This is not to say that constructing institutions, parties and movements on the basis of ethnicity is always a good thing. Danger also lurks in such a set-up, especially if left in the hands of unscrupulous politicians. Thus in countless texts, one finds the argument that ethnic conflicts are actually disguised class conflicts; so-called ethnic wars, actually power struggles. Ethnicity only becomes the platform to mobilize a constituency. True for a good number of cases, but one also finds in many societies, North or South, that the poorest of the poor and those who have least access to political processes are indeed distinguishable by their ethnic stock.

Ethnic mobilization is perhaps necessary for some time to drive home the point. Consociational set-ups where ethnic-based formations are supposed to guarantee equal participation could even out the playing field. But it need not be the everlasting hallmark of groups. Identities, after all, evolve with time and histories can be reconstructed. A common civic culture strong on tolerance and respect for peoples' and individual rights and a shared ecosystem can provide an umbrella for diverse identities under a single political and social order. A polity that provides ample space for broader participation — for women, ethnic minorities, and the poor — can, in fact, de-emphasize the ethnic question (and the gender and class questions, for that matter) from the political arena and place it in the social sphere where hopefully, it can be allowed to interact harmoniously with the countless other types of relations that operate in this realm. ○

Beyond the Transition, Towards Consolidation

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The transition from authoritarian to democratic rule is attended by continuities and discontinuities that are often as intractable as the revolution that precedes it. For one, the state does not necessarily go away in the revolution's aftermath. For another, a new ethos or *Weltansicht* that would overhaul the vestiges of the overthrown order is not inevitably born out of the latter's demise. This is why social movements, who, in the *moment* of revolution or transformation, are able to act as powerful catalysts or change-agents, often find themselves nearly helpless, if not lost, in the *process* of the ensuing transition. Armed with skills that are designed more to oppose and discredit, than push forward and negotiate, governance and policy, these advocates of change, now also potential participants in the *new* status quo, discover themselves at a disadvantage

vis-à-vis technocrats and politicians who are more adept with the so-called "rules of the game."

In the attempt to protect democratic gains and move beyond the transition towards consolidation, it therefore becomes imperative to look more closely at the state and its undeniable role in social transformation and democratic consolidation. But while the state cannot simply be ignored, a vibrant civil society that can effectively share power with the state is indispensable for achieving these twin goals. This will entail gradually taking more and more power out of the "new" state and placing them in the various groups that compose civil society. The logical result of this enlargement of civil society is the diminution of the state. However, to enable civil society to perform its transformative role, it must learn to permeate, access and engage the state. This will require equipping civil society with the necessary tools for carrying out its role not only as change-agents in revolutionary transformation but also, and perhaps more importantly, as harbingers of reform in the slower, evolutionary process of consolidating democracy.

In a national conference on *Philippine State-Civil Society Relations in Policy-Making* of some 50 delegates from NGOs, POs, GOs and the academe, several facets of the relation surfaced, and the venues and mechanisms for interaction, identified. Of immense significance to advancing the democratic agenda is the recognition by the participants of an increasing or expanding space for democratic and consultative exercises where state and civil society interaction can take place. This democratic framework is operationalized in venues and mechanisms provided by the Constitution and the laws, which mandate consultative processes and even active participation of civil society in governance and policy-making. Through these the state, on the one hand, is able to initiate, and respond to popular pressure for, reforms, while civil society, on the other, is able to remain vigilant and to articulate its interests and agenda. There is thus an opportunity for a convergence of vision and action between the state and civil society.

Although this positive atmosphere is present, negative aspects of the relationship remain. The participants are of the view that negative preconceptions and mindsets still exist. It is perceived that decision-making processes of the state still lack transparency, giving rise to distrust and reluctance on the part of civil society. Civil society actors also bewail the lack of synergy, rationality and sustainability in state policies and procedures. In return, the state rebukes civil society groups for their impatience and scant appreciation of governmental venues and processes. Too, state actors complain about the often confrontational

stance and knee-jerk reaction of civil society to governmental action and initiative.

To intervene effectively in state policy-making, the participants agreed that civil society actors need to have a road map of labyrinthine state processes. This map consists of the formal and informal venues for and means of intervention which civil society can utilize to impact on state decision-making. Some of the more definitive formal venues cited by the delegates are: (1) the legislative arena, including individual senators and representatives and their alignments and coalitions, the committees, the bicameral conference committee and the LEDAC; (2) the executive branch, inclusive of the departments, bureaus and offices and other line agencies under them; (3) the judiciary; and (4) local governments, officials, special councils and bodies. Informal venues include the media, public fora, debates and symposia, multisectoral consultations, dialogues and summits, and tripartite councils and bodies. Means of intervention that have so far been successful, according to the participants, in gaining entry for civil society in state policy-making include (1) membership or participation in consultative bodies and processes, including elections; (2) dialogues and consultations with individual officials; (3) filing and prosecution of complaints and cases in redress of grievances before appropriate bodies; (4) submission of position papers and signed petitions; (5) use of the media in articulating its positions; and (6) networking with the state and other civil society actors. It must be noted though that there is relative unevenness in the utilization and effectiveness of these venues and mechanisms owing to variables such as time, sectors, issues and advocacies. Utilization and effectiveness will primarily depend upon the particularities, if not pecularities, of each time frame, sector, issue, or advocacy involved.

Although a necessary tool for engaging the state, this map, in itself, is by no means a sufficient device for guaranteeing effective intervention. As pointed out by participants from civil society themselves, they need to comprehend further the intricacies of state policy-making in order to optimize their influence and participation. Factors that limit or obstruct the intervention process must be addressed, and those that facilitate or encourage it, further harnessed. The challenge, therefore, is to raise the level of political adeptness of presently marginalized groups in civil society. This requires developing the capabilities of civil society to effectively adjust to and overcome the idiosyncracies of the policy-making process, and penetrate the state's policy-making structures. On this task will largely depend the advancement of a democratic policy agenda and the fortification and expansion of formal democratic processes. ●