



The political economy of the news media in the Philippines and the framing of news stories on the GPH-CNN peace process

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Appendix A: Review of related literature

The main purpose of journalism is to provide the public information they need to be free and self-governing. In a developing story, journalism plays an even more crucial role. Aside from merely informing, it engages, inspires, and activates people to play their roles as free and self-governing citizens (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007). This role is even more critical in a conflict situation.

However, news about conflict is often presented in a 'zero-sum game' framing in which it is reduced to two opposing sides (Lynch and Galtung, 2010: 1). In this type of reporting, the public is presented with claims from two dominant parties explaining their respective positions on the conflict in an 'us vs. them' slant (Lynch and Galtung, 2010: 13). News organisations failed to recognise that there are more than two sides to conflict. It is a complex situation involving different stakeholders whose interest and involvement are hidden (Lynch and Galtung, 2010).

Spencer's (2005) study on the media and peace acknowledges the potential of the news industry to constructively contribute to the development of peace negotiations. Unfortunately, on many occasions, the media's preoccupation with drama and antagonism fail to 'allow space for alternative discourses to emerge which could further contest and open up issues and positions in relation to peace communication' (Spencer, 2005: 114).

While there is vast literature analysing how media coverage contributed to the collapse of some peace processes around the world, scholars also argue that news sometimes help facilitate two parties reach a concurrence. Philips Davidson (1974) in his study on the role of news media and international negotiation argued that although

sometimes the media can make it more difficult for governments to reach an agreement to a conflict, it could still bring favourable influence on negotiations. Davidson observed that the daily news habits of diplomats allow them to have access to similar set of information and opinions. While two parties may not agree to what media reported, it gives them common knowledge of the circumstances they are trying to resolve (Davidson, 1974).

The 'Megaphone Diplomacy' employed by British and Irish governments in facilitating indirect dialogue with Sinn Fein and Irish Republican Army (IRA) during the Northern Ireland Peace Process is one example on how news media can provide common knowledge to parties to conflict. During the course of the peace negotiation, a British newspaper revealed that the British government had been secretly meeting with the Sinn Fein despite the former's pronouncement that it will only talk to Sinn Fein if the IRA will declare ceasefire (Sparre, 2001). This media report costs the confidence of other stakeholders of conflict and raised doubts on the British government's sincerity to the peace process.

Well aware that Sinn Fein is crucial to the Northern Ireland Peace Process, the British and Irish governments continued to engage them in the negotiation by using a different platform. The two governments used the news media to convey its messages to Sinn Fein. The later also used the media to relay its positions on issues related to the peace process. Sparre (2001) observed that one of the most important messages that had been positively carried out by the media is that Sinn Fein doesn't have to accept the Downing Street Declaration, the agreement that laid the framework on how British and Irish governments will

address the problem in Northern Ireland. The British and Irish governments only wanted the IRA to declare ceasefire before they will admit Sinn Fein to the political process.

Media coverage proved to have contributed to the peace process especially during its clarification period. IRA declared ceasefire in August 1994. However, Sparre argued that the relative success of megaphone diplomacy is also dependent on the cultural understanding of how the media work as well as the credibility and ability of the news media to convey messages in such a way that it is not reduced to drama, conflict, immediacy, and simplicity (Sparre, 2001).

While the news media positively carried out crucial information during the clarification period of the Northern Ireland Peace process, the Oslo Accord between Israel and Palestine suffered a different fate. Palestinian and Israeli leaders, as Gadi Wolfsfeld (2001: 113) commented, are 'very aware that they are playing to an international audience and, as always, there is a major struggle over who should be cast as aggressor and who as victim.' The news media themselves found it more riveting when both sides started to blame each other or every time the peace talks collapse (Wolfsfeld, 2001 in Spencer, 2005). This type of news framing failed to highlight that the Oslo Accord involved interim steps in its implementation. The peace talks collapsed and never reached the Final Status Agreement (Lynch and Galtung, 2010).

The same type of reporting was employed by most Manila-based news organisations when the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) collapsed in 2008. Instead of providing relevant information that could have helped the public understand the agreement, the media added to the confusion (Torres, 2008).

The sincerity of the then Arroyo government on the MOA-AD was also tainted because of the allegations that surfaced in the news that her camp is merely using the agreement to extend her term to push a shift to federalism through constitutional amendments. News media failed to discuss in their reports that the MOA-AD is just a preliminary agreement; a comprehensive agreement will be drafted only after the memorandum is signed (Pinlac and Dura, 2008).

When the Supreme Court of the Philippines declared the MOA-AD unconstitutional the so-called lost command of

the MILF launched violent attacks in several communities in Central Mindanao. This resulted in heightened hostilities between the MILF and the government military. Jose Torres Jr., (2008) former chair of the country's National Union of Journalists (NUJP) observed that media reportage reduced the Mindanao conflict to a religious war. Some media organisations tended to label the two opposing parties as Muslims and Christians.

News failed to provide context of the Bangsamoro struggle, deeply rooted in social injustices, marginalisation, and prejudices against Muslims in Mindanao that can be traced back to as early as the Spanish occupation in the Philippines (Pinlac and Dura, 2008). This failure in reportage was more evident among Manila-based journalists (Linggao, 2011).

Such practices of framing conflict and peace negotiations around the world can be attributed to conventional definition of news in many newsrooms – news is conflict. Many scholarly works that examined the dynamics and realities of news production revealed that factors influencing which story will come out in the news the next day ranged from personal judgment of reporters and editors, organisational policies, and very recently the systemic and economic factors (Lynch, 2013).

David Manning White (1950: 383) first introduced the concept of 'gate keepers' in his study that examined the decisions of the wire editor-in-charge in selecting which stories will land on the front page of his newspaper the next morning from an avalanche of wire copy. In this research, White (1950: 383) illustrated that a news story will have to pass through different levels of 'gates' and 'gate keepers.' A US Senate hearing on a proposed bill for federal aid in education, he cited, would have to pass through the reporter's judgment whether a story is 'important' or not. Then it is transmitted from one gatekeeper after another.

White concluded that the gate keeper's reasoning for rejecting news stories are highly subjective. He also observed that the gate keeper based his decisions on his own 'set of experiences, and expectations the communication of news really is' (White, 1950: 390).

White's findings was later on challenged by a developing scholarly consensus that downgraded the influence of individual journalist as gate keeper on the content of news. Among them are peace scholar Johan Galtung, and Mari Holmboe Ruge. In their essay called *The Structure of Foreign News*, Galtung and Ruge (1956) attributed the

representation of conflict in the news to structural factors arising out of the organisation and interests of the news industry.

Their study that examined the presentation of Norwegian newspaper of the Congo, Cuba, and Cyprus crisis identified 'tuning signals' involving 12 factors such as 'threshold, frequency, negativity, unexpectedness, unambiguity', and so forth that determine the newsworthiness of an event. Galtung and Ruge argued that these factors explain why media prefer bad news than good news.

Conventions in most newsrooms, they added, prefer stories that are unambiguous, and have identifiable beginning and an end. The news media undermine stories that will require time to monitor the unfolding of events. They are more interested with the present outcome rather than understanding the long and complex process.

More recent studies argued that organisational factors are believed to have a significant impact on the production of news (Gans, 2003 in Lynch, 2013). Several scholarly researches covering a number newsroom from different countries found procedural and professional levels of influence a strong predictor of journalists' own horizons and role perceptions (Shoemaker et al, 2001 and Weaver and Wilhoit, 1986 in Lynch 2013).

Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's (2002) Propaganda Model have directed the attention of media scholars towards the elements of political economy as prime determinant influencing the processes of news production. Herman and Chomsky (2002: i) argued that 'among their other functions, the media serve, and propagandize on behalf of, the powerful societal interests that control and finance them.'

The propaganda model identified five 'filters' that influence the framing of news. Herman and Chomsky also believe that these elements interact with and reinforce one another:

- (1) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms;
- (2) advertising as the primary income source of the mass media;
- (3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power;
- (4) "flak" as a means of disciplining the media; and
- (5) "anticommunism" as a national religion and control mechanism. (2002: 2)

These filters sit well with Carlos Conde's (2002: 68) argument as to why the so-called 'ethnic conflicts' in southern Philippines 'don't stand a chance of being reported thoroughly, sensitively and fairly by the mainstream media.' Conde observed that these conflicts between ethnic groups in Mindanao almost always go with a pattern:

...the company or the government targets an area for "development", sends in the military to quell any resistance by the natives, divides the ethnic group into factions for easier manipulation, the company or the government has its way, the ethnic group continues to resist, the violence continues, with the military's increasing ferocity matched only by the tribe's determination to fight. (2002: 68)

In this scenario, the military is the most visible. So when conflict escalates to violence it is convenient for defence beat journalists stationed in a military camp to interview and quote the military officer in their stories. Without a doubt, the military or government side is thoroughly represented but leaves the other side or even the victims unheard. Conde (2002) observed that journalists are expected to comply with their respective news organisation's daily story quota that prevent them from doing a more in-depth report of the so-called ethnic conflict. News organisations are also not willing to devote longer time or additional resources to do a thorough story.

The same factor was revealed in an undergraduate study that looked at the profile of Manila-based journalists who covered the MOA-AD (Bahillo and Ducut, 2011). Aside from their personal biases and prejudices against the MILF, the journalists interviewed for this research associated their inability to provide in-depth reports to their respective organisation's daily story quota.

The story quota may also be the reason why most stories on conflict only cite single source. A content analysis study by the *Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR)* titled 'Covering Conflict in Mindanao: Terror and the Press' revealed that most of *Philippine Daily Inquirer's* reports on conflict only quote military sources (Rara, 2006).

The circumstances cited above sit well with the argument on the third filter of the propaganda model – 'the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power' (Herman and Chomsky, 2002: 2). Herman and Chomsky (2002: 18)

further explained that ‘mass media are drawn into a symbiotic relationship with powerful sources of information by economic necessity and reciprocity of interest.’

While we see economic aspect as one of the main factors in these circumstances it is also observed that stories about conflict still dominate the news media. Conde (2002) observed that from the point of view of Manila-based newsrooms, Mindanao is nothing but a war zone and the source of the country’s bad news. War stories, he added, sell newspapers and up the ratings of television and radio stations. This distorted image of Mindanao by Manila-based editors led to the en masse resignation of the *Inquirer Mindanao Bureau* team including its editor-in-chief Carolyn Arguillas. Organisational and ideological levels are believed to be an influential factor of this disturbing image of Mindanao. Political and business elites from Manila view Mindanao as backward and recalcitrant. National news media outfits are ultimately controlled from Manila. Arguillas together with her former team from *Inquirer Mindanao* put-up the *MindaNews* in response to the sensational coverage of the national news media on the Mindanao conflict (Lynch, 2013).

The case is the same with CPP-NPA-NDF (CNN). A content analysis study by Jake Soriano (2015) on Philippine media’s reporting of peace revealed that media reports on CNN tended to focus only on clashes, ambushes, and explosions. Soriano (2015: 86) observed that these reports ‘were presented as if occurring outside the broader timeline of the still-ongoing communist insurgency, and the on-again, off-again peace negotiations of the NDF and the GPH.’ The study also revealed that these stories were never contextualised and treated as if it were no different from street crimes. Just like the circumstances cited earlier, the information cited in these stories were obtained from the military.

The same findings were observed in another content analysis study on the reporting of *Abante Tonight* on issues concerning leftist movement including the CNN. The research showed that there is a bias in terms of attribution (Dela Cruz, 2008). Majority of the information cited in the stories were accounts from government officials. *Abante Tonight* almost never figured the CNN as news source. The study also revealed that the tabloid never treated the CNN in its reports positively. The data analysed in this study (Dela Cruz, 2008: 61) showed that CNN was ‘merely presented as an organization intent on inflicting terror and harm among people, and destabilizing the government.’

Even in provincial media, reports on peace process between the Philippine government and CNN rely mostly on press releases from the government and military. An undergraduate study that looked at the reporting of *SunStar Davao* on the peace process between the two parties in Mindanao revealed that the government is given more mileage than the CNN (Senga, 2000). However, this research also observed that *SunStar Davao* treated stories on peace process more carefully than the Manila-based news media. The study argued that local journalists are more cautious when reporting peace process because the prospect of peace in Mindanao is significant to them.

The media treatment of CNN as illustrated in the studies cited above seemed to contrast from the observation of *International Crisis Group (ICG)*. The leftist movement being heavily concentrated in the countryside, the ICG 2011 report cited, CPP-NPA CARAGA Commander Jorge “Ka Oris” Madlos is adept at using media to publicise the organisation’s activities. Ka Oris, according to the report, made use of local radio stations in announcing its operations and even granted them extended interviews (International Crisis Group, 2011).

The ICG’s report supports an earlier study on conflict, terrorism and media in Asia. Benjamin Cole (2006) observed that the CPP-NPA has maintained professional relations and direct access to the media that enables them to use their revolutionary propaganda to influence media outputs. Cole posited that CPP-NPA had gained advantage over the government on the war propaganda by exploiting media coverage on the root causes of conflict such as poverty, landlessness, government neglect, and inequity. Radio is one of the most important forms of media that CPP-NPA is using in order to reach its constituency largely based in impoverished and remote rural areas. The group would use Manila broadsheets and TV if they wanted to reach a wider urban audience, which is not their natural constituency.

However, it was also observed that although media provide ample space to the Philippine government and CPP-NPA, the reporting of conflict and peace process remain in a ‘claim and counter-claim’ slant (Cole, 2006: 67). News media is still uncritical of the peace process, and provides very little analysis and context to help readers understand the situation. However, Cole (2006) argued that it is not clear whether this type of reporting actually matter to the CPP-NPA, because their access to the media enables them to successfully get their messages across to the public. He also suggested that while

the media is more analytical and critical of the government it would be helpful they are equally more analytical and critical of the CPP-NPA.

This type of reporting suggested by Cole requires journalism equipped with conflict analysis tools – peace journalism. The studies cited above mentioned the lack context and background as well as critical and analytical reports of the on-going conflict and peace process between CPP-NPA and Philippine government. Peace journalism is a 'remedial strategy' that creatively seeks and brings out to the public sphere habitually unheard but significant views and perspective (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005: 224).

The conventional reporting of conflict according to peace scholar Johan Galtung is violence-oriented, elite-oriented, propaganda-oriented, and victory-oriented. This type of framing news is what Galtung called as War Journalism. Peace journalism on the other hand is conflict (and peace)-oriented, people oriented, truth-oriented, and solution-oriented (Galtung, 1998 in Lynch and McGoldrick, 2012).

A significant update to Galtung's dyadic schema of peace journalism and war journalism models by Dov Shinar (2007) argues that that this type of reporting explores background and context of conflict formation; provides space for creative ideas, from any source, for conflict resolution, development, peacemaking and peacekeeping; and exposes lies, cover-up attempts and culprits on all sides, and revealing excesses committed by, and suffering inflicted on, peoples of all parties. For former journalists, and academics Lynch and McGoldrick (2005: 5), peace journalism is 'when editors and reporters make choices – of what stories report and about how to report them – that create opportunities for society at large to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict.'

Peace journalism first emerged in 1970s 'as a self-conscious working concept for journalists covering wars and conflicts' (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2000 in Lee and Maslog, 2005: 311). However, Lee and Maslog (2005) observed that it did not gain wide acceptance among journalists nor attracted adequate attention of researchers. Most published peace journalism materials are how-to-manuals based on anecdotes.

Thus, Lee and Maslog (2005: 313) argued that 'peace journalism made a leap from theory to practice without the benefit of research.' Their study, filled that gap by operationalising war journalism and peace journalism in a content analysis, focused on four Asian conflicts: the

Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan, the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) rebellion in Sri Lanka, the Aceh and Maluku civil wars in Indonesia, and the Mindanao separatist movement in the Philippines.

News articles from the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* and *Philippine Star* were analysed to find the extent to which the conflict in southern Philippines was framed as peace journalism or war journalism. The study concluded that although there is a promising signs of peace journalism in the coverage of *Philippine Daily Inquirer* and *Philippine Star* the indicators of peace journalism framing are 'highly dependent on criteria of a less interventionist nature, for example, an avoidance of good-bad labels, a nonpartisan approach, a multiparty orientation, and an avoidance of demonizing language' (Lee and Maslog, 2005: 324).

The researchers argued that these four indicators are, 'mere extensions of the objectivity credo: reporting facts as they are' (Lee and Maslog, 2005: 324). Journalists still simplify storytelling by providing only a set of villains and set of victims in their stories of conflict, and undermine other stakeholders. It does not demonstrate proactive role of journalists seeking and presenting creative solutions and paving a way for peace and conflict resolution.

Another study by Maslog and Lee (2006) operationalise Galtung's peace and war journalism by looking at the news coverage of the Iraq war by newspapers from India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and the Philippines and by one news agency from Pakistan. The research found out that the news media do not show uniformity in their representations of the Iraq war. The results of the content analysis revealed that non-Muslim countries (India and Sri Lanka), except the Philippines, had a stronger war journalism framing than the Muslim countries (Pakistan and Indonesia). While these countries are not directly involved in the war, this study found that religion and sourcing are two important factors shaping the framing of Asian news coverage on the Iraq war.

Also a noteworthy observation in this study is the significant differences in war and peace journalism framing between locally produced stories, and foreign wire stories. Foreign wire copy tends to highlight war/conflict/violence compared to a locally produced story. Jake Lynch argued that such reflects the perspective of western countries involved in the war. However, one could argue that published foreign wire stories may reflect to some extent a newspaper's framing of the Iraq war as some gatekeeping is involved in selecting which foreign wire

stories are published and which are not (Lee and Maslog, 2006).

The results revealed on the content analysis of wire copies and locally produced stories can be compared to the findings of a postgraduate study that looked at the reporting of *Inquirer.net* and *MindaNews.com* of the Bangsamoro peace process. Although perspectives of western countries are not reflected in this study, it revealed that peace process stories produced by Mindanao-based journalists have more peace journalism framing indicators than those news reports filed by Manila-based journalists.

It was observed that *MindaNews.com* stories did not only provide context but also thoroughly examined every agreement arrived by both parties. It also looked at other alternative discourses whenever there is impasse in the negotiating table. Reports filed by Manila-based reporters of *Inquirer.net* showed war journalism indicators as it only quoted elite peacemakers who are mostly from the government side. Unlike *MindaNews.com* whose reports would examine and compare previous agreements to the present, *Inquirer.net* only narrates what has been said during press briefings. However, stories produced by Mindanao-based *Inquirer.net* reporters showed more peace journalism framing indicators. News stories related to the peace process are presented with background and process-outcome orientation. Another factor that increases the number of peace journalism framing indicators in *Inquirer.net*'s reports is when editors based in Manila would merge reports of Manila-based and Mindanao reporters (Abunales, 2014).

Although peace journalism suggests better representation of conflict in the news media it still received criticisms from practitioners and researchers. Peace journalism, as argued by one of its critics, views its audience as 'passive masse that needs to be enlightened by virtue of right and proper reporting' and further suggested that peace journalism proponents were too optimistic of being able to change audience responses by changing the way conflicts are reported (Hanitzsch 2007: 6). Audience frames themselves were, Hanitzsch suggested, likely to prove too strong to be overcome by exposure to different media frames on key points of contestation.

However, this objection has been answered by studies that looked at the responses of audiences exposed to peace journalism, compared with war journalism versions of the same stories. Lynch and McGoldrick (2012) found in their studies that people who were exposed to war

journalism pieces developed a feeling of apathy and hopelessness. While those who were exposed to peace journalism became hopeful, empathic, and even offered solutions to conflict.

The findings on Lynch and McGoldrick's study is validated by recent scientific research that contests previous assumptions that humans are aggressive, sexually driven, and self-serving. Social critic and author Jeremy Rifkin (2010) highlighted in his work called empathic civilization that the discovery of mirror-neurons or empathy neurons suggests that more than the 'expansion of power', human evolution is also measured by 'intensification and extension of empathy to more diverse others across broader temporal and spatial domains'

However, news media seemed to have contributed to the inability of human beings to be able to relate to the 'other'. McGoldrick (2011) argued that war journalism, the conventional presentation of conflict, presents an inaccurate picture of human responses and motivations in conflict situation. She added that this kind of representation 'abrogate and suppress a key part of our meaning-making and relational capacity (2011: 125).

Although peace journalism is a promising approach of framing conflict better, the emergence of systemic, political, and economic factors that influence news production pose a greater challenge. The studies on media and the peace process cited above paid attention on the already manufactured news content. Only few studies have examined factors influencing the news production particularly the first filter of the propaganda model – size, ownership, and profit orientation of the mass media. It is also observed here, that the CNN and the Philippine government peace process have not attracted adequate attention among researchers. Only few, if there's any, have looked at how CNN is reported in the Philippine media.

The International Crisis Group (2011: i) cited in its report that 'resolving the CPP-NPA conflict has often taken a back seat to efforts to reach a political settlement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and is frequently neglected by the international community.' The media reporting seemed to have reflected the government peace and development priority. Soriano (2015) observed that most reports about CPP-NPA were treated as if a street crime and have significantly omitted the still on-going communist insurgency and on-again, off-again peace negotiations. The news media have undermined that the CNN predicament equally needs a long-term solution.

Recommendations

Based on the review of related literature, this research found out that studies on the media coverage of the CNN and GPH Peace Process is very limited. The international community including peace and media researchers recently paid so much interest on the MILF – GPH Peace Process but unconsciously undermined the importance of the CNN and GPH peace negotiation. The researchers recommend that funding agencies, academic institutions, and research organizations should regard equal interest to this issue.

There are very few available content analyses on the reportage of some news organizations of the CNN – GPH Peace Process, and even on CNN alone. While it provide findings that describe the representation of the media of the CNN, it failed to offer analyses on how structural and organizational factors influence this kind of framing. Scholarly consensus, detailed by Lynch (2013: 16) suggests that aside from personal judgment, ‘political economy of media systems’ is being pointed as ‘prime determinants of journalistic agenda-setting and framing.’ The researchers further recommend that more studies should be conducted to examine the systemic and economic influences on process of news production in order to come up with more informed policy implications.

The review of related literature and content analysis of this study revealed that news reports about the CNN tended to focus only on skirmishes between the NPA and the government military. In these instances, media frames these stories in ‘*zero-sum game*’ slant. This type of reporting only creates an image of who is winning and who is losing but failed to promote culture of peace. This research suggests that reporters should also highlight peace discourse instead of just accounting the violent acts committed. Newsrooms managers and reporters can go over previous agreements between CNN and the Philippine government.

This is not for the purpose of acting as mediator between the two parties but to provide the public pieces of information, which could allow them to be critical on the CNN and GPH’s stance on the peace negotiation. Lynch and McGoldrick (2012) found in their study that an audience exposed to a set of peace journalism material developed a sense of empathy and even offer solution to conflict. If exposed to this kind of news framing consumers of news may become critical and add pressure to CNN and GPH to pursue peace talks.

Lastly, the researchers recommend that media should go beyond the negotiating table in reporting developments about the CNN – GPH Peace Process. Conflict is not limited to two parties (Lynch and Galtung: 2010). It is very complex and multi-faceted. In this regard, journalists should realize that solutions to conflict are not limited in the Track One Diplomacy. There are alternative peace discourses that are often unreported and unheard. Most of these initiatives are from the grassroots and community leaders. Oftentimes, media would only report what has been said in press briefings, or quote the spokesperson of the dominant parties to conflict. News organizations should allow its reporter to go beyond this type of framing and give voice to peace proposals from the ground.

The CNN may say that it is representing the oppressed and marginalized but this should not stop any media organization from being critical about them. Therefore it is important that a reporter should hear voices from the ground independently.

Appendix B: Content analysis: news media framing of stories on the peace process

Two days after Christmas of 2014, on 27 December, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* ran on its front page the report “Joma says peace talks may resume next year.”

“Joma” is Jose Maria Sison, founder of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), whose armed wing the New Peoples Army (NPA) has been waging one of the longest running insurgencies in the world (Palatino, 2014).

The National Democratic Front (NDF) of the CPP has been in on-again off-again peace talks with the Government of the Philippines (GPH) since the Corazon Aquino administration in 1986 (OPAPP, 2011).

Sison’s announcement came at a crucial moment in Philippine peace negotiations with rebel groups.

Eight months prior, on March 27, the GPH and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) signed the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB), an ostensibly final peace deal capping 17 years of negotiations.

In the report, the *Inquirer* said Sison “remained pragmatic that the two parties would not be able to reach a final peace agreement within the Aquino administration, which will end in June 2016.”

It further reads,

“But at the very least, Sison told the *Inquirer* in a message that the two parties could reach agreements for social and economic reforms and a ceasefire.

“‘I think there is ample time to arrive at a Comprehensive Agreement of Social and Economic Reforms and a Truce and Cooperation Agreement on the basis of a general declaration of mutual intent,’ Sison said.

“‘There is little time left to make all the agreements up to the final peace agreement, which is the Comprehensive Agreement on the End of Hostilities and Deployment of Forces,’ he added.”

Meanwhile, the same report also quotes Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Sec. Teresita Deles describing Sison’s remarks as “very positive,”

“In keeping with the spirit and hope of the Christmas season, I would like to think that Mr. Sison’s very positive remarks indicate that common ground between the two parties may indeed be broadening toward the achievement of a just and durable peace that our people desire and deserve.”

The report however also quotes Deles categorically stating through an official statement released by Malacañang that,

“there have been no meetings between the GPH and the NDF to discuss the possible resumption of talks. It is true, however, that friends of the process have been shuttling between the two parties to explore possible parameters for restarting talks at the earliest time possible.”

For context, the report offers the following history of the NPA, as well as a summary of the timeline of the peace talks with the rebel group,

“The New People’s Army (NPA), the CPP’s armed wing, has been waging a Maoist-inspired war against the government for the past 45 years, considered one of the world’s longest-running communist rebellion.

“The protracted war has claimed more than 40,000 lives, according to government figures. Despite a series of peace talks by successive presidents, peace remains elusive.

“The peace negotiations have been stalled since 2004, with both parties adamant in pushing for their respective preconditions before the start of the negotiations.

“The last breakdown of the talks occurred in February last year.”

Then the story quotes sources from the field, thus introducing conflict in the narrative, and it is here that we get a glimpse of the political economy of the media.

These sources and the statements that were attributed to them are,

1. Military spokesperson Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla, indirectly quoted:

In a goodwill gesture amid a Christmas ceasefire, the rebels on Friday released two soldiers held captive for four months in Bukidnon province.

2. Rebel spokesperson Jorge Madlos, indirectly quoted:

Three more soldiers would be freed by January as a goodwill gesture.

3. Sen. Antonio Trillanes, described as a former Navy officer, directly quoted on his views and about mutual trust:

“I don’t see that [mutual trust] right now. The CPP-NPA-NDF should demonstrate more sincerity in their pursuit of peace. Otherwise, these talks would just be a tactical maneuver for them.”

4. Southern Luzon Command (Solcom) chief Maj. Gen. Ricardo Visaya, indirectly quoted on NPA attacks in Southern Luzon (Occidental Mindoro, Camarines Sur, Albay, Masbate and Camarines Norte) and directly quoted:

“It has been proven that nobody is a real winner in bloody armed conflicts. We are witness to the endless misery experienced by our own people, who are caught in the crossfire.”

“We must reflect why we have allowed ourselves and our communities to endure 46 years of violence and senseless deaths among fellow Filipinos.”

Counting alone already reveals a lack of balance: there are three sources from the Philippine armed forces, including Trillanes by way of his introduction as a “former Navy officer” but only one from the NPA.

But something more than journalistic balance could be seen here.

It is a truism that sources of information are essential to journalism, without which journalists would have nothing to produce. Great sources, whether human or documentary, make great stories.

But write Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky in their influential book “Manufacturing Consent: The Political

Economy of the Mass Media” (1988), a propaganda system is at work in the mass media, where,

“money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public.”

One of such “filters” in the model is the sourcing of information, and the reliance of journalists on sources from government bureaucracies or from business corporations.

Write Herman and Chomsky,

“The mass media are drawn into a symbiotic relationship with powerful sources of information by economic necessity and reciprocity of interest. The media need a steady, reliable flow of the raw material of news. They have daily news demands and imperative news schedules that they must meet. They cannot afford to have reporters and cameras at all places where important stories may break. Economics dictates that they concentrate their resources where significant news often occurs, where important rumors and leaks abound, and where regular press conferences are held.”

They quote Mark Fishman noting that,

“Newswriters are predisposed to treat bureaucratic accounts as factual because news personnel participate in upholding a normative order of authorized knowers in the society. Reporters operate with the attitude that officials ought to know what it is their job to know... In particular, a newswriter will recognize an official’s claim to knowledge not merely as a claim, but as a credible, competent piece of knowledge. This amounts to a moral division of labor: officials have and give the facts; reporters merely get them.”

This reliance on sources from the government is evident when two days later, on December 29, both the *Inquirer* and *Philippine Star* ran a report on critical remarks on GPH peace negotiations with the CPP-NPA-NDF made by Sen. Trillanes.

“P-Noy-Joma meeting a bad idea, says Trillanes,” reported the *Inquirer*. Almost the entire chunk of the report is about the opinions of the senator, but whose role in the peace process was not identified, i.e. if he was speaking as a senator of the country, or as a former military official.

The report reads,

“Not a good idea.

“Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV has thumbed down a possible meeting between President Aquino and Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founding chair Jose Maria ‘Joma’ Sison, even as he expressed pessimism about the prospect of successful peace talks given the “mountain of distrust” between the two parties.

“Trillanes also said Sison’s self-invite would be distasteful for a head of a sovereign state.

“‘You’re practically demanding that he meet with you. It should be President Aquino who should initiate [the meeting],’ Trillanes said on radio station *dzBB*.

“Trillanes said confidence-building measures should be undertaken before any meeting could take place.

“‘Otherwise, such a meeting would be a futile exercise,’ he told the *Inquirer*.

“Trillanes said that if Aquino really wants the meeting to take place, he would work for it to happen, as what he did when he met quietly with Moro Islamic Liberation Front chief Murad Abraham.

“The senator said he would believe that a meeting between the CPP and the government will take place if the invitation would come from the President himself.

“‘If [the President] really wants it, there would be no need for Joma Sison to announce that he is looking forward to meeting [the President] because it means there is no such schedule,’ he said.

“Sison’s statements are just propaganda, Trillanes said.

“The senator also said that the Aquino administration barely has two years left in its term, and if talks would at all progress, it would be in the next administration.

“‘That’s good because there would be a clean slate. There would be new personalities and a new beginning,’ Trillanes said.

“Otherwise, the senator said it would result in a half-baked peace agreement and the state would suffer in the end.”

The last part of the report briefly quotes Senate President Franklin Drilon saying he supports the revival of the GPH peace talks with the CPP-NPA-NDF.

“It is with guarded optimism that we look forward to the achievement of a final settlement. I support the effort to restart the negotiation,” Drilon was quoted saying.

Philippine Star meanwhile that same day reported that “Trillanes doubts sincerity of CPP in peace talks.”

Unlike the *Inquirer* report, no other source was quoted other than the senator. His being a soldier however was brought up,

“He [Trillanes] also frowned at reports that CPP founder Jose Maria Sison is seeking temporary passes for 500 consultants as part of confidence-building measures.

“Trillanes lamented that after being given safe conduct pass, the freed political detainees only return to the mountains and again kill soldiers.

“‘If you were the soldier and this was done to you time and time again... will you now take his [Sison’s] word for it?’ he asked in Filipino.”

Another instance of the reliance on government sources, the military in particular, and this case clearly problematic, could be glimpsed on the *Inquirer* report “Soldiers share Christmas cheer with NPA families, Mangyan folk.”

Published a day before Sison’s December 27 announcement, the report is about soldiers going around homes in Oriental Mindoro sharing *noche buena* gifts “with families of those believed to be active members of the New People’s Army (NPA).”

The sources of the story were all from the military: Maj. Gen. Ricardo Visaya, Solcom commander; Maj. Angelo Guzman, spokesperson of Solcom; Lt. Col. Ariel Mabagos, commander of the 4th Infantry Battalion; and Lt. June Matugas, leader of the soldiers who visited the families in Mindoro.

This is positive news in line with the spirit of the holiday season, but only for the military. Towards the end, the report brings up a November 7 attack by NPA rebels where one policeman and one soldier was killed.

The side of the NPA was not in the report, but noticeably it was the soldiers who spoke for them, as can be seen in this portion of the article,

“Mabagos said his unit was able to gather support from local government units, partner agencies and various stakeholders for the *noche buena* gifts for the beneficiaries.

“He said they were received well by the families of rebels.

“Citing Matugas’ report, Guzman said some of the recipients of the Christmas goodies admitted they had been longing for their kin inside the revolutionary movement.

“According to Guzman, a recipient told Matugas she would convince her son to lay down his arms and abandon the armed struggle.

“Maj. Gen. Ricardo Visaya, Solcom commander, said the gestures of Army soldiers in Oriental Mindoro showed the sincerity of the Yuletide ceasefire declaration of the military against communist rebels.”

In “Reporting Peace: Writing the First Draft of History,” which was published in the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR) annual magazine *Media Times*, Jake Soriano (2015) found that journalists have relied on military sources more than others when reporting about the GPH peace talks with both the CPP-NPA-NDF and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Soriano writes,

“Surprisingly, the source most commonly quoted in reports about peace is not the Presidential Adviser on the Peace process, or the peace negotiators for the parties involved in the talks.”

“... Information from the military is still most cited.”

From more than 600 news reports on the CPP-NPA-NDF and the MILF published in mainstream newspapers *Inquirer*, *Philippine Star* and *Manila Bulletin* from January to July 2014, 144 reports quoted sources from the military (Soriano, 2015).

OPAPP Sec. Teresita Deles, in contrast, was quoted in only 79 reports; Alexander Padilla, the GPH chair for peace talks with the CPP-NPA-NDF was quoted even less,

in only seven (7) reports; CPP founder Sison was quoted in also only seven (7) reports; and NDF negotiator Luis Jalandoni in only two (2) (Soriano, 2015).

Herman and Chomsky (1988) explain that what they call “the heavy weight given to official sources” by the mass media is “partly a matter of cost.”

They write,

“Taking information from sources that may be presumed credible reduces investigative expense, whereas material from sources that are not *prima facie* credible, or that will elicit criticism and threats, requires careful checking and costly research.”

The persistent quoting of sources from the military and the government might help explain why news media reports on peace negotiations between the GPH and the CPP-NPA-NDF lean towards a specific orientation.

Before December 2014, when the possibility of another round of talks was floated by Sison, another significant period was the week in March the same year when, coincidentally, the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) was signed.

The signing of the CAB marked a high point in the talks between the GPH and the MILF. In signing the said document, both parties agreed to an ostensibly final solution to resolving the conflict in Mindanao, Southern Philippines.

But as Soriano (2015) points out, significant events that concern the CPP-NPA-NDF also occurred on the same week,

“Probably by deliberate design (as President Aquino had hinted that something big is about to happen), the week of the signing of CAB was the same week that alleged heads of the CPP-NPA fell to government forces, Benito and Wilma Tiamzon on March 22 and Andrea Rosal on March 27, the same day as the signing. Add to that March 29, when NPA celebrated the 45th anniversary of its founding.”

How did mass media cover these events in relation to the bigger picture of peace talks with the CPP-NPA-NDF?

On March 23, the arrest of the Tiamzons was the banner story of *24 Oras*, the flagship primetime news program of *GMA News*.

In the report, militant group Karapatan was interviewed and told the press that their members were not allowed to visit the couple. They also threatened to sue.

A longer follow-up report immediately succeeded the first story. It provided more details on the arrest, and featured an interview with a source from the military, Gen. Emmanuel Bautista, and from the side of the arrested couple, their lawyers.

The military provided details on the arrest. The lawyers of the couple meanwhile insisted that the Tiamzons are consultants of the NDF, and are covered by the Joint Agreement on Safety Immunity Guarantees (JASIG).

A third report delved on the issue of JASIG immunity and whether the Tiamzons were indeed covered by the agreement.

The NDF through a statement was quoted saying JASIG applies. Former chair of the GPH panel Silvestre Bello agreed with the NDF regarding Wilma Tiamzon. The GPH peace panel however was quoted saying JASIG has been rendered inoperative because the NDF failed to open their files.

In contrast, *TV Patrol*, the primetime news program of *ABS-CBN*, placed the report on the arrest of the Tiamzon couple 10th in their sequence of news reports for March 23.

The report of the arrest came after three segments about fires in Tondo, Pasig and Caloocan; a hostage taking; a jeepney incident in Nueva Ecija; oil price rollback; a feature about Isabela pancit; a fake priest; and expired relief goods.

The report also featured Karapatan demanding the release of the Tiamzons. It quoted the military saying the arrest was a huge victory.

And unlike the 24 Oras report, *TV Patrol* got the side of Malacañang through Sec. Edwin Lacierda. The presidential spokesperson said that the government is ready for possible retaliation.

Compared with news about developments related to the Bangsamoro peace deal, coverage of the CPP-NPA-NDF leaned toward the negative and hardly touched on peace negotiations, or where things stood between the rebel group and the GPH.

The negative orientation contrasts with the optimistic, although guarded, framing of reports on the Bangsamoro.

Observes Soriano (2015),

“One event which both programs [24 Oras and *TV Patrol*] aired provides insight into the difference between Bangsamoro reports and CPP-NPA reports in the Philippine media. The day of the CAB signing, March 27, a group of Moros were in Mendiola for a peace rally, expressing their support for this very hopeful development. Nearby, a group of militants were protesting the arrest of the Tiamzon couple for allegedly being a violation of terms agreed upon during peace negotiations. The two groups met, and violence ensued. The reports quote the Moros saying they were gathering peacefully. The militants were portrayed as the instigators of violence.”

News values cannot of course be ignored here, and conflict is one significant news value.

Sky Schaudt and Serena Carpenter (2009) of the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University offer the following definition of news values,

“Traditional journalists have historically relied on news values to determine whether a story was worthy of publication... News values have come to include categories such as conflict, human interest, magnitude, unusual nature, prominence, proximity, tragedy and timeliness to name a few.”

Schaudt and Carpenter analyzed the most viewed stories on 15 community websites in Arizona to understand whether traditional news values still play a significant role online.

They reveal in their paper “The News That’s Fit to Click: An Analysis of Online News Values and Preferences Present in the Most-viewed Stories on *azcentral.com*” (2009) that proximity and conflict were the news values most preferred by readers. The news values least preferred meanwhile were timeliness and prominence.

These findings however were limited only to a certain location and a certain time period.

Still, they could provide clues as to why conflict is still attractive for newsrooms and journalists, and why

timeliness is not a guarantee of prominence, or even publication or broadcast.

In the case of the Philippine mainstream media, highlighting conflict instead of peace when it comes to the CPP-NPA-NDF has been observed by Soriano (2015) in his analysis.

This observation was made in comparison with developments regarding the Bangsamoro, the MILF and the Moro quest for self-determination.

Soriano writes,

“Reports about the CPP-NPA tended to focus only on clashes, ambushes and explosions in isolation and these events were presented as if occurring outside of the broader timeline of the still-ongoing communist insurgency, and the on-again- off-again peace negotiations of the NDF with the GPH [GPH].

“This is a significant omission on the part of the Philippine media, because peace issues are not restricted to the Moro conquest for self-determination. Numbers related to this other war mark it as equally needing a long-term solution, like solutions being sought in Mindanao. Like the Moro insurgency, the long-running communist insurgency (the NPA celebrated their 45th year this [2014] year) in the country has resulted in tens of thousands of casualties and is far from over. And ‘neither side will win militarily’ is how the International Crisis Group describes the relationship between the Philippine government and the NPA.

“And yet most reports in the mainstream about this other armed conflict has not really been contextualized.”

But even before peace talks between the GPH and the CPP-NPA-NDF bogged down, the issue would seem to be a challenging one for journalists to cover.

Even if one wanted a sustained reporting on the talks, what is there to report on when there is an impasse, or when there are talks but they appear not to lead to any development?

In June 2012, both parties met in Oslo, Norway for two days to talk about the resumption of formal peace negotiations.

The *Inquirer* reported briefly on this, quoting extensively from Ruth de Leon whom the report identified as “executive director of the NDFP International Information Office, said in an email statement sent Sunday morning quoting the joint communiqué issued by the GPH (Government of the Republic of the Philippines) –NDFP after the meeting.”

The full text of this story, “Reds, gov’t peace panel held two-day talk in Oslo,” reads,

“Lucena City, Philippines – Representatives from the government and communist-led National Democratic Front of the Philippines held a two-day meeting in Oslo, Norway to pave the way for the resumption of formal peace negotiation to end the more than four decades of armed conflict in the country.

“‘The Parties have agreed to continue meaningful discussions of concerns and issues raised by both sides on June 14 and 15, 2012 in Oslo, to pave the way for the resumption of the formal talks in the peace negotiations in order to resolve the armed conflict and attain a just and lasting peace,’ Ruth de Leon, executive director of the NDFP International Information Office, said in an email statement sent Sunday morning quoting the joint communiqué issued by the GPH (Government of the Republic of the Philippines) – NDFP after the meeting.

“The government and the communist rebels have yet to return to the peace table after they first met in Oslo on February last year.

“The last attempt to talk peace reached an impasse following a disagreement over the release of detained communist rebels. The government countered that the discordant demands from the rebels impede the resumption of the peace talks.

“De Leon said the government panel was composed of Alexander Padilla, chairperson; Efren Moncupa and Jurgette Honculada, panel members; Paulyn Sicam, consultant; and Maria Carla Villarta, director and secretariat head.

“The communist negotiating panel was led by Luis Jalandoni, NDFFP chairperson; Fidel Agcaoili and Julieta de lima, panel members; Jose Ma. Sison, chief political consultant; and Rachel Pastores, legal consultant.

“De Leon said the Royal Norwegian government (RNG) acted as third party facilitator and was represented by Ambassador Ture N.L. Lundh, ambassador of RNG to the Philippines; Knut Solem and Sverre Johan Kvale, senior adviser, Section for Peace and Reconciliation, Foreign Ministry.

“Former Senator Wigberto Tañada attended the meeting as observer, De Leon said.

“De Leon said the NDFP team raised the following concerns and issues during the meeting:

“Respect for and compliance with all bilateral agreements without qualification. The bilateral agreements were signed without reservation. Elaboration or amendment to the agreements must be by mutual agreement of both parties.

“Release of all 356 political prisoners in accordance with the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) and the Hernandez political offense doctrine.

“Respect for and compliance with the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG).

“Release of all 14 NDFP Consultants and JASIG-protected NDFP personnel.
Independent investigation of the extrajudicial killing of NDFP Political Consultant Sotero Llamas and the enforced disappearances of Leo Velasco, Prudencio Calubid, Rogelio Calubad and other NDFP consultants, family and staff.

“Recognition of GPH/GPH responsibility for instigating raids on NDFP office, JMS (Jose Ma Sison) and other NDFP personnel in August 2007.

Reconstruction of Document of Identification (DI) list; use of encrypted photos as legitimate photos.

“Rectification of ‘terrorist listing’ of CPP, NPA and Prof. Jose Ma. Sison by US and other foreign governments being declared by Secretary Deles as ‘sovereign right’ of these foreign governments (February 2004) and “welcomed” by former GPH/GPH President Gloria Arroyo and declared by her as “not intervention in internal affairs” of the Philippines (August 2002).

“Indemnification of victims of human rights violations under the Marcos regime in connection with the human rights litigation in the US as provided for in the CARHRIHL.

“De Leon said government compliance with their concerns could open the way for the resumption of formal peace talks.

“De Leon said the NDFP have also responded to the government concern and issues on the declaration of ceasefire.

‘Regarding the proposal for ceasefire and related matters, our two panels can discuss these in connection with an earlier proposal of the NDFP for a Concise Agreement for an Immediate Just Peace as well as with the later proposal for truce and alliance submitted directly to your President and considered as subject matter of the special track,’ De Leon said quoting the NDFP panel.

“De Leon said the NDFP is also ready to engage the government in a discussion on the implementation of the 1998 GPH-NDFP Joint Agreement in Support of Socioeconomic Projects or Private Development Organizations and Institutes.

“The communist guerilla war, one of the longest and deadliest in Asia, already claimed more than 40,000 lives, according to government figures and despite a series of peace talks by successive presidents, peace remains elusive.

“The on and off peace talks between the government and the communist rebels have been stalled since 2004 because both parties were adamant in pushing for their respective preconditions before the start of the talks.”

What was the result of this meeting?

In September that same year, months after the June meeting in Oslo, former Bayan Muna partylist Rep. Satur Ocampo in his “At Ground Level” column for the *Philippine Star* would provide a brief summary.

“No meeting of minds there,” he writes.

In the same column, Ocampo would also provide a 20-year timeline of the peace talks from the Ramos to the present Aquino administration, lamenting that “the

GPH-NDFP peace talks are in limbo, dampening the mood to celebrate what could have been a milestone in the long quest for peace.”

In full, “Will GPH-NDFP peace talks resume?” reads,

“Today, September 1, marks the 20th year of the signing of The Hague Joint Declaration between the Philippine Government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines. The agreement laid the basic principles and the four-point substantive agenda that have guided, since 1995, the on-and-off formal talks aimed at ‘resolving the armed conflict and attaining a just and lasting peace.’

“But now the GPH-NDFP peace talks are in limbo, dampening the mood to celebrate what could have been a milestone in the long quest for peace.

“Let us look back briefly to see what happened over 20 years:

- President Fidel Ramos (who, with Juan Ponce Enrile, had blocked the initial peace talks under the Cory Aquino government) initiated the exploratory talks that led to the signing of The Hague Declaration. Under his watch, the peace negotiations produced 10 signed agreements.
- Among these are the Joint Agreement on Security and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) and the landmark Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL), the first major accord in the four-point agenda.
- President Joseph Estrada approved the CARHRIHL by signing it on August 8, 1998 (NDFP Chair Mariano Orosa had signed it on April 10 that year). But he later abandoned the peace talks and launched an “all-out war” both against the MILF and the CPP-NPA.
- Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo revived the talks in 2001 but suspended them soon after, and kept them suspended till the end of her nine-year administration. Instead she pursued, in vain, a two-part vicious counterinsurgency program dubbed as Oplan Bantay-Laya.

- Still, the Arroyo government grudgingly signed two supplemental agreements after the controversial 2004 presidential elections.

- P-Noy, even before he became President, vowed to “revive the peace process on the basis of a comprehensive understanding of the root causes of the conflict, under clear policies that pave the way ahead...” He restarted the GPH-NDFP peace talks in February 2011.

The two sides reaffirmed the 12 previously signed accords, and agreed to begin implementing the CARHRIHL by convening its Joint Monitoring Committee. They even agreed to accelerate — within 18 months — the pace of the negotiations on the remaining topics of the agenda.

But as formal negotiations on social and economic reforms were to resume in June 2011, the talks bogged down, ironically, over disagreements on how to interpret and implement the agreements the two panels had signed and reaffirmed — particularly the JASIG.

The GPH panel virtually threw a monkey wrench into the talks by stating, in writing, that The Hague Joint Declaration has become a “document of perpetual division” between the parties.

Thus, after 14 months the prospects for resuming the talks remain uncertain.

Throughout that period, however, the Royal Norwegian government sustained efforts to resume the talks. Last June 14-15 the third-party facilitator, Ambassador Ture Lundh, succeeded in getting the two parties to hold bilateral discussions in Oslo.

Dubbed as “a non-meeting” because there was no agreed agenda, the discussions enabled each side to raise issues and concerns to the other side. On June 15, the participants signed a one-paragraph joint statement, which states:

“The Parties have agreed to continue meaningful discussions of concerns and issues raised by both sides on June 14 and 15, 2012 in Oslo, to pave the way for the resumption of the formal talks in the peace negotiations in order to resolve the armed conflict and attain a just and lasting peace.”

What did each side say to the other?

The NDFP team raised the following six concerns and issues, stressing that GPH compliance with these would open the way to resuming the formal negotiations on socio-economic reforms and convening the JMC:

1. Respect and comply with all bilateral agreements without qualification. Elaboration or amendments to these must be by mutual agreement.
2. Release all 356 political prisoners in accordance with the CARHRIHL and the Hernandez political offense doctrine (upheld several times by the Supreme Court).
3. Respect and comply with the JASIG by releasing 14 detained NDFP consultants and JASIG-protected personnel; conducting independent investigations on the extrajudicial killing of Sotero Llamas and the enforced disappearances of Leo Velasco, Prudencio Calubid, Rogelio Calubad and other NDFP consultants, family members and staff; and acknowledging GPH responsibility for “instigating” the raids on the NDFP office and the homes of Sison and NDFP personnel in August 2007.
4. Reconstruct the documents-of-identification list of NDFP consultants and staff, using encrypted photos.
5. Rectify the “terrorist listing” of the CPP, NPA and Sison by the US and other foreign governments.
6. Indemnify the victims of human rights violations under the Marcos regime as provided for in the CARHRIHL.

The GPH team, according to an OPAPP online posting, raised the following issues and concerns: 1) a cease-fire, or at least the “lowering of the level of violence,” especially against civilians and business establishments; and 2) objection to the NPA’s use of landmines in violation of the CARHRIHL.

No meeting of the minds there.

But beyond this problem is the glaring absence of P-Noy’s intervention. He hasn’t even spoken up. Unlike Ramos, who showed political will to overcome deadlocks and kept the negotiations moving forward.

Amid these uncertainties, talk suspensions and talk revivals only to bog down again, where can the mainstream media latch on for sustained peace reporting? It would seem, again, in reporting clashes particularly on the countryside.

A 2012 *Philippine Star* yearender report, “Peace talks with NPA hit rough patch” provided a good summary of where things stood between both parties, but was still oriented towards reporting conflict on the ground.

The report is also anchored in the significant developments between the GPH and the MILF, who in October that year signed a framework agreement for the establishment of Bangsamoro.

The first part of the report reads,

“While the administration is gaining headway in peace efforts with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), lawyer Alexander Padilla’s progress in peace overtures with the Communist Party of the Philippines-National Democratic Front (CPP-NDF) are not as encouraging.

“The peace process that the administration pushed under the leadership of former government peace panel chairman (now Supreme Court Associate Justice) Marvic Leonen in dealing with the MILF has overshadowed the government’s peace negotiations with the communists.

“Leonen’s group inked a framework agreement with the MILF peace panel headed by Mohagher Iqbal during a ceremony at Malacañang on Oct. 15.

“The framework agreement will pave the way for the establishment of a Bangsamoro political entity for Muslims in Mindanao.

“On the other hand, the peace negotiations between the government and the CPP-NDF have bogged down.

“While the government and the MILF have expressed trust in each other’s peace panels, the government and the NDF peace panels have accused each other of failing to show sincerity and implement confidence-building measures to persuade one another to go back to the negotiating table.

“The New People’s Army (NPA) has continuously staged attacks on military camps and installations in Mindanao.

“It has also raided mining firms in Mindanao, resulting not only in damage to property, but to the death of many innocent civilians and soldiers.

“One of the significant incidents that ripped the possibility of the government and NDF returning to the negotiating table was the NPA grenade attack in Paquibato District in Davao City that injured 47 persons, mostly children.

“The government’s committee monitoring the peace negotiations with the NDF has asked the NPA to show goodwill and surrender members allegedly behind the grenade attack in August this year.”

The following year, GPH panel chair Padilla, in a report posted on the OPAPP website, said that in light of the talks going “nowhere for the last 27 years,” the Aquino administration is considering a “new approach” to resolve the armed conflict with the CPP-NPA-NDF peacefully.

He is quoted in the report saying,

“We cannot wait forever for the other side if they continually refuse to go back to the negotiating table without preconditions.”

“The government will be taking a new approach to pursue peace.”

“We are always open to peace negotiations. But the other side has to do better than present endless roadblocks to formal talks. We need to see sincerity and political will on their part to seek peaceful ways to build consensus between them, the government and the whole of society and put an end to the senseless violence they are inflicting on our people especially on innocent civilians.”

In a separate report also posted on the OPAPP website, Sec. Deles was indirectly quoted saying “the new approach will factor the inputs of different stakeholder groups from nationwide consultations conducted by the GPH panel.”

She was also indirectly quoted citing the “the concept of ‘peace zones’ in Sagada in the Cordillera and Tulumun in North Cotabato as examples of how the people them-

selves can be instrumental in promoting peace in their communities.”

Peace talks would be revived again with the Sison announcement in December 2014.

And despite the underreporting of this issue, efforts were made by the mainstream media to their credit to provide context and to show where exactly the GPH and the CPP-NPA-NDF are in their peace negotiations.

Inquirer Research using the paper’s archives and the OPAPP website as sources, published the following context piece, “What Went Before: Peace Talks between government and communist rebels,” alongside the December 27 “Joma says peace talks may resume next year,”

“Peace talks between the government and communist rebels have been on and off for nearly three decades, with negotiations getting suspended several times.

“In May, Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founding chair Jose Ma. Sison said he ‘remained willing’ to meet with President Benigno Aquino III to help jump-start the stalled peace talks despite the arrest of alleged top CPP leaders Benito Tiamzon and his wife, Wilma Austria, in March.

“Sison made the remarks via Skype at a forum in Hong Kong, which was attended by an audience of mostly domestic workers. At the time, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Teresita Deles said ‘any serious proposal toward resuming peace talks should be coursed through our third-party facilitator and not through the media.’

“Broker

“Deles was referring to Norway, which is brokering the peace negotiations between the government and the communist-led National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP).

“It was the second time that Sison spoke about his willingness to meet with Mr. Aquino to revive peace talks with the communist insurgents, following the administration’s successful peace negotiations with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The government and the MILF signed a peace agreement in March, ending more than four decades of conflict.

“In July, the New People’s Army (NPA), the armed wing of the CPP, released four policemen who were captured when the insurgents raided the Alegria municipal hall in Surigao del Norte province.

“Malacañang said the release was a welcome development. Presidential spokesperson Edwin Lacierda said: ‘We hope this is a groundbreaking event where the NDF-CPP-NPA would look forward to pursuing the peace process without any conditions. We have always stated government is ready to sit down with them. We are hopeful the peace table would move forward with respect to the left.’

“Calls to resume talks

“On April 1, Luis Jalandoni, chair of the peace panel of the NDFP, said the communist insurgents had long been calling for the resumption of peace talks, contrary to statements attributed to government peace negotiator Alex Padilla that the rebels revived calls for a return to the negotiating table only after the arrest of Tiamzon and Austria.

“Jalandoni, in an e-mail statement, said he and Padilla met on Feb. 27 and Padilla at that time knew that the insurgents had wanted to resume the talks. The Tiamzons and five other alleged members of the CPP Central Committee were arrested three weeks later in Carcar City, south of Cebu City.

“The insurgents’ recent call for the resumption of peace talks was a reversal of their statement in December last year. On its 45th anniversary, the CPP declared it would no longer pursue negotiations because of the Aquino administration’s ‘unwillingness to negotiate a just peace.’

“‘It has no choice but to wait for the next regime to engage in serious negotiations,’ the CPP said.

“Despite the party’s declaration that it would not be returning to the negotiating table during the Aquino administration, the government said that it remained committed to forging peace with the communist insurgents.

“Talks ‘killed’

“According to Sison, it was the administration that decided to terminate peace negotiations, but Deles said it was the NDFP, the political arm of the CPP,

that ‘killed’ the talks because of its insistence on preconditions before negotiations could resume.

“In February 2011, the two parties met in Norway but failed to reach a settlement, particularly on such issues as the release of detained communist insurgents and the declaration of a longer ceasefire. The peace process has not moved since then.

“In October 2010, the Aquino administration expressed desire to revive the negotiations with the formation of a new panel to talk with the NDFP and the NPA.

“During the presidency of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the peace talks also broke down.

“In June 2001, the government unilaterally suspended the negotiations to protest the assassination, allegedly by the NPA, of Cagayan Rep. Rodolfo Aguinaldo and Quezon Rep. Marcial Punzalan.

“In 2002, then Army spokesperson Lt. Col. Jose Mabanta said a faction led by Tiamzon, who then headed the NPA, opposed peace talks with the government, adding that the leadership struggle was blocking the resumption of peace talks.

“List of ‘terrorists’

“In 2004, negotiations were scuttled anew with the NDFP accusing the Arroyo administration of ‘sabotaging’ the talks by pressing for the insurgents’ surrender upon the signing of a final peace agreement.

“Jalandoni said in a 2005 interview that the government wanted the NDFP to sign a ‘prolonged ceasefire’ before the talks resumed, as well as a final peace agreement that would mean the surrender of the NPA.

“He accused the government of being behind the listing of the NDFP as a terrorist group by the United States and the European Union in 2002, and of using the terrorist tag to force it to sign the agreement.

“Jalandoni said the NDFP would rather wait for a new administration than resume talks with the “crumbling” Arroyo administration.

“All-out war

“In June 2006, then President Arroyo declared an all-out war on the communist rebels and set aside P1

billion for the military and the police to crush the insurgency.

“In early 2007, Jalandoni said Norway was again willing to host exploratory peace talks in Oslo, but the Philippine government insisted that the NDFP first agree to a ceasefire before talks could resume.

“In July that year, both Jalandoni and Sison rejected a proposal for a three-year ceasefire as a condition for resuming the talks. This aimed to “crush” the communist insurgency without dealing with the roots of the conflict, they said.

“Sison said formal talks could resume only after the government did the following: stop extrajudicial killings, abductions, tortures, mass displacement of people and other human rights violations; stop the terrorist blacklisting of the CPP, NDFP and the NPA; and indemnify victims of human rights abuses during the Marcos regime.

“In 2008, the government negotiating panel asked the NDFP to agree to a ceasefire as a condition but was rejected anew. The NDFP feared that as soon as it approved a prolonged ceasefire, the Arroyo administration would deem all previously signed agreements superseded, and surrender negotiations would take the place of substantive talks on basic reforms.”

The *Philippine Star* meanwhile published the following 2014 yearender report, “Peace talks between gov’t, Reds remain elusive,” although the orientation, like its 2012 yearender, is negative and alternate between discussions on the talks and conflicts on the field,

“Manila, Philippines — Peace with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing New People’s Army (NPA) and political umbrella National Democratic Front (NDF) has remained elusive for President Aquino’s four-year-old administration.

“Despite recent developments that gave some encouraging signs, there is no clear indication that the suspended peace talks between the government and the CPP will ever push through before Aquino steps down in 2016.

“The negotiations between the government and the CPP broke down in February 2013. The government cited lack of sincerity and political will on the part of the CPP.

“While expressing readiness to resume the peace talks, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Teresita Quintos-Deles said that the resumption of the peace talks should be on the basis of ‘doable and time-bound agenda.’

“CPP founding Chairman Jose Ma. Sison said the government and the CPP may return to the negotiating table on the second week of January after the visit of Pope Francis.

“Sison noted that a comprehensive agreement on economic reforms, truce and cooperation could still be accomplished before Aquino finishes his term should the government and the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) be fair in the negotiation.

“But Deles said that while ‘friends of the peace process have been shuttling between the two panels to explore possible parameters for restarting talks at the earliest time possible,’ there have been ‘no meetings between the government and the NDF to discuss the possible resumption of talks.’

““So far, feedback has been positive but there remain matters to be clarified in order to ensure that, if ever we do resume talks, it will not go the same way of an early, major impasse that has happened too often in the past,’ she added.

“Deles also said that in keeping with the spirit and hope of the Christmas season, she would like to think that Sison’s very positive remark indicates that common ground between the two parties may indeed be broadened towards the achievement of a just and durable peace that the Filipino people desire and deserve.

“For his part, government peace panel chairman Alexander Padilla asked the CPP to transcend ideological boundaries and respond positively to the people’s yearning for peace.

“Padilla noted that history has shown that it is through earnest dialogue, not armed violence, that peace is created.

““We have asked them to engage in talks that have a clear agenda and timetable, to talk not just for the sake of talking, but to reach specific agreements that will lessen if not eradicate the violence on the ground,’ Deles added.

“The NPA showed a goodwill gesture to promote the peace negotiations with the release of its captive personnel of the Philippine National Police (PNP) last July 30 after days of intense negotiations initiated by NDF-Mindanao spokesman Jorge Madlos.

“The policemen were picked up in a mountainous barangay in Agusan del Norte by a group of multi-religious leaders who served as third party negotiators for the release of the captives.

“The NPA had abducted four policemen when they attacked a police outpost in a remote area in Surigao del Norte earlier this year.

“For the purpose of the release, the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the NPA agreed to separately issue a Suspension of Military Offensives (SOMO) to their respective forces for a period of five days from July 27 to Aug. 1.

“Deles said the outburst of intense relief and joy at the reunion of the freed police officers with their families, all with very young children, was the immediate and heartfelt reward for everyone’s efforts.

“In releasing the captive policemen, the NPA announced that they had taken this action as a goodwill gesture.

“‘We welcome this message from the NPA. In the face of the difficult challenges that have confronted this particular peace table, the government has remained firm in its commitment to pursue a peaceful resolution to this long drawn-out armed conflict,’ Deles said.

“However, Padilla questioned the CPP’s sincerity because its call for the resumption of peace talks was made only through media and not through the proper channels.

“He said the proper approach would have been for the CPP to inform the Norwegian government, the third party facilitator of the peace negotiations since 2004. But ‘there has been no formal notification to the government up until today.’

“However, the arrest of NDF leaders Benito and Wilma Tiamzon on March 22 also added to the question of sincerity, this time on the part of the government.

“NDF leaders Randall Echanis and Rafael Baylosis complained they were prohibited from visiting the Tiamzon couple at the PNP Custodial Center.

“The government denied the allegations. Padilla explained that the PNP duty officer that day clarified that as a matter of standard operating procedure, they need at least one week to process requests for visits.

“He noted that while visits are given the highest priority for immediate relatives, counsels and doctors, all others who do not fall under these categories have to undergo the usual scrutiny and process, which require an application submitted days in advance.

“‘Echanis and Baylosis handed their request letter signed by SELDA only on the day of their visit. In light of this, the PNP regretfully informed Echanis and Baylosis that they could not favorably grant the request and they were advised to reschedule their visit,’ he said.

“A month before the Tiamzon couple were arrested, NDF consultant Ramon Patriarca was released from jail, following the decision of the Danao City regional trial court in Cebu to dismiss the case against him.

“Patriarca was arrested in February 2009 by joint elements of the police and the 78th Infantry Battalion in Barangay Casili, Consolacion town in Northern Cebu. He was charged with rebellion.

“But the NDF maintained that Patriarca was one of its consultants in the peace negotiation.”

These two pieces by the *Inquirer* and *Star* help their readers situate what were then current developments in the broader context of the lengthy peace negotiations that through decades have not been fruitful.

They also reveal how prospects for peace, despite decades of the GPH and the CPP-NPA-NDF trying to negotiate and despite many instances of what seemed to be positive developments, remain out of reach.

Recommendations

Because the media play a crucial role in nation-building (and with that, in prospects for peace), practitioners from newsrooms down to individual reporters themselves need to be informed fully on all significant aspects of the negotiations between the GPH and the CPP-NPA-NDF.

Building the capacities of members of the media to do exactly this is however easier said than done.

The reporting on Bangsamoro developments, which have been covered more extensively by the mainstream media, remains problematic in some areas.

The aftermath for example of the January 25 incident in Mamasapano, Maguindanao, in which 44 members of the Special Action Force of the Philippine National Police and 18 members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front were killed would appear to have resulted in more conflict than peace reporting in the mainstream media.

What more about the peace talks between the GPH and the CPP-NPA-NDF, where other than official statements from both sides no significant developments have been seen?

It should be noted that the Mamasapano incident has also negatively affected prospects for peace between the GPH and the CPP-NPA-NDF.

A recent April 2015 report on *TV Patrol* featured an interview with NDF Peace Panel Chair Luis Jalandoni asking the government to also give attention to the CPP-NPA-NDF problem instead of just the Bangsamoro.

OPAPP Sec. Deles was quoted in the same report explaining that trust in peace talks must be restored first especially after Mamasapano.

Again, the topic of the report was ostensibly peace, but the treatment was conflict, i.e. Jalandoni and Deles trading barbs. A crucial quote from the former was also about the significant size of the NPA, that is, in terms of members and ammunition.

And despite new developments, covering the CPP-NPA-NDF as one would a crime was evident in a 24 Oras report on the same month about two alleged members of the CPP caught on CCTV trying to extort money.

In the report, no mention was made of the peace process. Instead, there was a note towards the end saying the CPP has not given their side to the story yet.

How then to improve the reporting on the CPP-NPA-NDF?

Since sources are crucial for journalists, the OPAPP as the lead government agency that handles peace negotiations, should for one update their website, particularly the section about the CPP-NPA-NDF peace table.

A cursory check on the OPAPP website would show that the “Highlights of the GPH-NDF Peace Negotiations” page was last updated on 31 May 2011. A separate “Updates on the GPH-CPP/NPA/NDF Peace negotiations page carry the same old posting date.

In contrast, developments on the Bangsamoro are banner stories, and have many available related resources.

Had OPAPP updated its pages on the CPP-NPA-NDF, it would have been probable that a resourceful journalist might have provided more information to his or her readers or viewers.

Further studies on the CPP-NPA-NDF must also be encouraged, and provided resources for by third parties involved in the peace negotiations. The results of these scholarship would not only be useful to the Philippine mainstream media, but may well contribute significantly to peace negotiations that until now has never translated to the lives of ordinary Filipinos.

Appendix C: Interviews with key informants

(Government peace negotiators, media executives, journalists, CNN negotiator and leftist congressman)

1. Interview with Atty. Jess Dureza, April 23, 2015 at Country Club, Greenhills

Background of interviewee

- Community journalist with Davao's oldest community newspaper, the Mindanao Times. Became a lawyer, passed the bar and went into politics.
- Elected congressman in 1987, appointed by Speaker Ramon Mitra as representative of the House to the peace negotiating panel during President Fidel V. Ramos' time.
- Head of Panel of Negotiators at the time was Ambassador Howard Dee. Formal negotiations took place 1987 to 1990s.
- In 2006 Dureza became Press Secretary and head of OPAPP.
- Davao Congressman (circa 1989) during Pres Cory Aquino when Speaker Monching Mitra appointed him as House representative to the GPH peace negotiating panel with the CNN.
- The chair then was former envoy to Vatican Ambassador Howard Dee. Was designated as GPH panel spokesman and joined peace talks in Europe with JOMA, Louie Jalandoni, Fidel Agcaoili, et al, across the table.
- During FVR's presidency served as presidential assistant for Mindanao and chair of the Mindanao Economic Development Council (MEDCO). Starting with the Arroyo presidency, was appointed in 2001 as chair of the government panel with the MILF.
- In 2006 when the Hyatt 10 resigned including OPAPP Ging Deles, she appointed me OPAPP to oversee negotiations with MILF, CNN and implement MNLF 1996 peace agreement. In 2008 I left OPAPP to become press secretary.

Opinions and perceptions

- Early negotiations came up with the Hague Declaration which came up with list of agreements, but no cease-fire.
- Hague Declaration also listed names of NDF consultants to be given free passes, and list was kept in the bank vault.
- NDF used the list to spring free any member caught by the military just by claiming their names were already included in the list.
- NDF tactic – continue with peace negotiations, but never agree to ceasefire to avoid the revolutionary movement from stagnating.

- In 2001 Dureza was appointed to head the Philippine panel of negotiators with MILF as Chair of MEDCO during President Ramos' time.
- During the time of President Marcos, the government negotiated peace with the MNLF through the Southern Philippines Development Authority (SPDA)
- Endorses ceasefire and resumption of peace talks with CNN
- Doesn't believe media owners try to influence coverage of the peace process.
- But he says Mindanao journalists complain of Manila desk bias—they try to generalize stories to the whole of Mindanao, as if the whole island is a war zone.
- When he was head of OPAPP he tried to conduct dialogues with Manila desk editors and community journalists re peace reporting, stressing on the need to be more accurate and to report to promote peace.
- Military sources understandably are biased against the rebels.
- Media owners would only interfere in the peace process coverage if they affect politics and advertising.
- Big business owners want peace.
- Believes mass media have very great influence on public opinion and on the peace process.
- But there is very little coverage of the peace process.
- Believes there is lack of backgrounding or contextual coverage of the peace process.

Some points re media reporting and CNN

1. Peace reporting or covering peace negotiations is a special field. Reporters must have a deep background of the peace process so stories are not treated like ordinary events given that there is great sensitivity to context, accuracy, precision of language, etc. A blaring headline can disrupt what otherwise is a positive development in the talks. The rule is: negotiations should be within closed doors and negotiations should not be done in the media. Contentious issues between panels are best discussed in executive sessions than in the public domain.

During my time, we continued to give media briefings, backgrounders and developed a regular pool of media reporters who have some understanding of the nuances of peace negotiations developments, given that prudence (not big headlines, sensational lead paragraphs) and accuracy in press reports help nurture the process.

In fact, joint statements or communiques jointly issued by both sides are standard. (Behind the scene, panels debate over words, even where to place the commas, in preparing those joint statements before they are released.

I used to call newspaper editors to assign specific reporters to the cover and not just anyone to jump in at any time.

But when peace talks are off or suspended, or a breakdown takes place, the bets are off. (As what we are witnessing today in the media exchanges between GPH & CNN).

2. Media can play an important role in providing an enabling environment for resumption of talks. One way is to interview and write stories based on statements from sectors supportive of the resumption. These sectors, as talking heads, must come from mainstream and NOT those identified with the LEFT, to gain traction. For example heads of business sectors or chambers of commerce, etc.

Periodic background materials or statements must also be fed to known newspaper desks and columnists to keep the issue on peace talks not forgotten. Or just to maintain their attention and interest on the matter.

3. A basic consideration is to create an enabling environment for peace talks to be held. A “public clamor” must be generated, otherwise government will take the initiative.
4. Third party interlocutors (like Norway) must start shuttling between Manila and Utrecht to revive interest and these efforts must be reported by media although in very subdued tones just to nurture public attention and keep the flame burning. If possible, JOMA, et. al., should be advised to tone down their “attacks” on OPAPP, etc.

2. Interview with Atty. Efren Moncupa, April 22, at Moncupa Law Office

Background of interviewee

- Atty. Efren Moncupa was a FLAG lawyer during Martial Law days, lawyering for anti-Martial Law activists, together with Diokno, Joker Arroyo and Alex Padilla. When Atty. Alex Padilla was appointed head of the Panel to negotiate with the Communists, Moncupa was invited to join.

Opinion on peace process

- Negotiations with the CPP-NPA-NDF (CNN) reached an impasse in 2010 during President Arroyo’s administration. Pablo Sanidad was head of the Panel at the time.
- After PNoy took over, he appointed Alex Padilla to head the Panel, with the following members: Efren Moncupa, Jurgette Honculada.
- The CNN Panel included Joma Sison, Luis Jalandoni, Connie Ledesma, Fidel Agcaoili, Juliet Delima.
- From 2011 to 2013, they held non-meetings and issued non-papers, the way they described the informal negotiations going on in Norway and Netherlands, where Joma and Sison lived in exile.
- Common issues that stalled negotiations involved release of political prisoners who were supposed to be consultants for CNN. The CNN called them political prisoners (PPs) while the Philippine government called them public order violators (POVs).
- The names of the consultants were supposed to be locked up at the start of negotiations in bank vaults in Utrecht, Netherlands. When a high ranking CNN operative is arrested, CNN would claim they were consultants.
- The Philippine government would demand that the bank vaults be opened to see if their names are indeed on the list, to be sure they are not just adding names to the list from time to time.
- If they are on the list the government panel would promise “best efforts to release” which the CNN would read “promise to release.”
- After talks collapsed in the last part of President Arroyo’s administration, they were revived by PNoy when he took over. A preliminary agreement was signed March 2011. Talks reached another impasse in 2011 to 2013.

Opinion re coverage of peace process

- There is no public opinion on the peace process
- Big business owners want peace
- There is very little media coverage of the peace process. No backgrounding coverage.
- There is no desire for the public to resume peace negotiations.
- Therefore there is a need to upgrade public opinion re the peace process and bring it to the fore. We must drum up public awareness re the peace process, campaign for public awareness.
- There is a need for a peace settlement, but we need to restart the peace process. Develop a com plan to revive public awareness to resume negotiations.

3. Interview with Nilo Paurom, chief, *Inquirer* page one operations, May 7, QC

Professional background

- Silliman student 1971-75, In Manila since 1977
- Series of odd writing-editing jobs, as all-around writer-editor of various publications, e.g., Makati Trade Journal, National Dispatch, trade, tourism and management magazines.
- Joined *Inquirer* in 1986 as City Editor, through friend Roy Acosta who was *Inquirer* editor at the time. Hanged out at National Press Club, found drinking buddies, including Acosta. Became assistant news editor, 1991-1998, and Page One editor, 1999-present.
- Coverage of peace process – no experience on this beat. No peace beat reporter. Usually senior reporters covering defense, foreign affairs, Malacanang, assigned to cover peace or conflict reporting.

Opinions and perceptions

- *Inquirer*'s regular sources of news about peace process – press releases, as starting point, leading to follow up process. Websites, of NDF, military spokespersons, government sources, spot news which starts investigations on the ground, developments start from spot news.
- Owners, management comes into the process only to stress that big, controversial stories are balanced, not libelous, does not affect advertising, get the side of politicians mentioned in controversial stories.
- A few reporters and deskmen are activists and have political leanings, but editors are aware and make sure their stories are balanced.

On coverage of the peace process, *Inquirer* is openly for the peace process, supports the BBL

- On extent of peace process coverage, very extensive on the MILF and supports BBL
- On the peace process coverage of CNN, little so far, waiting for concrete moves towards peace negotiations.
- On treatment of news/opinion on the peace process, objective, on type of coverage, half spot news, half backgrounding through research department and senior news desk editors.
- Orientation of coverage – positive. Has *Inquirer* bureaus in Cebu, Davao, Legaspi, Angeles City, Baguio

Inquirer editorial planning and decision-making process

- Story source to reporters who writes first draft
- To Day Desk Editors for copy tasting

- To Senior Editors – Artemio Engracia, Joey Nolasco, Nilo Paurom
- At 3 p.m. news conference of news desk, copy editors edit copy for the following day's edition.

4. Interview with Marichu Villanueva, May 1, 2015, at Star Office

Professional background

- Associate editor, *Philippine Star*
- Former *Manila Standard* staff
- Joined *Philippine Star* in 2005 as news editor
- Malacanang reporter
- Covered the peace process as Malacanang reporter
- Claims the *Philippine Star* is the Philippine newspaper with the widest readership, most advertisers and highest income. No. 1 taxpayer among the newspapers.
- *Philippine Star* reporters covering the peace process – those assigned to Malacanang (political) beat and OPAPP.

Facts, opinions and perceptions

- Regular sources of news on the peace process – press releases, government spokespersons, military (DND) spokespersons, documents, emails, websites.
- News values that determine coverage – essentially conflict and spot news, like NPA attacks, kidnappings, raids, encounters, arrests. No attempt at background reporting.
- Official announcements at press conferences and official statements also determine coverage.

Perceptions on whether and how media owners try to influence the editorial process and coverage of peace negotiations – None

Perceptions on how political leanings of news desk influence the editorial press in the coverage of the peace negotiations – One or two reporters may have political leanings but the editors decide what to use and how to present them. They always demand balance—interviewing the other side.

Perceptions on Star coverage of the peace process – extensive, objective (as a matter of policy), 80 percent spot news and 20 percent backgrounding.

Orientation of coverage is neutral, i.e. objective.

View on editorial planning – no regular planning, they approach the day with a blank slate. Coverage is day to day, whatever happens is covered. Since there are no formal peace talks, there is no coverage of the peace process. Editors decide on the content of the paper, based on what is happening. Owners do not meddle with the contents of the paper, as long as it makes money. It makes money because the contents are readable and appeal to readers. The market for the most part determines contents.

Owners do not interfere with the running of the paper. The editors know when their stories will affect big advertisers, and take care not to antagonize them.

Opinion re spate of killings by riders in tandems. These hired guns are the former “sparrows” of the NPAs, earning money for their organization. Military does not want to acknowledge them as Communist killers to avoid glamorizing them.

5. Interview with Howie Severino, April 27, at GMA Office

Education

- Ateneo de Manila Grade School and High School
- Tufts University, BA in History (1983), magna cum laude
- Sussex University, MA in Environment, Development and Policy (1993)

Professional experience

- Writer, PHL Embassy Wash DC 1983
- Teacher, Ateneo de Manila High School (1984-86)
- Executive Assistant of Health Secretary Alfredo Bengzon, Department of Health (1986-88)
- Reporter, *Manila Chronicle* (1988-91)
- Staff, PCIJ (1991-1997)
- Reporter, The Probe Team (1997-2001)
- Documentarist, I-Witness (2002 to present)
- Editor-in-Chief (GMA News Online) (2009-2014)
- Vice President, News and Public Affairs, GMA Network (2009-present)

Opinion on GPH-CNN Peace Process – Peace process is “invisible,” nothing going on worth reporting. CNN just not in the news until very recently when Luis Jalandoni and wife Connie Ledesma came over and had interviews with media.

Joma Sison no longer a significant factor in CNN. No longer seen as a significant force to reckon with, has lost leadership over CNN.

GMA coverage of GPH Peace Process with MILF, on a scale of 1 to 5, very extensive. On GPH Peace Process with CNN, on a scale of 1 to 5, very little

On treatment of news – objective as opposed to sensational

Type of coverage – Spot news oriented, very little contextual reporting. TV puts premium on spot news. Contextual writing follows when there is significant spot news happening.

Perception of GMA influence on public opinion – Very great. Howie says.

But with little GMA coverage of the peace process, very little.

Orientation of GMA coverage on peace process – positive, as opposed to negative or neutral.

Editorial planning and news decision making process

News anchor reviews at daily meetings the previous news cast – mistakes made if any. Team reviews news stories, news scripts. Plans the next day’s newscast.

Decisions on coverage of news – what to cover and how, are made by executive producer, program manager and news anchor.

GMA has MILF beat reporter, also Defense beat reporter.

Owners do not meddle with news departments – e.g. what news to cover and how.

Perception of what factors influence coverage. Decisions re what to cover and how to cover the peace process -- Significance, news value, human interest, ratings.

Are any GMA news staff members of lobby groups or political parties? Not that I know of.

Does ownership have a say on GMA news coverage, particularly of the peace process?

They can influence news coverage of the peace process if they wish (since they are owners), but they do not (or I have not heard of any instance that they have).

6. Interview with Satur Ocampo, May 7, Fisher Mall, QC

Media background

- Reporter, *Manila Times*, *Philippine News and Features*, *Sun Star Manila*. During Martial Law Ocampo went underground, was captured and imprisoned from 1976 to 1985. Escaped in 1985 and surfaced after the 1986 People Power Revolution.
- Founder, National Democratic Front and Chief, CNN panel of negotiators with the Cory Aquino government in 1986-87.
- Founded the NDF which put under one umbrella all activist organizations like KM, Anakbayan, KMU, etc.

After People Power 1986, the Cory government and the CNN agreed on Dec. 10, 1986 to a 60-day ceasefire and start peace negotiations. NDF Chief Satur Ocampo was chair of the CNN panel to the peace negotiations. Members were Antonio Zumel, Bobby Malay, Jayme Guerrero.

The government panel was chaired by Jose Diokno. Members were Ramon Mitra, Tito Guingona and Jayme Guerrero. When Sen. Diokno got sick of cancer, daughter Maris Diokno took his place. The peace talks were then held at the old Commission on Audit building on Commonwealth Avenue.

The negotiations were suspended after the Mendiola massacre in January 1987, when seven farmers were shot by soldiers guarding the Mendiola road to Malacanang, where the demonstrators entered. At that time the military was opposed to the Cory government's decision to engage the CNN in peace talks.

The peace talks were suspended during the Cory Aquino administration. President Ramos picked up the negotiations during his administration.

Satur Ocampo is president of Bayan Muna, served three three-year terms in Congress. Has followed by Teddy Casino, who served three three-year terms. The present Bayan Muna representative is Neri Colmenares, who is starting his first term.

Perceptions on media's regular sources of news about the peace process: Tel. Nos. and websites of NDF in Utrecht, Philippines. Tel. Nos. and websites of OPAPP chair and members. Press releases, spokespersons.

Views on media reporting of the peace process. Suggests media appoint regular and designated peace beat reporter. Media should make it a policy to promote peace.

Satur Ocampo and NDF notes that there are people in media who have political leanings to the left.

Thinks that media at present has little influence on the peace process and has enough coverage of the peace process.

As to the media treatment of the peace process coverage, subjective especially recently because of the Mamasapano incident.

As to type of coverage, Satur thinks media peace process coverage is 70 percent spot news, and 30 percent back-grounding.

As to orientation, some positive, some neutral and some negative. Media also exaggerates some.

History of the GPH-CNN negotiations

- The Hague Declaration of 1992 under the Ramos administration was the mother declarations, one of 10 major agreements.
- This was followed by the JASIG accord—Joint Agreement on Security and Immunity G
- Then came the CAHRIL – Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights and International L
- Then came the Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms.

Views on peace process

- Government should resume negotiations with CNN immediately, although he believes Deles is controlled by the military, which has defined its policy “to reduce the CNN to irrelevance.”
- Government cannot use the excuse that it has its hands full with the MILF problem, because the peace negotiators with the CNN would be a different panel, and tackle separate issues.
- What can be done to jumpstart the peace process with CNN?
- Peace advocacy groups can lead the way—e.g. church groups, like the UCCP and Catholic church; the Philippine Ceumenical PeaceForum.
- Break the deadlock on the interpretation of the JASIG. Take up the church offer to provide sanctuary for NDF consultants released for the peace process.
- Mass media can lead public opinion to put pressure on the government to resume peace negotiations.

Views on P-Noy and prospects of peace talks

Why P-Noy's February 2011 initiative to resume peace talks with the CNN failed:

I can suggest two reasons:

1. P-Noy's declared pursuit of his mother's mantra – addressing the root causes of the armed conflict -- lacked his promised "clear policies to pave the way ahead..." (In my Dec. 11, 2010 piece in this space, titled "Let's hope optimism lasts on GPH-NDFP peace talks," I precisely warned that absent such clear policies, the talks would likely not progress.)
2. Like his mother, P-Noy wasn't hands-on in managing the peace talks. He left it to his peace process adviser, Teresita Deles, to handle the task. Thus, rather than get his marching orders from the President who's his principal, GPH panel head Alexander Padilla deferred to Deles as "my boss." He echoed her positions both on issues of procedures and substantial agenda.

Deles' ideological-political bias -- or deep-seated antagonism towards the Left -- dictated her moves. A few months before the February 2011 formal talks, Deles had stated publicly that she wanted all the previously signed agreements reviewed. Thus, when the two panels proceeded to reaffirm the agreements – which had taken several years of on-and-off negotiations to complete -- the GPH panel included several qualifications or reservations in its affirmation statements.

That laid the ground for the ensuing disputes and mutual accusations of insincerity, which in turn led to an impasse in the talks.

Nonetheless, certain factors have kept open the prospect of resuming the formal talks sometime soon.

- ✓ The Norwegian government's sustained efforts, as third party facilitator, to break the impasse. In 2012 and 2013 it sponsored and facilitated informal bilateral meetings to discuss a 2011 proposal for a truce and alliance the NDFP had directly addressed to President Aquino;
- ✓ Peace advocates similarly have been pressing both sides to go back to the negotiating table, address the root causes, and honor all agreements. Notable initiatives came from the Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform. And last year a broad grassroots peace movement called Kapayapaan pitched in; and

- ✓ Late last year, a group led by a former GPH panel member reportedly with strong Malacanang links and rapport with the NDFP started to broker a new accelerated timeline, with "doable" targets, for resuming the formal peace talks.

7. Interview with Teodoro "Teddy" Casino

Work experience

- Currently with BAYAN, was Partylist Representative in Philippine Congress of Bayan Muna from 2004 to 2013.
- Years spent following the coverage of the peace process--since 1986 (29 years). Followed the peace process as a matter of interest. But in 2001 he was part of the Philippine delegation, as a witness to the resumption of the peace process.
- Considers himself more of a third party peace advocate—the peace process is a way of pushing for the peoples' political agenda. Secondly as a media practitioner--he did a segment for the *Correspondents* of ABS-CBN.
- Links to ideological groups/parties--as a member of BAYAN which is a democratic, activist organization—left of the political spectrum.

Perceptions

Media's most common news source –Basically the government, it relies on government. It is "government-centric." From this, follows the NDF. More like 70 -30 in favor of the government In general, the 30 percent is shared among other stakeholders.

The importance and role of the mass media—the media are crucial. The peace process should involve the public, not just NDF and government. Everybody has a stake in the peace process, even if they are not part of the armed struggle.

Perception on media owners and peace process –In general, the peace process is covered. The bias is there is bigger coverage of the "official narrative" of the government side in the peace process. They are more often quoted and given importance. In general the corporate interest is not sympathetic to the agenda of the NDF. There is a natural tendency to play up the government side.

Perception on whether and how political leanings of news desk influence—Most people on the news desks are not sympathetic to the leftists. The mainstream media is part of the status quo. But because of certain journalistic

principles, like balance and fairness, they give space to the NDF side.

Perception on coverage of the peace process—How would you describe the influence of the mass media in forming public opinion on the peace process? To a certain extent media can sway public opinion. But the problem is media coverage is not sustained and the peace process is also not sustained.

Perception on media influence on the peace process—Very Little, The dynamics of the peace process is for both parties to push for their constituents. Once there is agreement on an issue, the mass media plays its role in disseminating information.

Perception on treatment of news/opinion—They try to be objective but lacks understanding of the dynamics of the peace process. For example, if the talks are suspended, they report that the NDF is demanding new things. They don't remember that these news issues are old issues, part of previous agreements. News media lack interpretation, they lack context. Media coverage is more spot news oriented. Lacks backgrounding.

Perception on orientation of coverage—Positive. In general the coverage is positive despite its limitation. Lacking context but pro-status quo. But the media is still keen on developments in the peace process. (On) Adequate coverage, much is to be desired to attract public opinion.

Opinion on the current political and economic situation in the country--It is important to resume the talks.

The problem is the government (through OPAPP) says it wants to attend to the BBL/MILF problem first because it is the wish of Malaysia and the US. They think the CPP-NPA –NDF is already a spent force. The system hasn't really changed. It's the system that prevents that from happening. Change has to come from somewhere else.

Perception on news media coverage—In general the reporting of conflict in Philippine mass media is characteristic of the traditional conflict reporting, rather than peace reporting. Conflict reporting is characterized by the following:

1. Reports mainly on the visible effects of war...
2. Elite-oriented mainly...
3. Focuses mainly on differences that led to the conflict
4. Focuses mainly on the here and now.
5. Dichotomizes between good guys and bad guys, victims and villains in conflict.
6. Two-party orientation.
7. Partisan.
8. Zero-sum orientation.

Appendix D: AIJC in peace communication and advocacy

For more than three decades now, the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication (AIJC) has been involved in various peace communication initiatives through research, policy forums, training, communication planning, and IEC materials development.

In 1984, AIJC president emeritus Dr. Florangel Rosario-Braid wrote “Communication, Peace and International Understanding in the Philippine Context,” published in *Philippine Studies of the Ateneo de Manila University*. In 1999, she wrote “The Lessons of the Philippine Peace Process,” included as Chapter IX of the book, *Asian Peace: Security and Governance in the Asia Pacific Region*, which was edited by Dr Majid Tehranian and published in New York.

In 1993-1994, AIJC conducted the study, *Content Analysis of the Media Coverage of the Peace Process of the Manila Bulletin and Philippine Daily Inquirer*. The findings were eventually presented in the *Roundtable Discussion on the Role of Media Reportage in the Peace Process, Unification and National Development* which was held in November 1994.

In 2002, AIJC, with support from the Philippines National Commission for UNESCO (NatCom), conducted research and convened a series of forums on commonalities between Muslim and Christian Filipinos in such areas as community life, family life, political life, religion, education, environment or resource management, women, and laws. The end result was the publication of the pioneering book, *Muslim and Christian Cultures: In Search of Commonalities*.

The Institute published *Media as a Battlefield: Coverage of the War in Iraq* in 2003. It consists of papers as well as proceedings of the forum, *Into the Battlefield: Media Coverage of the War in Iraq* convened by the AIJC about a month after the war broke out. The book examines lessons on the media coverage of the war and advocates for the practice of peace journalism in the country.

From 2005 to 2006, the Institute with funding from The Asia Foundation (TAF) worked with the Philippine Judicial Academy (PHILJA) of the Supreme Court to prepare the *Communication Program for Court-Annexed Mediation*. This project produced a comprehensive communication plan to inform and educate the Court’s publics on the advantages of using mediation in the courts. The project also produced information, education

and communication (IEC) materials such as posters and brochures. News features on court-annexed mediation were written and published in national dailies and provincial newspapers.

In 2006 to 2007, AIJC implemented the *Communication Project for the Code of Muslim Personal Laws (CMPL) and Shari’a Courts*. Interviews and focus group discussions with Shari’a judges and counselors, Islamic religious leaders, lawyers, educators, and NGO and women leaders were conducted in key cities in Mindanao. The research results provided inputs in designing a Comprehensive Communication and Advocacy Plan for CMPL. In addition, print IEC materials on CMPL/Shari’a Courts were also developed, including three posters on using the Shari’a courts (translated into *Maguindanaon*, *Tausug*, and *Maranao*) and primers on the Philippine Shari’a Courts and the Code.

Also in 2007, AIJC completed two related research-cum-policy papers that examined the communication media’s role in fomenting prejudice and pride or promoting tolerance in relating with Muslim Filipinos. The papers were commissioned by pagbabago@pilipinas. The first paper focused on the role of the news media, primarily newspapers, while the second paper was on Filipino movies.

The paper on news media illustrated the manifest and latent biases of newspapers in portraying the “Muslim” conflict and the way these biases contribute to further discrimination by one party against another. For the second study, seven films were selected for content analysis, namely, *Zamboanga* (1936), *Badjao* (1937), *Perlas ng Silangan* (1969), *Muslim Magnum.357* (1986), *Mistah: Mga Mandirigma* (1994), *The Sarah Balabagan Story* (1997), and *Bagong Buwan* (2000).

In December 2007, AIJC with the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) and other media partners, including the Philippine Press Institute (PPI) and the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP), convened two forums on *Peace Journalism* to lay the groundwork for a planned full implementation of the Fellows in Peace Journalism.

An Experts Forum held on December 3, 2007 to define the criteria for selection of the Fellows, their scope of responsibility, and the selection process. The second forum was a Roundtable Discussion-Workshop held on

December 11, 2007 among editors and media executives to orient them on the concept and practice of “peace journalism,” activate support for the project, and finalize the criteria for the selection of the Fellows and their scope of responsibility. Implementation of the project was put on hold because of the change in leadership at the OPAPP.

With UNESCO support, AIJC developed and maintains the *Website on Muslim Mindanao for Journalists and other Communicators* (www.muslimmindanao.ph). Launched in January 2009, the website responds to an expressed need of media practitioners for a knowledge resource on Muslim Mindanao. It specifically seeks to build the competence of print, broadcast or online journalists and other communicators covering or writing about Muslim affairs by enabling them to provide context and present broad and diverse perspectives on the issues and concerns of Muslim Filipinos and Muslim Mindanao – and in the process help build understanding and promote the peace process in the region.

AIJC prepared in 2010 the *Mindanao 2020 Communication for Development Plan for the Mindanao Peace and Development Framework Plan, 2010-2030 (Min2020)*. This is the successor plan to *Mindanao 2000*, a 15-year plan prepared in the mid-1990s. Min2020 seeks to establish the shared vision among Mindanawons and build a consensus on the long-term, holistic and strategic road map towards lasting peace and a progressive and prosperous future for Mindanao.

To institutionalize this participatory process in development planning, the Min2020 Planning Team recognized the need to integrate a communication component into Min2020. But beyond facilitating participatory planning and building ownership, Min2020 Team also recognized that communication is an integral element or part of the process in pursuing and achieving most, if not all, of the development agenda and thrust of Min2020.

Communication is recognized as a vital element in peacemaking, building social cohesion, facilitating delivery of basic social services, and promoting a conducive business (entrepreneurial) environment, among others.

Access to Justice by the Poor Project implemented from 2006 to 2007 was supported by the European Commission. Among its pilot areas were the provinces of Sultan Kudarat and Lanao del Norte in Mindanao. AIJC was involved in capacity building of newly-appointed municipal court information officers (MCIOs) of the pilot

communities. The Institute conducted information needs assessment and training needs analysis, using focus group discussions and interviews, to determine learning areas for MCIOs, develop a training module/handbook, and eventually conduct a three-day trainers’ workshop. AIJC also produced information and promotion materials on the rights of women and children including flipchart and t-shirts.

In 2010, AIJC was one of the six international partners of the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) in convening the Third UN AOC Conference held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. AIJC president Ramon Tuazon also presented a paper on Social Impact of Media and Information Literacy during the event. The UNAOC was established in 2005 and aims to improve understanding and cooperative relations among nations and peoples across cultures and religions.

The Institute is an active member of an UNAOC-related organization, the Inter-Agency on Interfaith Dialogue with the Office of United Nations and Other International Organizations (UNIO) of the Department of Foreign Affairs as secretariat. The AIJC has participated in many activities of the group.

AIJC maintains good relations with Mindanao media. Majority of Mindanao-based daily and weekly newspapers participate in the *Annual Community Press Awards* of the Philippine Press Institute (PPI). AIJC has served as the Technical Awards Coordinator since the Awards inception 14 years ago. It links with the broadcast media in Mindanao through the *Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas* (KBP) and is partner of KBP in its annual Golden Dove Awards and various training programs.

On 03-06 August 2011, a workshop on the *Use of ICT in Conflict and Post-Conflict Areas* among in-school and out-of-school children was organized by the AIJC with support from UNESCO Office Jakarta and in cooperation with PECOJON and National Computer Center. This ICT training-cum-digital development project aimed to facilitate or broaden access to social media by the youth in a pilot community in Mindanao, to empower them to produce their own content which articulates their views on how peace can be attained, and to promote tolerance for the identity, culture, and way of life and aspirations of all the peoples of Mindanao.

Complementing the ICT for peace workshop was the *Peace Journalism Workshop* aimed at building the professional capacity of Filipino journalists to practice peace

journalism or conflict-sensitive journalism. It sought to impart knowledge and skills on peace journalism/ conflict-sensitive journalism to print and broadcast journalists based in the Zamboanga peninsula and the neighboring provinces of Basilan and Sulu. It was held on 8-10 August 2011.

The Institute has published the pioneering study, *Crimes and Unpunishment: The Killing of Filipino Journalists* (2012). With support from UNESCO, the study puts together the country's top social scientists to examine the phenomenon of killing of journalists from their respective disciplines – psychology, political science, political economy, communication, anthropology, history and law. Prior to the preparation of experts' disciplinary papers, a series of regional dialogues with local social scientists, journalists and journalism educators were also held in 2009-2010.

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