

Conceptualizations of Peace and Development Among Maranaos


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Abstract

This study focused on the conceptualizations of peace and development among Maranaos. Relationship between peace and development was likewise explored. Finally, how the government can help in the attainment of peace and countryside development and attitudes towards the creation / implementation of SPCPD were revealed.

In a survey conducted by Bartolome (May 1997) at the Mindanao State University, Marawi Campus entitled *The Maranao Concept of Peace and Development*, twenty-one (21) randomly selected Maranao faculty, administrative staff, and students (15 females and 6 males) with ages ranging from 18 to 40 years old (with a modal age of 32) were asked the following questions:

- (1) What is your concept of "Peace"?
- (2) What is your concept of "Development"?
- (3) What concepts do you think are related to "Peace"? "Development"?
- (4) How is peace related to development?
- (5) How can the government help in the attainment of peace in Southern Philippines?

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- (6) How can the government contribute to countryside development?
- (7) Are you in favor of the creation /implementation of Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD)? Yes? No? Why?

To supplement answers obtained from the questionnaires, follow-up interviews were made with selected respondents. The results are summarized in this article.

1. On the Concept of "Peace"

Peace is a broad concept. But, referring specifically to our problem in Mindanao, peace means "the absence or cessation of hostilities between government forces and Muslim rebels — Christians and Muslims living together in peace, in harmony". When one could walk in the night without being kidnapped or robbed or raped."

It is a universal imperative. It is desirable beyond measure - Islam is a way of life. It is the way to peace.

Peace means tranquility and freedom from war. It implies quietness. Freedom from noise. It means giving a chance to one another. (**Mapipiya so ginawata, da-a samok go lumilintad so engud**).

Peace also means having a clear mind — no war, no fighting but there is loving, patient care; having to sleep without fear in mind; without trouble or apprehension; able to rest quietly. There is no conflict or unsolvable problem in a particular place. There is cooperation, peace and unity in the environment.

When there is order, there is peace of mind. When things run smoothly; when there is mutual understanding and "convergent" thinking there is peace. When there are no wars, love of God prevails. Peace occurs when the world is free from illegal business.

"Salam means peace, freedom, **kalayaan**. It means happy living. No harm. No crimes. No violence. You feel secure or safe when you have peace of mind. There is freedom to choose whatever you want to do. You can go around without any fear or hatred in your heart."

Without peace, we can not perform well. We cannot do things we wish to do better. Peace is the best instrument — the key to a happy, harmonious and successful life. It implies absence of conflicts, disputes (**rido**), wars. The situation is peaceful where love, economic stability and order prevail.

Finally, peace is termed "**kalilintad**" in Maranao. It means absence of

wars, conflicts, misunderstandings and presence of a happy environment, where caring and sharing fill the air. When you say "peace" gun is not feared and can seldom be seen anywhere. Ajos (1997) says "peace is freedom from disturbances, a state of being calm and quiet. When we say a nation or an institution is at peace we mean that it is free from war, from turmoils, quarrels and misunderstandings."

2. On the Concept of "Development"

Simply related, development means an improved quality of life. Minimizing, if not completely, eliminating poverty, improving health services and making education relevant and accessible to all, especially the poor.

It means advancement, progress and better living. It implies transformation from a state of being 'worst' to good; to spread, to improve, to grow, to enlarge or to make more beautiful (**so kapakapiya o engud go so darpa go so ginawa**).

Development calls for the improvement of the quality of life in terms of conditions which afford individual members of society the opportunity to benefit personally from the social upward movement; changes that can benefit all living creatures on earth.

Progressiveness in terms of economic, socio-political and even mental aspects of development. It involves sacrifices in order to develop whatever things we wish to develop. Development is the result or by-product of sacrifices. It may be equated to success.

Development is change but not all changes are development. It is change for the better, not for worse. More concretely, "there is development when there will be no garbage, no squatter areas, no peasants hanging around. When all people living in this world have jobs and income to sustain their daily needs, that is development."

If there is improvement in a particular place, maybe some problems (if not all) can be solved. There is development where there is peace of mind, peace and order in the environment. Development brings harmony, good things, good life to all. Development (**katagompiya**) implies growth especially socioeconomic growth.

3.1 Concepts Related to "Peace"

- **Discipline.** When there is discipline there is peace. There would be no fighting and no trouble would ensue. It also implies orderliness

within the community.

- **People Power.** Peace is related to people power. It means giving freedom to our people (**Kibugay ko tutanggisa so kabunar iyan ko kapagintao**). Sharing what they have. Not doing something to hit or hurt others. Loving people and country paves the way to peace.
- **Economic Progress or Development.** Improved quality of life. Poverty and underemployment breed frustration, anger and violence thus causing underdevelopment.
- **Absence of wars, conflicts, disputes (rido), trouble.** Harmony. Absence of warring factions like the military and some other armed groups. Fighting is absolutely not existing in the area. War and conflicts are usually adversely related to peace, e.g., conflict between government officials and MILF rebels.
- **Absence of corruption.** Having good, just and honest leader will lead to a peaceful society.
- **Justice.** To achieve peace, everybody must be just and fair. In Lanao, conflicts start from lands which people claim as their own but which are not theirs. They have to be just and fair and be afraid of their day of judgement. People have to lessen their greed and love for worldly things and desires if they want a peaceful society. They must have strong faith in God.
- **Unity in diversity.** Filipinos may come from different tribes, different places, different religions, yet they could still be together and work peacefully when they have mutual understanding and similar goals/aspirations in life.
- **Islamic Way of Life.** Islam means peace. The best way to resolve crises is through the Islamic (peaceful) way of life. This means no discos, bars, alcoholic drinks and other things that make life miserable. It is because of these that we never have peace in ourselves. With the help of religious leaders, everything will turn out smoothly.
- **Success/achievement.** When we have peace in our hearts, and in our minds, it already becomes an achievement, at the same time, success.
- **Understanding others' strengths and weaknesses.** Understanding strengths and limitations of Filipino character paves the way for peace.

3.2 Concepts Related to “Development”

- ***Economic Progress.*** Development means change for the better and change for the better is progress, especially economic progress.
- ***Peace.*** An essential requirement for development is peace, which involves mutual understanding and tolerance.
- ***Availability of Financial Resources.*** Development will likely occur when there is money on hand, e.g., appropriating government funds for investment purposes.
- ***Betterment/improvement or modernization.*** Modernization is a by-product or end-result of development, e.g., high technology or computer facilities, internet.
- ***Good/wise Management.*** For development to take place there must be good planning, monitoring, control, evaluation — wise organizational management. Leaders must also be hardworking/ industrious, honest, conscientious and dedicated.
- ***Community development.*** This happens when there are adequate employment opportunities and good, clean and honest government.
- ***Promotion.*** When someone is promoted, it means he will be experiencing fruits of development as in more opportunities, prestige, wealth and power.
- ***Maturity.*** This refers to physical, cognitive/intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual aspects of human development rolled into one. Development goes hand-in-hand with the state of maturity of individuals comprising society in which they live.
- ***Hindrances/Frustrations.*** Oftentimes the process of development is hampered because of obstacles (e.g., lack of funds) to progress. But these should only serve as challenges to improve our quality of life.
- ***Improved Quality of life.*** To make something good or better; to make things beautiful (so kapakapiya ko kagiginawa go so pud amburasbarang san).
- ***Eradication of Poverty.*** This implies less hold-ups, kidnapping for ransom, rape and other cases of crimes or violence (satanic ways).
- ***Absence of corruption.*** While honesty is a lonely word, genuine improvement/development will only prosper when people abstain from graft and corruption. They must pledge to be honest, incorruptible or

- law-abiding citizens.
- ***Hardwork or industry.*** We can achieve development through hardwork that is, the cultivation of our own lands which will serve as our means of livelihood.
- ***Mutual friendship and understanding.*** Ideally, no communication gap should exist between the government and the governed and among tribes in order for development to flourish. This involves attitude change and mutual peaceful co-existence.

4. How is Peace Related to Development?

Peace is a precondition to development. When there is peace, there would be no fighting. Of course there would be discipline and unity. Therefore peace and development are closely related in a way that if there is no peace, no development takes place. In the absence of peace we are in a state of conflicts and probably war. "In education for example, who would dare go to school if there is war? In business of course, only those who sell guns and bombs will probably flourish/prosper but how about those engaged in industries, groceries and the like? They will be afraid of trading lest they be robbed. In government, how can authorities build highways in the war zone? Just imagine what it would be like without peace! Look at Malaysia. Compare it with Afghanistan. Who is more well-developed? You can never reach your targets for development if there is no peace and order in the community."

5. How can the government help in the attainment of peace in Southern Philippines?

Says one respondent:

"Unless the government will change, I don't know how they can help. Authorities are given the power to rule. But then they corrupt the power. Some use it to achieve their personal desires and satisfy themselves..."

The government appears helpless in the attainment of peace in Southern Philippines. The reason is that "most of our leaders are corrupt; they are not doing well. They caught the evil spirit of money and they forgot their promises to

the people..."

Peace talks are good only if the government would really listen and understand the situation and give a chance to SPCPD.

- **Stop/avoid graft and corruption.** Extend cooperation. Discharge/perform responsibilities faithfully to the people. Let the people decide or speak what they want if this would help.
- **Start campaigning "Vote honestly," "No vote buying" and "No flying voters".** Have faith in God.
- **Provide for the major/basic necessities in life.** Give financial support. Give complete independence to those who would govern or run their own government.
- **Stop military aggression.** Attainment of peace in Southern Philippines can simply be done.

One respondent opined:

" In my opinion, the government should adopt Federalism like that of Malaysia. This is because history justifies that the Bangsa Moro people cannot be fully integrated with the Filipino people since they are two distinct "nations". The Philippine government has to find ways to do the workable. For example, during Marcos regime we had the so-called Regional Autonomous Government (RAG). In Aquino's time, we had the ARMM and for Ramos government we have SPCPD. But still these examples which I cited are not effective because the Moros want to be recognized as a distinct people".

- **Be more realistic and practical.** Pay more attention to the basic/true needs of the people, Muslims in particular. Negotiate honestly without prior or hidden motives with the MILF, MNLF, or NPA.
- **Everyone must follow existing rules and regulations.** Avoid corruption and harrasment. The government must strive harder to look for effective solutions to the conflicts/misunderstandings so that peace and order may reign in Southern Mindanao.
- **Development projects must be fully implemented.** Be consistent

with government policies, eradicate graft and corruption in all government agencies, so that people may restore their confidence and consequently obey existing rules and laws.

- **Continuous peace talks between the government and MNLF, MILF, NPA and other groups.** There must be understanding/cooperation between religious groups, too.
- **Continuous support to rebel returnees.**
- **Choose a well-trusted, honest leader** (*so kapamilya sa kasasarihan ago mauntol a datu*). Uplift morale. Cultivate virtues (*somabot so mga tao a makapiya adat*).

6. How can the Philippine government contribute to countryside development?

According to some respondents, the government needs only “eyes and ears” to contribute to countryside development. It has to *see* and *hear* the real need for development and of course, has to *find* some good solutions for it.

It is evident from the findings of this study that prerequisites for peace also apply to countryside development.

- Avoid/stop graft and corruption. Appoint good, honest political leaders so that the government will be able to hear the quests/cries of the people and thereby provide them with some means of livelihood and basic services.
- Implement projects which are beneficial/useful to majority of the people in the community. Appropriate funds for the same.
- The government can help by preventing major instances of graft and corruption, crimes, violence and harrassment and lead people to survive in all aspects of life. Provide for their security/basic needs.
- Equal sharing of benefits and distribution of wealth and development projects among different regions of the Philippines.

A respondent has this to say:

“The contribution of the Philippine government to countryside development is very nil/poor. Actually Mindanao has 14 provinces and one of these is Lanao del Sur, with the capital

city of Marawi. Every municipality here has more than 14 barangays. All municipalities are in the countryside and considered poorest in terms of development. It has been observed that usually funding released to one barangay in Mindanao is less than the funding released to another barangay in Luzon or Visayas areas. We cannot even reach 20% of their budget. That is why our countryside can not build other projects other than elementary and high school buildings. We have no concrete barangay roads and even our national highway/road is not yet finished because of insufficient funds.”

Development in Southern Philippines can/will never be fully implemented by the government due to misunderstandings between Muslims and Christians that create brutalities or harassment from lawless/bad elements. The government must maintain first the peace and order situation at least to minimize crimes like kidnapping for ransom. This done, the government can then proceed to putting up infrastructure projects and school buildings.

- The government must put an end to the conflict with MILF, MNLF, NPA, etc. and get rid of scalawags in the military. Government countryside development programs can only succeed if they earn the trust and confidence of the people.
- Do good to the country and people. Do right in everything.
- Conduct research to find out actual basic needs of the community, what aspects of countryside needs development and monitor closely development projects already initiated.
- Invite foreign investors to boost economy of the country. Monitor and give appropriate funds for projects to the local government.
- Choose real honest leaders who will initiate construction of accessible roads in the countryside (**mamili tano sa Datu a kasasarigan a pegompiya-aniyan so mga karsada kombalabala a engud**).

7. Are you in favor of the creation/implementation of Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD)?

From the results of this study, it appears that respondents have mixed feelings about the success of SPCPD. Some claim that “SPCPD is a very significant

breakthrough in the way of peace inspite of negative reactions from some sectors." They say that at least there's a Council working for peace and development in Mindanao.

"The fact that the MNLF has practically been won on the side of the government (and there is peace therefore with them) is enough reason to support SPCPD. Whether it would work or not in the long run is another matter."

SPCPD is "the only way to solve conflicts/misunderstandings among peoples of Mindanao. Let us give it a chance." Through SPCPD, the people of Southern Philippines are empowered to make their voices be heard directly by President Ramos rather than be channelled to government bureaus/departments most of whose leaders are anti-Muslims. If the SPCPD will succeed, then the whole country will be benefited because economic growth in Southern Philippines can contribute to financial stability."

"Accepting SPCPD follows literally the way of the Holy Prophet. It is said that while we must always be ready for the good fight, lest it be forced on us, we must always be ready for peace."

Those who responded negatively to the question have these to say:

- The creation of SPCPD puts some people to power or to certain positions. The government created this Council to make them stop fighting against them. Other than this, can the Council really foster peace in their area of jurisdiction?
- No, it can only divide our small place and create communication gaps/misunderstandings (**Badun pukaoparik ago pukaadun sa lii ko magingud**). "So SPCPD na miyakaoman ko kiyapakala o gastos ko engud go miyakaoman ko mala a miya ilang a perak tano. Pukadakul so corrupt (SPCPD has contributed to the increased financial/budgetary spending of the people much of which has been wasted. There will be a proliferation of corruptors).
- Creating another agency will only generate another set of government corruptors. In any case, the functions of SPCPD can very well be done/absorbed by other agencies of the government already existing.

Observes one respondent:

“So far no improvement has been made yet, when it comes to peace and development. Maybe in the long run everything will be fine as long as graft and corruption is stopped. I don’t have the choice right now.” (**Sa manaya na dapun a bairan minita gunpiya ago kalilintad a miya-adun. Banda si-i ko puku ori a alongon na tagumpiya so ingud opama ka mada so di kapu ginontolan.**)

Another respondent hesitatingly said:

“To be frank, I don’t want to comment about it. I’m not against it but I’m also not in favor of it. I’m still trying to understand what their goals and mission are.”

Conclusion

Essentially, peace is freedom from disturbance, a state of being calm and quiet. When we say that a person is at peace, we mean that his mind is at ease. When we say that a nation or an institution is at peace we mean that it is free from war, from turmoils and misunderstandings. It is among the most overworked and often abused staples of man’s aspirations. (Ajos, 1997).

The concepts of peace and development are as old as civilization itself but the requirements of peace and development change with the changing world. Today we need a new definition of peace and development by which we can recognize not only the many threats to peace and development but also the many dimensions.

Peace is much more than the absence of war and development essentially involves change. Peace is a precondition to development. In the final analysis, “peace is a spiritual condition. All religions pray for it. Man must build it by reason and patience” (Ajos, 1997).

There is a close relationship between peace and development because the former is a requirement for the latter and man yearns for both. When people are free to make their own choices (e.g., enjoy inner peace, freedom) there is more likelihood for all forms of development to occur among nations. Essentially, peace

and development are rooted in a sense of community in recognition of patterns of cooperation emerging from neighboring communities. The government can essentially pave the way to peace and development in Southern Philippines by stopping all forms of graft and corruption in various government agencies, prevention of crimes, violence, harassment; providing for the basic needs and services to the people; fostering attitude change, (e.g. eliminate prejudices/discrimination) mutual cooperation/understandings between Christians and Muslims; equal/fair distribution of wealth; implementing development projects particularly in Southern Philippines; continued peace talks and support to rebel returnees and granting autonomy in governance/self-rule.

Bibliography

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