

RELATIVE DEPRIVATION THEORY AND COLLECTIVE POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN THE PHILIPPINES

A. Miren Gonzalez-Intal
*University of the Philippines
at Los Baños*

Relative deprivation is used to explain occurrences of political violence in the nation during the past 25 years. Specific recommendations are made in order to minimize the chances of collective political violence in the future.

The recent history of the Philippines since the late 1960s has been one characterized by collective political violence. Collective political violence refers to collective attacks by groups within a political community against the political regime, its authorities or policies (Gurr, 1970).¹ In the period preceeding the imposition of Martial Law in 1972, the collective political violence mainly took the form of student activism and street demonstrations. After the declaration of Martial Law and the massive suppression of dissent, collective political violence took more destructive and widespread forms—internal guerilla wars from the more radical elements of society, the communist New People's Army (CPP-NPA) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). The social unrest that had been suppressed in the more moderate segments of society and unleashed by the assassination of Benigno Aquino in 1983 and the fraudulent 1986 snap Presidential elections culminated in the "People Power Revolt" of February 1986. Following the greater democratic space after the downfall of the Marcos regime, collective political violence resurged, this time in the form of widespread labor unrest and strikes, intermittent coups d'etat, and urban terrorist attacks by both rightist and leftist elements. All these bring forth the following questions: Is collective political violence here to stay? How do we make sense of

all these collective political violence? What are its causes and processes? Can social science knowledge be used to understand the heightened collective political violence that we have been experiencing in the Philippines over the last two decades? Can social science knowledge be used to map out possible ways for minimizing the incidence and magnitude of collective political violence in the future?

This paper is a modest attempt to examine the foregoing issues in the light of a theory that has been around in the social science literature for some time now in the hope that the theory can shed some light towards understanding the nature, forms and processes of the heightened collective political violence that has marked the Philippine socio-political landscape during the last two decades. In so doing, it must be borne in mind that it is not the purpose of this paper to provide an explanation for all facets of this complex social phenomenon for that would only result in a "model" that will be "about as complex (and thus mystifying) as the concrete world it models" (Eckstein, 1980, p. 162). Rather, the goal is to come up with a parsimonious theoretical explanation that hopefully will capture the "essentials" and thereby serve as a heuristic framework for understanding similar future phenomena.

Relative Deprivation Theory

Relative deprivation theory is one of two opposing approaches to the study of collective political violence (Eckstein, 1980). The other is what has been termed "collective action theory."

¹ The concept is broadly used here to mean all attacks which may include actual or threatened use of violence. It includes demonstrations, political strikes, riots, coups d'etat, political assassinations, terrorism, guerilla wars, civil wars, and revolts.

Relative deprivation theory falls into that class of theories called contingency theories whose basic premise is that collective political violence is the result of sharp discontinuities or changes in a political community. In contrast, collective action theories postulate that collective political violence is not aberrant but rather just one tactical course of action that could be taken by a group in the pursuit of its goals.²

This paper focuses on relative deprivation theory for two reasons: First, critical evaluation of the two approaches indicates that relative deprivation theory does a better job than collective action theory in explaining collective political violence (Eckstein, 1980). Second, relative deprivation theory is essentially social psychological in nature even though its major proponents are mainly sociologists and political scientists. Thus, it is deemed worthwhile here to examine how social psychology can be used to understand and explain this phenomenon of collective political violence that has distinctly characterized the Philippine socio-political situation during the last two decades.

Relative deprivation theory originated when the term "relative deprivation" was coined by Stouffer, Suchman, De Vinney, Star and Williams in their classic work *The American Soldier* (1949). Since then, several variants of relative deprivation theory have been posited, the most important ones being those of Davis (1959), Runciman (1966), Gurr (1970), Crosby (1976) and Martin and Murray (1984). This paper will draw mainly from the work of Gurr (1970) because not only is Gurr's model the most comprehensive of the group with the most extensive empirical test but also because it focuses principally on collective political violence as a consequence of social unrest.

Gurr (1970) proposes a causal model of the sources, magnitude and forms of collective political violence. He tested the model using cross sectional analyses of data collected for 114 dis-

tinct national as well as colonial political entities, each of which had a population of one million or more in 1962. Data on relative deprivation, collective political violence, as well as the various channeling variables postulated in the theory were collected from the politics for the period 1961 to 1965. A total of 1,100 events of collective political violence were identified and examined. The results of the correlation and regression analyses conducted provide support for Gurr's model.

At the core of Gurr's relative deprivation theory is the proposition that a social psychological variable, relative deprivation, is the basic precondition for collective political violence. What is the experience of relative deprivation? According to Gurr, relative deprivation refers to the perceived discrepancy between people's value expectations and their value capabilities. Value expectations are the goods and conditions of life that people want and feel they deserve. A job, adequate food on the table, a decent standard of living, freedom of expression, truth and justice are some examples of value expectations that people generally hold. Value capabilities, on the other hand, are the goods and conditions of life that people already have or believe they can obtain. Discontent, which is a motivating state, is the immediate response to the experience of relative deprivation. The discontent experienced can range from mild dissatisfaction to rage. Following the frustration-aggression hypothesis, discontent is often accompanied by anger and the tendency towards aggression. Gurr postulates that the greater the discrepancy experienced between value expectations and value capabilities, and the greater the number of people who experience this discrepancy, i.e., the greater the intensity and scope of relative deprivation and hence of discontent, the greater is the potential for collective violence. The potential for collective violence is transformed into the potential for collective political violence to the extent that the political system and its agents are blamed for the discontents.

² See Eckstein (1980) for an excellent critique and evaluation of the two approaches to explaining collective political violence.

Types of Relative Deprivation

In Gurr's model, three types of relative deprivation can spark collective political violence. The first type is called decremental deprivation. Here, value expectations do not change but value capabilities decline, thus, there is discontent and anger over losing what was once had or thought one could have. Examples of this are the case of inflation eroding the purchasing power of people's income, decline in a country's economic growth resulting in unemployment, fewer goods produced and consequently higher prices, and decline in the ability of the government to solve problems and crises. Decremental deprivation also occurs when segments of society lose some of their value capabilities to competing segments of society, as when landlords subvert a land reform process. It likewise occurs when people lose the freedoms and privileges they have been accustomed to.

The second type is called aspirational deprivation. Here value capabilities do not change but value expectations rise. Discontent and anger grow out of the frustration of having no means to attain the new or heightened expectations. Where do these new or heightened expectations come from? Exposure through the media to desirable material goods or a better way of life is one source. The demonstration effect is another source, i.e., seeing other groups (such as families of overseas contract workers) enjoying material benefits. Changes in government and government leaders as well as short-term improvements in a country's economic situation are also likely to increase people's expectations.

The third, and worst type, is progressive deprivation in which value expectations continue to rise at the same time that value capabilities decline. Progressive deprivation can be considered as a special case of aspirational deprivation which usually occurs when improvement in people's outcomes over a period of time leads to expectations of continued improvements but external shocks and/or structural inflexibilities result instead in declines in outcomes. This is analogous to Davies' (1962) "J-curve" hypothe-

sis that revolutions or violent collective political responses are most likely to happen when a prolonged period of economic and social improvement is followed by a short period of sharp reversal. In this situation, people become intensely angered because their expectations continue to remain upwards at the same time that they are losing what they have already gained.

Economic and Political Developments, 1966-1990

From the above, it is easy to glean that the Philippine socio-political situation over the last twenty or so years has been one marked by both decremental and progressive deprivation. The political instability and collective political violence in the Philippines during the past two decades is intimately intertwined with the changing economic and political fortunes of the country. Table 1 highlights this interrelationship.

1966-early 1969. Upon his assumption to the Presidency in 1966, Ferdinand Marcos embarked in an aggressive government expenditure program centering on infrastructure in order to push the economy forward. GNP grew at a respectable average of 4.9 percent per annum while inflation rate averaged a low 4.7 percent. The latter 1960s saw the successful introduction of the new high yielding rice varieties so much so that consumer prices remained relatively stable despite the expansionary economic policies of the government. In relative deprivation theory terms, 1966-early 1969 was clearly a period of improvement and rising expectations.

Late 1969-1972. The government's aggressive expenditure program was financed, however, by foreign borrowing of short-term maturities. The year 1969 saw massive expenditures by the government in the run-up to the reelection bid of President Marcos, an election that was considered by many as the most violent and fraudulent thus far. As a result of the sharp rise in government expenditures, by 1969, the external debt service burden amounted to nearly 50 percent of total export earnings. Considering that the international reserves of the country was

**Table 1. Economic and Political Developments in the Philippines,
1966–1990**

1966–early 1969

Economic

- * GNP growth rate averaged 4.9% per year
- * Inflation rate averaged 4.7% per year
- * Growing external debt

Political

- * New administration
- * Government embarked in expansionary expenditure program

Late 1969–1972

Economic

- * Balance of payments crisis in late 1969 and 1970
- * Peso devalued from P3.90 to about P6.50 per US dollar
- * GNP growth dropped to 3.9 in 1970
- * Inflation rate averaged 13.0% in 1970–1972

Political

- * Violence/fraud marred 1969 presidential elections
- * Massive student protests
- * Increased CPP-NPA activity
- * Muslim secessionists struck in Mindanao
- * Martial law imposed in September 1972

1973–1979

Economic

- * Robust economic growth with GNP averaging at 6.7 percent a year
- * Balance of payments under control because of heavy foreign borrowing
- * Peso-dollar rate relatively stable at around P7.35 per US dollar
- * Inflation rate surged to 35% in 1974 but averaged 8% during 1975–1978
- * Country turned into net rice exporter in late 1970s

Political

- * Martial Law regime
- * sharp increase in government expenditures
- * Land reform in rice and corn intensified
- * Dissent subsided in the general population
- * Industrial strikes prohibited
- * Rise of cronyism

1980–1982

Economic

- * Fast deteriorating balance of payments position; very large trade deficits
- * Economic growth steadily declining from 5% in 1980 to 1.9% in 1982
- * Inflation rate averaged 13.9% per year
- * Financial market crisis (Dewey Dee scandal)

Political

- * Growing demands for political liberalization
- * Heightened dissent in general population of the Marcos government
- * Growing criticism of cronies
- * Growth of CPP-NPA in the countryside
- * Growth of Muslim secessionist movement

1983–1985

Economic

- * Full-blown balance of payments crisis
- * Economic recession; GNP declined by 11% during 1983–1985
- * Inflation rate shot up to 50% in 1984; averaged 27.8% per year during the period
- * Unemployment rate rose to 7.1% in 1985
- * Peso depreciated to P20 per US dollar in 1985 from P8.50 in 1982

Political

- * Aquino assassination
- * Popular disenchantment with Marcos government
- * Serious CPP-NPA threat in the countryside
- * Growth of Muslim secessionist movement

1986-1987

Economic

- * Tight balance of payments position but exchange rate relatively stable
- * Economy starting to recover but unemployment continued to rise to 9.4% in 1987
- * Inflation rate averaged 2.3% per year

1988-early 1989

Economic

- * Robust economic growth at 6.7%
- * Investment surged
- * Unemployment declined from 9.4% in 1987 to 8.3% in 1989
- * Minimum wage increased
- * Inflation rate rose to 8.8%

Late 1989-1990

Economic

- * Worsening balance of payments position
- * High interest rates
- * Double-digit inflation rate
- * Decline in investments
- * Economy battered by drought, power failure, typhoons and earthquake
- * Large oil price increases
- * GNP growth dropped to 3.1% in 1990.
- * Peso depreciated to P28 per US dollar

Political

- * February 1986 People Power Revolt
- * Strong popular support for President Aquino but fragile political coalition
- * Installation of democratic institutions (e.g., Congress)
- * Serious attempts
- * Serious labor strikes in many firms
- * Decline of popular support for CPP-NPA; urban guerilla tactics of CPP-NPA

Political

- * Period of consolidation of Aquino government
- * Labor strikes subsided
- * Coup attempts
- * Decline of CPP-NPA

Political

- * Increased criticism and dissatisfaction with the Aquino government
- * Coup attempts
- * Cabinet reshuffles
- * Demands for increase of minimum wage; attempts at "Weling Bayan"
- * Spate of bombings by rightist rebels
- * Autonomous region in Mindanao; decline of Muslim secessionist activities

very low by then, the heavy debt service burden precipitated the balance of payments crisis of late 1969 and 1970. The peso was devalued from P3.90 per U.S. dollar to about P5.75 per U.S. dollar in 1970 and P6.50 per U.S. dollar during 1971-1972. In the aftermath of the external debt-induced balance of payments crisis, the government had to embark on a stabilization program that resulted in the lowering of the country's growth to only 3.9 percent in 1970. Equally important, the inflation rate surged to about 14.0 percent in 1970, 15 percent in 1971 and 10 percent in 1972 from only 1.9 percent in 1969. The period late 1969-1972 was one of marked decremental and progressive deprivation for the population.

The violent and fraud-marred 1969 presidential elections, the balance of payments crisis and peso devaluation, the slowdown in the economy, and the surge in the inflation rate sparked massive student protests. The CPP-NPA heightened its guerilla campaign. Muslim secessionists struck in Mindanao. In an effort to extend his grip on power beyond the second term and using as pretext the reported ambush (later acknowledged to have been faked) on the Secretary of Defense, President Marcos imposed Martial Law in September 1972. Massive arrests followed and dissent was suppressed.

1973-1979: The sharp improvement in the economy in 1973, brought about by a world-wide commodity boom, helped consolidate the martial law government. The economy grew by a hefty

9.3 percent in 1973. Even when the oil price hike of 1974 pushed inflation by nearly 35 percent in 1974, the martial law government pushed through with a sharp acceleration in government expenditures financed through heavy foreign borrowing. As a result, the economy was growing at a fast clip at an average of 6.7 percent per year during 1973–1979. The exchange rate was relatively stable at around P7.35 per U.S. dollar during the period despite the large current account deficits because of continuing heavy foreign borrowing. The rate of inflation returned to a single digit averaging 8 percent during 1975–1978. Land reform in rice and corn was pushed further and investments in irrigation and better rice varieties turned the country into a net rice exporter in the late 1970s. During this period of economic gains, dissent against the martial law government subsided, especially among the middle and upper classes, although the CPP-NPA continued to grow and gain adherents especially among the rural poor and landless.

1980–1982. The second world oil price hike of 1979–1980 and the sharp rise in world interest rates brought a quick unraveling of the Philippine economic performance of the 1970s. The government's policy response to the second world oil price hike was similar to its response to the first world oil price hike of 1973–1974; that is, an expansionary government expenditure program highlighted by large-scale industrial projects. However, unlike in 1973–1974, this time the strategy did not work. The high world interest rates and the deteriorating world market prices for Philippine exports meant that the government's expansionary expenditure program, which raised further the government's deficit, would fail in reviving the Philippine economy. Economic growth steadily declined from 5 percent in 1980 to 1.9 percent in 1982. Inflation rate rose to an average of 13.9 percent per year. In addition, the worsening balance of payments in 1980–1982 which was increasingly financed by foreign borrowings of shorter maturities built further the external debt service bur-

den that would eventually explode into the debt and balance of payments crisis of 1983.

On top of the deteriorating economic situation, the Philippines faced another economic crisis internally: the crisis in the country's financial system in the wake of the Dewey Dee scandal. As a result of this crisis, a number of financial institutions (primarily investment houses) folded up and a few well-connected industrial empires needed major government financial infusion to prevent them from crumbling altogether. The financial crisis brought to the fore the problem of "crony capitalism." Crony capitalism means that some groups are favored and other groups disfavored. A number of industrial empires expanded very rapidly during the 1970s because they were granted special favors in government contracts, policies and financing; the net result was that they were highly leveraged which made them vulnerable to crises in the financial system. The public's disenchantment with crony capitalism gained ground in the aftermath of the Dewey Dee scandal and the government's financial rescue of the crumbling crony industrial empires. As the economy slowed down, criticism of economic policy grew and the public clamor for greater political liberalization increased. Dissent and resentment over the Marcos government heightened, stirred by perceptions of corruption, abuse of power, and the illegitimacy of the dictatorship. Both the CPP-NPA and the Muslim secessionist movement in Mindanao expanded during the period.

1983–1985. The assassination of Benigno Aquino in August 1983 was the watershed event which opened the floodgate of public protest. The debt and balance of payments crisis of 1983 led to severe economic recession. For the first time in Philippine history since the Second World War, the economy registered declines in 1984 and 1985. For the whole period 1983–1985 GNP declined by 11 percent and per capita income declined by 15 percent. Unemployment and business failures increased sharply. The two key government banks, the PNB and the DBP, were practically bankrupt. Inflation rate soared

to 50 percent in 1984 and the peso depreciated to P20 per U.S. dollar. The incidence of poverty increased considerably, fanning a serious CPP-NPA threat in the countryside. The Muslim secessionist movement also gained strength. The public's perception of a "moro-moro" in the government investigation and trial of the Aquino assassination and the worsening economic crisis deepened the public's disenchantment and anger with the Marcos government, which found ultimate expression in the People Power Revolt of February 1986.

1986-1987. President Corazon Aquino began her office in 1986 with strong popular support but with a fragile political coalition. In the euphoria over the dramatic success of the People Power Revolt, expectations were raised to high levels. However, the economic reality in 1986 was that the balance of payments was very tight and although the economy started to recover with a 1.9 percent growth rate, the per capita income further declined in 1986 and unemployment continued to rise to 9.4 percent in 1987. The new democratic space saw the outburst of aggressive labor demands and strikes, a response to the suppression of labor strikes during the martial law regime and the effective decline in real wages since the 1970s. The fragile political coalition soon collapsed and a series of coup attempts were staged by disgruntled elements of the coalition as well as by Marcos loyalists. There was the July 1986 "Manila Hotel Incident," the November 1986 "God Save the Queen Plot," the January 1987 "GMA-7 Incident," the April 1987 "Black Saturday Incident," the July 1987 "MIA Takeover Plot," and the August 1987 coup attempt. (See the Davide Commission Final Report, 1990, pp. 156-240 for an account of these attempts at military intervention.) On the positive side, the restoration of democracy led to a decline of popular support for the CPP-NPA which, however, spawned an increase in its urban guerilla activities, in an effort to make up for lost ground.

1988-early 1989. The economy recovered in 1988 and posted a robust growth of 6.7 percent.

Investment surged and the unemployment rate declined. The minimum wage was increased which led to an increase in the inflation rate to about 8.8 percent from a low of about 2.3 percent during 1986-1987. As the economic recovery gathered sufficient momentum, the Aquino government was able to effectively consolidate its political position and political and labor unrest subsided. It was once more a period of improvement and increasing expectations.

Late 1989-1990. By mid-1989, however, the economic recovery lost steam. Owing to huge trade deficits, the balance of payments deteriorated substantially beginning the second half of 1989 at the same time that interest rates started to rise significantly. Furthermore, the inflation rate turned double digit since the second half of 1989. By late 1989, the polls indicated a decline in President Aquino's popularity which the military rebels mistook as popular dissatisfaction with the Aquino government. The rebels launched another coup attempt in December 1989, the most destructive and serious thus far. In the wake of the coup attempt, the President reshuffled the Cabinet. The coup scared away foreign investors and together with the very high interest rates which discouraged local investors, led to a drastic decline in investments. Adding to the growing difficulties, the economy was battered by a series of natural calamities (drought that led to power failures, typhoons and earthquake) and the Gulf crisis. The worsening balance of payments position led to the depreciation of the peso to P28 per U.S. dollar. Inflation further rose to 14 percent in December 1990. The economy grew by only 3.1 percent in 1990 (and only about 1.7 percent in the fourth quarter of 1990). As the economy soured and decremental and progressive deprivation increased in 1990, criticism and dissatisfaction with the Aquino government likewise increased. On the labor front, the declining economic situation and high inflation rate led to demands for increases in the minimum wage and attempts at general strikes called "Welgang Bayan."

In sum, from the foregoing analysis we see that much of the collective political violence that has marked the Philippine socio-political landscape over the last two decades have their roots in decremental and progressive deprivation spawned by a deteriorating economic environment.

Need for Assessment

Obviously, no society is immune from relative deprivation. Thus, the critical issue is not the existence of relative deprivation but its intensity and scope. As catalyst of collective political violence, it is therefore important to assess (at least in rough terms) the proportion of the members of society, or the classes or strata, that are potentially affected by relative deprivation and evaluate (also at least in rough terms) the intensity with which it is experienced.

The need for assessment is especially important in developing countries because the process of development is likely to result in increased expectations among peoples of developing countries. However, unlike traditional societies which have institutions for helping the relatively deprived (e.g., "patron-client" ties) or industrialized societies which offer a wider range of opportunities for satisfaction of welfare needs including developed welfare institutions (e.g., unemployment insurance, welfare checks), developing countries usually do not have adequate institutions to help alleviate the plight of the relatively deprived. The higher levels of relative deprivation arising from increased expectations in developing countries at the same time that there are fewer societal institutions to cushion the impact of such is a major reason for why developing countries tend to experience greater political instability and higher levels of collective political violence than either traditional or industrialized societies (Olson, 1963).

How do we assess the scope and intensity of relative deprivation? First of all, there are three categories of values for which relative deprivation may be assessed: economic values, power or participatory values, and status values (Runci-

man, 1966). Economic values are by far the most important to most people, especially in the developing world. It is also the value class for which relative deprivation is most often experienced. Thus, unless conditions indicate a need for assessment of power values (e.g., there is suppression of freedoms, political participation, or human rights as in authoritarian regimes) or a need for assessment of status values (e.g., certain sectors of society such as religious sects are oppressed), the assessment could focus simply on economic values.

There are two ways of assessing relative deprivation in society. The most direct way is through surveys such as those being conducted by the Social Weather Stations. However, surveys are very expensive. The other way, which is by far cheaper, is through the use of indicators. Although less precise than surveys, carefully chosen indicators can be quite revealing of the patterns, scope and intensity of relative deprivation in various sectors of society. Indeed, Gurr's extensive analysis of relative deprivation in the 114 polities which he studied made use of indicators; the indicators did very well as measures of relative deprivation and predictors of collective political violence.

Among the measures that could be used as indicators of economic relative deprivation are the per capita GNP, per capita income by sector, inflation rate, urban and rural unemployment rates, real wage rate (i.e., wage rate adjusted for inflation), production and productivity measures in both the agricultural and industrial sectors, crop prices, income distribution, poverty levels, land distribution measures, and adverse weather conditions such as droughts or devastations wrought by typhoons. These economic measures are readily available from a number of government and private agencies such as the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB), the National Statistics Office (NSO), the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS), the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), and the Center for Research and Communication (CRC).

Among the measures that could be used as indicators of power and status: relative deprivation are systematic discrimination against particular regional, ethnic, religious or political groups in so far as participation or representation in the political process is concerned (such as election or appointment to government positions); violations of human rights; patterns of land ownership; curtailment of freedoms during periods of national emergencies; accounts of inefficiency, red tape and corruption in the government; accounts of abuses by the police and military; breakdown of law and order; and accounts of judicial inefficiency, corruption and denial of justice. Agencies such as the Commission on Human Rights and the media (newspaper, television and radio accounts) are good sources of these indicators.

Time series on the economic indicators will reveal patterns of increases, stability or decline. Patterns of improvement over time in one or more measures could serve as indicators of increasing expectations while patterns of deterioration can be used as indices of relative deprivation. Special attention should be given to patterns of improvement that are followed by sharp declines as this likely signals a sharp increase in feelings of relative deprivation (for example, a pattern of improvement in the real wage rate followed by a marked drop arising from sharp increases in the inflation rate as what had happened during the 1989-1990 period which led to heightened labor unrest).

The sectors in society that are likely greatly affected by the changes should also be noted. For example, increases in the inflation rate affect adversely both the middle and lower classes, especially the fixed income earners. Decreases in real wage rates and increases in the unemployment rate affect the wage earning labor sector. Agricultural production and productivity measures (as in rice, sugar and corn) and adverse weather conditions affect the rural poor especially tenants and the landless agricultural laborers. Industrial production and productivity measures affect the business sector and the in-

dustrial labor sector. One should also take note of evidences of conditions associated with rising expectations such as pronouncements by government of no oil price increases, the launching of campaigns to improve transport and traffic, the imposition of price control ceilings, etc.

With regard to government pronouncements of programs of action or reform, which is the usual government response to demands from affected sectors for alleviation of the relative deprivation they are experiencing, the following caveat is in order:

"A common response to such demands is to establish new programs designed to increase societal value opportunities ... But such programs typically promise more than can be delivered ... To the extent that ... [the relatively deprived] ... perceive new programs as an increase in their value opportunities, the edge is taken off their discontent. To the extent that they try to use these opportunities and find that they don't pay off, the edge of discontent is sharpened. Moreover, their bitterness is likely to be focused on the agency of their final disappointment, the government which offered what proved to be a false hope, rather than on the sources of their previous frustrations. In short, the announcement of a reform program to deal with popular grievances tends to reduce the immediate potential for violence, but, to the extent that it fails, it tends to increase the long-range potential and to focus it on the would-be reformers" (Gurr, 1970, p. 78.).

In the light of the above, it is not surprising that many "well-intentioned" programs by the government end up increasing rather than decreasing people's discontents. To the extent that the programs are less than effective, they only serve instead to sharpen feelings of frustration and relative deprivation in the affected populations and to focus their anger on the government.

From Discontent to Collective Political Violence

In Gurr's theory, given high levels of discontent, the potential for collective violence is transformed into the potential for collective political violence to the extent that the relatively deprived blame the political system for their situation and to the extent that they hold beliefs and attitudes

about the propriety and utility of political violence.

Gurr asserts that much of the relative deprivation and concomitant discontent experienced by people in today's modern world is "not political but politicized" (1970, p. 179). Discontents tend to be focused on the political system for two reasons. First is that the origins of many deprivations experienced such as inflation, unemployment and poverty are ambiguous. Second is that in the modern world, the scope of responsibility of government has been ever-increasing. Thus, difficulties experienced by the population for which the sources are not clear-cut become readily blamed on the agency that is supposed to be responsible for the general welfare—the government.

We see this phenomenon very strikingly in the Philippine context. cursory observation of commentaries in media (radio, television, and print) on economic and social problems by both political commentators and ordinary citizens tend to be accompanied by the familiar line "What is the government doing about this?" The expectation is that it is the government's responsibility to solve every social and economic problem of the country. This expectation likely has its origins in the "patron-client" ties that characterized Philippine feudal society, with the government taking on the role of the landlord as protector and provider. The focus of expectations on the government has been in no small measure reinforced by the highly centralized nature of Philippine government. A highly centralized government tends to focus discontent and collective political violence to it. For example, Payne (1965, as cited in Gurr, 1970, p. 181) writes that as a result of the highly centralized character of Peruvian government "the President is considered ... omniresponsible ... when anything goes wrong, the executive is considered to have committed a sin of commission or omission." Thus, relatively deprived groups in Peru tend to focus collective political violence on the chief executive. This has a very familiar ring to the Philippine situation.

According to Gurr, the two cognitive variables that influence the transformation of discontent into collective political violence are the degree to which people believe that violence is normatively justified and the extent to which they believe in its utility to bring about redress of grievances. Collective political violence is more likely when the relatively deprived are able to rationalize the use of political violence as a proper and useful mode of action to increase value capabilities. Indeed, the results of the Davide Commission fact-finding (Davide Commission, 1990) clearly show the normative and utilitarian justifications given by those who participated in the December 1989 coup attempt. The Commission's Final Report states (p. 533-535):

"Invariably, those who openly admitted participating in the coup or are implicated in it offered the following reasons on why the coup occurred, which is another way of expressing why they joined the coup:

1. Failure of the government to deliver basic services especially in the rural areas;
2. Graft and corruption;
3. Too much politics and grandstanding of politicians, and unfair criticism, even humiliation, at the hands of politicians;
4. Bureaucratic inefficiency which exacerbates the alienation and poverty of the people;
5. Poor and non-responsive military leadership;
6. Lack of genuine reconciliation;
7. Uneven treatment of human rights violations committed by the military and the CPP-NPA;
8. Absence of good government;
9. Softness on the CPP-NPA and left-leaning elements; and
10. Failure of the civilian leadership to effectively address economic problems.

... Despite the attempts of the coup plotters and their sympathizers (witting or unwitting) to project themselves as real reformers, the rebels had their own hidden agenda even as they rode on valid grievances.

Many of the grievances cited by the rebels as their reasons for joining were, unfortunately, objective realities and, hence, real for those who were successfully recruited by reason of their sincere desire, however misguided, to help effect reforms in the military establishment and the government. That the core group of rebels managed to mask

their own agenda by invoking these grievances validates the reality of many of the shortcomings in the military and the government, and the need to address them decisively if future coup attempts are to be deterred."

Gurr points out that "a society's historical experience with political violence affects its prospects for future violence" (1970, p. 171). That is, collective political violence breeds further collective political violence because it leads to the development in people of normative and utilitarian justifications for such. The results of numerous research in the psychological literature on the modeling of aggression are consistent with this proposition. Studies consistently show that observing aggressive models, especially those who are reinforced or rewarded for their behavior, results in greater aggression among the observers (see e.g., Walters, 1966; Frank, 1968). Indeed, the Davide Commission Final Report (1990) noted the effect of the leniency with which the July 1986 Manila Hotel incident was handled in which the rebel soldier participants were simply made to do 30 push-ups and to take the oath of loyalty to the Freedom Constitution (p. 545):

"Such leniency set the tone for government handling of subsequent coup attempts ... Leniency, however, tended to encourage, rather than deter, participation in subsequent coup attempts. As the military is socialized into its own system of reward and punishment to instill discipline, leniency only encourages undisciplined behavior among officers."

The implication to the Philippine situation is clear: the more collective political violence happens, the more it will happen in the future, especially if the participants are perceived as having "gained" from their actions.

Forms of Collective Political Violence

Given that the potential for collective political violence exists in a polity, what form does it take? Gurr outlines three general classes of collective political violence. One is turmoil, which is a loosely structured and relatively spontaneous collective political violence that tends to have mass participation. Examples of turmoil are

demonstrations, political strikes, riots and political clashes. In contrast, conspiracies are highly organized and have limited participation. Examples are coups d'etat, political assassinations, and small-scale terrorism. Internal wars are large-scale, highly organized collective political violence that are almost always accompanied by extensive violence. Examples are guerilla wars, civil wars, and large-scale revolt.

Gurr postulates that the following conditions maximize the likelihood of turmoil: if the masses but not the elite experience intense discontent over a few conditions of life (e.g., wages), if the discontented are not well organized, if the regime in power has high coercive capabilities (e.g., police or military power) relative to the discontented, and if the discontented are concentrated in areas that are under the control of the regime. Under these circumstances, demonstrations, strikes and/or riots are more likely. The above proposition tends to hold true in the Philippine context in recent times with respect to demands for increases in wages and for the rollback of oil prices, which have spawned attempts at large-scale demonstrations and strikes. The Philippine experience during the Marcos regime suggests, however, that contrary to the above proposition, the potential for turmoil appears higher if both the elite and the masses experience intense discontent over many conditions of life. Thus, the huge anti-Marcos demonstrations in which people from all walks of life participated. The second part of Gurr's postulate appears to hold though. That is, the likelihood of turmoil is high if the discontented are poorly organized and concentrated in areas under regime control and the regime in power has high coercive capacities relative to them.

With respect to the conditions that maximize the likelihood of internal war, Gurr postulates that mass revolutionary and secessionist movements are likely to occur if both the elite and the masses experience intense and widespread discontent resulting from relative or absolute deterioration of many conditions of life, if the discontented and the regime in power have about

equal coercive and institutional capabilities, if the discontented are in isolated areas outside the scope of effective control by the regime in power, and if the discontented are able to muster external military and material support. These postulated conditions appear to characterize the guerrilla war being waged by the CPP-NPA and the Muslim secessionist war in Mindanao. In both cases, the discontent is intense and widespread. The communist insurgents and the Muslim rebels both have large-scale military and organizational capacities and have substantial mass followers. They are concentrated in isolated areas where the government does not have effective control and they have been able to obtain external financial assistance, the secessionists from Muslim countries like Libya, the communists from left-wing organizations in Europe.

On the conditions that maximize the likelihood of conspiracy, Gurr theorizes that the potential for conspiracy is greatest if groups with elite characteristics are intensely discontented about their lack of political power and influence but popular discontent is mild. A conspiracy such as a coup d'état is best carried out if the conspirators are able to develop tight-knit organizations and if they are able to convert regime forces to their side or at least ensure the neutrality of the regime forces. Gurr further posits that if the regime forces remain loyal to the regime in power, i.e., the coup d'état is not successful, the conspirators may resort to terrorism or small-scale guerrilla warfare in order to erode the strength of the regime and increase popular discontent over the long run.

We see Gurr's propositions in the recent experiences of the Philippines with coups d'état. At the time they launched the coups, the "elite" conspirators (Honasan and the RAM boys) were intensely discontented with their lack of political power and influence but popular discontent was mild, as the Davide Commission Final Report (1990) notes:

"Thus, the December 1989 attempt, as well as the other six attempts against the Aquino administration, happened as a result of a propitious con-

juncture of motive, circumstance, and perceived opportunity.

1. There was a group of officers which enjoyed high credibility within the ranks of the military because of their service records and their cultivated reputation as reformists even during the Marcos regime, and the perception within the military that they caused the Aquino government to improve the lot of the soldier.
2. This group of officers, highly politicized by the transformation, in general, of the military over the years ... and the group's special status during the Marcos regime, decided to grab power for themselves, representing that they could do better than civilians in governing the country ..." (p. 537).

"The failed coup attempt in December 1989, and even previous ones, was greatly influenced by the misperception among politicized officers that President Aquino owed her position to the original Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM) of which ex-Lt. Col. Gregorio Honasan's faction (RAM-HF) is a splinter ..." (p. 542).

"Because they [the RAM conspirators] mistakenly thought that their failed coup attempt against Marcos succeeded in the wake of people power, they expected an equal sharing of power with President Aquino ..." (p. 543).

"... the shortcomings of the Aquino government cannot be the root cause of the coup. As pointed out in Chapter III, the political achievements and economic performance of the Aquino government, at least up to the December 1989 attempt, compare favorably with past regimes in the country and those of other countries in the region. However, the Aquino government could be faulted for failing to live up to the promise of its glorious beginnings" (pp. 536-537).

The results of the Davide Commission fact-finding also reveal an important point that is not considered by Gurr's theory. That is, although people may be dissatisfied with the regime in power, they will not necessarily support a coup d'état and all the more so if what the conspirators offer is less palatable (Davide Commission, 1990, p. 538):

"... why did the December attempt fail and turn out to be unpopular?

Because the people were not disposed to it, as they were for the EDSA Revolt. The December 1989 coup attempt was perceived as an attack on democracy, the EDSA Revolt as a return to it. Surveys showed that the unpopularity of the De-

ember 1989 attempt is not as much a reflection of high satisfaction at the performance of government as a natural aversion against violent and illegitimate means to effect change. The Filipino is essentially conservative and patient, and considers electoral change as a valid democratic exercise despite its imperfections. Furthermore, the motives of the coup participants were suspect. After all, they themselves acknowledged the electoral victory of President Aquino in 1986. The tactical alliance between the RAM-HF and the Loyalists that became public knowledge for the first time during the coup, although traceable to earlier signs of collaboration, contributed to the distrust. Finally, the economic indicators by December 1989 were positive compared to the severe recession prior to February 1986."

Consistent with Gurr's theory, the coup failed because although the conspirators were able to develop a tight-knit organization, they were not able to get the loyalty of the regime forces on their side or at the least ensure the latter's neutrality. Thus, the Davide Commission Final Report states:

"... That the December 1989 attempt turned out to be unpopular was not the reason for its failure. Its failure was a combination of genuine heroism on the part of some government forces, tactical mistakes by the coup plotters and the hesitancy of key rebel figures (i.e., Blando), timely intervention of military-civilian forces particularly at gateway roads to Metro Manila, and the failure of the rebels to elicit a bandwagon effect from major military units in the country" (p. 538).

And, in final support of Gurr's propositions is the fact that after the failed December 1989 coup, the conspirators have indeed resorted to terroristic attacks (such as bombings) with the tactical objective of eroding the government's strength and increasing popular discontent in the long run. On this matter, the Davide Commission Final Report had this to say:

"The Commission agrees with the military that the likelihood of a successful coup is remote. But, at this difficult economic period with more problems lurking around the corner, even the bombings that happen with disturbing regularity could push the country closer to a crisis, and the logical question is—do the rebels have the capability to make an attempt of sufficient magnitude and international impact, however ultimately un-

successful, that would bring the country to crisis?" (p. 570).

The above quotation from the Davide Commission Final Report brings us full circle to the questions raised at the beginning of this paper: Is collective political violence here to stay? Can social science knowledge be used to map out possible ways for minimizing the incidence and magnitude of collective political violence in the future?

Minimizing Collective Political Violence

No political community has ever been free of collective political violence. Some political communities, however, have more of it than others. While collective political violence can have beneficial effects, as the People Power Revolt attests to, nevertheless, over the long haul, collective political violence tends to be destructive of people and societies. How can the incidence and magnitude of collective political violence be minimized in the future? The foregoing analysis suggests the following:

1. In the pursuit of economic development, the government must have equity as a primary objective. In other words it must, as best it could, try to ensure that the benefits of progress are about evenly distributed (Gurr, 1970). Of course, this is a very difficult objective to achieve because limited resources often preclude all sectors from similarly benefiting from economic development. Be that as it may, nonetheless, at the very least the government must try to see to it that no group is markedly left behind in reaping the benefits of economic development as groups that are left behind will likely feel relative deprivation and will be likely candidates for collective political violence.
2. Gurr (1970) points out that where limited resources do not make significant progress for all groups possible, the discontent of the less advantaged groups can be reduced by increasing the number

and scope of their value opportunities. Two very important ways by which the value opportunities of the less advantaged groups in the Philippines can be increased, and which are within the capabilities of the government to pursue and achieve, are the speeding up of the implementation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL) and the enactment of economic policy measures that will boost employment generation. Much has been written about the slow pace with which CARL is being implemented and how the land reform program can be improved. Hence, such will not be discussed further here. The reader is referred instead to the literature on the area. With respect to employment generation, the government has many economic policy tools at its disposal (e.g., taxes, incentives, the exchange rate) which it can use to pursue more vigorously the shift of industrial development in the country from capital-intensive industries to labor-intensive ones. While this is an avowed objective of the government, apparently, it has yet to be successful in achieving it. Economists have written a great deal about how to redirect the industrial development of the country—there is no mystery to it. What is only needed is the political will.

3. The government must be attuned to situations that give rise to decremental and progressive relative deprivation especially among large segments of the population. In this regard, economic policy must place emphasis on avoiding high inflation because it results in high levels of decremental and progressive relative deprivation among the poor and middle class sectors of society. Indeed, results of public opinion surveys conducted by the Social Weather Stations from 1985 to 1990 consistently show that inflation is a major factor in people's perceptions

about whether or not they are poor. Across the years in the surveys conducted, as inflation rose, poverty self-ratings correspondingly increased. Declines in inflation rate were accompanied by declines in poverty self-ratings (Social Weather Stations, July 1990). Gurr points out that "Men are likely to be intensely angered when they lose what they have than when they lose hope of attaining what they do not yet have" (1970, p. 50). For the middle class and especially for the poor, high inflation is a painful daily encounter with losing what one previously had.

4. As pointed out earlier in the paper, the government should be careful in making pronouncements about programs of action or reform. It should be careful not to promise more than it can deliver as such could only increase frustration and sharpen discontent in the long run as well as further focus people's anger on the government if the programs fail to live up to people's heightened expectations. It is of course essential that government undertake action and reform programs to alleviate the plight of the relatively deprived sectors of society. The best strategy in making pronouncements, however, is to be frank about what can be realistically achieved and to exert every effort to ensure that the expressed objectives are reached.
5. Among the long-term recommendations of the Davide Commission for preventing coups is decentralization (Final Report, 1990). The Commission points out that decentralization of the national government is necessary for the efficient delivery of government services and for bringing the government closer to the people especially in poor rural communities. There is another reason for why decentralization is essential. Based on relative deprivation theory, decentral-

ization will reduce the incidence of collective political violence because it will de-politicize a good deal of the discontents experienced by relatively deprived groups. Instead of blaming the national government for deprivations experienced, decentralization will force people, both local officials and the citizenry, to try to solve the economic and social problems within their communities because they will now be vested with the power and wherewithal to do so.

6. In conjunction with decentralization, there is a need for a strong values formation program in the elementary and high school emphasizing, among others, the development of self-reliance. To the extent that the citizenry are oriented towards an internal locus of control or a strong sense of initiative and personal responsibility for one's outcomes, rather than an external locus of control which places responsibility and blame on external agents and events, they will be less prone to collective political violence as a response to relative deprivation and instead focus the energies of their discontent towards activities geared at self-improvement or constructive improvement of society (Crosby, 1976).
7. The military establishment has been the source of the most recent serious threats against democracy in the Philippines. Two major factors account for why the coup leaders have been able to successfully recruit participants from the military establishment. First is that relative deprivation is both intense and widespread in the military arising mainly from dissatisfaction with promotions, pay and benefits, with the poor state of military facilities and equipment, and with the way the military perceives the civilian government has been treating them. The second factor is that in the past, coup participants have been posi-

tively reinforced for their behavior by getting off lightly. Thus, in order to prevent the further recruitment for coups of military personnel, immediate and strong measures must be taken to address these two factors. The Davide Commission has outlined a series of recommendations that, among others, addresses these two factors. As a deterrent to the recurrence of coups, the Commission recommends the administration of a justice and rehabilitation program to those who participated in past coups that includes the speedy administration of justice and the punishment of those found guilty as principals to the full extent of the law. The Commission also recommends a program of rehabilitation for the military establishment that is geared to reduce if not eliminate the high levels of relative deprivation in the military. Among the principal features of the program are the setting up of a systematic selection process for the Chief of Staff that will generate the least controversy about the choice, the immediate implementation of a comprehensive program that will provide timely rescue and medical assistance to troops wounded in combat, and the institutionalization of necessary improvements in promotion and assignments, purchasing and auditing, educational benefits abroad, and compulsory attendance at military command schools (Davide Commission, 1990, pp. 584-608). Full implementation of the Davide Commission recommendations will go a long way towards reducing the threat of future coups in the country.

8. The media should be keenly aware that press freedom carries with it great responsibility for the delivery of fair, accurate, relevant and useful information to the public. Sensationalism must be avoided because it is a very potent goad

for heightening discontents and for providing normative and utilitarian justifications in the public mind for collective political violence when it portrays collective political violence in terms that are normatively neutral or positive rather than negative (Gurr, 1970). Worse is if media wittingly or unwittingly serves as a propaganda vehicle for those engaging in collective political violence. We have seen both happen in the Philippines. Because there is no place for media censorship by government in a democracy, the people in media themselves must regulate and discipline their own ranks. Thus, a major recommendation of the Davide Commission is that "... media should proceed with their initiatives in formalizing their own ethical standards, strictly enforce them, and inform the public of such efforts. It is also incumbent on media to define the boundaries of their profession not only during crisis but also in conflict of interest situations. Media should accept the responsibility to discipline erring members, provide training and guidance to its apprentices, and to establish linkages with responsible counterparts abroad to broaden their expertise and perspective" (Davide Commission, 1990, p. 606).

9. Expression of discontent must not be suppressed. Coercive tactics and suppression, which may work in the short run, are counterproductive in the long run as they only serve to increase hostility among the relatively deprived.

Rather, the goal must be to channel the discontent towards positive ways for airing grievances, for the appropriate persons or entities to address such grievances, and for working positively towards the solution of economic, political and social problems.

10. And finally, above all, the best guarantee against collective political violence is, in the words of the Davide Commission Final Report: "... the creation of a just, humane, and progressive society, the elements of which are set out in the Constitution." (p. 583).

Conclusion

Relative deprivation theory is a useful framework for understanding the collective political violence we have been experiencing in the Philippines in recent years. While it may not account for all of the nuances of this complex phenomenon, nevertheless, it appears to do a reasonably good job of capturing the "essentials" and of serving as a heuristic model for understanding future collective political violence. Collective political violence is a fact of organized political life. What is important is to prevent it from becoming endemic in the culture. Thus, the lessons that can be gleaned from a theoretical analysis of its causes and processes and of ways for minimizing its incidence and magnitude must not be lost, especially to those who have been vested by the public with the power of governance, if we are to reduce to the minimum the devastating physical, economic and psychological consequences of recurrent collective political violence.

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