

Recent Philippine Experience in Regionalization: Political and Other Implications

GABRIEL U. IGLESIAS AND LORETTA MAKASIAR SICAT

Introduction

Like all "societies in a hurry," the thrust of the present political order in the Philippines is towards the attainment of national development within the shortest possible time. This being the case, it is worthwhile looking into the question of whether the means by which it is being sought are appropriate.

One of the striking features of the recent reforms of the Martial Law administration is regional development as an important component of the national development strategy. This national strategy is embodied in a four-year development plan (the latest of which is the plan for Fiscal Year 1974-77), prepared and coordinated by the National Economic and Development Authority. It is designed to do away with regional imbalances in development arising from gross differences in the extent of exploitation of their respective demographic, economic, social and environmental resources. It seeks to bring about a more equitable distribution of income, to expand employment opportunities outside of Metropolitan Manila by identifying and supporting other growth centers, to stabilize prices at reasonable levels, and to accelerate economic growth by encouraging industrial dispersal and promoting regional development. These closely interrelated objectives are collectively focused on social development—that is, substantially improving the conditions of life for the masses. The government, therefore, has placed maximum emphasis on achieving close coordination in the planning of all development efforts and on the need to integrate sectoral

Dr. Iglesias is Professor and Director of the Administrative Development Program, College of Public Administration, University of the Philippines (U.P.). Dr. Sicat is Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science, U.P. Paper delivered at the Tenth World Congress of the International Political Science Association at Edinburgh, Scotland on August 16-21, 1976. (At the time this was delivered, Dr. Iglesias was still an Associate Professor.)

activities, thereby giving a "spatial dimension into a strategic frame of reference" oriented towards full-scale implementation.¹

The basic approach to the current regional thrust is to develop all regions by providing guidelines and programs for each region to effectively utilize its own resources *relative to the resources of other regions*.² Activities are classified into nine sectors—agriculture, industry, health, education, infrastructure, utilities, housing, tourism, social welfare and community development, and exports—and applied in drawing up the national, regional, and local plans. The idea is to regionalize the national plan, which introduces spatial dimensions into all the national sectoral plans so as to identify national projects in each region. At the other end, local sectoral plans are aggregated at the regional level. With a view towards consistency, a comprehensive regional development plan can then be evolved.³

All this proceeds from the assumption that within a region, or among regions, the extent of development depends upon the location in space of economic activities. There are theoretical and empirical indications that development occurs from a growth center, usually an urban-industrial core which attracts resources from its surrounding rural periphery. Conscious intervention on such concentration of economic activities will create external economies and linkages, bringing about more income and employment and, eventually, the development of the urban center and its rural environs. This, coupled with the integration of regions with the national economy, will contribute to the goals of increasing the rate of national growth.⁴

The Rationale of Regionalization

Regionalization does not always imply nor lead to development. Nor does national development always necessitate regionalization. The size and complexity of the nation concerned would have to be taken into account. Nevertheless, in the Philippine case, regionalization has been deemed the appropriate approach or the most efficient instrument in the formulation of strategies for national development.

Regionalization simply means breaking up an organization (in this case, the national government organization) for administrative purposes into smaller units. In spatial terms, existing geographical boundaries are reorganized for developmental ends. In this context, regionalization envisions common regional centers where before these were located in various places in the region.

In the particular case of the Philippines, the compelling objective of the reorganization is to provide a governmental machinery that is development-oriented in addition to being conducive to increased levels of efficacy and efficiency in the administrative aspects of government. Hence, the twin-targets of the present Reorganization Plan is to improve administrative efficiency and to bring about more effective development planning.

Within the framework of this twofold objective, the regional offices established are intended to be units for administrative as well as for planning purposes.

A. *Administrative Efficiency*

The most important reason for regionalization has to do with the basic purpose of government. Government here is viewed as a sort of marketing or selling operation in which the clientele is the public and the end-product or "good" is the service. On this basis, it is felt that government service would be much more effective if there were greater personal contacts between government personnel and the public, the target clientele. Especially in many cases where people are not too adept at, or are timid about, transmitting their problems formally in writing to some unknown and remote official or agency located in Manila, the personal, face-to-face presentation of problems to readily available government officials who have the authority to represent and exercise powers of government is the preferred style of ventilating the needs of the public which seeks government assistance.⁵ The reasons are practical and rather obvious: it is less inconvenient, less expensive, and less time-consuming. Also, since it is more direct, especially where the appropriate action or solution to any problem is made right away, it gives the constituents a heightened sense of satisfaction at having been granted an audience by those representing the "powers-that-be." Sometimes, this alone might spell the difference between supportive versus hostile feelings about the government.

Other factors of administration may be categorized into those that are internal to the department and those that involve inter-departmental relationships. In the first category, regionalization will create a relatively new senior level of government administrators, thus providing the departments with some flexibility in the selection of senior level executives. This, in some way, will offset the rigidities under the civil service system. By creating, through regionalization, a new series of senior-level executive positions to which there are

few or no incumbents who claim vested rights (since these positions are in large part new) the departments will have a wider field of choice in filling up these positions.

Secondly, reorganization cuts considerably the communications distance between central office and the field, by placing regional offices directly under the Office of the Secretary. This arrangement provides the Secretary or agency head with a direct link with the field units and gives him a more immediate knowledge and a better feel of what is going on in the field.

Finally, regionalization is to be effected at the department level rather than at the bureau level. (Some departments, however, opted for the bureau model.) A decision, therefore, had to be made to make bureaus staff bureaus (departmental) rather than line bureaus with their own regional offices. Under the staff bureau concept, the regional offices would be under the direct control of the Secretary. In this way the structure of power and authority within the department is more clearly delineated and identified on this basis since only one director represents the department in the region.

B. Economic Aspects

Regionalizing on a department-wide basis facilitates considerable economies in administrative overhead costs. By establishing only one set of regional offices for each department, it is possible to provide common auxiliary services, such as communication equipment, motor pool, transport facilities, and similar other administrative services, whereas an unnecessary proliferation of these administrative facilities would arise if the bureaus were allowed to have their own sets of regional offices.

On an interdepartment level, the existence of common geographical coverage and regional centers facilitates interdepartmental coordination at the regional level, since problems involving several bureaus or departments can be more easily threshed out among the regional directors who are all located in the same regional center.

Regionalization is also conducive to the development of urban centers outside of Manila. Since administrative centers used to be dispersed in different locations within the same region, many of the regions, which were originally conceived as regional markets, were not large enough to support the economic growth of all the centers, especially if these centers also doubled as administrative centers for governmental purposes. Pooling together the resources of contiguous territories enables them to concentrate on the qualitative

development of urban centers in appropriate places other than Manila.⁶

C. The Planning Dimension of Regionalization

Planning at the regional level becomes more rational when it comes to determining specific projects because it enables the people involved to talk in terms of actual conditions rather than in abstract or highly generalized terms. Because here, in what is called, for instance, as the "river basin" approach in regional planning, what is taken into account is the economic profile of the regional area surrounding the river basin, such as geographical boundaries and features, water and other natural resources, and the human settlements (ethnic minorities) along both sides of the river bank.

The Formal Organization for Development Planning and Implementation

Entrusted by the new Constitution (1973: Art. XIV, Sec. 1) with the task of development planning is the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), which "shall recommend . . . after consultation with the private sector, local government units, and other appropriate public agencies, continuing, coordinated, and fully integrated social and economic plans and programs."

The NEDA Complex

A major problem which had plagued and frustrated the formulation of implementable development plans in the old system was the proliferation of governmental bodies performing economic planning functions. This was compounded by organizational and political weaknesses of the central economic planning body—the National Economic Council.

NEDA's letter of implementation (LOI No. 22) was issued on November 1, 1972 and its establishment was approved by the President on January 24, 1973 soon after the ratification of the Constitution. But it was only in May 1973, following the President's approval of its staff pattern, that NEDA became operational. The NEDA is a three-tiered body, with the NEDA Executive Board at the apex, supported by the NEDA Proper, the NEDA Regional Offices and the Regional Development Councils at the local level.

The NEDA Board

The NEDA Board, the highest development planning and pro-

gram implementation body, is composed of fourteen (out of the present number of 22) members of the Cabinet, with the President as Chairman, and invested with considerable power and authority by the Constitution and the Integrated Reorganization Plan (IRP).

Whereas the NEC had congressional members and representatives from the private sector, the NEDA Board's composition appears to ensure a more unified and cohesive "bureaucratic team" with no built-in divisive or countervailing forces which could challenge the President's leadership and authority. Although this does not preclude conflicts among members on policy matters, Presidential intervention could resolve any major controversies before it seriously affects the functioning of the Board.

To facilitate its work as well as expand its involvement in coordinating sectoral, agency, and multi-agency planning and implementation, the NEDA had organized a network of Standing Committees and Technical Committees. Through a system of "interlocking directorates" or membership in these committees, informal coordination is achieved among NEDA members and technical staff as well as other government agencies and personnel.

The Standing Committees include: 1) the Development Budget Coordinating Committee (DBCC; to link planning and budgeting), (2) the Investment Coordinating Committee (ICC; to coordinate investment policies, (3) the Statistical Advisory Board (SAB; to improve decision-making, linking planning and the statistical system), and (4) the Coconut Committee (CC; to bail a major domestic and export industry out of a threatening crisis).

NEDA Proper

The NEDA Proper, the Board's main bureaucratic machinery for development planning and implementation, was organized basically from the personnel of the old National Economic Council (NEC) and the Presidential Economic Staff (PES), the former generally found in the Planning and Policy Office and the latter in the Programs and Projects Office. Assisting the Director-General are five Deputy Directors-General (each with his own subject-area assignment, although one is currently on leave as he has been appointed acting Budget Commissioner) and two Assistant Directors-General.

Regional Development Staff: Center and Region

Another key unit is the Regional Development Staff (RDS) which is directly concerned with regional planning and development through the NEDA regional offices and the Regional Development

Councils (RDCs). In view of the importance given to regional planning and development, this office is directly supervised by the Director-General, though the office itself is headed by a Director. As staff arm, the RDS assists in the setting up of NEDA regional offices and the Regional Development Councils. It also provides staff support to the NEDA Regional Offices and RDCs as well as monitors development in the regions. To ensure effective coordination or supervision of the regions, RDS has divided the regions into zones. Some NEDA regional directors, however, would like to deal directly with the Director-General and not through the RDS; nor do they appreciate being supervised by the zone coordinators.

In line with the IRP's recommendation to decentralize governmental services in the twelve regions, NEDA only recently completed organizing offices in all the regions. The regional office, headed by the Regional Executive Director (RED), has two units—the Plan Formulation Staff and the Program Coordination Staff. As the extension of the NEDA in the region, the regional office serves as the main planning and implementation arm of regional plans and local government plans and programs. Staffing remains a major problem since most of NEDA's regional offices are understaffed due mainly to a shortage of qualified people.

Regional Development Councils

A key feature in the IRP's strategy of linking the national with local planning and development machinery is the establishment of Regional Development Councils. These RDCs would serve as the only body for regional planning and development in each region. As implemented, the organization of the RDCs hewed closely to the IRP's recommendations. Composed of elective local government officials (governors and city mayors), regional directors of some government departments, a representative from a regional development authority and the NEDA-RED (who is Vice-Chairman, the chairman being elected from the elective members), the RDCs average around 25 members, ranging from a high of 53 for Region IV (Southern Tagalog and Metro-Manila) to a low of 18 (Regions II and III—Cagayan Valley and Central Luzon, respectively.)

To enable this rather unwieldy body to work, NEDA organized them into sectoral task forces generally headed by the barrio councils. The brunt of the work is done through its eleven-member executive Committee headed by the NEDA-RED as Chairman and numerically dominated by bureaucrats (only two members are elective officials).

Analysis; Political Implications

Since regionalization means subdividing an organization into smaller units, it implies some sharing of functions and thus also of governmental power. Indeed, the NEDA Director-General defined regionalization as "a process of imparting more development activities at the level of regions instead of at the level of national definitions. For instance, the growth of economic activities in some sectors of the economy implies a greater exercise of local initiative — initiative at regional levels by officials of national offices and of local governments." He goes on to say that "we are in fact in the process of improving this by giving more powers to the local regional authorities and offices."

Thus the concept of power appears to be a useful approach in this analysis because power factors seem to be obtrusive and pervasive in the conditions relevant to the study. Martial law and governmental reforms are examples of power exercised, changing its locus, relationship and distribution, thus spawning conflicts and resistance.

It has long been assumed that the moment the question of sharing power comes up, we can always expect resistance from power-holders. But what if the opposite situation arises? What if the power-wielders themselves happen to be open to the idea of power-sharing, of democratization of the decision-making functions and of the delegation of authority? Do lower-level executives seize the opportunity and actively utilize their new-found authority or do they turn out to be too timid to use it?

To all appearances, at least, the political leadership is not only "open to the idea" of sharing power and delegation of authority; they had been advocates of regionalization in the real, substantive sense of the term *prior* to their recruitment to the government service. At times, one likes to believe that a good number of the present group of cabinet members were called to the service on the basis of their professional reputations — due in large part to what they had been known to have said or recommended in written form through various media with respect to governmental policies. It is the apparent soundness of these recommendations that moved the appointing power — i.e., the Chief Executive — to invite them to join his "think-and-do-tank." The writings and public lectures or speeches of these men, both before and after their designations to positions of authority, at least appear to show that they were committed to policies based on the principle of regionalism as the best approach to the solution of development problems in the Philippines.

Commitment to regionalization does seem to be the common denominator among the top leadership at the NEDA. Interviews with NEDA officials support this inference. For those to whom it means enhancement of their respective positions in the service, like the regional directors, this is understandable. For those who stand to lose a measure of their power, this is something different. It could, however, signify another kind of pay-off — added prestige in the eyes of those who stand to benefit directly from shared power.

The Reorganization Plan, which was the formal document that mapped out the regionalization scheme, was prepared basically to be presented to Congress for approval. It therefore had to be not only technically feasible but also acceptable to Philippine political leaders. In the course of selling the idea to members of Congress, some modifications in the original pattern had to be made to accommodate political interests. One such accommodation was the increase in the number of administrative regions from ten to eleven (now twelve). Indeed, even the demurrer of the chairman of the Reorganization Committee, viz.:

Let me point out, however, that this modification was not necessarily at the expense of technical considerations. After taking another look at the proposed regional division, we found out that the proposal for an additional 11th region was *technically defensible (underscoring supplied)* and, in fact, represented something of an oversight on our part, since even with the splitting of one region into two, each region would still be more thickly populated than some of the other regions . . .

seems to have been politically and diplomatically inspired.

Problems

Premised as it is on the principle that development can only be pursued on an integrated scale — that is, it has to involve virtually all other departments, such as Agriculture, Health, Social Welfare, etc. — NEDA's push towards regionalization is encountering some stumbling blocks.

The most expected hindrance is that cooperation could be lacking on the part of the personnel of the other departments concerned, partly as a result of inertia. To begin with, there is no real agreement as to what regionalization means. For another thing, there could be as many definitions of regionalization as there are administrators, the differences hinging on the varying degrees to which they would be willing to delegate power to some subordinates. Then, there are the enduring loyalties, even among

personnel assigned to regional offices, towards their home departments. Perhaps a more accurate description would be "interdepartmental jealousies" — a fact which gets in the way of the much-needed cooperation that should otherwise be expected from people assigned to the same region, considering that Filipinos are known for their highly intense regionalistic feelings.

But then, maybe there's the rub! Not all regional personnel come from the region of assignment. "Outsiders" who are thrust on the regions are naturally regarded with hostile feelings and behavior by the "natives."

Why not appoint "indigenous" personnel then, we ask. The answer is simple. Even at this point in our governmental development — where the level of education is presumed to be high and the civil service has had a long history — there are still precious few who are skilled in development administration. Or, to put it another way, we might have already produced a corps of highly efficient bureaucrats, but they would not be the development-oriented variety.

NEDA has not been content at simply casting about for appropriately skilled personnel for possible assignment to the regional offices; it has pioneered in sponsoring training programs for promising young recruits and otherwise actively cooperated in and availed itself of training opportunities conducted by other agencies on the level of career executives by providing fellowships, both at home and abroad. Yet again, there is another snag: *nobody* wants to be assigned to posts very far outside Manila! The situation may not be so bad if the position being offered were on a high level, e.g., that of regional executive director. Lower positions, however, do present a problem.

It is probably a function of the fact that Manila is just about the only metropolis in the Philippines, but, whatever the reason may be, it can be observed that there is a concentration of talent, institutions, cultural offerings, opportunities and other refinements and amenities — even distractions that may be deliberately sought — in metropolitan centers, of which Manila may be the epitome in the Philippines. The attraction of these *few* centers is too strong to ignore and tends to keep bright people in the metropolitan areas. So, although the idea of development is to develop growth centers other than Manila, this strategy is being nullified by the tendency of people to remain in metropolitan centers. Despite incentives and other attractions, there are few takers.

The above example, of course, may be simply a matter of caprice or quite practical calculations of relative pay-offs regarding their

occupational options. It becomes a matter of true resistance, however, when the change threatens personal prestige or honor, and this comes from rather unexpected quarters. One regional director reportedly said, "I am going to oppose this regionalization thing: People have been calling me 'director' for years. What if I am not the one chosen? How can I face my friends?" Resistance here, it may be noted, is impelled not by any fear of diminution of power already held, but uncertainty that one may not get the power that has been expected for so long.

Summary and Conclusions

The Philippine experience in regionalization provides many useful insights in the usefulness of this strategy for development. In particular, the efforts of the current administration to grapple with some problems encountered in implementing this strategy could offer some useful "lessons" or issues to other developing countries.

Philippine experience is instructive on the intractable problem of determining the most suitable balance of power and responsibility between the national and subnational levels, and between headquarters and field, which would conduce to more effective management.

Historically, the Philippine administrative system is characteristically highly-centralized, with the important functions of education, public works, and health being administered by national departments at the local level, that is, regional, provincial and municipal.

The dominant rationale for the regionalization scheme implemented since the declaration of Martial Law in 1972 sought to decentralize administrative as well as developmental functions to the 12 regional subdivisions in the country.

Although regional offices were created since the major reorganization in 1955, the reform efforts failed because the regional offices merely served as relay points or "post offices" since power and responsibility were retained by the central departments. The Integrated Reorganization Plan (IRP) of 1972, therefore, adopted the devolution-of-power approach to remedy the apparent weakness of administrative decentralization by "deconcentration."

While regional offices now have real powers to make substantive decisions *at their level* without referral to headquarters, there remain several obstacles. The level of technical competence remains low and this has obviated full exercise of powers at the regions. The

desired pace of rapid implementation of the regionalization scheme could not be realized because of the low reservoir of technical expertise available in the country. This problem was further exacerbated by the reluctance of some trained executives and experts to accept regional assignments outside the metropolitan areas of Manila and Cebu.

The shift in the locus of power from the center to the region led to some degree of resistance on the part of some center officials (i.e., Secretaries and Bureau Directors) to "surrender" these powers, since the determination of "full" delegation of power and responsibility remained with center officials. The long tradition of elevating to the center in Manila decisions on matters affecting regional and local governments dies hard and the paternalistic pattern of leadership tends to reinforce this subservience to the center, so that both serve as cultural and mental blocks to regional assertiveness.

The cultural and behavioral contexts of reform deserve special attention even if the political system has moved from a free-wheeling "democratic" system to that of "constitutional authoritarianism" under Martial Law. The effort of a cabinet secretary to adopt departmental regionalization (i.e., only one regional director for all the bureaus of the department, with the department's bureaus performing staff functions in place of line functions) is a case in point.

Since Presidential Decree No. 547 was approved without their being consulted by the Secretary, the bureau directors banded together and pushed through another decree (PD No. 547-A) rescinding the decree which would, in their view, reduce their powers and status. Many regional directors also opposed PD No. 547 on the same grounds despite the increased power and status of the regional office vis-à-vis the center. The regionalization would, in effect, lead to the appointment of only one of the existing regional directors, and the reaction of a regional director in the South cited earlier encapsulates the resistance to a change that affects the prevailing distribution of power and statuses.

In addition to administrative decentralization, another important and parallel aspect of the regional development strategy is the regionalization of economic planning and development. This, too, was the result of disenchantment over the anemic performance of regional development authorities (RDAs) created since the early 1960's, a concept patterned initially after the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) model. The proliferation of many "paper" RDAs through congressional sponsorship, often with no substantial finan-

cial viability nor economic and political resources to develop the region, has spurred the search for alternative approaches.

The creation of Regional Development Councils (RDCs) under the IRP was designed to serve as the vehicle for regional planning and development as well as to link local and regional planning with the national level. The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) was also organized, under the IRP, to provide a central machinery of economic and developmental planning and implementation, with the NEDA Board, headed by the President and composed of cabinet secretaries and heads of key departments and agencies, at the apex of the policy and coordinating structure. The Board is supported by a technical staff (NEDA Proper) headed by the Director-General who is concurrently Secretary of Economic Planning.

Thus, the RDCs are the extensions of the NEDA Board in the region and the NEDA regional office of the NEDA proper. The RDCs in each region represent both the politically elective regional units such as provinces and cities and some of the administrative "development" units in the region.⁹ In practice, "other" regional directors are invited to participate, thereby enlarging its composition and making the RDCs rather unwieldy. The NEDA regional executive director (RED) heads the smaller 11-member Executive Committee composed mainly of the career regional directors of national departments.

Although the RDCs in all 12 regions have only more than a year's experience as a regional planning and development body, many problems have already emerged which have exposed the fundamental weaknesses of its organizational structure primarily because the original proposal contained in the IRP—itsself a product of the pre-Martial Law accommodation and designed for the old style political system—was not modified to suit the changed political configuration.

For example, congressional representation in the NEDA Board was not followed, giving the NEDA Board a unified techno-bureaucratic structure, with the president heading the "team." In the region, the Executive Committee reflects the NEDA Board's techno-bureaucratic feature but not its cohesiveness and unified conception of power. The NEDA RED can only exert influence more in areas where his expertise (and that of his staff) is recognized and accepted and his ability to coordinate would be weaker in areas where agency interests of regional offices or directors are strong.

Therefore, the RDC was to be the extension of the NEDA Board

in the region but the RDC, unlike the NEDA Board, contained "elective" officials (provincial governors and city mayors) where the RDC Chairman is drawn from among the politicians. Thus, the RDC is based on the notion of political supremacy over the career administrative officials (i.e., the appointive regional directors represented in the Council). It also presupposes that politics is the dominant ideological perspective, not bureaucratic rationality. There is the danger here of reverting to "old society politics" — a thing which the present administration wishes to avoid. If anything, it constitutes one more indication that politics is still too much with us and partly accounts for the ambivalence of the leadership regarding the implementation of decentralization and devolution of authority.

Several points of coordinative tensions are evident in this setup in terms of planning and implementing regional development. The real extension of the NEDA Board, the Executive Committee, does not have the power over the political government units represented in the Council except through persuasion and expertise. This is explained by the fact that local government units are administratively—and in the real political sense—"controlled" by the Department of Local Government and Community Development (DLGCD) particularly in the areas of local planning and implementation of development projects.

On the other hand, the RDC Chairman or the Council has no formal authority over the representatives of regional agencies of national departments or the representatives of local government units in terms of their respective plans. Nor do they have much influence over the implementation of programs and projects in the region. The RDC's influence would depend largely on its role of integrating local and agency sectoral plans into the regional development plans. There is also the assumption that the elective representatives in the Council would adopt regional perspectives and forget their parochial orientations. The political dynamics in the Council, however, do not always support the aggregative or larger collectivity concept.

The evident lack of articulation of regional to national plans and vice versa is reflected in the decision, through a Presidential Decree, allowing a public corporation to locate a large industrial estate in the South which is not in the regional plan adopted by the RDC. In many respects, the RDC is weak not only in coordinating the regional planning process but also in directly affecting the implementation of either "national" or agency (i.e., regional, provincial, and city) projects in the region. Thus, its role as regional coordinator for

development and as the principal link with national planning is seriously weakened by its lack of authority commensurate to its responsibility for regional planning and development.

Reforms and Alternative Strategies

A number of innovative responses and adaptations to strengthen the regional development strategy have been proposed and/or adopted. One approach was towards providing institutional mechanisms to improve reporting, monitoring, and feedback through the PROD system—an acronym for the Presidential Regional Officers for Regional Development. Adopting a management by exception approach—i.e., through intervention whenever normal administrative channels break down or when there are delays or overruns in large projects—the PROD however served as an effective mechanism only during the initial period after Martial Law.

The NEDA itself has introduced many changes to strengthen the regional development strategy. A Deputy Director-General of NEDA was given primary responsibility over the regional development through NEDA regional offices. The Regional Development Staff (RDS) of the NEDA was also strengthened. Consultation meetings have been held to improve coordination among the various components of the RDCs. Although the NEDA regional offices still lack all the resources and expertise for regional planning, there had been a deliberate effort to upgrade and recruit technically-trained personnel. In fact, NEDA views as one of its primary functions the improvement of the capabilities of local units in planning by training its recruits who show potential, far more than actual implementation of specific projects, which it coordinates.

What appeared to be the more promising approach is exemplified by the Regional Commission experimented on in the Southern Philippine provinces where Moslem separatist and Marxist insurgency group activity had intensified after the declaration of Martial Law. In effect, the approach was a response to the peace and order situation obtaining in Mindanao and was meant to meet the demands of our brother Moslems for greater autonomy. Thus, in Regions 9 and 12, Regional Commissions were created to supersede the RDCs. Under this setup, the Regional Commissioners were given more authority and power in financial and budgetary matters, especially in fund allocation; in the recruitment, setting of wages, and movement of personnel; and in coordinating, planning and project implementation in the region.

The Regional Commissioners were also given administrative supervision and control over local government units as well as the various national government agencies in the region. The Commissioners are appointed by the President and report to him directly. It would seem, therefore, that most of the coordination and control problems of the RDCs over regional planning and development are not evident in the two regions where the Commission or "area manager" model was adopted.

The recent Third Consultative Conference (August 5-7, 1976) revealed a strong consensus towards the adoption of a regional commission type of setup for the other regions. The NEDA Director-General indicated a strong determination to strengthen the RDCs so that the adoption of regional commissions for the rest of the country may be discussed in the next meeting of the NEDA Board or the Cabinet.

Other reforms suggested for regional development is the proposed regionalization of the budget to enhance regional development. The development of regional accounts could also accelerate regional planning because the existing data base is more geared towards nonregional planning (either provincial or national). Another reform currently being discussed is the area development (inter-regional sectoral) strategy to complement the regional development approach.

The principal problem facing regionalization is that the region is not considered a subdivision, with the exception of the Metropolitan Manila region and the two regional commissions in the South. For greater coordination and integration of regional planning, implementation and development, it is essential that the country be restructured to make the region as the basic political unit for planning and implementation. Complete devolution of governmental powers for planning and implementation (except foreign relations and national security) to the regional government could be a feasible strategy in the near future. Given a long history of centralized administration, the movement towards a "federal" setup or area management will be strongly resisted by center officials. On the other hand, history and experience suggest that the movement may be towards greater autonomy and the spatial enlargement of the development unit such as the region.

Indeed, if we were to wind up this paper in terms of the suggested questions in the instructions given to paper-writers in this conference, we would say that the empirical evidence provided by the Philippines shows that the answers are not so clearcut, e.g.,

regarding the importance of boundaries, it depends on whether "boundaries" refer to geographical or functional boundaries, which may in fact be conflicting. With regard to the relation between administration and politics vis-à-vis distance between center and periphery, there is no clear pattern; there may even be low correlation with respect to degree of control exercised by the central authority. The role of ideology is important, especially the "ideology" of the leadership.

All of these simply indicate that there is need for further studies and hypothesis-testing on such questions as, for example, the relation between power-sharing and resistance, the role of values and ideology with respect to reforms in development administration, and the relation of distance to administrative control and coordination.

NOTES

¹Dr. Jose Lawas, "Regional Thrust and National Growth," paper read at the Philippine Sociological Society's *Strategies for Development* lecture series, Makati, January 23, 1975, p. 3.

²*Ibid.*, p. 5. (Underscoring supplied.)

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁵Armand Fabella, "The Regionalization Scheme as an Approach to Administrative Reform," *NEDA Development Digest*, February 15, 1974, pp. 1-2.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁹In a recent decision of the President, some elective officials have been appointed and those who were removed have been replaced by officials appointed by the President. Elections have been held to elect representatives to consultative bodies (i.e. Sangguniang Bayan) at the local and national levels.

SELECTED REFERENCES

1. E. A. J. Johnson, *The Organization of Space in Developing Countries*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1970.
2. James J. Heaphey (ed.). *Spatial Dimensions of Development Administration*. Durham, N.C., 1971.
3. James Fesler, *Area and Administration*. Alabama, 1949, 1964.
4. Arthur Maass. *Area and Power: A Theory of Local Government*. Illinois, 1969.
5. National Economic and Development Authority. *Four-Year Development Plan: FY 1974-77*.

6. Raul P. de Guzman, *et al.* "An Evaluation of the Regional Delineation in the Philippines, 1973," mimeo.
7. Jose M. Lawas. "Regional Thrust and National Growth," in *Strategies for Development* lecture series, Philippine Sociological Society, 1975.
8. Gerardo P. Sicat, "NEDA and Regional Development Planning," in *NEDA Development Digest*, February 15, 1974.
9. Michael Faltas. "Implications of Regionalization for the Organization of Government," mimeo.
10. Gabriel U. Iglesias. "Administrative Reforms and Innovation: An Assessment of Development Planning and Implementation Experience in the Philippines," paper presented during the conference on *The Political Economy of Development in the Philippines*, Manila, December 1974.
11. Armand Fabella. "The Regionalization Scheme as an Approach to Administrative Reform," *NEDA Development Digest*, February 15, 1974.