
Poverty Alleviation and Peace Building in Multiethnic Societies: The Need for Multiculturalist Governance in the Philippines*

Macapado A. Muslim, Mindanao State University, Philippines

Abstract: This paper is about the twin challenges of poverty alleviation and peace building in multiethnic countries. It argues that alleviating poverty and achieving peace require the transformation of their politics and governance in multiethnic societies to become multiculturalist. This means making their governance responsive to the challenges and requirements of cultural diversity. Moreover, focusing on the Philippine situation, the paper stresses the urgency of evolving a cultural diversity-friendly political formula for the government to achieve the twin goals of peace and development, particularly in relation to its ethnocultural minorities like the Bangsa Moro of Southern Philippines.

Part II of this paper discusses the inextricable link between peace and development, while Part III elucidates some of the political, socio-economic, cultural and security determinants of ethnic conflict. Part IV presents some features of governance warranted by the ethnocultural diversity of multiethnic societies, while Part V analyzes the Philippine situation using the multiculturalist governance framework. Part VI provides some concluding statements.

Presently, the United Nations has three top priorities: eradicating poverty, preventing conflict and promoting democracy. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan stressed:

Only in a world that is rid of poverty can all men and women make the most of their abilities. Only where individual rights are respected can differences be channeled politically and resolved peacefully. Only in a democratic environment, based on respect for diversity and dialogue, can individual self-expression and self-government be secured and freedom of association is upheld.¹

Reflective of UN's concern for preventing conflict is the special focus on cultural liberty and ethnocultural conflict of UNDP's *Human Development Report 2004*. Its main emphasis is the global imperative of "accommodating people's growing demands for their inclusion in society, for respect of their ethnicity, religion, and language."²

Ethnocultural conflict or ethnonationalism confronts countries of varied circumstances, big and small, developed and less developed, old and new, authoritarian and democratic, socialist and capitalist. It afflicts even the advanced industrialized countries of the West like the United Kingdom, the United States, France and Canada.³

It should be noted that most of today's armed conflicts are internal, not inter-state as in the past, and the great majority are in states with two or more component nations or cultural communities. And considering that almost all of the world's nearly 200

countries are multicultural or multiethnic, with two-thirds having one substantive minority group (ethnic or religious) and the likelihood of ethnic challenges to grow, effective management of the challenges of cultural diversity becomes an urgent imperative of survival at both national and international levels.

It should be stressed also that addressing the phenomenon of ethnocultural conflict is indispensable not only to the promotion of democracy but also to poverty alleviation. There is a strong link between poverty alleviation and cultural diversity management. The said UNDP's report emphasizes the primacy of cultural diversity management to poverty alleviation, viewing the former as a precondition to the latter. The report states:

"If the world is to reach the Millennium Development Goals and ultimately eradicate poverty, it must first successfully confront the challenge of how to build inclusive, culturally diverse societies. Not just because doing so successfully is a precondition for countries to focus properly on other priorities of economic growth, health and education for all citizens. But because allowing people full cultural expression is an important development end in itself."⁴

Addressing cultural diversity should be given top priority in contemporary reform initiatives in public administration. Effective management of cultural diversity is a first-order governance imperative affecting the nature, content, quality and implementation of public policies and programs. Hence, public

administration scholars in multiethnic societies need to reexamine some of their ideas, views and assumptions, like those pertaining to the societal context of public bureaucracies. In particular, they need to rethink their views about the ecological or culture-bound nature of public administration. While it is true that, “public administration is embedded in the surrounding society,”⁵ scholars in the field have neglected or trivialized the cultural heterogeneity of the society wherein public administration is embedded. Even scholars who are strong advocates of the cultural perspective in public administration (i.e., that emphasizes fitting management or administrative ideas to the cultural context) have ignored the cultural heterogeneity of the societal context of public administration.⁶

For multiethnic countries, the said neglect or trivialization of the cultural heterogeneity of the societal context is a fundamental flaw. This erroneous view is disastrous to multiethnic societies for spawning political structures, processes and policies which are more parts of the problems of peace and development than reforms therein. In particular, we refer to assimilationist or monoculturalist states, which are hostile to cultural diversity, many of which function as “ethnic democracies,” with the virulent version of ethnonationalism.

This paper is about the twin challenges of poverty alleviation and peace building in multiethnic countries. It argues that alleviating poverty and achieving peace therein require the transformation of their politics and governance to become multiculturalist. This means making their governance responsive to the challenges and requirements of cultural diversity. Moreover, focusing on the Philippine situation, the paper stresses the urgency of evolving a cultural diversity-friendly political formula, for the government to achieve the twin goals of peace and development, particularly in relation to its ethnocultural minorities like the Bangsa Moro.

Peace and Development Nexus

Peace is not just the absence of direct physical violence as in a military confrontation between armed groups. Peace of this kind is short-term, fragile and unstable. Some scholars refer to it as “negative peace.” But strictly speaking, this kind of peace is a mere break or interruption in violence or military confrontation.

In the context of the contemporary world characterized by the increasing number and intensity of violent conflicts, the peace we mean or aspire to bring about is one that is authentic or enduring, or what many scholars refer to as “positive peace.” It is peace characterized by the absence of the three types of violence in Johan Galtung’s “violence triangle,” namely: direct/personal violence, structural violence and cultural violence.⁷

The first, *direct violence*, refers to physical acts of violence such as those in actual military confrontations. The second, *structural violence*, refers to

violence built into the very social, political and economic structures and processes governing societies, states and the world. This type of violence is far more difficult to recognize and understand, but is far more destructive than the other two forms of violence. The third form, *cultural violence*, refers to violence associated with Manicheism, i.e., the presentation of one party (an individual or group) as evil and the other as good, denying the ‘evil’ a voice, resulting to the demonization or dehumanization of the other, making them seem somehow ‘less’, ‘unworthy’, and ascribing to them entirely negative, self-serving or evil motives.⁸ This concept is similar to what Bikhu Parekh calls “moral monism” of much of traditional moral philosophy, including contemporary liberalism – its tendency to assert that only one way of life or set of values is worthwhile and to dismiss the rest as misguided or false.”⁹

What constitutes development or the good life? To address this question would require describing each of the major dimensions of development.¹⁰ First, development has an *economic* component that includes the creation of wealth and improved conditions of material life, equitably distributed. Second, development has a *social* ingredient measured as well being in health, education, housing and employment. Third, it has a *political* dimension that includes such values as human rights, political freedom, enfranchisement, and some form of democracy. Fourth, it has a *cultural* aspect that embraces respect for cultural and religious differences and recognition of the fact that cultures (including religion) confer identity and self-worth to people.

What is the relationship between peace and development? According to Parekh, “peace is the first desideratum in every society, particularly multicultural whose tendency to provoke acute conflicts is further compounded by its inability to rely on a shared body of values to moderate and regulate them.”¹¹ And if “to work for peace is to work against violence,”¹² and if we adopt a more comprehensive view of violence that embraces Galtung’s three types of violence (direct, structural, and cultural), then a responsive and holistic development administration is indispensable to the achievement of peace in multicultural societies. Addressing the asymmetrical, unequal and exploitative economic, social and political structures and processes (structural violence) and respecting cultural and religious differences (cultural violence), in addition to initiatives directed to physical acts of violence (direct violence), are indeed significant in the achievement of an enduring or authentic peace in multicultural societies.

The integral link between peace and development is best captured in the following statement by Pope John Paul II:

It must not be forgotten that at the root of war there are usually real and serious grievances: injustices suffered, legitimate aspirations frustrated, poverty, and the exploitation of

multitudes of desperate people who see no real possibility of improving their lot by peaceful means.¹³

Determinants of Ethnic Conflict

The multicultural character of a society per se does not automatically lead to some form of intercultural animosity or violent conflict. There are many countries in the world that are multicultural or multi-ethnic, but they do not have ethnicity-based political mobilization or ethnonationalist movements like the case of the Moros in the Philippines, the Tamils in Sri Lanka, the Chechens in Russia, the Basques and Catalans in Spain, the Acehnese in Indonesia, and the Catholics in Northern Ireland. There are also countries that have experienced violent forms of ethnic mobilization in the past, but succeeded in resolving them after making some appropriate adjustments in their policies and governance and other aspects of society.

Ethnic conflicts, like the Moro armed struggle in the Philippines, are attributable to several causes or determinants. These factors may be classified into political, socio-economic, cultural and security.

Political

One major political determinant of violent conflicts in multicultural societies is the nature and character of the state. The unitary state, with its assimilationist and monoculturalist features, is obviously unresponsive to the cultural diversity of said societies. In the words of Galtung, the state in societies with two or more component nations functions as a “prison” for the nations other than the dominant one.¹⁴ Another factor is the concept of “vertical ethnic differentiation” which is defined as “the near perfect ethnic stratification in which different ethnic groups occupy different social classes.”¹⁵ In such a vertical system, members of a minority ethnic community are consigned to menial or lower level positions, while those from a dominant ethnic group monopolize the important political posts.

According to Reid Luhman and Stuart Gilman, “ethnic stratification is not an inevitable occurrence when two or more ethnic groups share the same society. It occurs only at the instigation of a particularly powerful ethnic group in that society.”¹⁶ Echoing the significant relationship of the ethnic-based differentiating role of the state and ethnic mobilization, Bhikhu Parekh argues:

When a majority community defines itself as a nation and seeks to monopolize the state, it provokes its minorities to define themselves as nations or ethnic groups. Minority ethnicity is often a defensive reaction against majority nationalism.¹⁷

It should be noted that it is the dominance or monopoly of political power by one group (the dominant one) and the relative political inferiorization

or peripheralization of a minority group (as perceived by its members) that leads to political organization and mobilization. As UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan pointed out, “unequal access to political power forecloses paths to peaceful change.”¹⁸

The importance of the above points is indicated by ethnic minorities’ political grievances like lack of control over local affairs, lack of participation or representation in the central government, and discrimination in the access to political and administrative positions. These grievances are the bases of demands for secession or other self-determination formulas like federalism, regional autonomy, power-sharing, proportional representation, etc.

Socio-Economic

The problem of poverty or socio-economic marginalization is a central issue in most ethnic conflicts. The Center for War and Peace Research in Sweden reported that poverty was the major cause of about 80 percent of today’s wars.¹⁹ Poorer countries tend to be three times at greater risk of war than richer countries. And a big number of violent ethnic conflicts occur in highly backward or underdeveloped regions of multi-ethnic states. As pointed out in the Human Development Report 2004:

Ethnic minorities are often the poorest groups in most parts of the world...[T]hey have shorter life expectancy and lower education attainments and other social indicators. They also are most likely to suffer socio-economic exclusion.²⁰

Another economic driver of conflict is the perception of relative deprivation by members of an ethnic group. Poverty acquires an additional politicizing force when members of an ethnic group perceive themselves or their communities to be relatively deprived vis-à-vis the dominant ethnic group. Moreover, their propensity to mobilize is heightened when they perceive their socio-economic marginalization as a by-product of government neglect and discrimination in access to basic services (e.g., health, education, credit assistance, and livelihood opportunities).

In many conflict areas, the issue is about the asymmetrical and exploitative relations between the rich/imperial center and the backward ethnic communities in the periphery. Many ethnic minorities resent the use of their areas as the “milking cow” of the center and the whole country. Moreover, awareness by members of an ethnic group of the adequacy of their region’s natural resources for their own (ethnic group or regional) survival and development is another known cause of ethnic advocacy for secession in some cases.

Another major economic driver of ethnic conflict is rivalry over control of certain strategic resources (like oil and natural gas). Many ethnic conflicts involve areas or regions with vast deposits of

important minerals. The involvement of domestic and foreign capitalist interest in the efforts to exploit these important resources is certainly a major conflict factor.

Capitalist globalization is another major cause of ethnic conflict. Although it is undeniable that globalization “succeeded in producing unprecedented amounts of goods and services, It is equally clear that capitalist growth proceeded unevenly between countries and within regions, creating great disparities of wealth and income, and that it has always proceeded cyclically, through euphoric booms and painful busts in every country and region.”²¹ The positive/negative or boom/bust consequence of capitalist globalization was demonstrated in the spectacular economic growth in identified economic growth centers within capitalist countries, while those in the periphery are falling far behind. Given the weak political and economic power of ethnic minorities, it is likely that they will be among the big losers, not among the winners that globalization creates. This means that ethnic minorities in general will be at the receiving end of the predatory or destructive aspects of capitalist globalization. Hence, the socio-economic disparities between ethnic minorities and dominant ethnic communities will most likely widen further.

According to Robertson, globalizing or universalizing pressures trigger particularistic responses that include “the current upsurge in various forms of religious fundamentalism and ethnonationalism which, to him, is part of what he calls “globalization syndrome.”⁹ To Vicky Randall and Robin Theobald, “the upsurge in religious fundamentalism and ethnonationalism may highlight the state as the potential focus for resistance to globalizing trends.”²³

Another important socio-economic underpinning of ethnic conflict is the competitive relationship between militarization and development.²⁴ The strong emphasis on the military-oriented national security paradigm by many poor Third World countries is certainly limiting their performance in development administration, particularly in the delivery of basic social services like health, education, etc. Many Third World governments, including those facing severe scarcity of resources with no external security threats, are preoccupied with military reputation building and modernization, instead of waging a serious war against poverty that continued to cripple many of their citizens and communities.

Cultural

By definition, a multicultural society “consists of several cultures or cultural communities with their own distinct systems of meaning and significance and views on man and the world.”²⁵ This organizational character suggests that the principal dilemma of governance in multicultural societies is the need to reconcile the legitimate demands of unity and diversity. Effective governance in multicultural societies requires addressing the need for unity and giving due recognition

to cultural diversity or differences. In other words, the demands of unity and diversity are not mutually exclusive.

If we look at the situation in multicultural societies, impressionistically the demands of cultural diversity are substantially neglected in many of them. This explains the upsurge or resurgence therein of agitational or revolutionary movements based on ethnicity, culture, religion or identity. Parekh posits that:

A multicultural society cannot ignore the demands of diversity. By definition, diversity is an inescapable fact of its collective life and can neither be wished out of existence nor suppressed without an acceptable degree of coercion and often not even then. Furthermore, since human beings are attached to and shaped by their culture, and their self-respect is closely bound up with respect for it, the basic respect we owe our fellow-humans extends to their culture and cultural community as well.²⁶

The importance of recognizing cultural differences in preventing, regulating and resolving inter-ethnic conflict is a major theme of numerous scholarly works in the social sciences, including the new discipline of peace studies. It is my view that the continuing neglect of the legitimate demands of diversity or the non-recognition of cultural differences in many multicultural societies is the major cause of the seeming intractability of conflicts therein which, according to one scholar, involve “non-negotiable” items like identity.²⁷ According to Parekh, “minorities have a right to maintain and transmit their ways of life, and denying it to them is both indefensible and likely to provoke resistance.”²⁸ Similarly, Taylor argued that multicultural societies “can break up, in large part because of lack of (perceived) recognition of the equal worth of one group by another.”²⁹ And if we are looking for a legal basis of the demand for recognition of cultural differences, the following argument of Hurst Hannum is instructive:

A fundamental state obligation under international human rights norms is to eliminate discrimination, not to destroy all differences. Recognition of the right to personal autonomy and group identity is essential to ensure that the principles of self-determination, participation and tolerance are allowed to flourish.³⁰

Among the major cultural demands of ethnic or cultural communities are the use of own local language, the grant of government support for local schools (including religious schools), the adoption of separate judicial/legal system (e.g., Islamic Law), the designation of a traditional homeland, the recognition of local practices and other cultural identity-related items. Moreover, discriminatory practices and prejudicial relations of

member of dominant group(s) against ethnic minorities are indeed among the cultural precipitants of ethnonationalism.

Security

For purposes of emphasis, the issue of security which is a subject under human rights is treated separately in this section. Security is a fundamental human need, like physiological, identity, control and participation needs. When members of an ethnic group perceive their individual and collective security to be threatened, or not assured by the government's military and police forces, which are usually headed and manned mostly by members of the dominant ethnic community, mobilization to address the resulting insecurities ensues.

Security acquires importance as a conflict factor in conflicts that went through violent or large-scale military confrontation. As demonstrated in some armed ethnic conflicts, the issue of security is of the second-order problem category. It emerges as a problem largely when a particular conflict graduates to the violent phase. When this happens in combination with some of the other conflict factors discussed under the other categories, like government failure to redress basic minority complaints about discrimination, then the formation or revival of minority security forces is likely.³¹ And as the state emphasizes the repression of ethnic insurgents ("freedom fighters" to the ethnic community, and "terrorists" to the government) then the state-ethnic group interface gets more and more militarized, often times brutal. As John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary observed, "repression sidelines moderates, bolsters extremists and obstructs prospects for future accommodation."³²

It should be noted that the physical insecurities that stem from the militarization of the relations between the state and an ethnic group account for the importance given to the establishment of local/regional security forces and other related arrangements in many of the peace negotiations in the contemporary period.

Governance in Multicultural Societies

There are two broad approaches by which multiethnic societies deal with their cultural diversity. One is to recognize and accept the fact of their cultural diversity or ethnic heterogeneity and evolve appropriate political and economic structures, processes and policies. This is the multiculturalist response of contemporary multiethnic countries like Switzerland, Belgium, Canada and Australia. Even the United States started moving in this direction, indicating its abandonment of the "melting pot" concept. The second approach adhered to by majority of multiethnic countries is to assimilate their diverse constituent cultural communities into the mainstream culture. This entails forcible subordination or inferiorization of minority ethnic communities to the dominant group not only culturally but also politically and economically. This is the monoculturalist response.

The increasing number and intensity of ethnocultural conflicts in the contemporary world can be taken to suggest that the majority of multiethnic countries are factually of the assimilationist mold. This also suggests their adherence to the liberal view that the ethnic or cultural attributes of minority ethnic communities would disappear as they gradually integrate to the more "advanced" dominant cultural groups. Southeast Asian societies are among the strong adherents of this flawed approach by adopting a monoculturalist reading of their glaring multicultural character. Related to this, David Brown states:

Despite their cultural pluralism, each of the Southeast Asian societies can derive from their pre-colonial history, an image of a set of dominant cultural attributes and values which form the core for the definition of contemporary nationhood. They therefore seek to portray the culturally plural society as one which is potentially culturally homogenous, and which already has a cultural core around which nationhood can develop.³³

Assimilation as a mode of political integration is inherently unsuited to multicultural societies. Defined as an association of individuals, the assimilationist modern state abstracts away the class, ethnicity, religion and social status of its citizens, and unites them in terms of their subscription to a common system of authority, which is similarly abstracted from the wider structure of social relations.³⁴ Parekh pointed out:

The modern state makes good sense in a society that is culturally homogenous or willing to become so. In multi-ethnic and multicultural societies whose constituent communities entertain different views on its nature, powers and goals, have different histories, and need, and cannot therefore be treated in an identical manner, the modern state can easily become an instrument of injustice and oppression and even precipitate the very instability and secession it seeks to prevent.³⁵

In view of the need to ensure that ethnic minorities assimilate or integrate to the mononational state, control-oriented measures of political incorporation are warranted. These measures are collectively referred to as "hegemonic control," considered as the most common system of managing ethnic conflict.³⁶ Hegemonic control is viewed by its supporters as "the only alternative to continuous war."³⁷ Since its purpose is to make unthinkable or unworkable any ethnic challenge to the monoethnic or mononational state, hegemonic control entails coercive domination and elite cooption.³⁸ It emphasizes control of coercive instruments like the security and police forces.

Moreover, it involves the support of the largest or most powerful ethnic community.³⁹ This makes the multiethnic state an “ethnic democracy,” which, to Sammy Smootha and Theodor Hanf:

[D]iffers from other types of democracy in according a structured superior status to a particular segment of the population and in regarding the non-dominant groups as having a relatively lesser claim to the state and also as being not fully loyal. The manifestations of superior status are various but the most important ones relate to entry to the highest offices in the land and to the character of the state (its symbols, official language, religion, immigration policy). They may expressly be written into the constitution and other laws, or incorporated into the unwritten but clear rules of the game.⁴⁰

One unmistakable feature of the contemporary world order is the obstinate refusal of the leadership in many multiethnic states to recognize and accept their cultural diversity and the unresponsiveness of assimilation. Many of them are engaged in the ruthless suppression of ethnonationalism. Stressing this point, Will Kymlicka pointed out that states employed measure like banning the use of minority languages in schools or publications, suppression of political associations to promote minority nationalism, redrawing of political boundaries to prevent a group from forming a majority in a region or locality, imposing literacy test to make it difficult for the members to vote, and encouraging massive immigration so that the target group would become overwhelmed or outnumbered.⁴¹ He added:

All of these measures were intended to disempower national minorities, and to eliminate any sense of possessing a distinct national identity. This was justified on the grounds that minorities that view themselves as distinct ‘nations’ would be disloyal and potentially secessionist. And it was often claimed that minorities particularly indigenous peoples – were backward and uncivilized, and that it was in their own interest to be incorporated (even against their will) into more civilized and progressive nations.⁴²

The growing number and intensity of violent ethnocultural conflict suggests the bankruptcy of the assimilation policy and its derivative technique of hegemonic control. Thank God, there is now a global trend indicating that states are veering away from the said approach and moving in the direction of multiculturalism. Aside from Switzerland, Canada, Australia, and Belgium, which are known for embracing multiculturalism, there is a growing number of countries

that have started implementing cultural diversity-friendly initiatives.

For a society to be multiculturalist, it is not enough that it is multicultural, i.e., it consists of several ethnic or cultural groups. As clearly argued by Parekh, the term ‘multicultural’ refers to the fact of cultural diversity while multiculturalism points to the normative response of the society to its multicultural character.⁴³ Hence, many of contemporary multiethnic societies can be aptly described as “multicultural but not multiculturalist”.

A multiculturalist society is one that cherishes its cultural diversity and makes appropriate adjustments or responses thereto. In particular, it respects the cultural demands of its constituent communities. It was argued that “no multicultural society can be stable and vibrant unless it ensures that all its constituent communities receive both a just recognition and a just share of economic and political power. It requires a robust form of social, economic and political democracy to underpin its commitment to multiculturalism.”⁴⁴

The task of making multiethnic societies multiculturalist is indeed colossal. The inherent challenges are obviously daunting. But being an urgent survival imperative in contemporary multiethnic societies, it must be done. And the best way to do this would be to start with the basic aspects. A focus on the political dimension of multiculturalism is in order, particularly the need to evolve a governance formula that is suited to the cultural diversity of multiethnic societies.

It should be stressed that there is no available full-blown formula that multiethnic societies can borrow, experiment with, and adopt. Multicultural societies have to go back to the drawing board and reinvent or reconceptualize their political systems. They have to explore new kinds of political structures, processes and policies which are compatible with their respective circumstances. As Parekh pointed out:

The task of exploring new modes of constituting the modern state and even perhaps altogether new types of political formation is particularly acute in multicultural societies. They need to find ways of pluralizing the state without undermining its unity and the ability to act decisively in the collective interest. Every multicultural society needs to devise its own appropriate political structure to suit its history, cultural traditions, and range and depth of diversity.⁴⁵

Parekh added that the political task for multicultural societies is:

To find ways of reconciling the legitimate demands of unity and diversity, achieving political unity without cultural uniformity, being inclusive without being assimilationist,

cultivating among their citizens a common sense of belonging while respecting their legitimate cultural differences, and cherishing plural cultural identities without weakening the shared and precious identity of shared citizenship.⁴⁶

Given the points or ideas discussed in this paper, the following should be among the features necessary to make politics and governance in multiethnic societies multiculturalist:

1. An inclusive or pluralized political system that ensures the equality and participation of all constituent communities, and decentralized/localized governance (federalism, consociational democracy, or balanced pluralism);
2. Management of the economy to ensure that all constituent communities or groups receive a just share of economic resources;
3. A constitutional/legal system that recognizes cultural and religious differences and provides for some collective rights (protection for cultural/legal autonomy);
4. Political decision-making that provides ample protection for the voice of ethnic minorities; and
5. Affirmative action policies and programs for minorities.

It is my view that the operationalization of the above features would significantly help in addressing the principal underpinnings of conflicts in multicultural societies, particularly government neglect and discrimination in the allocation of resources, lack of participation and control over local or community affairs, lack of or inadequate representation in the central government, and lack of respect for the right of minorities to be different. The latter includes demands for a separate legal system, separate educational system and the power to come up with local policies warranted by the cultural groups' otherness or peculiarities. In other words, the above features have bearings on issues associated with politics of redistribution or social justice and identity politics or politics of recognition which are at the core of many violent ethnic conflicts.

Philippine Situation

Given the above features, and in the context of Mindanao, is the governance in the Philippines multiculturalist? Regrettably, I think it is relatively far from being multiculturalist, although it may be aptly considered "on the road to multiculturalism," given the recent cultural recognition-oriented initiatives of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and her major socio-economic development programs in the Southern

Philippines (including the depressed Moro communities) under the 2004-2006 Mindanao Investment Program. But although these recent cultural diversity-friendly initiatives of the Arroyo administration are indeed encouraging political developments in the context of multiculturalism, generally, the Philippine state, like many other modern states, remains preoccupied with ensuring national political and cultural homogeneity. Despite some initiatives in regional and local autonomy and decentralization, governance in the Philippines remains substantially assimilationist and continues to emphasize hegemonic control and the derivative techniques of coercive domination and elite cooption.

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) has been in existence since 1989. Territorially, the present ARMM based on the new autonomy law (RA 9054) is slightly bigger, with the addition of Basilan to the original four provinces (Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Sulu and Tawi –Tawi) and Marawi City.

The ARMM has its legislative, executive and judicial branches. It has its own administrative system and some degree of fiscal autonomy. The Arroyo administration has started implementing the provisions of RA 9054 on Moro representation in the central government by appointing Muslim leaders and professionals to certain positions in some national agencies. Moreover, the Philippine government has completed the integration of 7,500 qualified MNLF combatants into the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP). Some socio-economic development programs were implemented in the region by foreign donors and the national government, while others are presently being implemented. There are many other gains or accomplishments made under the present regional autonomy experiment in Muslim Mindanao. However, the continued persistence of the Moro armed struggle can be taken to suggest that the existing governance system for the region (i.e., Muslim Mindanao) has not been responsive. Despite the reported grandiose socio-economic development programs for the Southern Philippines, the five predominantly Muslim provinces have remained as the country's poorest. The region has the worst poverty index in 2000, i.e., four years after the signing of the GRP-MNLF Peace Agreement.

Reflective of the government's continuing assimilationist thrust and a heavy slant towards hegemonic control technique are some cultural diversity or identity-related issues. One is the too limited jurisdiction of the Shari'ah courts, i.e., only persons and family relations. The establishment of the Shari'ah Appellate Court which was mandated by the old and new autonomy laws has remained unimplemented. Another one is that despite the completion of the integration of 7,500 qualified MNLF combatants into the AFP and PNP, the Special Regional Security Force of the PNP and regional command of the AFP for the

ARMM which are expected to have substantial Moro elements mandated under the old and new autonomy laws have remained unimplemented until today. The taxing powers of the region are hollow because aside from the widespread poverty in the region, no significant national taxing powers were transferred to the ARMM. The control-oriented governance of the region is indicated by the emphasis in the old and new autonomy laws (RA 6734 and RA 9054 respectively) on the limitations of the powers of the ARMM. Like RA 6734, many of the provisions of RA 9054 have to do with what the ARMM cannot do, instead of what it can do.

As pointed out earlier, despite the gains and accomplishments made with the current unitary regional autonomy experiment in Muslim Mindanao, governance in the Philippines cannot be classified as multiculturalist. What have been achieved so far are largely in the nature of formalistic compliance, not substantive compliance with the requirements of multiculturalist governance. The gains are largely with those aspects with significant cooption functions (e.g., appointment of mujahideen leaders to some government positions, integration of MNLF combatants into the AFP and PNP). It should be noted that the core issue of autonomy as a policy response to ethnic conflict is the right of the minorities to be different.

But the gains and accomplishments discussed earlier, while largely formalistic, can be made to lead to the desired multiculturalization of the country's governance. I wish to stress that autonomy as a policy response to ethnic conflict is a significant phase of the cultural diversity-friendly interventions continuum. Being in the initial phase of the road towards multiculturalist governance, the task at hand is how to make the current autonomy experiment in the Southern Philippines succeed and lead to more responsive, nonviolent and nonsecessionist politico-administrative alternatives (with federalism as a more promising option). In other words, the present ARMM may be operated as an effective transitory structure towards that goal.

I am of the view that the autonomy option is a significant initial policy response. In other words, despite its inadequacies, the autonomy formula embodied in R.A. 9054 can be taken as a good beginning of a work-in-progress, i.e., evolving a more responsive and durable formula that ensures the territorial integrity of the country and addresses the principal Moro grievances underpinning the conflict. It is a must that we fully utilize what we now have like the new autonomy law (RA 9054), the new ARMM and other autonomy-related institutions and resources at all levels of government. All doable and deliverable aspects of RA 9054 must be fully implemented. As to the items not addressed in RA 9054, like those matters associated with the cultural diversity of the country (such as the clamor for the broadening of the jurisdiction of Shari'ah courts, the provision of financial support for the

madaris, etc.), I think, they should be part of the potential reform thrusts in the future, as we go on with our autonomy experience. The current peace process between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) provides a good opportunity to address these neglected but significant items. Moreover, initiatives to enrich the existing autonomy law or evolve a more responsive politico-administrative set-up like federalism can be done simultaneously with efforts to fully implement the many doable and deliverable aspects of RA 9054.

It is my view that the current nation-wide advocacy for federalism, which has been gaining momentum over the years, is a significant step in the efforts to make governance in the Philippines genuinely multiculturalist. A genuinely multiculturalist governance will make secession and armed struggle baseless and unnecessary, and transform the Philippines as a vibrant multicultural society that will provide authentic peace and holistic development for all of its constituent cultural communities, including its ethnic minorities.

Concluding Statements

The increasing number and intensity of ethnocultural conflicts in the contemporary world suggests not only the limitations of the "one size fits all" and reductionist theories. It also implies an acute deficit in academic theorizing about multiethnic societies. In particular, while there are theories of the liberal capitalist state or the Marxist state, there is no available coherent theory of politics and governance in multiethnic societies. Similarly, while there are theories or models of public administration in developing or transitional societies, there is no theory of public administration in multiethnic states.

Although the societal context of politics and governance is given considerable emphasis in political science and public administration literature, it should be noted that much of the related scholarly works are of the cultural homogenization model. The societal context in which governance or public administration is embedded is assumed to be homogeneous. The various cultural communities are governed through the prism of the dominant culture. In other words, the cultural heterogeneity of multiethnic states is ignored, thus leading to unresponsive policies and programs. As explained in the foregoing sections, this flawed approach spawned not just the lack of development but also the lack of peace in multiethnic societies.

Given the above points, politics and governance in multiethnic societies need reconceptualizing, reinventing, or reengineering to address the requirements of their ethnic heterogeneity. This means that the "customer-attuning" concept, one of the new ideas associated with New Public Management, has to be brought to a higher level, i.e., beyond the bureaucracy. We need political structures, processes and policies which are suited to the needs and

requirements of the various ethnic or cultural groups in multiethnic societies. This is public sector reengineering at the macro level.

It is my view that the recommended shift from the policy of assimilation or homogenization to multiculturalism has the potentials to make governance in multiethnic societies “governance for all,” including the ethnic minorities therein. It will also make governance in said societies as “governance for both development and peace.” When this is operationalized, public administration becomes an enabling or capacitating instrument, not an apparatus of hegemonic control and coercive domination that provides neither development nor peace.

Helping hasten the required paradigm shift in theory and practice is indeed a significant task for scholars in political science and public administration in the Asia-Pacific region.

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Author

Dr. Macapado A. Muslim is the incumbent Chancellor of the Mindanao State University at General Santos City (MSU-GSC), Philippines. He has been teaching public administration and governance since 1980. He is also the Vice President of the Philippine Political Science Association. Dr. Muslim obtained his PhD and MA in Political Science from the University of Hawaii as East-West scholar, Master of Public Administration from the University of the Philippines, and Bachelor of Science in Public Administration from the Mindanao State University, Marawi City, Philippines. His current academic interests are largely in development administration and peace building in multiethnic countries, local and regional governance, multicultural education and political leadership.

Endnotes

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2002) and Hans-Rudolf Wicker, ed., *Rethinking Nationalism and Ethnicity: The Struggle for Meaning and Order in Europe* (Oxford and New York, Berg, 1997)

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5. B. Guy Peters and Jon Pierre, “Introduction: The Role of Public Administration in Governing,” in Guy Peters and Jon Pierre, eds., *Handbook of Public Administration* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003, p. 2.
6. For illustration see O.P. Dwivedi, “Challenges of Culture and Governance in Asian Public Administration”, in Peters and Pierre, eds., *Handbook of Public Administration*, pp. 514-522
7. Kai Frithjof Brand Jacobsen, “*Peace: The Goal and the Way*,” in Johan Galtung, Carl G. Jacobses and Kai Frithjof Brand Jacobsen, eds., *Searching for Peace: The Road to Transcend* (London, Sterling, Virginia: Photo Press, 2002), pp. 16-24
8. Note that the second strand of the definition of cultural violence in Galtung’s formulation focuses on those aspects of culture that legitimize or make violence seem an acceptable means of responding to conflict. See *ibid*.
9. Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 16-49.
10. The description of economic, political, social and cultural dimensions of development followed the model given in Mark Turner and David Hulme, *Governance, Administration and Development* (Connecticut: Kumarian Press, 1997), pp.11. The definition of the cultural dimension contained therein was slightly modified. Moreover, the last two dimensions of the said model were excluded in the definition provided herein.
11. Bikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism...*, p. 207.
12. Johan Galtung, Carl G. Jacobsen and Kai Frithjof Brand Jacobsen, eds, *Searching for Peace...*, p. xi.
13. Cited in Charles K. Wilber, “Humane Development: The Political Economy of Peace,” in Gerard F. Powers, Drew Christiansen, SJ, and Robert T. Henemeyer, eds, *Peacemaking: Moral and Policy Changes for a New World* (Washington, D.C.:NCCB/USC, 1994) pp. 134
14. Johan Galtung, “The State/Nation Dialectic: Some Tentative Conclusions,” in Johan Galtung, Carl G.

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15. Reid Luhman and Stuart Gilman, *Race and Ethnic Relations: The Social and Political Experience of Minority Groups* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1980), p. 323.
 16. *Ibid.*, p.205.
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 18. Cited in Steven D. Strauss, *World Conflicts*, p. 11.
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 28. Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism...*, p. 197.
 29. Cited in Mateo Gianni, "Multiculturalism and Political Integration..." p. 127.
 30. Hurst Hannum, *Autonomy, Sovereignty, and Self-Determination: The Accommodation of Conflicting Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), p. 476.
 31. This pattern was demonstrated in the conflicts in Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland. See *Ibid.*
 32. John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, "Eliminating and Managing Ethnic Differences," in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., *Ethnicity* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.333-341.
 33. David Brown, "Ethnicity, Nationalism and Democracy in Southeast Asia," in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., *Ethnicity*, p. 308.
 34. Bikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism...*, p. 181
 35. *Ibid.*, p. 185
 36. John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, "Eliminating and Managing Ethnic...", pp. 338-341.
 37. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 340
 38. *Ibid.*, pp. 338-341
 39. *Ibid.*, p. 338
 40. Sammy, Smooha and Theodor Hanf, "Conflict Regulation in Deeply Divided Societies," in Hutchinson and Smith, eds., *Ethnicity*, p. 331.
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 42. *Ibid.*
 43. Bikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism...*, p. 6.
 44. *Ibid.*, p. 345
 45. *Ibid.*, p. 195
 46. *Ibid.*, p. 343