and accommodation and integrative behavior in peace building have to become personal habits in the family and the community. Korten describes the 1990s as the decade of voluntarism. As we move into 21st century, the principle of global interdependence will apply not only to nation-states but also to NGOs and people's organizations. Korten noted the important role of NGOs in aiding the development of democratic organizations and movements particularly in authoritarian or newly democratizing countries.

Peace initiatives, whether taken at the formal negotiating table or in various informal settings, provide added knowledge on dynamics needed for effective governance. The search for commonalities despite cultural differences, the will to establish creative mechanisms for conflict resolution and to forge partnerships, alliances, and networks with various groups with similar goals are strategies that have proven to be successful. Peace building requires continuing vigilance, dialogue, and consensus on what is truly a balanced, just, and humane governance for our times.

Appendix

*The International Forum on the Culture of Peace (The Manila Forum)
26-30 November 1995, Manila, Philippines Summation of the Forum*

Five signposts:

1. Consensus that the process of conflict management resolution, healing and reconciliation are complex, requiring a participative and self-critical approach.
2. The development and economic rehabilitation are central to a culture of peace building. Development progress must be just and people-centered as well as being sustainable in an age of ecological crisis.
3. A culture of peace is built on process of empowerment and the strengthening of civil society. Governance needs to be defined as participative, inclusive, plural, and cognizant of the rule of law. It must respond to rights of all sectors especially marginalized people and groups including women, minorities, children, rural and urban poor and indigenous people. Transparency and accountability are essential and leadership must be transformational.
4. Education includes schools, media, family socialization, toys, sports, recreation, and religious and other social institutions. Education for peace must draw on appropriate and empowerments pedagogies.
5. Solidarity must be developed between and among governments, nongovernmental institutions, the private sector and the components of civil society.

Principles in Building a Culture of Peace

- Peace is a holistic concept. It is not merely the absence of war but a commitment to build a just, equitable, compassionate, multicultural, pluralistic and sustainable society.

- Building a culture of peace requires enactment and implementation of societal, international, and global reforms that meaningfully and democratically address the root causes of conflict.
- A culture of peace must be underpinned by values, knowledge, and practices of environmental care and ecological sustainability.
- A culture of peace is sustained by a process that is evolving, participative, reflective, critical and dynamic.
- The peace process must seek a principled and nonviolent resolution of armed and all other forms of conflict based on reconciliation, justice, and dignity for all.
- The peace process must be community-based reflecting the sentiments, values and principles important to all sectors of society. It must therefore be built on dialogue, negotiations, consensus-building and cooperation among government and civil society.
- The culture of peace seeks to prevent social exclusion. It thus involves governmental accountability and the empowerment of social sectors, particularly the poor and the marginalized, so that they may fully participate in defining, designing and implementing all aspects of peace-building. It thus also means that a strong civil society will ensure authentic participation in monitoring the process.
- The transformation towards the culture of peace requires parallel and complementary development of values, knowledge and skills at both the individual and institutional or structural levels.
- It must also draw on the inherent strengths of local and indigenous knowledge, beliefs and practices for building and sustaining peaceful and just societies. In particular, the expertise, perspectives and rights of women and indigenous peoples must be recognized and integrated in peace-building.
- Building and nurturing a culture of peace is enhanced by the infusion of spiritual, moral, and ethical values in all aspects of individual, national, international, and global conduct and relationships.
- It thus requires solidarity among peoples, ethnocultural communities, states, international organizations and all other actors in civil society to address and overcome common problems of violence and conflict are so intertwined that their resolution calls for a mutual sharing of resources and strategies.

Notes

1. The Tripoli Agreement signed in 1976 by representatives of the Philippine government, the MNLF, and the Libyan government with the participation of the OIC was intended to end the armed conflict and provided for the establishment of autonomy in the Southern Philippines within the realm of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines.
2. The establishment of the SPCPD is also regarded as a violation of democratic principles and processes and an undue exposure of the Christian majority to expected Muslim retaliation that the council was giving less than expected. These are the perspectives of contemporary realities. The other perspective is that of history. The concept of *kaadilan* (social justice), which is to rectify historical oppression, and *gausbaugbug* (the geopolitical context of social justice), which is implied by “ancestral land,” are factors that should be taken into account, according to the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (1996).
3. The present leadership uses the cooking of *bibingka* (rice cake) as an appropriate analogy. It is cooked with coal embers placed on top and at the bottom. A perfect *bibingka* is the outcome of adequate and appropriate mobilization of political will (legislation, policies) from the top and a continuing bottom-up mobilization of collective groups working together toward common goals.
4. Decentralization is defined as the transfer of powers and authority from a central institution to local levels of a government system. Devolution, a form of decentralization, is the transfer of political power and is geographic or territorial. Local autonomy involves the transfer of authority, responsibilities, and resources by the national government to its constituent units so that these become more self-reliant.
5. The Communist-National Democratic Front leadership and the government panel are now engaged in another round of peace negotiations after more than a decade of peace talks. The Communist movement, like the MNLF conflict, has claimed a heavy toll as the estimated cost per rebel in a protracted counterinsurgency campaign is P21 million.
6. The restoration of the democratic space after the 1986 EDSA Revolution and the liberalization of telecommunications in the early 1990s have resulted in exponential growth in mass media and telecommunication, including in the countryside. Many trimedia establishments also set up news bureaus in Mindanao and other regions throughout the country.

7. According to Huntington, the fault lines in our new, post-Cold War world do not flow from politics or ideology but from culture. When large masses of people join in common purpose, the primary link between them will increasingly be their shared heritage of language, history, tradition, and religion – that is, civilization. And when they stonily face each other across the divide, the unbridgeable gap between them will be the lack of just such a shared civilization.

SOURCE: Tehranian, M. (Ed.). (1999). *Asian Peace: Security and Governance in the Asia Pacific Region*. New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers

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