

Political-Administrative Leadership for the 21st Century

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The only constant thing in life, politics and administration included, is change. So do the roles, standards and conditions of political-administrative leadership change. Also, the leaders of the next millennium must review and evaluate, and if necessary alter their current roles and qualifications in order for them to face decisively the challenges of tomorrow.

Before discussing the tasks of political and administrative leadership as we move into the next century and millennium, let us deal briefly with some aspects of contemporary history for perspective. Historically, our political system and public administration have undergone major changes since the Republic of the Philippines was established in 1946, under the 1935 Constitution. This charter for the transitional Commonwealth and the future Republic described the Philippines as "a republican state" or representative democracy.

From hindsight, during the first quarter century of the 1946 Republic, or until 1972, politics and administration were normal and predictable, so to speak. They manifested a basic continuity under a largely free and democratic system marked by periodic elections and regular alternation in power of the political elite who formed the two major parties and shifted between them. This condition signified in a way the people's ultimate power through the ballot to choose and change their leaders, not necessarily as a mandate for new policies or reforms but more to boot the rascals out and replace them, hopefully, with honest or less venal leaders.

The existence of peasant unrest that became a communist rebellion was part of the normality of the whole postwar period. This was a revolutionary expression of the people's dissatisfaction with the performance of democracy because of widespread poverty and inequity and prevalent corruption and injustice.

The imposition by President Marcos of martial law in 1972 and the 1973 Constitution transformed the nation-state into a dictatorship which he

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euphemistically called a "constitutional authoritarianism." Reflecting the legalistic and cynical attitude of the leadership, the 1973 Constitution also described the Philippines as a "republican state."

The authoritarian "New Society" of Marcos failed to achieve its avowed twin objectives of saving the nation from the Communist insurgency and the Moro rebellion and reforming the society. But it eminently succeeded in destroying our democratic institutions and ruining the economy. While the Philippines had been regarded as second only to Japan in development up to the mid-1960s, under Marcos' authoritarian rule of over 13 years the Philippines stagnated, decayed and fell behind the newly industrializing countries of East and Southeast Asia: South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and even Indonesia.

Redemocratization and Consolidation of Democracy After the Marcos Dictatorship and the EDSA Revolution

A year after the overthrow of the dictatorship as a consequence of the fraudulent presidential election and the peaceful, "people power" EDSA Revolution in February 1986, the Philippines as a nation-state was restored to its status as a representative democracy under President Corazon C. Aquino. To impress upon those who understand the nuance, the 1987 Constitution describes the Philippines as not only "a republican State," as in the 1935 and 1973 constitutions, but as both a "**democratic** and republican state" (emphasis added).

In a paper presented at the 1996 meeting of the Philippine Political Science Association and published in *Democratization: Philippine Perspectives*, a volume edited by Felipe B. Miranda and published by the University of the Philippines Press in 1997, I analyzed the issues, problems and conditions of democratization and democratic consolidation first under President Aquino and then under President Fidel V. Ramos (Miranda 1997: 1-81).

My analysis could only suggest the gravity and challenges that our political and administrative leaders confronted and continue to face today in effecting the transition from Marcos' martial law and dictatorship from September 1972 to February 1986, and back to constitutional democracy since then. The analysis was made under the following headings:

1. Transitional Issues and Problems: (1) dismantling authoritarianism and re-establishing democracy; (2) choosing the kind of democracy to establish; (3) upholding the inviolability of human rights; (4) defending democracy and punishing the military rebels and coup leaders; (5) releasing the political prisoners; and (6) President Aquino's leadership itself under multiple crises.

2. Contextual Problems: (1) the Communist insurgency; (2) ethnic/communal conflicts (with the Moros and the Cordillerans); (3) chronic and widespread poverty; (4) severe socioeconomic inequality; (5) continuing injustice; (6) heavy foreign debt; (7) violence, criminality and terrorism; (8) rapid population growth; (9) serious environmental degradation; (10) chronic and pervasive corruption; and (11) excessive government inefficiency, waste and red tape.

3. Systemic Issues and Problems: (1) re-instituting constitutionalism and the rule of law; (2) preventing untimely, self-serving amendments to the 1987 Constitution that would lift the term limits on elected leaders from the President down to local leaders; (3) people's preference for and adherence to democracy and peaceful change; (4) holding free, clean and credible elections; (5) the disloyal, unaccountable, rebounding collaborators of the ousted dictator; (6) rebuilding the party system; (7) strengthening civil society and political participation; (8) the mass media; (9) rebuilding the institutions of the presidency, national bureaucracy, Congress, the judiciary, and the military and police in the restored democracy; (10) local governments and the autonomous regions; (11) repayment of foreign debt and the order of the government's spending priorities; (12) the language of government and democracy, education and development; (13) the policy and program performance of democracy in the period of transition and consolidation—democracy and development for whom?; and (14) the impact of world capitalism, globalization and the world culture on Philippine democratic governance and development.

The Changing Roles, Standards and Conditions of Political-Administrative Leadership

Let us now discuss what roles, standards and styles of political-administrative leadership would be needed in the wake of the fundamental changes in the Philippine political system: from 26 years of democratic governance (1946-1972), to over thirteen years of authoritarian rule, and back to democratic governance since 1986.

Even the bare enumeration above of the transitional, contextual, and systemic issues, problems and conditions of democratic transition and consolidation suggests how enormous, complex and challenging they are to grapple with, and how our leaders must develop a new and deeper understanding of their roles and greater sophistication and skills in order to succeed. These would include dealing with the profound changes in the nature of Filipino society and of the world at large, as many of them do in fact realize.

First of all, our population is now about 71 million. It is expected to grow to 78.4 million in 2000, to 93.8 million in 2010, to 107.4 million in 2020 and to

113.4 million in 2025. This rapid growth will exert tremendous and mounting pressures on our resources, environment, employment, governance, public services, growth and equity, and political stability. The steady population explosion alone will put our democracy to continuing and severe tests of policy performance and institutional viability.

Second, globalization of trade, finance, industry and telecommunication will demand greater creativity and innovativeness and higher productivity in our industries, agriculture and services, and creativity and resiliency in our culture, if we are to survive, compete and benefit globally as well as contribute to the welfare of humankind.

Third, increased travel and instant access by Filipinos to what is happening in the world around through satellite television, the computer and cyberspace, and their growing empowerment as citizens are raising expectations and heightening demands for better governmental performance and for more effective, transparent and accountable governance and leadership, as well as for more popular participation in setting the national agenda and decisionmaking.

Fourth, global change and internal needs require the reinvention of the State, the government and the bureaucracy, as well as the transformation of our leadership and our citizenry.

Here we may face a paradox and a contradiction. The 1987 Constitution envisions a democratic "welfare state" to help us in our quest for "The Good Society," described as one that is peaceful, democratic, prosperous, pro-people, pro-environment, and just and humane, if not also God-centered. Article III enumerates six State principles and 22 State policies that the State is committed to uphold or pursue, although none of them may be legally enforceable. Then several articles following spell out what the State cannot do and how the government shall exercise its powers and authority in ways that could unduly restrict its effectiveness.

As a legal scholar told me: "In our Constitution we want the best of the two worlds of State activism and individual liberty. The Constitution faithfully reflects our collective confusion." A common example of this is the requirement of "just compensation" for land to be taken by the State for public use in the exercise of its power of eminent domain. This has proved to be a huge obstacle to the building or widening of roads for the greater public good now and in the future.

Thus, despite its grand mandate to do many things, the realistic capabilities of the State may require: (1) that the State focus on its primary and indispensable functions and do them fully and well; (2) that the State devolve a number of its other functions to the market and to civil society

according to the principles of limited and effective government, economic liberalization, privatization and the people's empowerment; and (3) that the State should decentralize decisionmaking according to the principles of subsidiarity and creative involvement of staff and workers in innovation and problemsolving.

The global trend is to redesign structures of authority and decisionmaking to ensure flexible, creative and efficient responses to rapidly changing environments. Our world is becoming more diverse, complex, and chaotic, and continues to be full of surprises. So our leaders must adapt to the changes surrounding them.

Fifth, all the foregoing conditions will require that our citizenry and our nation as a whole become better educated and learn continually: to think more effectively, to become more creative, productive, adaptive, critical, and responsible, and to be united and cohesive as a people, working with and through our social institutions, including the government.

As recommended by a study underlying the Ramos administration's moral recovery program: "value development programs should aim to develop in the Filipino: (1) a sense of **patriotism and national pride** — a genuine love, appreciation, and commitment to the Philippines and things Filipino; (2) a sense of **the common good** — the ability to look beyond selfish interests, a sense of justice, and a sense of outrage at its violation; (3) a sense of **integrity and accountability** — an aversion toward graft and corruption in society and an avoidance of the practice in one's daily life; (4) the value and habits of **discipline and hard work**; and (5) the value and habits of **self-reflection and analysis**, the internalization of **spiritual values**, the emphasis on essence rather than on form" (*Moral Recovery Program* 1988).

In sum, character-building for nation-building and the strengthening of societal institutions must go hand in hand in the national development process if the Philippines and the Filipinos are to be winners and not losers in our shrinking and keenly competitive world.

Sixth, in the afterglow of the EDSA Revolution and the defeat of the successive coup attempts to overthrow our newly restored constitutional democracy under President Aquino, Filipinos take nationalistic pride in their adherence to democracy and their rejection of authoritarian alternatives. They regret their tragic losses and setback under the Marcos dictatorship. Under President Fidel Ramos, our people have warmed up to our economic recovery and growth and accepted the challenge of becoming a Newly Industrializing Country, catching up with our advanced neighbors in East and Southeast Asia — if not "pole-vaulting" into the next century. We have a new pride and optimism to achieve our goals despite many odds. We should be inspired by our

centennial celebrations of the 1896 Revolution, the 1898 declaration of independence from Spain, and the 1899 birth of constitutional democracy.

Seventh, all the above pose a great challenge and responsibility to our leaders in the government, the political sector, the private sector, and civil society. For one, they are called upon to provide our institutions and communities and the nation with a vision, with knowledge and understanding, with democratic and participatory governance, and with the capacity for seeking consensus in solving common problems and resolving conflicts, and achieving unity and cohesiveness. For another, they should together help to enhance the nation's creativity, productivity and resiliency, the strength of the national and cultural identity, and the people's sense of purposiveness, hope, optimism and national pride — of feeling that they hold the nation's destiny in their own hands. A tall order indeed for our leaders as we step into the 21st century.

To quote Howard Gardner (1995: iv), the author of *Leading Minds*:

A leader is an individual...who significantly affects the thoughts, feelings, and/or behaviors of a significant number of individuals.... [L]eaders fashion stories — principally stories of identity. It is important that a leader be a good story-teller, but equally crucial that the leader embody that story in his or her life.

Roles and Qualifications of Political-Administrative Leaders for the 21st Century

With the foregoing assumptions in mind, let me conclude by attempting a combined statement of the roles and qualifications of the political and administrative leaders we need and want in our collective struggle for human survival, democracy, development and welfare, as we move into the 21st century.

- (1) The political-administrative leader should possess the knowledge, skills, and experience for performing the essential and conventional duties and responsibilities of leadership and management, namely:
 - (a) authoritatively defining the problem or the situation to be resolved, alleviated, or changed;
 - (b) formulating the course(s) of action, policy or strategy for dealing with the problem or situation defined; and
 - (c) mobilizing the human, material and other resources needed for carrying out or realizing the course(s) of action based on the

given definition, and countering opposition to proposed policies and solutions (Tucker 1981: 18-19).

These generalized functions subsume the familiar administrative functions of organizing, planning, policy formulation, policy implementation, monitoring, and evaluation — leading to policy and program maintenance or revision, and the redefinition of the problem or situation.

- (2) The political-administrative leader should have a profound respect for the dignity of the human person and for the inviolability of human rights for all. S/he should have an abiding faith in democracy and a dedication to make it work for the common good. Ideally, s/he should have the character and personality to be perceived by other leaders and by followers as a paragon or exemplar of the goals and ideals, the values and attitudes, and the conduct and behavior that they seek to achieve or realize. In other words, s/he must be seen to embody and personify the changes to be made. As paragon and exemplar, the leader is a transforming leader who elevates fellow leaders and followers as moral agents; s/he is the opposite of the self-seeking manipulator of people (MacGregor Burns 1978: 4, 434, 455, 461).
- (3) The political-administrative leader should have a vision of the desirable future for the organization, the community, the nation, or beyond, as may be appropriate, and should link such vision to a larger, authoritative vision that may already exist. S/he should have the ability to explain her or his vision so as to gain its willing if not enthusiastic acceptance and the commitment to its realization on the part of those who should have a stake in it and who can help to convince many others to believe in and work for its fulfillment.
- (4) The political-administrative leader must understand and believe in the imperative of character formation, fostering creativity and innovation and greater productivity, protecting and improving the environment, nation-building and institution-building in the processes of democratization and development. He must lead pro-actively, not just re-actively, on the basis of that understanding and belief. The foregoing factors and processes are continuing and long-term in nature and require integrity, consistency and persistence for their success.
- (5) Accordingly, the political-administrative leader, with other leaders, must define and enhance the roles and capabilities of State and non-State institutions, of the market, and of organizations and citizens

in civil society. The leader must be concerned with enhancing the nation's value system and shaping the appropriate political culture, and also with the various ways of doing them. S/he should have the ability, directly or through others, to redesign policies, institutions and systems to make them more humane, effective and efficient. S/he should be able to deal with diversity, complexity, and chaos in performing the duties and discharging the responsibilities of leadership.

- (6) Finally, the political-administrative leader must continually identify, train and develop promising contemporaries and younger leaders for succession to positions of leadership. Moreover, s/he must support and strengthen institutions for training and developing future leaders. The leader should try to leave a legacy of her or his leadership in various ways, including the writing of memoirs or an autobiography, and participation in organized programs for leadership training and development. A good leader is preeminently a good teacher. S/he can leave a valuable and enduring legacy when s/he is studied and cited for the valued lessons that her or his life and work and leadership embody or exemplify to present and future generations of leaders and followers.

As history's good and effective leaders have shown the world, only a few of them were saints; they were simply humans who emulated the best and tried always to aim high, to learn, and to transcend themselves for they truly cared for the people under their responsibility. No less will be expected of the political-administrative leader in the 21st century.

For us in the College of Public Administration, University of the Philippines, the celebration of our 45th foundation anniversary should be a rededication to our evolving ideals for political-administrative leadership. May we embody those ideals as individual scholars, professionals and colleagues in the institution, and as its representatives vis-a-vis the government and the nation.

We also have a dream. We shall work for the conversion of the CPA into the National School of Public Administration.

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