

# **Public Administration and Political Determination: A Review of Theoretical and Rhetorical Notions in “Healing the Nation”**

ANANDA DEVI DOMINGO-ALMASE\*

*Conceptual studies and even political speeches have theorized and epitomized that the immense task of alleviating poverty rests on an efficient, responsive, and incorruptible public bureaucracy. And at the pilot seat of a well functioning administrative machine, it has been posed that the ingenious steering of political leaders is a major drive towards the direction of national prosperity and unity. Once more, the immense task of government in social and economic development elicits academic introspection of the integral relationship between politics and public administration. How the new political and administrative leadership will be able to carry out its imperative responsibility is a question that this study seeks to ponder on if only to shed light on the theoretical underpinnings of the President's rhetoric of “healing the nation.”*

## **Introduction**

At the center stage of government, the passionate call for a strong political determination was enunciated by newly inaugurated President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo after the unqualified performance of former President Joseph Ejercito Estrada in his role as the national “champion of the poor.” Proclaiming herself better than the former actor who had flopped in the third year of his presidency, Arroyo in her inaugural address on 20 January 2001 vowed to deliver the government from corruption and ill-gotten politics that have hindered genuine development, according to her. With this, Arroyo called for a new brand of politics based on platforms and programs, and of governance supported by high moral and ethical standards.<sup>1</sup>

Arroyo's battle cry upon assuming the presidency of the politically beleaguered Republic was aimed at setting up an efficacious government that is manned by dedicated political leaders, competent civil servants, and empowered civil society. The promise of “healing the nation” by improving the

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lives of the poor and uniting the people indeed tested her leadership ability and administrative capacity to rise above the political ruins of Estrada. In retrospect, the sudden change of presidential leadership that shortened the term of Estrada to only three years instead of six had been triggered by politically complicated turns of events that were tainted by controversies, cacophonies, and conspiracies. Estrada was ousted by a heightened demand for his resignation by organized sectoral groups that had protested in Edsa Shrine at the height of the unfinished impeachment trial of his alleged involvement in plunder and illegal gambling.

The tone of President Arroyo's clamor for effective political steering and good governance resounded with critical expectations and speculations in this study. What constitutes a good government has been a subject of academic debates and theoretical reflections on the nature of relationship between "politics" by elected officials, and "administration" by professional civil servants. The active participation of the organized groups or civil society on the other hand also figures significantly in the broadening political dimension of the theory and practice of public administration. This discourse deems it only fitting to examine the strong theoretical underpinnings of the said clamor for political and administrative reforms as the anchor of poverty alleviation in the national development agenda. This essay intends to give fuller meaning to the inclusion of "politics" in Public Administration (P.A.)—a discipline previously theorized as an exclusive domain of an apolitical execution of public policies.

The first and major part of this study delves into the rich theoretical foundations of P.A., particularly in the United States (US) which not only influenced but institutionalized the said discipline in the Philippines. Significant historical events which shaped the various theoretical propositions of P.A. will also be taken into account in order to comprehend how the latter managed to transform and conform to changing environmental contexts. The retrospective of the discipline will show how the realm of politics, which at the outset had overshadowed but later faded in the sphere of governmental management, now shares prominently in the extended and eclectic breadth of P.A. Moreover, in describing the evolution of the academic field, this article aims to ascertain how and when is "politics"—whose pragmatic and paradigmatic conceptions have been constantly refounded—beneficial and inimical to P.A.

Following an understanding of the epistemological underpinnings of the integration of politics and administration, the second part ponders on the kind of political determination that is needed in healing the nation as pledged by the new administrative leadership. This is to substantiate the emerging paradigm of P.A. that is inextricably woven in the political sphere of sensitizing the needs of the public and of fostering national unity. The last part of the article raises some permeating issues and questions on the nature of politics that is practiced in government administration.

### **From Unity, to Dichotomy, to Public Accountability: The Theoretical Foundations of Politics and Administration**

At some time in the incipience of P.A. as a field of study both in Europe and later in the US, the determinate quest of conservative scholars for cognizable intellectual boundaries gave rise to a conceptual dichotomy between P.A. and its related field of Political Science. In the case of American P.A., the perceived separation had been, for a passing period, enshrined by a positivist academic community that patronized Woodrow Wilson's treatise on *The Study of Public Administration* in 1887. The said discourse which argued on the separation of politics and administration, aimed to purify the latter from the hurry and strife of political patronage and spoils system in the United States. But the belief in a promised salvation from the impurities of a muddled politics that had so intoxicated the American government was later challenged by a politically orientated paradigm of P.A. in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During this time, there emerged a different conception and appreciation of "politics" apart from its perceived evil tendencies toward meddling in the affairs of the civil servants' sanctified function.

The practical domain of public administration which Wilson—in his celebrated paper had supposed as a field of business—was particularly criticized for its preoccupation with the mechanical workings of an impersonal governmental bureaucracy. The highly rational notion of administering the state utterly disregarded the psychosocial and political context of the field which is predisposed to sensitize and meet the divergent needs of various peoples in the society. It must be remembered that the accountability of the government to the public is inherently the concern of the political sphere. This may be overlooked by the administrative domain which is made accountable to institutionalized rules and procedures, and not really to the people as electorate.

What is actually "politics?"—the kind of which was scrutinized by reformists as either integral to or inimical in the administration of public affairs in different periods of the development of the academic field. Only then can we reckon if "politics" in its various connotations and contexts, has indeed retreated from or strived to reign in P.A. as it is today. In the light of the need for public accountability more than the quest for a disciplinary dichotomy, the ensuing discussions will delve into the theoretical explication of the political dimension in the study and more so in the practice of P.A.

#### *Early History and Quest for Identity*

As a practice, the early accounts of an institutionalized system of administration dated back from the eleventh century in Rome with Catholic

Church as a typical example of a hierarchical organization with clearly defined positions (e.g., pope, bishop, priest) from central to local levels. The source of legitimacy of the Church's administrative system as well as of the pope's authority was the Canon Law. The said body of rules was a progeny of the Roman law system from where the sovereignty of the Emperor in Rome was also derived 500 years before the birth of Christ (B.C.) (Raadschelders and Rutgers 1996: 67-69).

Earlier historical record of administration even traced an already developed organization to the antiquated and mystifying world of the Egyptian Empire between 2900 to 2475 B.C. (Beyers 1982). Apparently, the presence of a well-established and formal governmental organization in Egypt was a striking feature of a modern bureaucracy with systematized procedures and departmentalized operations. Aside from this, the most notable and glaring subject of analysis in ancient Egypt was the administrative principles employed in the still baffling and extraordinary construction of the Great Pyramids in Giza and the irrigation of the Nile River.

As an academic field, the study of State Administration or "Camerarism" as it was earlier called, already emerged as a separate but rather compounded study in Prussia in the early 1700s. In an attempt to capture realistically the dynamism of the internal workings of the State, the said field of inquiry propagated the principles and ethos of public accountability, leadership, and policymaking, even to the chagrin of conservative scholars of Political Science. Cameralism delved into the concept of polity which was generally associated with the administration of a sovereign prince who ruled over a welfare State. With this, the search for an underlying political philosophy of providing *eudaimonia* or total happiness to the prince's subjects or people, preoccupied the early scholars of Cameralism in Europe (Rutgers 1998: 554-555). It must be noted that even in ancient China particularly during the Han Dynasty from 206 B.C. to 220 A.D., the prevailing norm of its public administrative system was greatly influenced by a Confucian philosophy of ensuring the happiness of people (Hughes 1998).

The attempts to link Political Science theory as well as Philosophy with the praxis of Cameralism somehow defied the hallowed academic boundaries that conservative scholars had guarded for an enduring period. Von Justi, in response to controversies on defining the theoretical parameters of the field, maintained in 1760 that the locus of the said field of inquiry was the internal organization and affairs of the State in line with the eudaimonic ideal of promoting public welfare. Justi made the study more academic by integrating the sociohistorical and utilitarian-pragmatic approaches to administration with the systematic operations of the state and the law, thus giving the field an explicit political orientation (Rutgers 1998: 556).

In the heat of the continuing debate on the interdisciplinary nature of the academic field, Medikus in 1779 delivered a rousing historic speech before the faculty of the School of Cameralism in Lautern. He strongly articulated that the study ought to be treated "as a separate field of great importance to the state" after more than 50 years of assiduous theoretical reflection by its scholars (Rutgers 1998: 554). He also explicated that the attacks on the lack of disciplinary identity of Cameralism had only been waged flimsily by envious vigilantes from other departments in the University. He thus dismissed such criticism as a viciously imagined crisis in the theoretical paradigm of the more practical study of polity.

But the crux of the matter, whether real or imaginary, permeated the veins of the conglomerated analytical discourse of Cameralism whose identity became known as one that is interdisciplinary and practical. To note, the 12,026 bibliographies reviewed in the period between 1727 and 1835 in Germany showed that the scope of the field was indeed very broad. The vaulting list of studies ranged from policy science, praxis of the chancellor, philosophy, economics, fiscal management, statistics, farming and forestry, to home administration, among others (Rutgers 1998: 555). Considerably, it was German Cameralist Von Mohl who commented in 1844 that despite the diverse literature and published books about State Administration, there had been "no fundamental principles but only aggregates of recipes" (Rutgers 1998: 557). Mohl, however, made it clear that the underlying reason for the lack of a universal paradigm for State Administration was the inherent absence of a normative theory of the state. The lack of a single-agreed theoretical framework, according to him, cannot be criticized as "there will never be a one right way to approach the matter" (Rutgers 1998: 557).

The early accounts of the development of P.A. already showed that the eclectic nature of government administration cannot simply be disregarded in the quest for disciplinary autonomy or originality. This only means that the discipline, even in its early history, cannot be encapsulated immemorially or universally in a single-agreed theory of administering the state. A universally standing and concise theoretical framework will certainly fall short in making sense of the complex administrative phenomena which operate in the changing sociopolitical milieu of different governments in different times. The ghosts of the past continued to haunt the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century polemic in the West of whether to recognize P.A. as a distinct academic field, rationalize its operations from the hurry and strife of politics, or synthesize it with the inescapable embrace of its political context in the end.

*Reign and Retreat of 'Politics' in Administration*

The predominance of politics in the affairs of the State molded the rudiments of the American government as a paragon and bastion of democracy. Notably, in 1830 it was President Andrew Jackson who popularized a philosophy of democratic public administration in the government that would later become problematic for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century bureaucracy in the US. Danilo R. Reyes (1995) described this in his study of the history of Public Administration.

In Jackson's view, the duties required by federal positions were simple and did not demand experience. Government was seen as a rather simple operation and ability was believed to be widely distributed among citizens. As a result, public employment soon began to be regarded as a reward rotated among citizens on the basis of their political loyalties. In time, patronage, or the "spoils system" became the common practice and political appointees, knowing that their tenure in office was short, enriched themselves (Reyes 1995:9).

Owen Hughes, in tracing the early forms of American Public Administration, narrated that the spoils system had been woven incorrigibly in the fabric of the governmental system in the belief sown by Jackson that the spoils belong to the victor. This only meant that positions in the government and all benefits of public office rightfully belong to the winning political party in the election from the President down to the local officials. As Hughes wrote, Jackson promulgated the idea that something good can be gained from the pursuit of egalitarianism and democracy rather than elitism. This was because there would be greater benefit of reducing corruption in intermittent appointments of public officials and bureaucrats, rather than in their long continuance in government office (Hughes 1998: 24). Hughes noted that such egalitarian philosophy conformed well with the American frame of mind at a time when the electorate generally distrusted the people in the government, and thus demanded periodic change of administrators. But history will attest that what had been earlier believed to be the domain of politics to democratize public administration only turned out as a paradox of promoting the personal interests of power trippers positioned in government.

The concept and practice of a politicized administration naturally became the order in a government lacking stable and professional administrators that would provide for continuity even with changes in the political leadership. The "Jacksonian" democracy and its doctrine of running a politicized government ruled headstrong in the absence of a rational-legal framework that would professionalize and institutionalize a merit-based civil service. Then finally, the democratic system that the American people had epitomized to the world during that era, waned in the changing sociopolitical environ of an unfolding generation which strongly censured the perverse practice of spoils system and Patrimonialism in public administration.

The assassination of President James Garfield in 1881 was followed by a popular call for reform in the administration of the American government. "Politics" was sought to be confined in the sphere of policymaking in hopes of rationalizing the discipline and practice of public administration. Thus in 1883, the Progressive Movement pushed for the promulgation of the Civil Service Law otherwise known as the Pendleton Act which sought to professionalize public administration through an elaborate system of merit and fitness of government personnel (Reyes 1995: 9-10). The embryonic foundation that had been laid by the civil service reform was further developed by an academe that adopted Woodrow Wilson's treatise on the separation of politics and administration. This provided for the establishment of a separate school of Public Administration from where the envisioned dichotomy between politics and administration was concretized and even consecrated. Wilson's original writings in his classical work *The Study of Administration* in 1887 provided a more explicit explanation for the separation of politics and administration. According to the great scholar who later became the President of the US from 1913 to 1921:

The field of Administration is a field of business. It is removed from the hurry and strife of politics. It is a part of political life only as the methods of counting-house are part of the life of the society, only as machinery is part of the manufactured product...

Politics is a state activity in things great and universal while administration on the other hand is the activity of the state in individual and small things. Politics is thus the special province of the statesman, administration of the technical official. Policy does nothing without the aid of administration, but administration is not therefore politics (Akindele 1994: 299).

Notably, the rationalization of the civil service institution was influenced in part by Britain's earlier strides in replacing political patronage with a merit-based system in its own public personnel administration in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. With the promulgation of the milestone Northcote-Trevelyan Report in 1854, the British government adhered to recommendations that public service should be carried out by a well selected body of young men through an established procedure of examination. As Hughes wrote in his historical account:

It [Northcote-Trevelyan Report] recommended: the abolition of patronage and the substitution of recruitment by open competitive examinations under the supervision of central examining board; reorganization of office staffs of central departments in broad classes to deal with intellectual and mechanical work respectively; and filling higher posts by promotion from inside based on merit (Hughes 1998:25).

The legitimate moves to redress and replace the corruptible patronage system in Britain and later in the US ushered in the full flowering of an

epistemologically positivist discipline of P.A. However, the question of whether “politics” had truly been purged in the actual praxis of government administration in the West, was a crucial issue that the discipline at that time did not bother to ascertain after securing a niche in the academic community. Nevertheless, the succeeding age of rationality, consistency, and impartiality dawned in the study with the subsequent publications and fora of scientific research which somehow kept “politics” in its theoretical territory of policy formulation outside policy implementation.

### *Age of Rationality, Consistency, and Impartiality*

With the professionalization of the civil service, administration was separated from politics but apparently categorized as business where complex decisions and operations were regarded normatively to be products of scientific calculations. As politics had retreated for a while in the backstage of P.A. study, the rule of science commanded or attempted to have control of the calculable mechanical workings of the bureaucracy as the rational way of administering the affairs of the state. The widely accepted scientific paradigm, whose tenets were borrowed from the field of business and organization studies, was supported by Frank Goodnow in 1900 and Leonard White in 1926 (Reyes 1993: 26). Both scholars elaborated Wilson’s earlier call for a dichotomy and for a distinguished study of the field.

Looking at the body of literature that accumulated in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century in the US, it can be seen that the various theories and principles of P.A. have been analyzed and characterized in different typologies by various scholars. Nicolas Henry in 1975, for one, categorized this age of rationalism as the *principles of administration* paradigm from 1927 to 1950, and which immediately followed the first paradigm of the *politics-administration dichotomy* from 1900 to 1926 (Reyes 1993: 27). Golembiewski in 1977, on the other hand, called this era as the *science of management tradition* which imbibed not only the values of scientific management, but also of behavioral science and of other approaches in organizational management. George Frederickson in 1976 labeled this impartial and rational epistemological tradition as the *classic bureaucratic model* followed by the *neo-bureaucratic* and the *institutional* which all looked at the systematic and scientific operations of public organization (Reyes 1995: 24).

What appeared to be the most prominent theory in the separate study of an apolitical P.A. was, just as Fredickson noted, the *bureaucratic model* as espoused in the writings of German sociologist Max Weber and reinterpreted in various publications in Organization Studies and Public Administration. The bureaucracy, which was based on the principle of a rational and legal authority, was regarded by Weber to be the ideal if not the perfect design of



administering large scale and complex organizations. Specifically, the bureaucracy adheres to the tenets of: unity of command in a hierarchical structure; division of labor and specialization in a departmentalized organization; and, formality in a rule-driven institution (Hughes 1998: 27).

Since the bureaucracy is governed by established rules and regulations, the consecration of the law is assiduously kept in elaborate records and files as means of control in the organization. Moreover, the institutionalization of legitimate procedures was aimed at rationalizing organizational operations and human behaviors which are predetermined and therefore easily calculated. Despite criticisms from succeeding humanist scholars with regard to the mechanistic actions of men, still, the significant contribution of the bureaucracy was the establishment of qualification standards in the selection and career development of permanent personnel in stable public office. Weber's bureaucratic principles in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century consolidated the various scientific theories on administration and management whose basic tenets can be traced way back to the ancient world.

Apparently, the bureaucratic model that Weber was credited for was a semblance of the formal organization theory of Henri Fayol in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century which became popular in the US in the 1930s. Fayol's universal principles of administration corresponded with those of the bureaucracy that Weber contextualized and juxtaposed with polity and society. Specifically, these are the scalar principle, span of control, vertical communication, and line and staff division (Beazley 1993: 10). Corollary to these structural principles in the organization were Luther Gulick and Lyndall Urwick's administrative functions in 1937 which probed into the basic management functions of: planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting. These principles and functions of administration complemented other classical theories that are midway between the macroscopic perspective of Weber's bureaucracy, and the particularistic focus of work tasks by scientific management scholars like Frederick Taylor (Rabin and Bowman 1984: 4).

The seemingly overemphasis on the physical dimension of a formalized organization was a mirror of a bureaucratic face. But Fayol's reflection on the other hand also showed a countenance whose lineaments dated back from Frederick Taylor's principles of scientific management as measured by time and motion studies in 1911. The scientific management axioms which Taylor consolidated from much earlier management thoughts in the industrial setting are the: hierarchical structure; division of labor; control and coordination; as well as payment schemes and incentives to maximize production (Taylor 1947). What was implicit in Taylor's doctrine is the idea of selecting qualified workers and making them productive through division of labor which enhances specialization and efficiency in an industrial setting. Stemming from the practicality of replacing the "rule of thumb" or personal

discretion, the microscopic approach of Taylor was modified by Fayol's Science of Administration to fit large and formal organizations with complex tasks. And in a modernizing environment with more complicated demands of putting order in the society, the need to institutionalize a stable and legitimate organization led to the creation of the bureaucracy as characterized by Weber.

In the course of the study of an apolitical P.A., another school of thought emerged in the field of management and challenged the realism and positivism of the bureaucratic model in the 1930s. The challenge came from the humanist model of administration which focused on the subjective study of human behavior and on how people can be motivated by personal goals and social groups in order to enhance organizational cohesion and productivity. The proponents of this alternative management style were Elton Mayo and his associates in the famous experiment conducted on personnel of the Hawthorne Plant of the Western Electric Company in Chicago in the 1920s. Maslow, McGregor, Herzberg, Likert, and Argyris among others followed this tradition (Beazley 1983: 12-13). In particular, these sociologists contributed significant insights on employee morale and welfare, job satisfaction, self-actualization, socialization, and participation in decisionmaking. All these were theorized to bear implications on the design of an enriching and progressive career in the organization.

On the whole, even if the mechanistic nature of a bureaucracy had been challenged by humanistic scholars, the rationalization and intellectual progression of the field developed during this age when the study enclosed itself from the outside political environment. However, it seemed that conservative theorists were engrossed in the idea that in developing a separate academia of an apolitical P.A., the normative scientific study or even of a humanistic alternative can actually be freed from the naturally intervening and integral component of politics.

*Revival and Refounding of "Politics" in  
the Eclectic Administration of the Public*

In the ensuing years, the prescribed rational and impartial administration of the bureaucracy was seen to be incapacitated to cope with the dynamic sociopolitical environment. Institutional reforms were urgently needed and these can only be directed by policymakers in the political sphere. Even the orthodox academic community was not able to make sense out of the enveloping political force of policy decisions and resource allocations in inspiring the bureaucratic machine without a compelling paradigm shift. The need to accommodate the emerging revolutionary theory with political orientation can be succinctly explained by Wamsley and Dudley's statement that "governance is an enterprise inherently political and moral which is well

outside the capacity of a well-ordered world of expertise and limited commitment" (Wamsley and Dudley 1998: 355).

Henry in 1975 called this momentous metamorphosis in the study as the *Public Administration as Political Science* paradigm which flourished beginning from the 1960s and onwards. Relatedly, Golembiewski in 1977 and Frederickson in 1976 also studied the shift towards a politically oriented paradigm which they labeled as the *public policy approach* and the *public choice* models, respectively. Reyes vividly described this revival of politics in his own analytical review of the study as:

....represent(ing) a focus of attention towards the political process and, in a way, disturbed the supposedly logically tidy distinction built by the politics-administration dichotomy tradition between Public Administration and Political Science. It is an orientation that would subject the discipline to vigorous scrutiny, to a number of unsettled questions that were then taking shape (Reyes 1995: 14).

The changing theoretical paradigm of the field from a closed to an open system of understanding the ramifications of policymaking was agitated by a rousing public opinion on the bureaucracy's ineffectiveness in addressing public demands. Hughes noted that in the 1970s, the quality of public services in most developed countries deteriorated and, thus, incurred increasing public criticisms and clamor for reforms in the government (Hughes 1998: 39). This condition, to note, was reminiscent of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century public administration in the US when sweeping reforms were instituted as a result of heightened public censures against the corruptible marriage of politics and administration in the American civil service. This time though, the divorce of policymaking that was deemed political and of policy implementation as rational, failed to meet the expectations of the people from the government in its role of sensitizing the needs and sentiments of the public.

As early as 1949, a notable work which signaled a modicum of political reawakening of the still young field of P.A. was authored by Paul Appleby. However, his writings were only noted and appreciated when succeeding scholars took serious cognizance of his work years later, until an imminent paradigm shift became ripe in the late 1960s amidst issues of intellectual crisis. A number of articles were published in support of Appleby's integration of politics and administration, one of which came from Marshall and Gladys Dimock in 1970 who posed that governmental administration operates in a political setting. Arguing that politics is central to the administrative life of all civil service personnel from the lowest to the highest ranking officials, Marshall and Dimock wrote:

Public Administration is policymaking.... It is policymaking on a field where mighty forces contend; forces engendered in and by the

society. Indeed Public Administration is one of several political processes by which a people achieves and controls governance (Akindele 1994: 303-304).

Relatedly, Harold Stein, in his paper *Public Administration as Politics* in 1970 explained that the totality or oneness of the two fields refers to the administrators' values of pursuing organizational objectives and adjusting to the sociopolitical environment. Stein noted that politics is synonymous not just to benefits and power, but also to a system of ethical values and to problems of survival that even a bureaucracy is not immune to. His writings provided a more definitive explication:

(The) possible threats to what may be called survival may come from a legislature...or from an administrative superior such as the President, frequently acting on pressure from the general or some specialized public. Administrator, agency, program—all are subject to attack...And the administrator must rely on his own system of values (because) it is doubtful that any administrator can long survive...if his decisions reflect values that are sharply at variance with the general standards of society or the goals which society seeks (Akindele 1994: 304).

In accord with this, Hughes likewise asserted that the importance of a value system cannot be meaningfully imbibed nor replaced by value-free calculations of a rational bureaucracy. According to him, "the attempt to be non-political meant a reluctance to recognize the policy and political significance of public service work" (Hughes 1998: 40).

One glaring truth about the inseparable convergence of politics and administration is in the area of budget preparation and approval. Aaron Wildavsky, in his book *A Comparative Theory of Budgetary Processes* (1986), viewed government budgeting more from its behavioral aspect of competing for budgetary shares, rather than its financial aspect of programming expenditures that is just an embattled result of complicated politics (Wildavsky 1986). It must be taken into account that while policies are deliberated outside of departmental administration, Cabinet members are being summoned to Congress to defend their respective budgetary proposals, the rates of which are of course getting higher each year. The legislators then hear and approve the budget on the bases of how administrators and bureaucrats do well in their jobs, justify convincingly their proposed programs, and even play skillfully the art of politics in order to get the right budget. And in a developing country like the Philippines where resources are limited and fiscal deficits are high, the battle for budgetary demands is tough among competing departments that could get bigger shares of the budget pie.

Thus, more than rational calculations in allocating the budget, it takes political will and wits to bargain for and bolster the ambitious executive agenda for development. Addressing and balancing the diverse demands of

different sectors in a scrupulous and effective manner is precisely the value of political determination in public administration. This notion correlates well with Stein's argument as well as that of Hughes that the administration of public policies can never be divorced from politics—the latter of which embodies the general and aggregated interests of the society.

A reader on *Politics and Administration: Woodrow Wilson and American Public Administration* in 1984 presented a strong conclusive argument in summing up the various theoretical challenges to the orthodox study of the field. Jack Rabin and James Bowman noted that: "the search for an apolitical science of public administration has ended and we must now transcend it by emphasizing politics in administration" (Rabin and Bowman 1984: 8). In integrating a compendium of contemporary works on the political revival in P.A., Rabin and Bowman considered that while politics may be detached from administration for the purpose of scientific analysis and reform, they are however inseparable in operation. The writers emphasized that the perceived theoretical separation between the two fields is not necessarily a dichotomy in reality, but a continuum from routine administrative works of rank and file employees to value-laden decisionmaking of higher administrators. Rabin and Bowman highlighted the dualism of politics and administration born in the name of good government composed of a strong executive and an efficient bureaucracy (Rabin and Bowman 1984: 3).

The full embrace of politics in public administration was articulated by Raul de Guzman who defined the field as a "cooperative human action whether within the public bureaucracy, the private sector, or nongovernment organizations aimed at delivering services to the people" (De Guzman 1993: 4). His assertion complemented well the well-accepted paradigm of Public Administration in the Philippines which is concerned not only with the formulation and implementation of public policies, but also with the socio-cultural, economic, and political factors bearing on them.

### **The Call for Political Enlightenment in National Healing and Development**

The evolution of Public Administrative theory having been described, it is now clear that the intellectual renaissance of contemporary times celebrates optimistically the realistic union of politics and administration. The crucial role being played by politics in the administrative function of the Executive was articulated elaborately by the new President who took over an overthrown leadership. In her rousing inaugural speech entitled "*Where Do We Go From Here?*" on 20 January 2001, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo stated:

We must improve moral standards in the government and society in order to provide a strong foundation for good governance.

We must change the character of our politics in order to create fertile ground for true reforms. Our politics of personality and patronage must give way to a new politics of party programs and process of dialogue with the people.

The State of the Nation Address (SONA) of Arroyo in July 2001 also emphasized the need to change the nature of politics in the country as a prelude to her presentation of the executive agenda of development in relation to the state of the nation. "Politics," in this sense, was described in the SONA:

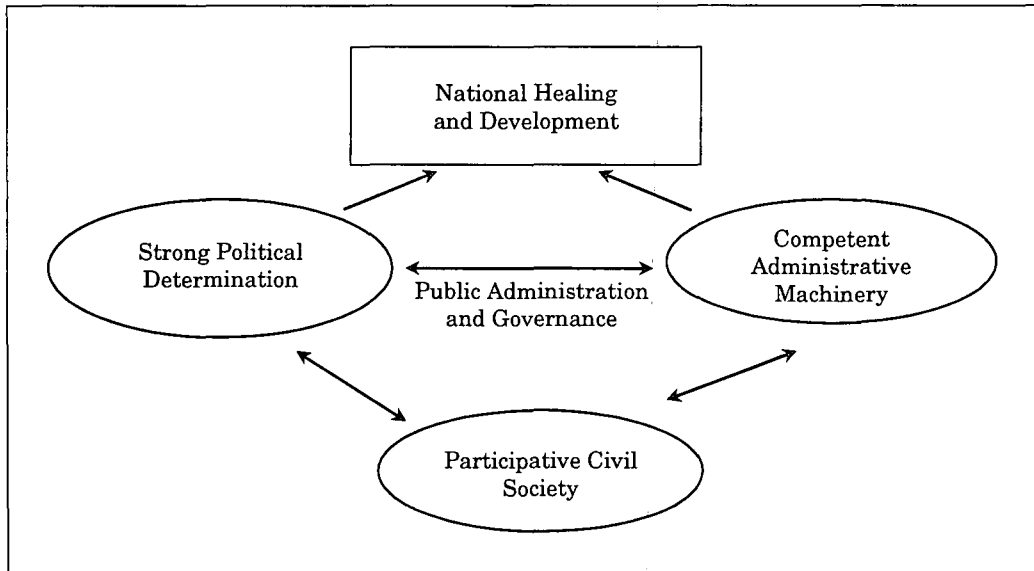
...The greatest obstacle we, as a nation must overcome is inside us. The enemy is to beat ourselves. When we spread division rather than unity; when we put ourselves above country and profit above fairness; when we think the worst of those with whom we should be working for the common good, and when we wallow in despair rather than rise to achievement. Indeed, when we make politics replace patriotism in our country's hour of need.

Taking off from this, the strategies for national development were laid out to Congress as policy guidelines in the deliberation of the national budget for the succeeding year. The development plan was simplified by underscoring the basic needs of people which are: *trabaho* (jobs), *edukasyon* (education), *sariling tahanan* (housing), and *pagkain sa bawat mesa* (food on every table). In order to meet these, the Administration presented four major thrusts: (1) free enterprise with social conscience, (2) agricultural modernization with social equity, (3) social development leaning on disadvantaged sectors, and (4) reformed government with ethical standards.

Arroyo's addresses to the nation focused on the issue that the structural problem of poor administration of development in the past was due to problematic "politics" which she defined as the domination of personal interests and factionalism over the public good. Such was a claim that can be seen either as a challenge to instill genuine public service value, or as a tactic just to justify the new administrative leadership as a credible alternative over the previous one that had fallen into disarray. But whether it was a stratagem employed by a new political personality, it is certain that politics—the beneficial and inimical tendencies of it—can make or break the performance of the all-embracing gamut of P.A. in its task of developing the nation.

Arroyo also beseeched the active support and participation of the people, particularly the civil society as a strong foundation on which the government strives to build strong institutions for development. This only shows that politics encompasses not just the process of policymaking that was conventionally related to legislature and to elected leaders, but the

**Figure 1. Framework for the Attainment of National Healing and Development**



cooperation of the public in fostering good governance. Significantly, the Chief Executive at the helm of government upheld a framework of governance that concurs well with the emerging paradigm postulated in the discipline of Public Administration. As illustrated in Figure 1, the three major components in the attainment of national healing and development are: (1) strong political determination, (2) competent administrative machinery, and (3) participative civil society.

**Testing the Vision of “Healing the Nation”:  
Some Permeating Questions in “Political Determination”**

One hundred days after Arroyo ascended to the Presidency, an accomplishment report published in 2001 reaffirmed the commitment of the Administration to *“Healing the Nation.”* With a long list of attainments that it flaunted, the report, bearing the same theme as its title, declared that the Administration “will set the stage for the full empowerment—economic, political, social, and spiritual—of the entire Filipino people.” But behind the report’s raw counting of budgetary inputs and total number of people served by particular programs within a given period of one hundred days, the promise of healing the nation seemed to harbor lurking frustrations for those whose deeply ingrained wounds have not been healed. Even the succeeding publicity of behavioral and structural reforms made in the Executive

Departments did not appear to appease ripening political conflicts and ensuing armed struggles. The greatness and loftiness of the envisioned panacea to society's lingering ailments of poverty and disunity truly evoked a proportionate degree of high expectations from the people, and of critical questions that the academe should continuously address and ponder on.

Firstly, the rhetorical call for 'a new brand of politics' as a crucial dimension of P.A. in its role of developing the nation should be taken in the locus where it is most wanting—in a highly politicized local environment. It must be realized that the administration of development is a serious responsibility that is devolved and decentralized to local chief executives now exercising wide discretionary powers in their own autonomous political units. As stipulated in the Local Government Code, the enhanced powers and authority given to LGUs are geared towards making them self-reliant to plan, fund, and manage their own development programs in accord with the prescribed national development plan. The success stories of affluent cities and developing LGUs can certainly attest to the blessings that decentralization has showered upon the progressive localities. But whether the assumption in general is truly reflective of the capacities of other struggling LGUs, is a critical question that poses serious implications on the theoretical union of politics and administration. The strong fascination of public officials and academicians as well with the insubstantial concept of "political will" is an interesting concern that needs to be studied in the light of how the local chief executives are actually exercising political power to promote development, or aggrandizing personal rulership especially in the far flung areas of the countryside.

Secondly, it has been theorized and advocated that the rise of civil society and people empowerment can serve as neutralizing force to rein in politics especially in the context of the local government's enhanced power and autonomy. In the localized political environment especially in underdeveloped areas of the country, how true is the sweeping assumption that the citizens are politically mature to work hand in hand with or even stand against local oligarchs? While the so-called "power of the civil society" in highly urbanized cities has been successful in questioning dauntlessly the perceived irregularities of politics and administration, what kind of power do the unorganized, disadvantaged, and vulnerable people in low class LGUs possess? Perhaps political maturity in a democratic public administration is more of a product of social and economic progress in a relatively conducive homogeneous civic community, rather than a means of development in a disintegrated society. This would explain why the historic and democratic exercise of political power to develop the country faltered in the face of poverty, social inequity, and cultural diversity which obstruct the ideal union of politics and administration.



Thirdly, the epistemological unity between the two fields leaves a lingering problematic of how to operationalize the rather ambiguous political values of public relations, accountability, responsiveness, and patronage within normative limits—all in the name of good government. With the revival and reign of “politics” that orthodox scholars once drove to its own lair, will public administration sacrifice rationality and impartiality because of the same ill consequences of too much “politicking” in invoking too much democracy that tends to be unruly? And as a result of this, will the academic community grapple with the same identity and intellectual crisis just to make sense out of another unanticipated clamor for change in the relationship of politics and administration? Perhaps, scholars and practitioners of Public Administration should really pay attention to the historic struggles and refounding of the field in its effort to promote the principles of predictability, accountability, transparency, and responsiveness of a stable government. Indeed, much can be learned from history which serves as guidepost towards understanding the basic arguments in support of the appropriate features and ideas about government that had or have been desired by people in the past (Raadshelders 1998: 7).

Fourthly, the espoused partnership of politics and administration does not discount definitively the irrationalistic tendencies of Patrimonialism which generally point to personal discretions that could lead to corruption. Guenther Roth (1991), in his paper on *Personal Rulership, Patrimonialism, and Empire-Building in the New States*, defined patrimonial domination as the wielding of power by personal rulers who transcend the bases of their legitimacy and maximize their control over various political and administrative devices. Roth further explained that such personal rule is grounded not on the perceived credibility and competence of the leader, but on how material rewards are dispensed by the ruler to elicit loyalty (Roth 1991: 21-22).

A critical account of patrimonial domination was also ruminated by Robin Theobald who sounded an ominous signal that the incorrigible rule of opportunistic politics has penetrated modern governments. According to the author, the direction of public institutions “seems to be (moving) towards highly fluid, informal, non-bureaucratic forms of contacts, networks, alliances, and personal mediation” (Theobald 1995: 430). The deterministic course of governmental administration towards Personalism in globalization was said to be one of the consequences of decentralization which emancipates the strength and legitimacy of the bureaucracy (Theobald 1995: 428-429). It should be taken into account that Patrimonialism reflects the strong tendencies of local government administration whose emanating culture does not delineate between administrative and political affairs.

Relatedly, Paul Hutchcroft (1991), in his study of *Oligarchs and Cronies in the Philippine State: The Politics of Plunder*, emphasized that the move

towards decentralization in 1991 has ushered in the resurgence of decentralized Patrimonialism that former President Ferdinand Marcos had centralized in his Martial Law rule in 1972. The conclusive analysis of the writer painted a grim scenario for public administration in the Philippines when he noted that the enhanced political autonomy in the locality "was no more than a logical extension and culmination of the pre-martial law process of using access to political machinery to accumulate wealth" (Hutchcroft, 1991: 329). Hutchcroft's comprehensive documentation of the crony phenomenon in the country even went further when it noted that patrimonial domination has defied the democratic political philosophy of former President Corazon Aquino after the fall of the dictator in 1986.

It is therefore with high hopes that the ideals of politics that the academe has so inspired and infused into the anatomy of Public Administration would countervail the perverse use of political power that serves only personal interests. Despite the normative and oftentimes romanticized role of political leadership at the helm of public administration, Felipe Miranda's retrospective analysis of the use of political power in the Philippines showed that politics has not been positively harnessed towards the ends of public good and national development. Miranda noted that the exercise of political discretion in administration has perpetuated oligarchic interests which can explain the grossly inequitable distribution of political and economic power in the country (Alfiler and Nicolas 1997). Miranda's study ran congruent with various studies on patrimonial domination whose practice in different historical epochs of nation states has proven to be obstructive to the development of poor countries because of corruption of the so-called personal rulers and cronies. This was what the new Administration claimed to have permeated in the past, and this was what it declared to change with effective leadership, integrity, and managerial acumen of a reformed government. That is the solution in which manner of actualization is more of a question than an answer in healing the nation.

### Conclusion

This study reviews the theoretical ramifications of Public Administration in an attempt to substantiate the call for a new brand of politics by the new Administration to "heal the nation." The retrospective of the various theories that were posed since the incipience of the academic field only shows that despite efforts to separate politics and administration in hopes of professionalizing the latter, the nature of political relationships prevails among rulers, administrators, and civil society in governance. However, considering the disconcerting assumptions and implications of the integration of politics and administration, even the academic discipline seems to be embroiled in a dilemma of how to normatively accommodate "politics"—that which is only benevolent and beneficial to public good.

Politics, to be good and essential in governmental management, must then be developed as a compelling tool or force of strengthening institutions, instilling reforms, giving direction to the bureaucracy, and stirring the citizenry into a common aspiration for national prosperity with equity. As normatively defined in this article, "politics" after the tradition of the politics-administration dichotomy encompasses not just the dynamics of deliberating and implementing public policies by the legislature and the executive, but also the critical participation of people from policy articulation to service delivery. On the part of the government, the political component refers to the strong determination of elected leaders, both in national and local governments, to push for policies with social justice content, generate adequate resources for poverty alleviation, prioritize public good over party affiliations, and administer policies in the most efficient and responsive manner. The civil society, on the other hand, refers to political dimension as their critical participation in the entire policy process, as well as to their exercise of liberties in a democracy. On the relationship between the government and the public, the development of politics refers to the strengthening of institutions and laws that not only promote the rights and participation of people, but also arrest corruption and unscrupulousness both in government and in society.

The major topics in this article are designed to stand as separate essays that can be pursued more extensively by assiduous scholars of Public Administration. The wide and open field of the study in the Philippine setting is truly a vast acreage of theoretical notions and practical prescriptions where extended breadths for exploration stem only from a central aspiration. And that is to understand or undertake the most appropriate ways and means of administering government, promoting development, and healing the nation as the new political and administrative leadership pledged to the people.

### Endnote

<sup>1</sup>The President's policy pronouncements on governance were emphasized unequivocally in her inaugural address entitled "Where Do We Go From Here?" which she delivered upon accepting the Presidency on 20 January 2001 at the Edsa Shrine Plaza.

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