

Social Services Policy in the Transition State: The Agenda of Social Reform in the Philippines

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The problems of democratic regimes installed to power in societies that suffered and endured years of authoritarianism are generally varied and complex. In the early stages of reconstruction, the new government is confronted with a fragile and unwieldy environment. This is referred to as "the democratic conjuncture" or the transition state. In view of the unwieldy nature of the new configuration, the new regime has to reorder its priorities, which understandably requires a redefinition of the rules. As the new dispensation attempts to redemocratize, it ushers in a climate of liberalization along with the aspirations of political and economic reconstruction. In the process, the active pursuit of social service programs designed to respond to the needs of the poorer sectors of society may be deferred to allow the government to concentrate on the need to normalize and stabilize societal conditions. This pattern is analyzed using the Aquino government as frame of reference, as well as other countries presently engaged in redemocratization efforts. Some policy prescriptions towards improving delivery of social service programs once normalcy is attained are also proposed.

Introduction

The implementation and pursuit of social development policies among democratic governments installed to power after the collapse of authoritarian regimes generally become significant areas of concern during the critical period of transition. While the new dispensation has been understandably preoccupied with the problematic of restoring civil liberties, and of pursuing societal reconstruction and political consolidation, it needs to simultaneously structure a nexus of policy derivatives to rebuild the socio-economic infrastructure in response to demands from the populace who may have been habitually neglected during the rule of its predecessor. It is during the early stages of consolidation, which we propose to call in this paper as the "transition state"¹ where the immediacy of designing, or redesigning appropriate social goals and policies, become apparent even if they may be ignored in the initial periods of reconstruction.

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A crucial metadilemma that surfaces remarkably in the praxis of redemocratization is how to deal with social service concerns during the period of transition, at a time when the new regime is gripped with the specter of conflict, trying to endure a painful phase referred to as a "democratic conjuncture."² This is an interval in the redemocratization process characterized as fragile and unwieldy, and where competing priorities have to be resolved against a climate of instability and conflict.

This paper examines the predicament of social service policies and programs during the crucial stages of the redemocratization process and their potentials towards hastening normalization among transition states. As it is, a transition state that professes adherence to democratic traditions cannot live on the illusion that restoring civil rights and democratic processes alone can respond to the imperatives of normalization, especially in a setting where the citizenry may have been alienated and systematically deprived during the years of authoritarianism. To be sure, the populace may be inclined to raise expectations on the new government, exceeding that which the new dispensation can actually and realistically provide. The transition state has to concretize its social service policy in the arena of conflict as it moves towards normalcy, mainly because it is in the intervention of these services that faith in government can be restored. The implementation of viable social service programs will be a significant contribution in delivering the new regime into stability and order.

Concededly, these are logical premises that proceed from the character of a transition government which it is incumbent to fulfill. But a crucial issue surfaces: can the transition state strengthen social service programs during the democratic conjuncture when it is faced with the distinct dilemma of survival?

This paper thus analyzes the phenomenon of transition states, its predicament of survival and the delivery of social services. The discussion uses the Philippine experience under the government of President Corazon C. Aquino as frame of reference. The period following the installation of President Aquino in February 1986 as a result of a limited revolution that saw the ouster of then incumbent President Ferdinand E. Marcos³ has been marred by incidents of conflict and tension, characterized by attempts of coup from the military, and destabilization from redoubts of the old government, even as the country continues to suffer from basic problems of poverty, hunger and malnutrition, health, unemployment and similar inadequacies. This paper submits a point of view of how transition states, as the Aquino government can be characterized during its first year of rule, responded to these problems during the transition. Undoubtedly, the discussion is by no means comprehensive and suffers from the limita-

tion of having to follow events as they unfold in the Philippines during the months of transition.

The paper is divided principally into three parts. Firstly, we inquire into the nature of transition states where analysis of character and peculiarities are outlined using reference countries such as Argentina and Brazil. We will examine their problems, the locus and meaning of social service programs, incorporating therein a brief overview of limitations; and from here, juxtapose a scenario of the transition state. Secondly, the events that characterized the over a year old regime of President Aquino will be highlighted and fitted into the premises of the transition state. Again, there is an attempt to pinpoint priorities and how social services are accommodated. The paper further discusses the social service provisions of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, and how the Aquino government responded to social needs during the transition. Finally, an analysis of potential policy directions insofar as social service programs are concerned is considered. The intention here is to embody a philosophy by which democratic governments can service the needs of the social sector in the face of limited resources.

In a nutshell, the paper describes the peculiarities of the transition state, its problems and concerns, the implications on social service policies and programs, with the experience in the Aquino government as framework for analysis. At the outset, let it be stated that this paper is more normative than definitional, as it attempts to theorize on the transition state using the Aquino government as an example. There is no intention to pass judgment on the performance of the Aquino regime insofar as social service delivery is concerned simply because it would be premature to do so at this time. At best, promising policy directions are highlighted as the transition state in the Philippines attempts to move towards democratization.

The Nature of Transition States

The concept of the transition state,⁴ as used in the context of this paper, refers to the type of governance that immediately shapes among resurgent or aspirant democracies, filling the interstice from the period of collapse of an authoritarian government to the time when democratic institutions are temporarily suspended even as the new dispensation adheres to the philosophy of the democratic system.

The predicament of a transition state seeking to restore democracy among societies that endured years of authoritarian rule is prominently anchored on how to preside over the transformation without having to betray the very principles and philosophy that mediated its capture of

political power. The early stages of the transition involve an unwieldy period characterized by a conspicuous emergence — or resurgence — of a pluralist society where various groups are allowed to articulate sentiments and persuasions. The dynamic process of democratization is, to begin with, set off by a “prolonged and inconclusive political struggle”⁵ which may begin from the period of agitation against the authoritarian state and extending to the transition period until normalcy is reached.

The transition state may be similar in predicament to the concept of a synthetic society caricatured by Hipe in his paper on crisis administration. Simply put, both concepts deal with a society “in extremis,” or in crisis, where the quality of administration and governance are adapted to the environment that impinges on it. Hipe maintains that a synthetic or emergency society shapes from a stable society when a disaster or similar emergencies occur, forcing the government to adapt, to the extent that certain rules may be suspended, and where government acquires the posture of a crisis administrator. He describes crisis administration as

“... the process and activity of decision-making and directing of group efforts in a disaster stricken community to the end that the adverse effects of disaster be neutralized and normalcy be restored at the soonest possible time.”⁶

The synthetic society thus emerges from the impact of natural disasters such as typhoons, floods, cyclones and similar calamities, or from a political crisis such as an uprising.

While the synthetic society aspires to move towards the more generic goals of restabilization and normalcy premised on the strengthening of basic services needed as a result of the crisis, the transition state, on the other hand, seeks restabilization and normalcy predicated on the restoration of civil rights that had been denied during the years of autocratic rule, not as a result of disasters, but as a dictate of the need to entrench the authoritarian regime in power. The similarities as to the operative approach in the conduct and business of government and administration may be common in these two instances, in that both systems tend to be adaptive and reactive to the crisis. However, if the crisis engulfing the administrative mechanism in the synthetic society is brought about by natural calamities threatening the social fabric, the administration tends to be inclined towards expanding delivery of social and basic services to assist the stricken community faced with deprivation. In this case, the services acquires the quality of being temporary and artificial, i.e., lasting for the duration of the crisis, with the predilection for dole-out subsistence that engenders dependency which may result in the rationing of canned goods, provision of shelter, and medical services (with costs assumed by the government). The

transition state may, however, be restrictive in the delivery of social services so as not to allow access to a larger majority because of limitations in resources and the competing agenda that momentarily displaces the pursuit of a truly adequate service delivery program in its order of priority. In another light, however, a transition state may, like the synthetic society, be also constrained to engage in quick impact projects that would be reactive and tentative as a way of responding to heightened demands to satisfy basic needs. The rationing of services here may be based on the perceptions of policy-makers of the new government anchored on the continuation of previous programs which may not have allowed a systematic assessment of needs, or how availment should be packaged to reach the deserving clientele.

Problems and Dilemma of the Transition State

At length, the transition state is curiously confronted with the dilemma of how to proceed with the democratic process, of defining what "democracy" or "being democratic" should be. It faces the difficulty of how much amount of "democracy" (or democratic space, as used in the Philippine content) could be tolerated without imperilling its position, and without being repressive, as its predecessor was. Democratization, in the aftermath of breakdowns of a previously authoritarian rule, would invariably connote an imposing set of prescriptions.

Viola and Mainwaring, in their studies of transition in democracy in Brazil and Argentina in the 1980s, advocate such salient features as "free democratic elections, without major proscriptions,⁷ universal adult suffrage, freedom of speech and the press, freedom of political association," individual civil rights, and a government structure that recognizes the division of powers among autonomous executive, legislative and judiciary branches.⁸ These may be expanded to include political participation, competitiveness of political parties and the adoption of a constitutional government. Linz offers a more comprehensive criteria:

"... our criteria for a democracy may be summarized as follows: legal freedom to formulate and advocate political alternatives with the concomitant rights to free association, free speech, and other basic freedoms of a person; free and non-violent competition among leaders with periodic validation of their claim to rule; inclusion of all effective political offices in the democratic process; and provision for the participation of all members of the political community, whatever their political preferences. Practically, this means the freedom to create political parties and to conduct free and honest elections at regular intervals without excluding any effective political office from direct or indirect electoral accountability..."⁹

In characterizing democratic regimes, Linz is emphatic on the medium that "provides the legal equal opportunity for the expression of all opinions and protection by the state against arbitrary and above all, violent

interference" with the right of competing parties in the pursuit of political power. This in effect distinguishes a democratic regime against a government that may have received the support of the majority when it seized power and has since become unwilling to submit that power for validation of the society.¹⁰

The crucial component suggested here is the provision of the mechanism that will allow the smooth transfer of political power within the framework of accepted and legally recognized rules. Viola and Mainwaring stresses that democracy implies the possibility of an "alternance in power" which in effect involves more than relaxation of authoritarian policies that entrench dictatorial governments.¹¹ This further implies institutional arrangements which make an alternance possible, conceivably through the medium of free competitive elections. The electoral process becomes meaningful when accompanied by basic freedoms, which is categorically premised not only on the basis of the mere procedural conduct of balloting, unlike terror-ridden societies in El Salvador and Guatemala cited by Herman and Petras,¹² but in the quality of the exercise which secures the genuine will of the people devoid of manipulation, intimidation and other similar machinations that merely use the electoral process as cosmetic devices to impress a facade of democracy.¹³

Unfortunately, a transition state seeking to reestablish democracy may not be allowed at the early stages of rule the luxury of an electoral exercise given the conditions of instability cited above. A transition state operates within an inhospitable environment characterized by competing demands for democracy simultaneous with articulated sentiments from the constituency to uplift living conditions, particularly among Third World societies. The reality is that a transition state may deem it pragmatic to initially suspend the electoral process and pursue instead liberalization measures as it consolidates the political and economic systems. Liberalization, as contrasted to democratization refers to "a decline in repression and the reestablishment of most basic civil and political rights, but not to the extent where institution of competitive elections are maintained to pave the way for alternance in power."¹⁴ The period from liberalization to full democratization may take months or years depending on the capacity of the transition state to adapt and overcome the conjuncture. In Argentina, it was claimed that liberalization was not clearly separated from democratization, which meant that the Alfonsin government took steps not only to restore civil liberties but also provided a mechanism for transfer of power, although the early stages saw the suspension of the Constitution. Brazil, on the other hand, started the liberalization process based on the reforms initiated by the existing dispensation in 1974 and allowed elections only in 1980.¹⁵

Liberalization in this sense represents a stage in the redemocratization process. The transition following the collapse of the previous regime would entail "a marked, though unstable, redefinition of political rules where intense struggle is very much evident." This period also marks a critical mass of problems which the new government must attend to as it continues to consolidate political power. These problems range from what to do with the excesses of the preceding regime and their perpetrators, how to deal with corrupt bureaucracies, the judiciary, the military and police establishments that served the dictatorship, and how to eliminate the dangers of restoring the dictatorship while retaining freedom for all groups and factions to operate.¹⁶ Conceivably, a small and powerful faction — the redoubts of the old regime — will continue to exist and will attempt to retake power taking advantage of the climate of liberalization. This faction may also apply to leftist groups and may try to influence the military and civilian sectors to their cause. The remnants of the old government will continue to try and seize power or a share of it, even as the leaders of that regime may have become symbols of national disgrace.¹⁷ Unfortunately, the response of the transition state to these problems may border from pragmatism to paranoia, and may, for the most part, distract attention from the imperatives of reconstruction and other concerns.

Then of course, there is the problem of economic reconstruction, of shaping new economic policies that will invigorate the business climate, and bring about new strategies that will engender productivity. The dilemma that forms in this dimension is that the aspiration has to be pursued amidst a setting of conflict and confusion that follows the revolution, and where power and property relations may have been altered to such severity so as to wreck havoc on the productive capacity of the economy.¹⁸

Another area of concern is that of international relations and foreign policy. The transition state must not only extract support from its own constituency, but must also solicit the sympathies of the international community. It must advertise its cause to gain recognition as part of the family of nations. A critical issue here is the perception and predisposition of Western democracies like the United States and its allies which may see the new regime as a threat to the world balance of power, or as "fall guys" whose allotted task is to assume responsibility for economic problems that may be traced to inequitable policies imposed by international lending institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.¹⁹ The treaties and agreements made by the previous regime may also bear pressure on the transition state in that the latter may have to honor commitments which it may find arbitrary and oppressive.

Amidst these overwhelming morass of political and economic concerns will take shape the burdens of improving or alleviating the social

conditions of society which may have been neglected as a result of the rapacity and willful mismanagement of the authoritarian regime. Social service programs may have been severely neglected, if not treated with token and lip-service concern in the hustings and rhetorics of the previous government. The agenda of social services may have been lost in the maze and clutter of the dictatorship as it concentrated on entrenching itself.

Sadly, it becomes a distinct possibility that the same social service agenda may again be lost in the maze and clutter of liberalization and democratization that occupy the priority concerns of the transition state particularly in the early stages of rule. It may be a truism to claim that social service programs, even among stable societies, are treated as activities that may be reduced, compromised or postponed in the light of other pressing needs. Social services may not be generally viewed as a *sine qua non* or composite components of political and economic development, but rather, as cost centers that weigh heavily on the state. The old regime may have given token attention — and resources — to this sector as it fought to maintain political power, and again the transition state may tolerate the same tokenism as it fights for survival. As a result, both governments may leave behind a mass of deprived citizens whose sense of freedom is not construed in terms of political liberties and other furnitures that make democracy appealing, but instead on the more fundamental freedoms from hunger and want. The recipients of this sector may represent the low levels of society whose articulation of demands may not be as vociferous as other organized and militant groups. Thus, as the transition state begins to reconcile the contradictions pervasive in a pluralist society it seeks to build, the social service programs may again become a potential victim of neglect because it is postponable, and not markedly urgent in the arena of competition for attention and resources. Should a neglect become apparent, it would most likely be benign and slight such that the programs are not removed arbitrarily but given the tokenism it merited in the past.

Social Service Policies and Programs

What do we mean by social services in this respect? Social service programs may be interpreted as those that involve activities intended to pursue social policy. Marshall defines social policy as that which seeks "the elimination of poverty, the maximization of welfare and the pursuit of equality."²⁰ Social service programs cover a wide and composite constellation of activities designed, among other things, to "relieve environmental pressures which customarily arouse individual social problems by manipulating the social environment; (to) ensure that the basic necessities of living delivered by other services are provided without undue stress for the indivi-

dual; (to) help people use the opportunities open to them through market-provided or community-sponsored services."²¹ The banner goals according to Algie that pervade in these aspirations include such advocacies as the promotion of welfare and morale of the people over and above earned income, social health, meeting social needs, reduction of poverty and similar concerns.²²

Donnison suggests that the essential marks of a social service are: (1) it is rendered by, or on behalf of, the community to an individual or at most, to a family; and (2) it contains elements of redistribution, i.e., that the majority of the individual or families who avail themselves of it are receiving more than what they can actually give.²³ In this sense, social service programs are generally associated with the satisfaction of basic needs which cover both physiological and biological dimensions, ranging from such concerns as food, shelter, clothing, health and the like.²⁴ As such, social services are largely associated with programs on health, education, housing, welfare, employment and such other activities which allow permutation of these needs in such a manner that they respond to uplifting the well-being of the community, particularly the poorer sectors of society who are excluded by the operations of market mechanisms in dispensing these services.

The pressure that beleaguers, and possibly haunts the continuous and adequate delivery of these services is that, as Algie maintains, the objectives are not explicitly stated, and that their programs are "increasingly required evidence of social results and benefits produced in relation to costs and legislative sanctions."²⁵ There are, in fact, extreme positions that view social services as "a charitable burden borne on the back of the productive institutions of the economy."²⁶

The appeal of this position becomes even more persuasive when seen in the context of other priorities in a society that has limited resources and which needs to measure expenditure on the basis of tangible returns and results.

In the transition state, this dilemma becomes even more acute as the new dispensation struggles with an assortment of political and economic difficulties in its struggle for survival. It thus becomes a tempting move for the reconstruction and redemocratization process to omit social service concerns in its order of priorities in deference to, and in recognition of other needs whose returns and impact are more visible, tangible and compelling. The transition state would thus have to live the transformation first to be able to foster social service programs in the future.

The Transition State: A Proposed Scenario of Priorities

Based on the foregoing discussion, this paper submits a listing of a sequence of events that characterize transition states. The following scenario summarizes this pattern:

1. The new regime has to reconstruct society amidst conditions of conflict, instability and tension. It has to operate in a hostile environment particularly during the early stages of rule, even if it captured political power based on popular will. It has to address itself to the socio-economic and political problems that have been accumulated by its predecessor, as well as other difficulties that are bound to arise during the period of transformation.

2. The reconstruction implies the refashioning of the contours and horizons of the polity in the most democratic manner possible, although it has to redefine the rules which may mean the suspension of the Constitution, the fundamental law or any other legal mode of conduct. The challenge of a pluralist society will be most dominant as political factions emerge to assert or claim political supremacy and control of government.

3. The visions of political and economic deliverance have to be translated into operational programs and cannot remain as visions for an extended period. This may have to be done outside of the recognized means habitually used by the previous regime, or by state societies.

4. Liberalization, in the context discussed previously, may signal the resurgence of democratization, but mechanisms for the alternance of power may be deliberately postponed. International recognition and support have to be solicited as the transition state adopts a form of crisis governance to ride the democratic conjuncture. It is in this area where the transition has to overcome the attraction and lure of power. In the early stages, the transition state will be its own worst enemy as it resists the temptation of (a) falling or depreciating into absolutism not unlike its predecessor; and (b) extending the period of suspension of fundamental laws to entrench itself.

5. Finally, there is the question of how much social service can be delivered as the masses react with raised expectations, demanding for a share of attention and resources in the programs of the new regime. For reasons stated earlier, the transition state may be compelled to procrastinate on this agenda with a promise of improved services once normalization is attained.

The Aquino Government as a Transition State

The Aquino government in the Philippines precisely faced the dilemma characteristic of a transition state conceptualized in the previous discussion. Its seizure of political power during the historic "EDSA Revolution" in February 1986 from former President Marcos after a fiercely contested "snap" presidential elections has thrust it into the corridors of political leadership in a society torn, divided and confused in a state of internecine conflict.²⁷ The post-Marcos era has proven to be unwieldy, as Mrs. Aquino's government, caught in the vortex of struggle and tension percolating from both rightist and leftist directions, attempted to tame and preside the democratic conjuncture that captures more or less this paper's concept of transition states. The enormity of the tasks in this lacuna is so staggering to the extent that certain institutions had to be dismantled with the view, hopefully, of reassembling them at a more propitious time.

A month after the installation of Mrs. Aquino as President of the Republic,²⁸ her new government suspended the 1973 Constitution promulgated during the Martial Law era of Mr. Marcos which has been severely criticized as having been ratified under questionable circumstances so as to legitimize the Marcos administration.²⁹ The new government issued on March 25, 1986 a provisional constitution under Proclamation No. 3, otherwise known as the Freedom Constitution which in effect adopted a "revolutionary government." The Freedom Constitution adopted part of the abolished 1973 Constitution, but contained explicit provisions that radically altered the political fabric. Mrs. Aquino's Justice Minister, former Assemblyman Neptali Gonzales, one of the ardent oppositionists of the Marcos regime described the new dispensation as "revolutionary in origin, democratic in essence and transitory in nature."

As such, the new government, using the mandate of the Freedom Constitution went about "to dismantle the vestiges of the Marcos regime." It saw thru the abolition of the Marcos dominated Batasang Pambansa, the Parliament accused of having perpetuated Mr. Marcos in power by giving his administration a semblance of democracy; the replacement of elected local officials, most of whom allegedly owed allegiance to Mr. Marcos, by appointed personalities identified with the new regime; the reorganization of the bureaucracy which brought about summary dismissals of career civil servants who were believed to be either incompetent, corrupt or had participated in entrenching the Marcos government; the relief of members of the Judiciary from the Supreme court to Regional Trial Courts; and the sequestration of assets, and properties of individuals and companies believed to have been owned by the Marcoses and favored cronies. These radical changes were executed side by side with liberalization policies that provided, among

other things, for the release of more than 500 political prisoners including erstwhile leaders of the Communist Party of the Philippines Jose Ma. Sison and Bernabe Buscayno, the establishment of a Presidential Commission on Human Rights, and galvanizing a shaky 60-day truce with the insurgent movement.³⁰

The ensuing months also saw the Aquino regime developing its economic policies which were premised on the quest to bring foreign investments to stimulate capital and economic activity believed to have been stunted during the previous regime. It also brought Mrs. Aquino on a visit to the United States, Japan and Singapore to open the doors for foreign relations and to campaign for aid and investments. Negotiations for the US\$27 billion debt were also effected to make repayments less burdensome.

On April 23, 1986, Proclamation No. 9 was issued calling for the creation of a Constitutional Commission to draft a new charter "truly reflective of the ideals and aspirations of the Filipino people. The Commission, which was composed of 48 Commissioners appointed by the President prepared a draft charter completed on October 15, 1986 and submitted to the Filipino people for ratification on February 2, 1987. The new Constitution was ratified overwhelmingly and subsequently promulgated. As such, it brought the election of a new Congress of the Philippines in May 1987 with several opposition parties actively participating including Mr. Marcos' *Kilusang Bagong Lipunan* (KBL or the New Society Movement). The elections for the Senate and the House of Representatives were however marred by conflict as opposition groups, gaining only two seats in the Senate out of twenty-four, claimed massive fraud and cheating against Mrs. Aquino's ruling coalition, the *Lakas ng Bansa* (Strength of the Nation). It is not for this paper however to discuss the issues in that election contest; this could be properly appreciated in another paper.

Our concern however is the social service component of the new administration. In this regard, the social service provisions of the 1987 Constitution will instead be discussed briefly in succeeding sections of this paper.

Amidst the exuberance and optimism that swept the new regime, a series of right wing plots that involved several *coup d'etat* attempts was executed. The first, staged at the Manila Hotel in July 1986 was led by former Senator Arturo M. Tolentino, Mr. Marcos' running mate in the snap presidential elections with other prominent civilian and military personalities. The attempt, however, failed and was quickly quelled. Another attempt was allegedly made sometime in November 1986 (code named "God Save the Queen") by disgruntled elements from the military believed to be fol-

lowers of Juan Ponce Enrile, a key figure in the EDSA Revolt who was appointed and subsequently relieved of his position by President Aquino as Defense Minister. A third attempt occurred on January 1987, when again, certain elements of the military tried to seize military installations at the Villamor Air Base, Sangley Point and the government operated TV Station Channel 4 at Bohol Avenue in Quezon City. Failing in these operations, the plotters were arrested but only after a group was able to capture another TV station, Channel 7. The group surrendered two days later.

On the whole, these events characterized the unwieldy and fragile nature of the Aquino government as a transition state. They are at best animated commentaries of the problems that besiege a transition government, beginning with those inherited from its predecessor to the ones parented by its transitory nature. The difficulties of the Aquino regime and its responses on the whole depicts the pattern described by Herz,³¹ and those by Viola and Mainwaring.³² The pattern of developments are not unlike the ones that prevailed in Argentina, although certain peculiarities do occur.

David, on the other hand, brings into focus three areas of concern that distinctively hovered around Mrs. Aquino's transition government: (1) the alternative vision, or the operationalization of the restructuring of the political system within the framework of the new regime's advocacy spelled out before and after the Revolution. David maintains that the seven months following the seizure of power saw the immediacy of translating these ideals into programs although "many of the alternative visions of the desirable society remained at the level of basic documents; (2) the immediate problems which cover an overwhelming collection of concerns that range from the political to the economic; and (3) the concrete internal and external conditions which either limit or actualize the possibilities of social transformation."³³

In a speech before the combined meeting of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the U.S.-ASEAN Bureau Council at Washington, D.C. last September 18, 1986 during her official visit, Mrs. Aquino outlined her program of government within the "immediate future," a casual reference to the transition state in the Philippines. This involves a wide range of activities that can readily be classified into: (1) the recovery of ill-gotten wealth; (2) political restructuring using the then draft Constitution as basis; (3) peace and order and the role of the military; and (4) economic and debt management.³⁴ In all these, the social service program has not been clearly specified, and treated or adverted only as a passing reference to statements of concern for social justice or correction of inequities. The specifics of these commitments have not been spelled out into concrete programs. However,

in a speech before the Joint Session of the United States Congress on the same day, President Aquino, while identifying the difficulties facing her government, cited the problems of poverty and massive unemployment affirming her commitment towards these concerns. She acknowledged the "pressing obligation to respond quickly" to these problems. These very well underscore the concern and commitment although it implies an admission that these still need to be addressed more clearly. Thus, relating these to democracy, she points out:

"Today, we face the aspirations of a people who had known so much poverty and massive unemployment for the past 14 years and yet offered their lives for the abstraction of democracy. Wherever I went in the campaign, slum area or impoverished village, they came to me with one cry: democracy! Not food, although they clearly needed it, but democracy. Not work, although they surely wanted it, but democracy. Not money, for they gave what little they had to my campaign. They didn't expect me to work a miracle that would instantly put food into their mouths, clothes on their back, education in their children, and work that will put dignity in their lives. But I feel the pressing obligation to respond quickly at the leader of the people so deserving of all these things."³⁵

The references to democracy in this statement may readily be indicative of the premises of normalization or redemocratization as a precondition to the servicing of the social service programs. While President Aquino alludes to the people's aspirations for democracy in a manner of rhetoric, it may very well be suggestive of a "first things first" view of treatment of this concern.

The most telling manifestation of the postponable nature of social service programs in the transition state of the Aquino government however can be adduced from the statement of priorities enumerated under Art. II, Sec. 1 of the Freedom Constitution which stipulates that:

"The President shall give priority to measures to achieve the mandate of the people to: a) Completely reorganize the government and eradicate unjust and oppressive structures, and all iniquitous vestiges of the previous regime; b) Make effective the guarantees of civil, political, human, social, economic and cultural rights and freedoms of the Filipino people, and provide remedies against violations thereof; c) Rehabilitate the economy and promote the nationalist aspirations of the people; d) Recover ill-gotten properties amassed by the leaders and supporters of the previous regime and protect the interest of the people through orders of sequestration and freezing of assets of accounts; e) Eradicate graft and corruption in government and punish those guilty thereof; and f) Restore peace and order, settle the problems of insurgency, and pursue national reconstruction based on justice."³⁶

This statement of priorities thus delineated the concerns that occupied the agenda of the Philippines during the early stages of transition. They more or less hover around the premises to normalization in that there is the attempt towards the restructuring of bureaucracy and other political

institutions, the prosecution of those who committed excesses during the past regime, conflict resolution and management, and the shift towards liberalization.

This is not to imply however that the social service function has been completely ignored during this period. The fact is the programs of government that deal with these concerns have been pursued but based on the outlines inherited from the previous dispensation instead of an entirely new, reconceptualized activities and approaches that would concretely address perceived problems of inequity, access or systematized delivery. There, however, have been notable initiatives in increasing the budget for social services particularly towards the latter part of 1986, but this has been more of infusing money resources on existing programs rather than on a redefinition of activities.³⁷

The attempt, however, to substantively redefine social policies, and consequently, the programs and thrusts of the Aquino Regime can be captured in the mandate identified under the new 1987 Constitution which was submitted and ratified by the Filipino people in a plebiscite held last February 2, 1987. The new Constitution embodies a comprehensive focus on social policies and thus gives an indication of the priority concerns of the Aquino regime as it moves towards democratization and normalcy. It is significant to emphasize that the social service programs would be expanded after the period of the transition state and would play an important role in hastening the normalization process. For a nation where about 85 per cent of the population are believed to be living below the poverty threshold,³⁸ a strong social service component can serve as a catalyst not only in fully enlisting support of the masses but in also engendering a climate that would be preventive of unrest and revolutions.

The Aquino Government has apparently remapped the horizons of social service policy during the transition stages with the intention of substantiating and pursuing them more vigorously when full democratization (e.g., a Constitutional government which allows free competitive elections, and thus, the alternance in power) is or will have been reached. At this point, social service is still within the order of mandates and policy aspirations and needs to be substantiated not only with actual programs and projects, but with tangible results that will be consistent with the experience of the people (e.g., jobs will be made available and perceived as such by the unemployed, as the government advertises its program on employment generation).

The Social Service Provision of the 1987 Philippine Constitution

The commitment of the Aquino Government to social services took shape concretely during the transitory formation and is most clearly enshrined

in the various provisions of the 1987 Constitution. During the present transition stage, this commitment has been largely implied. The transition government of the Aquino regime has obviously focused its concern on consolidation and has for the most part, continued existing programs.

The 1987 Constitution, however, provides for, and promises a lively and vigorous preoccupation towards strengthening social services policies as a way of correcting the iniquities of the past.

Thus, Art. II on state policies covers a series of provisions affirming the commitment to social policies. These include the promotion of a "just and dynamic social order to ensure freedom from poverty thru adequate social services" (Sec. 9), social justice (Sec. 10), the recognition of the dignity of human beings and respect for human rights (Sec. 11), the recognition of the role of the family (Sec. 12), the emphasis on the role of the youth and women (Sec. 13 and 14), the right to health (Sec. 15), priority to education (Sec. 17), and the recognition of labor as a social economic force (Sec. 18).

These statements of policies are given substance and amplification under Art. XIII on Social Justice and Human Rights, Labor, Agrarian and Natural Resources Reform, Urban and Land Reform and Housing, Health, Women, the Role and Rights of People's Organization and Human Rights, and that of Art. XIV on Education.

The constitutionalization of these social concerns marks a distinct departure from previous charters because the embodiments are not only minute and explicit, but are so expanded that they assume the character of legislation. They are expressed in such a way that the mandate both serves as a safeguard and an imposition on the legislative body against any perverse interpretation that may adversely influence the pursuit of these policies in the process of their being translated into laws. Thus, for instance, education is assigned "the highest budgetary priority" under Art. XIV, Sec. 5 (5), or that priority in health services is given to the underprivileged, sick, elderly, disabled, women and children under Art. XIII, Sec. 11.

The view that can be derived from this development is that the transition government of President Aquino may have attended first to the problems of consolidation, survival and conflict resolution in its fledgling period, then conceptualized its social service policies through the Constitution it drafted, with the intent to later expand these at a time when a Constitutional government is already in effect to serve as catalyst towards hastening normalization.

A strong social service policy becomes meaningful in the normalization process because they readily help enlist the support of the citizenry who may generally pass judgment on the efficacy of their government on the basis of services perceived as having been rendered.

Emerging Directions in Social Services Implementation

Thus, as the transition state in the Philippines under the Aquino government moves towards normalcy and full democratization with the ratification of the 1987 Constitution, its agenda veers away from the problems of strife, conflict and survival. Granting that the problems of the transition have been neutralized, it shifts to nomothetic concerns, substantiating policies of reform with suitable programs within the perspective of the new charter. Programs will be conceived within the framework of the Constitution which will both be limiting and conducive to the envisioned democratic system of government. It will have to transform adversary into advantage using for instance, the mechanism of legislation, which can be burdensome for the impatient, as a way of identifying concerns and attention. As a result, there would have to be an intense preoccupation with consensus building reminiscent of Western democracies following the World War II years where consolidation became a major focus as a result of the trauma of the war.

In a pluralist society, democracy is a process of "accommodation," or as Rustow suggests, a matter involving a "combination of division and cohesion, and of conflict and consent."³⁹ National unity will emerge as background condition in the sense that it will have to precede all other phases of full democratization.⁴⁰

In this milieu, the harnessing of people's participation and support becomes ever compelling. While maximum consensus may be a lofty ideal in pluralist formations, the regime of President Aquino will have to evolve a tenuous middle ground⁴¹ that skews from some sort of imposed uniformity to tolerated dissent. This will imply a balancing act, or a centrist position that will either accommodate or deny certain demands coming from the environment.

The social service program will conspicuously be at the forefront of this middle ground because it remains the facility of government in reaching out to the mass number of citizens. Unfortunately, a government like that of President Aquino will continue to be faced with limited resources in the dispensation of these services and thus would have to derive certain strategies that will aspire to maximize use of resources and satisfy the citizenry in tune with the Constitutional mandate. In this setting, the traditional

administrative problems of access, systematic discrimination of deserving clients, over-bureaucratization and graft and corruption will continue to intrude and threaten the efficacy of the programs.⁴² It is in this light that new directions or strategies in plan implementation may have to be designed. This paper views certain aspirant trends that may be employed or experimented to cope with vestigial problems. They are by no means magic recipes that will solve these problems overnight, but they do offer promising directions. These are:

1. *Degovernmentalization of Social Services.* In the face of limited resources, the new regime may have to enlist the services of non-government organizations (NGOs) more substantively to help in the dispensation of services and in the broadening of access. In recent years, the potentials of NGOs in the area of social service delivery have been recognized.⁴³ These involve activities of non-profit organizations such as foundations, the Church, civic clubs and similar associations which may be used not only in monitoring and evaluating service delivery systems of government, but in the actual dispensation of services. The activities of these sector may have been overlooked in the past instead of being systematically incorporated in the main-streams of the government's social service programs. To be sure, these entities may have a better perspective of specialized areas of concerns as they may be in a better position to render objective judgement in the efficacy of social service programs.

2. *Debureaucratization in the Servicing of the Sector.* The demands of social services particularly in areas like health and nutrition need swift, circumspect action which may be compromised by the efficientist values traditionally observed and championed by the bureaucracy. Servicing of the sector would have to be seen as immediate, and liberated from the rigors of bureaucratic processing and paper shuffling. Health emergencies for instance cannot afford to be encumbered by the cluster of forms to be filled, affidavits to be filed and documents to be submitted. Medicare services, for one, require a lot of tedious requirements and limitations, but its impact has not been largely felt because of the static nature of legislation specifying the amount of support that can be extended to members. Situations like these merely frustrate beneficiaries and cause disaffection with government.

3. *Emphasis on Feedback System.* R. Allen Hays argues that decision-makers tend to "draw information directly from their own personal experiences or preconceptions, despite warnings from more 'scientific' policy analysts that these sources may contain serious biases or distortions."⁴⁴ In this light, the new regime may have to pay more attention towards drawing up its feedback systems to determine the impact or out-

come of existing programs. In a nascent democracy, the mechanism for this may still have to be developed, but the government can initially rely information distilled from interest groups and NGOs rather than on bureaucratic organizations which may have a personal stake in the outcome of the feedback. It is incumbent for policy makers and implementors to be conscientious in seeking feedback, and take it upon themselves to immediately correct deviations. If they do not, client groups are likely to bring it to their attention forcefully through political or legal pressure.⁴⁵

4. *More Attention to Parameters or Indicators.* Simultaneous with the need for feedback systems, the government may have to devise viable parameters that will give insight on the efficacy of programs. Traditional indicators have proven to be inadequate, particularly in identifying clients that are deserving of the service. In Housing for instance, there was an intense preoccupation during the Marcos years to count number of units built as a way of reporting accomplishments without taking into account whether the deserving beneficiaries were excluded as a result of unreasonable income requirements or rigid amortization policies for applicants. Indicators will not be easy, but the neglect of this component has been noticeable. The transition government of President Aquino, by taking the initiative of establishing poverty threshold, may however be cognizant of this need, and hopefully, we can expect more emphasis in this area in the years to come.

5. *Shift from the Dependency Syndrome.* Finally, the challenge that confronts the Aquino government today, as in any developing country, is how to wean clients in the social sector from the syndrome of vulgar welfarism perpetuated in the past. Social service programs have evolved to be looked upon as dole-out programs by both government and clients to the extent that total dependency is nurtured. This kind of attitude has not allowed clients the opportunity to be self-sufficient and has imposed pressure on the budget. The new regime will have to repackage its programs as a means of assisting clients to be self-reliant in the long-run.

Conclusion

This paper has submitted some perspectives on transition states, its problems, predicament and concerns, and the locus of social service programs in the agenda of reform. The Aquino government in the Philippines has been used as a focal point of analysis, from where specific situations and dilemmas have been drawn to validate the framework of transitory formations moving into a pluralist configuration. Some policy propositions on social services have been offered, such as the degovernmentalization of social service programs, and more extensive use of nongovernment organiza-

tions in servicing the sector; the minimization of control in dispensing social services; the emphasis on feedback; the design of indicators or parameters to determine the effectiveness of social service programs; and the need to change attitudes or outlooks of beneficiaries from overdependence on social service programs in ameliorating their conditions. While these may not readily solve all the difficulties that confront the sector, they more or less aspire to help rationalize programs.

While the mass of problems that confront the transition state today, as seen in the Aquino government, may continue to be overwhelming, the process of introspection becomes compelling if only to understand the problems of the past. Conceivably, a government that knows its past can have better control of its future.

Endnotes

¹The concept of a "transition state" is discussed in succeeding sections. In deriving the term, I was influenced by the paper of Viola and Mainwaring on transitions to democracy in Brazil and Argentina. The term may be awkward, but it is more or less used here to represent the stages from crisis to normalcy following the collapse of a previous autocratic regime and supplanted by a new dispensation that professes adherence to democratic traditions. See Eduardo Viola and Scott Mainwaring "Transitions to Democracy: Brazil and Argentina in the 1980's," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Winter 1980), pp. 193-220.

²See Randolph S. David, "Theorizing and Living the Transition: The Aquino Government's First Seven Months," *Kasarinlan*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 4th Quarter, 1986, p. 14.

³The account on this subject is numerous. The reader may refer to the various books and articles in local and foreign journals. See for instance A.P. Acuirre, *A People's Revolution of Our Time, Philippines: February 22-25, 1986* (Quezon City: Fine Print, May 1986).

⁴The term "transition state" and "transition government" will be used interchangeably for the purpose of the paper.

⁵Dankwart A. Rostow, "Transition to Democracy, Toward a Dynamic Model," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (April 1970), p. 352.

⁶Victoriano A. Hipe, "Towards a Redefinition of Crisis Administration: Some Sociological and Legal Notes on Administering a Community in Extermis," *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. XIX, No. 4 (October 1975), p. 275. The special issue of *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 45, January 1985 provides a series of articles on emergency administration. See for instance William J. Petak, "Emergency Management: A Challenge for Public Administration," pp. 3-7, in this issue.

⁷I would include in this qualification an electoral process free of manipulations, intimidation or other irregularities that distort the genuine political will. For one, the Marcos Government in the Philippines has been accused of using the electoral process to subvert the genuine will of the people. See Raul P. de Guzman and Luzviminda G. Tancanco, *Assessment of the 1986 Special Presidential Elections*, forthcoming.

⁸Viola and Mainwaring, *op. cit.*, p. 193. The separation of powers is cited here as a philosophy among presidential types of government, which is followed presently by the Philippines. Under parliamentary systems, a different context or precondition of course may be advocated.

⁹Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (eds.), *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 5.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹¹Viola and Mainwaring, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

¹²Edward S. Herman and James Petras, "Resurgent Democracy: Rhetoric and Reality," *New Left Review* No. 154 (November-December 1985), as reproduced in mimeo form, p. 3. Herman and Petras provide an incisive analysis of aspirant democracies in Latin American and U.S. and the impact of intervention.

¹³Again, the Marcos regime has been consistently accused of this predilection.

¹⁴Viola and Mainwaring, *op. cit.*

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶John H. Herz, "On Reestablishing Democracy After the Downfall of Authoritarian or Dictatorial Regimes," *Comparative Politics*, July 1978, p. 561.

¹⁷Viola and Mainwaring, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

¹⁸*Ibid.* This predicament was also highlighted by Colburn and de Franco in a paper on productivity of cotton producers following the takeover by the Sandinistas. See Forest Colburn and Silvio de Franco, "Privilege Production and Revolution: The Case of Nicaragua," *Comparative Politics*, April 1985, pp. 277-290.

¹⁹Herman and Petras, *op. cit.*, p. 5. I personally find this proposition frightening but valid, to a large extent.

²⁰T. S. Marshall, *Social Policy*, 3rd. ed. (London: Hutchinson, 1970), p. 169.

²¹Jimmy Algie, *Social Values, Objectives and Action* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1975), p. 51.

²²*Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

²³I. Macleod and E. Powell, *The Social Services, Needs and Means*, 1954 as cited in D.V. Donnison, "The Development of Social Administration," *Social Administration, Readings in Applied Social Science* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books), p. 28.

²⁴Algie uses here the framework of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as discussed in Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1954). See Algie, *op. cit.*

²⁵Algie, *ibid.*, p. 10

²⁶David V. Donnison and Valerie Chapman, *Social Policy and Administration* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1965), p. 15.

²⁷Gabriel U. Iglesias and Luzviminda G. Tancangco, "The Philippine Bureaucracy During the First One Hundred Days of the Aquino Government," 1986, mimeo, provides an analysis of the Aquino regime's performance and problems during the early months of transition.

²⁸The term "installation" has been used instead of "election" to precisely capture the means by which the Aquino Government seized power. It is still however claimed that the basis was the special presidential elections of 1986, although it was the EDSA Revolution which mediated the actual take-over of power.

²⁹Mr. Marcos continuously held plebiscites, referenda and elections during the Martial Law era. A Comelec Report lists a total of 25 such political exercises held since 1973, in the form of plebiscites, referenda and elections. At least seven election contests were held up to 1984. See *The Commission on Elections Report*, Circa 1985, pp. 39-43. Mr. Marcos used these electoral exercises as a way of legitimizing his regime, although observers and critics maintain that the elections were largely manipulated and suited to the needs of the Marcos regime. David Wurfel of the University of Windsor says the results of these exercises "were so predictable that no one took them seriously any longer." See David Wurfel, "The Succession Struggle," in *The Philippines After Marcos*, R.J. May and F. Nemenzo, eds. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985).

³⁰Eric Giron provides a useful synopsis of the events of the EDSA Revolution and the succeeding period. See Eric S. Giron, "A Glorious Revolution, Then a Fragile Regime," a two part article in *Weekend Magazine*, 28 December 1986 and 4 January 1987.

³¹Herz, *op. cit.*

³²Viola and Mainwaring, *op. cit.*

³³David, *op. cit.*

³⁴Corazon C. Aquino, *Democracy by the Ways of Democracy*, 1986, pp. 36-39. This is a collection of speeches delivered by President Aquino during her official visit to the U.S. on September 15-24, 1986.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 33.

³⁶Art. 11, Sec. 1, *Proclamation No. 3*, March 25, 1986.

³⁷Thus, the government towards the latter part of 1986 has allotted a budget of ₱ 2 billion for jobs generation. Similarly, a significant increase for social services has been noted in the proposed 1987 Budget, where a rise by as much as ₱ 28 B from the 1986 level of ₱ 19.8 B has been proposed.

³⁸Alejandro B. Lichauco, *Towards a New Economic Order and the Conquest of Poverty* (Manila: SSP, 1986), p. 1.

³⁹Rustow, *op. cit.*, p. 339.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 351.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 363.

⁴²A discussion of these problems have been made in numerous papers. See for instance Ma. Concepcion P. Alfiler, "Administrative Accessibility: Towards the Operationalization of the Concept," *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. XXIII, No. 1 (January 1979), pp. 20-38;

Ledivina V. Cariño, "Increasing Access to Basic Services: An Examination of Relevant Concepts and Practices," December 1981; David C. Kortzen, "Management for Social Development," *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. XX, No. 3 (July 1976), pp. 261-283; and Danilo R. Reyes, "Control Processes and Red Tape in Philippine Bureaucracy: Notes on Administrative Inefficiency," *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. XXVI, Nos. 3 & 4 (July-October 1982), pp. 271-285.

⁴³Y. Hasenfeld, "The Administration of Human Services," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 495: May 1985, pp. 67-81 as cited in *Sage Public Administration Abstracts*. Vol. 12, No. 3 (October 1985), p. 348.

⁴⁴R. Allen Hays, "Perceptions of Success or Failure in Program Implementation: The 'Feedback Loop' in Public Policy Decisions," *Policy Studies Review*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (August 1985), p. 51.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*